

Tate no Yuusha no Nariagari (盾の勇者の成り上がり)

Chapter

001-378

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Story Description:

Naofumi Iwatani, an uncharismatic Otaku who spends his days on games and manga, suddenly finds himself summoned to a parallel universe! He discovers he is one of four heroes equipped with legendary weapons and tasked with saving the world from its prophesied destruction.

As the Shield Hero, the weakest of the heroes, all is not as it seems. Naofumi is soon alone, penniless, and betrayed. With no one to turn to, and nowhere to run, he is left with only his shield. Now, Naofumi must rise to become the legendary Shield Hero and save the world!

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: A Royal Summoning

"Huh?"

I was dropping by the neighborhood library for a quick read.

I, Iwatami Naofumi, am a sophomore[1] from a local university. I'm quite self-conscious about being somewhat more of an otaku compared to other homo-sapiens[2].

I've embraced countless anime, games, and other aspects of otaku culture, but I do take my studies seriously so that I can lead a proper life.

Actually, my parents had swiftly given up on me and invested their hopes onto my little brother by sending him off to attend some famous cram school.

This brilliant eyesore of a brother finally snapped one day and transformed into a delinquent due to all the accumulated stress. He bleached his hair and went full yankee-mode once he arrived home one fateful day, and thus marked the start of our family's dark age.

That was when I, the messiah, made his debut!

I tenderheartedly welcomed this ill-humored and tongue-clicking brother of mine and recommended him to a famous galge[3].

"Haha!? Would you look at this mess!"

"What? I was fooled! Just wait until I get the hang of this and you'll see."

I knew it all. All about the cause of my delinquent brother's transformation.

On one hand you have me, who grew up doing whatever the hell he wanted, while on the other hand my brother was forced to study like a mad man.

Therefore, once a slacking-specialist like me baited him with a few games, he instantly became hooked like an addict.

As far as I was concerned, the world's otaku count had once again increased by one.

Afterwards, his room turned into a castle of galge goodies from the games I recommended.

However, the vexing part was that once all the steam and stress vanished from his system, he graduated from that certain famous cram school with ease and headed straight down the road to becoming one of society's top dogs.

As a result, thanks to my heroic achievements, my parents pampered me to an even greater degree. I was granted a fulfilling college life with the utmost freedom included.

To sum it all up, I am the useless leech of the Iwatami household.

Now enough with the rant, I was dropping by the neighborhood library for a quick read.

My monthly war chest, funded by my parents, amounted to 10,000 yen. Such a meager amount lasted only for a moment when faced against manga-adaptions-of-light-novels, eroges[4], eroges[5], and other great products from far and wide.[6]

Part-time jobs during the summer and winter seasons granted me another 50,000 yen worth of war funds, but when one decides to partake in the local festival, this amount of money soon disappears.

Yet when my brother desperately begged as if his life depended on it, our parents agreed to provide us with lodging within the festival's general vicinity for its entire duration, but that still wasn't enough...

Well, to maintain one's livelihood, one has no choice but to learn how to conserve one's wallet; which for me was just barely enough for tuition and basic life necessities.

Thus in order to save money, even though it pained my heart to do so, I had to read old books from second-hand bookstores and the library.

During my free time, I usually played net games that proved to be infinitely time-consuming as I tried to master each one of them.

I'm the type that likes to play around with a wide array of trivial

knowledge to begin with.

Reaching max level in a game isn't as interesting and addictive as hoarding money to me. Even right now, the character that I created was currently vending on the streets while trying to sell off rare items.

Hence, the real me with nothing to do was quite bored.

That's the reason.

The reason behind the incident that was about to occur.

I was lurking around the section that dealt with old fantasy books.

At any rate, when compared to mankind's history, the fantasy aspect seems to be quite outdated. Even the Holy Scriptures could be considered as a type of fantasy.

"Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual?"[7]

For some reason, only this ancient looking, retro-sounding book had fallen from the bookshelves.

Most likely, some random guy must have quickly shoved this book onto the shelf and went on his merry way.

This must have been a sign of destiny calling.

I sat down in a chair and started reading the Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual.

Flip... Flip...[8]

The story began with the description of a parallel world.

To summarize, it prophesied the world's demise.

Sooner or later, waves of disaster will assault this world one after another until it's finally destroyed.

To escape the impending doom, they have to summon heroes from other worlds and request their aid.

... Ok. The plot's a bit overused, but since this is a retro-fantasy book, it doesn't seem to be out of place.

The four summoned Heroes all possessed their own respective, unique weapons: Sword, Spear, Bow, and Shield.

Aiya to begin with, a shield can't even be considered a weapon, right?

I chuckled sarcastically as I continued with the story.

The heroes then ventured separately, in order to gain power in preparation against the waves of disaster.

"Fuwaaa[9]"

Crap, I'm getting sleepy.

A regal urge to sleep swept through my body. Even though this book is ancient, there has been no cute heroine appearing at all.

Although, even if a princess were to appear, she would undoubtedly smell like an irritating slut in heat with a harem involving the four heroes.

Enough with the princess, let's take a glance at the heroes' characteristics, onto the first one.

The Sword Hero probably had overwhelming combat strength, while the Spear Hero was probably the considerate type of guy.

I wondered if the Bow Hero would be able to get rid of a horrible dictator like Robin Hood did.

Huh? The story was shifting towards the Shield Hero.

"A-re?"[10]

As I flipped to the next page, I instinctively let out a voice.

The page concerning the Shield Hero that spread out in front of me was white.

No matter which angle or direction I looked at the page, it was pure white through and through.

"What the heck?"

Right when those words left my mouth, my consciousness drifted away.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought that I would awaken in a parallel world.

Chapter 2: Hero Introduction

"Oooh..."

A voice full of admiration brought me back to my senses.

As I settled down, what filled my view was a bunch of men wearing robes, looking in my direction with dumbfounded expressions.

"What?" Following the robed men's line of sight, I found three others who also seemed to have trouble grasping the situation.

I inclined my head as I thought: What on earth happened?

A while ago I was in the neighborhood library... where was I now?

I restlessly checked my surroundings, and all that I found were brick walls in every direction.

So this place was made out of bricks? I didn't recall seeing anything like this place before. It certainly couldn't be the library.

Below me, there was an altar and various geometric patterns that were painted with fluorescent paint.

They resembled what magic circles or alchemic formulas may look like in a fantasy setting. It was that sort of vibe which they gave off.

And on top of the altar stood the four of us.



Why do I have a shield attached to me?

That's the gist of it... but, why do I have a shield attached to me?

The shield fit perfectly and was strangely light. Not knowing why it was stuck to me, I tried to remove the shield by slamming it against the floor with all my might, but it refused to dislodge from my arm.

"Where is this place?" The guy with the sword gave into his anxiety and

asked one of the robed men. "Ooh, Please brave heroes! Please somehow save this world!"

""""WHAT!?"""""

All of us said unanimously. "What did you mean by that?" "What was with this cliché line? I felt as though I may have read it in a web novel before." "To put it simply, due to various circumstances, we were able to summon you brave Heroes through an ancient spell."

"Summoned."

Mhmm. That's the word. The chance of a shocking revelation for this situation was oddly high. But for now, we'll keep listening to their story to see what it has to offer. "This world is currently facing a global state of crisis. Brave Ones, please lend us your might." The robed man bowed deeply to us while saying so. "Well... This is a bit sudden--" "What a pain."

"Is that so?"

"Can I just go back to my old world? I already heard this kind of story before."

While I was engrossed with their story, the other three interrupted me midway. Wait? Did they just immediately give an answer to this desperate guy who's bowing so low as if giving the ground a mooch?

They jumped the gun after only hearing the intro of this story.

The other three were all glaring intensely at me now while I was pondering in silence.

... I gave them a half smile. The tension in the room was rising to a delicate level as time passed. Aren't you jerks actually happy?

Well isn't this a cherished, world-leaping dream come true here...

Your attitudes are pretty cliché, huh? But dudes, this is the part where you need to hear them out.

"Aren't you people guilty over summoning us without our consent?" The guy with the sword, who looked like a high school student, pointed his sword at the robed men. "For instance, we won't just fight for world peace

and then return to our old world empty handed, right?"The guy with the bow scowled at the robed men's direction."You guys don't seem to take much consideration into our own plans, do you? Depending on what you have to offer, we might end up becoming this world's enemy instead, got it?"So that's what was up. They were demanding tribute after confirming their social standings.

These guys are quite macho, I felt like I've lost in a very meaningful department.

"Well first, I'd like you all to have an audience with the king. We can discuss your reward then."The representative of the robed men opened the heavy looking door to guide us through."...Guess it can't be helped."

"Right."

"Duh, the guy we'll be meeting changes, but I bet the story's still the same."

The macho bunch arrived at their own conclusions before following. I hastily trailed behind them.

We left the dark room and passed through a corridor made out of stone.

...I wonder why? Was it due to my limited vocabulary that the atmosphere here could only be described as 'delicious'?Our breathes were taken away as we took a peek at the scene outside of the window.

Spanning off into the horizon, a town much like one from Medieval Europe could be seen.

All too mesmerized by the townscape laid before us, we walked down the corridor and reached the audience chamber in no time flat.

"Hou, are these fellows the Ancient Heroes?"On the throne in the audience chamber sat a prideful grandpa who began evaluating us when we arrived.

For some reason, I didn't get a good impression of him...

I personally do not fancy the act of licking other person's boots.

"I am the king of this country, Aultcray. The thirty-second ruler of

Melromarc. Brave ones, please raise your heads."I wasn't even looking down! Damn, I felt like punching this bastard, but I'll refrain from doing so for now.

He speaks as if he was superior, but I guess it couldn't be helped since he was a king and all.

"Now then, let me explain our situation. This country, and moreover, this whole world is facing its demise."To summarize the king's story.

Currently, there is a prophecy predicting the world's end. This world will be assaulted by waves of calamity which will one day turn everything to ruin. To save the world, these waves must be repelled before they can be dispersed.

This era marks the prophesied year.

There exists a giant, ancient hourglass which continues to drip down ceaselessly. It has the ability to forecast when the waves will arrive and it began its warning a month ago. According to the legends, each wave will come in roughly one month intervals.

Initially, the residents of this country were not too concerned over the prophecy. However, as prophesized, when the hourglass had completed its first turn, a wave of disaster occurred.

A dimension crack appeared in this country, Melromarc, where hideous and brutal demons crept out in large quantities.

Other adventurers and knights barely managed to repel them. However, the next incoming wave would be even more powerful.

It seemed like the worst case scenario was about to occur.

At this rate, the disaster won't be repelled.

That was the basic outline of their situation.

By the way, it looked like our legendary armaments had the ability to translate languages for us.

"I understand your dilemma. But who gave you the right to summon us into doing manual labor for free?"

"That is one hell of a convenient story."

"... Even if that is the case, and this isn't me being selfish or anything, but if this world is going into ruin then let it be destroyed. This matter doesn't even concern us."

The person in front of me laughed loudly. Aren't you also secretly jumping for joy inside that heart of yours, dude?

Well, I guess I'll take advantage of this situation too.

"Certainly, we have no obligation to help you. In the end it'll just be fruitless labor for us. And once peace comes, you guys will just go 'sayonara' as if nothing happened. So to prevent such a sad outcome from occurring, I'd like to hear some form of insurance from you. Surely you have something to present us, right?"

"Fumu..."

The king sent his vassal a glance. "Of course, we planned on rewarding the Brave Ones fully for their efforts." Including me, the Heroes made a guts pose with a clenched fist.

Jackpot! First phase of negotiations complete.

"I had already made arrangements to aid your cause with money. And surely, since the Brave Heroes will be protecting our world, I have already prepared a fitting place for you Brave Ones to rest."

"Eh~ ... Those are all well and good promises then."

"Don't think that we can be tamed with only this much though. You'll have to continue giving your cooperation if you don't want us to turn rogue."

"... That's right."

"Righto~"

What was wrong with these guys? Always looking down on people.

The immediate threat right now was us becoming the kingdom's enemy.

Well, we need to stay on top of things or else all our efforts will be in

vain, with nothing but empty pockets to show for it.

"Well then, Heroes. Let us hear each of your names." Hold on a sec. Wasn't this just like the book, the "Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual," that I read a while ago?

We have the sword, spear, bow, and shield.

Coincidentally, we were also called Heroes. So doesn't that mean we got sucked inside the book's world?

The Sword Hero stepped forward and began his self-introduction.

"My name is Amaki Ren. Age 16, a high schooler." Hero of the Sword, Amaki Ren. First impressions: a bishounen high school student would best describe him.

He seemed to have taken great care of his facial features. Although he was a bit short, only about 165cm.

If this guy cross-dressed, no one would ever doubt that he was a girl. A perfect trap. His short-cut hair was a light brown color.

Long, slated eyes and white skin, he somehow gave off a cool vibe.

He looked like a slender swordsman.

"Okay, next up will be yours truly. My name's Kitamura Motoyasu. 21 this year, a university student." Hero of the Spear, Kitamura Motoyasu. First impressions: he looked like the carefree type yet gave off the vibe of a real man.

I've lost. His face was too refined even for a handsome guy. At least one or two girlfriends, that was his image as an experienced playboy.

He was sporting a ponytail: a hairstyle that didn't match a male, yet somehow it didn't look out of place for him.

He had a caring older brother kind of feel.

"It's my turn next. My name is Kawasumi Itsuki. 17 right now, another high school student." Hero of the Bow, Kawasumi Itsuki. First impressions: a timid boy who enjoyed piano lessons.

He seemed to lead a fleeting life yet also possessed a reliable, tenacious strength. His aura was quite vague and mysterious.

A few curly hair strands made him look like he had a wavy perm hairstyle.

He gave off the feeling of a docile younger brother.

Everyone looked Japanese. It was quite surprising with the whole foreign setting.

Whoops, it was my turn already.

"And lastly, I'm Iwatani Naofumi. Age 20, university student." The king casually looked past me.

A weird feeling shot through my spine.

"Fumu. Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki, huh?"

"My liege, you forgot about me."

"Oh sorry, Naofumi-dono."

Seriously, this old man had some short-term memory issues. That was just... Somehow, I was feeling out of place here; please don't forget about me at least. "Now then, everyone please confirm your own status. As a matter of fact, I would like you all to visually check for yourselves."

"Eh?"

Just what is this 'Status'!?" Etto, how do I go about seeing this?" Itsuki timidly asked for the king's guidance.

Well duh, you don't just go around throwing the word 'Status' without a proper explanation!

"The hell, man. You guys didn't even notice that much after coming to this world?" Ren was utterly shocked by his colleagues' ignorance.

How should I know! It was like, what exactly was there for me to notice, your face?

"Well whatever, do you see that icon in the corner of your vision?"

"Eh?"

When he said that, I noticed a weird, dim icon along the edge of my vision. "Focus your mind on it and you'll see." Pikon~ And as it light lit up silently, a browser with bigger icons similar to a PC's popped into my view.

Iwatani Naofumi

Occupation: Hero of the Shield Level 1 Equipment: Small Shield (Legendary Armament), Parallel World's Clothes Skill: None Magic: None

There was a bunch of other data but let's omit that part.

So this was the 'Status'.

But what the hell was this! It was strangely like a game.

"Level 1 huh... this doesn't look very reassuring."

"Right, I don't even know if it's possible to fight like this."

"That's exactly what I meant."

"Tools like these don't exist in the Brave Ones' world? This Status magic can be used by everyone in this world, helping to improve ourselves."

"Is that so?"

Your real body's prowess was represented by numerical values and could be naturally raised through these numbers. This was quite surprising. "So then, what should we do now? Our current values seem rather troubling."

"Fumu. From now on, you Brave Heroes will need to venture forth so that you may hone and strengthen both yourselves as well as your legendary armaments."

"Strengthen? Does that mean that our starting equipment isn't strong enough?"

"Yes, the legendary weapon of each summoned Hero has their own special method of enchantment. By doing so they can become very powerful."

"Legend this, legend that. It's fine not to change weapons as long as it can function properly as a weapon, no?"

Motoyasu whirled his spear around while commenting.

That was indeed correct. But mine was a shield. It wasn't even a weapon and was something that needed to be upgraded regularly.

"That doesn't matter right now, so we can leave it for later. More importantly, what we need is to improve our own abilities, right?" This was a moefic situation where Heroes from parallel worlds were summoned.

Like a springtime of youth where one's reckless emotions swelled up from deep inside.

The number one dream filled with exciting adventures that will never cease.

Focusing on their weapons was usually the case for everyone that was involved in such a situation.

"So are we going to form a party with the four of us?"

"Brave Heroes, please hold for a moment."

"Huh?"

Even though we were advised to set out right away."Each of you Brave Heroes will need to recruit your own companions and begin your adventures separately."

"And the reason for that is?"

"Yes. According to legend, it's said that the legendary armaments will reject one another should you Brave Heroes band together, interfering with the growth of both the owners and the weapons."

"I don't really get it, but if we act together, we can't increase our power?"

Huh? Wasn't it supposed to be something along the lines of: 'If we group the legendary weapons together, they will help each other?'

Everyone shared a glance with one another.

Attention. If those who possess the legendary weapons worked together on a united front, a repulsing reaction will occur. Therefore, let us move individually as much as possible.

"That really does seem to be the case..."Just what was up with this game-ish explanation?

It seemed like I have entered a completely game-like world.

The instructions for this weapon were conveniently lined up for me and were described in great detail. However, I don't have the time to read everything right now.

"Between improving ourselves and recruiting comrades. I wonder which should be done first?" "Allow me to prepare your comrades. At any rate, the sun is already beginning to set. Brave Ones, please take your time and rest for the day. You may depart for your journey tomorrow. During that time I shall make arrangements and scout for talented individuals who can accompany you on your destiny."

"Thank you very much."

"Thank you."

After saying our thanks, we rest in the rooms that were prepared by the king for the day.

Chapter 3: Hero Discussion

Sitting on the luxurious beds inside the guest room, everyone was staring intensely at their own weapon as they went over its description.

The sun outside the window had already set before I even noticed.

That was how focused everyone was at reading the descriptions.

Etto, unlike regular weapons, the legendary weapons didn't require routine maintenance.

Based on the owner's level, the weapon will be able to absorb different raw materials; the Weapon Manual will also fill up as we defeat monsters.

At a glance, it seemed to contain a variety of branches which the weapon could change into.

I clicked on my Weapon Icon which opened up the Weapon Manual.

Tada-----!Tons of picture icons popped up and spanned onwards, even beyond the menu window in front of me.

I didn't have the ability to change into any of these shields right now, but they were all described in detail.

Incredible...

Fumu fumu, it seemed that some arms could only be unsealed by evolving its predecessor first.

This type of setup; wasn't this similar to the skill trees utilized in online games?

Learning new skills was like evolving the weapon, as both were necessary to unlock your true potential...

Seriously, this was just like a video game."Yo, doesn't this all seem pretty game-like?" Might as well request some aid from my other colleagues. However, my question was only met with silence."Seriously dude, isn't this an actual game? I've known some which are like this."Motoyasu proudly boasted."Eh?"

"Are you saying that you don't even know about this famous online game?"

"Well no, but was there a game that even a splendid otaku such as myself didn't know of?"

"So you scrubs really don't know? This is Emerald Online, man."

"What's that? Never even heard of that one."

"Just how ignorant can you guys be? It's such a famous title too."

"Of course I know games like Odin Online and Fantasy Moon Online, aren't these pretty popular too?!"

"What are those? This is the first time I've heard of them."

"Eh?"

"Eh?"

"If I may interject, everyone. This world isn't a net game, but more like a console game!"

"That's wrong, bro. This is a VRMMO, right?"

"Hah? Well for instance, isn't this world similar to games where you click and use a controller to operate?"

Confused, Motoyasu tilted his head with a dumbfounded expression during our conversation.

"Click? Controller? What kind of retro games are you referring to? Don't people usually mean VRMMO when they say 'net game' these days?"

"VRMMO? As in Virtual Reality MMO? What kind of sci-fi world setting are you trying to create? Are you daydreaming here?"

"HUH!?"

A loud sound of disagreement was released. Come to think of it, this Ren guy was the first to notice our "Status" magic.

He gave off the impression of someone who was accustomed to this.

"Well then... gentlemen, I'd like to ask each of you to name a game from

your world which bears the closest resemblance to this one."

Itsuki requested with his hand slightly raised.

"Brave Star Online."

"Emerald Online."

"None. I mean, this is simply a game-like type of world, right?"

I could understand that this place felt game-ish. But seriously dudes, you guys thought that I couldn't even tell the difference between a game and reality?" Ah. As for myself, this world is like a console game called Dimension Wave." A game title which no one else knew of yet again." Hold on for a minute, let's reorganize our information." Motoyasu said while putting a hand on his forehead as he tried to calm us down." Hey. Tell me what you know about the situation with VRMMO, will you?"

"It's common where I live."

"Itsuki, Naofumi. What about you guys?"

"If I recall correctly, it only exists in Sci-fi."

"I remember reading about it in a light novel before."

"Is that so. I suppose I did get that vibe off of you. Then back to you, Ren, what's this Brave Star Online? Is it a VRMMO?"

"Yeah that's right, VRMMOs are ones like Brave Star Online. It has a world system very similar to this world's setup."

Just for reference, VRMMO involved a technology where one's brain waves were analyzed and deconstructed into data, which allows that person to dive into another world produced by a computer. That was my understanding of it more or less." If that's true then, does that mean the world that you two came from only has retro games like the ones you both mentioned earlier?" He said with his head inclined." Reviewing what I know about gaming history, those type of computer games clearly did exist at one point. But for some reason I don't recognize any of those supposedly famous titles which you guys mentioned." Motoyasu and I both nodded.

Without question, not knowing a popular online game was certainly strange.

And while there was a chance that our preferences were simply too different, it was blatantly impossible not recognize a single renowned title between all of us.

"Let's try asking a common question. What's the name of the current Prime Minister?"

"Hai hai."

Everyone nodded. "Let's say it together." "Gukurin..." "Yuda Masato."

"Yawahara Tsuyoshi Tarou."

"Odaka Enichi."

"Itsufuji Shigeya."

"..." "These were Prime Ministers I had never even heard of before. It's not the kind of mistake I would ever make in a history class test."

After that we asked about famous internet slang, net pages, and more online games.

And thus, we arrived at the same conclusion of not knowing anyone else's information.

"Apparently, it seems that we all came from different Japans."

"Looks that way. You guys definitely didn't come from the same Japan as me."

"This means there's another Japan for each distinctive world."

"There's a high chance that each of them belong in a separate era too, since they don't match each other at all."

This was an explicit gathering of four weird individuals.

But even so, we all came to an understanding that everyone here was an otaku. So there was no need to panic.

"Based on this pattern, I think everyone has a different reason for being

here."

"Idle conversation isn't one of my hobbies, but I guess it's necessary for us to obtain information."

Ren awkwardly scratched his nose; though I was totally cool when people revealed their insecurities. "I was walking back home from school, when I unfortunately encountered a troubling murder incident."

"Fumu fumu."

"I tried helping my childhood friend who was with me at the time, and somehow I managed to capture the killer, but that's as far as I can remember."

... Ren explained his circumstances while rubbing at his side the whole time.

Saving your childhood friend; what kind of hero were you trying to make yourself out to be? I had a strong urge to play the straight man but showed some restraint for now.

Look man, capturing the perp was good and all, but if you got your sides stabbed at the end then what good does that do?

Such a false display of chivalry here; this fellow Hero needs to be placed in the untrustworthy category. Though I'll let it slide this time.

"I was already in this World before I even felt a thing."

"I see, a heroic situation where you save your childhood friend."

I coolly feigned while complimenting him with a chuckle. I've already heard enough, bro. "Then I'll go next." Motoyasu pointed at himself and began to speak. "For me, it was because I had too many girlfriends."

"Yeah yeah, that totally was the case."

This guy seemed like the annoying onii-san type who gave off a booty-chasing image. "And after doing a bit of this and that..."

"Did you get stabbed for two-timing or three-timing?"

That idiot Ren asked with a straight face.

Motoyasu's eyes blinked with surprise before he gave a small nod.

"Man... Girls are really scary, aren't they?"

"GOD DAMN IT! "

I was overcome with anger and shoved my middle finger into his face.

Die, asshole. I mean, were you summoned into this world because that's how you died?

Otto. Itsuki had a hand on his chest and was already beginning his confession.

"I guess it's my turn now. When I was crossing the street on my way home from cram school... a dump truck took a sharp corner turn. And afterwards..."

"" ... ""

In all likelihood he was run over... that was one hell of a pitiful ending.

Eh?

Wait a second, these stories didn't seem to mesh well with mine?

"Um... Do I absolutely have to recount my story on what happened before I came to this world?"

"Well duh, we already told you ours."

"I suppose so. Sorry to say, guys. But as far as I remember, all I was doing was reading a suspicious book inside the library."

"" ... "" "Everyone's gaze felt so cold.

What? We couldn't be friends just because I came into this world without a tragic ending?

The three of them began to secretly whisper amongst each other while leaving me out of the loop.

"But... that person... has the shield..."

"Right... same as our place?"

"Oh..."

Why did I feel like I was being treated like a fool?

Let's try changing the topic.

"Well guys, how would you rate this world now that we know the rules and how its system works?"

"So-so."

"It's not that bad."

"It's nice in its own way."

I see how it is... I was being treated like a total noob here!

That was mean.

"Hey, hey. Can't you guys teach me how to fight and stuff? Since my world didn't have this kind of game after all." "How can you guys be so cold-hearted? Motoyasu and Itsuki were staring at me with awfully charitable eyes." "Alright, Motoyasu onii-san here will teach you the very basics at least." "Motoyasu raised his hands up to his putrid phony face." "So first, according to my knowledge from Emerald Online, Shield... people who use shields as their main weapon are usually..."

"Yeah?"

"First of all, you have high defense. Secondly, even though your defense is high, if you keep on taking damage like an idiot, you'll die."

"Okay..."

"So your loser class will never be able to reach a high level."

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

I didn't want to hear that part!

What kind of death flag was this?! I was stuck with a deadbeat occupation right off the bat. OI!

"Update! Shouldn't there be a patch update?!" "There was a thing called job balancing, right?!" "Nope, it's a totally pitiful class when pitted against Bosses and even common mobs. That's why they just leave it alone. And also, there was that class-abolishing decision..."

"Aren't there job upgrades?!"

"Perhaps that only happens when you die?"

"Then how about a job change option?!"

"You can't change to another class skill tree anyways, right?"

GEH!? If all of this was true then I was stuck with this backbreaking occupation and somehow had to make do?

I glared at my shield as I thought.

Hey you, why do you have such a bleak, chocolate-colored future?

"How about with you guys?" I look imploringly into Ren's and Itsuki's eyes.

Both of them casually averted their eyes.

"Sorry..."

"Same here..."

EK! Did this mean that I was condemned to be a failure?

The three of them were giving me side glances while they talked about each of their respective games.

"So how's the geography?"

"The names are different but hardly anything else. It's very likely that the performance and distribution of demons are the same here too."

"Our weapon hunting locations are roughly the same, but let's not hunt at the same place as each other."

"True enough, we need to take efficiency into consideration as well."

Why was it always them? Why didn't I also awaken with a hex ability? That was what I had been brooding over.

... That's right.

If I was weak, then couldn't I just find companions to rely on?

How come I hadn't thought of this sooner?

Even if I'm no good, I can still grow stronger by joining a party.

"Fufu... It's all good. This is a special parallel world. So even if I'm weak, I'll be able to manage somehow." The three of them looked at me as if I was a pitiful existence. But fear not, I won't be defeated by you guys. To begin with, my equipment was only a type of armor so it was different from a game. I could just focus on strengthening another weapon and ignore this shield's special growth. "YAY! I'll work hard at it!" I shouted to invigorate myself. "Brave Heroes, your meals have been prepared." Oh? Apparently we'll be eating dinner now. "Hai hai" Everyone stepped out of the door, the guide then lead everyone to the knight's dining room.

The castle's banquet hall was like a scene from a fantasy movie.

A complete feast filled the table in a buffet-like fashion.

"Everyone, please go ahead and eat whatever you desire."

"What the? Are we eating the same stuff that your knights eat?"

A small grumble was heard, whoever said that sure was rude as hell.

"Of course not."

The guide shook his head.

Eh?

"This cuisine was specially prepared for the Brave Heroes and will be divided once you have eaten." I looked around as he said so.

I noticed that the noisy bunch of people were actually cooks.

I see, so there was also a ranking order when it comes to meals.

Eating here was a form of initiation, meant to introduce us to the knights.

"Thank you, let's dig in."

"Umm."

"I suppose."

And thus, we thoroughly enjoyed this parallel world's cuisine.

The smell and taste was a bit odd, but there was nothing that couldn't be eaten.

Well, the food had a unique kind of twist to them, like an omelet type food which tasted like an orange.

After finishing our meal, we headed back to our room for some rest.

"Do they have baths here?"

"This place is pretty medieval-ish... So I guess the chance of it being an open air bath is fairly high."

"Personally, I don't think they have any."

"Well it's only our first day right now."

"I suppose. Time to hit the sack. We'll begin our journey tomorrow, so let's give it our best."

Everyone nodded at Motoyasu's words and went to bed.

My epic adventure will start tomorrow!

The other three and I went to bed, awaiting impatiently for the next day to arrive.

Chapter 4: Specially Arranged Gold

The next morning.

After breakfast, we were impatiently called upon by the king.

As expected, there wasn't much noise this early in the morning; it should be around 10 AM based on the position of the sun... We received the summons just as I was thinking that.

We quickened our steps, our chests filled with excitement while we made our way towards the audience chamber.

“The honored Heroes have arrived.” The audience chamber doors swung open, and inside were twelve people clad in various styles of adventurer outfits.

There were also those dressed in knight-like garb.

Hoh... The king's influence sure is amazing.

We bowed down to the king and listened to what he had to say.

“As promised yesterday, I have recruited companions who will accompany you on your journey. Apparently, everyone gathered has already decided which hero they wish to follow.” Each of us should be getting three people if we divided them up evenly. “Now then, future champions. Please set forth with the Hero to whom you shall swear your allegiance to.” Eh? We didn't get to choose?

It was a surprising development.

Oh well, if I think about it, this parallel world's government would be more likely to place its citizens' wishes above some unknown persons who came from another world.

We were lined up in a sequential order.

Our future allies then walked over and gathered in front of each of us.

Ren, 5 people

Motoyasu, 4 people

Itsuki, 3 people

Me, O Homo Sapiens

“OU-SAMA, PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT!” What the hell! Isn't this clearly simple harassment?

Cold sweat ran down the king's face as I voiced my complaint.

“We-well. Dear me, I would never have thought such a situation could occur.”

“There's quite a difference in charisma amongst them.”

The minister painted his whole face with amazement.

A robed man then began to secretly whisper into the king's ear.

“Fumu, did such a rumor spread..?”

“Did something happen?”

Motoyasu put up a sympathetic face and asked.

Like I thought, this reeked of extreme prejudice.

What the hell, this was like being the only kid left out when children were forming sport teams in elementary school.

I wanted to ignore this feeling which existed even in a parallel world too.

“Fumu. To be honest... there seems to be a rumor spreading around the castle about you Heroes, or more specifically the Shield Hero.”

“Hah!?”

"According to the legends, Heroes that come to this world must meet a certain condition. It appears that you alone didn't fulfill this condition, such is the rumor." Motoyasu poked me with his elbow. "Did someone eavesdrop on our chat yesterday?" Is it because I didn't know about the games? Was that the reason why everyone was repulsed by me?

I mean, what's wrong with these legends?

Even though I'm unfamiliar with them, I'm still the Shield Hero, you

know!

I might have a loser's weapon according to the other heroes, but that doesn't mean I'm playing around, okay!

“Hey, Ren! Give me someone since you have five people.” The female adventurers, including one man, shrank behind Ren and looked at me like frightened lambs.

For some reason, Ren was roughly scratching his head before he shook it.

“I hate being tagged along by others. Anyone who doesn't have the resolve to follow me, please leave.” And even after saying such a heartless statement, absolutely no one showed any signs of moving away from him. “Motoyasu, my friend! Don't you think that this is too cruel?”

“Well...”

By the way, there seemed to be an oddly high ratio of women in here.

This smelled like a Harem declaration of war.

“This is such a shit load of bias.” And why were Motoyasu's companions all women? This guy seemed to be a chick magnet wherever he went.

Itsuki also wore a worried face, which revealed his reluctance of parting with any of his beloved companions.

“I guess you've got your fair share of 3 people... so it's not good to take someone by force.” Itsuki nodded his head, at a loss for words. “So then, do I really have to depart alone?!” It's a shield, yo! A loser's weapon according to the theories, yo!

Just watch me grow stronger even without comrades!

“Ah, Yuusha-sama, I'd like to accompany the Shield Hero instead.” One of Motoyasu's former female companions raised her hand and expressed her candidacy as my ally. “Oh? Really?”

“Yes.”

A lovely girl with semi-long crimson hair.

Her face is pretty cute, isn't it? She has youthful facial features, yet she's slightly shorter than me.

“Is there anyone else that wishes to fall under Naofumi-dono’s protection?” At this scene... no one showed any sign of moving.

The king let out a grieving sigh.

“So, there is no one else. Unfortunately Naofumi-dono, it appears you will need to scout for additional talent yourself. But fret not, for I shall be giving you a bonus on your monthly war fund which will soon be distributed.”

“Ye, yes!”

A wise decision.

Since I’m the one with the least amount of allies, I’ll be the one with the largest financial budget.

“Now then, here are your monthly war funds. Brave Heroes, please use this with a clear goal in mind.” Four pouches full of money were distributed to us. And a slightly larger moneybag was handed over to me.

I heard heavy chinking sounds coming from inside.

“Naofumi-dono will receive 800 silver coins, while the others will receive 600 each. Please use this money to buy equipment for yourselves.”

“ ” ” ”WOAH!” ” ” ”

Every one of us each gave a salute, and thus the king's audience was concluded.

Afterwards, our self introductions began.

“Errr Shield Hero, Mein Sophia is my name. Let us work together from now on.”



Mein Sophia is my name.

“Yo, Yoroshiku.”

Mein is such a splendid person for talking to me without a hint of bias.

But after that unsightly incident from earlier, it’s kind of awkward to start a conversation. On the bright side, however, such a caring girl is now my ally.

I have to treasure this companion of mine. Therefore, I won't lose to the other heroes by upgrading my legendary weapon.

“Let's go then, Mein,-san.”

“Okay~”

Mein vigorously nodded and followed behind me. Crossing the bridge connecting the castle to the town, a splendid city laid before me.

Even though I caught a curious glimpse of it yesterday, seeing it up close made me realize the vivid charm of this parallel world.

The streets were paved with stones and there were signs hanging on the buildings.

The place was shrouded with the savory fragrance of food. I was truly moved, both deeply and emotionally.

“What should we do now?”

“First, we should go to some Item Shops, and probably a Weapon Shop in order to gear ourselves up. This will consume most of our funds.”

Right, the first order of business should be me, who only has a shield, to acquire a weapon.

Without one, it'll be difficult for me to fight monsters and catch up with those guys.

After all, they have actual weapons that can evolve.

In order to get a head start, we definitely need to resolve this problem quickly.

“Alright. I know of a good shop, so allow me be your guide.”

“Are you really okay with that?”

“Most certainly.”

Mein was skipping about as she led me to the Weapon Shop.

After 10 minutes of walking from the castle, Mein stopped in front of a conspicuous store with an oversized sword printed on its sign.

“Here is my recommendation.”

“Oh...”

Stepping through the door, one could see weapons hanging from the walls, exactly as one would imagine when mentioning a Weapon Shop.

There were also other necessities for adventuring, such as complete suits of armor.

“Welcome!” The shop owner cheerfully greeted as I entered the shop. He was just like I had imagined, someone ultra-buff who stood behind the weapon store counter. It would have been rather revolting if the owner was a flappy fatty.

This really is a parallel world.

“Heh... so this is a weapon shop...”

“Oh, a first time customer. It seems that you came in without knowing what you're looking for.”

“Yeah, I was introduced to this shop by her.”

I said while pointing at Mein. She raised her hand and waved back lightly. “Thanks a lot, Meinu-chan.”

“No problem~ It's simply that Oyaji's shop is famous around here.”

“Oh ma'am, you're flattering me. But isn't the outfit of your boyfriend over there a bit weird?”

Right, my current clothes are: "Parallel World's Clothing."

Can't you see that this is a classy attire, weird dude?

“Oyaji thinks so too?”

“So that means you're a Hero!? Wow!”

Oyaji took a long, hard look at me. “He doesn't seem to be very reliable...” So snide. “How straightforward.” Before he even said that, I already knew I was unreliable right now. That's why I wanted to become stronger. “You need better equipment.”

“I suppose...”

Hahaha... It's not the personality but the appearance. “Are you... that misfit?” Piki, I felt like my cheeks were cramping.

Rumors about me seemed to be traveling unexpectedly fast.

Well whatever. Only losers would care.

“My name is Iwatani Naofumi, the Hero of the Shield. I'll be troubling you from this point onward, so please take care of me.” I gave my introduction to Oyaji just in case. “So, Naofumi. It's good to hear that I'll have your patronage from now on. Best regards!” Again, he sure is an energetic one. “Well, Oyaji. Do you have any good equipment?” Mein leered at Oyaji as she asked. “Right... How much do you have to spend?”

“Let me see...”

Mein began appraising me. “Around the range of 250 Silver Coins.” We had 800 Silver Coins yet we'll only be using 250... I guess she considered the value of hiring our future comrades. “Oh? If that's what you're looking for, then how about this here?” Oyaji left the counter, picked up some of the weapons on display, and came back. “So lad. which one of these do you want?”

“Umm, I have no idea which is good.”

“I would suggest swords since they're good for beginners.”

I looked at the swords aligned on the counter. “These are my new recommendations since they all have blood-clean coating.”

“Blood-clean?”

“It's a coating which prevents dullness due to gore.”

“Heh...”

I remembered that back in the old world, I once heard that if a knife was used to butcher meat, its sharpness will fade over time .

In other words, the edges of these swords will never dull.

I guess it's like a “Sharp Sword”.

“From the left we have: Iron, Magic Iron, Magic Steel, and finally Silver. Each of their performance is guaranteed to be top notched.” Does the material used affect its durability?

These weapons seem to belong in the ore based category.

“There are better weapons around here, but these are the ones which fit your budget of 250 Silver Coins.” I see.

Console games usually don't have better equipment in the first town. Despite that fact, this place has quite a good line-up.

This world once again resembled an online game. Usually, big countries had better stocks of weapons, this seemed to be the case for this parallel world too.

“Iron Sword, huh..?” I slowly grasped the sword's handle.

Ah, it truly was heavy.

I hadn't thought about the weight since my shield was extremely light. But weapons seemed to be considerably heavy, huh?

So I'll be using this to defeat the monsters...

· BACHIN!*

“Ouch!” A sudden, intense surge of electricity repelled the Iron Sword in my hand and sent it flying. “Oh?” Oyaji and Mein were staring alternately between me and the sword with mystified looks. “What the..?” I picked up the fallen sword.

No sign of that strange thing happening.

What was all that about?

My previous thoughts returned as I recalled them.

· BACHI!*

“Ouchie!” I glared at Oyaji, thinking he was playing a trick on me. Yet he shook his head repeatedly.

It shouldn't be Mein, but I turned toward her anyways.

“Did you see how it was suddenly repelled?” Such bullshit.

I stared at my palm while thinking about such impossibility.

Then, words began to emerge into my view.

[Violation of Legendary Weapon's Convention: you had touched another specialized weapon with the intent of possession.] What the fuck?

I quickly located the help option to summon up the description.

Found it!

[Excluding their own Legendary Weapon, the Hero cannot equip any other weapon for combat purposes.] What did you say!?

My benevolent self couldn't use anything else besides this shield!?

How in the world could I fight with only a shield?

“Etto. Thanks, but it seems that my shield is the possessive type.” I laughed bitterly while looking up. “How does it function? Can I take a look?” Seemed Oyaji had taken an interest in my shield as he held it up with his hands.

It'll never come off because such a method doesn't exist.

The Weapon Shop's Oyaji chanted something under his breath, then a small ball of light flew towards the shield.

“Fumu. Even though it looks like a Small Shield, there's something mysterious about it...”

“Ha, did you find out anything?”

I know that it's a Small Shield.

It was also called by that name in my Status window, with the (Legendary Weapon) tag attached to it.

“Probably this jewel engraved in the middle? I can sense a strong source of power from there. While I could somewhat identify it through my Appraisal magic... I couldn't fully grasp it. It seems to be a type of curse.” After finishing his appraisal, Oyaji faced me while playing with his trademark beard. “You've shown me something interesting. Then do

you want to buy some armor instead?”

“Yes please.”

“You’re buying armor instead of weapons within the 250 silver coin range, then I guess this armor will do.”

Since I already possess a shield, it doesn't seem like I have many other options.

Oyaji brought back several pieces of armor that were on display.

“The full plate armor isn't very popular with adventurers since it’s quite chunky, a chain mail would provide better movement.” With that said, I reached out towards the chain mail.

· Jing-a-ling...*

Looks like cloth sewed with metal chains.

This seemed fine. But I wondered if it only increases the defense of the protected areas?

Huh? An icon opened.

[Chain Mail Defense Power Up Tolerance against enemy’s slash attack (small)] Fumu fumu, the sword’s description didn't pop up before since I couldn't equip it.

“How much is this worth?”

Mein asked the shop owner. “At a discount, it'll only be 120 Silver Coins.”

“Should I buy it?”

“Hm? I suppose... if it’s still relatively new, I guess I can resell for 100 Silver.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Since this is indispensable for Shield Hero-sama's growth, I just want to reconfirm the price, that’s all.”

That makes sense... I’m only at Lvl 1, but I'll have to upgrade my

equipment as I grow stronger after all.

This seemed like low-level gear, but it was also the best I can get in my current state.

“Okay then, I'll be buying this.”

“Thank you! I'll be sure to give you a bonus for next time!”

The shop owner expressed his thanks while sending me words of gratitude. 120 Silver Coins was handed over and the Chain Mail was obtained. “Do you want to put it on now?”

“Yep.”

“Then please come this way.”

I was led to the changing room, and I donned the Chain Mail over my undergarments.

My old clothes were put inside a bag provided by the shop owner.

“Oh, don't you look quite handsome now.”

“Thanks a lot.”

Keep the compliments coming. “Then shall we go hunting now, Yuusha-sama?”

“Okay!”

Looking like a true adventurer, I loudly exited the shop while Mein accompanied me.

We then headed over to the gate, about to leave the castle walls.

On the way, the guard knight bowed to me and I happily returned it with a nod.

The start of my exciting adventure was about to begin.

Chapter 5: Shield's Reality

Upon exiting the gate, one could see the green meadows spreading far into the horizon.

Now, I was only one step away from leaving the stone paved streets and entering the trail which led into the boundless, uncharted grasslands.

This was like a field trip to Hokkaido.

It was the first time I had personally experienced how vast the sky and horizon truly were.

With only this much excitement, a Hero needed to stay composed.

“Now then, Yuusha-sama. Shall we engage in some mock battles against the weaker demons inhabiting this area?”

“Right. This'll be my first combat experience, so I've got to fight to the best of my abilities.”

“Please give it your all.”

“What? You're not going to fight with me, Mein?”

“If I fight then I won't be able to gauge Yuusha-sama's potential.”

“Th-that's true.”

Come to think of it, Mein should have more battle experience than me; I didn't even know how much I was capable of right now.

Let's try fighting against a monster that Mein had marked as a safe choice.

I wandered the grassland for a while. Then some weirdly conspicuous, orange balloon-like creature came into my view.

“Yuusha-sama, please wait. Over there is an Orange Balloon... and although it's one of the weakest monsters, it's very aggressive.” That was some crude naming sense. You called it an Orange Balloon just because it was orange and round? “GAH!” With an atrocious cry, a pair of hostile, villainous eyes were staring directly at me.

Originating from the meadow, the balloon-shaped thing charged at me like a beast upon spotting my presence.

“Yuusha-sama, please do your best!”

“OOOO!”

I've got to show her my good side.

With my right hand, I used the blunt side of the shield to strike the Orange Balloon.

Bash!

Boyon~!

It rebounded off my shield at the point of impact. This monster is surprisingly elastic!

Even though I thought that it would break right away...

The Orange Balloon bared its fangs and started biting me.

“Hii!”Kang!

I heard a solid impact.

Yet it didn't hurt, it barely even itched.

The Orange Balloon was biting my arm, but it had no effect at all.

It seemed that the shield was gently emitting a protective barrier around me.

I looked wordlessly at Mein.

“Go on, Yuusha-sama!”

“ORAORAORAORA!”

... I didn't receive any damage, but I couldn't deal much of it either.

So I continuously struck the Orange Balloon like a Kung-Fu master.

Five minutes later...

Pop!

A faint sound was heard followed by the Orange Balloon bursting.

“Hah... hah... hah...” The [EXP: 1] value popped up along with a “Pikon” sound.

I think I received a single experience point.

Seriously, all this work just to kill one balloon... I couldn't help but pity myself.

That was a tough fellow. My bare hands could only do so much.

Pachi Pachi Pachi.

“I'm proud of you, Yuusha-sama.” Mein gave me her applauds, yet it somehow felt hollow.

Suta suta suta!

Then I heard footsteps.

Looking behind me, I saw Ren along with his companions jogging onward.

I thought they would be chatting amongst themselves along the way, but all of them were wearing a serious expression while moving silently.

Ah, three Orange Balloons appeared in front of them.

Zuba!

With one swing of his sword, Ren sent an Orange Balloon popping.

1-hit kill!? Hey dude... just how different could our attack powers be?“...” Mein awkwardly turned her head away multiple times, avoiding my eyes. “It will be alright. Every Hero has their share of struggles after all.”

“... Arigato.”

It's my first fight anyways. And I suffered zero injuries since my defense is super high, even with the Orange Balloon biting me for five whole minutes.

Just as I started ransacking the remnants of Orange Balloon, the Shield let out a 'Pikon' sound.

When I brought it closer, the shield glowed gently with a pale light and absorbed the remnants.

[GET: Orange Balloon Skin]As this line popped up, the Weapon Book Icon also blinked.

I opened it to confirm, then the Small Orange Shield Icon popped up.

While I couldn't transform my shield yet, I now knew what materials were required.

"So that's the power of the Legendary Weapons."

"Yep. Looks like it needs to absorb materials in order to transform."

"I see."

"By the way, how much could I get from selling what was dropped earlier?"

"It should be about 1 Copper Coin."

"... And how many Coppers do I need to get 1 Silver?"

"100 Copper Coins."

Oh well, it couldn't be helped. It was a weak monster so of course it'll drop equally poor loot. "It's your turn next, Mein."

"Hm, I suppose so."

At that moment, some Orange Balloons approached us.

Mein took out her sword from her waist and swung twice.

The Orange Balloons then burst with a pop.

Uwaa... Am I that weak..?

My name is Iwatani Naofumi. A 20-year-old university student. Right now, my mouth is being covered by both of my hands.

I had been summoned to a parallel world and became its hero for 2 days now.

After 5 minutes of combat with a suitable monster, I had come to perfectly understand my role.

「Hero Aptitude Test」

Four people were given this test. The most rational result shall be swiftly delivered.

CHECK!>>What is your hunting aptitude?

Whoopsie, looks like I lost myself for a moment there.

Anyways, I had become painfully aware that I am, or rather my shield, was super weak.

It seemed that it was more efficient to simply let Mein do the fighting.

“Okay then, Mein. Please attack while I'll be in charge of defense. Let's see how far we can go with this setup.”

“Hai.”

Mein immediately replied.

After that, we roamed around the meadows until the sun began to set. We encountered more Orange Balloons and some Yellow Balloons, where it seemed their strength differed by their color.

“We can encounter slightly stronger monsters if we press onward, but it will soon be nightfall if we don't return to the castle.”

“Mhm. I wish we could keep on hunting a bit more though...”

I had yet to receive any damage, since the Balloons' attacks were so easy to defend against. “Since we're returning early, let's take another look at the Weapon Shop. Because upgrading my equipment will allow us to go even farther than today.”

“... Come to think of it, that makes sense.”

I was able to improved myself and gain a little exp for my starting level, so I suppose we've made good enough progress for the day.

By the way, the shield also absorbed enough to satisfy the transformation requirement; I now had a Balloon shield equipped to my arm.

In the long run... I guess I could still level up and transform my shield

some more.

Oh well. As the first day of adventuring ended with many uncertainties, we began heading back to the castle town.

Chapter 6: The Trap & Arts of Betrayal

That evening, we dropped by the Weapon Shop again after returning to the castle town.

“Hoh, well if it isn't the shield lad. The other heroes had also dropped by earlier.” Did everyone buy from this shop?

Oyaji greeted us with a pleased expression.

“Oh right. Do you know where we can sell this?” I presented Oyaji with an Orange Balloon skin and he pointed towards the front of his store. “There’s a shop that buys most of the monster drops if you bring them over there.”

“Thank you.”

“So, what business do you have with me?”

“Haha, it's for Mein. I want to gear up my companion.”

Mein was quietly staring at the equipment inside the store when I turned toward her. “So what’s your budget?” I had 680 silver coins remaining on hand. I wondered how much I should spend? “Mein, how much should I use?”

“...”

Mein was comparing equipment with an extremely serious expression.

So serious that my words didn't reach her at all.

Since I didn't know the cost to rent a room at an inn, I couldn't estimate how much we would need for a month's worth of lodging.

“Your companion’s equipment? Hmm... I suppose anything that looks good while providing decent stats would be fine, right?”

“Sounds good.”

Since I had next to nothing in terms of firepower, it was a better idea to focus on gearing Mein up. “You can give me a discount on expensive equipment since I’ve been accompanying you twice today, isn't that

right?”

“Hoh, please keep those hilarious fantasies to yourself, dear brave hero of ours.”

“80% discount!”

“Please don’t be unreasonable! 20% discount!”

“We can go a bit higher, no? 79% discount!”

“Never in my wildest dreams would I have guessed that you were the type to haggle on products!”

“Wha-whatever! 90% discount!”

“Tsk! 21% discount!”

“At least give me a better deal! Full discount!”

“What the hell, Yuusha-sama! FINE! 50% discount.”

“Too small! 92%———”

Then, as this continued for a while, Mein brought over a set of armor with a cute design and a seemingly useful metal sword. “Yuusha-sama, I would like these.”

“Oyaji, what’s the total? 60% discount.”

“The total is 480 silver coins including the price reduction, which is a 59% final discount.”

Since I had been haggling with Oyaji before Mein made up her mind, the price was greatly reduced.

Yet as expected, being left with only 200 Silver Coins was a bit rough, no?

“Mein... can’t you wait a bit longer? I’m trying to save us as much money as possible for our lodging.”

“Isn’t it fine, Yuusha-sama? If I get stronger, we can defeat bigger and more dangerous monsters, which also means more income, right?”

With her eyes sparkling, Mein pressed her breasts against my arm as

she pleaded with me. “I-I suppose so...” With 200 silver coins remaining, I wondered what Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki would do to get their hands on this amount. Their original funds could only take them as far, barely covering the initial gear for their entire team.

It seemed like 200 silver coins is an amount which will let a person live comfortably for a whole month.

Recruiting companions, leveling them up, and increasing your own income doesn't sound like a bad idea.

“Alright Oyaji, please take care of this.”

“Thanks for your patronage. Really, you’re one hell of a hero.”

“Haha, not like money has eyes to see.”

I had always been a money hoarder in net games.

Buying items at the lowest price from auctions and reselling them at the highest price possible.

Nothing is as easy as haggling with another person. Money will blind their eyes after all.

“Thank you, Yuusha-sama.” Mein teasingly kissed my hand.

This meant ‘Intimate UP’!

Tomorrow’s adventure will be a walk in the park!

After we bought Mein her equipment, we headed over to the town’s inn. 30 copper coins a night per person...

“Two rooms, please.”

“Wouldn't one room do just fine?”

“Yuusha-sama...”

Mein silently pressured me.

We-well it couldn't be helped.

“Two rooms then.”

“Hai hai. I owe you a favor.”

The inn owner was rubbing his hands together as he led us to our rooms.

The price was standardized based on the number of people. After that we went out for dinner in the inn's tavern.

We were charged 10 extra copper coins for our meals.

"In other words..." I spread out the region map which I purchased along the way and asked Mein. "Today, we were hunting in this meadow over here?" This map showed the geographic landscape of the surrounding region. If I had asked before, Motoyasu would have definitely shown me the ropes. But looking back at his attitude yesterday, that didn't appeal to me at all.

I also had no reservations in outwitting my other competitors. I wanted to get ahead of them by learning where powerful demon lairs were located first.

Therefore, I asked Mein to teach me the area of this region.

"Yes. That's correct."

"Earlier you said something about if 'we had pressed onward', were you talking about this forest that's within walking distance from the meadow?"

With this map I could get a rough understanding of this country's geography.

There's a highway that cuts across the castle meadows and leads into a forest. From there, mountains appear along the edges of the map with a river nearby.

Since this wasn't a very big map, I couldn't see any other villages that might have been further ahead.

As expected, this map doesn't provide any information beyond the forest; it would be suicidal to fight without knowing what monsters spawn in there or the safe path through the area.

"Yes. Although it isn't recorded in the map, there's a village called

Raffan inside the forest. This is where we should go next.”

“Fumu... interesting.”

“There’s also a novice dungeon outside of the village.”

“Dungeon...”

The dream land! Although there was nothing to do besides killing the monsters inside when it came to net games. “The rewards won't be too bad either. Yuusha-sama would at least gain a few levels from that place.”

“I see.”

“We're also well equipped, and along with Yuusha-sama’s superb defense, it should be a breeze.”

“Oh ho, why thank you. I'll use this as a future reference.”

“Not at all. By the way, Yuusha-sama? Why haven’t you touched your wine?”

I had gotten carried away with the tavern's atmosphere and ordered a glass, but I hadn't even taken a sip yet. “Ha ha, I'm not very fond of alcohol, you see.” Its not that I couldn't drink. As a matter of fact, I could hold my liquor quite easily.

I just wasn't interest in drinking.

Back in my college fraternity when there was a party and everyone, including me, was chugging down drinks like alcoholics, only I stayed sober while the rest had gotten beastly drunk. After that certain event, they all came to hate my guts.

“Is that so... but one cup wouldn't hurt, right?”

“Sorry. But I really, truly hate to drink.”

“Buuut...”

“I’m sorry.”

“O-Okay.”

Mein dejectedly withdrew the glass of wine. “Well then, I'll be retiring

for today. Please take care of me tomorrow as well.”

“Hai, see you tomorrow.”

I hastily finished my meal inside the noisy tavern and returned to my room.

As expected, I had to remove my Chain Mail since it was uncomfortable to sleep with it on.

I hung it on a chair afterwards.

“...”I then placed the bag of silver coins on the table.

So I had 200 silver coins remaining, huh... Actually, make that 199 silver coins since I paid the inn in advance.

Unable to calm down, I couldn't help but feel anxious the whole time. It must've been my beggar blood acting up since I've always been lacking in the cash department.

Like a stealthy, Japanese tourist who's on vacation, I hid 30 silver coins inside my shield.

Yep. I could finally feel secure.

Much had happened today.

So this is the feeling you get from defeating monsters.

Those balloons didn't inflict any pain though.

I was sitting on the bed, so I lied back down without a second thought.

What an unfamiliar ceiling, and it was only yesterday that I came into this world.

I needed to relax.

From now on, the curtain to my glorious daily life will open.

Although I had a late start compared to my fellow heroes, I would be walking on my own path. I didn't need to become the strongest, just doing the best to my abilities would be enough.

For some reason... I suddenly gotten so sleepy... I could hear a cheerful

voice coming from the direction of the tavern.

I think I heard voices similar to both Motoyasu and Itsuki conversing in the next room. Are those guys lodging here too?

I reached out my hand to extinguish the room lamp.

It's a bit early tonight, but let's just hit the hay...

Chari Chari...

W-what in the world is that sound?

Are the tavern's drunkards making more ruckus again?

Munya...

Scratchy scratch...

It was so hot... these clothes were so sticky.

"Huh?"

It was cold...

The sun shone brightly on my face, as if announcing a new morning.

Disoriented from drowsiness, I got up and took a look outside the window.

It seemed that I had fallen asleep before I knew it. The sun had already risen quite high.

According to my biological clock, it should be around 9 AM.

"A-re?" I was only in my underwear. Did I unconsciously take my clothes off?

Oh well, whatever.

As I eyed the scenery outside my window, I spotted crowds of people come and go as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

It was quite the spectacle seeing busy restaurants and food stalls cooking their ingredients for the day's lunch rush. There were also carriages being pulled along the street; and I unwittingly fell into a trance of sorts.

Haha, this really is a wonderful parallel world.

It seemed that the bird or horse drawn carriages were the two most popular types. The bird looked like a particular type of ostrich; I believe their official name in a certain game would be Chocobo.

If anything, the horses seemed to be more of the luxurious type.

Once in a while, a carriage would be pulled by a cattle; this medieval setting is unbelievably wonderful, isn't it?

"Now then, it's time to start breakfast and quickly depart for another adventure." I searched the bed for my clothes which I supposedly removed during my slumber.

... Weird. They weren't here?

The chain mail that was hung on the chair...

Could not be found.

The bag of silver coins on the table was gone too!

Not only that, even my original spare clothes were gone!

"What the..." OH SNAP!

Nighttime invasion!?

I was robbed during my sleep!

This inn had some serious problems with their security!

Anyways, I had to hurry over to Mein and warn her!

Bam! I rushed out and knocked on the door next to my room.

"Mein! There's a problem! Our money and my equipment--!" Don don don!

There was no sign of Mein coming out no matter how hard I knocked.

Tah tah tah!

Noisy footsteps could be heard approaching my direction from a bit further down the corridor.

The castle knights came over and stared at me.

Since I was the victim of a night-raided invasion, they were going to help me arrest the culprit, right?

This thief must have been quite a fool to rob a hero in his sleep.

“You guys are knights from the castle, right? Please hear me out for a moment!” I faced the knights and eagerly appealed to them.

Mein, please come out of the room quickly, I’m in serious trouble right now.

“It’s the Shield Hero!”

“Well, yeah. That’s me.”

What in the world? They seemed to be strangely hostile towards me. “The king has requested your immediate presence. We are to accompany you along the way.”

“Requested my presence? No, I have a reason for looking like this, I was a victim of a bedroom invasion. The Culpri—”

“Come along now!”

Squeeze. “That hurts! At least listen to my story.” The knights forcefully gripped my arms and took me by force.

I’m still in my underwear here. What kind of treatment is this?!

“Hey, Mein! Come quickly--” The knights refused to listen to my situation, and thus I had to leave Mein behind at the inn while I was being dragged back to the castle.

A carriage like the ones I saw earlier was there waiting for me.

I had no idea what was going on. All I knew was that I was being treated like a criminal while the real one was somewhere roaming free.

Chapter 7: False Charge

Many things happened. After being abducted, I was dragged through the castle. Once I was within the audience chamber, the knights pointed their spears at me.

Inside we have a pair made of an ill-mannered king and his minister.

As well as...

“Mein!” Itsuki, Ren, Motoyasu, along with their respective merry companions, were also gathered here.

After calling out to Mein, she hid behind Motoyasu and I was dumbfounded.

“W-what’s with that attitude?” Everyone was staring at me as if I was a villain. “You really don’t remember?” Motoyasu cross-examined me with an imposing posture.

What in the world was his problem?

“Remember what? Wait a sec... that chain mail!” That bastard Motoyasu was wearing my bloody chain mail! “So you’re the bedroom intruder!”

“Who the hell is a bedroom intruder?! Don’t even think of escaping from your sins using that nonsense!”

“Sins? What sins?”

As if in response, the audience chamber began emitting an atmosphere much like a criminal trial. “Now then, what is the charge against the Shield Hero?”

“Charge? Charge for what?”

“Sniff... Hic... Shield Hero-sama got drunk yesterday... Hic... Th-then he suddenly burst into my room, gave into his beastly desires and forced himself on me.”

“Huh?”

“The Shield Hero said that, 'The night is still young' and violently tore

my clothes off.”

Motoyasu then comforted the sobbing Mein. “I-I was horrified... I ran out of the room, screaming for my dear life when Motoyasu-sama appeared and defended me.”

“... What?”

What was that?

Yesterday evening after I separated from Mein, I headed straight to bed. So when did all that happen?

The mortified Mein did nothing but sob.

“What are you saying? After dinner last night I went straight to bed.”

“Stop spewing such lies, you bastard. It’s clear as day that the reason Mein's crying is because of you.”

“What secret motives do you have for protecting Mein? Forget that, where did you steal that chain mail from?!”

You have only met her for the first time yesterday, no? “Er, well, yesterday I found Mein drinking alone in the tavern, and she gave me this chain mail as a gift.”

“Huh?”

That was mine no matter how you looked at it.

Of course, there’s the possibility that it was bought by Mein with her own pocket money, but Motoyasu got one right when mine disappeared. This was all too suspicious.

Motoyasu’s story was full of shit. I had to convince the king of that.

“Right! Your highness! My bedroom was raided and everything inside was stolen except for this shield! Please arrest the culprit.”

“Silence, you fiend!”

The King flatly declared and ignored my plea. “You brutally committed rape against my dear countryman, villain! If you weren’t a hero, I would've executed you on the spot!”

“This is a huge misunderstanding! I didn't commit any crimes!”

Unfortunately, everyone here had already judged me guilty before the trial had even begun.

I could feel my blood boiling and my fury rising.

What the hell? What the hell is this? What the hell is this shit?!

I don't recall any of this crap, so why should I be abused like this?!

I locked eyes with Mein while trying to convey my plea for help. In response, Mein mirthfully stuck her tongue out while everyone was focused on me.



Mein mirthfully stuck her tongue out...

... That was when I realized it. I glared at Motoyasu.

I could feel a deep, dark emotion swelling up from within me, seeping into my guts.

“You fiend! You must have thrown away your clothes and money to create an alibi for your crimes!” Motoyasu pointed at me and accused with

an extremely loud yell. “What! Are you trying to say that I’m a serial rapist?!” Motoyasu shielded Mein with his body, trying to uphold his fake heroic act. “Don’t fuck with me! I’ve already spent all of my money to gear up my comrade!” It seemed that Mein, who originally intended to be Motoyasu’s companion, plotted this beforehand. Since I was the loser who could only use a shield, I bought her all of the good equipment. And after acquiring everything she wanted with her sweet flattery, Mein then ditched me and stole the rest of my money. She later came back crying to the king, acting like the victim, and driving me into ruin.... This is so messed up. Ever since the beginning, Mein had always called me by my title, Yuusha-sama, while she called Motoyasu by name.

If this wasn't enough evidence then what is?

Does that mean this world only needs one hero?

“Even after coming to a parallel world, I still have to put up with this garbage of an associate.”

“Yeah, I guess, but I hold no sympathy towards you.”

Ren didn't hesitate to condemn me as guilty.

I see... So everyone here was in on the conspiracy from the very beginning... Since I used a shield, since I was weak, and since I didn't know anything; they had already intended to get rid of me because I was nothing more than dead weight to them.

— Cheap bastards. No matter where I go, these types of filthy maggots always pop up.

The people of this country held no regard towards me from the start.

You know what?! Why the hell do I even need to protect you people?!

Perish already! This god forsaken world!

“... Fine, I don’t give a shit. Just return me to my old world already, won’t you? After that, just summon a new Shield Hero.” A parallel World? Hah!

I wouldn't even want to come here in the first place if I knew this kind of shit would happen!

“Running away when it’s inconvenient? What filth.”

“I suppose you’re right. But as long as I fulfill my obligations properly, then a few forceful relationships with women shouldn’t be that much of a problem...”

“Go home, be gone! I refuse to accept this kind of trash as a fellow hero!”

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki glared at me with bloodlust.

It was a fun experience, I suppose, being in a parallel world. Yet it was all ruined by this jerk.

“Okay! Now send me back to my old world already!” Then, the King groaned as he held his head. “Unfortunately, there isn’t a known method to send heroes back to their own worlds... Even if we wanted to re-summon new heroes, all of the current ones would first need to perish.”

“... Wh-why?”

“What the...”

“I-It’s got to be a lie...”

The other three heroes, bewildered, responded in unison.

There’s no magic that could return us to our old world?

“Then I can’t go back home now?!” Don’t fuck with me! “Give me a proper explanation!” I violently shook off the knights’ restraint. “Hey! Stop resisting!”

“Let me go!”

One of the knights hit me.

Guh!

A nice sound was heard, but it felt kind of ticklish rather than painful.

I quickly punched that knight back, but instead of hurting him, my hand grew numb instead.

“So, King? What’s my punishment?” I asked as I held my hand, waiting

for the numbness to pass. "... Right now, you shall not receive any discipline due to your value as our trump card against the incoming wave. However, we will spread the rumors of your crimes to the citizens. That will be your punishment. Don't even think about finding suitable work in my country."

"Haha, thanks oh so much for your lenience!"

That means I am only left with adventuring in order to level up and prepare for the incoming wave. "The next wave is predicted to come in one month. Even though you're a criminal, a fiend like you is also the Hero of the Shield. You won't be able to escape from your role."

"I know! Since I'm weak and all that. Time is pretty precious to me, you know!"

Chari...

Ha, as expected. Even after everything, only this shield stayed loyal to me.

"Yo! You wanted this, didn't you?!" I took out my pouch with all my remaining 30 silver coins and threw it in Motoyasu's face. "Uwa! What are you doing?! You bastard--!" I just pretended that Motoyasu's disparagement didn't reach my ears.

After leaving the castle and entering the main road, people looked and pointed at me while gossiping amongst themselves.

Really, word sure travels fast.

Isn't that just amazing?

Whatever, everything already looks hideous in my eyes.

That's why I'll only place my trust in cold hard cash... and nothing else. So now the curtain of my new adventuring arc rose in the worst possible way.

Chapter 8: Fallen Fame

One week had passed since then.

I was still hanging around the castle's vicinity.

“Hey, Shield lad.”

“Wah!?”

After storming out of the castle, I was called out by Oyaji from the Weapon Shop, half-naked with nothing but my underwear on...

To be more accurate, I was strolling past the entrance to his store.

“I’ve heard about your exploits. You raped that companion of yours, didn’t you? Mind letting me get a punch in?” He seemed to have heard the rumors and was boiling over with rage, announcing his intentions while grasping his fist. “You too, asshole?!” This guy's probably the same as everyone else, they'll never listen to my side of the story.

Ah yes, I had absolutely no idea what passed off as common sense in this country - or rather - this world when I first arrived. But raping a woman must have been one of the cardinal sins.

Ah, damn... When I saw Oyaji, the face of that slut rose into my mind.

I was about to get beaten into a pulp.

He violently grabbed me and scowled.

“Hu... Bastard...”

“What? Don’t you want to hit me?”

Oyaji loosened his fist and dropped his stance. “No... I won't do it.”

“That so? Sure was cutting it close.”

I was pretty confident that despite my low attack power, I could still go blow for blow and outlast anyone in a fight.

Unfortunately, pulverizing people would never convince them to believe me. That's why I chose to focus on saving money for any future occurrences.

Although, venting my frustrations on the balloons did help clear my mind.

“Hold on a second!”

“What do you want?!”

I was about to leave through the town gate when was stopped by Oyaji.

A small bag was thrown at me.

“You won’t get very far with that appearance. At least let me give you this parting gift.” Inside the bag contained some cheap linen clothing and a worn out mantle. “...How much are you charging?”

“Let's say 5 Copper Coins. It’s on a bargain sale.”

“...Got it. I'll come back to pay you later.”

It was a bit weird moving around in my underwear. Guess the old man never passed up a chance to do business. “Remember to pay me back in full, since the only thing I believe in is cold hard cash.”

“Ah, sure thing.”

I put on the clothes and donned the mantle, then I headed to the meadows.

After that, I went in and subjugated a horde of Balloons.

“ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA!” It took roughly 5 minutes to kill one of them, but it wasn't too much of a problem since I received 0 damage no matter how hard they bit me.

In order to distract myself, I fought all day long and obtained some Balloon skins as a result.

Level UP!

I'm now at Lv 2.

Conditions for Orange Small Shield and Yellow Small Shield have been released!

Now then, time to carefully do my various daytime chores.

I became hungry as evening approached.

I reluctantly returned to the castle town, and headed straight for the Merchant's Shop where they buy various materials from monster drops.

The merchant was a little chubby, and he let out a phony, unpleasant laugh upon seeing my face.

.....Looks like he was looking down on me.

I understood him with only a glance.

There was a prospective customer ahead of me who had come to trade in some goods.

Coincidentally, he was also selling Balloon's skins.

"Let's see..... how about I buy these for one copper per two pieces?" The merchant assessed while pointing at the Balloon's skins. 2 pieces for each Copper Coin..... "Please do."

"Thank you for your patronage."

The customer left and I was next in line. "Hey. I've brought some monster materials to sell today."

"I humbly welcome you."

Thought I didn't hear your little laugh at the end, you moron? "So you do have some. Balloon's skins, I see. How does ten pieces for a copper sound to you?" One fifth of the original amount! This bastard's looking down on me way too much. "Didn't you buy two pieces per copper from that other guy just a little while ago?"

"Did such a thing happen? Why can't I seem to remember that?"

Bullshit, he keeps making up some dumb excuses..... so you want to do THAT kind of business. "Hmph. Fine then." I grabbed the merchant's collar and pulled him toward me. "Guh, wh-, what—"

"You want to buy THESE guys? They're still alive and are very energetic, you see."

Gupu! I took one of the Orange Balloons that was hidden inside my

mantle and let it bite the merchant's nose. "GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" After pulling the Balloon away from his face, I kicked the stumbling merchant down. "The meadow's a pretty dangerous place as you can tell. So, do you feel like doing some proper business now?" I flipped open my mantle a little to show him the 5 Balloons hidden underneath it.

Since it doesn't hurt at all when they bite me, I figure that they can be quite useful in case some asshole picks a fight with me.

Regrettably, since my attack power is close to 0, I'm not much of a threat.

But thanks to my ingenious strategy, the negotiations were successful.

This pig understood his position. With this little demonstration, he could picture a future where none of his bones remained once these balloons were done with him.

"I'm not demanding any extravagant costs from you. I just hate being looked down upon with people trying to exploit me."

"You won't get away with this—"

"Tell me, if a merchant was extorting money from an adventurer, and others were to find out about this, I wonder what will become of him?"

Trust was a merchant's greatest ally, so he would have already defeated your average adventurer. But sadly for him, his opponent was me.

Which is why I kindly provided him with the alternative of going bankrupt from lack of customers instead.

"Guh....." The merchant glared resentfully at me with bloodlust lingering in his eyes. However, he soon gave in. ".....I got it."

"Haha, please don't be so obvious when overcharging people in the future. From now on I'll be a regular of yours, so I'll be expecting some reasonable deals from you."

"I'd very much like to refuse your offer, but I suppose money holds no sin, no matter where it's from. I'll look forward to your business."

I guess he was the type of villain who knew when to call it quits. My Balloon skins were then purchased at a price slightly below market value. “Haha. Feel free to proclaim my greatness by spreading it to others. It'll serve as a good lesson for the merchant who tried fooling around with the Balloon industry.”

“Yeah, I got it. You, dear sir, are one bloody hell of a customer!”

And thus, I received enough money to pay for the clothes that Oyaji threw at me.

I stopped by at a restaurant for dinner. However, the food didn't have any taste. At first I thought that I was scammed by the restaurant, but it seemed there was an actual problem with my taste buds.

How about the Inn? Since I didn't have money, I had to sleep in the meadows! But that was no problem since I wouldn't feel any pain even if a Balloon attacked me all night long.

The next morning, there was also this bird-like creature which joined in along with the Balloons. So I pounded on it to relieve my stress.

And I got myself some morning pennies!

A person will learn how to treasure money once they have struggled greatly to acquire some.

First, I looted some tradable goods from the Balloons.

Then, I saw some herbs clustered together in the meadows.

I remembered that the Pharmacy in town sells medical herbs, so these should add up to quite a sum.

While I was clearing away the surrounding weeds, the shield reacted. I slowly let the shield absorb them.

The requirement of Leaf Shield had been unsealed. Come to think of it, I totally forgot about the Weapon Book.

I went ahead and checked the shields that were lit up.

Small Shield

True power unsealed! Increases Defensive Power by 3+!

Orange Small Shield

True power sealed.....Equipment bonus: 2+ Defensive Power.

Yellow Small Shield

True power sealed..... Equipment bonus: 2+ Defensive Power.

Leaf Shield

True power sealed.....Equipment bonus: Collection skill 1+.

I opened the Help menu for more details.

「Weapon Transformation and seals on their True power」

Weapon transformation refers to: the instance where the legendary weapon takes on a different shape.

In order to perform weapon transformation, the owner must place their hand on the weapon and silently conjure the desired weapon's name.

True power unsealing refers to: the instance where the user receives permanent stats and abilities from the transformed weapon.

「Equipment Bonus」

Equipment bonus refers to: the abilities that will be given to the user if they equip this certain weapon.

For example, when equipped a weapon with 'Erst Bash' the user will be able to use the skill 'Erst Bash'.

If 3+ Attack Force is the bonus when equipping that weapon, the user will be granted 3+ attack power.

I see, so by unsealing their true power I'll permanently receive the bonus even without equipping that particular weapon.

Perhaps in the long run, it would be wiser to gather materials along the way instead of just blindly massacring enemies.

Just how much more game-like will this world get?

After contemplating matters, I became interested in the equipment

bonus of Leaf Shield.

Collection skill 1+

This skill will most likely be giving me some sort of bonus when I gather herbs.

Right now I have no money.

With all things considered, this seems like an easy, high paying job.

I equipped the Leaf Shield without a shred of hesitation.

Shun..... a sound like something cutting through air was made, and my shield transformed into lush green, earthy leaves.

.....There's no decrease in my Defensive Power. The Small Shield was too weak to begin with.

Now then, should I begin collecting these clustered medical herbs?

Puchi.

A nice sound was heard as I easily collected one of them.

Pa.....

The herb really did glow when I picked it up.

Collection skill 1+

Aero Herb : Normal Quality -> Great Medical Value

Its icon also shined and changed its form.

Heh.....a nice, brief description, this will be surprisingly useful.

Sunset came quickly as I wandered around the whole day, stuffing my bag with medical herbs.

By the way, I don't know if it was due to all the collecting or its short time requirement, but it seems the Leaf Shield's true power was successfully unsealed.

Other colored Small Shield Series were also unsealed that day.

I returned to the castle town, planning to sell the big bag of medicines

in my hand.

“Hou.....This is quite a collection here. Where did you get them?”

“From the meadow spreading outside the castle. You don’t know about these?”

“Fumu.....you do indeed have a lot of them..... but it seems the quality is a bit bad.....”

I then sold the herbs after some small talk. Today’s profits were 1 Silver Coin and 50 Copper Coins.

A considerable amount compared to my previous days: a new record.

On a side note, there was this one fellow that came over to me while I was eating, saying that he wanted to be my companion.

I was getting tired of these guys with their nefarious faces.

.....Today’s food didn’t have any flavor either.

Since I couldn't taste anything, I just ordered enough food to fill my stomach.

“Shield Hero-sama, please let me be your companion.” She came over and spoke to me with an air of superiority.

Speaking as if you’re my boss, that meant nothing but trouble. And after taking another look, she was a goddamn woman like that slut from before.

“Well then, let’s confirm the terms of our contract, shall we?”

“Hai.”

Gah!!!!

Calm down, this is the part where I withdraw, just like how I practiced it beforehand.

"First of all, it'll be a full time job. I suppose you know what that means, right?"

“Nope.”

I want to kill her already!“We'll be distributing income obtained from adventuring. For example, let's say we get a fund of 100 Silver Coins, I'll be taking at least 40% of it, and the rest will be given out: depending on your efforts. Since you're the only other party member right now, the amount will be divided between you and me. But since we won't know anything until I see you in action, I'll be distributing the money at my own discretion for now.”

“What the heck, aren't you just trying to hog all the money with this roundabout talk?!”

“Didn't I say it depends on your efforts? If you work properly then you'll get paid appropriately.”

“Well then, I suppose that's all well and good. Let's go buy some equipment then.”

“..... Go buy it yourself; I have no obligation to buy YOUR equipment.”

“Tsk!”

Most of the time, these type of people are only after the chance of scamming free equipment off of me.

I can see through their facade. They'll just ditch me the moment I pay for their stuff.

What a dirty method. Just like what the bitch has done.

“Fine then. Hand over all your money.”

“Ah, why is there a balloon here?!”

Gabuu!“No! Stay away!”A Balloon was wreaking havoc in the tavern, but it's not any of my business. After pulling the Balloon off of her hilariously bitten nose, I put away my meal and exited the establishment.

In the end, there are no good people in this world.

All they think about is how to prey upon others.

Anyway, I continued earning money as my daily routine. And before I knew it, the second week had already begun.

Chapter 9: Something Called a Slave

One, two, three...

Two weeks and only 40 silver coins.

It seems that I have gathered a bit more than what I had thrown at that bastard spear hero. This was all pointless.

The places I could go with my attack power was extremely limited.

I did try going into the forest once since I wouldn't take any damage.

---Was that a Red Balloon?

When I struck it with my bare hands, I received a shock similar to hitting a can.

Even after 30 minutes of pounding, the monster wasn't getting any closer to dying.

I had enough and left the forest.

Basically, I couldn't fight any monsters beyond what was found in this grassland.

---By the way, after two weeks I was now at level 4.

Though I don't know how much those other bastard heroes have leveled.

The Red Balloon was still relentlessly biting my arm, trying to sever it.

Had it already been a week since I went into the forest?

Maybe I should give it another shot.

BANG!*

"Hah..."Nope. My attack power was still too low.

Since I couldn't deal any damage, I couldn't defeat any monsters.

And since I couldn't defeat anything, I received 0 experience points.

And with 0 experience points, I couldn't raise my attack power.

What a detestable loop.

---From the tavern, I was walking through a back alleyway which led into the meadows.

However, today was a tad different compared to all the other days up until now.

"Looks like you're facing quite a predicament."

"?"

A strange man wearing a tailcoat and a hat, which looks to be made of silk, stopped me.

This eccentric gentleman was wearing - how should I say this? - a pair of super obese sunglasses.

He really is a weird guy.

He left the impression that deviated away from the medieval theme.

It's best to simply ignore him.

"I don't have enough manpower." Bull's eye!

A direct hit right into my weak spot.

"I can't defeat any monsters." He was the type that continued making unwanted conversations. "If that's the case, then I have something just for you, kind sir."

"And here's where you're gonna advertise some companionship service to me, right?"

I don't have the time or luxury to babysit some loser who's only after my money. "Companion? No no, I'm not providing such an inconvenient substitute."

"Huh... Then what are you providing?"

That man swiftly came closer and asked. "Are you interested?"

"Don't get too close to me! It's disgusting."

"Fu fu fu, I like the look in your eyes. Good, I'll tell you!"

The weird gentleman teasingly shouted while waving his cane. "A slave, of course."

"A slave?"

"Yes, a slave."

'Slavery is a system where certain people are are forced into labor and treated as tradable property. Slaves can be held against their will; deprived of their basic freedoms such as leaving, demanding compensation, and refusing to work.'

This was written on a Wikipedia page, I think.

So slave trade exists in this world. Wow.

"Why would I want a slave?"

"In order to have a person who's both competent and loyal."

Twitch..."We cast a curse that will kill the slave should they ever betray you."

"Huh..."

Very interesting.

Die for disobedience. Someone who wouldn't foolishly think about taking advantage of me was exactly what I needed.

I had low attack power, so I wanted party members. But they were all disloyal money mongers.

Therefore, I couldn't afford to keep them around.

But slaves will never betray you. Because betrayal means death.

"What's your reply?"

"Let's have a look."

Smirking, the slave trader led the way.---We walked through the back alleys for a while.

It seems this nation has its own state of corruption.

Ducking into a dark, hidden side street, we came across what looked like

a circus tent.

"Right this way, Sir Hero."

"I'm coming."

The slave trader walked creepily. How should I describe his steps? They were too big to be called hops, at least.

Then, as expected, the slave trader led me inside.

"Now, I'm gonna say this just in case. But if you're thinking of conning me..."

"That must be the so-called 'Balloon Release' which has made you infamous around town. Planning to escape amidst the chaos, are you?"

Huh... They're calling it by such a nickname now.

Well, it was a convenient way to punish idiots. So its fame was only understandable.

"There was a customer who wanted to enslave a hero. So I intended to approach Sir Hero with that open possibility, but I've changed my mind. Oh yes."

"?"

"You have the qualities of a fine customer, both good and bad."

"What do you mean?"

"Who knows? What do you think?"

I don't get this slave trader. What does he expect from me?

GACHANG!

The heavy gate opened from inside the circus tent.

"Huh..."The interior was dimly lit with a faintly necrotic odor hanging in the air.

Because of the strong, beastly smell, I could easily tell that the environment wasn't clean.

Within the numerous cages, humanoid shadows wriggled and squirmed.

"Now, this one here is my recommendation." I approached closer to the cage and checked what was inside. "Grrrrrrr... GRAR!"

"It's not human."

Inside the cage partially resembled a human with fur, fangs, and claws. "This is a beastman. It's classified as a humanoid, more or less."

"Huh, a beastman."

A species which shows up fairly often in fantasies, mostly as enemy monsters though. "I'm a summoned hero, so I'm not well-informed regarding this world. Tell me more." Like those bastard heroes, I'm completely clueless when it comes to this parallel world.

But without a doubt, I've noticed people with dog or cat ears in town. And I do get a phantasmic feel when I look at them, since they are rare.

"The Melromarc kingdom has a human superiority custom, which makes it a difficult place for demi-humans and beastmen to reside in."

"Huh..."

While I certainly do see those species around, they're only venturing merchants or vagabond adventurers. In other words, they are segregated from society and can't hold a proper job. "So, what are demi-humans and beastmen anyway?"

"Demi-humans closely resemble humans, yet they have defining non-human traits and features. Beastmen are even less humanoid than demi-humans. Oh yes."

"I see, so they belong in the same category."

"Correct. And since these demi-humans are thought to be closely related to monsters, they have trouble living in this nation. Therefore, they are often treated as slaves."

Every world has its own darkness. And in this place which is fully aware of the non-human sentiment, there's no creature more convenient to use than them. "And you can punish a slave." The slave trader snapped his finger. A magic circle appeared on his arm while a similar circle

implanted into the werewolf's chest started to glow."GRAAARRR!
GHAAAAA!"The werewolf held its chest and twisted in pain.

When the slave trader snapped his fingers again, the magic circle disappeared.

"With one simple action, as you can see."

"A very convenient spell."

I whispered, looking at the werewolf who fell on its back."Can I use it too?"

"Certainly. You can change the trigger command, so it doesn't need to be with a snap of your fingers! The trigger can be implemented as a conditional clause as well."

"I see..."

It's got a pretty convenient design."However, a ceremony to input your body's innate code into the spell will be necessary."

"So it won't be confused by commands from other owners?"

"Your sharpness on this subject is greatly appreciated."

The slave trader smirked creepily.

What a weird guy.

"Anyways, how much does this cost?"

"As you know, this werewolf is from a capable species..."

When it comes to money, I'm sure there are many rumors about me."How does 15 gold coins sound?"

"I'm not sure about the market price... But you're stating a modest fee, I trust?"

1 gold coin is equivalent to 100 silver coins.

There's a reason the king delivered them with roses. Because of their high value, the gold coins are hard to exchange.

The shops in town mostly dealt with silver coins, since they were more

commonly used.

"But of course."...

The slave trader smiled as I stared back.

"You showed this to me knowing I couldn't afford it, didn't you?"

"Yes. You will become a prominent person one day, and it'll be inconvenient for us if you aren't aware of our high standards. We can't have some other incompetent trader sell you inferior goods."

He's a peculiar guy either way."This is the status of the slave, for your reference."The slave trader showed me a small crystal. An icon began to glow and words appeared.Battle slave Lvl. 75. Species: Werewolf.Other skills and techniques are displayed as well.

75... Almost 20 times my Lvl.

How easy will fighting be with someone this powerful under my command? It's likely stronger than any of the other heroes right now.

Though the pricing was iffy for its quality.

Because of its poor state of health, it was probably still a drawback even if it could follow my orders.

And does this price include all the other troublesome fees?

"It had previously been fighting at the Colosseum. I picked it up when it was discarded due to its broken arms and legs."

"Huh."

So this is an inferior model.

Weak despite its level.

"Now that you have seen our best product, what kind of slave is to your liking?"

"Something cheap and not crippled."

"Neither for fighting nor labor? So according to the rumors..."

"I didn't do it!"

"Hu hu hu, either way is fine with me. So what other qualities are you looking for?"

"Being domestic will be inconvenient. And of course a sex slave is out of the question."

"Huh... Seems like the rumors were indeed false."

"... I didn't do it."

Yeah, I can say it, since I didn't actually do it.

What I need now is simply someone who can defeat monsters for me, as long as they're usable.

"Gender?"

"Male would be preferable, but I won't stress over it."

"Huh..."

The slave trader scratched his cheek. "The quality won't be good enough to be deemed as a pet. Is that alright?"

"What do I care about looks?"

"Even though its level may be low?"

"If I want strength, I'll train it myself."

"... A humorous answer for someone who doesn't trust in people."

"A slave isn't human, is it? Training a slave is no different than practicing with this shield of mine. So long as it doesn't double-cross me, then I can train it."

"You've got me there."

'Pft pft.' The slave trader held back his laughter. "This way, please." We walked through the cage-filled tent for several minutes, passing the chaotic area into one which was less noisy.

I turned my gaze and saw both decrepit youths and the elderly with forlorn faces.

After walking a bit more, the slave trader stopped.

"These are the cheapest slaves which we can provide to Sir Hero." He said while pointing to three caged slaves.

The first one was a bunny-eared guy around the age of 20 with an arm bent at an odd angle.

The second was a bony girl around the age of 10 with circular dog-like ears and a strangely fat tail, shuddering and coughing in fear.

The third was a blind lizard man. He radiated a strangely evil aura, however, he looked much too human to be a lizard man.

"From the left, we have a rabbit species with a genetic disease, a raccoon species afflicted with panic and ailment, and a beastman lizard man. Ah, so the third is a beastman." All of them seem problematic."

"Only these fulfill your requested conditions. Anything lower than this, well frankly..."

The slave trader looked to the back. I did the same.

I could tell even from afar: the stench of death. That highly concentrated smell similar to a funeral. Something in there...

The necrotic odor was coming from there too.

I didn't want to look: it would be mentally scarring.

"What's the price, by the way?"

"From the left: 25, 30, and 40 silver coins."

"And their level?"

"5, 1, and 8."

Looking at the current standings, the beastman lizard man seemed to be the best. But the price and genetic disease, not to mention he was very thin.

Although the rabbit guy can't use one of his arms, the rest of his body should be fine. His expression was awfully grim... though it was the same for everyone else here.

"Speaking of which, they're very quiet."

"They'll be punished if they make noise."

"I see."

Either they were well trained, or the trader didn't show me the untamed ones.

The lizard man was probably useful in battle, but not for anything else.

"Why is this middle one so cheap?" Although she was skinny and scared, she was still a girl. Her face wasn't all that pretty, however.

A raccoon species, literally a raccoon dog.

But a girl closely resembling a human could be sold for other specialties.

"The raccoon species is somewhat inferior aesthetically. If it were the fox species, then it could be sold at a high price despite any problems."

"I see..."

Too inferior to be a pet then." Her face is below standards and she panics during the night, so we're having difficulties with her."

"So this is one of your goods in stock?"

"Wow, right into the heart of the matter."

Not suited for labor compared to the other two. Her level was the lowest as well.

It's hard to decide which of these three is the best.

My eyes met with hers.



Then. I noticed my emotions suddenly swelling deep inside.

Yes. This one is a girl, the same sex as that bitch.

Looking at its frightened eyes, I can feel the intense desire to dominate her.

It's good to imagine her as if I enslaved that woman. So even if I die, my soul also won't bear as much of a grudge that way.

"Then I'll buy that slave in the middle."

"Your immensely wicked smirk is very gratifying to see."

The slave holder took out the key, let the raccoon girl out of the cage, and chained her to a leash. "Hee!?! "Looking at the fearful girl, I felt extremely satisfied.

What a nice feeling to imagine that woman making this face.

Dragging the girl along, the slave trader returned and called someone from inside the semi-opened circus tent to retrieve a vase.

Then, he poured some ink into a small saucer and directed it towards me.

"Mr Hero, please share some of your blood. Then the ritual process will be complete, and this slave shall become yours."

"I see."

I used a knife to slightly cut open a finger. If someone else tried to stab me, the shield would respond. But it was unresponsive if I ever harmed myself.

Furthermore, it won't activate outside of battle.

I waited for blood to ooze out, then dripped several drops into the saucer.

The slave trader used a brush to soak up the ink, then he tore the slave's clothes down to her waist and painted the stigma on her body.

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!" The slave stigma started to glow, and an icon appeared in my status window. Obtained a slave. A message with terms of service agreement appeared.

Numerous terms and conditions are listed.

I skimmed through it and set the punishment for betrayal to extreme pain.

I checked the companion icon next to the slave entry.

Since her name was unknown, 'Slave A' was written in there.

It seemed like I can change the specifications however I wanted. I'll read it closely later.

"Now this slave is yours, Sir Elderly Hero. Please complete your purchase."

"Yeah."

I handed over 31 silver coins. "There's 1 extra."

"It's for the ceremony service. You were going to demand it anyways, weren't you?"

"... You know me quite well."

If I pay the service in advance, he can't complain about it later either.

Though if he planned to demand more, what should I do?

"Well, it's fine. Since we cleared out our inventory too."

"How much were you going to charge for the ceremony, by the way?"

"Haha, our services were included in the 30 silver coins."

"Is that so, who knew?"

The slave trader laughed, so I chuckled back. "You really are too sharp! I'm shocked."

"Feel free to say whatever you want about me."

"We're looking forward to your next visit."

"I'm sure."

---I commanded the slave to follow and left the circus tent.

The slave trailed behind me with a dark expression.

"Tell me your name."

"...*Cough*..."

She turned her face away, refusing to answer.

But that reaction was foolish.

The slave disobeyed, so the punishment was activated.

"A, UGHHHHHH!"The slave held her chest in pain."Now then, say your name."

"Raphtalia...*Cough* cough!"

"Raphtalia? Okay, let's go."

After announcing her name, the pain stopped and Raphtalia was able to breath again.

Holding her hand, I continued to walk through the back alley.

"..."Raphtalia looked up to me, at the hand which held hers, and walked along as well.

Chapter 10: Kid's Lunch

“You....”

Oyaji was completely dumbstruck when I brought Raphtalia along with me to the Weapon Shop.

Yep, in order for her to fight efficiently... she needed more offensive power.

So it would be absurd not to buy her a weapon.

“Give me a weapon within the range of 6 silver coins that this girlie can use.”

“... Hah.”

The Weapon Shop's Oyaji lets out a deep sigh. “Is this country really that corrupted, or did you become completely rotten to the bone... but whatever, I'm getting 6 silver coins out of this.”

“Do you still have any left, things like ordinary clothing or a cape?”

“... It's fine. I'll add those in as a freebie.”

Oyaji muttered with a detested tone while bringing out several knives. “These fall under the 6 silver coins and below category.” From left to right, we have knives made from: Copper, Bronze, and Iron.

They all have the same attack range but different prices.

I made Raphtalia hold each of the knives a few times before choosing the one which she was most comfortable with.

“This one's good.” Raphtalia's face paled as she looked at me and Oyaji with the knife in her hands. “Here, your free clothes and mantle.” Oyaji handed them over with a brusque shove and guided us to the changing room.

I seized Raphtalia's knife and then instructed her to wear the donated clothing.

Raphtalia tottered into the changing room while coughing; she then got

changed.

“She still looks rather messy... let’s give her a bath later on.” There was a river flowing near the meadow.

In this country, the river splits into various branches as it flows downstream. My camping grounds have recently been relocated in that area.

It's a great spot since I can always fish for food.

Some of the fishes that I caught were absorbed, unsealing the effects of the ‘Fish Shield’ and acquiring Angling Techniques 1 as a result.

Raphtalia timidly tottered over to me after she finished changing.

It seemed she understood that disobeying will bring about pain.

I squatted down to Raphtalia’s eye level and spoke to her.

“Now then, Raphtalia, this here is your weapon. From now on, you and I will be fighting monsters together. You get what I’m saying?”

“...”

Raphtalia nodded at my words with frightened eyes.

Good, because it'll be painful if she didn't understand.

“Now then, with that knife in your hand——” I took out the Orange Balloon that was hidden within my cloak and placed it in front of Raphtalia.

“Hack and slash this thing.”

“Hii!?”

When I showed her the hidden demon, Raphtalia screamed in shock and dropped her weapon. “Eh... N-...No.”

“That’s an order. Do it.”

“I-, I can't.”

Raphtalia shook her head vigorously. However, she was then struck with a surge of pain due to her disobedience from the slave spell. “Guh...”

"Come now, it'll only continue hurting if you don't stab this thing."

"Koho...koho!"

Raphtalia's face contorted in pain as she firmly gripped her weapon. "You..." Oyaji was rendered speechless as he witnessed our little theatrics.

Raphtalia firmly steeled her will to kill as I shoved against the Orange Balloon that was biting on my arm.

Buni...

"That's weak! Put in some more effort!"

"..!? Ei!"

Startled, Raphtalia recoiled back for a moment. Then immediately using the momentum, she once again charged at the Balloon with great force.

POP!*

The Balloon burst with a loud noise.

EXP 1

For the first time, a text box popped up and indicated that my ally had defeated an enemy.

Once again, my head was filled with bloodlust.

That bitch. She never had any intention of staying with me or teaching me how the system works.

"Good, you did well." I patted Raphtalia.

She then looked up at me with a mystified expression.

"Alright, the next one will be this." The strongest balloon that I've encountered was still attached to me, trying to devour me with its bites. I held out the munching Red Balloon just like I had done with the last one.

The Red Balloon didn't eat or drink anything for about a week, so it should have been weakened considerably.

But even so, this thing could probably endure an attack from a sick,

newbie girl.

Steadily, Raphtalia nodded her head and pierced the Balloon's eye more firmly than before.

POP!EXP 1

Companion EXP 6

It was then that the icon caught my attention. "Good, from now on, just keep fighting like this; let's go."

"... Koho"

Following my orders, Raphtalia sheathed her weapon around her waist and obediently followed me. "Hah, hey buddy. I have something to say to you."

"And that is?"

Oyaji grumbled while scowling at me. "DON'T YOU, EVER, DIE, DISHONORABLY, you hear?"

"I'll take those kind words to heart."

I returned his sarcasm with one of my own.

On the way towards the meadows, I noticed some stores and street stalls along the side road which continue stretching into the horizon.

While Raphtalia held my hand and walked beside me, she glanced around the town restlessly.

The food stalls were releasing a delectable aroma.

Remaining money after my purchases: 3 silver coins... Speaking of which, my belly was a bit empty.

Gu...

Such a sound was heard from Raphtalia's direction.

She averted her gaze with an:

"Ah!" While trying to deny what just happened...

I wondered why she was holding back.

Right now, if Raphtalia doesn't have the strength to fight enemies, then I won't be getting income anytime soon either.

A dull knife is useless. She won't be able to muster any strength when she's hungry.

I went inside a restaurant which seemed affordable enough for our budget.

"Wel-...come!" Our server guided us to a table with a displeased look, due to our shabby appearance.

Along the way, Raphtalia looked over at a parent/child pair who were sitting elsewhere.

With a finger to her mouth, Raphtalia seemed quite envious of the child digging into that kiddie lunch.

I guess she wanted to eat that.

We sat down and quickly ordered before our server left.

"Etto, I'll have the cheapest meal on the menu, while this little lady will get whatever that kid over there is eating."

"!?"

Raphtalia stared at me with clear astonishment. Was it so surprising for me to order that lunch for her?"Understood. That comes to a total of 9 copper coins."

"Here."

Handing over a silver coin, our server then gave me back the difference.

I looked around the store absentmindedly while waiting for our lunch to be served.

...People around us began to gossip after noticing my presence.

Yep, it's totally a parallel world in here.

"Wh-,y?"

"Hm?"

I lowered my gaze towards Raphtalia after hearing her voice.

She was staring up at me with a face full of wonder.

“You looked hungry for that meal, no? Or did you want to order something else?” Raphtalia shook her head so fast that a bustling sound can be heard from the movement.

This is quite a delicate topic for her.

“Wh-, why, would you let me eat that lunch?”

“Like I told you, I ordered it since you seemed to want it.”

“But...”

Why was she being so persistent on this subject? “Anyways, eat some food and get some nutrition. You’ll die if you’re too skinny, you know.” Well, since I just bought my new slave, I can’t have her dying on me before she paid me back with interest. “Sorry for the wait.” Our meals have finally arrived.

That’s the lunch which I ordered for Raphtalia? It’s a bacon meal set (?) about as big as a person’s arm.

Mhm. The presentation is in pretty good taste at least.

“...” Raphtalia froze on the spot while having thoughts like “is this kid’s meal really meant for me?” “You don’t want to eat?”

“... Is this really alright?”

“Hah... it’s fine, so eat up.”

Raphtalia timidly began eating...

Raphtalia’s face contorted a bit upon hearing my instructions.

“Okay.” Raphtalia timidly began eating her kid's lunch with her bare hands.

Well, it couldn’t be helped since she grew up in a harsh environment.

It somehow seemed that the amount of gossip floating around had increased once more. Though it's not a matter worth concerning myself

with.

Raphtalia adoringly held the flag which had stood at the chicken rice-like summit of her meal.

Munch Munch Munch

Raphtalia then began savoring each and every morsel of her lunch.

So I'll be eating my meals with this slave from now on... just a solitary thought which crossed my mind.



Chapter 11: Slave's Accomplishments

After our lunch inside the restaurant, we headed off into the meadow.

Raphtalia was humming cheerfully by the way.

However, upon seeing the meadow, she began to tremble with fear lingering in her eyes.

"It may be scary but I will definitely protect you from the monsters." She tilted her head upon hearing my words. "C'mon, these small fries can only make me itchy when they bite, I don't even feel any pain." Raphtalia was dumbfounded when I showed her the gallery of Balloons hidden under my mantle. "That's not, painful?"

"Nope."

"Then..."

"I'll tank."

"Yes... Koho..."

I was a bit concerned over her coughing, but she seemed to be fine.

We picked up medicinal herbs along the way while heading towards the forest.

Oh, here they come again.

Three Red Balloons came flying out from a bush inside the forest.

I sacrificed myself to make sure that none of them bit Raphtalia.

"Alright, just do it like we had done it a while ago."

"... Hai!"

A motivated Raphtalia vigorously charged and backstabbed the Red Balloons.

POP!* POP!* POP!*

With this, Raphtalia raised her Level to 2.

The requirement for Red Small Shield has been unsealed. Red Small

Shield True power sealed Equipment Bonus: 4 Defensive Power I immediately changed my shield.

Raphtalia's eyes popped out when she saw my shield transform.

"Goshujin-sama... just who are you?" She didn't seem to know that I was the one and only Shield Hero. Well up until now, she was nothing but a demi-human slave after all. "I'm a Hero. The Hero of the Shield."

"The legendary hero?"

"So you know?"

Raphtalia timidly nodded. "That's right, I'm a summoned Hero. There are 3 more people like me... but I'm the weakest of them all!" I began biting my fingernails, trying to contain this sudden outburst of rage.

My head was filled with nothing but bloodlust when the face of that fucker popped up.

Raphtalia was frightened by my eyes, instinctively knowing that she shouldn't dig any deeper into this.

"For the time being, today's task will be hunting monsters in this forest. I'll seize them and you'll pierce them."

"Hai..."

She had become somewhat accustomed to this as Raphtalia nodded obediently.

And then, whenever we encountered enemies inside the forest, we'd always use the common tactic where I aggro'ed and disabled them while Raphtalia went in for the kill.

Midway through, we encountered an enemy other than Balloons for the first time.

Roux Mush

A white, moving mushroom. It had sharp slanted eyes, and was roughly the size of a human head.

I tested my attacks on the Roux Mush and it gave off a response

identical to a Red Balloon's.

Raphtalia then knocked this one down too.

There were Roux Mush of other colors such as Blue Mushes and Green Mushes Requirement for Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Blue Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Green Mush Shield has been unsealed.

Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Plant Identification 1

Blue Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Simple Compounding Recipes
1

Green Mush Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Apprentice's Compounding
There were no status bonus; all of them gave level-based skill bonuses.

Compounding... Mass producing medicine will be very valuable.

By the end of the day, Raphtalia's Level increased by three, so in total she was now at Level 5.

We walked through the meadow and camped around the riverbed in the evening.

"Koho..."Raphtalia arrived at my side without voicing any complaints.

I suppose it would do her some good if she learned to appreciate money by experiencing the difficulty of making some.

After we lit a campfire with some firewood by the river, I took out a towel from inside my bag and gave it to Raphtalia.

"Go wash yourself for now. When you're done, come back here and warm your cold body with the fire."

'... Hai."

Raphtalia removed her clothes and dove into the river, where she then

began cleansing herself.

During that time I began fishing in order to prepare our dinner.

I properly kept an eye out for Raphtalia while doing so.

There should only be weak Balloons lurking around this area, but it would be wise to never let my guard down.

I took a look over today's harvest.

An abundant amount of 'Meadow's Wild Medical Herb'.

A splendid amount of 'Medical Herbs that don't usually grow in the Meadow'.

A reasonable amount of 'Balloon's Balloon'.

A reasonable amount of 'Assorted Mush'.

Number of shields unsealed: 4 types.

Mhm. An obvious difference in efficiency.

Buying a slave was the right choice.

That's right. I should try to challenge compounding.

I called forth some simple recipes.

A window popped up, showing combination formulas that can be made with the medical herbs which I collected.

As for equipment... I suppose I can only make a limited amount using the rocks and pebbles on the riverside. So let's try the recipes that can be made from a mortar.

However, the simple recipes didn't have any record of mixing techniques within it.

Gori gori gori*...

I tried imitating how the pharmacy owner mixed his medicine in order to witness the results.

Heal Pill has been made!

Heal Pill Quality: Bad -> A Bit Bad. A pill that hastens a wound's recovery, needs to be applied on the wound to receive effects.

This type of Icon floated in front of my eyes.

Nice, it was a success.

The shield was reacting, but I decided not to let the shield absorb the medicine for now.

Alright, time to challenge an unfamiliar recipe.

Sometimes the compounding failed and the stuff turned into a jet black waste. This was more fun than I expected.

Pachi pachi pachi*...

The sound of fire crackling could be heard.

Raphtalia was done bathing and had gone to warm herself up by the campfire.

"Are you warm yet?"

"Yes. Koho..."

This looked very similar to a cold. The slave dealer did say that she was plagued with an illness.

Coincidentally... there was a cold medicine amongst the experimental remedies.

Regular Medicine Quality: Somewhat acceptable. This medicine is effective against a mild cold."Hey, drink this."I was a bit anxious, but this was better than nothing."... So bitter, dislike it... guh..."Raphtalia tried to say something selfish but held her chest in pain instead."Here."

"Y-, Yes."

Raphtalia trembled as she swallowed the medicine that I passed to her."Haa... Haa..."

"There there, good girl."

Raphtalia once again gave me a perplexed stare when I patted her head.

Ah, these tanuki ears sure were fluffy.

She hugged her tail while blushing, refusing to let me feel it. Did she think that I would try touching her tail when I looked at it?

"Here, this is your dinner." I handed a grilled fish over to Raphtalia, and then returned to compounding medicine.

I've always loved working on these kinds of delicate projects.

The sun had already set but I kept on compounding, using the campfire for light.

Fumu... This was fun in a lot of ways.

Having already finished eating her fish, Raphtalia drowsily stared at the campfire while letting out some subtle snoring sounds.

"Go to sleep." Upon hearing my order, Raphtalia repeatedly shook her head.

Was she being shy? She was refusing to sleep like a spoiled child... Well, I guess she was one.

Anyways it seemed like she would fall asleep eventually.

Come to think of it, was the medicine effective? I hadn't heard her cough since then.

Afterwards, I examined the remedies which were made from my experiments, and most of them had simple effects.

Those deemed inferior were absorbed into the shield.

Requirement for Petit Medicine Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Petit Poison Shield has been unsealed.

Petit Medicine Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Raises Medicine's Effects.

Petit Poison Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Poison Resistance (Small)

Both of them seemed to be related to the Leaf Shield and Mush Shield.

Though I had no idea how 'Raises Medicine's Effects' works.

Does it increase the effect of the medicines that I use on myself, or the effect of the medicines which I create?

Well, whatever.

There was no mistake that today's harvest was a good one.

"No... help me..."Raphtalia let out a strange voice.

The sleeping Raphtalia seemed to be having a nightmare.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"I felt like my ears went deaf for a moment there.

This sucked. Balloons were coming our way; they probably got attracted by her screaming.

I quickly went over to Raphtalia and covered her mouth.

"H—————!"However, a loud noise could still be heard, I then recalled the slave dealer's concern about this dilemma.

This certainly was problematic.

"Calm down, just settle down already."I held the sobbing Raphtalia in my hands and cradled her."Noo...a-san...o-san."Was she calling for her parents? Raphtalia could do nothing but cry and stretch out her hand, begging for help."It's fine... it's alright, you're safe now."I patted her head and continued cradling her."Don't cry. Be strong."

"Huhu..."

I continued to hug the weeping Raphtalia."Grah!"A Balloon that was attracted by her cries appeared."Fu..."Really, even at a time like this.

I held Raphtalia close to me and charged at the Balloon.

"Uwoooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

Chun... Chun!*

"Is it morning?"What a terrible night.

By the time I finished with the horde of Balloons that appeared,

Raphtalia's cries had also begun to quiet down. But when I tried to separate myself from her, if even a little, she would start wailing out loud again.

Then the Balloons would appear once more.

Which is why I was unable to get a wink of sleep.

"Nn..."

"You awake?"

"Hiii!?"

Raphtalia widely opened her eyes in surprise since I was holding her up in front of me. "Ha... I'm tired." There was still some time before the town's gate opened. So I planned on taking a quick nap for now.

Today, I would be selling the medicine which I had made yesterday; this should yield more profit than the raw medical herbs.

If the herbs' value were higher than the medicine's, then there would be no point in people making them.

"I'll be sleeping for little while. As for breakfast... would the leftover fish from yesterday suit your taste?" Raphtalia timidly nodded. "Then good night. Call me if any monsters appear." It was painful just to keep my eyes open, so I was quickly lulled into a slumber full of dreams.

I still didn't know the reason behind Raphtalia's panic attacks. And I wasn't too interested in hearing about it either.

It's most likely due to the shock of being sold by her parents, or maybe from being kidnapped.

Even if it was the latter, I had no obligation to return her. This gentleman here had paid big bucks for this slave after all.

It was fine if she held a grudge over this. I needed to do all I could in order to survive.

I have to find a way to return to my old world, that's all there is to it.

Chapter 12: What's Yours is Mine

Around high noon, I opened my eyes and Raphtalia was there waiting for me.

“Are we going to the castle town? Koho”

“Ha ha.”

She's coughing once again.

I silently handed her the 'regular medicine' and Raphtalia took it while frowning.

After that it was time to drop by the pharmacy to do some business.

“Fumu... the quality of these isn't bad. Yuusha-sama, are you familiar with pharmacology?” Since I was no longer a stranger to the store, I was able to catch glimpses on some of the medicine's production. “No, it was my first time making some yesterday. Compared to selling raw medical herbs, which one is more profitable?”

“That's a difficult question. Although medical herbs are cheaper to use, medicines can usually save lives.”

Although the pharmacist frowned when he saw Raphtalia, I knew from observation that he didn't use cheap lies and was speaking honestly. “The price of medicine has skyrocketed recently due to the prophecy, so demand for them are very high right now.”

“Fumu...”

Either risk failing to craft them for better sales, or selling raw materials to their production line directly; it's debatable on which of the two will yield more gold.

However, everything has its own silver lining. There's no disadvantage in continuing to collect more.

“Hey, does this mean you're not coming anymore?”

“... Didn't I say something along the lines of: 'For two weeks, I'll be selling medical herbs around town'?”

The pharmacist understood my answer and looked at me with an odd expression before laughing.

This time around he gave me some hand-me-down equipment and taught me how to use them, taking my medical herbs as his payment while still buying the medicine off me.

I received various tools besides the mortar.

Laboratory equipment like: measuring device, flask, and distiller.

These should last me for quite a while before I have to get some new ones.

“Since these used goods were only collecting dust in the warehouse, you won’t know when they might break.”

“I suppose it’s a good enough set for beginners.”

Anyways, with this I'll be able to try out more formulas.

I just have to dispose of the Balloon skins now.

While on my way to the Balloon buyer, I caught sight of some children from my peripheral vision.

It seemed those Balloon skins that the merchant bought were used as material to make actual, marketable balloons. The children were playing around with one of those as if it was a ball.

Raphtalia was looking at those kids with envy.

“Naa, what’s that?”

“Yes?”

I pointed at the ball those children were playing with and asked. “Well, that's one of the practical applications of what we do with the Balloon skins.”

“I see, then can you make another using the goods we're about to sell?”

“Eh, well... if you really want one.”

We headed over to the buyer to sell our goods and left with money in

hand. He then let me have one of the balls that was made from a Balloon skin. “Here.”

I threw the ball and Raphtalia caught it.



With wide eyes, Raphtalia alternated between the ball and my face several times.

“What? You don’t want it?”

“M-, Mhm.”

Raphtalia laughed merrily, waving her head around.

She laughed for the first time.

“Once we’re done with today’s work, you can go play around with it.”

“Yay!”

She was somehow very energetic. This is good progress.

Because an energetic Raphtalia will be more beneficial for me.

After that we returned to the forest, exterminating monsters and collecting herbs just like yesterday.

We were able to go in deeper thanks to my enhanced defense.

... Apparently there is a village if we continued to advance into the forest. However, I refused to follow that bitch’s advice.

It was profitable and we discovered various things. It was likely due to the fact that we were approaching the foot of the mountain range.

Oh? We've found a new enemy.

An egg-like creature.

This thing looked like it belonged to a branch of the Balloon family.

“We’re fighting this monster for the first time. I'll be going in first. Once I give you the signal, rush in for the kill.”

“Un!”

That’s a good answer.

I charged at the monster; it also noticed me and bared its fangs my way.

Gan!*

It really did no damage. There wasn't any pain or so much as an itch.

Rapharia’s blade flew through the air and easily impaled it.

“Taha!” We cleared monsters more vigorously compared to yesterday.

An Eggy.

Another one of the earlier enemies.

Followed by a 'Parin*' sound, Eggy crumbled into pieces with egg yolk splattering everywhere when it died.

“B-ue, this is nasty!” Couldn't the shell be sold? This was such a waste.

It smells rotten so I guess it's inedible.

I absorbed the shell pieces into the shield.

Since she got used to it, Raphtalia was able to pierce the Eggy in an experienced manner.

Requirement for Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Culinary 1

Another level based skill bonus.

This time was cooking, huh?

We continued hunting the different color variations of this monster.

Requirement for Blue Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Requirement for Sky Egg Shield has been unsealed.

Blue Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Judgement 1

Sky Egg Shield

True power sealed Equipment bonus: Beginner Cooking Recipes

Weird, it has only been skill bonuses lately.

Does it depend on which type of enemy we defeat?

Oh well, in the meantime I'll just utilize my herb collecting skills more.

The day seemed a little bit longer while up in the mountain.

Still, I was a bit concerned over Raphtalia's equipment.

Here are today's results:

Me: Level 8

Raphtalia: Level 7

Damn. She almost caught up to me already.

This was undoubtedly due to Raphtalia dealing the finishing blows.

Gu*...

“My stomach's empty...”Raphtalia made a troubled expression as she said this to me. “I guess you’re right, let’s head back for our meal.” We ended our exploration and headed back to town.

After returning, I sold the Eggy Shells that looked unusable for compounding.

We made 9 silver today, including what we sold this morning.

It was doubtful that we could make much from these shells. However, they were bought from me for an unexpectedly high price.

The medicine and herbs also fetched a good price, making me reconsider what we should eat today.

Well, considering that Raphtalia had been drooling all over the food stalls for awhile now...

I had no intention of pampering her, but she should be rewarded for her good work. So, why not?

“Let’s drop by, just for today.”

“Eh? Is it okay?”

“You wanted to eat here, right?”

Raphtalia nodded fiercely at my question.

She had become quite honest.

“Keho...”She’s coughing once again.

I silently handed her a 'regular medicine', then I ordered what looked like hardened mashed potatoes on a skewer from one of the stalls.

“Here, you worked hard today.”After swallowing the medicine,

Raphtalia happily accepted the skewer I held out and stuffed her face with it.

“Thank you!”

“N-, no prob...”

... I'm glad that she had become so energetic.

I looked around for a cheap Inn while eating and walking.

“Do you want to stay here tonight?”

“Aaah.”

Raphtalia crying all night long was troublesome enough already, please at least spare me the fights with the Balloons.

We went into the Inn.

Upon entering, the Innkeeper blatantly scowled,; however, he instantly switched on his business smile.

“There's a chance my companion here will be crying at night, is that alright?”I dangled the Balloon concealed under my cloak threateningly in front of the other party as I asked. “Tha-, that's a bit——”

“I can count on you, right? We'll be keeping the noise at a reasonable level.”

“Y-, yes.”

Ever since coming to this world, I had learned that blackmailing was an important part of business.

This whole damn country had made me into a target of ridicule; the damn king wouldn't be able to fully comprehend the damage his actions caused me.

No, even if he did, he would probably say something like 'it couldn't be helped'.

Seriously, all these parallel world elitists.

I paid the fee and then unloaded our luggage inside the room we rented.

Raphtalia's eyes sparkled while looking at the ball.

"Come back before nightfall. Also, stay as close to the Inn as possible."

"Yaaay!"

Good grief, she really did act like a child her age.

Demi-humans seemed to be the object of contempt, but there shouldn't be any problems if she was seen and treated like an adventurer.

Looking out of the window, I saw Raphtalia playing with her ball. I then did research on more methods of compounding.

Approximately... 20 minutes had passed since then.

That was when I heard a loud, childish scream.

"Why is a Demi-human playing in our turf!" What was that? I peered out of the window.

No matter how I look at it, all I saw was some shitty bullies pointing at Raphtalia and harassing her.

Good grief, no matter where you go there will always be these type of kids lurking around the place.

"This brat. You have a nice toy, so hand it over."

"Eh-, a-, that's..."

Raphtalia seemed to be aware of the demi-human's low standing in society. So their reaction wasn't strange to her either.

Ha...

I went out of the room and headed downstairs.

"I told you to hand it over."

"N-, no..."

These fucking punks were intending to use violence as they encircled the frail and defiant Raphtalia. "Hold it right there, you little shits."

"What do you want, old geezer."

Guh, old geezer he says!

Whatever, I'm only 20 this year and I don't care about this world's standards for age.

I don't even care if I'm an old geezer to them.

"What reason do you have for demanding other people's belongings?"

"Hah? That isn't your ball, is it?"

"It's mine. I'm lending it to this girl. If you stole it from her then that means you stole it from me."

"Just what are you saying, damn geezer."

Sigh... It seemed they couldn't even understand that much with all the blood rushing into their brains.

Even if he was a kid, I never intended to forgive him. Those who steal from people deserved to be punished.

"I see I see, then I'll give you an EVEN BIGGER BALL." Noticing my demeanor, Raphtalia squeezed out her voice, telling the startled children. "Run away!" However, the eyes of those little shits underestimated me.

I silently snickered deep down while I took out the Balloon that was biting my arm.

GABU!*

"MY ASSSSSSSSSS!" The Balloon immediately paid the brat a visit with a bite on his ass. "So kids, that one was a REAL ball, you guys want some too?"

"Ouuchhhhh!"

"That was not a joke. Dumbasses!"

"Die! Retard!"

"I'll kick your ass too, you little shit!"

I turned back towards the Inn with the brats cursing me as they ran

away. “Er, umm...” Raphtalia grabbed my mantle. “Oi, there’s a Balloon still living in there.” The frightened Raphtalia quickly flinched her hand away, her timid look making me laugh. “Arigatou.” What was she talking about? “Oh...” While stroking Raphtalia's head, we both returned to the Inn.

Chapter 13: Remedy

The sun had set and the night grew cold; it was about time for Raphtalia's stomach to grumble. Leaving the luggage behind at the inn, we went to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

We had some snacks just awhile ago.

Raphtalia got them from an unfamiliar shop, though I had no idea what was so good about them.

Good grief, I needed a way to fatten up my wallet. I guess camping out will be our plan from now on.

So I'll let you eat your fill for now!

"Let's see, Delia-set for two people and a Neapolitan please." After giving the order to our server, our dinner soon arrived. "Let's dig in."

"Un."

Raphtalia began eating by stuffing food into her mouth with her bare hands again.

Judging from her growth, I would say that she was roughly around 10. She had been eyeing my plate, so I went ahead and ordered extra.

"Eat up while you can since we'll be camping out from tomorrow onward."

"Ha-gu-i!"

Nodding and eating at the same time is bad table manners. But since she's eating so gratefully, I'll excuse her behavior this time.

After that, we returned to our room where I took note of Raphtalia's appearance yet again.

"Your hair is a mess, let's trim it a bit."

"... Hai."

I patted Raphtalia head with a 'pon*' since she was making an uneasy face. "It'll be fine. I'm not going to give you a weird haircut." Besides, it was

her current appearance that looked weird.

Using a knife, I began trimming off the excessive hair with a 'gushi*'.

I trimmed her hair to about shoulder length before I was done.

"Alright, this much should be good, right." Compared to her old hairstyle, this one was at least more presentable.

With this, she would look quite nice after dressing up.

Raphtalia began twirling around, her face swelling with confidence.

I wonder what she's so happy about.

The shield reacted when I was cleaning up the leftover hair.

...

I never would have imagined that.

Suuu*...

I opened my status to confirm. Though it appeared that my Lvl and 'Tree' were still insufficient.

"Hm?" Crap, she turned around. "Now then, you should hurry up and go to bed."

"Un!"

She was being strangely honest, unlike yesterday.

Well, that's good.

She might weep again, so I busied myself by compounding inside the room.

...

Nutritional Supplement was created.

Nutritional Supplement Quality Bad -> A Bit Bad. A medicine that relieves fatigue, it is also effective as a method of rapidly recovering from malnourishment.

Recovery Potion was created.

Recovery Potion Quality A Bit Bad -> Normal. A medicine that treats certain illnesses. It will be less effective against more severe diseases.

Fumu... there are various things that can be made using the mountain and forest herbs.

Because of this, I can trade these at the pharmacy for a splendid sum of money.

It was just that the materials were consumed at a fearsome rate that was borderline hazardous.

Altogether, I made 6 Nutritional Supplements and a few other remedies.

However, it was still very difficult to make high quality medicines; I had no chance of winning against a specialist.

Since I'm the Shield Hero and not a Pharmacist.

... Let's absorb some of them into the Shield then.

The requirement for Calorie Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Energy Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Energetic Shield had been unsealed.

Calorie Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Stamina Boost (Small) Energy Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: SP Boost (Small) Energetic Shield

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Stamina Consumption Decrease (Small) For the time being, all of them gave status related bonuses.

Just what is 'stamina' anyways? Is it like physical fitness?

It seems that I'll need to experience this myself.

Next we had the medical herbs, but... I wonder if it'll become more difficult if I continue to recklessly learn more crafting skills.

I want more combat bonuses.

Or maybe it's because I can't meet the unsealing requirement with only the herbs I had collected.

Well, that's fine.

"Nn~..." While stretching and preparing to go to sleep, I spotted Raphtalia squeezing her eyes tight. Looks like she wasn't able to get a good night's sleep; that was a sign she was about to weep. "Kya—" I covered her mouth right before she screamed, then I held her in my arms while gently patting her with a 'pon pon*'.

Phew, I was somehow able to calm her down tonight.

But she would cry again if I tried to let go of her now.

Guess it can't be helped. Let's sleep together then.

... It felt kind of chilly.

Feeling the sunlight shining on my face, I opened my eyes.

Raphtalia, who was supposed to be sleeping next to me, was trembling in a corner of the room.

"What's wrong?"

"Gomennasai gomennasai, gomennasai gomennasai!"

I furrowed my eyebrows at Raphtalia who was desperately muttering apologies; I could roughly guess the reason due to this damp chilliness which was coming from underneath me. I see... Raphtalia wet the bed.

Haa...

She thought I would be angry.

I had never heard of a 10 year old wetting the bed, but there was no way I could be angry after looking at those frightened eyes of hers.

I went over to Raphtalia.

I reached my hand out, startling Raphtalia as she curled herself up into a ball and shielded her head.

“Good grief...”I used that hand to pat the shoulder of a trembling Raphtalia. “Wetting the bed wasn’t something that you can control, right? Come now, hurry up and undress so you can wash yourself up.” She'll need a spare change of clothes too, I suppose. “Eh...” Raphtalia looked at me with a mystified expression. “You’re not angry?”

“How could I lash out at someone who's been regretting their actions? You reflected on what you did, so I'm not angry.”

The sheet was stained. I wondered how much I'll have to pay the Innkeeper... we'll keep it as a piece of cloth for the time being.

After that, I explained the situation to the Innkeeper, paid for the damages, and then rushed off to buy some spare clothes from the Weapon Shop.

Although the well water was a bit cold, I washed the sheet clean and packed it in our luggage bag.

It seemed like a great idea to dry this sheet by tying it on a branch and hanging it as we walk through the meadow.

“Now then.” It's getting a bit irritating to walk with Raphtalia, who continued apologizing. “I told you not to worry about it!”

“... Hai.”

Haa... She really was an obedient child.

However, it would also be troublesome for me if she had no motivation.

Guu*...

Raphtalia’s stomach grumbled again.

Oh, and her face was flushed with shame.

“I guess it's about time for breakfast.”

“Un...”

Raphtalia walked besides me while holding onto the hem of my shirt. “... *koho*”

“Alright then, you'll need to take this medicine as punishment.”

I handed a 'recovery potion' over to Raphtalia.

It seems like a persistent illness, one which required a regular intake of medicine, so this is exactly what she needs.

Raphtalia's face turned extremely sour after just a sniff. However, she was very enthusiastic about drinking it since this was her punishment.

"Uwaa... So bitter..."

"Just bear with it."

Gokugokugoku*

Raphtalia, who finished drinking the whole thing, had a blenched face and looked about ready to vomit.

By the way, that compounded medicine seemed to fetch a good price. But since the quality was poor, the horrible taste was even worse.

Chapter 14: Taking a Life

Exiting the meadow, we arrived along the fringe land between the mountain and forest.

Raphtalia's fighting style had greatly improved thanks to her experience, and her movements were more skillful too.

Our herb collecting was going well. Monsters steadily kept on coming and provided us with exp, while our luggage was being overstuffed with all the item drops.

But then 'it' happened.

Before we had only fought fable-like monsters. But now we had finally encountered our first animal class creature.

A one-headed... chestnut rabbit?

Usapiru.

That's a weird name.

"Pyo!?" The Usapiru spotted our presence and leaped at us, attacking with its huge buck teeth. "Watch out!" It targeted Raphtalia after judging she was weaker.

I jumped out to protect her like usual.

Chomp! Chomp!

It seemed that my defensive power was still higher than its attack.

"Alright! Stab it."

"A... Aah..."

"What's wrong?"

"A, a living thing, will, will have blood, right..?"

I was barely able to make sense of Raphtalia's stuttering words. "Deal with it, we'll be fighting these kind of enemies from now on."

"B-,but."

Chomp! Chomp!

Usapiru repeatedly bit me with its teeth.

“Brace yourself and bear with it. Or else you'll become too much of a burden that I'll have to abandon you.” That’s right. Even if she’s my cherished slave; if she can’t fight then she isn't needed.

I'll just have to visit that perverse slave dealer and buy another slave, one who can fight properly.

“N-, no!” Frightened with her eyes shut tight, Raphtalia stabbed the Usapiru multiple times with her knife.

Blood began spewing after she pulled her weapon out.

“Ah...” The Usapiru died with a thud and laid motionless on the ground.

Raphtalia stared at her own knife while trembling, the scene thoroughly burnt into her eyes.

Her complexion became pale; she looked as if she wanted to escape from all of this.

However, we mustn't feel any remorse.

Because we'll be fighting monsters like this again and again for hundreds, even thousands of times.

“Pyo!” Another Usapiru appeared out of a bush and it leaped at Raphtalia, trying to bite her. “Ah—” I immediately prevented the attack by jumping in between the two.

Chomp!

“... Sorry. To be honest, I had to push you. Because I can't do anything but protect others. So I have no choice but to leave you with all the dirty work.” The Usapiru was chewing on my arm while I told this to Raphtalia. “I can’t get stronger if I don’t do this. For this purpose, I need your help..” If I don’t, then there won't be a future for me. The time limit is fast approaching and the waves of disaster will soon appear.

I had no confidence in surviving with how things stood now.

“... But...”

“Within one week, a world-ruining wave will spawn.”

“Eh!?”

“Because of that, I want to become stronger, even if it's only a little bit.”

Raphtalia was trembling as she listened to me. “Are you... fighting against that disaster?”

“Haha, I was told that this was my role. So I'm not doing it because I want to... Guess we're similar in that regard. I was forced to defend against the wave; there's no sense of obligation or duty in it for me.”

“ ... ”

“So, please try to understand that I don't want us going our separate ways.”

Having to raise another slave will definitely be a waste, and sending her back into that cage won't make me feel good about myself either.

But unfortunately, I have no money. If I want to buy a new slave, then I'll have to sell her.

“... Understood. Goshujin-sama, I... will, fight.” Color gradually returned to her pale face. She slowly nodded her head and thrust her blood-stained knife at the Usapiru's vital point.

For some reason, her demeanor was the polar opposite of what she was like before, her eyes now shined with determination.

At the sight of the Usapiru squirming and convulsing, Raphtalia silently closed her eyes.

Then a moment later, she changed her grip on the knife and began skinning the rabbit.

“Let me do that. I don't want you handling all the grunt work.”

“Hai.”

I took out a knife used for dismantling, and with that the body of the Usapirus was soon dismembered.

This is reality, not a game.

It was understandable for someone to want to look away.

But after killing a living creature for the first time, I truly understood what it means to be alive in this world.

With the Usapiru's blood staining my hand, I was able to understand what Raphtalia had just gone through.

I dismantled both rabbits and absorbed the pieces into the shield.

The requirement for Usa Leather Shield has been unsealed.

The requirement for Usa Meat Shield has been unsealed.

Usa Leather Shield

True power sealed...Equipment bonus: 3 Agility

Usa Meat Shield

True power sealed...Equipment bonus: Dismantling Techniques 1

I equipped the latter shield then stood up. "Goshujin-sama. Please, don't abandon me." Raphtalia begged me while raising her face.

She probably hated the mere thought of going back to that place, where she cried at night and was sick and famished.

Without proper care, she'd probably die in there. That would certainly leave a bad aftertaste in my mouth.

Although I'd love to imagine ridiculing that bitch until the climax of her death, it would be impractical for it to actually happen.

"You've properly fulfilled your role, so I won't abandon you." Besides, I would be troubled if Raphtalia were to die.

But then again... That's right. She's a creature of the similar gender just like that bitch... the exact same as that bitch!

I shook my head repeatedly.

I need to stop thinking like this. It's bad for my heart.

Right now, I have to find a way to grow stronger with this slave of mine,

even if just a little.

EXP 7 x 2

“I want to, lend my strength, to goshujin-sama, desu.” From then on, Raphtalia was unbelievably enthusiastic about charging in and skewering the monsters which appeared.

Someone who I always needed to keep safe was now being so aggressive without any inhibitions.

This was some good development, but it seemed like... she was motivated for the wrong reasons.

The way I handled matters is not praiseworthy

It was entirely for self-interest.

But still... these sort of things needed to be done no matter what.

When evening came, we decided to rest within the forest. For that purpose we found a spacious area, lit some firewood, and began setting up camp.

We made a stew out of the Usapiru's meat and edible herbs which we collected.

The remaining meat was grilled over the campfire.

Although our plan was to return back to town by tomorrow evening, we have no proof that the monsters' meat will even sell.

Since I was a bit skeptical, I used the 'Judgement' skill to identify the food and see if it was safe to eat.

I cut a piece of the cooked meat to confirm that there was nothing wrong with it. But I still had no idea what it tasted like.

They were just grilled and boiled so it couldn't be considered a proper cuisine.

I also activated my 'cooking' skill, and the quality turned from 'normal' to 'a tad good'. So they shouldn't taste terrible either.

“Here, eat up.” Raphtalia then began devouring the cooked stew and

grilled meat. “O-, Oishii!” Her stomach grumbling in anticipation a little while ago, Raphtalia heartily ate with shining eyes.

After today’s fights, I became a Lvl 10 and Raphtalia also became a Lvl 10.

She finally caught up with me.

Oh well, it couldn’t be helped.

I started compounding under the light of the campfire.

Our immediate goal is to gradually save up money, then to gear ourselves up. Which is why I’ll try to create the most expensive medicine in order to sell it.

grind grind grind

I grounded the medical herbs with the mortar, then mixed the extracts together before transferring the solution into the beaker.

Recovery Potion was made.

Nutritional Supplement was made.

Again, these recipes were ones which I had already discovered.

This was the limit of “Simple Compounding Recipes 1”. Even these two drugs were miraculously made with intuition.

The shield’s power - which was fueled by an ‘eternal torch’ that will-, who am I kidding - of ‘compounding’ had reached its limit.

Basically, most of the qualities were somewhat bad.

“... Ah chou*” Did the effect of the medicine run out?

I silently passed her a ‘recovery potion’, and Raphtalia drank it while frowning.

Anyways, in order to acquire new sources of income, we will need to grow stronger.

“I’ll watch over the campfire, you go ahead and sleep. So yeah... I’ll wake you up after awhile.”

“Understood.”

She was strangely obedient. One could see a huge difference between this and our first meeting. “Good night.”

“Haha, pleasant dreams. Oh right, we'll be selling those tomorrow. So go ahead and use the fur as a blanket.”

I passed Raphtalia the fur, which was fumigated while I was cooking in order to drive away fleas.

It was a little small, but it should keep the body warm after bundling yourself up, right?

“Hai.” Raphtalia frowned a bit after sniffing the fur's scent. “Is it smoky?”

“Yes. It's very smoky.”

“I thought so.”

“But, it looks very warm.”

Raphtalia snuggled up to me, leaned against my back, and closed her eyes.

Oh well, this was fine.

I continued to make medicine and threw more wood into the campfire, just waiting for the moment when Raphtalia would begin shrieking like a banshee.

... sigh.

I wonder how long this lifestyle would continue.

It might only last for one week more, huh.

Although I shouldn't be thinking about dying anytime soon, I should always be prepared for that possibility.

... It's about time. Since we've been together for three days, I could somehow sense when she was about to make another uproar.

“Nn...” Raphtalia gently rubbed her eyes and slowly got up. “Are you

awake?"She didn't scream.

Ah, I see. It was because she was contently sleeping against my back.

It may be a trauma, but it seems like she'll be fine if there's another person's warmth besides her while she slept.

Guu...

"... My stomach's empty."She got hungry again right after the feast she just ate."Hai hai."I gave Raphtalia the grilled meat which was meant to be reserved for tomorrow's breakfast.

Raphtalia delectably stuffed her mouth full of the meat.

"Well then, I'll be going to sleep now. Wake me up if anything happens."

"Hai!"

Raphtalia nodded while munching her food.

Good grief, she became a lot more energetic. But look at how much of a glutton she turned into.

Chapter 15: Demi-Human's Traits

We took turns sleeping until morning came.

At around noontime, a certain incident occurred.

While we were hunting some Usapiru that had appeared before us.

“Ah...”pokin The knife in Raphtalia's hands had snapped off completely. “Show it to me.” It couldn't be helped. The knife had done its job and broke only after killing the last Usapiru which had been gnawing at my arm. “I'm sorry.”

“Nothing lasts for an eternity. So it was inevitable for this knife to break.”

It was a cheap knife, not to mention it had never even been polished. “We'll stop here for now before returning to town.”

“Hai.”

The bag that Raphtalia carried was splendidly stuffed full of loot.

On a side note, I've become a Lvl 11 and so has Raphtalia.

Along the way we had encountered several monsters, but we somehow managed to get by with my spare knife.

Later on, we sold off our spoils, including the compounded medicine, for a grand total of 70 silver coins.

Chari chari...

“I wonder which one we should get.”

“You mean a knife?”

Raphtalia murmured while eating her lunch inside a street stall.

We should be able to cover our living expenses by camping outdoors.

And there wouldn't be a problem with food if we skinned the Usapiru for their meat.

I stopped thinking about that for now.

Since I didn't have a favorite store or know of any other good places to shop, I at least wanted to know more about the details of our purchased equipment.

"Well, guess we should go over to the Weapon Shop."

"Un."

Guu...

I heard a grumbling noise coming from behind me.

"My tummy's empty."

"Didn't you just eat a moment ago!?"

Is it a growth spurt!?

Just how many times a day were you planning to eat!

"Haa..." Right, Engel's Coefficient would skyrocket with her in the equation.

We need to start hunting again as soon as possible. At this rate our food expenses alone will bring us to ruin.

-----"--And that's what happened, Oyaji. I'd like some weapons and protective gear within the range of 65 silver coins, plus a cheap knife." For some reason, Oyaji groaned with his palm on his head. "Well..... it's none of my business, but please properly maintain your equipment at least."

"Sorry about that. I thought the blood-clean coating would take care of everything, so I didn't plan for it beforehand."

Right. The Balloon, Mush, and Eggy were creatures made from inorganic substances after all. And the bodily fluids of the Eggy could definitely be wiped off without much effort.

However, the blood of the Usapiru stained the weapon.

Not only that, but the blade seemed to deteriorate even faster because of improper care.

"But I'm amazed this girl's complexion is so much better after just three

days. And haven't you gotten quite plump now?"Raphtalia nodded at him with a proficient smile. Just what was Oyaji talking about?"Hoh? That's a fine expression."

"Un!"

Alright, let's get down to business.

"Oyaji, please prioritize the weapon's durability when you show us the wares meant for her."

"And how about you?"

"I don't need any."

"You don't want anything?"

Raphtalia looked up at me and asked. "Does it look like I'll be needing any gear?" Up until this point, I had yet to receive a single wound from a monster's attack.

Didn't those dipshit Heroes once say that: 'shields are easy at the beginning, but suck towards the endgame?'

That's why I didn't feel the need to buy myself equipment until we got to the point where I start taking damage.

"Uun."Raphtalia groaned, looking unconvinced. Her hands were preciously holding onto the ball which I had bought for her before. "Well, I guess this must be karma at work. I'll give you a little something as a bonus."

"I'll be haggling if the cost is too high."

"I'm already selling to you at dirt-cheap prices here. If I tried to increase the price any further, you would be throwing those Balloons around right?"

The merchant incident from before must have started that rumor. Well it's fine, since the end result will be the same either way. "An eye for an eye, that's all I'm doing."

"... Not that it matters to me. But even if I came up with a

countermeasure, you'll just find another way around it. That'll be just like you, right?"

"You certainly know me well."

"Anyone can tell with a glance: That you, sir, are a shrewd businessman under the guise of a Hero."

"I'll take that as a compliment."

"Well then..."

Oyaji rubbed his chin while looking at Raphtalia. "It's about time this Jou-chan stop using a knife and start equipping a sword."

"Will it be alright?"

"Seems she's quite enthusiastic about it. A sword proves to be a rather fine weapon for a beginner, no?"

Oyaji searched through a corner of his shop. gacha gacha "So that's it."

"Will I be using this sword?"

"Looks like it."

"I'll be tutoring her on how to use one."

Then a tanned hide breastplate was brought to us from the back of the store. "An iron short sword and a hide breastplate. Although they're a bit old, please bear with it. At least the size fits you." Oyaji handed Raphtalia the sword while the breastplate was worn on top of her casual clothes.

Guu...

"Again!?"

"Duh, she is a demi-human, right? Since she's still a child, this much should be expected if she keeps leveling up."

Wait, what? Is that common sense around here? This world sure worked on weird standards that I couldn't comprehend.

A long time ago, I did hear about the tale of Hina the crow, where she'd die if she wasn't continuously fed.

“So there is some truth to that story... guess it can’t be helped. Just stay here and listen obediently to the lecture, I’ll go buy you some food while you practice.”

“Haaai!”

Seeing our conversation, Oyaji bursted out laughing for some reason. gahaha “Okay listen up, I’ll now teach you all about the basics--” I left the Weapon Shop and hurried towards the market.

Demi-humans are truly a strange race, using hunger to compensate for level raising.

Although her condition grew favorably and her self-consciousness also gradually became more resilient.

But still, the food expenses were no joke.

To make a long story short, I bought some food from the vending stalls and returned to find Oyaji teaching Raphtalia how to grip and swing a sword.

“Here you go.”

“Thank you!”

She then munched away as Oyaji diligently taught her evasive maneuvers.

Even in such a situation, the mood didn’t change at all.

“What about you?”

“I’ve got those evasive moves memorized.”

“Well, you do seem like the blocking type. It would be rather dangerous for you to gawkily upset your balance.”

That marked the end of Oyaji’s crash course on sword handling, I then paid the bill.

After that, Oyaji passed me a small slab of white stone.

“What’s this?”

“A whetstone. The ‘coating’ wasn’t applied on the weapon this time. So it'll break in no time if you don’t regularly maintain it.”

“Hmm...”

The shield reacted when I slowly grabbed the whetstone.

Which is why I ended up absorbing it.

“H-,Hey!?”

The requirement for Shield of Whetstone has been liberated.

Oh? This was the first shield that wasn’t in English.

Well whatever, it’s still a shield.

I should absorb more minerals from now on.....

Ah I see, this isn’t a new branch, but one that's combined with the Sky Egg Shield and Usa Meat Shield.

Was it because the whetstone was as indispensable as a kitchen knife?

The huge defensive power of the Egg Shield was quite frightening.

It's likely that I would get the ‘Usapiru Shield’ if I absorbed the whole Usapiru without dismembering it.

Shield of Whetstone

True power sealed Equipment Bonus: Mineral Identification 1+

Special Effect: Automatic Polishing (8 Hours), High Consumption

A Special Effect?

I clicked the 'help' confirm button.

「Special Effect」

An exclusive effect that will only be usable when equipped with a specific weapon.

The effect won't be usable by other weapons even if its true powers have been unsealed. Therefore, one will need to fit a specific weapon into a slot for this special ability to take effect.

So it's something like that?

A type of effect that grants immense power like in those oo games.

I quickly changed my shield. “Huh!? What the heck is that?” Shield of Whetstone, it looks like the Small Shield but is a whole lot bigger. A huge shield made of whetstone.

But there's a pattern of slots on top of the shield, with the multiple holes varying in shapes and sizes. Some are fat while others are thin.

“Hey, you! Tell me what's going on.” Fumu... Just what did ‘Automatic Polishing (8 Hours), High Consumption’ mean?

Although, I am expecting it to do what it's advertised...

“Hey!”

“Huh? What's up, Oyaji.”

“What on this flat Melromarc is that shield?!”

“Don't you know already? It's the legendary shield.”

“I've never seen or heard anything like this!”

“You saw it before, though it was a Small Shield back then.”

“Huh!? Then why on Melromarc did it turn into a whetstone?”

“I guess it's because it absorbed the whetstone?”

“...”

At this rate, Oyaji wouldn't be able to comprehend this situation anytime soon. “You must have heard that the Legendary Weapon hold mysterious powers. This is just one of its powers.”

“... You didn't hear this from the other Heroes?”

“I hadn't seen them recently. You were the first one to transform your weapon right in front of me.”

Our natural adversary will be spawning in about one week. So shouldn't they be sharing what they know with others, even if just a little? It seems those bastards were too selfish to even assist their peers properly.

I don't even have an ounce of trust for those type of people either.

... But then again, it may not be necessary for them, since they weren't in the 'loser' category like me. "So, what are you troubled about?"

"Haha, it seems to have an effect of 'Automatic Polishing (8 hours) High Consumption'. But I don't know if it's really possible to polish without using anything else."

I didn't know what would be consumed. "Fuuumu..." Oyaji went to grab a rusty sword from within his shop and inserted it inside one of the slots in my shield. "I'll give you this trash weapon as a bonus. Use that and see what it does."

"Ooh, you have my thanks."

There was an icon which popped up in the corner of my screen: 「Polishing」.

There was a lot of pressure.

Then, I felt a heavy weight on my shoulders.

I immediately glanced at the Icon and opened up my Status. In there, I saw my 'SP' gradually reducing.

I previously thought that something physical would be consumed, but I guess this shield can be used in this way too.

"Now then, guess we'll be taking our leave."

"We're going?"

"Haha."

Stepping out of the Weapon Shop, I continued to stroke Raphtalia's head for a short while.

So now, in order for us to raise our level and procure food for the ever-growing Raphtalia, I'll need to go on another journey.

"Ah right, Oyaji." Glaring heedlessly at me, Oyaji said with an exasperated tone. "... You still need something?"

"Do you know about the dungeon that's located near the forest village?"

I asked while opening up a cheap map and pointing at the spot where that bitch had recommended.

I want to have another person's reference just in case. Though actually trusting them is another matter entirely.

“The monsters are different from the forest; I heard they're more similar to the ones which show up along that village's highway.”

“I see, guess we'll see for ourselves once we get there.”

Right now, we have to evolve my shield and earn as much money as possible before the next wave.

Chapter 16: Preparations for the Wave

Requirement for Rope Shield has been released

Requirement for Pikyu Pikyu Shield has been released

Requirement for Wood Shield has been released

Requirement for Rock Shield has been released

Requirement for Butterfly Shield has been released

Requirement for Pipe Shield has been released

ETC...

Rope Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill -「Air Strike Shield」

Pikyu Pikyu Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Beginner Rank's Weapon Repair Techniques I Wood Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Lumbering Techniques I

Butterfly Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Paralysis Resistance (Small) Pipe Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill - 「Shield Prison」

ETC...

It had been eight days since then.

After parting with Oyaji, we journeyed to the new village.

The village's name was Riyuuto. It seemed like a good, operational base for adventurers. But since there was only one Inn around, the fee was one silver coin per night.

The Merchant Buyer dropped by this place only once every two days.

There was no pharmacy store, so I had to sell cheaper medicine directly

to the villagers in order to compete with the castle town's pharmacy imports.

To compensate for this, the medicines I sold were all subpar in quality.

By the way, my notoriety had spread quite far. When I first I arrived, I had to punish quite a few morons with my 'Balloon Release'.

And that's the gist of it.

Thanks to the monsters around town, the medical herbs, and the lumber, I was able to absorb them all and create multiple shields. I also learned a lot of new skills and techniques.

There were also various stat increases, but I won't go into that since it's such a hassle.

"Wait—!" Raphtalia began chasing the porcupine-like monster who, upon realizing its disadvantage, fled the battle.

Raphtalia's level had raised considerably. I was now at Lv 20 while she was at Lv 25.

Her growth was surprisingly fast.

... On a side note, I was still fighting in my ordinary clothes.

And since I had yet to take any damage, not to mention all the monster attacks seemed quite weak up until now, this incident became a real head scratcher when I thought about it.

Yet it served as a painful experience for me.

Overestimating my defense, I went into battle with a weak shield, and it hurt like hell when I had gotten hit.

Astonishingly, I had received some small scratches from this Porcupine's ambush attack.

"Ouch, that hurt a bit. It's been awhile since I last felt like this." I promptly smeared the wound with a 'heal pill' to prevent the bleeding.

That needle sure stung when I got hit, naturally.

I've already forgotten about these sort of sensations ever since coming

to this world and receiving the shield's protection.

“Like I said before, it hurts, right? Naofumi-sama should just give in and buy some equipment already.”

“No... It was only because I was using a weak shield.”

Since when did Raphtalia start calling me ‘Naofumi-sama’ instead of ‘Goshujin-sama’?

Well whatever. It wasn't such a bad thing since it had a nice ring to it.

Anyways, my shield could cover up my whole body. So it wouldn't make any sense to also wear individual pieces of small protective gear.

Just in case, I had always defended with the sturdiest part of my shield, and I hadn't received a single injury up until now.

So this is my very first time experiencing damage. That's all there is to it.

I watched the Whetstone Shield's auto-polishing at work. It really was quite a convenient shield, one that I always used.

The polishing time period was 8 hours. There'll be no effect if I pulled any weapons out beforehand.

The only drawback was that while in use, my SP won't recover since I'll be continuously drained.

Ah, speaking of which, I guess I should try utilizing the other abilities in my skill set...

“Air Strike Shield!” It's the first skill which I learned. It summons a shield within a range of about five meters.

But it served no purpose if I was alone.

It felt like everyone was forced into having a specialized role.

I focused my mind, imagining the desired location to call forth my Air Strike shield; this mysterious ward which will vanish once its duration time is over.

Alright, just a little bit more.

The porcupine stumbled in surprise due to the sudden appearance of my conjured shield.

However, it immediately regained its balance and resumed its escape once again.

Kuh... And here I thought that five meters was more than enough distance to catch up with you; this one was surprisingly fast at fleeing.

Guess I'll have to use this.

"Shield Prison!" A skill which allows me to summon an enclosed cage anywhere within a six meter radius.

This time around, I'll be dropping it directly on my target, the porcupine.

Although this skill was intended for protection, it could also be used as a restraining device to trap a target inside.

Indeed, it was both an offensive and defensive skill.

"Kii!" No longer able to escape, the Porcupine rampaged inside 'the Shield Prison'.

Its duration period was 15 seconds.

During that time, Raphtalia rapidly approached the 'Shield Prison'. Then right as its effect had ended, she pierced the Porcupine with her sword.

"Kii!?"

"I did it!"

Raphtalia triumphantly returned while gripping the dead porcupine. "Nice!" EXP 48 An adequate harvest.

We defeated our quarry, properly dissected its remains, and then absorbed the pieces into the shield so that it would undergo transformation. I only discovered this last week, but it seems the Balloon, Mush, and Eggy were all classified as 'material'. Well, that hadn't been anything worth noticing back then, really.

I immediately dismantled the porcupine into needles, meat, and skin. It was quite easy after learning the trick to it.

All of them were precious materials and must be handled with care.

I absorbed the leftovers into the shield.

The bones belonged to the bone category, which required several other bones from different monsters, while the skin belonged to the pelt category and granted some additional stats through equipment bonuses. Of course, there were some cases where I lacked the required Lvl or category in order to unseal.

The meat belonged to the cuisine category. A topic which certainly caught my attention.

I'm looking forward to what the needles will do. They are a porcupine's trademark after all.

Requirement for Animal Needle Shield has been unsealed. So it's a shield made of an animal's spikes. A needle shield... I'm excited to see what the unsealed effect will be. Animal Needle Shield Sealed..... Equipment Bonus: Offensive Power 1+

Special Effect: Shield of Needles (small)

Hell yeah! An increase in my offensive poweeeeeeeeeeeeer! Yeah. I know. It's only a measly increase of 1+.

Although I didn't know what 'Special Effect: Shield of Needle (Small)' could actually do, I was able to acquire an offensive shield, which is far more important.

This was just the beginning. From now on I'll be able to attack too if I kept absorbing items that are connected with this shield type category.

The defensive force was slightly lower than the others belonging to the mineral category, but that should be alright.

"How did it go?"

"Haha, it seems that this shield will increase my attack power."

“So you finally got one, good for you. But how about its defensive force?”

Raphtalia pointed at my wound with a dubious look. “It’s so-so, I guess.”

“Is that so... Um, I wanted to ask if my sword could be polished but...”

“Got it. Let’s end our hunt and return to the forest for now.”

“Hai!”

I equipped the ‘Whetstone Shield’ and inserted Raphtalia’s sword into one of its slots.

Currently polishing...

Now then, our levels rose considerably after a full week's worth of extensive money making, and we saved up a grand total of 230 silver coins.

A moderate amount of medicine was sold, and the business on lumbering and mining was booming thanks to my new shield skills.

There was a shallow cause for concern, however, as it seemed that my online gaming tendencies were influencing how I had been acting.

Well, I was too preoccupied with choosing the best possible method in order to earn money.

And I didn't waste time on pointless actions which didn't strengthen me either. So it couldn't be helped since this was what I needed to do to survive.

“Well then, we should return soon and upgrade your gear, Raphtalia.”

“... Naofumi-sama?”

Huh? For some reason, Raphtalia was softly smiling at me. Yet I couldn't help but feel a strange, spine-freezing chill at the mere sight of her. “Although, I very much welcome the idea of buying new equipment, but can you please pay a little more attention to yourself and how you're dressed?”

“Do I look weird or something?”

“Except for that shield, you look like a common villager.”

“W-...well, it wasn’t really necessary... but I guess a small change in my attire should be alright?”

Gashi!*

Raphtalia threateningly gripped my shoulder with a smile.

“Didn’t you just get injured a short while ago?”

“Like I said, I was deliberately using a weak shield... so it should still be fine, right? Your weapon's much more important than me right now, so it's better to invest our——“

“Naofumi-sama? Do you know that you'll be dying very soon if you keep on joking like this?”

“Death!?”

With spare sword in hand, Raphtalia was poking me with it forebodingly.

Although, I supposedly couldn't be harmed by her due to the slave’s restraining spell.

“... To begin with, shouldn’t you worry more about your own equipment? The deadline is approaching, isn’t it?”

“... haha.”

Come to think of it, she's right.

There were only a few days left before the wave of calamity spawns.

I'll need to continue growing stronger until then.

Though I've certainly become anxious about dressing up like your average townie.

The ends and the means had truly been misplaced.

“Haa.....”Even though I wanted to raise my offensive power a bit more... “Instead of me, let's hurry up and find Naofumi-sama’s equipment right away.”

“I guess so, we'll be buying my equipment for the time being. But we'll

use the remaining money to get your weapon.”

“Hai.”

Although it's fine with me since I've gotten used to it, she sure has become rather cheeky...

Her violent actions have escalated recently along with her stubbornness. I really wanted to know why our positions were somehow reversed.

She's become quite a bossy slave if I do say so myself.

Chapter 17: The Barbarian's Armor

“Oh well, if it isn't the shield lad. It's already been over a week now.”

Please don't phrase it as if I'm getting fat

After returning to the castle town, we had gone straight to the shopping district.

Yet for some reason, Oyaji had his mouth wide open when he looked over at Raphtalia.

“We're only meeting again after a short while... and look at how much of a beauty you've become.”

“Haah?”

Just what was he saying? Why was Oyaji mumbling incoherently like this? “You've developed so nicely... this is far too different from your previous, famished complexion.”

“Please don't phrase it as if I'm getting fat.”



Seemingly bothered by his statement, Raphtalia fidgeted while fiddling with her fingers.

That reaction of hers was repulsive!

She reminded me of that bitch of a woman.

“Gahaha, you grew up into such an adorable mink.”

“Grew up? Well, her level certainly rose.”

A week ago she was at Lvl 10, and now she was at Lvl 25. But did her physical appearance really change that much? “Fuumu... you’re quite cynical, you know that?”

“I have no idea what nonsense you're talking about.”

It was true that anyone would find a little 10 years old girl cute. But since she had only been eating meat, meat, and more meat all day long, it might have made her a bit chubby.

Every time her stomach grumbled, we would immediately cook up the meat from the monsters we had encountered.

I was afraid she might turn into one of those beriberi people due to her unbalanced diet. So I started adding medical herbs into her meals, even though it broke my heart and wallet by doing so.

She hadn’t been coughing recently, probably thanks to the recovery potions finally taking effect.

“What were you up to this past week? Hunting?”

“The village inn staff had taught me some table manners. Since I wanted to be able to dine as elegantly as Naofumi-sama someday.”

“Looks like you’re well on your way.”

Unexpectedly, Oyaji was in a real good mood. At this rate he'll probably sell us some high quality wares.

So keep on flattering him, Raphtalia!

“So, what’s your business with me today?”

“Haha, I plan on purchasing some equipment.”

I said while pointing at Raphtalia. In response, she firmly gripped my finger with an eerie smile on her face. “Please consider Naofumi-sama and his protective gear this time around.”

“Gotcha. But for what reason?”

“I'd like to ask that you take a moment to ponder it over yourself.”

“Mmm... Well, to prepare for the incoming wave, I guess?”

“Just what are you two getting at? I seriously don't have the slightest idea of what this Jou-chan is saying here...”

Just what in the world were these guys even talking about?

Both Raphtalia and I had already decided that we'll be buying my equipment, right?

“So, seems like we'll be getting you some armor. Around how much are you looking to spend?”

“Within the range of 180 silver coins, if you would.”

Raphtalia rattled off our budget range without my consent.

Now, that had ticked me off some.

If we settled for that price, then we couldn't buy a new weapon for her!

“Let's see... well, my best balanced armor for that amount would be this chain mail here.”

“That chain mail... BAAH!”

Dark emotions began creeping up from deep within my gut.

It'd be utterly humiliating for me to re-buy a piece of equipment which had originally been mine.

“Well... if the shield lad hates this so much, I suppose we should go with something else.” Oyaji replied while scratching his head, understanding my reaction, as he turned to his other armory in stock. “To be honest, it's kind of hard to find an appropriate gear within this price range. How does an iron plated mail sound to you?” He asked while pointing at the armor in question.

It was a huge sheet of iron morphed into... a full guarded plate. The armor was decorated with the castle town's symbol.

I knew about this! Back in my old world, this was what people called a ‘full plate mail’ or something like that. This type of armor was said to be extremely tedious to move in; the wearer couldn't even stand by themselves; and finally, they were the fastest to sink in a swamp.

“Some physical stamina will be needed in order to wear this. Its only fault is that the ‘Air Walk’ feature isn't applied to it.”

“Air Walk feature?”

“A function which allows the wearer to lighten their weight by consuming their own magic power. A truly magnificent ability.”

“I agree.”

Basically in this world, if a full body armor didn't have the Air Walk function then it was nothing more than an immobile sandbag.

That's not quite right. If the wearer was physically capable then they should be able to move around somewhat.

However, I don't have much stamina at this point in time.

“Seems like we can make it lighter and cheaper by removing the bulkier looking parts...”

“So lad, you were thinking along those lines after all.”

“Isn't that a given?”

“Iron breastplates are indeed cheaper to buy. But their protective coverage is very limited.”

“Fumu... While high defense is a must, losing your mobility in exchange would make it meaningless.”

It was good and all to become as solid as a wall, but it would be a huge problem if I could barely move at all.

I'd like to refrain from equipping gear which decreased mobility as much as possible.

The Air Walk feature, huh? I wonder how much it would cost to add that function on.

“With that said... I might be able to craft a custom made armor if you can bring me the materials...”

“Sounds good, I enjoy doing these sort of things.”

“You have a satisfied expression there, lad... Guess we'll go with this plan.”

Oyaji spread out a parchment with the names of various materials written on it. “I can't read this.” While it was possible to communicate directly thanks to the shield's translation feature, I still couldn't read the writings of this world.

Oyaji looked troubled, so he went ahead and explained everything to me.

“You can buy some cheap copper and iron from the atelier over there. After that, bring me some Usapiru and Porcupine hides, and then a few Pikyupikyuu feathers.”

“Here are the hides and feathers.”

With a smile, Raphtalia happily took out the hides and feathers from inside our luggage sack.

Those were used as our blankets and bedding since they were warm and fluffy. But... well, I suppose it's fine either way.

“The quality of the armor will be a bit bad. But it's still good for practical use.”

“Then what's the reason for making it?”

“This is the Barbarian Armor. Its performance is on par with the Chain Mail and covers the majority of the body. It may be a bit cold to wear but it's very strong.”

“Oh...”

Barbarian Armor... Somehow the phrase sounds a bit unpleasant. “There's a trick to add some magical options as a bonus, but this step can be done later when you've finished with gathering the other materials.”

“That's reassuring. Well then, let's go and buy some iron and copper.”

“Let's go! Let's go right away!”

Raphtalia energetically pulled my hand along while rushing me outside. “What’s the big deal?”

“Naofumi-sama is going to look like a real adventurer. I can’t wait to see it.”

“W-well... I guess so.”

She did say that I looked exactly like a villager.

Although the equipment would be a bit barbarous, it wasn't like I had much choice.

We then headed towards the metal atelier and bought the required amount of iron and copper.

They seemed to have heard about us from Oyaji, so they sold us the goods at a surprisingly cheap price.

They also said that Raphtalia was cute and gave us a little extra.

The ossan from the metal atelier was grinning widely while looking at her. Raphtalia graciously waved back at him in return.

I didn’t even want to start preaching about the pedophilia morality to this world.

“That was some quick material gathering.”

“It’s all thanks to your own efforts, isn't that right, lad?”

“Well, yeah. Since a lot of Oyaji’s acquaintances are lolicons. I can already point out two or three of them.”

“Lolicon? What on Melromarc are you saying?”

“You don’t understand what lolicons are? I thought you would understand this word through the shield’s translating feature.”

“Not that, I just don't get why you think my co-workers’ preferences are for young girls...”

“They said that Raphtalia was cute so they sold the goods even cheaper to us.”

“Lad... could it be that you seriously don't know?”

“Don't know what?”

“Oyaji, it's fine for now.”

Raphtalia said that while shaking her head.

Oyaji somehow understood. Resigned, he slumped his shoulders and threw me a glance.

“It'll be done by tomorrow, so please wait until then.”

“That's fast, I thought it would take at least two days minimum for you to finish.”

“Hmm, that might be the case for some stranger. But it's different for you, lad.”

“For once, you have my gratitude.”

“Wahaha, that sure was a butt-scratcher of a reply.”

He sure was making fun of me just because I showed him a little appreciation. “So, what's the price of this custom made armor?”

“Including the fee for copper and iron... about 130 silver coins. In addition, you can add some optional enhancements.”

“Is that the base cost? I thought it would be fine so long as I got the required materials.”

“Waha, those were already taken into account at the 130 coins price tag, I can't go any lower than that.”

“I understand. Then it's good enough for me.”

I took out 130 silver coins and handed them over to Oyaji. “Thanks for your patronage.”

“Ah, that's right. Oyaji, I want to buy a weapon within the range of 90 silver coins.”

“I guessing it's for this Jou-chan here?”

“Haha...”

That's right. The ordinary sword which we bought last week was newly polished now. So we should ask for a trade-in?"Raphtalia."

"Hai."

Raphtalia pulled out the sword from her waist and put it on the counter. "I want to ask for a resale. So here, include this sword into the payment amount."

"Fumu... looks like you've properly maintained it this time around."

"All thanks to my shield."

The polishing maintenance would end by the next morning if we inserted the weapon inside the whetstone shield before going to sleep.

It also kept the blade nice and sharp for ease of cutting.

"That's a convenient shield... I want one too."

"You won't be able to equip any other weapon, you know."

I'm just a moving wall without any attack power.

I would gladly hand this over to anyone who wanted it. If only that was possible.

"That part is quite bothersome." I waited for the trade-in to commence while enduring Oyaji's obnoxious laughter. "There's not a speck of rust on the blade. As expected of the legendary shield, its performance is superb." Oyaji stated his open admiration while inspecting the sword's durability. "Let me see... with this much left over, I can sell you a magic iron sword." Magic iron sword was definitely higher than an iron sword in terms of weapon ranking. "It should be a given that blood-clean coating is included, right?"

"Urg, I'll add that as a bonus. I know full well that you're working hard, lad!"

Oyaji sure was a great guy. If you think about, he had been giving me various extras ever since the day I had been robbed and was left with absolutely nothing. "Thank you..."

From the bottom of my heart, I expressed those sincere words of gratitude to Oyaji.

“Lad. It's good to see that same glint in your eyes just like the first time we met. You've shown me some fine stuff today.” Oyaji somehow seemed satisfied as he handed the magic iron sword to Raphtalia. “Good weapons will only become powerful in capable hands, while they'll only turn into worthless junk in the hands of the talentless. However, I believe that you'll be able to fully master their strength. Give it your best shot, Jou-chan.”

“Hai!”

Raphtalia sheathed the sword on her waist with sparkling, motivated eyes. “Now then, please come again around this time tomorrow.”

“Aarg.”

“Thank you very much!”

“Until then.”

And thus, we left the weapon shop.

With our business there done, we headed off thinking about what to eat and what we should do for the remaining day.

Even though I couldn't taste anything, I still needed to eat since I got hungry like everyone else.

In my hands were 10 silver coins. What we managed to save up in one full week had vanished instantly.

Oh well. This was well within expectations, and these coins should be good enough to make our future investments.

Fortunately, there were plenty of ways to earn money.

“Ah, that's right. Do you want to eat at the shop that we went to a while ago?”

“Are you sure it's alright?”

“I'm looking forward to seeing Raphtalia's gluttonous manners as she

devours the food off her plate again.”

“Please stop that! Mou, I'm not a child anymore!”

The previously cheerful Raphtalia was now getting angry as she puffed her cheeks.

Why would you suddenly try to be an adult when you were acting like a kid only a week ago?

It looked like our little girl had just hit puberty.

“Yeah, yeah. You honestly want to eat. I understand that, I truly do.”

“Naofumi-sama isn't even listening to a word I'm saying.”

“It's okay. You're totally an adult. With that being said... you really want to chow down, don't you?”

“You think I can't see through your true thoughts behind those kind eyes used to patronize children?! I don't need that kind of sympathy!”

Good grief, she sure was at a difficult age.

Should we still get a Kid's Lunch for her? We entered the same shop which served those.

“Welcome!” Oh? Our server courteously guided us to our table this time.

Was this the effect of changing Raphtalia's hairstyle? People sure were cruel over the smallest things back then.

“I'll be ordering the cheapest meal set you have, while this girl will get the lunch for kids, the one with the little flag on it.”

“Naofumi-sama!”

The employee confirmed our orders with a perplexed expression while alternating between me and Raphtalia. “Err, please give me the cheapest table course meal as well.”

“Y-yes.”

Our server nodded at Raphtalia and returned to the kitchen. “What was that for? Do you really dislike the kid's lunch that much?”

“As I said before, I've already grown up.”

“Um... okay?”

Guess it couldn't be helped. I'll let Raphtalia indulge in her selfishness for now.

I suppose my only current obligation is to let her eat what she wants to eat.

Chapter 18: Engraved Dragon Hourglass

The next day, we showed up at the weapon shop.

"Well, if it isn't the lad."

"How's our order coming along?"

"Done! I've finished it a long while ago."

Oyaji said while bringing out a set of armor from behind the counter.

What came out was a rather rough and lawless looking... set of unrefined armor; there was a wild vibe to it.

The Usapiru hides made up the fluffy wool portion around the neck, while the chest area was comprised of a metal plate.

The joints weren't connected by metal, but by the Porcupine skins. Putting my hand in, I could feel the Pikyupikyu feathers fully stuffed between the dual skin layers.

"... I'm going to wear this?" How should I say this, it looked like the type of armor that bandit lords would wear.

Just what were they thinking by calling this the 'Barbarian's Armor'? I would look like one of those small time yankees back in the 90's if I wore this.

"What's wrong, lad?"

"No, I'm just thinking this looks like the armor of a wicked scoundrel."

"What are you saying at this late hour, lad?"

Huh?"Are you implying that I'm already a wicked scoundrel to begin with?"I certainly made the most efficient choices when it came to making money, but that didn't make me a villain, okay?"It will definitely suit you, Naofumi-sama!"

"Raphtalia... you--"

Wasn't that like admitting I was one of them?"Anyways, just try it on for us."

"Urg... I would avoid it if possible... but there isn't any other choice since we went through so much trouble in making this armor."

I immediately got changed after entering the dressing room.

... I couldn't even begin to describe my amazement on how perfectly fitted the size was.

It truly was something that could only be made by Oyaji, a true owner of a store who deals with weapons and armory. He could tell my specific sizes just by looking.

I came out of the dressing room and presented myself to both Oyaji and Raphtalia.

"Fumu... your face may not give off that barbaric vibe, but I can see the glint of a lawless thug within your eyes."

"Hah? Are you saying that I have nasty looking eyes?"

"Lad, you sure are quick on the uptake regarding important details."

Damn it, just what did you mean by that?"Naofumi-sama, it suits you so well and you look so COOL!"Raphtalia gushed over with a smile.

I glared at Raphtalia in silence.

Using the meanest look and most hurtful eyes as possible...

... That was my intention anyways. Just what kind of environment did she grow up in?

Ah, I forgot that Raphtalia was a Demi-human. It was probably because of that that she had a different aesthetic sense compared to me.

I confirmed through the status that this armor's defense was on par with the chain mail. Rather, it was a bit higher.

Oyaji sent me a wink. So this was his bonus for us, that was quite considerate I must say.

"Haah... Thank you."Frankly speaking, this kind of thing wasn't a hobby of mine, but I couldn't do anything about it since I had to prepare for the incoming wave.

I convinced myself using that reasoning.

"Now then, what should we do?"

"That reminds me, the town's atmosphere had been kind of tense lately."

"The wave will probably be coming very soon, but where and when will it spawn?"

"Huh? Nobody told you, lad?"

"About what?"

Information that Oyaji knew but I was ignorant of... About this country's counter measures against the calamity. I secretly cursed while listening to what Oyaji had to say. "You've probably seen this country's huge, famed clock tower in the town plaza, right?"

"Well, only a glimpse. I've usually been operating around the outskirts of town."

"The Dragon Engraved Hourglass is inside that building. When the final bit of sand from the hourglass drips down, the Heroes along with their merry band will be teleported to where the wave of great calamity will occur."

"Oh..?"

Without a doubt... that shitty king probably told this tidbit of info to the other heroes and their companions beforehand. "If you don't know when the wave will appear, why not stop over and take a look for yourself?"

"I... guess."

I'll be very troubled if I had no idea when I would be warped.

I planned on dropping by that place for some reassurance.

"Well then, Oyaji."

"So long then!"

"Until next time."

We said our farewells and headed for the clock tower.

In the entire town, the clock tower was the tallest structure around. From up close, it would rival the height of modern city buildings.

For some reason, the clock tower's roof was dome-shaped very much like a church.

It seemed that there was no entrance fee; the gates were wide open and people were going in and out.

Wearing an outfit similar to a nun, the female receptionist was eyeing me suspiciously. She probably recognized my face.

"Are you the Hero of the Shield?"

"Haha, as you can see, I'm here since the time limit is just around the corner."

"Then, please come this way."

I was then guided towards an hourglass enshrined in the middle of the church.

A gigantic hourglass with a whopping height of approximately 7 meters.

It was decorated and gave off an indescribably divine aura.

... What was it? My spine felt tingling, like a surge of electricity was rushing up.

Just by looking at it, my instincts kicked in and a strange sensation began to stir from within my body.

The color of the sand... was red.

I turned my gaze upon the smooth, dripping sand.

I immediately understood what would happen once the last grain fell.

Letting out a "piin*" sound, a single beam of light flashed from my shield and into the center of the dragon engraved hourglass, striking the jewel from within it.

Then a digital clock appeared in my peripheral vision.

20:12The 12 value soon turned into 11 after a short while.

I see, so the exact time remaining was translated for my own understanding.

Using this will allow me to act accordingly.

However... the things that I could do within a 20-hour time frame were extremely limited. All things considered, the best option was to gather as many meadow herbs as possible for the rest of the day.

I also needed to prepare some healing medicine.

"Huh? Isn't that Naofumi over there?" A loathsome, despicable voice resounded from within the tower's interior.

Walking around with a huge harem of women, the Spear Hero Motoyasu casually came over to me.

What a pain, I want to immediately send his ass flying. But considering the time and place, I restrained myself from doing so.

"Did you also come here in preparation for the wave?" That was one hell of an indescribably lascivious look. He looked me over from top to bottom with a single, scornful glance. "What the hell, man. Are you planning on fighting with equipment of that level?" And what if I am?

Who do you think I have to thank for putting me in this situation? You and that goddamn bitch behind your sorry ass.

Motoyasu's gear was vastly different from a month ago, one can tell how high-leveled he was with a single glance at his equipment.

It wasn't iron-based, but a shiny armor made from silver. He wore cloth underneath which emitted a beautiful pale green tint, most likely due to the extra effects blessed by those clothes. Not only that, but there was the layer of chain mail worn in between those two; it was as if Motoyasu was boasting his absolute defense.

His legendary weapon wasn't in its original, sorry state either. And although it is vexing to admit, the spear's design was simply downright awesome to be honest.

It was a pike... well, I guess that was still a spear.

"..."Talking with this guy was such a pain.

I turned my back on Motoyasu and ignored him while heading back to the clock tower's entrance.

"What in the name of Melromarc, Motoyasu-sama is talking to you! Open your ears wide and pay attention to him." A fangirl bitch from behind Motoyasu said as they all glared at me with eyes full of contempt and bloodlust.

After that came the stereotypical mockery. They began to provoke me by sticking out their tongues and jeering.

This bitch, I'll kill her someday.

"Naofumi-sama? Who are these people...?" Raphtalia inclined her head and pointed at Motoyasu's group. "...I tried to walk away, deciding that it was best to simply leave and not answer her.

At that same moment, Itsuki came waltzing through the entrance.

"Tsk."

"Oh, Motoyasu-san and... Naofumi-san."

Itsuki seemed displeased with me clicking my tongue at him, but his 'good boy' features soon returned. "...Ren had also come and walked up to us in silence, pretending to act cool. His equipment was undoubtedly much stronger than when his journey began.

And then, both of their companions popped up one after another.

The population within the clock tower quickly escalated.

$4 + 12 + 1$

We, the four summoned heroes, along with the twelve adventurers chosen by the king, and finally Raphtalia.

That added up to a grand total of 17 people, a rather disappointing amount of troops for the impending threat.

"Haa..."

"Just who is this beauty? She's simply adorable."

Motoyasu pointed at Raphtalia and uttered.

This guy, he's fine with anyone as long as they're female?

To think that a hero would lust after a little girl... this country was finished.

On top of that, he approached Raphtalia with filthy motives while affectionately introducing himself.

"Nice to meet you, young miss. I was summoned to this world as one of the four great heroes. Please call me by my name, Kitamura Motoyasu. I'm honored to make your acquaintance."

"Ah, yes... so you are one of those heroes."

Raphtalia nodded timidly while her eyes eluded his gaze. "May I have the pleasure of knowing your name?"

"Umm..."

A troubled Raphtalia looked over at me and darted her glance back to Motoyasu. "I'm Ra-Raphtalia. It's nice to meet you." She had probably guessed that I was quite ticked off. I understood that much from the cold sweat running down her face.

This girl also wanted to ditch me and join Motoyasu's fanclub, didn't she?

Goddamn it, I've already tried to make a peaceful retreat here, so why did these bastards still have to fuck with my heart?

"What's your business here today, cutie? For what purpose are you carrying around such a dangerous sword and equipment?"

"I am here to fight along with Naofumi-sama, that's why."

"Hah? For Naofumi?"

Motoyasu turned and stared at me with eyes full of suspicion. "... The hell are you looking at?"

"You fiend, why are you dragging such a cute girl into these dangerous

places?"

Motoyasu said while looked down on me with his eyes. "I don't need to tell you the reason, asshole."

"And here I thought you would shoulder this battle alone... so you're just leeching off Raphtalia's kindness in the end."

"Damn, delusional retard."

The trash spewing out from this son of a bitch, who trusted this parallel world's biggest whore more than a fellow hero, was seriously beginning to piss me off.

I headed toward Itsuki and Ren's direction in order to make my exit.

Those two and their merry companies opened up a path for me.

"Let's meet again during the wave."

"Don't be a burden to us."

I walked pass them with Itsuki giving off a professional response, while Ren gave a cruel, bossy one like a real lone wolf hero.

Surprised by my suddenness, Raphtalia quickly rushed over to my side while looking around restlessly.

"I'm going."

"Ah, hai! Naofumi-sama!"

After hearing my voice, she finally returned to her energetic self.

Good grief, that was painfully unpleasant.

Exiting the clock tower at last, I quickly passed through the castle town and made a beeline towards the meadow, growing more and more frustrated with each passing second.

"Um, Naofumi-sama? What happened to you?"

"Nothing really..."

"Back then..."

"What?"

"Never mind..."

Sensing my awful mood, Raphtalia hung her head dejectedly as she followed behind me.

... Then a wild Balloon appear!

Raphtalia immediately unsheathed her sword.

"Wait, let me handle this one alone."

"Eh... but--"

"Just let me!"

Raphtalia cowered in surprise from my sudden shout.

The Balloon appeared before my eyes.

"Ora ora ora ora!" Shit! Shit shit shit shit shit!

Distracting myself by pummeling the balloon, I was able to calm down a little.

I checked the remaining time from the corner of my vision.

18:0118 more hours.

I needed to do what I could until then.

After that, I went on a Balloon Hunt and collected medical meadow herbs along the way.

They still needed to be compounded into beneficial medicine in preparation for the incoming wave.

Then came evening... after returning to the inn to rest, Raphtalia humbly spoke to me.

"Naofumi-sama."

"... What?"

"The people this morning were heroes just like Naofumi-sama, right?"

"... Urg."

She had to remind me of that terrible experience.

And here I had finally forgotten about it after all that diversion.

"Just... what happened between all of you?"

"I don't want to talk about it. If you want to know then go to a bar and ask around."

No one believed me when I told them the truth anyway. This girl was probably the same as the lot of them.

However, a big difference between Raphtalia and others was that she was my slave.

If she refused my orders, tried to escape, or rebelled against me then she would be tormented by the curse.

Judging it was for the best, Raphtalia didn't press the issue since I wasn't going to talk.

To prepare for tomorrow, I compounded medicines until I fell asleep; I continued doing so for a long while.

Chapter 19: Memory / Black Beast

00:17

In just another 17 minutes, the anticipated wave will spawn.

This news should already be well-known around town.

Squadrons of knights and adventurers were geared up and ready to dispatch at a moment's notice, while the civilians barricaded themselves in their own houses.

Since I was a hero, I couldn't even attempt to escape from the wave's outbreak due to the hourglass' power.

The same was applied to my party member; it was likely that Raphtalia would be teleported along with me.

"It's almost time, Raphtalia."

"Hai!"

Raphtalia nodded with a strangely enthusiastic and excited response.

Well, I didn't voice any objections since it was a blessing to have her so motivated.

"Naofumi-sama... may I talk with you for a while?"

"Hm? That should be fine, what's your concern?"

"Ah no, somehow I felt so moved since we'll be fighting against the calamity soon."

... Why was she murmuring this and raising her own death flag?

I'll protect her since it would be a pain if she died... Wait, that was so unlike me; I was being influenced by too much anime and manga.

Although this world was like a game, it definitely wasn't one. This world was real.

And look at that, those shitty heroes had such fine equipment. I didn't even know if my armor was strong enough or not.

It was likely that I would suffer some wounds.

It would be great if this battle ended with only injuries, since I might even lose my life.

If that were to happen, the trash heap of this country would rejoice at the sight of my corpse.

—A criminal's fitting end.... Let's stop that. If I keep thinking this way then I won't be able to fight.

In order for me to survive for another month.

"The truth is that... I was enslaved due to the spawning of the first calamity."

"... Is that so?"

Certainly, I thought there was a slim chance that that might have been the case."I used to live in a remote region of this country. The demi-human village that I grew up in focused on agriculture and farming; it was also the spawn point of the very first wave."Her parents were kind and everyone in the village lived peacefully.

However, a huge horde of Skeleton Soldiers came out from within the wave of disaster.

The Skeleton Soldiers only had large numbers at first, so the adventurers within the vicinity were able to suppress them.

But the beasts and giant beetles kept overflowing in massive quantities. Because of that, the line of defense was soon breached.

Then a pitch black, three-headed Cerberus appeared. And the villagers were trampled upon like they were helpless wilderness buds.

As Raphtalia's village was desolated beyond recognition, the villagers desperately tried to escape.

Unfortunately, the monsters were merciless; they murdered everyone as if it was the greatest sport in the world.

And like all the others, Raphtalia's parents took her and fled until they

finally reached the edge of a sea cliff.

Knowing that escape was futile, both parents faced Raptalia and smiled.

They didn't use that time to escape, but to gently stroke her frightened head instead.

"Raphtalia... from now on, you will surely find yourself in a terrible situation. You might even die from it."

"But you know what, Raphtalia? Both of us want you to continue living... so please forgive us for our selfishness."

Even though she was young, she knew in her heart that her parents were only trying to keep her safe."Noo! Mommy! Daddy!"Don!

Their single greatest wish was for Raphtalia to live, and so they pushed her off the cliff.

While she was falling, Raphtalia witnessed the scene of her parents being pounced upon by vicious monsters.

Raphtalia plunged into the sea with a huge splash, yet she miraculously survived and was washed ashore at a nearby beach.

After regaining her senses, Raphtalia rose up and returned to the cliffside in search of her parents.

By then, the monsters were already subjugated by the adventurers and knight squadrons.

Walking through the sea of corpses with great difficulty, she managed to locate her parents.

On that spot was a vast amount of blood... and scraps of meat scattered everywhere.

Realizing her parents' death, Raptalia dropped down as something deep within her burst opened.

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!" She
then wandered around aimlessly, sobbing and sincerely wishing for the

warmth of her parents in an effort to escape reality.

And before she knew it, she had already been imprisoned within that dark corner of the circus tent.

That place... was comparable to hell.

Every day, someone would be purchased or returned.

Raphtalia was also among those cases.

In the beginning, they considered making her into a servant. A well-buffed noble bought her and tried teaching her multiple things.

Not only was the coughing troublesome enough, she also shrieked like a banshee at night.

Thus, she was promptly refunded back to the tent the next day.

The next buyer also attempted to teach Raphtalia various stuff, but again she was immediately returned the following day.

The owner before me was the cruelest buyer of them all.

They purchased her one evening, whipped her throughout the entire night, and resold her, tattered and torn, the very next morning.

I wasn't the least bit surprised that this country had sickos who would take pleasure in inflicting pain upon others.

She was wrecked by illness, her heart was almost broken from the recurring nightmares, and she was used and abandoned countless times... that was before she was bought by me.

"You know, I'm very glad to have met you, Naofumi-sama."

"... Yeah."

"You were the one who taught me how to live a proper life after all."

"... Yeah."

I absentmindedly replied to Raphtalia's story with a mechanical tone.

This didn't matter much at any rate.

"For that reason, please allow me a chance. A chance to confront this

wave."

"... Yeah."

"With that said, I'll do my best!"

"Ha... ha... give it your best shot."

Even I thought that I was acting a bit too cruel.

However, my past self could only act in such a pitiful manner.

00:01We have one more minute before it's time.

I took my stance, prepared for the teleportation.

00:00Bikin!A deafening sound echoed throughout the world.

The very next instance, my vision was flushed away and the scenery around me changed. I was probably being warped.

"The sky..."Dyed an eerie wine red, cracks began peeling away and expanding outward through the sky due to the dimensional rift."So this is..."While assessing the scene, three shadows dashed passed me, followed by twelve other people.

Those shitty heroes.

I also tailed them since it was the obvious thing to do, but where were they heading off to?

While sprinting onward, I saw enemies come crawling out and pushing against each other through the large crack in the sky.

"This is the vicinity of Riyuuto village!"Raphtalia anxiously exclaimed after examining the surrounding area."Since this is all farm land, a lot of people should still be dwelling here!"

"But everyone should have already evacu--"

Then a sudden realization hit me.

We never knew beforehand where the Wave of Calamity would appear, right? Then how the hell would we know which locations needed to be evacuated?

"You fools, wait a minute!" Refusing to heed my calls, the three idiotic heroes dashed straight towards the source of the wave.

During that time a group of monstrous spiders, having separated themselves from the overflowing monster horde, headed straight towards the village's direction.

Wait, the buffoon hero troupe had shot something like a bullet flare up into the sky, signaling a sort of message.

It must have been to inform the knight squadrons and rally them to their location.

"Tsk!! Raphtalia! Let's go protect the village!" I was indebted to many of the people from Riyuuto village.

I'd definitely suffer from remorse if they got killed by the wave!

"HAI!" We then rushed to a different direction, separating from those shitty heroes.

Chapter 20: Wave of Calamity

We arrived right on time as the demons overflowing from the wave started to wreak havoc within the village.

The adventurers and soldiers stationed there were barely able to defend against the horde's onslaught. They were greatly outnumbered...

... and the line of defense was about to break.

"Raphtalia, please evacuate the villagers."

"Huh? What about Naofumi-sama..?"

"I will aggro the enemy!"



I flung myself into the frontline and bashed my shield against a group of locust-looking monsters.

The sound of metal colliding was there but the damage obviously wasn't.

However, I was able to grab their attention.

It was the same as what I had always done with Raphtalia.

"Gugi!"The herd of tiny locust-like monsters charged at my direction. Moving on, I immediately decided on my next targets: the ghouls and the swarm of wasps.Bang! Bang! Bang!Was it thanks to the barbarian's armor, or was it the shield? Either way I received zero damage as usual."Yu-yuusha-sama?"

"Ah, right... You guys go and reorganize yourselves while I hold them back!"

I saw a lot of familiar faces within the Riyuto village bunch.

"Y-yes sir!"

Fortunately, no one was fatally wounded among the survivors even though I was the only one on the frontline."What the..."What was that thought just now? How unpleasant.

While I was dazed, the monsters attempted to knock me out of commission with their claw, fang, and needle attacks.

Even though there were the sweet sounds of impact, I didn't feel any pain, only a bit of an itch. However, the feeling of them crawling all over my body was beyond disgusting.

Hence I beat the crap out of the mobs.

WAMP!

Damn it, didn't any of the inhabitants of this world know how to leave people alone?

But I guess it couldn't be helped since the wave of great calamity was happening and all that.

"He-help m—!"Behind me, the innkeeper whom I was indebted to was being attacked by a monster.

Right before the innkeeper got decapitated by the monster's claw, I shouted: "Air Strike Shield!"I cast the skill, and a lifesaving shield was immediately summoned and rescued the innkeeper.

He was surprised at the sudden appearance of the shield and looked towards my direction.

"Run for it!"

"... Ooh, thank you."

After he bowed from his waist and voiced his gratitude, the innkeeper left the scene along with his family.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" A stereotypical, ear-deafening shriek.

It was the sight of a damsel in distress fleeing away with a gang of pursuing monsters.

I approached the vicinity.

"Shield Prison!" I called forth a box of shields to surround and protect the damsel.

With the shields' sudden appearance, the monsters switched their target to me.

That's good. Come over here. I'm very delicious.

Before the duration time of the Shield Prison expired, I lured the monsters away and returned to the frontline.

WAM! BAM!

Haah haah...

My body steadily became heavier with the increasing number of monsters.

Then, a rain of fire poured down on top of me.

Behind the horde of monsters, I could spot the knight squadron's arrival. The magic users among their ranks were shooting out their magic; so this was the cause of the fire.

"DUDES! There are allies over here!" Although, there was only me here.

The monsters were quickly ignited and turned into cinders.

Since there were a lot of insects they burned nicely.

Apparently, not only was my physical defense high but my magical defense was as well.

The front line was burning brightly with a crimson red. Anger swelled up from within me while questioning the motive behind this friendly fire; I glared and approached the knight squadron amidst the mayhem as my cloak fluttered, scattering the flames.

"Hmph, so that is the Shield Hero... He's surprisingly resilient." The person who appeared to be the knight commander threw me a glance and spat on the ground while uttering those words.

Then a shadow dashed at him, brandishing a sword.

And with a loud 'Klang!', the knight commander quickly unsheathed his own sword and locked blades with his attacker.

"What was the meaning of your actions against Naofumi-sama?! I will cut you down depending on your answer!" Raphtalia declared with great bloodlust. "A companion of the Shield Hero, huh?"

"Correct, I am Naofumi-sama's blade! I shall not forgive any act of disrespect!"

"... How dare a demi-human try to speak on the same level as us knights?"

"You have neglected your duties of protecting civilians and attacked your own allies, specifically Naofumi-sama whom you tried burning along with all the monsters using your magic. For those reasons, you people are unfit to be called knights!"

"Isn't it fine since he's still safe and sound over there?"

"No it's not!"

Raphtalia passionately continued arguing with the knight commander while the others began to surround her. "Shield Prison!"

"Damn, you basta——"

I confined the encircling knights with my shields and stared down at the knights who tried to usurp my hard work. "... Aren't the real enemies here the monsters spawned from the wave? Don't mix up your objectives!" Ashen-faced, the knights turned their heads away after my

rebuttal."A criminal Hero doesn't have the right to say such crap."

"Oh well... I'm fine with anything. So I guess it's safe to say that you guys want to make an enemy out of me?"

The frontline was brimming with fire blazing monsters who were crawling all over my face, with more and more from the wave joining the fray.

Looking at me withstanding all of that, the knights' faces turned completely blue.

After all, I was the Shield Hero. 'Do not mess with this guy' or other lines of reasoning were there.

"Raphtalia, did you finish with the evacuation?"

"No... it's not done yet. I believe that it will take a little bit more time."

"Understood, then hurry up and evacuate the civilians."

"But..."

"Though our allies had rained fire on me, it wasn't even painful or ticklish. It just... left a feeling of being licked on my arms and legs."

I patted Raphtalia's shoulder and followed with a glare at the knights."... I will definitely kill you, no matter what it will take. I'll lure the worst monsters here and abandon you, for example, as well as all that other fun stuff too."My threat was effective; the knights stopped chanting magic and gasped."Now then, Raphtalia. The fight's already started; let's remove the disabled away from the battlefield, discarding all this dead weight. Wow, look at that. There sure are a bunch of enemies. Yes, let's do just that."Unexpectedly, since the knights can seemingly hold their own... it should be alright to ditch them here."Y-yes!"Upon my orders, Raphtalia rushed back to the village."Shit! Putting on airs even though you're just a criminal Hero."The knight commander bellowed at me like an idiot right when the Shield Prison's duration time expired."Alright, so you... want to die?"Monsters began to stir towards me.

The idiot shuts up, knowing what would happen if I were to abandon

them and only protect myself.

Geez, I couldn't seem to find a decent person amongst all of these people.

These guys were the type that thought that I wouldn't be able to do anything other than protect others since I was nothing but a Shield Hero. Who the hell would ever help others for the fun of it?

Afterwards, the cleanup of the stranded monsters from the wave was completed to some extent.

Once she was done with evacuating the civilians, Raphtalia returned to the frontline, that was when I commenced my retaliation.

Using the knight squadron as our human shield, we finished off the monsters by baiting them into our encircled formation. And a few hours had passed by in no time at all.

"Alright, I guess that's the end."

"Seems like it, this boss was a cakewalk."

"Yep, at this rate, the next wave will also be a cinch."

Our bravely fought heroes were simply chatting at the heart of the frontline; where the corpse of a Chimera, the wave's Boss, laid.

It was as if the job of evacuating civilians were only the adventurers and knights' responsibility...

Even though a month had already passed, these folks still think that all of this is nothing but a game.

It was quite a hassle for me to ignore these shitty heroes, but I was relieved that I managed to survive this wave.

The sky's color was still pitch black. Although it was only a matter of time before it would be dyed orange by the setting sun.

With this, I should be able to stay alive for at least another month.

... Although I didn't receive any damage, that was probably due to the wave being weak: for now. I honestly don't know if I can endure the next

one.

Sooner or later I'll be unable to withstand their attacks... what in the world would happen to me then?

"A job well done, oh brave heroes. The king has properly readied a feast in celebration for your achievements. We humbly invite you to join in since we will also be handing out your rewards there." I naturally didn't want to participate. However, I had no more money. So I'll bless them with my presence. Let us depart together!

Indeed, it was expected for them to prepare our tributes, ones which equal our efforts for every wave.

500 silver coins. That was quite a sum of money for me at the moment.

"Ah, um..." The Riyuto villagers saw me and came over to talk. "What?"

"Thank you very much. We would all be dead if you weren't here."

"It would be the same if I wasn't around."

"No."

Another villager refused my comment. "It was thanks to you being there that we were able to survive."

"If you think so, then just do whatever you want."

""YES!""

The villagers bowed to me and went back.

Their village was violently raided. I suppose that it would be quite a hassle to reconstruct it afterwards.

They merely expressed their gratitude to their life savior, whom they usually despise... what a calculating bunch.

"Naofumi-sama!" After the long battle, a muddy, sweaty and smiling Raphtalia came running over to me. "We really did it! Everyone is expressing their gratitude."

"... I guess."

"With this, there will be nobody who'll end up like me. It was all thanks to Naofumi-sama!"

"... Haaa."

So this was what they called a post-war bliss, famous throughout the history of my birthplace; Raphtalia was moved to tears. "I too... tried my best."

"Right, you did well."

I praise her while patting her head.

That's right. Raphtalia had followed my orders and fought devotedly.

It would be a folly of mine to falsely evaluate that.

"I defeated a bunch of monsters."

"Haha, that certainly saved me."

"Guhehe."

I felt a bit uncomfortable with Raphtalia laughing so blissfully like this, dood: we headed towards the castle.

"Well well! As expected of our heroes. I cannot contain my surprise after seeing the difference between the casualties from this battle and the last." Once the sun had gone down and the night sky had taken over, the king declared loudly to his grandiose banquet held within the castle.

On that note, I had no idea what the casualty count was before, but this time the casualties were within the single digits.

... Though I had no intention of taking credit for that.

I didn't resent that bunch of muscle-headed heroes at all for charging in and beating the crap out of the monsters while leaving me behind to do all the cleanup.

However, I thought to myself that we'll eventually be left in a sorry state at this rate.

We were lucky this time, but who knew what would have happened if the knights didn't arrive on time. It was thanks to the sand hourglass for

sending us close to them.

This was such a heavy subject...

Cry out for help, and aid shall come. It was about the battle against the wave.

Mobilizing knights to accompany us when we got teleported by the hourglass was a valid possibility.

But didn't the knights get left behind right after we were teleported the last time?

It must have been their attitude! Those people didn't want to acknowledge me as a hero, so that's why they weren't teleported!

But... didn't the party of those shitty heroes get teleported too?

Just, how the hell?

This kind of setting was weird as hell if this was a game.

... Anyways, aren't we in big trouble? This is the part where they will drop their guard just because aid arrived.

In short, it's complicated stuff.

I ate my share in an appropriate looking corner while the banquet was being held.

"This is such a feast!" Raphtalia stared at the mountain of food which she normally couldn't get a chance to eat with eyes shining like stars. "Go and eat whatever you want."

"Yes sir!"

I don't usually give her a lot of good food to eat... so it would be wise to let her eat whatever she desired here. Once she ate her fill, she would be an even better war asset. "Ah... But, I'll gain weight if I eat too much."

"You didn't even hit your growth spurt yet, right?"

"Urg..."

For some reason Raphtalia was making a very troubled expression. "It's

fine to eat whatever you want."

"Do you prefer fat girls, Naofumi-sama?"

"Huh?"

What was she saying?"Not at all."Just thinking about women would only make me imagine that bitch. A lot of unpleasant feelings would also pop up.

To begin with, that woman was a life form that was repulsive to the mind...

"I suppose that's right. That's just like the usual Naofumi-sama."She said as if giving up on whatever was on her mind."Naofumi-sama, this is so good."

"That's nice."

"Yes."

Hmm... This banquet was such a waste of time. Just when will I get my reward?

This place was like a cesspool of garbage, just looking around made my anger boil.

... Thinking back, it was quite possible that the rewards would be handed out tomorrow.

Then was this a fool's errand? No, since the food was good I'll let it fly.

It's not the same for normal people since Raphtalia was in the middle of her growth spurt! By no means I am a fool to pass this chance up.

"I wonder if they have something like a container in order to bring food home."One should always think about tomorrow and never waste money.

... I'll have ask them to let me have the rest and re-cook the food later. Anything that can be considered food will be fine.

Amidst the crowd, a raging Motoyasu was pushing his way through, heading towards our direction.

Really, just what the hell is wrong today?

Since it looked like a pain in the ass, the crowd split apart and made way for that trash, Motoyasu, as he glared at me with intense hatred.

"YO! NAOFUMI!"

"... What?"

He removed the glove on one of his hands and threw it at me.

If I was right, that guy wanted to challenge me to a duel.

The crowd was stirred into motion by his following statement.

"Duel with me!"

"Just what are you talking about?"

Was his brain finally fried?

You'll turn into an idiot if you kept on thinking about games all day long.

The goddamned spear hero who charged in to kill the boss like a madman, ditching all the innocents that he should have defended.

"I know it all! Raptalia-chan was only tagging along with you just because she's your slave!" He was burning with fighting spirit as he pointed at me and denounced. "Hmm?" The person in question was feasting upon her piled up delicacies. "So, what about it?"

" 'So, what about it?'... you say?! Did you seriously just say that!?"

"Haaa."

What's wrong with possessing a slave?

There was nobody that was willing to fight alongside me. Hence, I bought and used a slave.

And this country didn't have a ban on slavery anyway.

So, for what reason did he go on a rampage for?

"She's my slave. What's it to you?"

"It's... it's not the enslavement that's wrong! It's because we're heroes with different worldly ethics than the people here which makes your

actions wrong!"

"Isn't that a bit too late... there were plenty of slaves back in our world, right?"

I didn't know anything about Motoyasu's world. But it was literally impossible for mankind's history to be without the existence of slavery.

A different way of interpreting it would be: members of society are slaves to the higher corporations.

"Unforgivable? Are you even using your head? Think with that goddamn brain of yours!" Forcing others to follow their own biased beliefs... This guy's mind has problems. "But it's such a shame that this is a different world. Slaves exist here. And what's the problem with me using them?"

"Bas... tard!"

Gritting his teeth, Motoyasu swung his fist at me. "Duel with me! If I win, release Raphtalia-chan!"

"Why would I have to accept this challenge to begin with? What's in it for me anyways?"

"You can do whatever you desire with Raphtalia-chan! Just like now."

"Are you retarded?"

I attempted to ignore Motoyasu and leave, since this duel had nothing to offer me. "I have heard Motoyasu-dono's story." The excited crowd made room for the king to pass through. "I heard that one of the heroes was using slaves... although only as a rumor. If you refuse Motoyasu-dono's proposal then I shall order it. Duel!"

"My ass. Just hand over this wave's reward already. I have no time to waste in a place like this!"

The king sighed and twitched his fingers.

The soldiers appeared out of nowhere and began to surround me.

When I looked over at Raphtalia, she was detained by the soldiers.

"Naofumi-sama!"

"... Are you threatening me?"

I said while staring him down with all the force I could muster.

This guy, he didn't believe what I said at all.

So that's the case, didn't know that I was intruding here.

"If you're in this country then my word is absolute! I can even forcibly confiscate the Shield Hero's slave if it comes down to that."

"... Tsk!"

Things like undoing the curse placed upon a slave, the court magicians probably knew about such techniques.

In other words, to preserve my connection with Raphtalia, I have to fight.

Don't fuck with me! I barely even got any return from my purchase on this slave!

Whose money and time do you think was invested on her?

"This match is meaningless! I am——uuuuurg!" A piece of cloth was rolled up and stuffed into Raphtalia's mouth so that she wouldn't be able to say anything. "The owner has the power to strengthen the punishing curse of the inflicted individual. Therefore, let us stop this slave from speaking any further."

"... You just did that so that I would have to participate in the duel."

"Aren't we simply granting you the participation prize?"

"What! You bas——"

"Well then, the duel shall be held in the castle's garden!"

That asshole of a king interrupted my complaint and declared the duel location.

Shit, don't you people see that I have no attack power? This is like a gimped race!

Chapter 21: Contradiction in Action

At this very moment, the castle's garden had turned into a dueling arena.

Along the edge of the vicinity, torches were brightly lit and the joyful folks from the banquet expectantly gathered around to witness a duel between heroes.

Unfortunately, the outcome of this duel was already predetermined.

I, who ultimately dealt zero damage, versus the Spear Hero, Motoyasu.

A match between the parties of both the Shield Hero and the Spear Hero! ...not! What was about to take place was a one-on-one duel between Motoyasu and I.

It seemed that the proposal for a team battle was rejected by Motoyasu due to his overflowing pride, and thus we came to have our solo matchup.

Everyone already knew how the duel would turn out.

No sounds of people placing their bet could be heard.

Although this event was taking place within the royal palace, among the varying mix of nobles were adventurers who aided in the wave-effort.

Hence it was natural not to start a gambling circle here.

Everyone unanimously believed that I would end up being defeated.

As spectators, Ren and Itsuki could be seen looking and laughing from within the castle terrace.

They seem to have pleasure in witnessing the moment when I have my slave stolen from me.

Shit. Shit! SHIT! FUCK IT ALL! Every last one of them thought of nothing but to harass me.

For example, raining fire down on me amidst the battlefield confusion during the wave.

In the eyes of the people in this world, I am nothing but the object of

scorn and ridicule.

... That's just great. Defeat might have been the only choice for me all along. But, I won't be defeated without putting up a fight.

"Now then, let us commence the duel between the Spear Hero and the Shield Hero! The victor and the vanquished shall only be determined either before the finishing blow is directly dealt or when one of them accepts their defeat!"

I twisted my joints, cracked my fingers, and shifted into my battle stance. "Who will fall first, the shield or the spear? Such a match... this will be a joke." Motoyasu spitefully stared at me and hissed with his nose.

Are you mocking me?

"Well then———" Motoyasu, I'll show you that only knowing how to fight won't defeat your opponent.

If one were to ask a merchant whether the sharpest weapon or the sturdiest shield is the 'strongest' equipment a person can have, then that merchant will just contradict themselves over the meaning of 'strongest'. As a matter of fact, the word itself holds no meaning.

However, even if the word is a contradiction in and of itself, I will accept such a contradiction.

And to begin with, what elements decide the outcome of this duel?

Isn't this just the same as Shogi and Go?

Even if that's the case, how would this affect the outcome of the duel?

The ultimate purpose of a spear is to kill your opponent.

The ultimate purpose of a shield is to act as your guardian.

If one was to carefully analyze and think about it, the sturdiest shield will always triumph over the sharpest spear.

Their purposes were fundamentally different. The spear and shield that is.

"Begin!"

"Uwooooooooooooooooooooo!"

"Hyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"



I rushed at Motoyasu with a Falcon Punch while Motoyasu rushed at me with his spear leveled, preparing to pierce me.

The distance was shortened in an instant. Motoyasu thrust his spear at me, utilizing our momentum to amplify the penetrative force.

There is no attack that cannot be blocked if one is able to see the direction it's coming from.

"Chaos thrust!" Motoyasu flicked his arm and his spear instantly appeared to have multiplied several-fold.

A Skill! That certainly came at an unexpected moment.

But my rush was unstoppable.

I charged through while holding the shield over my head.

Clang!

Whoosh!

Arg... I could feel pain run through my shoulders and into my legs.

Although they were only scratches, attacks from a hero sure were different as expected.

However, Motoyasu's Skill came to a sudden halt; it seemed to have entered its cooldown period.

"Eat this!" But Motoyasu continued to thrust his spear at me.

The spear, its weakness lies within its range.

Like any other polearm, it is specialized for mid-ranged combat. Once inside of this range, its difficulty of usage becomes apparent.

Usually this doesn't matter as you only need to defeat your enemies before they have a chance to get close. Not for me though, my shield won't collapse to a single blow.

I dodged Motoyasu's thrust by a hair's length and charged with my whole body weight, focusing everything on a single point.

And thus my fist dug splendidly into Motoyasu's face.

Guh!

Tsk! It's impossible for me to deal any damage after all.

However, my attacks won't end with just that.

That bastard Motoyasu didn't even seem to move an inch from my

attack and just rolled his eyes.

Let's see how long you'll be able to keep that face, hmm?I pulled a deadly weapon from within my mantle and threw it towards Motoyasu's face.

GABUUU!

"GO!"My stockpile was completely wiped out earlier during the wave and the fiery rain, so I picked up a few along the way to the castle for negotiation usage."Wait? WHAT!?"Kukuku... look at that idiot Motoyasu speaking in a confused and puzzled voice.

NOM NOM CHOM!

"Ouch, OUCH!"Motoyasu writhed in agony from the pain of his oh-so-precious face being bitten.

Yep, my attacks aren't just barehanded only.

There is also the existence of a convenient weapon invented by humanity's experts, BALLOON!

"ORA ORA ORA!"Two on the face and an extra one to his crotch ensure that he's unable to get back up."Wh-, WHY THE BALLOONS!?"The spectators shrieked.

Now you know!

I kept adding kicks with all of my weight to the balloon that was feasting upon his crotch.

"Kuh... Asshole! What sort of move is this?!"

"I can't win anyways so I'll just harass you to the utmost of my abilities! The targets are: the face – a popular guy's lifeline – and the crotch – the proof of your manhood! Inside those balls of yours are just gross otaku-substances!"

"WHAT!? STOP ETTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT!"

"Don't ask for the impossibleeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

I relentlessly knocked Motoyasu's loins with one heavy kick after

another.

Motoyasu managed to peel off the balloon on his face, but was unable to muster any of his impotent strength to lift his spear.

To buy even more time, I decided to throw the previously peeled off Balloons onto his face once again.

And of course the Balloons weren't the only weapons I had, there were Eggies too. Motoyasu's situation was like sitting on a throne of needles.

I'll have my fill of harassing him this time around.

I will lose either way, so I'll carve the utmost trauma onto his soul.

"ORA ORA ORA!"

"ARG! DAMN YOUUUUUUUUU!"

Motoyasu concentrated all of his power into lifting my weight off his body, but I continued with my malicious strikes.

FUFUFU!

This is invigorating! Let me hear more of your tormented cries!

My laughter and smile naturally surfaced from deep inside me.

"GUAH..!" Suddenly my back was forcefully pushed and I ended up staggering forward.

I looked back at the direction from where the staggering force came from.

What I found was that bitch!

Mein was hiding within the crowd of people with her hand extended toward my direction.

Most likely, that was a type of wind magic.

To be more precise, Wind Blow is a spell that accumulates and fires a condensed, fist-sized mass of air.

Since the condensed mass of air is transparent, it wouldn't be noticeable if not closely observed.

That bitch Mein smirked then pulled down one of her eyelids and provokingly stuck out her tongue.

"Biiiiiiiiitch!" I staggered again in mid-shout due to Motoyasu's counterattack, having regained his stance thanks to the reduced weight on his body.

Motoyasu panted as he pushed me down, threateningly holding his pike at my neck. All of my Balloons were shaken off at this point.

"Haa... Haa... My, WIN!" While holding his spear, Motoyasu declared with a tone ever more desperate than when he fought against the wave of calamity.

Chapter 22: What I Wanted to Hear

"What do you mean by 'win', you coward!"

Our one-on-one duel was interrupted, right!?

"What are you talking about? You lost because you couldn't stand up to my strength."... You bastard, you're seriously saying that.

What was that crap about heroes! That they shouldn't own slaves!

You trash, acting like a hero while rigging this battle to satisfy yourself.

"Your comrade interfered in the middle of our fight! That's why I staggered!"

"Ha! Is that lie the bitching of a loser?"

"That's not it, you asshole!"

That coward Motoyasu looked down on me, ignoring my complaints while feeling victorious.

Even though there really was an intrusion... that bastard!

"Is that so."The spectators had their eyes on Motoyasu.

Did they not see what happened..? Everyone was completely silent.

"There is no need to believe the words of a criminal Hero. Hero of the Spear! It is your victory!"That asshole!

Just like that, the king boldly announced the result.

Even then, some of the crowd was unsure. They looked around as if they wanted to speak up. However, there was no one who would challenge what the king had declared.

Because the king had silenced all dissent.

This kingdom was a complete dictatorship!

"As expected of Motoyasu-sama!"The bitch who was the instigator of this incident shamelessly rushed to Motoyasu's side.

Furthermore, the castle's magicians only cast healing magic on

Motoyasu, treating his wounds.

Looks like they had no intention of helping me.

"Fumu, as expected of the Hero whom my daughter, Malty, has selected."

The king says as he places his hand on Mein's shoulder.

"W-what..!?" Mein is the king's daughter!?" Ah... I was also surprised at the time upon hearing that Mein is a princess. She used a fake name in order to slip amongst us."

"Yes... I wanted to help for the sake of world peace~"

... I see. So it's like that.

It seemed strange how easily I was labeled a criminal with just the victim's testimony.

So that's what it was... The king overlooked his idiotic daughter's selfishness and pushed a false crime onto me using fake evidence. For the sake of the Hero that his daughter had chosen, he sacrificed me and reclaimed my money because I was the weakest among the Heroes.

And because Motoyasu saved the princess from me, they ended up becoming closer, more so than all the other girls around him.

This also explains why I received additional funds at the beginning.

In other words, she was able to obtain good equipment for herself as well as support her chosen hero, Motoyasu.

If Motoyasu alone started off with equipment far better than the other Heroes, then even he would find it suspicious and be wary.

With such meticulous planning, there's definitely no way to find the truth other than from the culprits themselves. In the end the result was a worthless, criminal Shield Hero and the Spear Hero who magnificently saved the princess.

Piece by piece, everything began to make sense.

There was no evidence other than the blow I received, which did no

damage apart from making me stagger. There was no clear evidence that the princess was cheating.

Any objections to this rigged match were probably silenced behind the scenes.

So she could interfere in our duel and cover for her favored hero, Motoyasu.

In that case, it must have been planned from the start for Motoyasu and I to have this duel.

...Oh, it's so simple. All she had to do was whisper this to him: "That girl has been forced into slavery by the Shield Hero. Please save her." A chance to both test her potential husband as well as to show herself in a good light. If it's her, she definitely won't let that chance slip by.

If they do get married in the end, this will become a heroic tale of how they rescued a slave from a criminal.

And in the distant future, her name will be carried on as the wife of the virtuous Hero who defeated the evil Hero.

Shit! This trash king and bitch princess!

No, wait... the princess, a bitch...? This phrase, where have I heard it before?

Where? Where did I hear such a thing?

... I remember now. I read it in the 'Four Heavenly Weapon's Manual'..

In that book the princess was a bitch who whored herself to all the Heroes.

If the book I read in the library is related to this world, then it makes sense that the princess is a bitch. The same can apply to all these other shitty Heroes.

A seething rage from the very depths of my body enveloped me. Curse Series The conditions for unlocking this shield have been met.

My vision distorted as my shield was swallowed by the pitch black

emotion overflowing from my heart."Now then Motoyasu-dono, the girl which the Shield Hero has kept enslaved is waiting."The crowd separated as the magicians began to release Raphtalia from the slave curse.

The magicians brought a bowl overflowing with a certain liquid and smeared it on the slave mark etched onto her chest.

The mark faded away before my eyes.

Raphtalia was now officially freed from her enslavement.

My stomach churned as my heart was consumed by a dark feeling.

It's as if this world was ridiculing and scorning me, all the while laughing at my struggles.

All I can see... are the dark grins of the shadowy presences around me.

"Raphtalia-chan!"Motoyasu rushed over to her.

Raphtalia, with the gag now removed from her mouth and tears flowing down her face--

--slapped Motoyasu."You... coward!"

"... Eh?"

Motoyasu had a dumbfounded look on his face after being hit."I never asked to be saved by your cowardly tactics!"

"B-but Raphtalia-chan was being exploited by him, right?"

"Naofumi-sama has never forced me to do anything! Only when I was too afraid to fight did he ever use the curse!"

Slipping in and out of consciousness, I couldn't hear what was being said.

No, I could actually hear it.

But I did not want to listen to anyone.

I just want to hurry and run away from here.

I want to return to my world.

"He shouldn't have done that!"

"Naofumi-sama can't defeat any monsters by himself. That's why he has to rely on someone else to defeat them!"

"You don't need to do that! He'll just use you until you're broken!"

"Naofumi-sama has never once let any monsters harm me! And if I become tired he lets me rest!"

"N, No... he's not the type to be so considerate..."

"... Would you be able to offer your hand to a dirty slave wrecked with illness?"

"Eh?"

"Naofumi-sama has done so much for me. He allowed me eat whatever I wanted. He gave me precious medicine when I was sick. Would you be able to do that?"

"I-I would!"

"Then you should have another slave by your side right now!"

"!?"

For some reason... Raphtalia ran over to me. "S-stay away!" "This... is hell. A maliciously created world.

Women - no - everyone in this world scorns me as if to torture me.

If she touches me, then I'll just be reliving those bad memories.

Raphtalia witnesses my condition and again glared at Motoyasu.

"I've heard the rumors... that Naofumi-sama forced himself onto his companion, that he is an awful Hero."

"A-Ah. He's a rapist! As a female slave, you should understand that, right!?"

"Why would I!? Naofumi-sama has never once laid his hands on me!"

Raphtalia then grabbed my hand. "L-let go!"

"Naofumi-sama... How can I earn your trust?"

"Let go of my hand!"

Everyone in this world accuses me of a crime I didn't commit.

"I didn't do it!"



"Pompf..."

Something covered my frenzied self.

"Please calm yourself Naofumi-sama.

Please hear me out and give me a chance to earn your trust."

"...Eh?!"

"...Or is it that you cannot trust anyone but a slave who can never disobey nor betray you? In that case please let's go to that place where we first met. So you can put a new curse on me. "

"Y-you're lying!... This is another trick to deceive me!"

"What was that!? Who?!"

This voice... these words... how come they managed to force their way into my heart?

"No matter what happens, I will always believe in you, Naofumi-sama"

"Shut up! You people are just going to pin more crimes on me!"

"...I don't believe those rumors. You are a person who would never do such a thing."

Ever since I arrived in this world, it was the first time... that I had heard the words I have been wishing for. Slowly the darkness that obscured my vision cleared out.

And I could feel the warmth of another person.

"Even if the whole world unites to blame you, Naofumi-sama. I will not... No matter how many time it takes, I will tell them all." Naofumi-sama did not do it.

"When I lifted my head, what laid in front of me was not a little girl, but a young woman around the age of seventeen.

While her features looked like those of Raphtalia, she was an unbelievably cute girl.

What should have been dry, cracked skin was now a healthy complexion, with beautiful hair that was slightly dusty in color.

The body that was once all skin and bones was now curvy with a fit, robust figure.

Most prominently, her eyes were no longer filled with hopelessness, but brimmed with a strong will.

I could not recognize a girl like her.

"Naofumi-sama, now let's go and place the curse on me again."

"W-who are you?"

"Eh? What are you saying? It's me, Raphtalia."

"No-no-no, isn't Raphtalia a little girl?"

She claimed to be Raphtalia. Troubled, she tilted her head while trying to convince me. "Geez, Naofumi-sama is always treating me like a child." That voice... is definitely the voice of the Raphtalia I remember.

However, her body was completely different.

No-no-no, this is strange even if she was Raphtalia.

"Naofumi-sama, I'll say this due to the circumstances."

"What?"

"When young Demi-humans raise their level, their bodies also mature quickly in order to match their level growth."

"Eh?"

"Demi-humans are not like humans. It is the same with monsters."

Embarrassed, the girl who claimed to be Raphtalia continued. "Although my... my mind is still that of a child, my body has already become similar to an adult." While telling me this, Raphtalia once again buried my head into her voluptuous chest. "Please believe me. I believe that Naofumi-sama has not committed any crimes. You are the great Shield Hero who has saved my life, given me precious medicine, taught me how to survive and how to fight. I am your sword, and I will follow you no matter what hardships we may face." Those were... the words that I wanted to hear.

The words spoken ever since Raphtalia swore to fight alongside me.

"If you don't believe me, then make me your slave or do whatever you wish with me. I will always stay with you."

"Ku...u....uu...."

From the first kind words that I received since arriving in this world, I unwittingly began to weep.

Although I felt that I shouldn't cry no matter what, I couldn't stop the tears from falling.

"Uuu..... uuuuuuuuu...""The duel just now... Motoyasu, you are disqualified."

"Haa!?"

Ren and Itsuki appeared from within the crowd and said. "We saw it clearly from above, your companion targeted Naofumi with wind magic."

"No, but... That can't be."

"The king has become silent. You understand from that much, right?"

"... Is that what happened?"

Motoyasu's head swept through the room, looking at the audience. "But he attacked me with monsters."

"They did no damage. You can check it for yourself."

Acting self-righteous now, Ren scolds Motoyasu. "But... He! He aimed for my face and crotch!"

"Using dirty tactics after being forced into a fight where he had no chance of winning. We should overlook something like that."

After hearing Itsuki's words, Moyotasu gave up arguing with a displeased look. "This fight seems to be your mistake this time, so just let it go."

"Hmph... what a shitty result. I'm still suspicious that Raphtalia-chan is being brainwashed."

"How can you still say that after looking at them like this?"

"That's right."

With the atmosphere turning awkward, the heroes began to leave while the crowd returned to the castle. "... Hmph! How boring."

"Yes... this was quite a disappointing result."

The two royalties who were dissatisfied with the match's conclusion left in irritation. Only Raphtalia and I were left in the yard. "It must have been tough for you. I didn't realize it at all. From now on, I want to share in your hardships." My consciousness drifted away when I heard her kind voice. After that, I slept while being embraced by Raphtalia for about another hour.

I was surprised. I didn't realize Raphtalia had already grown up so much.

Why didn't I notice?

... I was too stressed, probably. I didn't have the luxury of noticing Raphtalia's growth. All I could see were her rising stats in the status screen.

The feast has long ended. So I fell into a deep sleep in a dusty unused room, originally prepared for the servants.

Someone believes in me. With just that, I feel like a burden had been lifted from my heart. The meaning of this became clear the next day during breakfast.

For the first time since I was betrayed by Mein, my sense of taste had returned.

Chapter 23: Shared Pain

Just like last time, we assembled around 10.

This damn trash king is simply jerking me around... he should have just told us what was going on.

Now I have to meet up with these dicks. What if I end up getting an ulcer?

"Now then, I will distribute this wave's bounty reward and support funding."

Bounty?

An assistant appeared carrying bags filled with money.

"For each of the heroes."

I looked at the bags.

I see, just for monthly living expenses we would require at least 500 silver coins.

500 coins... would not be enough for preparation costs.

"Good job."

Raphtalia smiled while facing me.

"Ahh."

What should I buy with the money?

Maybe some weapon for Raphtalia would be for the best? Or maybe strong armor this time around?

Ahh, it's also about time to buy some new tools for mixing medicine. The truth is, the shield reacted to my current tools, so I'm curious what would happen if they were absorbed.

I fantasize about what to buy while hearing the coins clinking inside the bags.

I receive the bag and check its contents.

One, two, three... yup, 500 pieces.

"For completing requests and in expectation for Motoyasu-dono's other great deeds, we award 4,000 coins." Oi!

I stare dumbfounded at the heavy looking bag that Motoyasu was holding.

I feel like I'll be endlessly complaining if I start now, so I hold it in, clenching my fists.

"Next is Ren-dono, for displaying similar bravery during the wave and completing requests, we award 3,800 coins." You too!?

Ren coolly received the bag while making a face as if annoyed that he lost to Motoyasu. Even cursing silently, "All because the princess favors you..."

"Itsuki-dono... Your heroism echoes throughout the country. For your great work in times of strife, we award 3,800 coins." Itsuki acts as if this much was to be expected while looking at Motoyasu enviously.

What are these 'requests'?

"Hmm... Shield needs to work harder, you only get living expenses." Who's 'Shield'?! Is that supposed to be my name?!

I felt like a blood vessel would soon burst.

Even after going through all that bullshit from yesterday!?

"Um, Sire?" Raphtalia raises her hand. "What is it, demi-human?"

"... That is, what are requests?"

Raphtalia was also curious. Ignoring how little we received, we should at least investigate the reason.

"Requests are assigned to heroes to resolve problems that occur in the kingdom."

"... Why did Naofumi-sama not receive any requests? This is the first we've heard of this."

"Ha! What can Shield do?" Asshole!

The audience snickered.

Ahh, not good. I feel like I'm going to start rampaging.

Is what I thought until I feel Raphtalia grasp my hand as she whispered to let it go. I suppressed my anger while still trembling.

... It's fine, I can bear it.

"Be thankful for even receiving this much!"

"It's not like you helped us out at all."

"Right. I didn't see you during the wave at all, what were you even doing?"

"You're an embarrassment to us heroes. Completely useless."

My irritation had peaked. I spat out a sarcastic retort.

"Great heroes, abandoning the lives of the villagers to fight the boss sure was heroic."

"Ha! Just leave that stuff to the knights."

"The knights are useless, leaving it to them would have resulted in a massacre. You bastards who only aimed for the boss wouldn't understand that."

Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Ren all look towards the leader of the knights.

That bastard just nods back at them.

"Don't get ahead of yourself. Without the heroes dealing with the source of the wave, the casualties would have been far greater.

"This bastard... how can you say that?"

Acting all haughty while relaxing back at the castle.

Anyways, I'm also a hero. Or are you implying that the Shield Hero isn't one?

"Yeah, yeah. I'm busy with lots of stuff, so if there's nothing else we're leaving."

There's no point in arguing here. Let's just leave it at that and go.

"Wait, Shield."

"Hah? What. I'm busy unlike you assholes."

"You have been a disappointment; that money is our way of washing our hands of you."

Wha!?

So for all future waves I will get nothing. That's what you mean, right?

"That's great, Naofumi-sama!" Raphtalia replied with a wide smile.

"... Eh?"

"You don't need to waste your time coming here anymore. Instead of dawdling, you can now focus on more important things."

"O... Oh."

It feels like Raphtalia has become really reliable.

She tightly held my hand while calming me down.

"We will be taking our leave now."



Cheerily, she pulled me along and we turned to leave.

"The whining of a loser."

Motoyasu said while Ren and Itsuki just shrug.

... Yeah. Rather than an uncomfortable partnership, this was much better.

"Now then, let's head over to the slave tent and redo the curse."

"Eh?"

Leaving the castle, Raphtalia said while turning to me.

"Otherwise, Naofumi-sama will not be able to trust me completely."

"Well... Not really..."

I recall her words from yesterday.

With those words I felt that I could trust Raphtalia.

"It's... fine if you aren't a slave anymore."

"No."

"What?"

"You shouldn't lie. Naofumi-sama doesn't trust anyone other than a slave."

... Maybe I raised her wrong.

Well, even though it's true that I only trust slaves, Raphtalia is an exception.

Yeah.

"Um... Raphtalia."

"What is it?"

"It's fine even without the curse."

"No, I want it."

... Why is she so adamant about this?

"I also want something to prove that I trust you, Naofumi-sama."

"Haaa..."

First, what a weird person... that thought came to mind.

Second, I was reminded of Mein and got annoyed.

Why? I don't know why, but it's not like I'm angry at Raphtalia.

Normally I would feel... something else? What a strange feeling.

"So let's go."

"Fine."

If she insists, then I won't stop her.

To handle this matter, we headed back to the slave tent.

Chapter 24: Egg Gacha

"Oh, if it isn't Hero-sama. How may I be of service today?"

The gentle owner of the slave shop appeared flourishingly to welcome us.

"Oh?"

Surprised, he looked at Raphtalia curiously.

"What a surprising change. I did not think you would grow so well."

He said in a disappointed voice while slumping.

"... What?"

"I thought you would be more like us, how unfortunate."

What does he mean? But I'll just keep that question to myself.

"Real slave traders would raise high quality slaves by keeping them half dead."

He casually continued.

"Then the slaves you know of were discarded after being used, right?"

"N-Naofumi-sama?"

Raphtalia looked up at me concerned.

I've become a lot more confident now.

My current situation is much better than last time.

"Fufufu... Is that so, how exciting."

The slave owner, perhaps amused by my reply, let out a laugh.

"Then, looking at her condition... she has grown quite well. For a non-virgin... how about 7 gold coins?"

"Why are you talking like I'm going to be sold! Also, I am still pure!"

Shocked at Raphtalia's words, the slave owner let out a gasp.

"Oh my! Then how about 15 gold coins? May I confirm if she is a

virgin?"

"Naofumi-sama!"

15 gold coins for Raphtalia!?

"Naofumi-sama! Hey, please say something?"

15 gold coins would be enough to buy the Level 75 male wolf!

While I was having those thoughts, Raphtalia tightly grabbed my shoulder with a scary look on her face.

"Naofumi-sama... If you keep playing around, I'll get mad."

"What's wrong? You have a scary look on your face."

"You're not defending me at all even though I might be sold."

"I'm just playing along."

--That's how I'll have to play it off as. Although I did think it over, Raphtalia saw right through me.

I shouldn't pretend to consider selling the one person in this world who believed in me.

"15 gold coins...."

Her grip became stronger when I murmured this.

"Ow, ouch!"

Raphtalia's offensive strength... had become greater than my defense.

This was reliable in a combat sense.

"... I'll run away, you know."

"It's a joke. I was just thinking of how amazing and beautiful you've become."

"T-that... Oh, Naofumi-sama..."

For some reason, Raphtalia became bashful all of a sudden.

It's kinda irritating.

... Is what I thought, but why? What did I say?

"Well, she's not for sale."

"I see... that's too bad. So how may I help you?"

"Ah, didn't you hear about the commotion at the castle?"

The slave trader grinned at my question.

"I have. The slave curse was removed, no?"

"If you understand already, then this will be simple... Don't ask in the first place if you know beforehand."

Since I'm already tired from dealing with Raphtalia.

Good grief...

"Of course, you know, despite what the king declared, the slave system will still exist."

"Hmm, I thought the nobles didn't buy slaves?"

"No, not at all. There are many slaves owned by the wealthy. After all, they are quite useful, of course."

"That trash king, saying those things while supporting Motoyasu, the Spear Hero... Won't the nobles become rebellious? I would if I were them."

It'd be quite funny if that happened.

Although it'd be quite bad for the kingdom.

"Well, there are many factions within the kingdom. If they did rebel, the ones who will end up losing would be the nobles themselves. Yes."

"That bearded old man has that much influence?"

Was it because this kingdom was a complete dictatorship?

Then maybe the kingdom will eventually collapse due to an uprising.

Since the kingdom currently had a trash king who will be succeeded by a bitch princess.

"Actually, in this country, rather than the king--"

"Um... back to the matter of the slave curse..."

"Ah, yes."

We've digressed. Now that I think about it, I don't care what will happen to that trash king.

"So, you've come to reapply the curse, yes?"

"Yeah, is that possible?"

"Whenever you wish."

With a snap of his fingers, an assistant appeared with the same jar used when we first marked her.

An embarrassed Raphtalia took off her armor and exposed her chest.

"H-how is it?"

"How is what?"

"... Haa..."

?

Why is she acting so embarrassed?

Even sighing afterwards.

Did I do something?

Just like last time, I added my blood to the ink and the mix was coated on Raphtalia where the old mark used to be.

"Although the mark was erased, it is possible to restore it."

"Ohh--"

The erased mark began to reappear as Raphtalia's chest glowed.

"Ngh..."

As expected, it seemed to hurt. Raphtalia tried to bear the pain.

The mark was restored before my eyes.

I need to check the reaction from disobeying orders.

... It should be fine to go easy this time.

Raphtalia became a slave again to gain my trust. So I should trust her now as well.

"Now then."

While thinking about what to do, I noticed that there's some ink left on the plate.

"Hey, can I have some of that ink? I can pay for it."

"Sure, go ahead."

I spread the remaining ink from the plate onto my shield.

Suu-my shield absorbed the ink.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield has been unsealed.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield 2 has been unsealed.

Slaver's Shield.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave growth+ (S) Slaver's Shield 2.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave condition+ (S) Slaver's Shield... well, that's somewhat expected.

Something new appeared in the tree, branching from Small Shield series. It was not that strong.

However, the equipment bonus caught my attention Improved growth.

But two items were unlocked from just a little bit of ink?

I carefully look at Raphtalia.

"What is it?"

That reminds me that the shield absorbed her hair before. 'Racoon Shield' was unlocked at that time, but maybe that also fulfilled some of other conditions.

That was probably for Slaver's Shield 2. With those conditions fulfilled, two shields were unlocked.

I logically reasoned.

In that case...

"Raphtalia, give me a bit of your blood."

"What, why?"

"There's something I want to test."

Puzzled, Raphtalia makes a little cut on her fingertip and spreads some blood onto the plate. I drip it onto my shield.

-The requirement for Slaver's Shield 3 has been unsealed.

Slaver's Shield 3.

True power sealed... Equipment Bonus: Slave growth+ (M) Yes! As expected!

"Naofumi-sama? You seem like you're having fun."

"Ahh, an interesting shield appeared."

"That's great."

I change my shield to the Slaver's Shield and waited for it to unlock.

"Now then... Hmm?"

We've finished our business here and began to leave, but a wooden box filled with eggs caught my eye.

I don't remember seeing these last time. I was curious.

"What is that?"

I ask the slave trader.

"Ahh, that is what we sell as our business front."

"What business is that?"

"A monster shop."

For some reason he answered excitedly.

"Monsters? In that case, are there also monster tamers?"

"How perceptive, was Hero-sama not aware of this?"

"I don't think I've seen any..."

"Naofumi-sama."

Raphtalia raised her hand.

"What?"

"Filo Rial are monsters raised by a tamer."

The name of a monster I've never heard of. I have no idea what she meant.

"What is that?"

"It's a bird used to pull carriages instead of horses within the city."

"Oh, those things."

Those birds that looked like chocobos.

I thought those were just animals unique to this world, but I guess they were monsters.

"In the village I lived in, there were also people who raised monsters. They were raised for their meat in many of the farms."

"Ohh..."

Is that how it was? In this world it seems people who worked on farms also count as monster tamers.

"So then, those eggs are..?"

"It's difficult for people to handle monsters otherwise. This way is easier to do business."

"Is that so."

"Would you like to see the cages with fully raised monsters?"

If I showed interest he would try selling them to me. The slave trader was a businessman.

"No, it's fine."

I have other matters to attend to.

"So what's that sign on top of the box filled with eggs?"

Although I don't know what's written there, I saw an arrow pointing to the box and characters which looked like numbers.

"One try for 100 silver coins, a monster egg lottery!"

"100 coins is pretty high."

We currently have 508 silver coins. That was a hefty price.

"Because they are expensive monsters."

"Just making sure about Filo Rials, how much are they normally?"

"Starting at 200 coins for a grown one. They also provide lots of byproducts like feathers. Yes."

"So chicks are cheaper than adults? So this is the price of a Filo Rial egg... but there's also the cost of raising one?"

"No no, we also have other types of eggs in there."

"I see... since it's a lottery."

So he's saying there are losers and winners.

So a loss is worth less while a win is more than the attempt.

"So there's probably no winners in there, right?"

"What! Hero-sama thinks that we would pull such a scam!?"

"Am I wrong?"

"We have pride in our business! Although we do like to trick our customers, we would never misrepresent our products."

"You like to deceive, but won't lie..."

What kind of logic is that. I wonder dumbfounded.

"So? What is the winning prize?"

"An easy way to explain it to you would be a Kiryuu."

Kiryuu? That's maybe... a dragon that a knight commander would ride?

"A horse-like dragon?"

"These are the flying types. They are quite popular... so nobles often vie for them."

Flying dragons... like in dreams.

"Naofumi-sama?"

"The market price for one of these winners is about 20 gold coins."

"What are the chances? Just for the Kiryuu."

"Right now there are 250 eggs in the lottery. Among those, one."

So 1/250.

"Strong magic has been cast so you can't tell from the look or the weight. Only after customers acknowledge they may not win do we allow them to play."

"What a good business."

"Yes, if one wins we make sure to get their name. And from the publicity we get many participants."

"Of course, it's just luck..."

"If one buys 10 attempts then we allow them to pick another one from the box. Yes."

"But, how about excluding the Kiryuu?"

"Yes. Nevertheless, there are ones worth 300 silver coins."

Hearing that made me smile.

Wait a second... Isn't this just CompuGacha? Hey!

It's easy to reap huge profits with something like this.

I was nearly tricked again.

"Hmm..."

Still, I ended up seeing something interesting here.

Thinking about it, I feel somewhat vulnerable with just Raphtalia.

So which would be better, buying another slave or raising a monster?

It would be interesting to try out the new Slave Shield. Raphtalia's level has already gone up, so it would be difficult to get the benefits of Slave Growth+.

However, I was reminded of Motoyasu.

That guy sure was annoying about freeing slaves... Although, maybe it was just because Raphtalia was a pretty girl.

There were also many times when Raphtalia was in a lot of trouble.

Additionally, I would have to buy equipment for the slave. This would be a problem for my penniless self.

"Okay, then I will buy a single try."

"Thank you very much! This time I will also throw in the slave ceremony for free."

"Oh, how generous. I like that."

"Naofumi-sama!?"

"What's the matter?"

"Are you going to buy a monster egg?"

"Ah, I was thinking that our last battle was tough with just Raptalia. Equipment for another slave would be expensive, so I thought raising a monster would be interesting."

"Haa... But monsters can also be troublesome."

"I know that. Don't you want a pet though?"

"... But aren't you aiming for a dragon?"

"Even a crappy Usapiru is fine."

It's not like I hate animals, even MMOs have pet taming features. Hopefully, raising it would be just as relaxing. Either way, as long as it's able to obey orders like a slave, then it should have a higher attack than me.

I notice that since I have a bit of extra money now, I'm starting to be reckless with my spending. However, this should be a good investment.

Anyways, with the Slaver's Shield it makes sense to own a monster.

"Selling it off after raising it won't be as painful like with a slave."

"Ah, I see. That makes sense."

Although we may end up becoming attached to it, we have no money so we'll just have to bear it should that happen.

Since a slave is another person, having to sell them would be very sad. If for some reason I need to sell a slave whom I've become close with like Raphalia, I'm not sure I would be able to do it.

However, monsters aren't able to talk, so no matter what it'll just be slightly painful.

Leaving them behind with a 'I hope you meet a good master'.

"So you also provide those services?"

"I'm excited by how insightful Hero-sama is! Yes!"

This slave owner gets really enthusiastic.

Let's just look at the eggs for now.

He said something about there being no way to search through them.

Well, I guess just randomly picking one is fine.

"This one then."

Using my intuition, I pick one out from near the right.

"Please mark this seal with your blood to remember which one you chose."

Like he instructed, I smeared my blood onto the design on the egg.

A bright red light shined as an icon representing the monster tamer appeared.

I guess this is the same as restricting what slaves can do.

... Setting a punishment for it if my orders are ignored. I'll make it more severe than the one on Raphtalia.

It's a monster after all. Since it can't understand my words, then it would be better for the punishment to be harsh.

Though it hasn't even hatched yet.

While grinning, the slave owner opened an incubator-like machine.

"If for some reason it doesn't hatch, I'm going to ask for compensation."

"How admirable! For the Hero-sama who won't take a failure lying down."

I take note of the slave owner's mood and attitude. Geez, isn't this guy a bit of a masochist?

Although I don't get off on verbally abusing other guys... well, I do want to see the suffering faces of those shitty heroes.

"Even though it's just words now, I really will come. I'll unleash my violent slave on you."

"What are you going to make me do!"

"Duly noted."

The slave owner was seriously in a good mood.

"Around when will it hatch?"

I ask the slave owner after handing over 100 silver coins.

"It is written on the incubator."

"Hmmm..."

The number-like characters were changing.

"Raphtalia can you read?"

"Um, Just a bit... it says around tomorrow."

"So fast. Well that's good."

"We will await your next arrival."

In the end we left the tent with our egg.

Chapter 25: Gift of Life

Now then, what's next?

I remembered that I still have leftover potions from the wave.

Even though I had them prepared beforehand, I never used them in the end. It might be better to just sell them to a medicine shop.

"Let's go to the medicine shop and then, the blacksmith."

"Naofumi-sama, we won't be receiving any more aid so we need to be more careful with our money. We should refrain from what we've been doing up until now."

"Understood."

"Right now, we'll be fine with our current equipment. Let's consider buying them only when we really need them."

"..."

Fumu, that is a good idea.

However, we only have cheap goods compared to the equipment of the other Heroes.

I think it would be a good idea to get Raphtalia a better weapon when we start fighting stronger enemies.

"It has only been a few days since we got new weapons. Imagine what Oyaji would think."

"Yeah..."

The Oyaji from the weapon shop has given us various services. Although he allows us to trade in our equipment, we won't be able to afford better gear with our current funds...

"Alright, let's save up then."

"Yes!"

Well it wasn't a bad idea to be frugal with our money.

"Then, let's go to the medicine shop."

And so, we went to the medicine shop. The owner had a friendly smile when he saw us.

"What? What's going on?"

Normally, he had a sour look on his face when he saw us, so seeing him smile sent a shiver down my spine.

"Nothing much. I just wanted to thank you if you came."

"Huh?"

We were both confused.

"I heard that you guys saved my relatives in Riyuuto Village. They told me to help you out if possible."

"Oh... I see."

When the wave ended, everyone from Riyuuto Village got together to thank us. It seems like his relatives were among them.

"So, thank you for that."

The shop owner retrieved a book from a closet and handed it to me.

"What's this?"

"You've been making beginner level medicines, this book has a bunch of recipes for mid-level medicines. This will be a good time for you try them out."

"..."

I gently opened the book of mid-level recipes. The binding was in bad shape, but the letters were printed clearly.

Yup. Can't read it.

"T-thanks. I'll try them out."

I should show him some gratitude for helping us out.

Recipes for medicines with higher sale value could probably be found in here.

"I'm happy to hear that."

I felt pressured because I might not be able to answer his goodwill.

I had already given up on reading the language of this world... but it might be a good idea to learn.

"The owner of the magic shop also told you to drop by."

"Magic shop?"

"Naofumi-sama, it's the shop that sells magic books."

"Oh, I see."

I thought it was just a bookstore... but now that I think about it, they had things like crystal balls at the back.

"Where is that?"

"The big store along the main road."

... Ahh. One of the biggest bookstores in town.

"So, how may I help you today?"

"Ah, today's--"

I sold my potions for higher than the usual amount.

I also bought new tools using that money before heading to the magic shop.

"Oh, you're the Shield Hero. You've been a great help to my grandchild."

"Uh..."

I had no idea who she was talking about, but it was probably someone from the village. The old lady at the magic shop politely greeted us.

The old lady was a bit plump and wore witch-like clothing.

"So what do you need?"

I looked around the magic shop that I thought was just a bookstore.

There were rows of stale books and lots of crystals placed behind the counter.

Along with items such as staffs, it definitely felt like a magic shop.

Anyway, how do you use magic in this world?

"Is that young lady over there your companion?"

"Hmm? Ah."

I nod at Raphtalia.

"Please wait a moment."

The old lady said and retrieved a crystal ball from behind the counter, then she began to chant some sort of spell.

"Okay, now then Shield Hero-sama. Can you take a look at the crystal ball?"

"Ah, sure."

What's going on?

Is what I thought as I gazed into the crystal ball.

... It was shining a bit but I didn't notice anything else.

"Hmm... it seems that Shield Hero-sama is suitable for support and healing magic."

"Eh?"

I'm suited for magic!?

Hurry up and teach me then... well I can't really complain since I wouldn't understand.

"Next is the young lady there."

"Ah, okay."

I step to the side as Raphtalia looked into the crystal ball next.

"Hmm. As expected, the young lady of the Raccoon race is suited for light and dark magic."

"As expected', as in that's normal?"

"Yes... her race is skilled at illusions using light distortion and darkness

concealment."

I see. So the Raccoon race is similar to Tanukis. It seems that even in Japan, Tanukis are a sort of creature that can transform into humans.

"So what now?"

"Here, just something from this old lady at the magic shop."

The old lady then handed us three books.

Books again! Even though I said I couldn't read, why were you also giving us books?

"I actually wanted to give you a crystal ball, but this old lady's livelihood would be endangered if I did."

"What do you mean?"

"Doesn't Shield Hero-sama know that you can learn a spell by releasing compatible magic from a crystal ball?"

What!? That means that I can use magic even though I can't read?

"The country recently made a large order... of crystal balls for the Heroes. A lot of them were delivered, does Shield Hero-sama not know?"

"I had no idea."

Because of that trash king. They were probably given to the other heroes.

Geez, they left me out to die.

"Although magic books are a bother, one could learn 10 spells in a single month with dedicated studying."

So, 1 spell with the crystal ball and around 3 spells per magic book; though I still can't read it yet. No, since she said a month maybe there's something more to it.

"My apologies."

"No no, these magic books are more than enough."

Raphtalia answered while smiling. I nod along.

"So how much magic will we be able to use?"

"These are all beginner level. For higher level... please buy them."

"Ah-Ah."

It is a shop. So we shouldn't be ungrateful since she was hurting her own business by giving these books away.

"Thank you."

It was hard to express but we accepted the magic books from her.

"Ha..."

I let out a sigh.

I don't really like studying. What could someone with low grades like me do with these?

Fine. I'll definitely decipher the recipes and spells in these books.

Is what I want to say.

I kind of wish my shield had a 'written language translation' ability.

There's a high chance that my shield has recipes for various medicines. I should be able to use them if I try.

However, I wonder which option would be better, spending the effort to search through the branches of my shield or learning the language to understand the medicine recipes from the books?

With the latter, I would have to deal with costs and other problems.

Still... just thinking about the possibility of my shield having a way to translate this world's written language made me lose my willpower.

"Let's learn magic together."

Raphtalia happily said to me.

"But I can't read the language of this world..."

"Eh, that's why we should learn it together."

"Well... I guess that's fine."

Well, it doesn't hurt to study while making medicine.

"Anyways, when is the next wave?"

"Hm? Ah, one moment."

I looked at the icon in the corner of my vision and check the menu for the next scheduled wave.

Next: 45 days and 14 hours.

"In 45 days."

Wasn't it every month!?

Hmm, well looking back, it has only been around 2 months since I was summoned here.

In that case, maybe the time limit is longer this time around.

It had only been a few days between Raphtalia becoming a slave and then meeting me.

A month is... a long time then.

"Well, having a lot of time is also good."

It's possible that there isn't much we can accomplish in that period.

"For now, have we finished all we needed to do here?"

"Hmm... we have reapplied the curse and sold the medicines. We have also received the books. I think that's it."

Raphtalia confirmed.

Since coming back here because we forgot something would be a waste of time.

"Let's get some food then grind some levels afterwards."

"Okay."

Today's breakfast surprised me. Because my sense of taste had returned.

I can now say that something tastes delicious.

Requirements for Mortar Shield has been unsealed. (note: mortar as in

pestle & mortar) Requirements for Beaker Shield has been unsealed.
(note: beaker as in beaker & flask) Requirements for Yagen Shield has been unsealed. (note: does this have an english name? it's pretty much the same as pestle & mortar) Mortar Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Novice Mixing

Beaker Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Liquid solutions bonus Yagen Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Harvesting skill 2

After eating, we left the town and headed in the direction of Riyuuto Village.

Nearby was a place with a moderate amount of monsters.

I don't know the grinding spots of the other Heroes. Because the only way to find these spots was either by asking the locals or searching for them yourself.

Finding a decent hunting spot just from looking at a map was pretty difficult; enough to be called a challenge.

Although it was not like we were competing, it was slightly frustrating to fall behind the other heroes. It was just that fighting new monsters and letting my shield evolve doesn't sound too bad.

While I've left out many details, a lot of shields have been unlocked. Although my abilities have risen, that was also a small problem on its own.

Because of my shield, my defense had increased a lot. My other stats such as agility, stamina, magic power and SP have all risen. Everything other than attack.

For that reason, during the last wave I didn't really receive any injuries.

While we were en route...

"... By the way, can I absorb any monsters from the wave?"

I completely forgot about it after returning from the invasion, but I want to see if my shield will react to them.

So near Riyuuto Village, we found the mob corpses from the wave.

Requirements for Netherworld Locust Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Netherworld Bee Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Netherworld Corpse Eater Demon Shield has been unsealed.

Netherworld Locust Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Defense +6

Netherworld Bee Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Agility +6

Netherworld Corpse Eater Demon Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Decay Prevention (S) Next I checked to see if any other shields would be unlocked from these.

However, the requirements for this shield series were not fulfilled and only one of them was unsealed.

Requirements for Bee Needle Shield has been unsealed.

Bee Needle Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Attack +1

Special Effect: Shield of Needles (S) Bee's Poison (Paralysis) With this we continued onward. The villagers were in the middle of disposing the Chimera corpse.

"Sup."

"Ah, Shield Hero-sama."

Because of our efforts the other day, the villagers warmly welcomed us.

"Is that the boss of the wave?"

I grumble while looking at the Chimera corpse.

I closely look at the thing called a Chimera, but for some reason... it doesn't quite look like the monsters in this world.

Maybe it's the color or something, but I can't pinpoint why.

"What a fearsome thing."

"... Yeah."

The villagers and I agree.

I wonder if the other heroes or knight brigade already harvested it. What's left of the meat and fur are carved up.

"Can I take some of it as well?"

"Please go ahead, we're having trouble disposing of it anyways. Do you need us to help process and prepare the parts?"

"That doesn't sound too bad... but there doesn't seem to be much I can use."

The fur was carved up so it isn't possible to make something like armor. So, all that are left are... the meat and bones... and the snake tail.

The heads have been removed and taken. Looking at it, it seemed that it had 3 heads.

Well whatever, Raphtalia and I cut apart the corpse and let my shield absorb the pieces.

Requirements for Chimera Meat Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Bone Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Leather Shield has been unsealed.

Requirements for Chimera Viper Shield has been unsealed.

Chimera Meat Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Cooking Skill+

Chimera Bone Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Darkness Resistance (M)

Chimera Leather Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: Defense +10

Chimera Viper Shield

True power sealed... Equipment bonus: [Change Shield] skill, Antidote Mixing+, Poison Resistance (M) Special Effect: Poisonous Snake Fang (M), Hook

The last one seemed to come with lots of useful bonuses. The defense increase was pretty high too.

However, using the shield requires a high level and unlocking more of the Chimera Series.

It should be fine to do this later, but there's a big chance it could be important for the next wave.

"What about the rest?"

I ask the villagers.

"We were going to bury it anyways, so take whatever you need."

"Okay..."

Although it was a bit of a waste, all that was left were mostly just meat and bones.

I guess we can hold onto the bones, but I think we can use the meat for jerky.

There was no way it would be edible though.

So it was like that. I felt like it could be used for ingredients in some magic potions.

... But I'm not sure if anyone would ever buy it... Plus, it'd be bad if the remains became rotten. It would also be scary if it somehow regenerated because of it not being preserved properly.

About the bones, I think they should be fine.

However, even then we should probably be careful.

"Then I'll take as much as possible."

"Um, but it will be quite heavy."

"Can I have the village look after the rest?"

"Eh? If Shield Hero-sama asks..."

"Just take the meat and dry it, but leave a bit and see if there's anyone who would want to buy some. That should help with the reconstruction. There should be people who would buy the meat of the wave monsters in order to research it."

"Yes, there should be."

The villagers seemed interested in the reconstruction fund so they accept my suggestion.

I dealt with the innards and other easily decayed parts by absorbing them into my shield. The sun has set by the time we finally reach Riyuuto Village.

The village was half-destroyed, but the survivors all stayed together in the remaining, intact houses.

We received a room in a safe inn and quietly spent the rest of the day resting.

"... Although I do want to help out with the reconstruction, we don't have the luxury to worry about others right now."

Today, we were taken care of by the people of Riyuuto Village.

They were grateful for our help with the chimera parts, but for us to receive a free meal and room might have been overdoing it.

"You're right. But it would be great if we could do something that would be mutually beneficial."

A villager who could read and write had provided us with a chart of this world's alphabet.

In other words, the Hiragana table. Or the alphabet table in English.

Afterwards, since Raphtalia could read a bit, I had her point out characters and teach me the pronunciation until I slowly deciphered the

table.

With this, maybe even words can be formed, but figuring it all out would be difficult.

For now I don't need to rush to learn the letters.

In between making medicine, I worked hard at memorizing the characters.

Chapter 26: Firo

The next morning, Raphtalia overslept due to staying up late last night. I groaned while holding the magic book in one hand.

Eh? I was brewing medicinal herbs into medicine.

While I was preparing to leave to regain some time from oversleeping.

"Ah, it's hatching."(Naofumi)

I had left the egg by a window in the room. Raphtalia noticed that the egg, that I bought yesterday, has started to crack.

A fluffy wing with feathers could be seen peeking out from within the cracks.

It's trying really hard to break free from it's shell.

"Okay."(Naofumi)

I'm interested in what was going to hatch from the egg.

I watched the egg as more cracks appeared.

The cracks noisily spread with a Piki Piki sound, the face of a baby demon emerged from the egg.

"Pii!"(Fledgling)

With soft and fluffy feathers along with eyes of a demon, the pink fledgling looked at me with a piece of shell on its head.

"Pii!"(Fledgling)

It jumped cheerfully and collided with my face.

It wasn't painful at all, and the demon seemed to be very energetic despite just being born.

Although I don't know its race, it seemed like its physical condition was good and it would grow up well if it was properly taken care of.

"What kind of demon is this? Is this thing from the Pikyu bird race?"
(Naofumi) Pikyu is a demon that was similar to a condor that could not

fly high due to it being deformed.

I observed the newborn chick's body.

Its body seemed more agile than the balloons. So I can expect it to be able to attack when it grew up because it has a beak.

"Hmm... Well I am not familiar with demons."(Raphtalia) Raphtalia answered with an embarrassed face.

"It can't be helped. Should we ask some villagers?"(Naofumi) Because this was a purchased demon, it shouldn't be dangerous to bring around. If there was any trouble, it would obey my commands.

When I extended my hand to the demon chick, it ran up my hand, onto my shoulder and jumped on top of my head to settle down.

"Piiii"(Fledgling)



· Suri Suri* slipping from my head to my cheeks This is... really cute.

"Fufu, Naofumi-sama, it must think of you as its father."(Raphtalia)
"Oh, it's probably due to imprinting."(Naofumi) It might be registered beforehand because the one who moved it first was me, so it must have assumed I am its parent.

When I picked up the egg shards, my shield reacted.

It might inform me what demon this is if I absorb a fragment of the egg.

Therefore, I let the shield absorb a fragment.

Requirements for Demon Trainer Shield has been revealed.

Requirements for Demon Egg Shield has been revealed.

Demon Trainer Shield Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Demon Growth Correction (Small)
Demon Egg Shield Unsealing completed...
Equipment Bonus: Cooking Skill +2

...A shield I wasn't expecting came out. I'll change it into Demon Trainer Shield from Slave Trainer 2 Shield because it seemed more convenient.

"Did you discover something?"(Raphtalia)

"No, but a shield I wasn't expecting came out though."(Naofumi) What kind of demon was this young chick? Hopefully the guys from the village will know.

I thought about where to Level Up today while walking through the village that was in the middle of reconstruction.

Maybe we could go to the bog area near the western part of the village? I also want to search for a suitable enemy near the North-west mountains.

I saw a villager that I recognized.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield-sama."(Villager)

"Good morning."(Naofumi?)

"Good morning."(Raphtalia?)

This was where I was defending last week during the wave, it seemed like there was a lot of familiar faces here rebuilding the village.

"Good morning."(Villager?)

He bowed his head very deeply. I was feeling a little embarrassed.

"Pi!"(Fledgling)

The chick on my head chirped rather cheerfully.

"Oya?"(Villager)

The villager looked at the chick on my head.

"What's wrong?"(Naofumi)

I pointed at the chick on my head.

"I bought an egg from a demon dealer."(Naofumi) "Aah, I see."(Villager)

"However, I don't know which demon I bought. Do you guys know what kind of demon this is?"(Naofumi) The villagers stared intently at the chick.

"Let's see... Do you think that is a Philorial?"(Villager) "Eh? The birds who pull carriages?"(Naofumi)

It would seem I made a little more than the money I paid... Well, only if what the villager said was true.

"Yeah, you can go see check with the ranch near the outskirts of the village."(Villager) "Then I'm going to go see."(Naofumi)

We arrived at the house of the fellow who was managing the ranch. The ranch seemed to have been damaged during the wave, half the bred demons were killed.

"In short, is this demon a Philorial?"(Naofumi) The ranch man nodded when I ask.

"Let's see. This is a female Philorial."(Ranch man) The young chick sat

still while the ranch man appraised her.

"This breed of the Philo Aria Philorial species is good. However, unless she pulls a cart, she'll be restless."(Ranch man) "... What kind of creature is that?"(Naofumi)

"Is there something strange?"(Ranch man)

Oh, it's not that strange if you're born in this world.

Hmm... I wonder if these birds treat the carts as their nest that protects their eggs.

"Well, at least I didn't lose any money."(Naofumi) This wasn't bad, when she matured, she'll go for at least 200 silver coins. Quite a good deal for 100 Silvers.

Though, I don't know how much time and money she will need before maturity.

"Pi!"(Fledgling)

The young Philorial chirped on my head.

"What does this fellow eat?"(Naofumi)

"In the beginning something soft, like boiled beans. After she matures anything is fine."(Ranch man) "I see, Thanks."(Naofumi)

I was surprised I could bow and say thanks this easily.

For now I should look for boiled beans inside the village.

"Well, what should we name her?"(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia asked me while stroking the chick.

"You're going to name a pet which may be sold?"(Naofumi) Well, you will be attached the moment a name is given, and when it is time to sell, you won't be able to.

"Do I call this Philorial chick all the time?"(Raphtalia) "Mu..."(Naofumi)

This is surely troublesome.

"Then... let's call you Firo."(Naofumi)

"... So cheap."(Raphtalia)

"Shut up."(Naofumi)

"Pi!"(Firo)

The young chick chirped cheerfully when she understood that she was named.

After we had breakfast we headed out to hunt with Firo.

"Where should we go today?"(Raphtalia?)

"Pii?"(Firo)

"Let's see... A place we can walk to safely."(Naofumi) "Okay"(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia was very reliable. Fights were easier compared to before.

Firo was happily chirping on my head.

It was noisy, but very comfortable.

When evening approached I noticed some strange sounds.

There were a lot of unexpected encounters with demons, but they were defeated easily.

It was probably due to the brand-new weapons and armor. I could defeat enemies coming from the front.

Today's results were:

Me Lvl 23

Raphtalia Lvl 27

Firo Lvl 12

Though I hardly fought, I got enough experience for a level, while Firo's Level soared.

This was good. For young Demi-humans I heard the body grew rapidly when leveling up, it seemed demons were the same.

But... I wondered...

Firo's appearance changed considerably.

Before, Firo was a small chick that could be held with both hands, but now she was big and grown up.

Well... Her figure seems to resemble a steamed bun.

And her feathers grew lighter, the color changed from pink to light pink.

I stroked the wings slowly for feathers.

Requirement for Demon Trainer Shield 2 have been released.

Demon Trainer Shield 2 Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Demon Status Correction (Small) Still, I noticed Firo's growth when I didn't even notice Raphtalia's.

"Piyo"(Firo)

She changed her chirp and was beginning to walk on her own with a pitter-patter, because she was heavy.

Guuuu.....

There was an unpleasant premonition from Firo who was constantly chirping.

Though I bought a little too much feed, it seemed grass on the roadside was already a suitable substitute.

Her appetite was unending... This was the proof of her rapid growth.

"Umm... Naofumi-sama..."(Raphtalia)

"I understand. Demons are amazing."(Naofumi)

To grow so much in one day... It was only a matter of time before she could be rode.

Though her body was strong, it was a little scary that her mind would be immature.

Therefore I performed a considerably severe limitation.

I returned to the hotel and showed the storekeeper Firo and asked where

I could put her.

Afterwards, we were guided to the stable of the hotel and substituted straw for a nest.

"Hm? The meat and bone of the Chimera were put here."(Naofumi) Is it because this place hasn't been corrupted that the materials rot slower? Or due to it being a monster of a different world.

"For the time being, I am waiting for it to soften so it will be easier to process."(Villager) "Eh..."(Naofumi)

It might not be edible, so is it processed so that it may be easier to handle just in case?

"After that, I'll make dried meat and look for buyers.I am still looking forward to selling them. It seems that a few mages are coming."(Villager) "That's good."(Naofumi)

Because it was quite a big chimera, there seemed to be a lot of stock. The meat was probably equivalent to two cows.

It may be tough to make it edible, but there were many who wanted to research it.

This would be a place to acquire it.

"Piyo"(Firo)

Guu...

Are you still hungry?

Though I got additional feed in the village and fed her, it still doesn't seem to be enough.

Where does it all go?

Biki... BikiBiki...

Is that the sound of meat and bones creaking? Are you still growing?

"To grow up so much in one day... That's pretty unreasonable"

The shopkeeper watched my face anxiously.

"She is still level 12."(Naofumi)

"Eh? 12?"(Villager)

The storekeeper was surprised at my answer.

"I think around 20 days was needed to let it grow to that level but I guess this was to be expected of the power of a Hero-sama"(Villager)
Hmm... There was the possibility of Demon Growth Correction (Small) having an influence.

It changed every time I checked her status. What amazing growth.

Still, I can't send her to battle yet.

"Piyo"(Firo)

Firo who was growing up quickly healthily chirped.

After I pet Firo to sleep, I headed back to the room shared by me and Raphtalia. I would study this world's letters afterwards.

The problem was that there were too many letters in this language.

Chapter 27: Growth

The next morning.

Raphtalia had been studying until late last night, so I woke up and discreetly slipped out of the room in order to see Firo.

It would be troublesome if she were to die from hunger.

I gathered the excess medicinal herbs that I didn't use in yesterday's compounding.

"Kweek!"

I heard a hoarse voice coming from the stables.

Looking at her figure, her feet and neck got longer. From a manjū, now she looked very much like an ostrich.

It was an amazing change. Her growth was entirely different from the birds I knew.

Her height was around my chest level, so it was still impossible for a person to ride her.

Gū...

It seemed that she was hungry. That was why I bought some animal feed from the farm.

Even though buying her food used up a lot of gold, it was still cheaper than buying equipment.

Seeing how rapid she was growing in just a day... I had a terrible feeling about this.

"You. Only a day had passed since you were born."

"Kweeek!"

'Surisuri' Firo clung to me and I smiled softly and naturally.

This doesn't particularly mean my love towards animals has awoken.

I'm just excited about what she could do when she grows up.

Earning her keep as a substitute for a carriage... my chest swelled with anticipation.

Wait, I can see a tinge of white and cherry blossom colors when I look carefully at the feathers.

I let the shield absorb the feather as a way of grooming.

The requirement for Demon Tamer Shield III has been met.

Demon Tamer Shield III. True power unsealed... Equipment Bonus: Growth Revision (Medium) Nothing... So it didn't have to be blood. Then it might also be good to cut Raphtalia's hair and absorb it again.

She played and ran energetically, even though Firo was still a newborn.

"Kwek!"

Although she wasn't a dog, I played with Firo by throwing a tree branch a distance away, where she then picked it up and returned it to me.

Her legs seemed fast, swiftly catching the branch before it even fell on the ground and quickly returning it.

She was quite intelligent.

Kukuku... it looked like my luck has finally turned around.

I played with Firo until Raphtalia woke up.

It was a rejuvenating type of therapy, these pets.

"Mu.. I've never seen Naofumi-sama show such a refreshing smile until now."

Raphtalia came over to me while softly murmuring her displeasure.

If anything, it was an impish smile.

"What's wrong?"

"It's nothing."

"Kwek?"

Chon, Chon. Firo's beak peck lightly at Raphtalia.

It seemed she wanted to engage in some skinship.

"Ha~a... Guess it can't be helped."

Raphtalia smiled while caressing Firo's face with both hands.

"Kwee~ek..."

Firo snuggled up to Raphtalia, squinting her eyes from the pleasant feeling of being caressed.

"Now then, where should we explore today?"

"That's right. How about going to the southward grassland in order to save food expenses for Firo?"

"Fumu... I guess so."

The medicinal herbs as well as weeds have grown in abundance within that vicinity. I also think that it's a good place to go.

For now, the purpose was to save money for better equipment.

"Yosh, Let's go then."

"Kwek!"

"Yes!"

Well, we blithely went to the grassland while fighting monsters and leveled up slightly.

Me: Lv 25

Raphtalia: Lv 28

Firo: Lv 15

Picking medicinal herbs among other things, we focused on Firo's food and several other harvests.

We defeated various monsters, releasing shield requirements with the best status bonus at around +1 or +2.

... The shield's Intermediate Compounding Recipe still has not been found.

Evening.

Firo had grown into a splendid Filorial.

"It's early..."

The inn's shopkeeper and the farm owner are both surprised.

The reason might be because of Growth Revision (Small) and (Medium)
"... Raphtalia, incidentally, when I bought the ink did you recognize..."

"A wa wa..."

I wonder if Raphtalia also wanted to grow up like that.

Biki...

A sound similar to a bone creaking was heard.

"Kwweek!"

Shortly, Firo, who grew up so much that a person could now ride her, sat in front of me.

"You want me to ride?"

"Kwek!"

Turning her head as I rode on her back, Firo chirped as if it was natural.

"Then let's go."

But was it all right to not attach a saddle or rein?

While thinking about it, I got on since she wanted me to ride her. I was sturdy thanks to the shield.

It would be all right even if I fell.

Riding her... wasn't so bad thanks to the feathers.

There seemed to be no problem in regards to maintaining my balance properly.

"Kwek!"

Firo readily stood up.

"Uwa!"

The view was quite high.

I felt deeply move as I proceeded to ride an animal, even though I don't know a thing about horse riding.

"Kweeek!"

Firo started running while I was thinking, her chirp is very cheery!

"You, hey!"

"Na, Naofumi-sama--"

Dotadotadota!

Wa, so fast! The scenery passed by me in no time, and Raphtalia's voice became distant in an instant.

Dotadotadota!

I wanted to see what Firo could do. After going around town, she stopped in front of the stables And sat, then I got down.

"Are you all right!?"

Raphtalia ran up to me anxiously.

"Oh, yeah. I'm all right. But it sure is fast."

Firo appeared to not even be that tired and started tending to her own feathers.

I was surprised when it exceeded the speed which I imagined. I might have got a good bargain.

"Well then, that's enough for today, let's return to our room."

And then, someone grabbed the collar of my armor.

When I looked behind, I saw Firo seizing my collar with her beak.

"What's wrong?"

"Kwwweeek!"

I got called to stop by a chirp that seemed like a wail.

"Hn?"

Oh well.

And, when I tried to leave, I got grabbed once again.

"What is it?"

"Kwwwek!"

Firo cried in a slightly displeased way and stamped her foot on the ground.

"Huh, have you not played enough?"

Firo shook her head when Raphtalia asked.

She can understand words

"Are you lonely?"

She cheekily nodded to us.

"Kwwweek!"

Then, she tried to appeal to us by unfolding her wings.

"That said..."

I'm reluctant to sleep in the stable, and I can't take such a big monster to a bedroom inside the inn.

"Let's accompany her here until she falls asleep."

"Mu... well, fine."

This girl has a big body, although it has only been 2 days since her birth. Even if it's an animal, it's too early to leave her alone in the stable at night.

That day at the stables, I studied this world's letters together with Raphtalia.

Firo watched us quietly while resting tensely in her nest.

Biki

"Ah... you really can't read these letters easily!"

If there was a shield like that, I want to find it fast.

"It can't be helped. Anyways, I don't think it's very Naofumi-sama-like if you depend on the legendary shield for everything."

"... Raphtalia. You've learned to even say things like that now huh."

"Yes. Therefore, let's learn magic and the language together."

... Shit.

There was nothing that would make this thing easier. While praying that my efforts won't be wasted, we continued to study at the stable until Firo fell asleep.

Afterwards, we returned to our room and began making medicine with the newly obtained herbs.

The result, well, don't ask - since I wasn't able to decipher the recipe.

Chapter 28: Exit by a Kick

The next morning. Raphtalia woke up early today, so she went to the stable with me.

"Gua!"

When we got there Firo let out a happy-sounding shout and ran to us.

"Is your body an adult now?"

Somehow...I feel like her head has grown one size since yesterday, but I'm not too sure.

"For the most part, this size is about average, right?"

"Now that you say it, that's true."

Firo's form was about the same as the appearance of the Filorials I saw around the castle town or on the road.

Her color has turned white... well, there was a little pink mixed in.

It was a beautiful mix of colors.

That slave dealer. He actually does a pretty good job.

"Are you not starving today?"

"Gua?"

Firo tilted his head and chirped.

Yeah. Looks like the growing period has passed.

Biki...

She was still making that weird noise though.

Well whatever.

After that, we finished breakfast and thought about what to do from now on. In the middle of that.

"Gua..."

While going the the town Firo looked at the wooden carts with jealousy.

"Do you think she wants to pull those?"

"Probably so"

"Is something the matter, Hero-sama?"

While pointing to the carts and chatting with Raphtalia a man from the village asked us.

"Right, my Filolial was looking at the carts, so I was talking about whether she wanted to pull them."

"Well... Filorials have that kind of habit after all."

The man nodded and look satisfied as he turned towards Firo.

"Right now this village is in the middle of rebuilding our buildings and we don't have enough people. Hero-sama, would you be willing to help out if we gave you one of the carts?"

"Mu..."

That was not a bad offer. I finally got a monster like this so there was no reason not to use it.

If it goes well it seemed like we could do some other work while moving things.

"What would we have to do?"

"In the nearby forest we are cutting some timber, so we would like you to bring it to the village"

"The forest...."

Now that he mentioned it, we haven't gone to that forest.

"We'll be back late but is that ok?"

"Yes"

"I got it. We accept."

And so I took on the villagers quest and received one of their carts.

The wheels and stuff were all made of wood. It was small and cheap-looking, but I got it for free so no helping that.

It wasn't new but rather seemed a little old.

"Gua♪"

We set up Firo with her own cart. She seemed happy and started pulling the cart.

The villagers also prepared a bridle for us. If I just looked at it, it seemed like something for a horse.

"Ok! Today we're setting out for the forest!"

"Okaaaay!"

"Guaaaaaa!"

I pointed to the way we were going and Firo, filled with energy, started pulling the cart.

Thud! Thud!

So the cart lightly...

Thud! Thud! Thud! Bumpbumpbumpbumpbump!

Gradually a loud noise sounded from the cart. Like yesterday the scenery swiftly passed by.

"Too fast! Too fast! Lower the speed!"

"Gua..."

We slowed down, and Firo bumped the cart along letting out an unsatisfied cry while walking.

"Uu... somehow I've started to feel sick..."

Raphtalia might be getting motion sickness. She slumped down and laid down in the cart.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes... but, please don't shake it too much..."

"I see, Raphtalia has gotten motion sickness."

"...It looks like it. Are you okay Naofumi-sama?"

"I've never gotten it..."

Getting drunk from alcohol and getting motion sickness were unrelated. When I was a primary school kid, I remembered guys sitting next to me watching me read light novels or manga and said it made them feel sick so they changed seats.

Also, I remember when we took the voyage that lasted about a day to see our relatives, my entire family was down with sea sickness while I was playing phone games inside the ship.

"Well take it easy, Firo and I will carry you to our destination" "I'll take you up on your offer..."

Raphtalia said weakly as she laid down in the cart.

In the middle of that journey... I met someone I didn't want to on the road.

"Buha! What is that! Haha, oh no, that's just too funny. Buwahahahahahahahaaha!"

He looked at me and clutched his stomach while laughed out load. That bitch stood behind him and laughed along.

I don't know what tickled their funny bones, but just being laughed at irritated me.

What's with you Motoyasu, right off the bat.

Motoyasu found us on the town road while being surrounded with women and started laughing.

"I-I mean right! You're super lame right now right!"

"What is?"

"Did you start peddling? I guess people without money get desperate. Your bird is lame too!"

Mu... peddling! That's not a bad option.

Depending on Firo's ability it could be possible. I'll start thinking about it seriously.

"Laaaame! It's not a horse but a bird, and what's with that color. There's that thin pink mixed into the white. It's normally just white right. Plus it's slooow!"

"I don't know what's normal but..."

I don't get this guy's sense of humor.

This is becoming a waste of time. I'll ignore these guys and get going.

While I was thinking that Motoyasu got close to Firo while pointing.

Right after that

"GUAAAAA!"

Firo aimed at Motoyasu's crotch and kicked up with her tough leg.

I saw it.

I saw Motoyasu's stupidly laughing face distort into shock as he flew back about 5 meters while spinning.

"Ugeh...."

"K-Kyaaaaaaaaaaa! Motoyasu-sama!"

Haha, that must have crushed his balls.

I felt really exhilarated. Just being able to see this made buying Firo worth it.

As expected of my monster. She must have gotten revenge for me.

Firo, tonight I'll specially let you eat something delicious.

"GUAAAAA!"

While flapping her wings around, Firo steadily took off running.

After a while I couldn't see Motoyasu's group.

Wow... I'm feeling very exhilarated. I didn't even dream I'd be able to see a scene like that.

"Wh-what happened?"

Raphtalia who had been lying limp lifted her face and asked.

"Hm? Nothing."

"... in spite of that you're making a radiant face I haven't seen before."

Oooh. It's showing on my face huh.

Still, that's some amazing leg strength, to send the hero of the lance flying that far.

"Umm... please go a little slower."

I ran Firo with a radiant feeling, enough that Raphtalia's words didn't enter my ears.

After that, Raphtalia threw up during the trip and when we reached the forest she seemed to be at her limit.

"Uu...uuuuu..."

Raphtalia moaned with a white face. I realized I had gone too far and felt sorry.

It's all Motoyasu's fault. He had made me feel so energetic and exhilarated.

"Sorry"

"Gua..."

Firo, same as me, looked sad and sorry.

"I-I'm al...right"

"You definitely don't look it. It'll be nice if we could find a place to rest but.."

"Ah, Shield Hero-sama"

There was a cabin near the forest. A villager that looked like a lumberjack came out of it.

"Aah, the villagers asked me to come and get some lumber but.."

"Umm... is your companion alright?"

"I think, probably not. I want to let her rest, but do you know a good place?"

"Well then there's a cabin over here, let's let her lie down."

He said that and led us to the cabin. I supported Raphtalia's shoulder and laid her down on a bed.

"If we say that Firo can only fight easy-ish enemies, then for today we'll focus on transporting things."

Raphtalia seemed to be weak to vehicles, so until she gets used to it let's not go fast enough to bump the cart around.

"So, sorry but could you place the lumber on the cart, we'll be back in a little while."

"Ah, yes."

Firo was unhooked from the cart and was looking in at us from outside the cabin.

"Okay, let's go."

"Gua!"

She had kicked Motoyasu that far into the air. It seemed like I can expect quite a bit from her attack power.

Let's take a little stroll around the forest. (!) We went into the forest and unexpectedly didn't encounter any monsters.

I walked around the quiet forest with Firo.

It might have been me getting immersed in the forest, but I felt like the air was really clear.

Come to think of it... this was the first time since coming to this world that I took the time and looked around at my surroundings.

I wonder why.

Seeing Motoyasu's pained face must have blown all my troubles away.

... No.

I think it was because Raphtalia believed in me.

That Raphtalia was now motion sick and not here.

I felt kind of lonely.

Thinking about it I've only been with her for half a month or three weeks or so. Even so, it seemed like we've developed a natural relationship.

"It would be nice if there was medicine that worked on motion sickness."

For now I'll gather any herbs I see around here.

"Even so... no monsters are coming out huh.."

I've been walking for a while but there was no presence of monsters.

"Gua."

"Hm?"

I heard Firo's voice from unexpectedly far away.

I ran towards it and saw that Firo had just put something into her mouth.

... Was it just my imagination? That looked like an animal resembling a Usapiru.

Eventually Firo swallowed with a gulp.

"Gua!"

Firo walked over here like nothing had happened.

34 EXP gained.

... Let's not worry about it.

After a little under an hour, we finished foraging around the woods and returned to the lumberjack's cabin where we saw the lumber had been packed onto the cart.

Entering the cabin, Raphtalia was still lying limp on the bed.

This was a problematic effect.

Raphtalia won't last if Firo ran at top speed.

This might require some training. If Raphtalia doesn't get used to vehicles we won't be able to do any transportation work.

"Seems like some training is needed to get used to the cart." "Uu...uuuu"

Raphtalia let out a moan in response to my words. As I thought, it seemed tough.

"Umm... I finished loading the lumber but.."

"Ah, yeah. Then I'll head to the village and back, so can I leave her to you?"

"Yes! If she's Shield Hero-sama's companion then I'll protect her no matter what."

I'm a little worried, but I don't have the patience to sit around doing nothing.

"Then we'll get going."

I got on the cart and gave the order to Firo, who was all prepared, to set out.

"Guaaaaa!"

Letting out an energetic voice, Firo took off running.

Chapter 29: Those with Wings

I didn't encounter Motoyasu on the path back.

I thought he probably would have gone mad with anger and searched around for me, but it looked like that was a needless worry.

After I dropped off the cargo at the village, I returned to see Raphtalia feeling better.

"Were you okay?"

"Yes"

"Th-that was fast..."

The lumberjack was surprised at how quickly we had returned.

"Seems like this guy is a good walker."

I answered the lumberjack while petting Firo.

"Gua!"

Firo answered energetically. Yeah, you're fast.

"Well then, shall we start seriously searching the forest?"

"Yes"

"Run slowly on the way back okay."

"Gua!"

Biki....

What is that? That noise, her growing period should be over right?

I heard it coming from Firo again.

It's okay if it's not a strange disease but..

That day's harvest was pretty good.

Raphtalia put in a particularly good effort and while she was at it, I got to see Firo's movement and attack power.

To be honest, she might be beating Raphtalia in speed and hitting

power.

Me, Lv26

Raphtalia, Lv29

Firo, Lv19

The requirements for White Usapiru Shield have been met.

The requirements for Dark Porcupine Shield have been met.

The requirements for Usapiru Bone Shield have been met.

The requirements for Porcupine Bone Shield have been met.

White Usapiru Shield Ability released.....Equipment bonus, defense +2

Dark Porcupine Shield Ability released.....Equipment bonus, wit +2

Usapiru Bone Shield Ability released.....Equipment bonus, stamina up

(small) Porcupine Bone Shield Ability released.....Equipment bonus, SP up

(small) They're all great status up types.

It would be good if I could unlock a high performing shield and become more efficient, but I don't know places that have good money or exp. So I have no choice but to honestly work hard to raise the ability of the shield.

What all these abilities I've unlocked add up to... there are too many so I don't know.

In the first place I haven't used the beginning equipment like the Orange Small Shield even once since unlocking them.

At best I've just been using the shields with exclusive effects like the Whetstone Shield when I need them.

If it's not exclusive then it affects all the shields after all.

Well at least, I won't be using the four from today again after unlocking them.

The sun went down as we slowly walked back into the village.

Raphtalia required training to get used to the cart after all.

During the trip, she felt sick many times so we repeatedly rested while

slowly making progress.

In the end, we made it back after the sun had mostly set.

"I'm very sorry."

"Don't worry about it, you'll eventually get used to it."

Even I think it's odd that I don't get motion sickness at all, but I have no intention saying that other people do not have any willpower.

I've hear that if you get used to it then you wont get motion sickness anymore.

So I want to get Raphtalia used to the cart quickly.

Well, if something happens then the sprinting Firo will be at fault.

"Gua!"

At this time, something strange was already happening.

To be correct it had been happening for quite a while, but we still hadn't noticed it. No, we noticed it but decided to ignored it.

The next day.

Even I noticed the change at this point. Raphtalia was the same as me, deep in thought.

"Guaaa!"

When we showed up at the stable, the change had already ended.

Firo had... no matter how you looked at it, grown far larger than the average Filoliara.

Filoliaras usually grow to about 2m 30cm. This about the same height as an ostrich.

But, Filoliaras' have a larger skeleton, in particular their heads and necks are larger.

However...Firo's height had passed 2m 80cm.

She was already at the point where if she stood up her head would reach the ceiling of the stable.

"Did I really buy a Filoliara's egg? I'm starting to want to think that I bought some other thing."

"Yes... I also think so."

"Gua!"

Gulp, and Firo swallowed something down.

Looking closely, the chimera meat that the villagers had left in the stable was gone.

There should have been about two cows' worth of it, but it had tragically all disappeared.

Did she just eat the last of it?

"I had thought she lost her appetite but..."

"Um, is it possible that Naofumi-sama's shield's power caused her to grow this big?"

"It's plenty possible. The Familiar Shield III had a bonus called growth compensation (middle).

Na-naofumi-sama... there was a Slave Shield as well right?

"Yeah, the Slave User Shield had a similar bonus with it."

"...Um, did the power affect me?"

"Yeah, it was unlocked a while ago. So it has been affecting you a little."

"Noooooooooooo!"

Raphtalia ran out of the stable while screaming.

"Ra-raphtalia!?"

"Recently, I thought my body felt light. But it was just because of Naofumi-sama right!"

"Ca-calm down!"

"A-am I going to become big like Firo!? That's scary!"

"You're not making any growing noises right!"

"O-oh, that's right. Thank goodness, really thank goodness!"

... This doesn't change the fact that we can't make guesses in this situation.

While imagining a Raphtalia that's grown to be super macho, I turned my gaze to Firo.

"Are you thinking something rude?"

"... What should we do?"

I ignored Raphtalia's question and advanced the conversation.

"I think it would be good to return to that tent and get confirmation."

"Right"

No helping it. I don't like the idea of returning to the castle town for no reason but... there was no other way.

"Gua!"

We left Riyuuto Village as Firo energetically pulled the cart. At the same time, I was worried for Raphtalia as she fought with motion sickness.

During the trip, Firo stomach rumbled, so I fed her some food. We also fought with a few monsters. When we got to the city it was after noon.

"Oi..."

I noticed that Firo's appearance was still changing.

Her legs and neck were gradually getting shorter. By the time I noticed she had changed to a body with short legs and a long torso like an owl.

Even then she enjoyed pulling the cart, and kept pulling it without change.

However, there was a big change in how she pulled it.

Right now she was skillfully using her hand-like wing to grip the cart's harness and pull it along.

"Kue!"

Even her call was different, and she was becoming pure white.

"Hm?"

As I slowly got off the cart I got a look at Firo's height.

She shrunk?

She had shrunk to about 2m 30cm. However, she was wider too, and it seemed like she might be more intimidating. To put it badly, she looked like an amusement park's mascot, strangely fat.



"Kue?"

"No, it's nothing"

Had Firo noticed her own change?

It was to the point where you couldn't tell what kind of animal she was.

"Well... I wonder what this was, thinking about it I had nothing but words of surprise, yes.

The slave trader, while repeatedly wiping away his sweat, looked closely at Firo.

"Kue?"

Firo had gotten an even larger breadth and width, making her look like some kind of owl monster.

Where did that friendly ostrich-like form go to.

"So, I wanted to ask directly. This guy is the monster hatched from the egg I bought from here. What kind of egg did you give me?"

Depending on how this turns out...

I whistled with my finger and Firo threatened to attack.

"KUEEEEEEEEE!"

The slave trader seemed to panic and check over some kind of document several times.

"Th-that's weird. The supply papers we have show that the egg Hero-sama bought definitely had a Filolial inside of it."

"This is a Filolial?"

"Kueeeee!"

I threw a fairly big piece of food to Firo and she skillfully caught it in her mouth and swallowed it down.

"Ummm..."

Come to think of it, I feel like that growing noise that had been coming from Firo stopped.

Did she finally grow into an adult body...?

"Still, even though it's only been a few days to have grown it this large, as expected of Hero-sama. I'm moved."

"Don't use flattery to get out of this. Hurry up and tell me what kind of egg I bought."

"Uh... did this monster have this shape from the start?"

"No"

I gave the slave trader a rundown on Firo's growth from when she was born to now.

"Well then, she was definitely a proper Filolial up to the middle right?"

"Yeah, and it has grown to the point where you can't tell what kind of monster she is now though."

"Kue?"

While tilting her head in a somehow cute pose, Firo seemed to pick up on my slight irritation.

Who's fault do you think it is that I have to do this.

"Kueeeee"

Using her whole body, Firo slid up and snuggled me. Being hugged by her fairly large wings I felt Firo's body heat that was hotter than a bird's.

Truthfully it was just hot.

"Mu..."

Raphtalia frowned and grabbed my hand.

"Kue?"

It somehow seemed like Raphtalia and Firo were talking with their eyes.

"What's with you guys?"

"No, it's nothing."

"Kue kue"

Both of them shook their heads to convey their intentions. What was that?

"So? What is it?"

"Uhh... umm"

The slave trader was very troubled.

He deals with monsters but does he not know how monsters grow?

"For the time being, I will quickly contact a specialist and investigate, so could I have you leave her with me? Yes."

"Yeah, don't make a mistake and kill her so you won't have to say 'I don't know'"

"Kue!?"

"I understand of course, but it will take a little time for the specialist to come here. Yes."

"...Well, that's fine. I'll leave it to you. If something happens I'll just take compensation money."

"Kueeee!?"

At my response Firo flapped her wings like she was protesting.

However, the slave trader's workers put a collar on her and moved her to a cage. It might have been since I was close by, she entered the cage

surprisingly obediently.

"Alright then, I'll be back to get her tomorrow. Have an answer by then."

I warned him just in case, and left the tent with Raphtalia.

"KUEEEEEEEEEEE!"

I still heard Firo's loud voice even after leaving the tent.

That night...I was staying at the inn when suddenly the inn keeper called out to me.

"Um Hero-sama."

"Hm? What is it?"

"There's a customer here to see you."

Who is it? I thought as I went up to the counter where the inn keeper was waiting. There was a man I hadn't seen before.

"What business do you have?"

"Umm, I... am someone from the monster trader."

Monster trader... ahh, the slave trader. He definitely can't make a public introduction that way.

"What happened?"

"Um, my master has ordered me to ask you to take the monster you left with us back."

"What!?"

It's only been a few hours... what exactly happened.

I went to the tent with Raphtalia to hear Firo's cry still echoing.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so late at night. Yes."

The slave trader, seeming a little tired, came out to greet us.

"What happened? The plan was for you to take care of her until morning right?"

"That was my intention, but Hero-sama's monster is a little bit of a

problem."

"KUEEEEEEEEEEE!"

Firo had been flapping wildly with her wings and finally calmed down when she saw us.

"She's broken 3 iron locks, I've had 5 workers who tried to subdue her sent to the hospital, and 3 of the monsters I used have suffered serious injury. Yes."

"I'm not paying for that."

"I tip my hat to Hero-sama whose first concern even now is money."

Is this slave trader serious?

"So, what happened? Did you figure it out?"

"No... just, I've found an eye-witness report that says she has a body similar to a Filolial king."

"King?"

"To be correct there's talk that there is a Filolial that rules over a group. It's quite famous among adventurers."

It looks like the slave trader had used all his information network to check for some kind of hint to her identity.

It seems like there's a large group of wild Filolials, and he heard a conversation mentioning that the one who runs it is the king.

The Filolial ruler that seldom appears before humans is the king Filolial... So his conjecture is that Firo is one too.

"Hmmm"

This is hearsay.

If I unlock the shield crest for this monster, I might be able to determine whether it's true or not, but that would mean killing Firo.

Even if I use her feathers or blood, she's my monster so the only thing to come out would be the Monster User Shield. It seems like a light bulb

isn't coming to me....

I don't have the needed level or series.

I look closely at Firo.

"... Kue?"

The monster's species name doesn't come up in the part monster status... but if it's an enemy I can get it though.

"So, what do you call that kind of monster."

"It's called a Filolial king, or queen."

"Firo is female so I guess queen."

"R-right... if it's this attached to Hero-sama, then as it stands if you tried to sell it to me I'd be troubled."

She went wild while crying out and broke 3 iron locks, was it?

Damn! My plan was completely ruined!

Well, I didn't plan on selling her though.

"...ter"

"Hm? Did you just hear a strange voice?"

"Well now? I feel like I heard a voice like that too."

"U-um..."

While covering her mouth Raphtalia pointed to the cage Firo was in. Looking the same, the slave traders workers also pointed to the cage.

The slave trader and I tilted our heads wondering what was going on and turned around.

"Master-"

There, with a faint light remaining, white... with white wings was a naked girl inside the cage reaching her hand out to me.



Chapter 30: Transformation Ability

"Oyaji! Oyaji! Oyaji!"

I knocked on the door of the closed weapon shop over and over.

After I did the disgruntled weapon shop Oyaji reluctantly opened the door.

"What is it all of a sudden shield an-chan? The shop closed a long time ago."

"It's not like that!"

I showed Oyaji Firo who I had dressed in my cloak.

"An-chan, don't come bragging because you got a good slave."

"You're wrong!"

Who does Oyaji think I am!

If I met the me that's inside Oyaji's mind, it seems like I could kill him without regret.

"Master? What's wrong?"

"You be quiet."

"No."

Damn! What the heck is happening!

After that there was no end to the panic.

That slave trader, he had his mouth hanging open while pointing. His men were also too shocked to speak.

Even Raphtalia was speechless.

Firo was so desperate to be by my side so much so that she became human.

By the time I noticed, I had carried her over to Oyaji's shop.

"Ha-hachoo"

Poof! Sreeeech!

She transformed and I heard the sound of the cloak I put on her ripping.

In a moment Firo transformed to a Filolial Queen's (pending) body.

This bird! Cloaks aren't free you know.

"Wha..."

Oyaji also lost his words. He looked up at Firo.

Firo returned to a human form, and grabbed my hand. A thing that resembled a mantle fell on top of her head.

"... do you get the situation?"

"Ye-yeah."

Oyaji led me into the store with a really complicated face.

"So, the reason you came to me, is for that girl's equipment?"

"Leaving aside defensive power, isn't there some outfit that won't break even if she transforms?"

I knew it was unreasonable as I asked Oyaji.

"I mean why is she transforming!?"

"An-chan, calm down a bit."

That's right. Thinking about it carefully why is Firo transforming into a human?

There the wings growing out of her back which may be remnants of her true form.. She was a blond and blue-eyed girl so she kind of looked like an angel.

On top of that, she was so cute she had a face like a painting.

She looked around 10 years old. Her physique was like Raphtalia's from a while ago.

Guuuuu....

A classic loud stomach growl.

"Master I'm hungry."

"Bear with it."

"No."

Ku! What the heck is happening.

"For now do you want what I'm having for dinner?"

Oyaji said as he brought a pot out from the back of the store. It seemed like a soup.

"Sto-"

"Yaaaay, thanks for the food"

Firo stole the pot from Oyaji and drank it down, the entire pot.

"Hmm... it doesn't taste that great."

She gave the pot back to Oyaji.

Oyaji looked at me, stunned.

"Um, sorry."

"... An-chan, treat me to a meal after this."

I felt more and more like despair was waiting for me.

"Right... I feel like I might of had some clothes for demi-humans that had transformation powers but... I mean go to a clothes store an-chan."

"Are you telling me to go to a clothes store that doesn't know me at this time of night with a completely naked girl? On top of that, the girl can change into a monster you know?"

"... that's true, hold on a sec."

Rustle rustle, Oyaji rummaged through the back of the store.

"I don't know if the size will fit, and they're some odd clothes so don't expect much."

"I got it."

In the end, Oyaji spent some time before coming back.

"Sorry. None of the clothes look like they'll fit her after she transforms."

"What, was that!?"

This was my last option, what should I do now. Are you telling me there are no clothes for this young girl who looks at me dearly and comes into contact with me?

With this, the recent good opinion I've gotten is going to take a steep dive.

"Master"

"Don't transform!"

Even if I have to use the magic crest, there's no choice but to forbid her from transforming into a human. A monster transforming into a human has to be pretty rare.

"No."

Ku... what does this kid what to do!

Plus she's completely going against what I say.

Is it her rebellious phase? She shouldn't be allowed to enter a rebellious phase a few days after being born.

"Cause... if I'm in my true form master won't sleep with me."

Firo tightened her grip on my hand and smiled with her whole face.

"... why do we have to sleep together?"

"cause I'm lonely."

"Ahh... how to say this, an-chan. You have it rough huh?"

I didn't come to this world to take care of kids though...

"Come to think of it where's Raphtalia?"

"I finally caught up."

Raphtalia entered the shop breathing heavily.

"You suddenly took off running... I searched for you."

"Ah, sorry."

"Ahhh Raphtalia onee-chan."

Firo happily waved her hand.

"I'm not giving you master ok?"

"What is this child saying!"



"Not giving me, I'm not your thing. More like you guys are mine right?"

Meaning they're slaves.

"Well, for now I'll see if there's a way to tailor clothes for her so go back for today."

"Right, sorry about this."

"Thanks for the food~"

"Man... you manage to surprise me again and again, an-chan."

I left the weapon shop and started tiredly making my way towards the inn when Raphtalia called out to me.

"Ah, that sla-... the monster trader asked you to come back."

"Hm? Got it."

We returned to the tent and the slave trader, who was just waiting for us, came out to greet us.

"Well, that was a surprising development. Yes."

"Yeah."

"So, I've realized why sightings of Filolial kings are so rare."

"Oh? You figured it out?"

"Yes. I mean, I think Shield Hero-sama will also be able to understand."

What? The slave trader's using quite a round-about way of speaking.

"You don't understand?"

"... no so tell me."

The slave trader pointed to the human shaped Firo who was wearing the torn up cloak.

"Filolial kings have a high level transformation ability, so they transform into regular Filolials to avoid human eyes, is what we think."

I see...they have the power to transform and hide, thus people won't

realize they're the Filolials' boss on sight. They could also use it to transform into humans.

"Well well, to be able to see with my own eyes the Filolial king that can rarely be studied, I'm moved by Hero-sama's high monster taming ability. Yes."

"What?"

"To raise a normal Filolial into a queen... what raising method would you use to raise a queen do you think?"

... I understood the slave trader's aim. This guy wants to hear how to raise Filolial kings from me and mass produce them.

It must be a pretty rare class of monster, plus it has transformation power. He wants to raise them at minimal cost and sell them at a high price to reap a huge profit.

"It's probably, the legendary shield's power I think."

I reasoned that the power of growth compensation raised her to this height, otherwise it wouldn't be worthy of being legendary.

"When Hero-sama is vague like that, it makes me all tingly. How much would I have to pay to have you teach me I wonder?"

"That's not what I mean!"

"Well then, I'll present you with one more Filolial, so please try-"

"I refuse!"

If they increase any more my wallet won't hold out. I already have to do something about Firo's clothes. If my food expenses increase any more I would be broke.

"Sigh... thinking of any other possibilities, I guess there was that."

"What was it, if you please."

Uu... the slave trader's eyes are sparkling.

It was sickening.

"I fed her meat from a huge monster that was beaten during the wave, so I can't deny the possibility that affected her."

Well, even I think that that sounds crazy.

But she did eat the chimera's meat so I'm not saying anything wrong.

"Hmm... then no helping it."

The slave trader didn't believe it either, but he didn't want to irritate me so he backed off.

"I'll give you a Filolial anytime, so please try raising one. Yes."

"If possible I want to decline but..."

"If you raise it, you'll easily be able to earn a lot of money"

"Hm, if I'm not busy I'll think about it."

With that one phrase, I became even more self-conscious that I'm a miser.

"Have you finished talking to him?"

"Yeah."

"By the way what shall we do?"

"About what?"

Firo was drawn into the conversation so she had a question mark above her head.

"About your treatment."

"I'm sleeping together with master~."

"I won't let you!"

"Ahh no fair! Raphtalia's onee-chan, you're trying to keep master to yourself~"

"No I'm not!"

What are they getting so worked up for...

"Alright, then Firo will sleep in the stable attached to the inn."

"No!"

My order was clearly rejected by a mere bird.

"I'm sleeping with master!"

... this is the same as a child throwing a tantrum because they want to sleep with their parents.

"I see I see, no helping it."

"Naofumi-sama!?"

"Even if I reject her, she'll just keep being selfish so I should meet in the middle somewhere right?"

"Well... yes, but.."

Raphtalia muttered like she wasn't satisfied.

"But make sure you're not naked in front of other people."

"Okaaaay!"

Does she really get it? Well whatever. I'll pray that the weapon shop owner can do something about it tomorrow, nothing to do but return to the inn.

I returned to the inn, paid the inn keeper for one more and went back to my room.

Studying or mixing potions... the free time for that disappeared when Firo transformed into a human.

"Yay! A soft bed~!"

I warned Firo who was jumping on the bed and decided to turn in early.

... It's hot!

Why is it hot!?

"Uuu..."

My body won't move as I want.

What's happening?

I fearfully opened my eyes and the world was pure white.

I was wrapped in wings.

"Su... su..."

This bed is breathing!

I slowly raised my body to see I wasn't sleeping on a bed. I was on top of Firo's belly after she had returned to her real form.

At about the same time, Firo's original body rolled in her sleep, falling off the bed while hugging me like a pillow.

"Wake up! You fat bird!"

Who said it was okay to return to your original form.

"Noooooooo..."

This guy was speaking even though she was in her real form.

"Wh-what are you doing!?"

Raphtalia yelled at me while looking half asleep.

"Oh, Raphtalia, help me!"

This guy was not waking up even if I punched her. My attack power was just too low.

"Wake up Firo!"

Firo rolled over on the floor.

Creak creak creak...

I heard an ominous noise coming from the floor. With just a wooden floor, we were near the breaking point.

"Get up!"

However, Firo who kept smothering me showed no signs of waking up.

"Wake up now!"

Raphtalia forcefully pulled Firo's smothering arm open.

I didn't miss that chance and somehow managed to escape.

"Whew... it's only morning and it's already terrible."

"Nnya?"

Firo realized I was gone and opened her eyes.

Firo noticed me and Raphtalia glaring at her and tilted her head.

"What's wrong?"

"First return to human form!"

"Ehhh... I just woke up."

Ku! This is the last thing I wanted to do but no helping it!

I used the status magic and chose the monster icon and in the restrictions index I put a check on the part that said my orders were absolute.

If I do this she won't be able to go against any kind of order I make.

"Become human!"

I faced Firo and issued an order.

"Ehhh... I want to sleep with master for a bit more."

After refusing to follow my order, the curse mark on Firo's belly emerged.

"Eh?"

"If you don't listen it's going to hurt."

The shining red curse mark spread across Firo's body.

"Noooooooo..."

Then, some kind of pattern appeared on Firo's wing. It flew to the curse mark and, with a fizzle, the mark stopped shining.

"Huh?"

I checked the monster icon. For some reason the part of the restrictions index I had marked had become unmarked.

I tried to check it again, but even if I messed with it it didn't change.

Damn! I brought a monster because it would listen to my orders.

Slave trader... I'm heading to your place right now, so wash your neck and wait.

Chapter 31: Carrot and Stick

"Slave Trader!"

First thing in the morning I barged into the slave trader's tent.

"What is it from so early in the morning Hero-sama? Yes."

"The curse mark from your place was defective. Depending on your answer, my dangerous slave and monster will start going wild in here, okay?"

"My stomach is empty so I'll do it later."

"... if you don't start behaving I'll turn you into breakfast."

The curse mark on Firo won't activate like it should. On top of that it isn't going away.

"Huh? What does that mean?"

I explained to the slave trader what had happened this morning. After that it was horrible. I somehow managed to coax Firo into human form and we went to the tent.

Firo was led here by Raphtalia who was on constant watch for Firo doing anything weird. Seems like it's tough.

"It seems that a normal curse mark won't restrict a Filolial queen. Yes."

"And that means?"

"A normal curse mark won't bind a high rank monster. The dragon that was the prize of that lottery has a special curse mark carved on it."

"In other words a normal curse mark won't work on this guy?"

"Yes."

The slave trader was writing something in his notebook very excitedly.

"So, will you apply that special curse mark?"

"No no, that would not be something we could give for free. Yes."

"What was that?"

"This isn't something that will be cheap, so giving it for free would be tough. We've also neared the limit of the damage we can take."

Ku-! It seems I can't expect any more service.

Well, they did suffer that much damage so I guess there's no helping it...

"How much?"

"Expecting much from Hero-sama in the future, how does the great discount of 200 silver coins sound?"

Kuuuu... that's expensive.

"Couldn't you-"

"By the way 800 silver coins would be considered cheap in the current market. I'm expecting much from Hero-sama so I'm not lying."

Gah!

My wallet took a lot of damage.

I admitted defeat and very regretfully handed 200 silver coins to the slave trader.

"... If that's a lie my dangerous underlings will hold a festival in your blood."

"Of course I understand."

Raphtalia led in Firo by the hand while Firo was looking around in her Filolial queen form.

"Stand still right there Firo."

"Why?"

"If you stay still then afterwards I'll give you something good to eat."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

Firo had sparkling eyes as she headed to where the slave trader was pointing and stood still.

Alright, if we're casting the magic now's the time.

I gave a signal to the slave trader with my eyes. He nodded, called 12 of his underlings who had their faces hidden with robes, and had them surround Firo.

They poured some kind of chemical on the ground and started chanting magic.

The floor shined with light, and a magic square formed with Firo in the center.

"Eh, wh-what?"

Firo tried resisting and sparks flew, but it was no use and the magic square started invading into Firo's body.

"Ow,Ouch----! Stop it-!"

Feeling the pain of the update to the curse mark, Firo started thrashing around. At that the magic square gave off sparks and started to sway.

The Slave trader's underlings let out voices of surprise.

"To be on the safe side, I had a lot of people cast the magic but still... to be able to move under this pressure, this young one would be scary in the future. Yes."

Come to think of it she is still only lvl 19. If she was to become lvl 70 like this exactly how strong would she become? I nodded to the slave trader's words.

Eventually, the magic square was completely carved onto Firo's stomach, and it became quiet.

"It's finished. Yes."

My display also showed a more advanced monster icon than before. Without hesitation, I checked the part that made what I said absolute.

"Haa... haa..."

Firo walked towards me while breathing heavily.

"That was horrible master, it hurt a lot."

Even I thought I had an evil smile on my face as I ordered Firo.

"First, change to human form."

"Ehhh, that hurt so no way. Give me something tasty!"

She rejected my order in an disrespectful tone, while she was asking for food the curse mark shone.

"Eh, no! What, no no!"

Firo sent some kind of magic at the curse mark, but this time the curse repelled it and activated.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Firo fell over from the curse mark's pain.

"If you don't listen to what I say, it'll hurt."

"Ow, ow! Uuu..."

Firo unhappily transformed into human form. After that the curse mark's light faded.

"Hm... this time it properly activated. Good job, slave trader."

"Yes, it is a fairly strong pattern, so it's not easily tampered with. Yes."

I went in front of the collapsed Firo and told her.

"You yourself were 100 silver coins, next that curse mark was 200 coins. In total I'm out 300 silver coins. I'll have you pay that back by obeying my orders."

"M-master..."

Firo swayed and reached her hand out to me.

It kind of hurts my conscience to say this to a child with such a pure face, but I don't think she can survive outside if she's this selfish. (!)

"Listen to what I say."

"N-nooo"

"I see I see, If you don't want to listen to what I say no matter what, then I'll sell you to this scary old man here."

"....!?"

Firo seemed to finally understand her position as her face distorted into fear.

The slave trader was wearing some kind of troubled yet happy expression while looking at me...

"How much would you buy this guy for?"

"Let's see. She is rare so even including the fee for the trouble I'd want her even for 30 gold coins. A effective curse mark is already carved on her so she won't be able to go wild anymore, there would be many ways to use her. Yes."

Even the slave trader who didn't like buying back goods was willing to offer this high of a price on her.

I don't know his true intentions, but if Firo falls into his hand I can expect that her life would be over.

However Firo was looking up at me with an incredibly fearful expression.

This is tough... my conscience which was supposed to be gone was speaking up.

But depending on Firo's attitude I might really have to choose that future.

I'm not a kind older brother or someone who spoils their pet.

"That's how it is. So if you act violently again, I won't see you anymore... you'll drink really bitter medicine, have your body messed with a lot and in the end... you'll probably die...?"

"N-nooooooooo!"

Firo rejected that in a loud voice.

"Master don't hate me..."

Firo clung to my legs and begged me.

Ku-! This is tough...

Even so I can't back down.

"If you honestly listen to what I say then I won't hate you. Therefore from now on, you must properly listen to me"

"Y-yes!"

"Good good, then when we're sleeping at the inn don't turn back into your real form no matter what. This is your first promise."

"Yes!"

When Firo smiled with her whole face, what was left of my conscience ached.

Okay, today after this we have to head to the weapon shop...

As I moved my gaze from Firo, I saw the slave trader smiling with an unbelievably amused expression.

"Such a wonderful and evil method. It sent shivers down my spine. You truly are the legendary hero of the shield!"

I feel like his way of praising me was off... but complaining about it doesn't seem right either.

And, beside him Raphtalia was also looking at me with a difficult expression.

"Naofumi-sama... wasn't that a bit too..."

"If I don't do this then she won't listen to me. Even you were like that at first right?"

At my reply Raphtalia nodded.

"Now that you say that, I was."

"Selfishness has parts where it can be forgiven and parts where it can't."

After hearing my, her master's, true thoughts she couldn't challenge them.

"Carrot and stick right? I understand. Yes."

"I wasn't talking to you slave trader."

Also, don't just decide you understand me.

"I guess I caused you a lot of trouble."

"If that's what you think then please, take and raise a Filolial that we prepared so that it would be easy to use—"

"Now then, we still have places to go today. We'll be leaving now."

"At hero-sama's strong will that keeps from getting caught up in our pace as much as possible, I hold true feelings of respect. Yes."

With this we ended our discussion and left the tent behind.

Chapter 32: Reward

Firo was wearing my mantle as we head to the weapon shop.

Old Man: "Hey lad."

The Old Man waved as we approach.

Naofumi: "Did something happen?"

Old Man: "Yeah. Wait a moment."

The Old Man closed the weapon shop and guided us.

We arrived at the magic shop where I received the magic book.

Magic Shop SK: "Oh my."

The aunt from the magic shop beamed when she saw the Old Man.

Magic Shop SK: "Why don't you guys come in?"

Naofumi: "Right, Firo, don't change into your true form until I permit you to."

Firo: "Okay."

At the back of the magic shop, there was a workplace that smelled like nature.

We were guided to that workplace.

The ceiling was quite high, about three meters.

In the middle of the floor was a magic square with a crystal.

Magic Shop SK: "Sorry that it's a little small because I'm working."

Naofumi: "No it's fine. Anyway, is there any clothing for children here?"

Old Man: "This Aunty from the magic shop is an acquaintance that could help you."

Magic Shop SK: "That's right~"

She removed the crystal and put an outdated sewing machine on a pedestal.

Magic Shop SK: "Is that child really a demon?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, let me take off the mantle first before she changes. Firo, return to your original form."

There should be enough room in here for her original form.

Firo: "Ok."

When I gave the command, Firo removed the mantle and returned to her original form.

Magic Shop SK: "Oh my, oh dear!"

The magic shop Auntie looked up at Firo who had returned to her Philorial Queen form in surprise.

Firo: "Is this all right?"

The scene was very strange as Firo's voice contrasted greatly with her body.

Even though this was a fantasy world, it was still weird...

I looked towards Raphtalia

Raphtalia: "What is it?"

Naofumi: "Nothing"

That reminds me, Raphtalia was also a Demi-human.

Now that I think about it, if it was the past me, I would agree in regards to Motoyasu's behavior in trying to attain a relationship with her. However, that is what the past me would have done.(!) Magic Shop SK: "So what kind of clothes do you need?"

Naofumi: "Can you make something that won't break when she transforms?"

Magic Shop SK: "Strictly speaking, I'm not sure I can make clothes."

Naofumi: "What!?"

Magic Shop SK: "Hero-sama, what do you see?"

Naofumi: "Magic shop... And a witch."

Magic Shop SK: "That's right. I only have some knowledge on transformation."

Though I don't really know what is considered common sense in this world... But I know that witches can transform into animals.

Magic Shop SK: "Oh my, it takes a great amount of magical power and a very troublesome procedure to transform yourself into an animal. Wouldn't it be bothersome to put on clothes every time you transformed?"

Hm? So it seems it was possible for witches to transform.

The Aunty answered while working on the bobbin.

By appearances alone it resembles a sewing machine from my world.

Magic Shop SK: "It would be fine if she transformed at home. But if she does so in a crowded place, it would be pretty serious."

Naofumi: "Yeah, that's right."

That's why Firo's clothes are my main concern. Walking around naked would stand out.

Magic Shop SK: "Therefore, it would be best if the clothes can be automatically worn when she transformed and stored safely when reverting."

Naofumi: "I see."

True, if the clothes just disappear after she reverts back, the problem would be solved.

Magic Shop SK: "There's a technique passed down by a certain demon category of the Demi-humans that is able to deal with this problem. A famous example of a clothing incorporating this technique is the vampire's mantle."

Yeah, like when they transformed into bats or wolves. So it was also true in this world too.

Magic Shop SK: "Well, this bobbin machine makes the materials for those clothes."

Naofumi: "Oh... So how exactly do the clothes transform?"

Magic Shop SK: "Strictly speaking..... what are clothes exactly? It is something that can be seen by others right?"

I tilted my neck and gave the Aunty of the magic shop a puzzled look.

What is she trying to get at?

Magic Shop SK: "What I mean is, this item can transform the threads to magical power and magical power to threads. Therefore, the user can change the threads to magical power at any time."

Magic Shop SK: "To put it simply, the user can change the threads to magical power and vice-versa."

Naofumi: "Oh, I see."

Now I understand why the Old Man from the weapon shop brought us here.

It'll certainly be weird to call these clothes. When not in human form the magical power would circulate in the body, and it would become "clothes" once back to human form.

Magic Shop SK: "Now then, Firo-chan right? Turn the handle of this tool slowly."

Firo: "Ok"

Firo begins to slowly turn the handle of the bobbin machine.

A thread comes out immediately and the Aunty wrapped it around a spool.

Then, the threads started to gather on the spool.

Firo: "Hmm? I feel like some power is leaving me."

Magic Shop SK: "This changes magical power to threads. It is tiring but please endure. It is still insufficient to make the clothes"

Naofumi: "Hmm... Interesting."

Firo was still a child who was barely one week old.

Firo looked tired while spinning the machine.

Naofumi: "Endure it and I'll promise you something."

Firo: "Food? Delicious food?"

Naofumi: "Sure."

I am a man who keeps his promises. I'll let you eat your fill of delicious food later, Firo.

Firo: "I'll do my best!"

Firo begins to energetically turn the bobbin machine.

Firo: "Yay, I'll work hard!"

The Aunty seemed surprised at the speed at which Firo worked.

Naofumi: "Old Man, I remembered that owe you a meal. Are you free after this?"

Old Man: "I left a note at the shop explaining I'll be closed till early afternoon. So what're you going to treat me to, lad?"

Naofumi: "How about this, can you prepare a big iron plate?"

Old Man: "What're you going to use that for?"

Naofumi: "I'm going to cook."

Old Man: "The lad's home cooking? I was expecting something different."

Naofumi: "What was that?"

I was slightly offended by the Old Man's disappointed expression.

Old Man: "Oh well, what did I expect."

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, go to the market to get meat, vegetables, and charcoal. I think Firo can eat the portion of 5 people."

Raphtalia: "Understood."

I handed some silver coins to Raphtalia to go shopping.

Firo: "Food~ Food~"

Firo was in high spirits while spinning the bobbin machine.

Magic Shop SK: "That's enough. You can stop spinning now."

After awhile, the Aunty told her to stop.

Firo: "Will there be more food if I turn it more?"

Naofumi: "No. you can stop."

Firo: "Okay~"

Firo returned to her original form.

Firo: "Master~ food~"

Naofumi: "Hold on a bit."

Firo: "Eh-..."

Firo sounded very disappointed. Raphtalia hadn't returned yet, so there was no food.

Naofumi: "When we leave the shop, return to your human form."

Firo: "Ok"

Do you really understand?

Magic Shop SK: "You can use this to make your clothes."

The magic shop Aunty gave us the threads.

Old Man?: "I'll go ask someone who knows how to weave this."(!)

Naofumi: "I have high hopes for that fellow. Firo, let's go."

Magic Shop SK?: "What should I tell the young lady who went shopping?"

Naofumi: "Tell her we'll be waiting at the gate leaving town."

Magic Shop SK?: "Understood."

Following the Old Man from the weapon shop, we left the magic shop.

Magic Shop SK: "As for the fee, I'll be sending it to the weapon shop~"

Naofumi: "How much would that be...?"

I asked a little anxiously.

Magic Shop SK: "Making the magic string? Because the crystal is expensive, I'll charge Hero-sama 50 silver."

Damn! Why is Firo so expensive?

In the future, we need to be careful with her clothes, it was like wearing money.

We headed to the weaver with the threads.

Weaver: "This is some unusual material, I could do a lot with this. Go to the dressing room and measure your size. I should be able to complete the dress tonight. You can pick it up later."

After she said that, we went straight to the dressing room.

Even though it was only making a piece of clothing, it will still take quite a while.

Dressmaker: "Wow..... What a very cute child!"

The Dressmaker was a girl with glasses and a scarf.

She seems a little plain. By that, I mean she looks like someone from my world who would write doujinshi.

Dressmaker: "Her wings are just like an angel. She seems similar to a Demi-human... Well enough of that, I'll work on your order now."

Naofumi: "Is that so?"

The Old Man puts a hand on my shoulder.

Old Man: "Bird Demi-humans usually have the hands or legs of birds, or features of a bird in other parts. But this child only have wings so it's very wonderful"

Firo: "Hm~?"

Firo tilted her neck while looking up at the Dressmaker.

Naofumi: "Yeah... This fellow is a demon that can transform into a human. When she reverts to her true form, her clothes break."

Dressmaker: "Interesting..... So that's why you need clothes made from magical power."

Her glasses gave off a dangerous light.

As I thought, this girl reminded me of an Otaku.

I felt a little nostalgic because I had an acquaintance selling doujinshi within a circle. She would often give me admission tickets for the circle and was quite friendly.

Sigh... There was no such thing in a different world.

Dressmaker: "Because the material is excellent, making a simple one piece dress may be good. And if she does not receive any impact during the change from magic to clothes, then it would be perfect."(!) Naofumi: "Eh? Uh sure?"

Firo was measured again after she put on her mantle and then the dressmaker started designing something.

Dressmaker: "I want to see her true form!"

Firo looked at me with a troubled face. I gulp and looked around.

Naofumi: "Looks like she would barely fit here"

When Firo returns to her original form, her head would hit against the ceiling of less than two meters high.

Dressmaker: "Can you sit down?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, I think that's better."

Firo stared at the dressmaker girl while changing back to her demon form and worrying about the ceiling.

Dressmaker: "Oh-... This gap is good!"(!)

To be unfazed even after seeing Firo's true form... This dressmaker is capable!

But at the same time, she's absolutely the doujinshi-type that has a very unpleasant personality. I'm glad this is a different world.(!) Dressmaker: "I'll bet that a ribbon will suit her."

Firo's neck size was measured by the dressmaker. Then she went back designing clothes again.

Dressmaker: "Well I'm going to wait for materials to arrive!"

She seems excited while answering.

Old Man?: "This fellow is a good craftsman."

Naofumi: "I guess..."

She's the type to be absorbed in her work and will accomplish it by all means.

Old Man?: "Well, looks like everything would be completed by tomorrow."

Naofumi: "That's fast. By the way, how much is this going to cost in total?"

Old Man?: "I recommended you to this place so it should be around 100 silver pieces."(!) Ugh... I received a shock.

Naofumi: "Firo, do you understand? I spent a grand total of 400 pieces of silver on you. I expect you to work diligently."

Firo: "Okay!"

Do you really understand? We left the shop with Firo in her human form.

We joined up with Raphtalia, who was waiting at the gate of the castle town.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, I bought the ingredients you asked for."

Naofumi: "Firo costs 400 pieces of silver. Raphtalia was cheaper."

Raphtalia: "Please don't say it like I'm a cheap woman!"

Sigh... Guess I have to live with this.

Naofumi: "Alright, Old Man, bring the iron plate. Firo, get a cart and carry it from the weapon shop."

Firo: "Ok!"

Old Man: "Alright..."

Firo left with the Old Man for the weapon shop and came back pulling a cart.

..... Why was she pulling it in her human form?

An iron plate around the size I had imagined was inside the cart.

Naofumi: "Alright, let's leave the castle town and go to the riverbank near the grassy plains."

We arrived at the riverbank.

I took out the iron plate, put it on a griddle and immediately put charcoal under it.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia and Old Man, take care of the fire."

Old Man: "Yeah yeah."

Raphtalia: "Okay"

As expected of the Old Man of a weapon shop, it seems managing fire is his forte.

Firo: "What about Firo?"

Naofumi: "Be on guard so that balloons won't approach us..."

Firo: "Okay~!"

I had Firo, who was curious on what we were doing for some strange reason, do something else because she is likely to mess up at the chores we were doing.

I cut the meat and vegetables, that Raphtalia brought, into appropriate sizes and put it near the grill.

Old Man: "Lad, the charcoal is ready."

Naofumi: "Yeah."

Raphtalia and the Old Man had already heated the plate as per my instructions, so I just put the fatty meat onto the grill for the oil.

Then I spread out the vegetables and meat so that they aren't directly

on top of the fire.

Old Man: "You sure are skilful."

I used a stick and a knife to turn the meat and vegetables so they don't burn.

Naofumi: "Well, this should be fine."

Yup. Today's lunch is a barbecue by the riverbank. Firo's reward.

Naofumi: "Firo, it's ready."

Firo: "Okay~"

Firo was already drooling from the smell when she took the skewer I handed her.

Firo: "Yaay~! This is delicious!"

Firo started throwing meat and vegetables that were just cooked into her mouth.

Naofumi: "Hey don't eat everything, this is for everyone."

Firo: "Mfkay~"

Firo nodded while stuffing her mouth.

Do you really understand?

Naofumi: "Well no matter. Raphtalia and Old Man go and eat."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Old Man: "Sure."

I put the meat and vegetables onto some leaves and handed it to Raphtalia and the Old Man.

Old Man: "Oh, this is delicious! I'm surprised grilled meat tastes so good."

Raphtalia: "For some reason, the dishes that Naofumi-sama makes are strangely delicious."

Naofumi: "I'll take that as a compliment"

Old Man: "I'm not flattering you. Why does it taste so good?"

The Old Man looked at his plate with a puzzled expression.

Naofumi: "It's probably because of the cooking skill from my shield."

Old Man: "The power of the shield?"

Naofumi: "Well, at least I think so."

From the corner of my sight I see, Barbeque is now available. Quality: Good -> Great quality.

To think that such a strange icon would exist.

Old Man: "That's quite a mysterious shield. I'm envious."

Naofumi: "I can't take it off so it's quite inconvenient."

Not to mention the non-existent offensive power.

Oh right, there was the special effect from the Bee Needle Shield. So now I can use the [Shield of the Needle] to attack enemies.

Although the enemy would have escaped before I beat it, unless it's slow like a balloon.

As expected, when the monster realize it was in a disadvantageous position, it would just run away.

Sometimes, a smart monster would ignore me and aim for Raphtalia.

Old Man: "Haven't you become quite strong?"

Naofumi: "I don't know... Compared to the other heroes..."

Old Man: "Is that so, are the legendary weapons that powerful?"

Naofumi: "That's right, I learned from experience."

Old Man: "I see"

Naofumi: "Then-"

Because skills could be acquired in various ways, the power of a legendary weapon was way above average.

Moreover, accumulating status improvements whenever a shield was

unsealed was good.

Monsters, materials, levels, and the skill tree. There were many different conditions that would unseal new shields.

Besides, the exclusive effects of any shield that was released would give permanent bonuses.

Even a weak shield could be helpful if I unsealed it.

Due to the Equipment bonuses carrying over, the more shields I unsealed, the stronger the skills I could use.

I can see how many bonus stats I got. My stats in general were higher than Raphtalia's. Maybe it was because I'm a hero.

Especially in the aspect of defence. I have 3 times more and that's not including the permanent bonuses from unsealing other shields.

Because I never attack, all the better gears went to Raphtalia. After all, the Hero of the Shield only has the potential in defending, that's why my defence is so high. But the price for that is having 1/10th of attack power.

The only difference between a resident of this world and a hero are the effects granted by this shield.

If I didn't have these effects, I would never be able to beat a monster with just defence.

After all, the only reason a hero is different from a normal person was because of the legendary weapon.

It could be considered that you are only a hero because you have the legendary weapon.

I hate it, but I am only a hero because of this shield.

It seems there is an influence from being the companion of a hero.

Raphtalia is superior to normal Demi-humans because of the effects from Slave trainer Shield and Firo's abilities are on par with her despite the level difference.

I don't know how much effect Growth Correction had, but it seemed to

be quite large.

The effects of Slave Trainer Shield and Demon Trainer Shield were good. I wonder what effects Friend Shield would have, if that even existed.

Basically, existences called companions are essential for a hero.

Friend huh..... something that I don't have.

Old Man: "I see... It seems that heroes really are different from us commoners."

Naofumi: "That seems to be the case."

Travelling around the world, absorbing various demons and materials to grow stronger.

Honestly, there's just so much more to know.

I don't understand how much I can improve the shield.

And even if I don't do anything, the wave of disaster will strike.

I don't know how many times it will come either.

It's been twice already. Maybe 5 times, 10 times, or even 100 times, I don't know.

Whatever it is, I can't just sit around and do nothing.

That reminds me...There seems to be a worrisome shield called Curse Series.

At that time when I almost lost Raphtalia, the Curse series was released and had started to erode the shield.

I've looked for that skill tree many times. (!)

However, I can't find it no matter how hard I look.

I'll try asking for help.

[Curse Series]

I hesitated to even touch it.

I had only written that sentence. But when I checked it many times, I

felt a shock and the letters change(!) Curse Series The Curse Series bestows power but consumes the user. Hero, Do Not Use It!

Therefore, I decided to stay away from this topic.

When I need it, the power will appear. This shield seems to have many limitations.

Firo: "Master~ there's no more meat"

Naofumi: "What!"

When I looked, there was no more meat. Everyone had already finished eating the stuff I prepared.

All that was left were vegetables.

Firo: "Is it already over? Firo still wants to eat more."

Naofumi: "Uhhh, well... Go to the forest and catch 5 Usapiru. I'll cook those too."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Firo rushed to the forest at full speed.

Old Man: "Oh man, that was delicious. Totally worth it."

Naofumi: "If you think that, then discount the price of clothes."

Old Man: "Lad, if I gave you anymore discount, I would suffer a huge loss."

Oh well, we barbecued next to the riverbank till evening and then called it a day.

By the way, Firo caught 10 Usapiru.

I barely had time to eat. Mostly because of managing the barbecue and dismembering the Usapiru to roast.

Chapter 33: Peddling

The next day, that otaku Dressmaker greeted us with a smile when we entered the dress shop.

Dressmaker: "Yes yes~ I've finished making the clothes. It took me all night."

The Dressmaker looked extremely tired with her red and tension-filled eyes. She then brought Firo's clothes from the back of the shop.

The dress was mainly white with a large blue ribbon placed in the middle for contrast. Even though it looks simple but I understand that it was beautiful.

Firo: "Master, am I going to wear this?"

Naofumi: "Yeah."

Firo: "Yay!"

Firo, who was wearing a cloak to cover herself, had taken it off and became nude on the spot.

Raphtalia: "Firo, no!"

Firo: "Eh--"

With Raphtalia urging her to stop, I guided them both to the back of the shop.

I waited for Firo to change in the shop.

Dressmaker: "Alright, change into your demon form."

I could hear the Dressmaker's voice from the depths of the store.

Firo: "Why~?"

Dressmaker: "If you wear this ribbon, I'll give you meat."

Firo: "Yay!"

Don't just casually say something so terrifying.

Firo: "Understood~"

I could hear the transformation sounds.

Dressmaker: "Yup. As I thought you look good..."

I heard an enchanted voice.

Dressmaker?: "Alright, let's go."

Firo: "Ok!"

The two girls appeared from the back of the store.

My eyes turned towards Firo.

... Wow. Her original figure which was already angel-like was now even more stunning.

Pure white wings, matching the white one piece... And a blue ribbon on her chest. What was it?

Right, she looks like an angel heroine from the 2-D world.

Firo: "Master~?"

Naofumi: "Hm?"

Firo: "Well? Does it suit me?"

Naofumi: "Yea, it suits you."

This otaku Dressmaker was able to take full advantage of Firo's specs and make suitable clothing for her. Her talent is quite outstanding.

Firo: "Ehehe."



An embarrassed Firo laughed while her clothes fluttered.

Seriously, what a terrible expenditure.

I let Firo pull the cart while we head back to Forest village.

When Firo changed to her demon form, the clothes dispersed and the ribbon turned into a collar.

That function was very convenient.

Magic Shop SK: "Oh, it's Hero of the Shield-sama."

Before we left the town's castle, we coincidentally met with the Aunty from the magic shop.

Magic Shop SK: "Are you heading to Forest village?"

Naofumi: "Yeah"

Magic Shop SK: "I happen to have some business there too. May I tag along?"

The Aunty from the magic shop asked with a smile.

Oh well, I don't really want to decline her since she has helped us out with various things.

Naofumi: "I won't guarantee that it will be comfortable, is that fine?"

Magic Shop SK: "Yeah."

Raphtalia was already battling with her motion sickness by looking far ahead.

Magic Shop SK: "Well then, let's get going."

The magic shop Aunty got on the cart.

Naofumi: "Good, Firo. Don't go too fast."

Firo: "Okay~"

The pedestrians who we just passed by gawked at Firo, their faces were filled with surprise. Talking demons are probably rare.

The cart rolled along with a pitter-patter.

I feel that in these past few days, I have been really busy.

Actually, I'm always busy. Its just that recently, I have been 'very' busy.

All of these circumstances could be summed up within one word, Firo...

Magic Shop SK: "So, how's your study of magic going?"

Naofumi: "Uh..."

The magic shop Aunty attacked where it hurt.

To be frank, I made no progress at all.

Should I retort with a "you should have given me a crystal ball"? No, she helped procure the threads to make Firo's clothes and gave a discount, I shouldn't complain.

Naofumi: "Because I am from another world, I can't read these letters."

Magic Shop SK: "Oh... I'm sorry."

I felt bad seeing her apologize. I lament at my insufficient studying.

I was defeated.

I repaid a good intention with bad feelings.

Therefore, I want to repay Aunty for the help.

I must learn it as fast as possible.

I don't have any support, unlike the other fucking heroes. That's why I have to do my best to learn.

Also, I need to acquire better equipment to survive the next wave.

Let's not forget about translating the medical recipes either.

Though it would take a lot of time, I decided to learn the letters first.

Firo: "Fuuaa... it's light."

Firo was yawning while pulling the cart steadily.

You're calling a cart with 3 people light?

That's great. I already have a certain plan. This can't be done without Firo.

The Aunty from the magic shop gave me 25 coppers when we arrived at Forest Village.

Naofumi: "What's this for?"

Magic Shop SK: "Transportation fee."

Naofumi: "Oh I see."

I can use this.

Forest village was reviving nicely. A storekeeper welcomes us pleasantly.

I have already apologized for the chimera meat.

Although, keeping that meat there was my idea in the first place.

Naofumi: "Now then, Raphtalia, let's go on some motion sickness training."

I promised to help with the reconstruction to compensate for the meat. Although it's only a little, I still get some compensation.

Raphtalia: "Eh!?"

Raphtalia had a bitter face. Oh dear, it's not good if you can't overcome something like this.

Naofumi: "From now on, our transportation is Firo pulling the cart, so you must get used to it."

Raphtalia: "O-Okay"

Firo: "Okay~!"

Naofumi: "Firo, you're pulling."

Firo: "Yup!"

Philorials really like pulling carts. Firo's eyes shined.

Raphtalia: "Uhm.....Are you thinking of something?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, I think we should start peddling."

Raphtalia: "Peddling? Why?"

Naofumi: "Although we don't have a lot of goods, I want to stock up on an assortment of medicine."

Raphtalia: "Sigh....."

Raphtalia doesn't seem to see the appeal. Oh dear, did I have too high expectations? However, it would be a waste if I did not use the precious cart given to me.

Naofumi: "So when you get used to the motion sickness, Firo can pull the cart everywhere at maximum speed."

Raphtalia: "I understand the reason..."

Naofumi: "I know a place that would make it hard to get sick. You should get accustomed there."

Raphtalia: "Is there really such a place?"

Naofumi: "Yeah."

And, before starting the day's work, I put Raphtalia on the place where she was most likely to get motion sickness... On the back of Firo.

Firo: "I'm fine with master, but why is Onee-chan on my back?"

Firo muttered as Raphtalia gets on her back.

Raphtalia: "It's the same for me. This is embarrassing."

It's a strange sight to see Raphtalia in a semi-crouching position on top of Firo's owl shaped body.

Naofumi: "Is it too tough?"

Firo: "Nope, this is easy."

Firo seems to have no problems at all.

Naofumi: "Well then, let's go."

Firo: "Ok!"

Firo pulls the cart with Raphtalia on her back.

Actually, it should be quite taxing. However, the one doing the pulling said it isn't.

Meanwhile, I began decoding the book of Intermediate recipes while learning the letters.

Rumble...

Rumble.....

It is difficult to concentrate with the sound of a wheel as background music.

Raphtalia: "Uhhh..."

Rumble.....

Raphtalia: "Uh-Uhhh..."

Hm?

I looked at Firo and see her in human form piggybacking Raphtalia. Raphtalia seems troubled and tried to get my attention while the passers-by whisper and point at us.

Naofumi: "A strange rumour is going to circulate!"

My reputation is going to drop again because there is going to be a rumour that I forced a slave girl to do manual labour by pulling a cart and carrying another person.

Naofumi: "Well..."

Naofumi: "When you pull a cart, do not turn into a human."

Firo: "Okay."

Firo nods and, seemingly dissatisfied, returns to her demon form.

I'm getting bored. Raphtalia doesn't seem to have motion sickness yet.

It will probably be okay if we go faster.

Naofumi: "Alright, Speed up!"

Firo: "Okay~!"

Firo nods energetically and begins running.

GaraGaraGara!

The wheels on the cart turn noisily.

Raphtalia: "Wa!"

Raphtalia was surprised and clings to Firo.

At least, we will arrive at our destination today.

Chapter 34: Journey on Carriage

Hmmm...

“Uuu... Have we reached?”

As we’ve arrived at our destination, I glanced at Raphtalia who looked like she was just about to collapse and I let out a bit of a woeful groan.

It didn’t seem like she was having trouble earlier, but it looks like having Firo run quickly may have been too much.

“We’ve made it to the hut?”

Looks like Firo didn’t have enough, as even after she stopped pulling the wagon, she was letting her legs loose and frolicking about.

Raphtalia looked dreadful as she staggered on her feet.

“Well, let’s load up the lumber now.”

I aided the lumberjack who came out of the hut in loading the lumber onto the wagon.

I also helped out a bit in cutting down some trees. Thanks to my [shield] skill, the quality of the lumber was raised.

While I did that, I had Raphtalia continue her riding training. On a side note, I got a reaction from the lumber so I let [the shield] absorb it.

The requirements for the Kino Tree shield have been unlocked.

The requirements for the Les Tree shield have been unlocked.

Kino Tree Shield

Ability remains locked... Equip bonus – Woodworking Skill I Les Tree Shield

Ability remains locked... Equip bonus – Low Level Wood Working Recipe It’s the Wood Shield branch. These two trees seem to be the most common types used for woodworking.

The Kino trees are like the Hinoki (Japanese cypress) from my world but with a bit of an aromatic fragrance. The Les trees sort of resemble the

Sugi (Japanese cedar), but the grain of the cut tree seems to differ depending on the location. It's a bit of an odd tree.

Well, not like that matters too much.

A few days later.

Pound, pound, pound.

With a wooden mallet in hand, I worked vigorously in modifying our wagon to become a full horse-drawn carriage.

It seems my skill has improved considerably which I suspect is due to the Woodworking Skill I unlocked the other day.

I began to affix a frame on top of our wagon. After that I'll need to cover the top with some thick cloth.

The Ryuuto village reconstruction is proceeding swimmingly, and it looks like they'll be fine without our help now.

The villagers noticed I was working on upgrading my wagon into a carriage and even lent a hand.

"Alright, this seems to be pretty ok."

"Looks like it's done."

I, along with the few villagers that helped me out, let out a bit of a cheer upon finishing the carriage.

It's a horse-drawn carriage, but the one pulling it will be a Philorial... Well, whatever.

"Thanks for helping me everyone."

"It's no problem at all. Hero-sama has helped us out so much, this is the least we can do."

The villagers all helped me out with kind smiles.

They're treating me kindly as I've saved their lives, but I can't spoil myself by staying here. Still, I'm honestly grateful to the people here.

"I'm glad you feel that way."

“You’ll be peddling goods you say?”

“I’ll mostly be a guy that does odd jobs. Traveling from village to village, town to town transporting goods, selling whatever commodities I come across, escorting people.”

“I see...”

Yeah, the villagers don’t seem to really get what I mean.

Well it’s true that it’s not typical hero behavior like what Motoyasu would do.

It’s not like I’ve envisioned a clear cut path to success here, but I’ve got Firo now, and it only makes sense to make the most out of her.

“Hm? Woah... The wagon turned into a carriage-.”

Firo, who was in her human form and playing about, had a look of surprise as she notices how large the wagon has grown.

“Is Firo going to be pulling this?”

Firo asks, her eyes positively glimmering.

“Yeah, that’s right. From now on you’ll be pulling this carriage as we travel all over the country.”

“Really!?”

Firo cheers, brimming with happiness.

Man if it were me I’d absolutely object to doing so much manual labor...

“Are we really going to?”

Raphtalia mutters dejectedly.

It seems Raphtalia doesn’t sound very enthusiastic about our journey on the carriage as she has yet to completely get over her motion sickness.

“You’ll get over it eventually. Just bear it until then.”

“Fine.”

I faced Firo and go over this multiple times.

“Firo, what is your job?”

“Ummm, Firo’s job is to pull the carriage to wherever master wants to go.”

“Right.”

“And to kick that spear guy if I ever see him.”

“Correct.”

“One of those is wrong! Just what are you making her do?”

Raphtalia objects to my words in bewilderment.

“What... You’re looking at me as if I said something crazy.”

If you see Motoyasu, kick him. I see nothing wrong here.

Seriously, I’ll get nowhere if I have to micromanage each one of them so much.

“Alright then, we’re off to peddle our goods. I’ll be hiding in the carriage. Raphtalia, whenever we hit a village or a town, try to sell what we’ve got.

“Okay... I will.”

Outside of Ryuuto village, I still have a pretty bad reputation. So if I were to come out and try to negotiate, things might go awry and I won’t be able to sell a thing.

That’s why I’ve appointed Raphtalia with the task of selling and haggling our wares.

She has a fairly attractive appearance and is not particularly shy either. She might be pretty well suited to jobs handling clients.

“Well, let’s head out.”

Our preparations complete, we load up the carriage with our baggage and have Firo draw us.

“Ah, Hero-sama.”

“Hm? What is it?”

Within the mass of villagers seeing us off, a man stepped forward in front me and was dressed several notches above everyone else.

“I am the lord who is in charge of the area in which Ryuuto village resides. Shield Hero-sama, I thank you for everything you have done.”

“Don’t worry about it. This was just a nice place for me to set up a base.

“...Please, take this.”

The lord says that as he hands me a sheet of parchment.

“This is?”

“As you’ll be selling goods, I’m sure this will be useful. It’s a Commerce Amnesty.”

“A Commerce Amnesty?”

“Yes. In this country, if you sell goods, at each and every village or town you visit you must pay a fixed amount to that region’s lord.”

... Is that so. Well, if I just flaunt my authority as a hero then... Nah, since I have such a shitty reputation, that’ll probably just backfire.

“But that’s when you can present this Commerce Amnesty with my stamp on it. If you have this then you’ll be exempt from paying the region’s lord. I hope you will find this useful.”

“Uhhh... Is it really ok?”

“Yes. I won’t be able to face my people if I don’t present to Hero-sama proper remuneration for the services he has done.”

Now that I think about it, this is the agricultural sector of the Merlot Mark region. It’s a place that gets quite a bit of traffic, so the lord of the region must have the same degree of influence and dignity to match its affluence.

It must’ve been brought to his attention by the villagers that I minimized the possible damage that could’ve occurred to Ryuuto village during the wave. With my bad reputation spread about, the king would scorn any nobles that would assist me. But for his villagers, he is willing

to bear such contempt... That's why he faced me with a cheerful smile.

"... I give this to you out of concern that your poor reputation may detriment your future business."

He's giving it to me with purely good intentions. Then I can respond with honest gratitude.

"Thank you. I'll make use of it."

"May you have a safe journey."

"...Yeah, I'll be off."

"If there's anything we can do you aid you Hero-sama, please allow us to help."

"If you guys can just live long and prosper, that'll be plenty."

"Of course!"

And with that our journey as a jack-of-all-trades doing odd jobs began.

At first we began with selling medicine.

We didn't have much, but we were able to sell it below the market price.

Our main items were remedies and nutritional supplements. These specifically I was able to make in higher level quality and we were able to sell it for a fairly high price.

And whenever we stopped by a village I would buy the medicinal herbs that I knew about and synthesize them into medicine on the road.

Firo was quite fast, so most of the time we made it to the next village within a day, but on some occasions we have to camp out.

When that happens we stop the carriage, set up a campfire and have dinner.

"Master! The space next to Firo is open! Let's sleep together!"

Pat, pat, in her Demon Form Firo signals to me to sit beside her.

"It's way too stuffy being next to you..."

It seems Firo really wants to sleep next to me. At an inn, I've ordered Firo to never change to her Demon form, so when we camp outside like this she indulges herself a bit more.

Well, if we're camping outside there's no one around so there won't be any trouble. I guess it's fine to let her off the hook a bit every now and then...

"Firo, you really do like Naofumi-sama don't you."

"Yup! I won't lose to you, Raphtalia onee-chan."

"How did you end up with that!"

Whenever Raphtalia and Firo argue, it's in some fine line where I can't tell whether they're on good terms or bad terms.

Firo is still a kid, so she can throw a tantrum at just about anything.

Oh wait, Raphtalia is also actually a kid herself isn't she. So mentally they're about the same age.

"Yes, yes. Hurry up and sleep you two. I'll wake you up when it's time to switch- ."

"Ahh-you're treating Firo like a kid again-!"

"That's right! Please stop treating me like a child!"

"Oh that's right-! Raphtalia and Firo are both grown-ups aren't they-!"

"You don't think so at all!"

"Yeah! Master you're so meeean!"

And with silly conversations like that, our days of peddling continue.

Chapter 35: Rumors of Our Hero

Naofumi: "Hm?"

About an hour before arriving at the next village, I heard a strange sound while working in the carriage.

There are wheezing sounds coming from a carriage next to ours. When I look outside, I saw a man with an impatient expression on his face, holding onto a bag.

Naofumi: "What's the rush?"

The key to being proficient in business is the ability to act curious.

Naofumi: "Hey, you over there, what's wrong?"

Villager: "I need to return to the village on the other side of the mountain quickly."

Naofumi: "Why are you in such a rush to return to the village over there?"

The man wanted to buy medicine for his parents but Firo ran past him.

Villager: "Yes, every second counts."

I understand the circumstances of this man who caught up to my carriage.

Hmm...The cost of getting to the other side of the mountain should be around 50 coppers.

Naofumi: "Firo, how fast can you get there if you go at top speed?"

Firo: "Uhhh, let's see... If I were to run without pulling the carriage we would arrive quickly."

Naofumi: "Understood."

I glanced at Raphtalia who read my mind and nodded.

Naofumi: "I'll take you there for 1 silver is that fine?"

Villager: "Eh!?"

The man has a shocked expression.

Villager: "I just bought medicine, I don't have any more money..."

Naofumi: "One silver is already cheap you know? You can repay me with medical herbs when we get there. That's my final offer."

Villager: "In that case....."

Naofumi: "Alright it's done. Firo!"

Firo: "Okay~!"

Firo leaves the carriage on the side of the road and turns around.

I pick up the man and put him in the wagon on Firo's back.

Villager: "Uwah!"

Firo carries the wagon with both hands and dashed at full speed.

Raphtalia is waving away from the carriage.

Firo: "I'm leaving!"

Villager?: "Oh!"

Dotadotadota!

When Firo runs seriously, she is two times faster than an average Philorial.

We arrived at the man's house in the village across the mountain in no time.

Villager: "What frightening speed....."

Naofumi: "Don't you need to give your parent the medicine? Don't drop it."

Villager: "Oh, right!"

The man enters the house. I enter after him as I have yet to receive my compensation.

It was a very normal house in a farming village.

I heard coughing sounds as I stepped inside.

Villager: "Mom, I brought medicine. Endure it and drink."

As I walked towards the voice, I saw a pale old woman who looks as if she is about to die at any time.

What medicine is that? The effects seem greater than any I know.

Hm...

Naofumi: "Hey. Before you let her drink it, boil it in hot water first."

Villager: "Is that ok?"

Naofumi: "Pass me the medicine."

I received the medicine from the man and fed it to the old woman while rubbing her back.

The skill Medical Effect Up seems to be working.

Old woman: "Cough..... Cough....."

The old woman somehow managed to finish the medicine.

In my eyes, I can see some light scattering.

Apparently it was pretty effective.

The old woman's condition seems to have improved by leaps and bounds. Some redness returned to her complexion and her coughing has decreased.

Naofumi: "You should rest for a while. Your son will bring you food immediately."

The old woman looks up at me while trembling.

Naofumi: "Now then."

I leave for the kitchen where the man is.

Villager : "Oh, did she drink it properly?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, her condition seems to have stabilized as well."

The man's shoulders sag in relief at my answer.

Naofumi: "You can pay me later."

Villager: "Okay."

I leave the house and head to where Firo is waiting.

Before we leave the village, the man's expression becomes tense.

Villager: "Um..."

Naofumi: "What's up?"

I answered the man while packing up peddling goods.

Villager: "Because of you, mother's complexion has improved remarkably."

Naofumi: "It's not necessary for you to thank me."

I have a bad reputation, so if people hear this, they will be doubtful.

Villager: "At least tell me your name."

Naofumi: "I have no reason to tell you. The medicine did all the work. Now, bring a silver piece or some suitable herbs."

Villager: "O-okay!"

The man brought some items and some food from his house and gave it to me.

Naofumi: "Thanks, best regards and see you later."

Villager: "Thank you very much!"

The man seems to be a lot more cheerful.

As a side note, on my next visit, the old woman seems to have become very energetic... Maybe a little bit too energetic for an old woman.

I got back on the wagon as we return and began compounding medicine while translating the intermediate recipe book.

The intermediate recipe book seems to be easier to translate than the magic book.

Though I was exhausted after being able to barely translate a treatment potion.

I've gotten pretty far.

Various things have happened this past month, I wonder if I can meet my brother some time...

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, I've finished selling items."

We arrived at the village sometime in between evening and afternoon.

Villager: "Can you take this baggage and letter to the next village?"

Raphtalia: "Sure"

I get off the carriage and load the baggage.

This luggage must not be worth much to trust an unknown peddler with it.

Since it might be stolen, it should be full of cheap things.

Well, it's not my problem since I can earn some pocket change.

I continue from village to village, town to town in this manner.

It seems that if I feed someone medicine directly, the effects do improve.

After two weeks, I've become famous for being a peddler with a rare demon.

As my credibility increases, customers who want a ride also increased.

I've been saving up money slowly.

There's some merit in being a travelling peddler.

First is being able to sell medicine smoothly.

Next, any demons that were defeated on the way were absorbed, increasing my stats.

On this trip, I found out that every region has different demons.

As a result of peddling, my shield seems to be getting stronger.

I also overheard various information.

I didn't know what the other heroes, Motoyasu, Ren, and Itsuki were

doing before.

Motoyasu seems to be in south-western region, I heard he solved a famine for a village by providing some legendary crop.

That knowledge seems to have come from a game.

Ren is in the south-east region where atrocious devils are residing. It seems there's a rumour about him dealing with a violent dragon.

And Itsuki... Well, he seems to have brought down a tyrant in a small country to the north.

But there's no evidence of who Itsuki took down. There are also vague rumours that claim Itsuki of the Bow is the strongest hero.

Before I came to this strange world, I had read about the 4 holy weapons and the events that are happening now resembled what I read...

The journey continues with these thoughts.

Our levels after two weeks:

Me Lv 34 Raphtalia Lv 37 Firo Lv 32

We have grown.

Firo's growth is abnormal because she is a demon...

Especially her physical abilities; before she needed both hands (Wings?) to pull the carriage, but now she can do it with one while yawning.

The person in question says:

Firo: "This carriage is too light, my motivation is dropping."

Oh well. That's a good thing

It seems the Status Up bonuses from my shield are effective.

Though there are other changes.

Pickaxe Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Mining Skill 1

Crystal Ore Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Craft Skill 1

I wonder. When we arrived at a prosperous mining town, I found a broken pickaxe on the road and absorbed some crystal ore which was thrown away.

Although these two skill bonuses seem good for making money, I lack information.

If I fail in processing some ore, it would become trash. I think a recipe would be necessary.

In the first place, I had to solve the intermediate recipe book I got.

The deciphering was completed in 2 weeks time. But before that, there were 3 weeks where I couldn't understand anything and had a staring contest with the book.

Antidote

Herbicide

Healing Ointment

Treatment Medicine (Already able to make)

Nutritional Supplement (Already able to make)

Gunpowder

Strong acid

Magic Power Water

Soul Healing Medicine

Insecticide

That is what I have deciphered so far. The basics of the intermediate class is that the effects change depending on how it's mixed.

Although I can't be certain, understanding the recipe seems to provide a bonus.

I let my shield absorb some of the intermediate recipe book.

And the results were:

Book Shield Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Magical Power Up (Small) Yup. I had high hopes that an intermediate recipe shield would appear. It seems to be a waste. Besides, the defence is very low.

However, during the next morning when I finished deciphering the Intermediate Recipe book, Demon Treants appeared but were quickly dealt with and then absorbed.

Requirement for Treant Shield has been released.

Requirement for Blue Treant Shield has been released.

Requirement for Black Treant Shield has been released.

Treant Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Plate Appraisal 2

Blue Treant Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Intermediate Compound Recipe 1

Black Treant Shield

Unsealing completed.....Equipment Bonus: Half Compounding Is this some kind of bullying?

Right after I finished deciphering that book too!

All I learned was the Heal Ointment? Perhaps, those monsters are materials for a recipe.

I cried when recipe 2 and 3 popped up.

I don't know how to make gunpowder, but it seems these treants are materials for herbicide and the healing ointment.

It seems that gunpowder can be substituted with some king flammable grass called Crackling grass.

I experiment with the gunpowder by collecting it into bags and creating make-shift bombs. After setting the bags on fire, I hurl them at an enemy.

After throwing it, I dive to the side.

Oh my, it seems the power of the bombs was terrible, it just burnt the bag and turned to ash.

It seems I'm not even allowed to attack with tools such as bombs. That's actually kind of amazing.

The strong acid that I store in a glass bottle seems to be a little less acidic than sulphuric acid.

This is not a medical herb, but it seems I can mix it with water. I don't know what I can do with this yet so I'll just let my shield absorb it.

The Magic Power water restores magical power when drunk. But, the materials are rare and hard to get.

It is an expensive medical herb. If I create this, I should sell it.

The Soul Healing Medicine seems to restore SP. It also seems to be rare and difficult to prepare.

Insecticide was easy. I just dissolve and mix grass that repels insects until it hardens.

Of the new recipes I learnt, the antidote, heal ointment and insecticide seem to be popular.

However, the herbicide seems to only sell in small quantities since people don't need that much.

I let my shield absorb the extras.

Requirement for Anti-Poison Shield has been released.

Requirement for Glyphosate Shield has been released.

Requirement for Medicine Shield has been released.

Requirement for Plant Fire Shield has been released.

Requirement for Killer Insect Shield α has been released.

Anti-Poison Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Defense Power 5

Glyphosate Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: 5% Damage Reduction from Plants
Medicine Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Medicine Effect Range Expansion (small)
Plant Fire Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Fire Resistance (Small)
Killer Insect Shield α

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: 3% Damage Reduction from Insects
Perhaps I originally would have received the anti-poison shield for Poison Resistance (Intermediate), but that probably changed because I acquired the Chimeric Viper Shield first.

The skills that I have acquired change due to the fact that I already had them, so instead of replacing the current skill, it gets replaced by something new.

I am also confused as to what the range expansion from the Medicine shield does.

Does it make it so that medicine is effective at a range or will be it effective to its surroundings?

I think the latter makes it way too convenient.

I wonder if the Plant Fire Shield is also effective against magic.

What is Glyphosate? It's the chemical name for an herbicide. As for the Killer Insect Shield α ... Maybe it will turn into Killer Insect Shield β if I increase the amount of herbs mixed.

The effect of reducing damage from specific enemies seems to be convenient.

The problem is deciphering the magic book. It seems to be considerably difficult.

Raphtalia seems to have gotten the hang of it, but she can't use any magic effectively yet.

She is now able to make a ball of light float in front of her for a few seconds.

You're making this prestigious hero look bad!

Therefore, after Raphtalia goes to sleep, I asked Firo how to use transformation magic.

Though it's difficult to call that magic, I am grasping at straws.

Firo: "Ummm. Imagine what you want to become and feel the power gushing from the bottom of your body."

Yup. I completely don't understand.

I'm done thinking.

It seems that even after deciphering characters to read, I can't use magic.

I can't get the feeling of magic flowing since I was originally from a world without magic.

Still... I must learn magic.

I must live up to the expectations of that magic shop aunty.

Not participating in a wave would be a problem. Since no one else is protecting the villages and towns, it has become my job.

Sooner or later, being able to use magic might make a difference.

Although using a crystal ball to learn magic is much easier, using a book was much cheaper.

Therefore, recently while riding the carriage, I've been groaning with a magic book in one hand.

It seems Raphtalia's explanation on magical power is the same as Firo's: it's a feeling in your body that comes from the soul.

The feeling of sensing magical power that even Firo has, what kind of sense is that?

I continuously ponder that question in my head.

Oh well, such are the results of two weeks.

Chapter 36: To Take Everything But Your Life

“Ohh... I am so fortunate as to be able to ride on the carriage of the Holy Bird.”

“The Holy Bird?”

That day we met a merchant who was looking to head over to the next town so we gave him a lift.

“Did you not know? Uhm, you are the owner of this carriage correct?”

The merchant who was chatting with Raphtalia points to me rather than her.

He pointed me out even though I try to make it seem like Raphtalia was the owner while I pretended to simply be the guy who synthesizes our goods.

“I am...”

“You guys are getting quite famous. Word has it that there is a carriage drawn by a Holy Bird whose proprietors wander about bringing miracles as they sell their goods.”

The carriage rattles about as I take a look from within the carriage at Firo.

People seem to think pretty highly of you, when in truth you’re just a glutton who wants to be spoiled.

But just what are these miracles that he’s talking about?

Hm?

“KWEEEEEEH!”

Firo suddenly lets out a strange call and runs rampant.

“Uwah!”

The three of us who were in the carriage (Me, Raphtalia, and the

merchant) grasp at the carriage's handrails to keep from falling.

“----GYAAAAA....”

“-----YASU-SAMAAAAA....”

Gararara!

The wheels let out a loud rattle so I couldn't hear what was going on outside.

Every now and then Firo flips out and causes a ruckus like this.

This is the fourth time since we've started peddling. Such a capricious creature.

“Watch it, it's not just us two in here you know.”

“Oka-y, I mean.... Kweh!”

I whisper at her so that the merchant doesn't hear.

It seems that a talking monster sticks out quite a bit, and I'd prefer not to invite any needless attention ... Though I have a feeling I might already be getting that attention.

The merchant is giving me a look in complete surprise.

“I've heard that it can understand our language, but it's really amazing.”

“Yeah, I think so too.”

Now that I think about it, just understanding human language is pretty amazing, but being able to speak our tongue too? Such a high spec monster.

I'll consider it as the expansive possibilities that the monster race can have. But even in that sense she might be something unbelievably rare.

“We just peddle plain old medicine and pick up any jobs that would benefit from our carriage.”

I respond going back to our original topic.

“It's said that a saint riding the carriage bears special medicine, and the sick and ailing who drink this special medicine from his hand will be

saved.”

“Is that so...”

It’s a bit expensive, but it’s medicine that most anyone can afford.

On a side note, it seems I can change which kind of herbs to use to make medicine that would best target specific symptoms.

The first medicine I made was an all-purpose one so its Quality was quite low. It might’ve been pretty good at stopping a cough.

But now that I’ve gotten my hands on a wide range of herbs, I can cater the medicine towards a specific purpose.

Fevers, pulmonary problems, digestive problems, skin problems, the efficiency of the medicine towards each of these issues depends on the type of herbs I use. I’ve just got all kinds of these targeted medicines on hand.

This type of stuff was covered in pretty fine detail in the intermediate recipe book. Though I still use the shield skill [menus] to help me out when mixing herbs.

“Plain old medicine you say?”

I pull out a bottle from our goods box and let him have a look at it.

“Is this the miracle drug?”

The merchant pulls out the top and takes a whiff.

“Well it certainly... Does smell like the medicine I’ve taken sometime ago.”

“... Do you know what it is?”

Is this guy also an apothecary?

As such questions go through my mind, he shakes his head.

“Nope, that’s just the feeling I get.”

So you have no idea!

I considered interjecting, but just let it slide.

“So, what kind of merchant are you?”

“I’m a jeweler.”

When he means jewels he probably means that. It’s probably in this world too.

He’s probably off to sell accessories and the like to some bigshot nobles.

“A jeweler huh... You’ve got money selling valuables to the nobles and yet you’re dealing alone?”

If there’s that much money riding on this merchant then it would make sense to bring with a comparable envoy to guard him. And yet he’s alone, which makes me quite suspicious.

“Your words hit a sore spot.”

Hahaha, the merchant responds with a short laugh.

“Jewelers come in all kinds. If I had to be more specific then I’d say I’m an accessory merchant.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Well then would you like to take a look at my wares?”

As he says that, the accessory merchant pulls out his baggage.

When I take a look inside, I see things like broaches and necklaces. Seem to be a few bracelets in there as well.

But the ores used seem to most all be iron or copper. As for the affixed gemstone... How can I say this, actually calling it a gemstone would be somewhat of a gray area.

“This time around I mostly just have cheap goods.”

“I see... Did your business not do too well?”

“Nope, this time I’m just selling low-profit accessories to adventurers.”

“Is that right...”

According to the accessory merchant, accessories can be Enchanted which could boost the wearer’s abilities.

“By the way, how much would each of these go for?”

“How much you say... This iron bracelet that increases the users Attack Power would go for about 30 Silver.”

Ooh... That’s quite pricy. Even my remedies don’t sell that high.

“If it was Enchanted it would go for 100 Silver.”

“Is that so.”

“It would.”

Hmm... I should definitely give this some thought.

My medicine business has more or less plateaued at the moment. I typically get pretty close to selling out, but since I have to buy herbs as materials, there isn’t much profit.

I wouldn’t be able to keep up with sales if I had to go out and gather the herbs.

They might have been fine for use back then, but the medicine made from gathered herbs are of too low efficiency to be sold.

“You would make these with Crafting correct?”

“Hmm... Indeed, making the accessories into this form would be crafting, but then I’ll be Enchanting them. Till that point it would be Crafting I’d say.”

... I see. So you could craft an accessory, but it wouldn’t be effective until you Enchanted it. Enchanting... this seems to be the kicker.

It has an unpleasant ring to it. Why would it be? I’ve seen the term a few times when I was making medicine. It came up quite a few times in the Magic Water and Spirit Water mixing instructions.

This is something you can’t make unless you’re able to use magic.

“This has been quite educational. Thank you.”

“No problem at all, the pleasure is mine.”

“Master-, looks like something is coming.”

Firo warns me in a slightly wary voice as she brings us to a stop.

From the suddenly stopping carriage, Raphtalia and I take a look at our surroundings.

And from within the forest came several figures.

All of them bore arms and approached us with a look that was anything but good.

They looked rather ragged, but they had pieces of armor here and there which resembled barbarians. It's most certain that they're mountain bandits or something of the like.

"Bandits!"

The accessory merchant called out in distress.

"Hehehe... You lot, bring out your valuables and leave 'em here."

I was almost astonished at such a cliché line.

It's that sort of thing isn't it. Is there really any point in charging into these situations?

Ah, I'm sure Firo already realized it but charged straight in anyway.

It's written all over her face, 'I can beat these guys, they sure are making light of me.'

"We know you've got a Jeweler holed up in there!"

The bandits shout at us.

I look over at the accessory merchant.

"I thought you said you didn't have anything that was of really high value?"

"Yes... I don't have anything of the like this time..."

Very nervously, the accessory merchant puts his hand to his shirt pocket as if he's covering something important.

"I do have an accessory that would sell for quite a bit."

"I see... So that's what they're after huh."

Looks like I've let on a pretty risky passenger.

"I thought they wouldn't target a merchant that's carrying mostly nothing but cheap goods and going for personal matters rather than official ones, so I skimmed on security."

"Are you stupid? Geez..."

All I can do is sigh.

"I'll be charging you an annoyance fee for this."

"... I understand."

The accessory merchant nodded with a solemn look.

"Raphtalia. Firo. They're enemies."

"Right!"

"Yup!"

On my signal, Raphtalia jumps out of the cart and arms herself.

I pull the accessory merchant with me as I follow suit.

"Do not leave my side."

"G, Got it!"

I change from a shield that I'm working on releasing the abilities from to a shield meant for battle.

"Y, You're the shield...?"

"Yeah..."

The owner of the carriage of the Holy Bird was actually the notorious Shield Hero. At that fact, the accessory merchant was dumbfounded.

"What's that? You guys wanna have at it?"

"Yeah. One must protect themselves from whatever danger comes after all."

I answer, glaring at the bandit.

The goal of this fight is to prevent the enemy from reaching their

objective.

In other words, it's to prevent them from stealing what the accessory merchant is holding.

"Raphtalia. Firo. Are you ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready when you are."

"I was just about to die of boredom."

"I see, then... GO!"

At my call the bandits also brandished their arms and charged forward. From what I can see there are about 15 enemies give and take. There are about that number of targets.

"Air Shield!"

I distract the enemies running towards me with the shield that suddenly appears out of thin air, then quickly activate my next skill.

"Change Shield!"

Change Shield is a skill that allows me to change the shields that appear from Air Shield or Shield Prison into another Shield that I know.

The shield that I change it to is Bee Needle Shield.

Bee Needle Shield's Special Effect is Shield of Thorns (S) and Bee's Poison (Paralysis).

"Wha, The shield suddenly...! Gaah---!"

One of the people charging after me runs head first into the shield that suddenly appeared. He then tumbles to the floor, gets paralysed, and starts convulsing. Nice, it looks like the Special Effect is actually kicking in.

"Shield Prison!"

"The hell is---"

The cage that comes from the shield then traps one of the other bandits.

Each of the shields have different time limits. Change Shield's cooldown time is 30 seconds. It's not something I can really use repeatedly.

But it lets me bring down their numbers so it's quite effective.

Three bandits appear in front of me. They must think I'm stupid as even though I'm an escort I've got nothing on but a shield.

I stand in front of the merchant and block the attack.

Sparks fly from the point it hits the shield, and I deflect the robber's attack as a metallic clang reverberates. It seems his Attack Power is below my Defence Power.

The shield I'm currently equipping is the Chimera Viper Shield.

Its Special Effects are Poisonous Snake's Fang (M) and Hook.

The snake sculpture on the shield begins moving and bites the bandits who come to attack me.

The Poisonous Snake's Fang retaliates with a poisonous counterattack to whoever tries to strike me.

"Guaaaahhh!"

"I, I won't go down with just.... Ugh!"

"I, I feel sick..."

Poisonous Snake's Fang poisons all who attack me. It's not too effective on things that have resistance. It seems to be working. I've never tried it on people before but it looks to considerably effective. Also, it's not really a detriment, but the poison is actually lethal.

I order the shield to use Hook. The snake ornament on the shield comes out and grabs one of the bandits. The Hook's effect has no Attack Power, but just pulls anything from within 2 meters. It's pretty useful when trying to climb a cliff.

The bandit's movements begin to dull and a few of them start to fall over.

“T, This guy is the Shield Hero!”

The bandits start to get a bit spooked.

It seems they’ve just realized that they bumped into one of the country's famous heroes.

But it’s too late for them at this point. With that fear the bandits quickly affirmed their own disadvantageous position.

“Tei!”

“E-i!”

Raphtalia, with sword in hand, takes a swing at the bandit when she spots an opening. His armor protects him from the cut, but with the sheer force from Raphtalia’s swing, the bandit is smashed to the floor, hits his head, and collapses.

Firo moves at a breakneck speed, kicking one, then another, with her powerful legs that sends the bandits flying. Each kick, the bandits flew about 5 meters like Motoyasu did... No wait. That one just flew 20 meters.

.....I’m pretty sure you would die from that?

In no time at all, the bandits’ numbers dwindled, and those that can remain standing numbered 6.

“Shit! Retreat!”

“You think I’d let you?!”

I capture the guy who looks to be the leader of the bandits with Shield Prison. The remaining bandits who try to run are captured by Raphtalia who is riding on Firo.

I’m glad they were weaker than I thought they’d be.

Though Raphtalia and Firo sure did quite the work.

“Now then.”

I pass my judgment on the tied up bandits.

“Maybe I can turn you guys in for some kind of bounty?”

“At times like these I’m not sure there’s money to give for that...”

Raphtalia responds with a troubled face.

“Do you know?”

I ask the accessory merchant, but as expected he shakes his head.

“Even so I believe you should turn them in anyway.”

“Hmm... Is that so...”

The leader of the bandit troupe is looking at me with a flippant smile.

I can easily imagine what he’s thinking.

“‘We were attacked by the Shield Hero. We’re just normal adventurers!’
is what you’re thinking?”

The leader gives an unpleasant scowl.

That’s right! The officials will probably take our word over yours, you
no-good Shield Hero!

“Well, I can’t root out that possibility.”

Just why is my reputation so bad... I think about it now, and I just can’t
really accept it.

Thanks to that fucking princess and king, even if I do good deeds, no one
would believe I did it.

Sigh...

“It can’t be helped. I’ll just kill you all.”

As they didn’t think I’d fathom that choice, the bandits all instantly
turned pale.

Within the bunch one of them was frantically trying to undo the ropes,
but Firo quickly came in and kicked him and he fainted in agony.

“I guess I can have my dangerous monster here learn how human flesh
tastes like...”

I say that to the bandit troupe in a low voice with a hint of duress.

“Food?”

Firo says that as she stares at the bandit troupe, drooling.

“H,Hiii---?!”

“I wonder what I’ll do.”

“Y-You’re the Carriage of the Holy Bird aren’t you!? You’re supposed to bring miracles and yet you’re about to commit murder!?”

“It’s not like that’s a title I made up. One must protect themselves from whatever danger comes, right? I’ve been taking it up the ass from everyone else up until now. But now it’s your guys’ turn, so just give it up.”

“A-At least spare our lives!”

“Then give me all your valuables and equipment, and tell me where your hideout is. You’re fine to lie all you want. But you know, I hate being lied to to death. If you tell me one lie, I’ll have my Holy Bird here rip out each one of your four limbs one by one and eat them.”

I say that casually as the bandits tremble in absolute fear.

Since I’m the notorious Shield Hero, it’s very much effective.

“I, I got it! Our base is---“

I confirm the location on our map.

It’s close.

“Alright, looks like negotiations succeeded.”

As I bring my hand down, Firo lets out a kick with such force it knocks out all of the bandits.

“In any case, let’s strip off any valuables they may have. Oh? This guy has some pretty good gear. Raphtalia this will be yours.”

“Stripping the bandits of their goods... What we’re doing is exactly the same as them.”

So Raphtalia says as she follows my orders and quickly strips the equipment off of the bandit.

“Now give the guys that are poisoned some antidote and load them onto the carriage. Quickly now, we’ll be bringing these guys to the hideout as well.”

“Oka-y!”

After confirming that the bandit’s base is really there, I proceed to strip the guards who were on lookout of their valuables in the same manner.

We then crammed the considerably abundant stockpile of treasure onto the carriage, and got all the bandits and tied them up in their base.

The various treasures were quite bountiful.

Things like plain money, food, liquor, weapons and armor, precious metals, healing pills and other cheap medicine.

It’s far more bounty than I imagined and an unexpected bonus income.

These guys might be the bandits that are raiding people all over the region.

“Such... Boldness.”

The accessory merchant, who has been following my actions in a confounded manner, looks deeply at me.

“So, how much of an annoyance fee do I charge you?”

The accessory merchant comes to his senses at my question.

“Maybe a few Silver Coins...”

I proceed to threaten him.

Thanks to you, this whole predicament happened. I didn’t put in all this effort just for that much.

After negotiations, we agreed to one accessory as proper recompense.

“... That mindset to not just take the bandit attack without something back... I’m deeply moved.”

Something seems to have sparked inside of him. The accessory merchant has been looking at me with a fire in his eyes. Yeah he’s

probably telling the truth.

“Okay then. I will tell you my secrets in Crafting and Enchanting as well as the trading routes.”

“... Isn't that a bit much?”

That is way too much compensation, to the point it's making me suspicious.

There's a good chance that he's trying to trick me somehow since I took an accessory off of him.

“Not at all. Greedy merchants such as yourself who wouldn't take a single hit without some sort of recompense are becoming a rarity.”

“I'm sure there are countless people who are greedy out there.”

“That's not what I meant. It's how you squeeze every last drop of profit out of someone. Not just using them then disposing of them, but to keep them going in order to wring out everything they have is what I'm saying is necessary.”

“Using then disposing huh...”

I look over to the bandits whom I've wrung out everything from.

They seemed to be pretty well off judging by how good their clothing were, so I just snatched all the equipment they had.

They're just getting their just desserts. Having all of their goods taken away from them feels like a fair curtain call.

“By doing that?”

“These guys tried to take our money and our lives. However, you negotiated and compromised to let them live so long as they gave you all of their possessions. They were after your life, so it would've only been natural for you to kill them. From your standing, [who had their lives in your hands], this is the best possible outcome for them.”

Well I do have a terrible reputation, so even if I tried to turn them in, there's a good chance the officials would believe their testimony over

mine. Though there was also the chance they would believe me.

“They bought their lives from you by giving you all of their possessions.”

“I guess you can look at it that way...”

“And then, when you could have had your just revenge, you used that as leverage to increase your own profits and wrung every last drop out of them!”

The accessory merchant let out a heinous smile.

What’s with this guy?! He looks extremely repulsive!

“W, Well, I’ll drop you off at the next town.”

“No way, I have so much I must teach you. I won’t get off until I’m done.”

Just what is this accessory merchant aiming to teach me!

I’m a bit worried about how fired up this guy is getting...

But with that we carry on with the goods we snatched away from the bandits and this merchant who seems to have warmed up to us.

This may not be very important, but the one who sold out the accessory merchant to the bandits was apparently a merchant union member. It seems that after that act he was excommunicated from the union.

Chapter 37: Magical Study

For some reason, the accessory merchant joined our peddling. I'm not complaining since he is paying us, but I don't know what this fellow is up to.

The accessory merchant started teaching me various things after he found out about my Hero status during the bandit fiasco, which he seemed to have enjoyed.

Apparently, he wants to refine my talents...

While the accessory merchant on the surface is someone who is gentle and teaches apprentices kindly, he actually holds considerable influence within the merchant guild. Apparently, the thieves around this area are notorious. It seems that they were tipped off by associates within the merchant guild.

The first thing he taught me was where to mine for the gemstones needed to create jewelry. Next is processing precious metals into accessories. I am currently capable of making various designs. Because I am somewhat of a picture otaku, my creations were quite nice.

The tools needed to work are also cheap. In this world, there are magic tools that were powered by magic stones, similar to how fuel works. There are several points that seem similar to the burning and grinding process of metalworking in my world.

To process any hard iron, I would need to go to the ironworks and work with a metal mould. Having crafting skills really help out with preventing any mistakes that might be made. Although the Shield is reacting, I can't just let it absorb my work because it's expensive.

Back to the main issue, I wanted to start working on enchantment magic.

As expected, I need to be able to use magic. I groaned while holding the magic book in one hand and the accessory merchant is curious.

Accessory Merchant: "Is Hero-sama unable to use magic?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, even though my slave can already use magic..."

Accessory Merchant: "Ah I see... "

The accessory merchant took out some small transparent fragment and handed it to me.

Naofumi: "What is that?"

Accessory Merchant: "It's a piece of an extremely rare ore. It's quite expensive."

Naofumi: "Wow..."

Accessory Merchant: "Can you read the letters?"

Naofumi: "Yeah... Only the simple ones though."

I've been seriously tackling the letters of this world for about a month. I can't read any of the more difficult words, but I can understand the simple ones.

Accessory Merchant: "It's enough for you to be able to feel magic first, learning how to use magic will come after."

Hmm... What you said just now is quite difficult.

I played with the fragment while thinking and then the fragment began to shine.

What can I say... This feels like I just found another hand within myself that I had no idea about.

Until now, I had no idea of the existence of such an "organ", but it doesn't feel out of place. Seems quite similar to how even when a bird doesn't know how to fly, it still knows how to flap its wings.

Naofumi: "What a strange feeling."

Accessory Merchant: "I grew up knowing the magical power was there. However, you had no idea of its existence until recently, but you seemed to have succeeded"

Naofumi: "Is that so...?"

I am now conscious of another “arm” called magic power.

I open to the part of the magic book which I have already deciphered. The letters begin to shine. This is a magic engraved by me and only usable by me.

Naofumi: “I am the Hero of the shield who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. May the power of nature defend me!”

Naofumi: "Fast Guard!"

A target mark appears in my view. I selected myself as a test.

A light shines over me. Then I check my status and it seems to have risen.

Naofumi: "Oh..."

Naofumi: "I seemed to have learnt it somehow. Well then, teach me some magic."

The accessory merchant disregarded my excitement and immediately began another lecture.

Even though I thought this was something pretty special...

While the accessory merchant was teaching me, I was trying to apply magical power to a processed jewel.

I had trouble at first but my shield corrected some of my mistakes.

It gets difficult when I try mixing power from a different gem. On a side note, I seem to be able to draw out magical power from medicine and apply it.

Accessory Merchant: "Well, that's the basics. Please keep improving and apply it to your business afterwards."

After saying that, the accessory merchant left the carriage.

Thus, I learn how to craft something besides medicine.

Because crafting required the use of ores, when we arrived at a mining town, I immediately went to negotiate with the owner of the mine.

Owner: "Eh? Is that an introduction letter?"

The coal mine owner asked in surprise when I showed him the accessory merchant's letter of introduction.

Owner: "This is certainly a letter from him. How did you manage to get something from someone so stingy?"

Naofumi: "What do you mean?"

Apparently the accessory merchant is a very stingy person.

The owner of the coal mines was suspicious when I appeared with a letter of introduction from that scrooge, but was shocked when it was the real thing.

Owner: "Since the letter is real, how much do you want to buy? Since you have the letter, I'll be flexible."

Naofumi: "Uhm, may I mine it myself? It would be cheaper."

Owner: "Eh? Well... That's fine, take whatever you mine..."

I left the peddling business to Raphtalia and Firo as I head to a cave with my pickaxe. I'm interested in the mining skill.

The sound of pickaxe striking stone echoes through the cave. To be honest, it's quite noisy and the air is hot and stuffy.

As expected of a different world, a crystal protruding out of the wall was providing light.

Owner: "This cave is safe unless there are extreme circumstances, so there are no problems wherever you may want to dig. However, the risk of collapse is not zero."

I was guided to several places within the mine by the coal mine owner.

As I raise the pickaxe slowly, a cross-hair emerges on the wall.

What? Do I strike there?

Naofumi: "Tei!"

I swing the pickaxe down with momentum.

With a clang, a crack emerges from the wall. The crack spreads and the wall falls apart.

Owner: "Whoa!"

That was a very fragile wall.

Naofumi: "Hm?"

The coal mine owner looked at me as if I'm crazy.

Owner: "That hard bedrock... In one strike?"

That was hard...?

Due to the mining skill, walls collapse whenever I swing and ores were collected at a terrifying pace.

But there are still walls that I can't collapse no matter what...

Maybe it's because of my low skill level.

Naofumi: "Well I'll just work with this."

Owner: "O-okay."

I filled a bag with gemstones and leave quickly.

By the way, gemstones were even able to be found near the entrance of the mine. I just had to dig near a few mulberry trees.

It is surprisingly easy to find in the neighbourhood.

Although the uncut stones close to the surface seems to be of a lower quality for magic.

According to my knowledge of my world, there seems to be a famous place where jewels were dug up simply by digging in the field.

Even though this is a different world, I believed the good quality gems will be buried deep underground.

Ruby Bracelet was made!

Quality: Good -> High Quality

Even though I originally made that as a trial, It seems to have turned

out well.

I also tried to imbue the bracelet with magic.

Ruby Bracelet (Fire-Resistance +)

Quality: High Quality -> Normal

Ugh... The quality fell a lot after magic was imbued.

I dabbled in making accessories as the peddling continues.

By the way, it is very hard to make accessories on a moving carriage, so I can only work on them at night.

It seems my shield is not of high enough level to absorb a finished gem.

Guess I should sell it instead.

On a side note, the bracelet that was made earlier took 2 days to make and it had sold for 80 silver pieces. It takes time to make the foundation of the bracelet after all.

It seems that the value of gems in this world seems to be lower than that of my world's.

How valuable the product is depends on the originality of the design. Even if it is slightly inconsistent.

It seems anything will be popular. So that's why what's popular in my world might be popular here too.

I mean, even an unknown jewel that I make may also turn out expensive.

However, when I think about the time used to make one, it looks like the pros and cons are well balanced.

That said, there is money to be earned. And it's also not a bad idea to upgrade our equipment.

Requirements for Iron Ore Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Copper Ore Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Silver Ore Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Lead Ore Shield have been revealed.

Iron Ore Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Smelting Ability 2

Copper Ore Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Smelting Ability 1

Silver Ore Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: 2% Damage reduction from Demons Lead Ore Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Defence Power 1

A skill which seems to be useful for the old man from the weapon shop appeared.

It's pretty useless to me at the moment anyway.

The Lead Ore Shield seems to have displaced another skill. I'm not going to use that skill anyway.

Every day of peddling was passed with such a feeling.

Just when I stopped at a southern town, through a certain reliable source (Accessory Merchant), I heard of a province that wants to acquire large amounts of Herbicide.

Since there's an opportunity to make lots of money, we rushed to the south-western village.

By the way, judging by speed alone, Firo seems to be a match for a God Bird...

Chapter 38: The Reason it is Sealed

After hearing that there was a village that had huge demand for herbicides, we quickly rushed over...

It might be because Firo was excessively fast that we were able to make it to the region in just a few days.

“Master-”

“What is it?”

“Uhhh, the plants here are pretty crazy-“

“Huh?”

Raphtalia and I both look outside of the carriage.

When we did, we saw the road completely buried in some sort of viney, squirmy vegetation.

“T-The hell?!”

It’s advancing slowly and gradually, but the vegetation is most definitely expanding its domain.

“The village is...”

I took a look around and noticed that there were people gathered over at somewhere that looked like a refugee camp.

“Firo, head over that way.”

“Okay.”

We head over to the camp and start to set up shop.

“Alright, what should I price these herbicides.”

I’m sure these will be used to try to exterminate those slowly encroaching vines.

I can see what the accessory merchant meant when he said I’d be able to make a killing here.

So then, just how much profit will I be making.

“Though it is possible that there is already a specialist here helping them out.”

“You might be right.”

I got out of the carriage to try and gather some information.

On a side note, I changed my shield into Book Shield. I then turned the shield around to make it look like I was just any old peddler holding a book.

By setting my shield to something that doesn't really stand out, I can hide my identity as the Shield Hero.

“I came by since I heard I can sell herbicides for a good price here.”

I ask someone at the camp who looked like they had some authority.

“Oh, a trader. It would definitely help.”

He responded quickly as if he was waiting for me.

“But what exactly is going on here?”

I inquire as I look towards the invading flora.

“What exactly... Our village was hit by a famine.”

Ah now that I think about it, I did hear of a rumour along those lines.

But didn't Motoyasu handle that?

“However, after we requested aid from the Spear Hero, he had returned with a miracle seed that has been sealed since ancient times. While it did resolve our famine, it...”

“That can't be the miracle seed can it?”

I look towards the encroaching vines. Now that I observe carefully there are fruits and other vegetable produce stemming from the vines.

It doesn't seem like this camp is having any issues with food, and there aren't any food relief aids in sight. The vines also apparently have potatoes as I notice some farmers approaching the vines and digging them out.

In other words, the villagers have no trouble whatsoever with food, but because the plants are growing out of control, they've been driven out of their homes...

Are you retarded?

Thinking about it, the seed was sealed, was it not? There has to be good reason for it to have been sealed or they would have just ignored it and let it go.

So what the hell was Motoyasu thinking?

"Moreover, although there are still no problems outside, there are some plants that have transformed into monsters inside the village."

Oh, so the plants can evolve.

Are you retarded?

Why must I feel this way in such a short span of time? Seriously, that guy [Motoyasu] is a genius at rustling my jimmies.

"And that's why you guys need herbicide?"

"Yes."

Since they're farmers, I'm sure they know about plant and weed control...

"At first we were overjoyed with all the harvest we were getting. But then it started growing from the fields to our homes... We tried our best to weed it out, but it just grew too fast."

"By the way, when did this happen?"

"It wasn't an issue two weeks after the Hero left. But ever since two weeks ago..."

"I see. Have you tried reporting this to the kingdom?"

"We have. But since the Heroes are all so busy, it would take some time before they arrive it seems. So we're just trying to stop it from spreading further with herbicide."

Haaah... Before I knew it I let out a sigh.

“Have you tried just lighting it all on fire?”

“We’ve tried everything we can think of.”

“Oh, so you guys already did.”

I’m sure they’ve also called to adventurers for help.

I take a look around and see people with weapons who were clearly not villagers.

“Uwaaaaaah!”

A scream comes out from the village.

“What’s going on?!”

“Some adventurers said they were going to go in to try and raise their Level. I tried to stop them, but they didn’t listen. That scream might have been coming from them...”

The villager says that as if he’s given up on them.

“Dammit...! Firo!”

“Ye-s!”

I point towards the village and Firo, who was stuffing her face with the produce from the plants, rushed in.

She then busts out of the verdure outgrowth shouldering three adventurers who were in tatters.

“What’s it look like inside?”

“Uhhm, there were plant monsters inside creeping about. There were some pretty interesting ones that spat out poison and acid. These guys here sure are dumb going in there when they’re so weak--.”

“You didn’t need to mention that last bit.”

“Fi-ne.”

The villager was flabbergasted at Firo’s fluent speech.

“A, Are you the rumored Saint who rides a carriage drawn by the Holy Bird?”

The villager now asks me, covering my hands with his own.

“Well... I don't know about a saint, but I am the owner of a carriage and a bird.”

“Please! If you can, please help us! There are some people here who have been infested by the plants!”

“So some of them have parasitic capabilities huh...”

With a remedy and herbicide in one hand, I'm led into a tent.

Inside I see some people laid down with half of their bodies blighted by plants.

“I don't know if I'll actually be able to cure them though. But I don't run a charity here, so you better make sure you pay the treatment fee.”

“We will...”

It was barely audible, but I could hear people around lamenting in a low voice, ‘If only the Spear Hero didn't come here...’ It made me a bit giddy.

In any case, I go to the nearest patient who was a sleeping child that had troubled breathing, and had him drink some medicine.

A dim light appears, and the child's breathing returns to normal. I then spread the herbicide along the diseased areas.

The child looked to be in a bit of pain, but the plants that were ailing him began to wither away and scatter about. What resulted seemed to be a full recovery.

“Oooh...”

“As expected of Saint-sama.”

Voices of admiration started flowing out.

I continued on to the other patients, feeding them the medicine and applying the herbicide.

After I finish treating everyone, the air around the camp seemed to lighten up a bit for some reason.

Well, even if it's not that major, I guess good news would tend to brighten up the mood.

"Thank you, thank you so much!"

The people here gave me their gratitude.

"Give me my treatment fee."

I charge them a tad bit above the market price.

I gotta be careful here. Since they've already requested aid from the kingdom there's a very high risk that I'll end up seeing one of the other Heroes.

If that happens then there's a good chance that these guys here will instead look to me in aversion. The villagers are now giving me their money with smiles on their faces.

"Well then, I'll be here selling herbicides now. After that, I'll be off as I'll no longer have any business here."

"Ah... Saint-sama, if you can, could you please save our village?"

"The hell?! Why don't you go ask one of the country's Heroes?"

"But..."

Ugh... The villagers were now gathering around and begging me as if in prayer.

I'm not the type of guy that would do anything so long as they ask. On top of that I have no obligation to help them.

"I refuse."

"Please. If it's money we can gather some."

"...You pay me in advance. And after, no matter what happens don't come crying about it. Now, tell me everything you know about the seal that the Spear Hero released."

At my response, the villagers began to pull money out of their own pockets and amassed their funds. In the meantime I try to gather as much information as possible.

According to what they were told, sealed inside of the nearby ruins was the seed of a certain type of plant, and protecting it was a powerful guardian.

Really, did you guys not have any doubts considering there was a fucking guardian protecting this seed?

I had an almost uncontrollable urge to scream that out but somehow I was able to restrain myself.

And that's all could get from the Spear Hero's... Motoyasu's story.

From what I got from questioning the villagers, long ago this region used to be the stronghold of an alchemist, and it was said that his one masterpiece was sealed here.

And some other details saying that some time ago, this whole area was under the domination of plants or something like that...

"If you had legends like that, don't go around undoing seals! Did no one really stop to consider?"

Everyone averted their gazes at the same time.

I'm sure they thought it was safe since a Hero brought it to them after all.

It doesn't seem like I can find any more useful information besides that. And while we had these discussions, the funds have finished collecting.

... This is quite the sum of cash.

Since they paid up front, I can get away with showing my identity now.

"Understood. I'll see what I can do."

I then change my shield into one meant for combat: the Chimera Viper Shield.

"T, The Shield Hero?!"

I ignored the voices of the villagers and head toward the mass of vines. Raphitalia and Firo followed behind me.

I tied the ample bag of money I received to my hip, and walked down

the road rife with the encroaching vegetation.

Chapter 39: Plant Invasion

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, Firo, be careful."

Now then, the enemy this time was a plant.

According to my vast knowledge of medical herbs, the plant in front of us was quite unique.

Various ripe fruits could be found hanging from the vines and potatoes could be seen on the root.

That's not all, apparently it also has the ability to spit poison and attach parasites to the human body.

Was the herbicide even going to be effective? Physically beating it up doesn't seem to be a good plan either...

As we advanced, the vines wriggled and then attacked us.

Raphtalia: "Haa!"

Firo: "Yaa!"

Raphtalia and Firo each cut down some vines.

But, we have already been surrounded by them.

Might as well try magic...

Naofumi: "I am the Hero of the Shield who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. May the power of nature defend me!"

Naofumi: "Fast Guard!"

I applied defensive magic on Raphtalia and Firo.

This magic improved the target's defense by a percentage. It is a support magic that shines when the target has high defense.

Raphtalia: "Thank you Naofumi-sama."

Firo: "Thanks~"

Both of them thanked me as they continued to decimate the attacking

vines.

Even though it is easy to advance, it is difficult to completely remove the plants.

Well there is that. We can either use some strong magic or special medicine. But since we have neither to suppress it, our only option now is to withdraw.(!) But at least, we'll annihilate the enemies here.

There is a high chance that a strong demon is lurking within the village.

Since the legends passed down did not reveal a specific method to defeat the plant, there was no sure-fire way to exterminate them.

So a frontal attack may not work and thus I have no choice but to think of another method.

The vines' attack do not seem to be able to penetrate my defense so my movement is unobstructed.

Naofumi: "For now, to investigate, let's advance."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Firo: "Okay~!"

I started running towards the root of the plants in the center of the village.

It's overflowing with plant demons, though enemy of this level is still manageable by the three of us.

However, I'm quite uneasy about Raphtalia and Firo's defense.

Naofumi: "Humm....."

The names of the demons are Bio Plant, Plantriwe, and Mandoragora.

Bio Plant is the general name for all the common plants. Plantriwe is a demon in the shape of a human made of vines. Mandoragora seems to be an immobile plant fortress.

According to Firo, the Plantriwe scatters poison pollen with the big flower on top of its head.

The Mandoragora sprays acid from a vine to weaken and drag in its prey.

Bio Plant is the demon that is producing these two. Occasionally, a vine swells up and these demons burst from within.

I smiled in satisfaction as when I sprinkle some herbicide on these demons, they wither and die.

It seems that the shield does not consider scattering herbicide as an attack. Is it because these are just considered really aggressive plants and not demons?

I wonder what the criteria is. Is it the same principle as sprinkling holy water and recovery magic on Zombie-Type Monsters? There is also the fact that my medicine can cure the parasitic state to consider....I don't understand.(!) Expanding on that idea, perhaps the parasites are pathogens and my treatment medicine is effective against them.

Naofumi: "So what do we do?"

Plantriwe and vines continued to attack me meaninglessly. The attacks themselves do nothing, but my nose is slightly stuffed because of the poison.

The acid is also troublesome. It seems to be very effective in lowering defense.

Still, it's not as if they can break through. Snake's Poison Fang (Intermediate) makes those effects useless.

This is pretty common. The enemy is a plant and uses poison.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia."

Raphtalia: "Cough...! What is it?"

The air seems to be bad for Raphtalia...

Even though she was cured, it was possible that Raphtalia's respiratory system is still damaged and weak.

Naofumi: "Here, take this herbicide just in case."

Raphtalia: "Ah, Okay!"

I throw some herbicide to Raphtalia. I hope it will be useful in an emergency If I think very carefully about the way these vines wriggle, it would remind me of an eroge-like scene where the heroine was about to be violated.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama?"

The demon plants in Raphtalia's area seems like it was about to wrap around and violate her.

Raphtalia: "You're thinking of something quite rude aren't you?"

However, as the vines wrapped around Raphtalia, she tore them apart calmly Unexpectedly, it seems like they have no durability.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama? Let's hurry up and go!"

Naofumi: "O-okay."

As we were advancing earlier, I saw a gigantic tree at the center of the village.

But taking a closer look, it's not a gigantic tree but rather a cluster of vines.

Naofumi: "That seems to be the main body..."

Suddenly, huge eyes appeared on the trunk and stared at us.

Monster: "!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

That's creepy.

But, that is the main body.

Firo: "Master~ Firo's going in."

Firo does a running jump onto an eyeball from the main body. However, she is intercepted by a giant vine.

Firo: "Ei!"

Firo kicks the vine mid-air, using it as a foothold, but the distance she gained is insufficient.

Firo: "Master~"

Naofumi: "I know! Air Strike Shield!"

I used Air Strike Shield on where Firo was falling to let her use it as footing.

Firo jumped off the shield and straight for the eyeball again.

Firo: "Tei!"

Bicha! With a squish, Firo kicked the eyeball.

That was pretty gross...

Monster: "!!!!!!!!!!!!"

The earth shakes as the vines tremble in rage.

Is it still not dead even after its eyeball was destroyed?

Hmm..... What happened?

Naofumi: "It's not falling over."

Raphtalia: "Yeah."

With a grotesque sound, the eyeball regenerated.

At the same time, I spotted a plant seed in the middle of the eyeball.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, Firo. The main body is within that eyeball. Pour the herbicide in it."

The cool-down time is over. I can use Air Strike Shield again. By the way, Plantriwe and Mandoragora were attacking me together.

But it does nothing, so I can take it forever.

Raphtalia: "Understood!"

Firo: "Roger~!"

Raphtalia jumps onto Firo's back while approaching the regenerating eyeball.

The eyeball must have registered them as the highest priority threat and unleashed a rain of vines at them.

Naofumi: "Shield Prison!"

I used the cage formed from Shield Prison to protect both of them.

The shield will stay in the air, unless an attack is strong enough to break through.

The effective time is 15 seconds.

Meanwhile, the Prison looks like it is able to drive the vines back.

Oops... Vines surrounded the Prison.

After 15 seconds, the Prison disperses. At that moment, I cast Air Strike Shield under Firo to be used as a foothold.

Raphtalia: "Tei!"



Raphtalia's sword flashes and the vines surrounding Firo were cut down.

The vines were cut beautifully and Firo succeeded in jumping off the shield.

She kicked the eyeball twice.

Monster: "!?????"

The eyeball's movements have stopped to regenerate.

By taking advantage of this chance, Raphtalia spreads the herbicide over the eyeball's wounds.

Monster: "!!!!?????"

After an enormous vibration that isn't exactly a voice echoed throughout the vicinity, the Bio Plant suddenly stopped moving.

Naofumi: "Did we do it?"

I don't even care that I death flagged myself, these attacks aren't even enough to make me itchy.

However, the Bio Plant begins to move again.

Raphtalia: "I apologize. It seems I didn't spread the herbicide well enough."

Naofumi: "No, you did it properly. It seems the herbicide is not effective enough."

There must be something we can do...

Then, an idea flashed through my mind.

I have a skill that increases the effectiveness of medicine. Even just now, I had used this skill to help a person.

So what would happen if I applied the herbicide directly?

Naofumi: "Well, it won't hurt to try that next."

I ignored the enemies surrounding me and took out the herbicide with one hand.

Recently, I've noticed that my defense is now ranged, I can proceed through enemies even if I'm surrounded.

However, this doesn't apply to my attacks.

I stroll through the large amount of demons like it's nothing.

At last, I've reached the Bio Plant.

Naofumi: "The effect might increase even more if I apply the herbicide while riding Firo."

I scattered the herbicide on all its roots.

Monster: "!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!???????????"

The Bio Plant convulsed violently. It seems to be its death throes.

The Bio Plant is dyed brown as its eyeballs dries up.

With a poof, the whole thing started falling apart.

The whole Bio Plant crumbles and we evacuate.

Naofumi: "Oooh..."

All the other demons started turning brown and withering. Everything is gone except for fruits that grew on their bodies and us left.

And...Where the Bio Plant used to be is a shiny seed.

... It would be dangerous to leave that here...

Naofumi: "For now, let's gather them because my shield may be able to absorb it."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Firo: "Food!"

We were collecting seeds while Firo stuffed herself with the remaining fruits and potatoes.

Chapter 40: Selective Breeding

Raphtalia: "Something like this?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, we should contact the village after this."

Seed of Miracles... After subjugating the Bio Plant which was Motoyasu's failure, we are currently collecting seeds.

I let my shield absorb any seeds that it has a reaction to.

Requirements for Bio Plant Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Plantriwe Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Mandoragora Shield have been revealed.

Bio Plant Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Plant Remodelling Special Effect: Hook

Plantriwe Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Intermediate Compounding 2

Mandoragora Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Plant Analysis I've unlocked the plant skill tree for my shield. But it is insufficient to open other parts of the skill tree.

Naofumi: "Plant Remodelling?"

I switched to the Bio Plant Shield and test out what plant remodelling does.

An icon appeared over the seed that I look at.

I fed some magic to the seed of a Bio Plant that I picked up earlier.

The seed floats in the air.

Fertility 9

Productivity 9

Vitality 9

Immunity 4

Intelligence 1

Growth Potential 9

Variability 9

Special Ability

What is that?

First of all, I'll lower everything.

The window makes a beeping sound as the values decrease.

All other statuses were decreased while increasing one.

Fertility 1

Productivity 1

Vitality 1

Immunity 1

Intelligence 1

Growth Potential 43

Variability 1

Special Ability

Hmm... I don't understand.

Well, all it has is growth powers, is that even good?

Oh, my MP decreases when I use this skill, it's almost empty.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama?"

The modified Bio Plant seed that I made was dropped by accident.

"Oo!"

The ground immediately becomes lush and green But...

"What?"

It grew in abundance for about 3 meters and then withered instantly.

Raphtalia: "What are you doing?"

Naofumi: "Ah, I'm experimenting with Plant remodelling using that seed."

Raphtalia: "Please don't do something so dangerous!"

I was scolded by Raphtalia.

Well, if it was someone else who did that, I would be angry too.

But, this skill is really interesting.

It seems I'll be able to make huge profits if I utilize it correctly.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, your smile looks rotten."

Oops, did it show on my face?

Naofumi: "Anyway, let's return to the village."

Raphtalia: "Yeah."

We were greeted by silence as we walked out of the brown plant zone.

Villager: "Thank you, Hero-sama."

Humans work for profit.

After I save the village, I am welcomed gratefully.

Well, it would be impossible to live in the village with all those dead plants.

That day, we ended up cleaning all the withered plants.

Even if the main body is destroyed, the fruit and potatoes remain. It seems there won't be a food shortage for a while.

But I'm a little worried about the soil.

Naofumi: "Aren't you going to return to a famine?"

Villager: "Well..... that's very likely."

In the near future, this village might be deserted.

After thinking it through, I push forward my plant remodelling plan.

I don't understand what 'special ability' is yet.

By looking at a seed, the plant analysis menu pops up.

I equip the Mandoragora shield and go to bed.

The next morning, I change to the Bio Plant shield and continue remodelling.

Fertility 9

Productivity 9

Vitality 9

Immunity 4

Intelligence 1

Growth Potential 9

Variability 9

Special Ability

Upon death a seed is produced.

Mutation Range Expansion.

I see... This was the original ability of the Bio Plants.

Originally, it was made with the purpose of producing food, but due to its mutation ability, it became a demon.

It might not be a bad idea to nip the problem at its root.

Due to its low immunity, the herbicide is effective.

I check the special ability. Various items appeared, with special instructions next to each item.

It seems I can choose abilities by sacrificing stats.

This village is troubled by the second coming of the famine.

That's why I'll experiment.

Fertility..... 4 is simply the ability to reproduce. We don't need too much so I'll lower it.

Productivity..... 15 should be the ability that produced fruit. To combat the famine, I'll increase it.

Vitality..... 6 - is this the power to grow anywhere? Let's drop it a little.

Immunity..... 4 is the power to resist sickness. Because the herbicide is effective, I'll leave it alone.

Intelligence..... 1 - What the heck is this, does it give it a demon's intelligence? I don't know what increasing it might do.

Growth Potential..... 15 - the speed at which it grows. Let's increase this.

Variability..... 1 - this is probably the cause of plants becoming demons.

Special Ability - I add in an ability that increases quality of crops and cancel the Mutation ability. Upon death, a higher quality seed is produced.

Naofumi: "It's completed."

Raphtalia: "Is something wrong?"

Raphtalia stirs and asks me sleepily.

The villagers suggested that the saint and holy bird stay overnight in the village.

The fruits and potatoes of the Bio Plant are quite delicious. It's an annoying plant, but it tastes good.

If my remodelling succeeds, it will become the special product of the village.

Naofumi: "Ah, continuing from yesterday is a bit..."

Raphtalia: "You're still at it?"

Naofumi: "It's a little bad to leave things as is right?"

The famine will hit sooner or later. Therefore, I'll stop it by all means.

Even if I can go shopping from different areas, it's impossible for this amount of people.

It would be difficult for these inhabitants who have lived here a long time to move.

Naofumi: "Now then."

I got off the carriage and dropped the seed onto the withered ground slowly.

The plant grows and covers a corner of the former village site.

Villager: "Wh-What's happening?"

The people who were resting near the camp run up to get a closer look.

Naofumi: "Ah my bad, it's just a little experiment."

Villager: "What are you doing?"

The villagers seem to be scared of the plants.

Naofumi: "Experiments to change this into a safe plant..."

Due to its low fertility, the plant stops growing.

And.....

Red and young fruit similar to tomatoes appear. It seems the foundation for the plant is a tomato.

Naofumi: "I think that's a success."

Villager: "Yeah..."

Naofumi: "Whether or not you want to use it is up to you. Whether this was in vain or becomes an asset is in your hands."

It seems the mutation range expansion and the variability status doesn't only change the plant into demons; it also has the effect of producing various fruits and other plants.

I sprinkled some herbicide to wither the plant. I hand the seed over to the feudal lord there.

Naofumi: "Well then, we'll be on our way, bye-bye."

Firo who was already awake and stuffing herself with tomatoes prepares to pull the carriage.

Villager: "Please wait!"

Naofumi: "Hm? What's up?"

Villager: "We still haven't rewarded you yet. How abo-"

Naofumi: "Are you guys possibly trying to make me deal with the excess food here?"

Villager: "Uh-uhm how about it....."

My carriage has now become 4 vehicles.

3 of the carts were loaded with crops that came from the Bio Plant.

It seems that the carts were also given to me.

I reluctantly received it because they presented it with a smile.

After connecting the carts, Firo pulls the carriage happily.

Firo: "It's heavy and comfortable~!"

As expected of a demon changed from a Philorial.

And so, our journey continues as the carriage shakes.

Additionally, after I realized the herbicide could be used as a weapon. I went to play with treants.

It seems to be effective only on plants which have a parasitic ability. I don't understand how it works.

Or perhaps the Bio Plant is actually not a demon but just a simple plant.

Well, it's fine. With Raphtalia and Firo, I don't have to worry about being attacked.

Let's think of a way to use the food that cannot be eaten first.

That reminds me... I heard a rumour about a famine up north. Let's go there and sell.

Naofumi: "Let's depart for the north."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Chapter 41: Shogun-sama

On our way north, we came across a town.

Naofumi: "What? There's a toll fee?"

The guards stopped us as we were about to enter the town and asked for a toll, so I showed them the note I received from the feudal lord of Forest village...

Guard: "These kinds of things aren't accepted! Pay quickly!"

Raphtalia: "But-"

The guard didn't even respond when Raphtalia tried to negotiate, only asking for gold.

Despite all that negotiating, the guard held his ground.

Naofumi: "What a stubborn bastard!"

Even though the guard looked like he was going to rush us, he stood there and just glared at me with hostility.

Hmm... Something must have happened here.

After I started peddling in this world, I learned a few things. No one would perform such unreasonable extortion unless they had strong backup. It seems whoever this person works with is powerful.

It seems like we have to call this guy's backing to talk about how they treat people. But it'll only work if the other party is not hostile though.

As for why the other party isn't here could be due to a few reasons...

Naofumi: "The Feudal lord here must be an outrageous bastard."

I muttered while looking at the town. The guard's expression changes upon hearing that.

Guard: "Don't you dare speak ill of the lord! Or else I will punish you!"

Ah I see. So it's a problem with the top dog. In this case, neither threats nor negotiations will be effective.

The road is closed so I can't pass. There will be punishment if caught.

Maybe if I make enough of a commotion for the lord to appear.

However, there is little reward for such a risk...

Naofumi: "I understand. You guys have it tough too..."

I hand the amount asked to the guard.

The guard looked a little shocked.

Guard: "Yeah... This is good."

The guard whispered to me.

Guard: "I'm sorry..."

Naofumi: "It can't be helped."

Is this in the jurisdiction of that trash king? Or is this country's feudal lord also rotten.

I intended to sell the food loaded in my carts, but I stopped when they collected tax.

The inn seems to be fairly high class, at least when compared to the neighborhood.

Everything in this town seems to be taxed: daily necessities, food, weapons, armor, crafted goods, and even the hotel fee. Everything is expensive.

Living here must be hard.

The commerce is totally in decline and the markets aren't lively at all.

The unreasonably heavy taxation must have taken its toll.

Naofumi: "Collect information on the village that's short on food."

Raphtalia: "Understood."

Firo: "Okay~! Master, I want a souvenir~"

Naofumi: "You eat so much food and you still want more?"

This Firo, demanding a souvenir despite the high prices...

We head to the bar with Firo in her human form.

By the way, I changed my shield to the Book Shield.

There, I saw a fellow who I would rather not have encountered.

"Fellow": "It seems that way."

Although he has a bow, there is also a sword on his waist, and his equipment also seems to be of low quality.

Similar to my Book Shield as camouflage, the bow is small and plain.

If this was our first meeting and if he wore a glove, I wouldn't have known him.

But, his companion was dressed in very conspicuous colours. It looks like he's trying to hide himself. Probably.

That's right, the hero of the Bow is having a discussion in the corner of the bar.

He doesn't seem to have noticed me.

What are they talking about? I'll get closer and concentrate on listening...

Villager: "The lord here..."

Apparently, they are gathering information about the lord's notoriety.

According to the story, he fills his own pocket with the raised tax money, accepts bribes from merchants, and employed bodyguards to severely punish anyone who objects.

It seems this feudal lord is also trash.

Itsuki: "That's overboard, I must punish him."

Whoops!

I almost fell over when I heard Itsuki's dangerous line.

First off, how am I supposed to respond to that...?

What are you trying to do staying concealed anyway, what kind of shogun are you? Are you going to leave right after the revolution?

Didn't I hear some rumors similar to this about the Hero of the Bow?

In hindsight, rumors aren't really reliable since I am known as the saint of the holy bird. At the same time, I'm also known as the nefarious Hero of the Shield.

Because nobody knows my real identity, I can still get by pretending to be a saint.

As for the reason why Itsuki is hiding, I do not know.

For example... Is the country asking him to hide? I can't really speculate due to the lack of information on Itsuki. There's little to nothing on the Hero of the Bow either.

Are you hiding intentionally...?

Itsuki: "Everyone, let's go."

Itsuki finished his talk, left the bar, and disappeared into the night.

The next morning, the feudal lord was removed...

After making a mess of the feudal lord's mansion, Itsuki's subordinates revealed themselves to start preaching.

The trash king heard about it, and in the end, the Lordship was transferred to another person.

I am reminded of dramas about olden times and a journey of revolutions.

Are they retarded...?

This is too troublesome to be involved in.

I returned to the hotel after looking for what I originally came for, information on the village that wants to buy food.

Firo's souvenir? There's no way I'll buy something like that in such an expensive town.

I just read my magic book and ignored Firo who seemed to be complaining to me about something.

I learned another spell.

What the Auntie from the magic shop told me about the Hero of the shield being good at using support and healing magic seems to be true...

Next morning.

As I expected, adventurers hired by the country are secretly investigating the town, stories about how the lord lost power are everywhere.

In the middle of the town, I see Itsuki engaging in small talk with a beautiful girl.

Girl: "Really, thank you very much."

Itsuki: "There is no such thing. It's secret you know."

That's a secret my ass.

Yup.

My suspicion has been confirmed.

Now I know why there are no rumours of Itsuki. This guy is pretending to hide himself and creating the image of being humble, then rejoices when people "find out" and ask him about it. What an unpleasant hobby.

That guy's retarded.

Hiding your true identity to satisfy your "superhero unmasking for the public" desires, truly obnoxious.

Otherwise, you wouldn't be chatting in such a conspicuous place.

At least I understand the reason she would be indebted to such a guy.

It seems she was almost taken away due to being unable to pay the tax and she has to take care of a bedridden old man.

This is ridiculous. We left the town at a quick pace.

After travelling for half a day, we reached the village bordering a neighboring country.

It seems that all the food that wasn't sold yesterday is in high demand.

Apparently the entire region is in famine.

However, it looks like there are a lot of guys that aren't residents of this village. Their clothes don't seem to be from this country.

Naofumi: "Hey. You over there..."

It seems they are from the neighboring country where their tyrant of a king was exterminated.

Are they here to peddle?

After they looked into my carriage, they came to have a talk about business.

They don't seem to have money so maybe they'll try to barter. Their medical herbs are good and maybe some lumber for woodworking...

I got off the carriage and asked about their circumstances.

Villager: "Thanks for allowing us to use other forms of payment than money. It allows us to save money."

Even if I am handed string or coal, as long as I acquire enough, it will be useful. Though I only traded because they had a nice amount of medical herbs.

Villager: "I'm sorry. For a while now, there has been little to sell....."

If I look closely, he resembles a thin twig, seems like he'll die at any moment.

Naofumi: "...Here's a little gift. Although it's not much, eat it sparingly."

Because it can't be helped, I borrowed a large pan from the group of villagers.

The village suffering from starvation cooperates willingly.

There's many things that are about to rot. Give or take 4 days until they go bad.

That's even after I got the skill 'Anti-Corruption' which delays rotting.

Villager: "Thank you very much!"

They hungrily devoured everything I made in the pan.

Meanwhile, I inquired why this is happening.

It seems that regardless of whether or not the king was a tyrant, life was fine.

Taxes weren't too high, and some people even took it easy.

But it seems that would be over soon.

It seems that the militia known as the Resistance that took over, and they increased the taxes.

Naofumi: "What? Didn't you guys overthrow the evil king?"

Villager: "..... Yeah, but since money is required to properly administer a country, taxes were raised. As a result, our military power was reduced."

I see. If the king wasn't particularly bad, he would have at least kept a minimum amount of military to protect his country.

It is said that "it is not a country without its people", but what do you say about a country that cannot protect its people?

It seems that only bad rumors of the king were being spread.

I don't know what the king was thinking, but I feel a strange sense of camaraderie with the king that was labelled as a tyrant.

Something could have been done if the king was negotiated with instead of being exterminated.

As for the trash king in this country, he's been evil since the beginning.

Villager: "Only the head changed and it's becoming impossible to live. So we brought what little wealth we have into this Melromarc country and try to live."

Firo: "I feel sorry for your king~! I wish everyone the best. Anyway, I'm hungry so who do I blame?"

Naofumi: "Shut up you bird! My spirit as the owner will be doubted!"

Firo: "Okay~"

I scolded Firo for opening another's wounds.

It seems that recently she has picked up some strange wisdom and has become foul-mouthed.

Raphtalia: "I wonder who she is learning from..."

Raphtalia watched and commented under her breath.

Naofumi: "Did you say something?"

Raphtalia: "Nope, absolutely nothing..."

It seems Itsuki took part in the Resistance. He might have been behind it since the beginning.

Anyway, are these people entering this country illegally to buy black-market food?

It seems the prices of food have sky-rocketed in this area. And I can just rake it in.

If I'm not mistaken, Itsuki... Shogun-sama has done some reforms around this area.

Though the after service sucks...

Because his sense of justice was satisfied, he moved on.

Villager: "Although this nation could attack our country as it is weakening, it is simply impossible to live during a famine..."

Naofumi: "Hmm I see..."

It might be due to the wave's influence that famines are frequently appearing in various places.

Villager: "This is?"

Naofumi: "This is a remodeled plant that was causing trouble down south of this country. I modified it with a special technique so that it will grow when planted. It will probably be okay, but pay attention while managing it. If it is handled carelessly, it could be dangerous."

Villager: "O-Okay....."

Naofumi: "I'll be around this neighborhood again in the future. You can thank me then."

Because the three carts were sold completely, I gave two seeds as a bonus.

As for what will happen to the village? That's a different story.

It seems that my true identity was revealed, but because the small neighboring country was saved from famine, the residents weren't bothered by it.

Additionally, due to the large amount of medical herbs acquired here, it seems an epidemic was prevented in the east after we decided to sell there.

Chapter 42: The Village of Plague

We were camping outside that day.

Naofumi: "We were somehow able to dispose of that ridiculous amount of food at a high price."

Because the South's famine was already resolved, we came to the North and sell.

Though there is still one cart of food left, it is for that absurdly gluttonous bird.

Firo: "Food~~!"

The bird stuffs her head into the cart and starts devouring.

Firo: "Delicious~!"

I've heard the annoying phrase somewhere before.

Although this fellow's growth is over, she's still a glutton. Everyday food costs are nothing to scoff at. On the other hand, we travel extremely fast.

However, the carriage went through quite a lot of abuse as various unreasonable actions were performed. The repair costs are also quite hefty...

Naofumi: "What should I do?"

Firo was complaining about how light it was. So this time, maybe the carriage should be made of metal instead of wood. It would be more durable but also more expensive.

Raphtalia overcame her motion sickness, but the g-force from Firo's full speed is ridiculous.

Maybe the shock will be reduced if I add in a spring.

My money has been accumulating nicely. I'm looking forward to meeting the Old Man from the weapon shop.

That weapon shop in the centre of the castle town sells the best weapons. I don't know where the other heroes buy their weapons and

armours, but I haven't found a shop that sells better equipment than the Old Man's weapon shop.

Firo: "Master~"

Squish..... Firo hugged me and pressed her feathers on my face It's the North, so it's a bit cold. Therefore, Firo's feathers that have her body temperature are nice and warm.

Firo: "Ehehe~"

Raphtalia: "Muu....."

For some reason, after I sit down, Raphtalia also clings to me.

Firo: "Hehehe, everyone is nice and warm together."

Naofumi: "It's getting quite hot for me....."

Though, I didn't leave this position because it's still somewhat chilly.

Raphtalia: "Firo, get off. The temperature will be just right after that."

Firo: "No~, if anyone should get off, it's Raphtalia Onee-chan. Stop monopolizing Master!"

Raphtalia: "I'm not monopolizing anything!"

Noisy!

Naofumi: "Both of you go to sleep!"

Raphtalia: "But..."

Firo: "Master~ let's sleep together~!"

Naofumi: "I need to prepare medicine before we arrive at the east area."

I eagerly started compounding the large amount of medical herbs I've acquired in anticipation of a large demand for medicine.

You never know whether or not you have enough... Such are the difficulties of peddling.

Firo: "Boo....."

Firo parted from me and went to sleep while sulking.

At the same time, Raphtalia entered the carriage. Sleeping on the ground may not be as good as sleeping on a bed but it's still not bad.(!)

Naofumi: "Now then."

I continue to work on the medicine while tending the fire.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama."

Naofumi: "Hm?"

I heard Raphtalia's voice from the carriage.

Then I saw Raphtalia beckoning me to the carriage.

Naofumi: "What's wrong?"

Raphtalia: "... Can we sleep together?"

Naofumi: "You too...? Honestly..."

Though they looked like adults, they are still children. Being lonely is a given.

Naofumi: "How about you sleep with Firo in her human form."

Raphtalia: "I'm not lonely... It's just..."

Raphtalia looked down shyly and fidgets.

That reminds me of the time when she was crying non-stop at night... A considerable amount of time has passed since then.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama... was there anyone you liked...? In your original world?"

Naofumi: "Huh? No not really."

Why would she want to talk about Earth?

I don't get her intentions.

Naofumi: "What's up with you?"

Raphtalia: "Um... I'm just wondering what Naofumi-sama thinks of me."
What?

Hmm... That fucking woman flashed through my mind, but there is no

reason to get angry at Raphtalia.

As to the reason why that fucking woman came to mind, I have no idea.

Naofumi: "At this moment, I don't really think of you as a slave"

Raphtalia: "Then... Is there anything else?"

Naofumi: "Anything else...?"

While I tilt my neck questioningly, Raphtalia has a very delicate expression.

Naofumi: "You trust me. So I trust and value you too..."

Raphtalia: "O-Okay!... Huh?"

Raphtalia nodded with a smile, and returned to bed in the carriage with a puzzled face.

Naofumi: "Now then..."

I continued working for our next peddling trip.

By the way, our respective levels from the fights that happened occasionally:

Me Lv 37 Raphtalia Lv 39 Firo Lv 38

I'm even lower than Firo. Is it because I need more Exp to Level?

No, these two are attackers. Especially Firo, who is more aggressive and agile compared to Raphtalia, and obliterates enemies in the blink of an eye. So she would gain experience quicker.

Raphtalia's attacks are gradually becoming quicker and they are very reliable.

We arrived at the eastern area of the country.

What can I say? The nearby trees are all dead and the air is heavy. Though, it's not particularly cold around here.

I observed the soil and it's dark enough to be called black.

When I looked at the sky, the clouds are thick and the big mountain range slowly grows.

What an ominous feeling.

Naofumi: "Umm."

I had to check the map again because the road was cracked.

Naofumi: "Firo, head towards the mountain."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Naofumi: "Also you two, make sure to cover your mouth with a cloth. An epidemic seems to be spreading in this neighborhood."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Before we arrive at a farm village, I also covered my mouth for a minimum amount of defense.

Villager: "...Is that person... peddling? Sorry, but in this village a plague is spreading cough... Please evacuate."

A villager explained to us while having a painful coughing fit.

Naofumi: "I know. That's why I came to sell treatment medicine."

Villager: "Is-Is that true!? We're saved."

The villager starts running and reporting that a peddler with medicine arrived.

... The situation seems to have become considerably tense. There is some anxiety about the amount I have.

My anxiety comes true; it seems the whole village needs medicine.

Villager: "It-It's the carriage of the famous holy bird! The village is saved!"

Uwaaa.....Such high expectations.

If the medicine is not effective, my hard earned trust will plummet.

It can't be helped.

Naofumi: "Where are the fellows who need medicine?"

I should use the most effective method of giving them the medicine

personally.

Villager: "Here, Saint-sama."

Though I've been called a Saint for a while now, it feels a little unsettling. Still, it's a lot better than being looked at with disgust as the Hero of the Shield.

We were guided to a building where the people with the most serious symptoms were gathered.

This is probably an isolation facility. There is a graveyard at the back and several brand-new grave posts were seen.

... No wonder this place smells of death. I'm sure this is an unpleasant atmosphere exclusive to graveyards and hospitals.

I'm not confident that this will be solved with only treatment medicine. I shouldn't be conceited because I deciphered a mere Intermediate class recipe. Moreover, if the treatment medicine is not effective then we're screwed, though if the treatment medicine works, I'll be able to make a large sum of money.

Still... It's unsettling. Even though the deciphering was difficult, the effects may not necessarily be that much better.

The next time I stop by the Pharmacy, I'll ask for a High Class Recipe book.

Villager: "Please see my wife first!"

Naofumi: "Okay."

I woke up a woman who won't stop coughing and gave her the medicine little by little.

Pa... Light spreads around the woman.

Was it effective? Colour returned to the woman's face. That's great. It seems to have worked.

Naofumi: "Next!"

When I looked up, all the villagers were staring at me with their eyes

opened wide in surprise.

Naofumi: "What's wrong?"

Villager: "Uh-Uhmm....."

Some of them pointed to the child who was laid next to the woman. Some time ago, he was coughing just as bad as the woman.

Hm?

Is he dead.....?

I confirmed the child's breath.

What a relief, he's still alive. But still, he was having a coughing fit a while ago. Why has it stabilized?

Naofumi: "What happened?"

Villager: "When the Saint gave my wife medicine, the breathing of the child next to her also seems to have relaxed."

Hm..... Is this due to the effect of Medicine Effect Range Expansion (Small)? If the range increases, it'll be very useful.

It seems to be able to apply the same effects of the medicine to anyone within a range up to 1 metre in the surroundings.

Just how much potential is hidden within this shield?

But with this range, it will hardly be useful in combat. I'm considering clustering people up within 1 metre, unless the effect diminishes.

Naofumi: "I'll explain the story later! The medicine has an effective radius of 1 metre when drunk. Gather up!"

Villager: "O-Okay!"

Because the manpower is insufficient, the patients were carried into the vicinity by Firo and Raphtalia.

This will save medicine, and the treatment of the isolation facility was finished quite early, but it only suppresses the symptoms. I am unable to completely cure the sickness.

Naofumi: "So currently this is the limit of my medicine huh..."

Villager: "Thank you very much!"

Even though I was thanked, I do not feel satisfied because I was unable to resolve the situation.

The possibility that more people becomes infected is still there and I cannot eradicate the illness.

Naofumi: "That reminds me, where did this sickness come from? Was there an epidemic or something? This is no ordinary disease."

This illness is quite formidable for the treatment medicine to only be this effective.

There is also a risk that we are infected.

We might have to flee as quickly as possible.

Villager: "A treatment master said that the disease had originated from the demon that lives within the mountains and that it was transmitted by the wind."

Naofumi: "Give me the details."

Villager: "Then, he..."

A treatment master is an occupation that is proficient in recovery magic and medicine, quite similar to a doctor in my world.

The treatment master was compounding medicine to combat the illness and came by the isolation facility to help out.

Naofumi: "You, can you make High Class treatment medicine?"

Treatment Master: "Yes. I am working on it now. Due to your help with the Saint medicine, I can get back to work on it."

Naofumi: "Hurry it up, the treatment isn't complete yet. They will relapse sooner or later."

Treatment Master: "O-okay!"

Naofumi: "Wait."

I stopped the treatment master who is about to run.

Naofumi: "I heard you explained the cause of this sickness is from the mountains. Explain."

Treatment Master: "Ah yes. About a month ago, Hero of the Sword-sama got rid of a huge dragon in the mountain range territory."

Speaking of which, I heard that rumour too.

Treatment Master: "Dragons usually make a stronghold in rural areas. But this dragon was a straggler and it had built his nest near the village."

Naofumi: "What does that have to do with anything?"

Treatment Master: "At one time, the villagers gathered to watch the feat of the Hero. After that, the adventurers went up the mountain and brought back the materials of the dragon that Hero-sama defeated."

It seems that excellent weapons or armour can be made with the materials of a dragon...

Quite enviable.

Naofumi: "Then?"

Treatment Master: "Here is the main issue. All the good parts were taken and this deserted village became lively again thanks to it. However, the corpse of the dragon began to rot and the problem appeared. The adventurers who went to the corpse got sick."

Naofumi: "... I see. So are you saying that the corpse is the cause of this illness?"

Treatment Master: "Most likely..."

Although all the usable parts of the dragon were taken, the corpse was left. The meat. If the dragon rots then what's affected will be the neighborhood. Some gourmets may want it, but adventurers have no use for decaying meat. Though I have no idea how dragon meat is treated in this world. It might be delicious but we don't know.

The entrails left behind, especially the liver will rot easily.

Ren that bastard seems to be after the materials, so the entrails are discarded. There's also the heart... It probably works very well with magic.

Naofumi: "Since the cause is known, you should quickly dispose of it."

Treatment Master: "Removal is impossible for the farmers of this neighborhood... The mountain range is infested by evil demons."

Naofumi: "Then ask some adventurers."

Treatment Master: "By the time we noticed, the ecosystem of the mountains changed dramatically and poison was mixed into the air. Any common adventurer gets sick immediately. Moreover, other adventurers were warned not to approach due to the epidemic."

Sigh...

Ren that guy, dispose of the corpse properly.

Before all that, let me look at this from another angle.

Ren is the youngest hero.

Also, I didn't know that things rot until I was a high school student.

Let alone, he is the biggest game addict among the heroes.

And what he plays is the product of science fiction called the VRMMO.

So naturally, it would be difficult for him to tell the difference between a game and real life.

Conclusion: this result is inevitable.

Treatment Master: "Saint-sama, what will you do?"

Naofumi: "Did you report to the country?"

Treatment Master: "Yes. Medicine is scheduled to arrive shortly."

Naofumi: "... What about the heroes?"

Treatment Master: "There is little possibility of them appearing because they are busy."

He seems to be referring to Motoyasu and Ren.

This is exasperating.

Naofumi: "Has the request fee to the country already been paid?"

Treatment Master: "Yes..."

Naofumi: "Can you get it back if you cancel it?"

The Treatment Master looked at me with wide open eyes.

Treatment Master: "Is the Saint-sama going to go?"

Naofumi: "How long will it be until you finish the medicine anyway?"

Treatment Master: "Uhm... it should be done in half a day."

Naofumi: "Alright, I'll go get rid of the dragon corpse. And give the request fee to me instead."

Treatment Master: "Un-Understood."

Thus, we went to dispose of a dragon corpse in a mountain.

Chapter 43: Curse Series

The influence of the mountain has turned the land into nothing but barren rock.

We advanced slowly along a mountain path in the East of the country.

It's been 30 minutes since the beginning of the climb, which Firo spent running and kicking demons.

Right now, we have treatment medicine and antidotes in anticipation of the poisonous air.

By the way, we left the carriage at the village, only bringing a wagon before heading out.

Firo: "No~! Many of Firo's memories are in here~!"

Firo, this fellow, she absolutely wants to pull everything. I'll ditch you here. You were born last month and you're already talking about life?

Well, I can understand her attachment to the carriage because she has been pulling it for 90% of her life...

There are many demons here that are from the Poison class, such as Poison Tree and Poison Frog. I diligently let my shield absorb it all after we defeated them.

Requirements for Poison Tree Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Poison Frog Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Poison Bee Shield have been revealed.

Requirements for Poison Fly Shield have been revealed.

All the Poison Resistance bonuses have been displaced, and have become status up as equipment bonuses.

The sole exception is the Poison Bee shield.

Bee Needle Shield II

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Attack Power 1

Special Effect: Shield of Stinger (Small) Bee Poison (Poison) The defensive power hasn't really changed from the Bee Needle Shield, but the paralysis poison can now be changed to poison damage over time.

Well, enough of that, it seem the enemies are appearing quite frequently. Even after defeating them, another one just takes their place.

Certainly, the wind is full of the poison which scattered a plague. This is definitely too severe for a normal adventurer.

Naofumi: "There is no point to killing them all! Firo, run through!"

Raphtalia and I ride the wagon while giving instructions to Firo.

"Okay~!"

Firo pulled the wagon and ploughed through at full power.

Some experience was occasionally gained while running over enemies.

Along the way, Firo ran over a sludge-like demon, but because there was no time I didn't get to absorb it.

And after a few minutes...

Naofumi: "Is this our final destination?"

I saw the corpse of a dragon, leaking poisonous miasma and releasing a foul odour into the air.

The size is around a 10 meters and it resembles a Western-style dragon...

However, the features can't be made out any more. The extent to which it is rotten has made it hard for even the original color to be seen, and all that's left is black miasma-like skin.

It seems the fatal injury would be a single blow to the abdomen. There is a big scar in the there, exposing its internal organs and releasing a putrid smell.

Poison flies gathered around the rotten meat of the dragon. This is quite disgusting...

Firo: "I'm hungry~"

Naofumi: "Is your appetite so great you can still eat after looking at that...?"

Firo began eating the food in the wagon.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, are you okay?"

Raphtalia: "Y-Yup."

I need to make sure Raphtalia is okay because her respiratory system is weak and the miasma will damage it even more.

Naofumi: "Take a rest if it gets hard."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

I checked out the other side of the corpse while swatting poison flies. The fingernails, scales, skin, and wings are all gone. Even the tongue was taken. Seem to have been stripped by Ren and the adventurers It's not an exaggeration to call all that is left bones and meat. Excluding an extremely small portion of skin, there is nothing left.

The smell is extremely nasty. This is definitely severe.

I might be faring better than Raphtalia because of my poison resistance. I have no idea about Firo.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, exterminate the poison flies. Firo, come dismantle the corpse with me. It's too big for my shield to absorb."

I should let my shield absorb all of it. There is a risk of the soil getting corrupted as well if I bury it.

Firo: "Okay."

Firo finishes her meal with a bloated belly and nods.

Firo: "I feel a little sick."

Naofumi: "That's because you're over eating."

I approached the corpse to dismantle it as planned.

Goso.....

Naofumi: "..... Did it just breathe?"

Raphtalia: "Ummm....."

The dragon's corpse seems to have begun to move.

Oh my, it probably looked like it because of the poison flies flocking on the corpse.

Gorori.....

Yup.

Just my imagination.

The dragon's corpse began to move, and got on its hands and knees in attack mode.

Zombie Dragon: "GYAoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"

The dragon raised its head and unleashed a roar with its fang-less mouth.

Naofumi: "How the hell can it move!"

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, please calm down!"

The corpse of the dragon..... No, the zombie dragon began to move as I shouted.



牙も角も無いドラゴンの頭部が
持ち上がって咆哮をあげる。

「あれで動き出すってどうなってるんだよ!」

「ナオフミ様落ち着いてください!」

動き出したドラゴンの死骸……

ドラゴンゾンビを前にして俺は叫んでいた。

おいおい。幾らなんでも今の俺達には

荷が重過ぎる相手なんじゃないか?

What the hell? This is too much for us. The Level is unknown and any ability this zombie dragon has is unknown.

What is wrong with this world!

The zombie dragon turned to face us while regenerating each organ. A part of the wing and tail is regenerated. I don't know whether the fangs and claws will regenerate too.

It seems to be liquidizing the rotting meat and turning it into its wings and tail. The fatal wound on the abdomen was closing and the internal organs were regenerating.

Dealing with this is impossible for me!

Naofumi: "Let's escape!"

Raphtalia: "But, Firo is already--!"

Raphtalia pointed at the dragon zombie.

Firo: "Terya!!"

At that moment, Firo jumped on the zombie dragon and kicked it in the head.

There was a nice smack and the dragon zombie bends backwards.

Naofumi: "That's unexpected..... Can we fight it?"

Firo's offensive power is high and there are no fangs or claws on this zombie dragon.

We may be able to win, but the opponent does not have the concept of stamina.....

However, there is a risk of the zombie dragon coming for the village if we escape there. Of course, there is also the possibility of it returning to its territory. But it might regenerate everything next time, so it must be defeated now.

Naofumi: "Don't be rash!"

Firo: "Okay!"

Naofumi: "Alright, we're stopping this thing here!"

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

The dragon roared threateningly and attacked.

I change into the Chimeric Viper Shield which has the highest defence, and I am able to block the dragon's attack.

But.....

Zombie Dragon: "GYAooooooooooooooooooooo!"

The zombie dragon shoots purple gas from its mouth at us.

Raphtalia and Firo run behind my back as I set up my shield and prepare to block the attack.

Naofumi: "Ueh.....What is this!"

Raphtalia: "Cough, Cough!"

The real nature of the breath attack is high-concentrated poisonous gas. Even with my poison resistance, I felt breathlessness and dizziness.

I had a coughing fit, while Raphtalia behind me is barely able to breathe.

While the zombie dragon was shooting its breath, Firo, seemingly unaffected by the gas, kicked it and made it stop.

Naofumi: "Ra-Raphtalia, are you all right!?"

Raphtalia: "Coughcoughcough-"

Raphtalia wanted to answer me with tears in her eyes, but she was just coughing non-stop.

.....This might be really bad.

Firo and I can fight, but Raphtalia is out.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, hurry up and get back, there is an antidote in the carriage. Drink it and rest."

Raphtalia: "Coughcough!"

Raphtalia desperately points towards the zombie dragon.

I turned around and see what's happening.

In just a second, the zombie dragon opened its mouth and swallowed Firo who is jumping over it.

Naofumi: "A---"

Bagun!

A loud sound echoes, and from the zombie dragon's mouth crimson liquid drips down.

Naofumi: "FIROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

My mind blanks out and I don't understand anything that Raphtalia is doing. The bird who acted like a pampered child ever since being born a month ago, always clinging to me, hugging me.....

Memories of Firo were recalled and shown like a revolving lantern.

What happened?

Something.....

The zombie dragon chewed its mouth several times, something red leaks out of it, and then the zombie dragon swallowed with a large gulp.

Raphtalia: "Cough!"

Raphtalia slapped my cheek strongly. I have tears in my eyes. The situation is only getting worse as I am lost in my own world.

However, all I felt was the anger from my heart after losing an important companion right before my eyes.

---Power, Do you desire it?

I thought I heard a voice from the shield. I looked at my shield almost unconsciously and listened for the voice.

---Everything, Do you wish for it?

Dokun.

My heartbeat is stronger.

I remember the feeling that is produced from the darkness shield.

This... It's the same feeling as after that fight with Motoyasu.....

The skill tree section of the shield appeared.

The skill tree screen turns inside out, and on a weird background that is neither black nor red appeared another skill tree.

Curse Series

This phrase reverberates in my mind.

The shield glows brightly.

Curse Series

Shield of Fury

Mortar Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Skill "Change Shield (Attack)" "Iron Maiden"

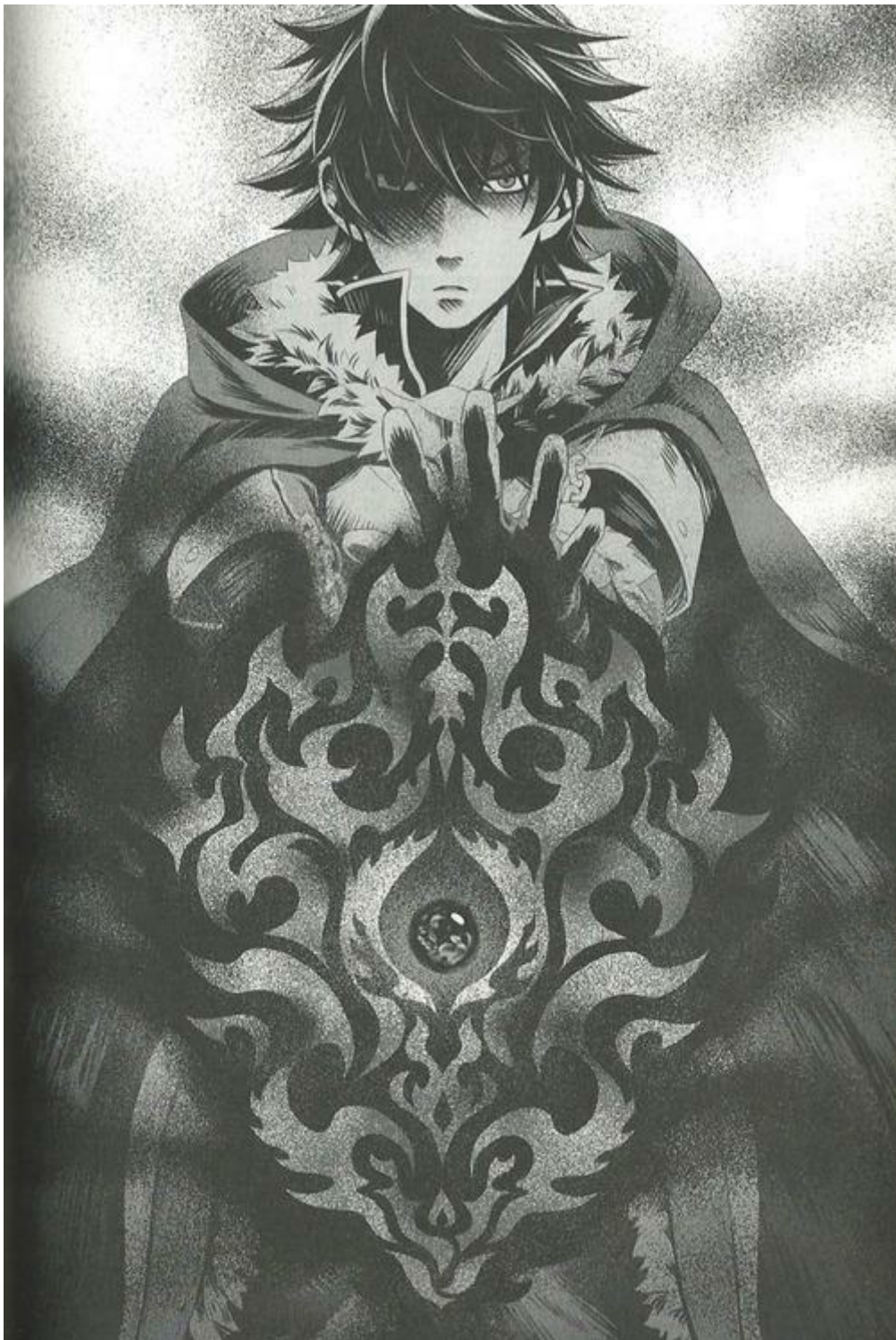
Special Effect: Self-Burning Curse Physical Strength Improvement.

Being born from the heart, Killer Shield.

On this shield is a particular explanation..... Am I even conscious? I hold my hand over the shield with these feelings.

Shield of Fury

With a outcry of raging emotion, the shield changes with a red and black light.



There was a crimson shield with decorations of abominations and flames.

Dokun.....Dokun.....

My consciousness was swallowed in anger.

I hate everything in this world.

Everything in this world is black, all there is left are shadows sneering at me.

I am ruled by a single emotion.

Zombie Dragon: "GYAOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

A big black shadow stretched its arm towards me.

Naofumi: "UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!"

Chapter 44: Shield of Rage

Naofumi: "UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

I unleashed a roar which rivaled the dragon's and caught the arm of the shadow with the shield.

I don't feel pain or anything else.

Zombie Dragon: "GYA!?"

The black, shadowy mouth distorts in astonishment and sneers at me. Ridiculous.

Naofumi: "DIE!"

I catch the black shadow and throw it.

The black shadow flew while roaring in surprise.

Zombie Dragon: "GYAOOOOO!"

However, the shadow gets up immediately and rushed to attack.

..... Can this shield attack an enemy?

Not available.

The black shadow attacks me with its tail and arms, knocking me to my knees.

Naofumi: "It's not working!"

The attack of the black shadow is not effective on me.

Naofumi: "Haha..... Are you stupid?"

Though, I don't have any means to defeat it.

After that thought, a black flame immediately appeared around my arm and it burned the tail and arms of the black shadow.

Zombie Dragon: "GYAOO!?"

The shadow was surprised at that fact and fell down.

Naofumi: "Hm..... Is there a counter-attack offensive ability in here?"

The shadow is keeping its distance, seemingly afraid.

Naofumi: "Are you begging for your life now? It's too late for forgiveness!"

I slowly recite a skill.

Naofumi: "Iron Maiden!"

However, the skill is not activated and a skill tree appeared in my view.

Shield Prison -> Change Shield (Attack) -> Iron Maiden Is this the activation conditions?

That's troublesome. I suppose to trigger the counter-attack, I have to trick the shadow into hitting me.

Naofumi: "Wait for me.....I'll kill you by any means possible....."

The shadow swings its arm at me, frightened by my murderous intent and anger. My shield was raised to intercept the arm and a black flame engulfed it. It roasted the meat and melted the bone.

This amount of heat is insufficient..... I want to erase the existence itself.

Zombie Dragon: "-----OT!"

I see... The angrier I get, the more powerful the Shield of Fury gets.

That's simple.

All I have to do is remember my feelings for those bastards.

Mein = Sofia..... Or was her name Malty?

I feel angry just remembering that name.

Next is Trash king, Motoyasu, Ren, and Itsuki.

I remember the things they did to me one by one.

Hate..... I want to kill them.....

My anger begins to dissolve into the crimson shield, staining it black.

Naofumi: "This time I'll kill..... Everyone....."

I catch the arm of the shadow and everything is erased, exterminated by the flames of indignation.

The flame wrapped around the entire shadow and consumes it all.

Somebody touches my hand.

Dokun.....

This is..... The same gentle feeling as that time?

Raphtalia: "I am different from the whole world which tortures and shuns Naofumi-sama..... I'll say it as many times as it takes, Naofumi-sama won't do something like that."

.....Eh?

My visibility warped by darkness slightly shakes.

Somewhere inside of me, a voice is warning me that if I give in to the anger, I will lose what's most precious to me.

I want to deny it. But.....

Raphtalia: "Please believe me. I am convinced that Naofumi-sama didn't commit any crime. You are a great Hero of the Shield-sama who gave me medicine to save my life and taught me how to live..... I am your sword and I will follow you no matter what road you take."

A voice whispered to me.

Don't be consumed by the urge to kill. There is something you must protect.

Did you forget your anger?

I did not forget, but I want to repay the person who so sincerely believes in me.

Do you defy me?

Do not order me. I will decide for myself!

..... I am always here, waiting for an opening.....

The black voice disappears and my view becomes bright.

Raphtalia: "Cough! Cough!"

When I noticed, Raphtalia was holding my hand while trying to hold down her coughing.

Naofumi: "Ar-Are you okay?"

She had suffered terrible burns.

There is no enemy here that can use fire.

Just... What...

Ah.....

Special effect of the Shield of Fury, Self-Burning Curse.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia!"

Raphtalia: "Coug-"

Raphtalia smiles and collapses.

Because of me... Raphtalia suffered serious wounds.

Naofumi: "I am the Hero of the Shield who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. I call forth the power of nature to heal!"

Naofumi: "Fast Heal!"

Naofumi: "I am the Hero of the Shield who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. I call forth the power of nature to heal!"

Naofumi: "Fast Heal!"

Naofumi: "I am the Hero of the Shield who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. I call forth the power of nature to heal!"

Naofumi: "Fast Heal!"

Until my magic power ran out, I did not stop healing.

Raphtalia... Raphtalia is the only person who believed in me!

There are severe burns. Using beginner class recovery magic is insufficient for treatment.

I must hurry to the wagon and use the healing ointments.

Zombie Dragon: "GYAOOOOO!"

I turned around and saw the zombie dragon roar. It faces us and uses its breathe while attacking with its un-burnt arm.

Naofumi: "Get out of my way!"

I intercept the zombie dragon's attack by raising my arm.

The shield shines with a black light and activates Self-Curse Burning.

Naofumi: "Stop it!"

The shield stopped as if responding to my voice.

If the shield activates again here, it will also burn Raphtalia.

I cannot do such a thing. However, the poison breath is very bad for Raphtalia's vitality.

As if in response to my intentions, the shield burns only the poison breath. But this output is not enough to earnestly slaughter the enemy.

What should I do?

The urge to kill and anger is always supplied to me from the shield; I try to hold it down somehow as to not be swallowed by rage again.

My highest priority now is to return to the wagon quickly and treat Raphtalia. Protecting Raphtalia is all that's left of my reasoning.

Zombie Dragon: "GYA!?"

While in the midst of attacking and defending, the zombie dragon begins scratching at its chest painfully.

Naofumi: "Wh-what is going on....."

What on earth is happening? Is the Self-Curse Burning burning it from the inside?

Zombie Dragon: "GYAOOOOOOOOO!!!"

Eventually, the dragon stops moving and returned to its original corpse form.

Now is not the time to observe the situation.

There seem to be no more poison flies buzzing around. They probably escaped as a result of the zombie dragon's rampage.

I returned to the wagon with Raphtalia and rub the burn cure made from healing ointments and medical herbs on Raphtalia's burns.

And an antidote was given to Raphtalia.

Raphtalia: "Ah..... Naofumi-sama."

Raphtalia's breathing becomes quiet and she opens her eyes to smile at me.

Naofumi: "Are you okay!?"

Raphtalia: "Yeah..... Thank you for the medicine Naofumi-sama....."

Still, her burns are quite severe. Though the simple burns were cured with the medicine..... Because the effect was from black magic, a black trace is left. Though it's a little better, a complete recovery seems unlikely.

Raphtalia: "I-I'm fine...Hurry...the dragon..."

Naofumi: "The zombie dragon isn't moving anymore."

Raphtalia: "That's not it..... dispose of the corpse quickly."

Naofumi: "..... Okay."

Raphtalia's strong gaze was directed at the corpse of the dragon.

Naofumi: "Is it safe to leave it here?"

Raphtalia: "If it gets up again, we have no way to fight it."

Naofumi: "I see..... Okay."

I got off the wagon and walked towards to corpse of the dragon.

It is necessary to dismantle the dragon and then let my shield absorb it.

And Firo..... even if it's only a corpse, I have to at least make a grave.

When approaching the corpse, I noticed its internal organs were wriggling.

What on earth is going to happen?

I can barely fight in this state.

Shield of fury.....

It's a dangerous shield that erodes the mind, but it provides strong physical defense and a strong counter attack.

I still haven't recovered from when I used it earlier, so I changed to the Chimeric Viper Shield.

But I get ready to respond to anything while taking a stance.

And I approach the corpse.

The wriggling stops in one place. It's getting eaten? The chest is broken and something appeared!

Firo: "Puhaa~!"

A familiar bird that was dripping with rotten liquid walked out of the corpse of the dragon.

Firo: "Fu.....Finally Firo is out."

Naofumi: "Firo? Are you safe? Are you not injured?"

Firo: "Yup. Firo doesn't feel hurt."

Naofumi: "Then..... What about the blood that came out when you were eaten?"

Firo: "Blood? Firo threw up all the food inside the dragon."

Did Firo eat the red fruit that resembles tomatoes.....? Is that why it looked like blood was dripping?

She certainly was eating before the battle.

Naofumi: "Don't scare me like that! I thought you died!"

Firo: "An attack of that level is not even painful. Firo isn't even itchy."

Is this a bird or a monster?

No, it is in fact a demon.

Honestly..... I am surprised.

Firo: "Master, were you worried about Firo?"

Naofumi: "I don't know."

Firo: "Master is embarrassed~"

Naofumi: "Do I have to kill you myself this time?"

Firo: "Noo~"

Sigh..... She's safe, that's great.

I'm angry at the smirking Firo though. I'll remember this.

Naofumi: "So what did you do?"

Firo: "Oh right. There was a big crystal that shined purple inside the stomach of the dragon. So Firo tore it up and it stopped."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

What does that mean?

Was the foundation of that zombie dragon the big crystal?

The place where Firo came out.....the heart?

But, such a thing.....

Because it's a dragon...? Did the magic that stay in the body all gather in the heart and crystallize?

That might be possible.

Naofumi: "So... The crystal?"

Firo: "Geffuuuuu!"

Yup. She ate it..... I want to smack this fellow.....

Firo: "Firo left a little. A souvenir for Master."

After saying so, Firo passes me a small purple fragment.

..... What can I do with this?

First, I'll let the shield absorb half.

As I thought, the amount of skill trees unlocked and level is insufficient.

Naofumi: "Because Raphtalia is hurt, Firo, dispose of the corpse with me.

Firo: "Okay~!"

Honestly..... This bird really surprises me.

I watch Firo and think.

At that time, if I didn't give in to the anger...

After I changed the shield to defeat an enemy for Firo, I completely lost to the anger after that.

If Raphtalia did not stop me, I might have even burned Firo.

Anger..... The shield which was cursed.

Were you trying to take over the consciousness of the hero?

All that I can say is, it gave me an uncontrollable urge to kill.

.....At that time, that was all I could think about.

Firo: "Itadakimasu!"

Naofumi: "Hey Firo, don't eat that meat! It's rotten!"

Firo: "Meat that's about to go bad is the most delicious, Master~!"

Naofumi: "This one isn't going bad, it's completely rotten!"

And without any tension, the zombie dragon was disposed of.

Though, I couldn't level any skill trees with the bone and meat of the dragon.

Still, the dragon zombie's skin and dragon's bone seem to be useful so I'll put in the wagon.

Chapter 45: The Results of Peddling

This is a curse, isn't it?

After hurrying back to the village, I got Raphtalia to see the healers about her burns that I had caused.

Treatment Master: "Even so, this kind is quite strong. The dragon corpse on the mountain had a curse that was this strong?"

Naofumi: "Eh... No... That is..."

Wondering how I was going to answer, I stammered.

Raphtalia: "Yes, I made a mistake and was accidentally burned by the dragon."

Raphtalia smiled while looking in my direction as if to say it was a secret.

Naofumi: "Can you do anything about it? If it's money, I'll pay whatever you need."

Raphtalia is a girl after all. If she has black marks like this, she would stand out which would be troublesome.

Treatment Master: "It's not that it's impossible, but..."

During the preparation, the healers bring a bottle of transparent liquid to the room.

Treatment Master: "It is quite powerful. It could heal her soon..."

Naofumi: "What is that?"

Treatment Master: "It's holy water. To cure a curse, it's best to use holy power..."

Naofumi: "I see."

It seems the injuries would be slow to heal due to the effect of the curse shield until fully healed.

That is very dangerous.

There is no clear distinction between friend and foe. In addition, there is a counter effect on allies.

I can't even think about using it.

Also, after looking at the shield tree, the unsealing wasn't progressing at all. It was only for a short time, but I cannot unseal that shield. I remember having that sort of hunch.

Treatment Master: "Soak the holy water into the bandage..."

The healers apply the holy water soaked bandage to Raphtalia's blackened wounds.

Treatment Master: "Sorry it's so simple for now. Please use powerful holy water made by the church in a large town if possible."

Naofumi: "How much will it heal?"

Treatment Master: "To be honest... it's a fairly strong curse. Whether it can be truly cured... when it comes to the work of dragons..."

The truth is that I did it though. But to think the curse was so powerful that it could be considered the work of a dragon...

Naofumi: "Oh right. How much more medicine will be needed?"

Treatment Master: "This is all I can do for now. Saint-sama, please help the people who are suffering from the illness."

Naofumi: "Okay."

I left Raphtalia in the room with the Treatment master and head to the building where they gather the sick.

As expected of medicine made by a professional. The sickness that could not be cured with my treatment medicine was easily cured by this.

I felt relieved looking at the sick people breathing calmly in their sleep.

..... I want strength, but not from relying on that kind of shield. Saving someone from sickness is significant, but I still curse my weakness.

There may come a time where even Firo could get hurt. Thankfully, she was fine this time.

My head blanked in an instant when I thought she died.

I've thought this many times. This world is not a game.

Nobody will revive if they die.

I watch the graveyard behind the isolation facility deep in thought.

I was betrayed and swindled----But I want to protect the people who believe in me no matter what.

I returned to the Treatment room and spoke to Raphtalia who is wrapped in bandages.

Naofumi: "I'm sorry."

Raphtalia: "It's alright."

Naofumi: "But....."

Raphtalia: "I was afraid. Afraid that Naofumi-sama went somewhere far away."

Naofumi: "Eh?"

Raphtalia: "That power, it's trying to drag Naofumi-sama somewhere. That's what I feel. Therefore, this is a cheap price to pay if I was able to stop Naofumi-sama."

Raphtalia's laughing expression pierces my heart.

I must absolutely protect her. With determination, I swear not to lose to that shield.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, is your sickness cured?"

Raphtalia: "It should be alright for now....."

Naofumi: "Next time I administer medicine, stay close to me. It will serve as prevention."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Thus, we slept in the village that day.

We worked on the extermination of the epidemic as hard as possible on the next day.

I asked the treatment master if I could help make the medicine and the work was completed earlier than scheduled.

I wanted to learn, but I felt something inside me that was interfering.

People suffering from the illness disappeared and the village became peaceful again.

Raphtalia: "Where will we peddle next? Did you ask the treatment master on how to make medicine?"

Procuring holy water for Raphtalia is top-priority now, but I do want to learn how to make High Class medicine.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama? Won't the wave start soon?"

Eh!?

That reminds me.

What Raphtalia says returns me from my thoughts.

I hastily open the arrival prediction window.

There are only 3 and a half days left!

Naofumi: "This is bad! We only have a little over 3 days remaining!"

Preparations will be insufficient.

Naofumi: "Firo, let's hurry to the castle town!"

Firo: "Roger~"

Village Chief: "Ummm Saint-sama...this....."

I was presented a bag full of money by the village chief.

Village Chief: "Saint-sama this is the money you asked for. Please accept it."

Come to think of it, my real identity is still hidden.

Naofumi: "Yeah....."

I receive the bag of money and count how much is inside.

.....I put half in another bag and return it

Village Chief: "Eh?"

Naofumi: "It wasn't my power alone. This is for the outstanding treatment master who is in this village. Hand it to him."

Village Chief: "O-okay....."

Yup, it would have been really dangerous this time if that treatment master was not here.

Because just suppressing the illness is already my limit.

That person contributed just as much.

Naofumi: "See ya."

Village Chief: "Ah, thank you very much!"

The group of villagers saw us off together.

When these guys know my real identity, will they look at me in disgust?

It's a complicated feeling. I stow it away in the corner of my head, because there are preparations to be made.

I can't care about the condition of the carriage at a time like this!

We rushed to the castle town.

There was a rumour about a carriage that was roaring down the road with frightening speed after that day.

On the way.

Firo: "Master~ something is-"

Naofumi: "Hm?"

I come out of the carriage.

Wild Philorial A appears!

Wild Philorial B appears!

Wild Philorial C appears!

Wild Philorials: ""Gua!?"""

Firo looked at the Philorial with an astonished expression.

Philorial A, B and C looked at Firo with the same expression and ran away.

Naofumi: "What was that?"

Running away right when encountering.....

That is the behaviour pattern of rare monsters that have delicious experiences points and money.

Though, I can't expect a lot of experience from Philorials in such a place. Maybe they were just surprised to see a Philorial Queen and ran away.

Firo: "What an appetizing bird. Whenever we pass someone, they have one."

Naofumi: "They are from the same family as you."

I noted that Firo is licking her lips. Is there anything this fellow doesn't see as food?

It is scary that she is likely to perform cannibalism Firo: "Master, if we chase now we can still kill them~"

Naofumi: ".....Stop it."

It's still not too late now?

This fellow has no sense of tension at all.

That reminds me, I did not check our levels after the fight with the zombie dragon.

Me Lvl 38

Raphtalia Lvl 40 ★

Firo Lvl 40 ★

★..... Star?

Naofumi: "Hey, do you guys know of the star next to your levels?"

I have a bad feeling. What could it be?

Raphtalia: "No....."

Firo: "Firo has no idea."

Hmm..... Let's see, Help.

.....I don't understand it.

I can't find anything on the ★.

At long last, we arrived at the castle town.

Naofumi: "Let's go to the old man and get some weapons and armour to prepare for the wave."

After a long absence, the old man from the weapons shop just watches us with a hand on the middle of his forehead and seems to be lost in thought.

Old Man: "Hey lad, don't just appear so suddenly."

Naofumi: "Don't you know sudden events go hand in hand with business?"

Old Man: "Well, that's true. So, what's your budget?"

Naofumi: "Let's see."

I put my month's earnings on the counter in front of the old man. It's about four large bags of money.

Naofumi: "This is all the silver coins."

Old Man: "Count properly lad! How did you make such a killing!?"

Naofumi: "Hahaha, this is the result of peddling."

Old Man: "Seriously..... What a surprising hobby for you to have."

Naofumi: "It's not unfortunate."

Old Man: "Well, did you count how much there is?"

Naofumi: "Uhh..."

The contents of the money bags were counted by Raphtalia, the old man and me.

Old Man: "So, how did the missy get injured?"

The old man points at Raphtalia while counting money.

Raphtalia: "Uhh, earlier I received a powerful curse attack by a powerful demon."

I stop counting and looked at Raphtalia.

Old Man: "Ah yeah, curses are troublesome. Did you get any treatment?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, after this we will go buy some holy water at the church."

Old Man: "I see."

Why are you lying.....? Is it because it's a curse that I gave?

Phew.

Naofumi: "After buying equipment, can I request a carriage made of metal?"

Old Man: "Don't order anything from me, lad."

Naofumi: "You can't do it?"

Old Man: "Well..... I'm familiar with dealing with metal."

Though it may look like a lot, but there is surprisingly little after being converted from silver coins.

Old Man: "This is equivalent to 70 gold coins! Lad, your earnings are tremendous!"

Naofumi: "I am aware of my business talents."

Though I'm not sure if I actually possess such talents, I am conceited.

I feel like I have done a few things similar to merchants of death.

Naofumi: "Oh right, there is various equipment taken off of thieves."

I gave instructions to Firo who has been restless within the goods store to bring in the various armours from the carriage.

Naofumi: "This is for trade-ins."

Old Man: "Lad, this is too much."

Naofumi: "How much equipment can I get with only this much?"

Old Man: "Let's see..... The missy can get a new weapon and you can get some gauntlets."

The old man is rather impressive and I start to think.

Old Man: "I am thankful that you're favouring my shop, but go to another shop to trade-in."

Naofumi: "What do you mean?"

Old Man: "Recently, the other heroes haven't been seen, so you could go check out the other excellent shops."

Naofumi: "Hmmm....."

I haven't considered that. Because they have knowledge from games, the possibility of knowing where they can get better equipment than from the old man shop is quite high.

Let's assume that the best shop in this city is the old man's..... Are they somewhere in another country?

Naofumi: "Do you have any idea?"

Old Man: "There might be something in the neighbouring country."

Naofumi: "Your shop is good enough, I'd rather not waste time on speculations."

Old Man: "Lad....."

Naofumi: "Even the worst weapons and armours I've seen you make are quite good. Is that a skill?"

Old Man: "What are you saying? I was a disciple of a master craftsman in the east when I was young."

Naofumi: "Exactly. I'll be in your care because it's efficient."

Old Man: "Lad. I understand. I'll live up to your expectations!"

The old man left the counter and started browsing the wares in his own shop.

Old Man: "Let's see..... For the missy, a High class magic sword should be adequate. Needless to say, the Blood Clean coating will be applied after it's completed."

It cost 10 gold. Of course there were some trade-ins included in the 10 gold.

Old Man: "Next is magic silver armour that has a magic defence within an appropriate range."

Naofumi: "Magic Defence?"

Old Man: "The process of absorbing the magical power of the wielder to boost defence."

Naofumi: "I see."

I want to make Raphtalia's defence as high as it can because there is a possibility I could hurt Raphtalia.

The old man moves 10 pieces of gold again. It's quite expensive.

But.....

Naofumi: "Hey, isn't there better equipment that I can buy?"

Old Man: "The metal carriage and the missy's treatment will be quite expensive. Also, it is absurd to have equipment that doesn't balance with you."

Naofumi: "That makes sense."

Old Man: "This is also the limit for equipment around here for now."

Naofumi: "Ah, so that's why."

I'll take the old man's word for it if the equipment is good enough.

Old Man: "From here on out it needs to be custom-made. Come back later."

Naofumi: "Sorry for the trouble, but the wave comes in 3 days. Will it be done in time?"

Old Man: "I won't have enough time if I have to procure the materials."

.....that's what I figured.

Old Man: "I already have various materials, but it's not enough."

Naofumi: "Well..... Can you use the skin of a decaying dragon?"

Old Man: "That's not a problem, what are you going to do lad?"

Naofumi: "What am I going to do?"

Old Man: "I can lighten the heavy equipment because you prefer it, and I can make new equipment with any materials you bring."

Naofumi: "By the way, will the performance be good?"

Old Man: "It can be done easily, the durability will be good too."

Naofumi: "Hmm..... by the way, would the performance go up if you add bone to the armour? Similar to the armour of the savage tribes."

Old Man: "Ah, I was going to recommend that. Chimera and Dragon materials are amazing! It would be perfect to protect the core of the armour with dragon skin too."

The core of the armour was that souvenir from Firo and a certain dragon. It seems it will become some good armour.

Naofumi: "Then..... can I order it?"

Old Man: "Thanks for business, there will be extra fees for processing costs and material charges."

After saying so, the old man moves another 5 pieces of gold and takes the materials to the inner part of the counter.

Old Man: "I can put the bone armour onto what you already have equipped."

Naofumi: "Okay."

I go to the changing room to change and put the armour on the counter.

Firo: "Master is just like a villager."

Naofumi: "Shut up."

This bird has a foul mouth.

Firo: "Hey Hey, What about Firo?"

Naofumi: "You're getting a new carriage."

I made the arrangements with the old man for a metal carriage. It was quite costly.

It cost me 10 gold coins.

Well, there were some bonuses added in.

Firo: "Firo wants armour like Raphtalia Onee-san and Master~"

Naofumi: "No."

Firo: "I want it! I want it! I want it!"

I'm pretty frustrated by this bird's whining.

Old Man: "Don't be like that lad. I'll do you a favour and lend you the equipment for that little bird missy."

Naofumi: "You see....."

I tell him this fellow's offensive ability already surpasses Raphtalia and that's with her bare hands.

That is already sufficient.

Naofumi: "Is there anything?"

Old Man: "Hmm. Does the Bird missy usually fight in her Demon form?"

Naofumi: "Yeah."

Old Man: "Well then that's outside of my jurisdiction. It's not impossible to acquire equipment from demon shops though."

Naofumi: "Demon trader....."

I am reminded of that nasty smile. The gentleman in my imagination.

Old Man: "Do you need me to introduce you?"

Naofumi: "No, I know someone."

Should we go meet him?

Old Man: "Then..... Come back two days later for the equipment."

Naofumi: 'Okay. So..... Old man.'

Old Man: "What's up?"

Naofumi: "Do you know about the stars attached next to a Lvl?"

Old Man: "Oh? Did you get strong enough to Class-up?"

Naofumi: "Class up?"

Old Man: "The lad doesn't know? The class up is a growth limit breakthrough. When levels are raised to their limit, a class up can be done, after that power can rise even further."

What was that!?

In other words, it's a rite of passage for a job change in gaming terms.

Unless a Class up is performed, they can't get stronger?

Old Man: "Originally, if you are a knight loyal to the country or a magician adventurer, you can get a class up. But will you be granted one as a Hero?"

When I think about it, it was no wonder thief groups were so weak. The highest level is 40. Using the fact that unworthy adventurers and villagers cannot class up, power is managed.

The reason is that if the country does not deem you trustworthy, a class up is not granted.....

Old Man: "There are worries as to what direction to take during a class up..... But if you get a star, then all the possibilities are open."

Naofumi: ".....Where can I class up?"

Old Man: "It can be done in at the Hourglass of the Dragon's era."

You can do it in such a place? No wonder the management was so strict.

..... Then meeting the other heroes there, Was it because of Class up?

I wonder what their Levels are.

As expected, I feel irritated.

Naofumi: "Then I'm going to head out."

If it's possible, I should do it as quickly as I can.

We left the weapon shop and hurry to the Hourglass of the Dragon's era.

Because our carriage has reached its limit, we left it at the back of the weapon shop.

Firo is in human form.

Raphtalia: "What are we going to do?"

Naofumi: "Um....."

Every day, I feel that there is some kind of weird atmosphere in the inn.

It seems there were many people with birds similar to this fellow.

That would be the result.

Naofumi: "Now that I think about it, what exactly does class up expand?"

Raphtalia: "I want to Class up as per Naofumi-sama's request."

Naofumi: ".....Stop that. Raphtalia, you must decide your own possibility yourself."

In the games of old, the class change would let you choose between a light route and a dark route. The person in question has to make the choice themselves.

Naofumi: "When the wave is over and I return to my own world, you must live for yourself."

Raphtalia: "Eh..... Naofumi-sama will go back?"

Naofumi: "Yeah."

I have no attachments to this world either. There are people that I want to repay, but I will do that by saving the world.

I do not wish to remain in such an unpleasant world.

Raphtalia: "Can you take me with you?"

Naofumi: "Where?"

Where would you stay? If someone like Raptalia comes to my world, it would look strange.

Firo: "Firo wants to go too. Where are you going?"

Naofumi: "Firo is impossible....."

Firo: "Really?"

Naofumi: "Oh well. Firo, what class up do you want?"

Firo: "Firo wants to be able to spit poison~!"

Naofumi: "....."

I was at a loss for words. All I can muster is. What is up with this bird?

Was it that? Recently we've been fighting a lot of demons that had the ability to use poison, like that Bio Plant and Zombie dragon.

Naofumi: "You're already poisonous enough."

By that I mean your tongue.

Firo: "Really!?"

Firo exhales and checks her breath.

Firo: "It's not coming out?"

Naofumi: "That's not what I meant. Anyways, let's go."

As for us, we head to the Hourglass of the Dragon's era full of expectations.

Exit by a Kick, Again

We arrived at the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.

As usual, the facilities give off a solemn atmosphere.

Sister: "Hero of the Shield-sama right?"

Just like before the sister stares at me with a suspicious expression.

Naofumi: "Yeah....."

Sister: "What do you want this time?"

Naofumi: "I want to Class up."

Sister: "Then..... 15 gold per person."

15 gold!? No matter how you look at it, that's too expensive!

The sister's expression doesn't change but her eyes are smiling.

You want to make me look like a fool for not being able to pay?

Naofumi: "Just 15 gold."

I reluctantly reach for my bag of money and produce 30 gold coins.

The sister's expression changes and produces a document.

Sister: ".....It is prohibited for the Hero of the shield-sama."

Naofumi: "What did you say? What does that mean!"

Sister: "By the king's direct order, the Hero of the Shield is prohibited from getting a Class up."

That fucking king! I honestly want to kill him!

I especially need stats, and to top it off, that ridiculous Class up cost. Being turned down without even knowing about it.

At this rate it will be impossible to Level up!

Controlling any job changes without permission is just player control!

Naofumi: "Don't joke around!"

Sister: "That's the rules. In the first place, it is impossible for the Hero of the shield-sama....."

Naofumi: "Say that first!"

I burst into a fit of rage and knights start appearing from behind the reception.

Naofumi: "Tch! Fine! I get it!"

I stomp towards the Hourglass of the Dragon's era noisily.

Seriously, everything about this is unpleasant, especially this country!

Raphtalia: "But, what now?"

Raphtalia was troubled and muttered, this is certainly a big problem.

Firo: "Hey hey, what is that hour glass? Firo wants to see more!"

Naofumi: "Hold it."

While feeling unpleasant, I go take a look at the help section.

.....Class up was found.

Class up is a ceremony that expands the possibilities of members who become Hero companions.

Let's check the Hourglass of the Dragon's era.

It is recommended that I do it after a ★ appears.

There is no growth limit for a Hero.

Heroes have no growth limit?.....

Does that mean I can get past level 40?

But, this is still very unpleasant!

If Raphtalia cannot Class up, there will be problems with our attack power.

Raphtalia: "What should we do?....."

Naofumi: "Can't be helped, we'll do this later."

Fortunately, raising our levels was not scheduled until after this wave has passed, I'll think about it afterwards.

There is also the trump card of having Raphtalia become an adventurer and acquire a class up recommendation that way.

It can probably be done with more money. But, there is no time now. Searching for that would also be especially difficult.

That reminds me, the slave trader had slaves over Level 40. Wasn't I going to go there anyway to get a weapon for Firo?

Motoyasu: "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

What's that?

I turned around and see Motoyasu pointing at me.

Motoyasu: "You! What are you doing!"

Naofumi: "What? Don't apply some strange connection to me."

Motoyasu: "Are you trying to play dumb? I know. The owner of that fat bird is you."

Fat bird..... is he talking about Firo?

Naofumi: "Come to think of it, how's your crotch?"

Motoyasu: "It was almost crushed, Thanks to this fucking guy!"

Naofumi: "What.....!?"

It wasn't destroyed!? Don't joke around!

To be kicked by such power and still not lose its function?

Naofumi: "You haven't lived up to my expectations."

Motoyasu: "You bastard-"

Naofumi: "It's not me who did it! Why would your crotch be destroyed?"

I asked Raphtalia who looks amazed.

Oh right, Raphtalia was not there to witness this guy getting blown away.

Raphtalia: "Why are you looking at me with pity?"

Naofumi: "Because you missed a really refreshing moment?"

Raphtalia: "I don't need to know such a thing!"

Motoyasu: "Fine, hand over the fat bird! I'll kill him!"

Naofumi: "You want my bird? What even happened? You are the one who approached carelessly."

Motoyasu: "Are you feigning ignorance? I was kicked whenever that bird spotted me!"

Hm? What did he say?

Is it fate?

Naofumi: "What do you mean?"

Motoyasu: "I said, whenever we meet with your fat bird, it chases me to kick!"

I look at Firo.

Then Firo says.

Firo: "Yup. I kick him every time I see him."

Naofumi: "I see, I see, that's great."

Firo: "Ehehe!"

Raphtalia: "Why are you praising her!?"

I pat Firo's head.

I noticed that on Motoyasu's nice equipment, there is a crotch protector in the groin area.

That is hilarious! This guy has a trauma!

I burst out laughing.

Naofumi: "Ahahahaha!"

Motoyasu: "That's enough you bastard!"

Motoyasu's companions: "That's right! Motoyasu-sama, don't concern yourself with that unpleasant shield!"

What are you saying, you follower.

That fucking woman's face is red while denouncing me.

This is refreshing.

Raphtalia: "What a refreshing smile, I haven't seen Naofumi-sama smile like that before."

Motoyasu: "You-"

Motoyasu clenched his fist and grabbed my coat.

Firo: "Master~ Firo is hungry!"

The bird that cannot read the atmosphere asserted itself.

Motoyasu's gaze turns to her.

Pita.

Motoyasu stiffens when he makes eye contact with Firo.

.....What's the matter?

Motoyasu: "Deryaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

He takes a second look at me and throws a haymaker punch to my face, but I caught it.

Naofumi: "What was that? If you want to have a fight, use your spear."

Motoyasu: "Miss! Hurry up and run away! This guy is very dangerous!"

Motoyasu shouts in the direction of Firo, trying to look like a good person.

That's the fat bird you wanted to kill not long ago.

Oh right, she's in her human form now. Is it because she's pretty? That does seem like Motoyasu.

Firo: "Eh? Master is not dangerous, right~?"

Motoyasu: "That is your master!?"

Motoyasu's face is dyed with anger.

Motoyasu: "You have another slave again!"

Naofumi: "What's with you..... Do you have a problem because she's a woman?"

Motoyasu: "Wrong!"

I talk big.

Motoyasu: "Amazing..... This is the first time I've seen such an ideal woman....."

Naofumi: ".....Ha?"

Motoyasu: "I did not think a girl so similar to Flonne-chan would exist in the world!"

Who is that?

..... It's a game character.

That reminds me, Firo's appearance is that of a certain pure daughter angel who is from a game in my world.

Motoyasu: "I, what a moe angel....."

Naofumi: "Shut up! I do not want to know your sexual preferences!"

Motoyasu: "Different worlds are the best!"

Motoyasu's tension reaches its climax.

The moods of his followers are the opposite.

I don't see the human being that flew into a rage a while ago. However, I see Firo with a well-defined expression.

Motoyasu: "Miss, what is your name?"

Firo: "Ummm, It's Firo."

Naofumi: "Don't just answer honestly!"

Motoyasu takes Firo's hand affectionately.

Motoyasu: "This guy is probably working you like a coach horse. I will save you."

Firo: "Well, Firo doesn't pull the carriage like a horse."

You should just accept it. That's the kind of race she is.

Firo: "Firo pulled a heavy carriage every day for more than a month!"

Annoying, I don't see this ending well.

Motoyasu: "You bastard-----!"

Motoyasu is being noisy.

I don't have a lot of time. I want to leave already.

Motoyasu: "Release Firo-chan!"

Naofumi: "This again!?"

It didn't work for Raphtalia, so it's Firo this time?

Do you want to take away my subordinates so much?

Motoyasu shouts with blood thirst and turned his spear to me.

At that time.

Firo: "What are you doing to master!?"

Firo knits her eyebrows and asked.

Motoyasu: "Don't worry, Firo-chan. I will save you!"

You're not listening!

Completely in his own world.....

Naofumi: "Anyway, that fat bird you were looking for. That's Firo."

Motoyasu: "Naofumi! You bastard! To say such a thing to a girl!"

Naofumi: "It's you. You're the one who has been calling Firo that. You even said you wanted to kill her."

Motoyasu: "Haa?"

This guy looks at me like I'm stupid.

Though, I do call her a fat bird.

Naofumi: "Anyway, stop complai-"

Firo: "Firo will protect Master~!"

With a Bofun, Firo returns to her true from.

Motoyasu: "Eh? What?"

Firo raises her foot and kicks Motoyasu in the groin while he is dumbfounded.

Motoyasu: "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-"

I was able to see it. With a perplexed expression, Motoyasu flies over 10 meters while spinning.

Furthermore, the crotch protector was shattered.

Motoyasu: "Uge!"

Were they destroyed this time?

No, they were probably okay. There was a crotch protector.

Naofumi: "Now then, let's ignore the fool and move on."

Raphthalia's face is blue as her mouth leaks an "awawawa."

Still, his entourage is not trying to help him.

Well..... a lot of unpleasant feelings were blown away.

I must give Firo a reward.

Naofumi: "Alright, shall we go to the slave trader now?"

Firo returns to her human form with a frightened expression.

Firo: "Firo is going to be sold?"

Naofumi: "Don't worry, I'm not going to sell you, I'm going to buy you a reward."

It seems she has been faithfully following orders and whenever we come across Motoyasu, he is kicked, not to mention that blow just now.

This good behaviour must be rewarded.

Naofumi: "I shall buy the equipment you wanted."

Firo: "Yay! Firo also wants food too!"

Naofumi: "Yeah, definitely."

Firo: "Then, Firo wants food cooked by Master~"

Naofumi: "Very well. This will be special."

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Firo begins skipping happily.

Chapter 46: Exit by a Kick, Again

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Sister: "Hero of the Shield-sama right?"

Just like before the sister stares at me with a suspicious expression.

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(Tl note: <http://i.imgur.com/9wNrM5N.jpg> <- Flonne from Disgaea)

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Naofumi: "Shut up! I do not want to know your sexual preferences!"

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Firo: "Then, Firo wants food cooked by Master~"

Naofumi: "Very well. This will be special."

Firo: "Yaay~!"

Firo begins skipping happily.

Chapter 47: Welcome

Slave trader: "My my, if it isn't Hero-sama. Welcome."

Naofumi: "I certainly was not expecting this."

We show up at the Slave trader's after the run-in with Motoyasu.

Slave trader: "What business do you have today?"

Naofumi: "Putting that aside....."

I am quite concerned with how the slave trader is dressed.

Even his subordinates..... They are all wearing luxurious accessories that are shaped like wings.

Naofumi: "That wing design looks good."

Slave trader: "Thanks to Hero-sama. Yup."

Naofumi: "Ha?"

Slave trader: "These profits were due to the Hero-sama's peddling."

Naofumi: "What do you mean?"

I can think of several reasons, but none of them are too significant.

Slave trader: "First of all, is the infamous Philorial Queen. Many nobles with demon collections are trying to obtain one. Yup."

Ah, so the reason his reputation rose is because Firo was pulling the carriage. Well, she is certainly a rare demon. If someone wanted one, they would of course come to the slave trader and check.

And whenever a noble comes, he just points them to my direction while knowing that I will not sell Firo because of her rampage.

Slave trader: "So when they give up, they purchase various other demons. Yup."

Naofumi: "That's just like you."

At the moment, the condition to become a Philorial Queen is uncertain. Otherwise, there would be a lot more sold.

Will it become a queen if it's raised by a hero?

Two is not a good idea..... Firo alone is troublesome enough.

Slave trader: "Next, because Hero-sama's slaves are seen, there is a rumour that my shop's slaves are high quality, so I get some extra profits. Yup."

It's Raphtalia this time huh.....

Raphtalia is certainly a beauty with a great figure.

Once people know where she came from, they would give them credit.

Will everything I do raise the slave trader's reputation?

Slave trader: "So, what do you need this time? Another slave? Maybe your co-operation on Philorial experiments?"

The slave trader rubs his hands together happily.

Naofumi: "No, I came for demon dealer business this time."

Slave trader: "Then Philorial experiments it is."

Naofumi: "That's not it."

Are there only 2 options in this guy's head?

Slave trader: "So, what do you need?"

Naofumi: "Ah, I was wondering whether or not I could purchase equipment for Firo here."

Slave trader: "Equipment?..... That can be done."

The slave trader turned to observe Firo.

The slave trader hummed cheerfully as Firo ran and hid behind my back.

As expected, she is bad with him.

Slave trader: "Would a horseshoe shaped weapon suffice? There is also armour made for Philorials....."

Armour is probably impossible, it is unreasonable to tailor-make

something considering Firo's body size.

Naofumi: "Do you have anything for charging?"

Slave trader: "You could equip a helmet. To use when tackling."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

The horseshoes might work since she is not a horse.

Slave trader: "What about the claws?"

Naofumi: "Firo, what do you want?"

Firo: "Eh?"

Were you too scared of the slave trader to listen?

Naofumi: "You can get a helmet or have shoes attached to your feet."

Firo: "Umm..... When Firo transforms it will dig into my skin, No~"

Ah, is the threat from the dressmaker's still working?

It would be no problem in her demon form, but it would be very heavy for her in human form.

The horseshoe would dig into the foot too and the size of the armour might not be correct.

We head to the magic shop, it seems to be possible to add the string to metal plates, but it would be very expensive.

The defence would not increase that much either.

Slave trader: "How about detachable claws, yup."

Naofumi: "Firo, is that fine?"

Firo: "Yes."

Slave trader: "We need to measure the size so release her demon form please. Yup."

Naofumi: "Oh right."

Firo: "Okay~"

With a Bofun, Firo returns to her demon form and sticks her foot out.

A subordinate of the slave trader measure the size of Firo's foot.

Slave trader: "Hmm..... She is considerably larger than an average Philorial."

Naofumi: "Is there any you can prepare immediately?"

Slave trader: "I think we have one just barely her size. Are you all right with iron?"

I wonder what kind of offensive power I can expect.

Should I be looking for hardness? If it's sharp.....

Naofumi: "That's fine, I can afford to get this fellow something good."

Slave trader: "I understand. Iron with magical properties is the best I can prepare for now."

Naofumi: "By the way, how much is it?"

Slave trader: "Because of the help from Hero-sama, I will sell it to you for half the market price, which will be 5 gold coins."

Naofumi: "May I haggle further?"

Slave trader: "Hero-sama's greed is giving me the shivers. Fine, I'll compromise for 4 gold."

Naofumi: "Done. Also, throw in a good bridle."

Slave trader: "Sold!"

The slave trader's tension is high. Though he feels easy to deal with, I feel like I'm being used.

What scary business sense. This guy.

A big claw is brought out from the back of the tent.

The size of the metal claw seems to fit Firo's foot just right. That's good.

Naofumi: "This thing is huge."

Slave trader: "It's a claw meant for Wyverns. There is a bigger size too."

You're not even a Philorial anymore?

Firo: "Firo will wear this?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, it is your weapon."

Firo picks up the claw and equips it.

Firo: "It fits perfectly!"

Naofumi: "Seems like it."

All that's left is to connect the claw to the foot with a cord.

Firo raises her foot to confirm if the claw is actually attached.

Firo: "Feels strange~"

Naofumi: "This will make your offensive power even stronger than before, you'll get used to it."

Firo's attack power with her leg is still ridiculous. Having it increase even more.....

The scene where Firo kicked Motoyasu is replayed in my mind.

This time, it seems Firo's kick will rip it apart.

Naofumi: "Firo, next time you kick that spear guy, do not use the claw."

Firo: "Why not~?"

Naofumi: "Because the balls will be completely crushed."

Though imperfect, he is a Hero. I do not know what consequences there will be if I murder him. I feel it's a little late now.

That guy's reason to live is to become popular with woman.

For Motoyasu, being kicked in the groin by my subordinate would be very mortifying.

If that happened, who would be the one to inform that trash king?

Firo: "Hmm."

Firo concentrates really hard on the claw that we just bought.

Is she listening properly?

Oh well..... Whatever happens to Motoyasu doesn't concern me.

I gave the slave trader 4 gold coins.

Firo: "Firo doesn't need the armour after all~"

Do the nails not fit? Firo seems to think that the armour is unnecessary.

Well, if you don't want it then that's fine.

Naofumi: "Now then, next....."

Hmm, I'm sure there was other business.

I can't remember after watching Motoyasu get blown off.

Certainly Raphtalia and Firo..... Ah I remember.

Naofumi: "Hey, slave trader. Is it possible for you to provide Class up here?"

Slave trader: "Class up you say?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, because the trash king won't let my subordinates who reached level 40 class up, I am having a little trouble. I remember seeing some slaves here above level 40."

I tell the slave trader my request and he puts his hand on his chin to think.

Slave trader: "Hero-sama, I regret to inform you that I cannot help with that. I do not have a letter of introduction."

Naofumi: "I see....."

Did this guy Class up from the power of a slave trader?

Slave trader: "If you obtain enough trust with neighbouring countries, you can use their Hourglass of the Dragon's Era to perform Class Up."

Naofumi: "What?"

Wait a minute, this isn't the only country with a Hourglass of the Dragon's Era?

Naofumi: "They are also in other countries?"

Slave trader: "Yes, though it might take you time to gain their trust....."

Time is very precious right now and I cannot waste it.

Will the Hero of the Shield have a bad reputation in the neighboring countries? This might be difficult.

Slave trader: "You can do it at the mercenary's country ZerutoBuru, the Demi-human country Silt Welt, and ShirudoFuriden is also available. Yup."

Naofumi: "There's that many?"

Slave trader: "Yes, for Hero-sama, I would recommend Silt Welt or ShirudoFuriden. You have a free pass there."

Naofumi: "Hmm..... How long would it take me to get there?"

Slave trader: "Let's see, by carriage it would be one month, and two weeks by boat."

The slave trader brought out a map and taught me the road.

Certainly, it is quite far from Melromarc.

It would take Firo a little over two weeks to arrive. Though, if we don't push it, 3 weeks would be the case.

Two weeks on a ship sounds good, but I would not be able to do anything during that.

Slave trader: "If there was a wyvern around here, Hero-sama would be able to get there very quickly."

Naofumi: "It is far....."

However, it would be important to Class Up because of our situation.

It shouldn't be that bad if I get new materials and monsters for my shield to absorb.

There is no meaning to stay here any longer as Raphtalia and Firo cannot improve. Should we just go to the country of Demi-humans?

Naofumi: "I suppose we'll go when the wave is over."

Seriously, that trash king is devoting so much passion into annoying me.

Naofumi: "I am indebted to you."

Slave trader: "If that's what you think then by all means-"

Naofumi: "I refuse. Oh right. Do you sell humans here?"

I was wondering if it would be better to sell thieves here instead of killing them.

Slave trader: "Humans are impossible in this country. If you look deeper, there are people who will buy, but there is risk and quality to watch for."

Indeed, so Demi-humans are fine in this country. I guess this is a country of human supremacy.

Naofumi: "Well then, see you."

Thus, we left the slave trader's tent. Firo returns to her human form and ties her claws with a cord to carry.

However, Raphtalia was quiet all the while during the conversation with the slave trader.

Well, it is admirable that she didn't intervene in a business talk and make it awkward.

Naofumi: "It's your turn, Raphtalia."

Raphtalia: "For?"

Naofumi: "Holy water. I'm sure it's sold at a church."

Raphtalia: "Ah, yeah."

Naofumi: "You're a girl, Raphtalia, these black bruises would be bad."

Raphtalia: "Well..... If Naofumi-sama is worried."

Raphtalia mutters bashfully.

Naofumi: "No, I don't mind them. It's because I caused them."

Raphtalia: "So that's what you mean..... It's nothing."

I don't understand Raphtalia sometimes.

Well, either way it's decided.

Chapter 48: Accusations of Identity Fraud

We arrived at an outstanding church within the castle town.

Sister: "He-Hero of the Shield!?"

I was greeted by an extremely bitter face.

Just how much do you reject me to show such a face?

As I expected, due to the rape accusation scandal will I be refused entry to the church?

Priest: "Do not be alarmed."

The priest from the church came and scolded the sister who scowled at us.

..... Something feels off, but there is nothing I can do about it.

Priest: "What do you need from our church?"

Naofumi: "Ah, my companion received a strong curse, so I would like to purchase strong holy water."

This guy did not openly antagonise me, so let's stay neutral.

A price list is hanging from the wall.

Priest: "Then, please give an offering."

Are you asking for an offering because I am supposed to know the price from the price tag?

Naofumi: "How much is it?"

Priest: "The effect from the cheapest to strongest holy water is 5 silver, 10 silver, 50 silver, and 1 gold coin."

Hmm..... It seems that they are not overcharging.

I was expecting them to add sanctions, but.....

Naofumi: "It doesn't seem like a good idea to negotiate for discounts in front of God, so I'll take the strongest holy water you have for 1 gold."

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, you shouldn't get such an expensive thing

just for me."

Naofumi: "It's fine. I already said so before. I cherish you. Compared to Raphtalia, one gold coin is nothing."

Raphtalia: "T-thank you very much!"

I give the gold coin to the priest while Raphtalia is thanking him.

Priest: "Understood."

The priest instructed the sister to bring a bottle of holy water.

.....I check the quality of it with the Judge Skill.

Low grade holy water

Quality: Bad

I glare at the priest who makes a confused face.

The priest then checks the holy water and his expression changes.

Priest: "Why did you bring something of so low quality?"

Sister: "But he is....."

Priest: "God is merciful. Repent for your barbaric act of satisfying your own sense of justice right now."

Sister: "I-I am sorry!"

Priest: "I apologize. Our church has been rude."

Naofumi: "I won't complain if you give me my money's worth."

Priest: "I appreciate your benevolence."

The priest personally went to get the holy water.

I check the holy water again.

Holy Water of Curse Removal. Quality: High Quality

Naofumi: "Well, this is what we came for."

I receive the bottle of holy water.

Firo: "Is that water delicious? Give Firo some too!"

Naofumi: "This is not for drinking. This is Raphtalia's medicine. Is there something wrong with you that require it too?"

Firo: "Yes. Firo is always energetic!"

Naofumi: "Then it is not necessary."

Firo: "Huh~?"

I turned to the priest while Firo has a question mark floating above her head.

Naofumi: "I am grateful. Later, please say the same to that sister at the Hourglass of the Dragon's era. That person tried to make a fool of me."

Priest: "I understand. They are shameful displays unworthy of a person of faith."

Naofumi: ".....I see. Well, Good-bye"

Priest: "Thank the guidance of God."

I feel that the priest is a pretty good person.

This country would be a better place if there are more people like him.

I left the church with that kind of impression.

Itsuki: "Ah! There you are!"

For some reason, Itsuki, Ren, and their followers run up to us after we left the church.

What do these guys want?

Everyone is gathering in the castle town. What kind of situation is this?

This time, Itsuki isn't wearing low quality equipment. He is wearing all high quality equipment.

Itsuki is looking at me with displeasure and speaks first.

Itsuki: "You thief! You stole the achievements and rewards of my work!"

Naofumi: "What!?"

Why would I steal Itsuki's reward?

Ren: "Me too. The request that was meant for me was taken by you."

Ren is also denouncing me.

I don't know what they are talking about. Then I remember that plagued village that I helped may have requested help from them.

Naofumi: "I may have taken Ren's job, but I don't know about Itsuki."

Itsuki: "Are you playing dumb?"

Naofumi: "I just said I don't know."

Ren: "Wait wait. Even if Naofumi does not confess, I want to talk first."

Naofumi: "Don't talk as if I am a criminal."

Firo: "Did master do something?"

Naofumi: "I did not do anything! At least nothing that I remember!"

While soothing Raphtalia and Firo, I glare at Itsuki and Ren.

Naofumi: "Anyway, explain the situation."

Itsuki: "Then I'll start."

Itsuki started explaining his circumstances to me.

It seems Itsuki received a request to investigate and if necessary, exterminate the feudal lords causing problems in the northern area. The fellow dressed in armour that stood out was his companion and went to receive the reward from the guild that requested his help.

However, it was said that the reward of the request was already paid and Itsuki concluded that the only person to do something like that was me.

Naofumi: "You know, Shogun-sama..... While you are hiding in the shadows and defeating evil, never revealing your true nature, people won't know who did what. I know revealing your hero status is your hobby, but there are many rumours going around."

Itsuki: "Sho-Shogun!? Wh-What are you talking about!?"

Naofumi: "Placing a sword on your waist and pretending to be an

adventurer. Shogun-sama."

Itsuki seems to remember and starts shouting at me. Yup, that's the attitude toward requests that is giving Itsuki a problem in the first place.

No one will identify you as the Hero of the Bow with that kind of appearance.

Because of that, your recognition by the country has become either the Hero of the Sword's or Hero of the Spear's.

Why the hell am I actually evaluating something like this? It's meaningless.

Being a secretive hero judging evil is cool, but it is not recognized by the world. While I am still a university student, I understand that appearances are necessary for society to acknowledge you.

If somebody wants to take Itsuki's recognition for his job, all he has to do is announce he is the one who did it.

I mean, that kind of hero will exterminate evil because he wants to, not for money or fame.

.....It's a painful topic. In the sense of being a Saint.

Naofumi: "Did you resolve the request as the Hero of the Bow? It is only in the town where the tax is high that I heard it was you. And at that time it was because I was there."

Itsuki: "Because I was keeping it a secret."

Naofumi: "Then, to confirm. Is the Adventurer with the bow in the Resistance of the North Country you?"

Itsuki: "Yes that was me! I subjugated the tyrant king with the Resistance."

Naofumi: "..... Do you know what happened to the country after that?"

Itsuki: "The bad king was overthrown, it should be prospering."

Naofumi: "No it's not! They have become so starved that they have to smuggle food by bartering!"

Itsuki: "No way! Why!?"

Naofumi: "You know, the king may have been bad, but the whole country was originally going through a famine. As for the country, all that changed was its head."

Itsuki: "That has nothing to do with me. Please do not shift the problem!"

Sigh..... Irresponsible..... Worry about it a little.

Naofumi: "Then let's reset the story. Did your subordinate go get the reward? Can your subordinate explain the situation?"

Itsuki: "Yes he did! Explain! Explain it!"

Naofumi: "The guild? Is there anything that proves your subordinate isn't the one that accepted the reward?"

Itsuki: "That.....There's a deed. I showed a deed with the king's direct seal stamped on it."

Itsuki declares with a face full of conviction.

What are you saying?

Itsuki: "It is a deed made with special techniques! It is impossible to counterfeit easily."

Naofumi: "Then there is no way for me to get it."

Itsuki: "!"

It seems something clicked in Itsuki's head.

Itsuki: "Th-Then the weapon!"

Are you that desperate for an excuse?..... It seems you want to pin it on me no matter what.

Itsuki: "It is a Hero only privilege to be able to change the form of your weapon. You changed your shield to look similar to a bow, and somehow forged another deed."

Naofumi: "Is that so? Well, all that is possible in this world."

Itsuki: "Yes that's it, do you have any evidence to prove otherwise?"

Naofumi: "Firo."

Firo: "What's up?"

Naofumi: "Return to your true form."

Firo: "Ok."

Firo changed to her true form.

At that time, Firo's one piece disappears and what's left of it becomes the collar. I point at the collar.

Itsuki: "What!?"

Naofumi: "Do you understand? This is a world where something like that can be made. There may be a tool which changes shape into a bow. And it is possible for other heroes besides me."

Itsuki: "B-But-"

Ren: "Give it up Itsuki, with the present conditions and lack of evidence, we cannot conclude that Naofumi is the criminal."

Ren stepped in-front of Itsuki before he tried to accuse me again.

Ren: "In the first place, did you ask the appearance of the fellow who took your achievement?"

Itsuki: "Umm.....that....."

Itsuki ambiguously tried to answer Ren's question.

Ren: "Then give it up. Make yourself known as a hero more. Next is me."

Naofumi: "Is this the matter of the epidemic in the east?"

Ren: "If you understand then this will be quick. Why did you steal my request?"

Naofumi: "Because I was in the area. Did you know? The corpse of the dragon you defeated was causing the plague."

Ren: "What!?"

Ren was at a loss for words and just stood there.

He didn't know? I thought he was a more cold-hearted person.

Naofumi: "A lot of people were dying. There was a brand-new graveyard behind the storage facility. There would have been even more if I wasn't there."

Ren: "No way....."

With tottering steps, Ren tried to head east.

Naofumi: "Wait, you don't have time to go now. The wave is soon."

Ren: "But, this is my responsibility-"

Naofumi: "I already removed the corpse of the dragon. The locals and the Treatment Master took care of the plague. I did steal your request though."

Ren: "Is that so.....Well, it can't be helped."

Ren's complexion is pale.

Itsuki: "You believe that!?"

Itsuki calls out to Ren with a perplexed expression.

Ren: "He has no reason to lie. Besides, the request was cancelled because it was solved. That means it is not wrong."

Naofumi: "I was surprised when the corpse became a Zombie Dragon. Raphtalia received the curse at that time when fighting it."

I did not lie. But, it was my fault.

Ren: "Oh, is that why you came out of the church?"

Ren looked at Raphtalia and saw the bandages as his answer.

Ren: "I hope it heals quickly."

.....This is unexpected. I thought Ren was a cold-blooded guy, but he seems to be weak to problems he caused himself.

They say that weakness is evil though.

Naofumi: "Why did you leave the dragon's corpse there?"

Ren: "Because..... My companion wanted to give the materials to the other adventurers."

Come to think of it, the village did say they were raking it in.

Ren: "I left it to the adventurers and the village. But....."

Naofumi: "Next time, make sure to dispose of the corpse neatly. Corpses will rot. There is danger of causing sickness when rotting. Disposing of entrails and meat are the highest priority."

Ren: "Yeah....."

This is somewhat anti-climactic.

Still, I said nothing about the village.

To think that it was their own fault..... Well, this was the consequence of their own deeds.

Itsuki: "I do not believe it."

Itsuki is more persistent than Ren.

Itsuki: "I will absolutely bring evidence."

Naofumi: "Sure, bring it. However, do not fabricate it. Were you saying that you found the criminal as the Hero of the Shield? Don't interrogate too closely. You know my rumours."

Itsuki: ".....What do you mean?"

Naofumi: "Because after a thief attacked me and I retaliated, he went to a town and declared that I robbed him."

Itsuki: "Th-That....."

Naofumi: "It's the same for you. Shogun-sama, I hope you think about it carefully."

Itsuki seems to feel pity for me from that rumour, his glance makes me feel sick. Why are you looking at me with such eyes?

Itsuki: "For now, let's put this matter on hold."

Naofumi: "I am fine with that, I am not a criminal."

Seriously, I hate false accusations!

Don't just attribute anything bad to me!

Itsuki left in an irritating manner and Ren seemed to be unsettled as he left.

Naofumi: "Oh well, should we go?"

Today was an unlucky day. There were various experiences.

After all, this castle town is under the jurisdiction of that trash king, so there is no way they won't be biased.

Let's quickly return to the hotel.

Chapter 49: Volunteers

The day was over, so we decided to go to a hotel and give Raphtalia treatment.

We re-dressed Raphtalia's wounds by soaking the bandages in the holy water I bought.

After the bandages had been applied, black smoke started rising from the wound.

Raphtalia: "U.....Ku....."

Naofumi: "Are you okay?"

Raphtalia: "Y-yes. There's a feeling of stiffness leaving the body and it's also quite itchy."

Naofumi: "I see....."

I want to heal her as fast as possible, because I injured her.

The black bruise seems to have gotten lighter.

Raphtalia: "The place Naofumi-sama wounded is healing quickly."

Naofumi: "That's good."

I want you to recover as soon as possible.



Firo: "Ah, Raphtalia Onee-chan is so sly, stop philandering with master."

Although Firo says that, she was clinging to me throughout the treatment.

Raphtalia: "I am not flirting!"

Naofumi: "That's right, all I'm doing is treating Raphtalia's wounds."

Raphtalia and I are philandering..... what's with that outdated slang? Oh well. Where did you learn something like that? Raphtalia and I aren't in that kind of relationship.

Firo: "Raphtalia Onee-chan's back is black."

Raphtalia: "Please don't say such things."

These two get along quite well.

Naofumi: "Well, the wave is coming soon, so just relax."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Raphtalia: "That's right. We have been quite busy recently, so relaxing occasionally is not bad."

Naofumi: "Yeah."

Firo: "Master, when are you going to make food?"

Naofumi: "Let's see..... How about tomorrow?"

Firo: "Yaay~!"

In this way, while giving Raphtalia treatment, we slept at the inn.

The next day.

The equipment I asked the old man to make hasn't been finished yet.

There's nothing particularly important to do, though it might be a good idea to show up at the magic shop or the pharmacy.

Or should I go to the dressmaking shop and look?

Naofumi: "Now then, what should we do today?"

Raphtalia: "Let's see....."

Firo: "Food!"

Naofumi: "Yes, Yes. I know."

As for recovery medicine, I have already prepared a lot in between the waves.....

Since Raphtalia and Firo have already hit their Level limit, only I need to get levels. It might be a waste, but it would be fine to take a rest for a while. Raphtalia's wounds aren't completely healed either.

Naofumi: "Should I go get more holy water?"

Raphtalia: "Eh? There's still some left."

Naofumi: "Is this enough for a complete recovery?"

Although the blackness has faded a bit, it is still far from a complete recovery. What is left leaves me uneasy.

The effect won't be as potent if holy water is not changed every day. At this rate, there will still be some damage left during the wave.

Naofumi: "I sincerely apologize."

Raphtalia: "It is a wound I got myself. Don't worry about it."

Naofumi: "Okay."

Naofumi: "Then, let's go to the pharmacy shop first. We can get food after."

Firo: "Yeah!"

Raphtalia and Firo nodded, so we left our baggage at the inn and headed out.

When we got to the pharmacy, the storekeeper's attitude did not change as he welcomed me.

Pharmacy SK: "It's been a while."

I answer the storekeeper's first question.

Naofumi: "Ah, the intermediate recipe book was received and put to good use."

Pharmacy SK: "I see....."

Looking at the medicine handled, I am not up to par yet.

Pharmacy SK: "That reminds me, my old friend the accessory merchant seems be your acquaintance."

Naofumi: "Ha?"

I was surprised at the connection with an unexpected person.

Pharmacy SK: "How did you get so friendly with that miser? He praised you highly."

Naofumi: "You two are acquainted?"

Pharmacy SK: "We knew each other since the old days. That guy, he had an aptitude for using fragrant medical herbs to make treatment medicine."

Back then, that guy knew I was making middle class treatment medicine from smell alone!?

Accessory merchant, what kind of person are you? I cannot fathom what else he might be hiding.....

Pharmacy SK: "Hm..... Are you still peddling?"

The storekeeper seems to have heard about me peddling from an acquaintance in Forest village.

Naofumi: "That guy was riding with us in the carriage when a thief that was after him appeared."

Pharmacy SK: "I don't think that guy would have been very happy about it."

I don't understand. Accessory merchant, are you some kind of celebrity?

Naofumi: "Ah, where was I? Oh right, after we captured the thief, I stripped him of all his possessions and confiscated everything from his hideout."

The storekeeper was silent, put his hand on his forehead, and nodded.

Pharmacy SK: "That certainly does seem like you. Indeed, that fellow is also capable of something like that."

Naofumi: "Afterwards, he taught me a lot of things."

Pharmacy SK: "Oh, he was praising you as a quick learner and said you were his successor in commercial spirit."

Naofumi: "Please leave me alone."

I went peddling for equipment fee. The true purpose was not for money.

Pharmacy SK: "So, what do you need today?"

Naofumi: "Ah, do you have any High Class Recipes to sell?"

The storekeeper stops mixing.

Pharmacy SK: ".....That's fast, although I think you are not ready yet."

Naofumi: "Yeah, there is also medicine that is not on a recipe that I can make too."

Strong Acid water, Magical power water and Soul Medicine water can't be made yet. There has been no need for these yet, but it is possible to acquire the rare materials through a distribution route learnt from the accessory merchant.

Naofumi: "But..... I was not able to save people with the medicine I made. Fortunately, the Treatment Master made Higher Class medicine. I felt inadequate in terms of ability."

The store keeper is convinced with my reply and nods.

Pharmacy SK: "I see..... But it is still too early for a High Class recipe."

Naofumi: "Is it that difficult.....?"

Pharmacy SK: "There are a lot of applications to medicine in Middle class recipes. Besides, there are other things you can make without a recipe."

Is it the materials necessary for compounding? Certainly, it can't be

that bad.....

Pharmacy SK: "I can still sell a High Recipe book though, but it will be expensive."

Naofumi: "How much?"

Pharmacy SK: "It's 500 silver coins. It cannot be lowered any further."

I understand that I am getting a good deal.

Learning about medicine, I'm sure there are organizations and companies that are willing to teach, I can also imagine guilds trading information.

But if I learn from somewhere, there will be pressure to help them. However, a recipe book will save me the trouble.

Naofumi: "I'll take it."

I obediently hand over 500 silver.

Pharmacy SK: "Hmm.....next is this."

I received a book called [Poisonous plants and Poison recipes].

I am slow but I am able to read the letters of this world, to some extent.

Naofumi: "Recipes for poison?"

Pharmacy: "It is impossible to avoid it when trying to be familiar with medicine. Those are intermediate recipes."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

I skim through it. It contains a simple anesthesia and other such drugs. This looks difficult, but it won't hurt to learn it. Beside, learning the High Class recipes are out of my reach at the moment Naofumi: "Thanks. Do you have beginner class recipes such as the heal pill and regular medicine?"

The storekeeper of the pharmacy almost did a splendid fall.

Pharmacy SK: ".....You were making middle class medicine without even knowing the fundamentals?"

Naofumi: "I saw what you were making and remembered."

Pharmacy SK: "Are you a boy from a temple who can't read.....?"

Those words are a proverb from Japan. The shield is probably translating the corresponding phrase from this world.

The shop keeper sighs and fluently writes something onto parchment.

Pharmacy SK: "I wrote the basics of the beginner's class on this. Remember it."

Naofumi: "Yeah."

When we left, Firo was already outside because she disliked the smell from the medicine and Raphtalia was looking at medical herbs.

Soldiers: "Hero of the Shield-sama!"

I hear an unfamiliar voice after leaving the pharmacy.

There were five 14 year old kids dressed as soldiers who were out of breath.

I start escaping at once. Raphtalia and Firo also start running. There are too many ideas in my mind.

Solder A: "Please wait! We are not here to capture you! Please Wait!"

Naofumi: "Then what do you want?"

Soldier A: "I only want to talk for a little!"

.....Doubtful.....Let's stop for now.

If it is a lie, should I let Firo rampage?

Soldier A: "Haa.....Haa..... At last, I can finally meet you."

The boy's shoulders are heaving while he gasps for breath.

Naofumi: "What do you want with me?"

Soldier A: "Umm. Can you please let me go with you during the waves.....?"

Naofumi: "Come again?"

What are you saying? I look at the boy with a puzzled expression.

Soldier A: "We are junior soldiers who were impressed with the fighting method of the Hero of the Shield-sama during the earlier wave."

The boy's story is like this.

During the previous wave, the low rank soldiers were impressed by the appearance of Raphtalia and I, who were the only ones to stay behind and protect Forest Village.

It seems the Knight's Order was complimenting me after the wave, seems like there were new rumours spreading about me while I was away.

Soldier A: "During town patrol, I heard that the Hero of the shield was here in town so I came over to have this conversation."

Naofumi: "Really....."

Soldier A: "Our duty is to fight against the wave, but our top priority is to prevent damage done to the people."

That's a noble thought. Though you should be telling the other heroes that.

Soldier A: "Therefore, please let us participate together with Hero-sama during the wave."

Naofumi: "I do not particularly want to fight against the wave, so can't we just fight separately?"

There is a backside to this proposal. Perhaps, with soldiers and knights more active in fighting the wave, security would be better. Their position will also rise due to actively participating as a companion of a hero.

However, the Hero would also have to fight in the wave. There is status magic that requires companions. Perhaps, I can test this during one of the waves.

It would probably be a good idea to use this and establish a party to fight the wave. If anything, it may be something like offensive and defensive battles with guilds in a net game.

The enemies are not human, but mistakes can be made. It would be extremely rash to fight alone against such a large amount of demons.

A Hero is probably carrying the duty of defeating the boss class demons because they are the aces..... But the inhabitants of this world should be able to deal with the small fries.

The last wave proves it. Because the wave spawned near the Forest village which was close to the castle town, the knights were able to rush there, but what about this time?

This country is big. It would be catastrophic if the wave appeared somewhere far-off. Should that happen, the damage could not be suppressed with such a small group of people.

Well, a standard strategy in fighting against the wave is the proposal I gave the boy; I want to hear his answer.

Did he come to me because there would be little competition compared to the other heroes?

Soldier A: "We want to protect the nation along with Hero of the Shield-sama."

On the surface I can say anything.

Naofumi: "Are you aiming for promotions?"

Soldier A: "No, this is different."

The boy shakes his head and answers immediately. I beckon another boy who looks like a magician to me.

The robe he was wearing wasn't purple like the magic shop, but a cheap yellow colour.

They lined up in-front of me and bowed.

Soldier B: "I.....am a native from Forest Village. My family was helped by Hero of the shield-sama before.....Therefore I want to help, even if only a little."

Naofumi: "Aah, I see."

This fellow wants to repay the kindness of helping his family?

Soldier A: "As Hero-sama says, there are certainly people who want promotions. But, I want to help Hero of the Shield-sama."

Naofumi: "I see, well I was just curious..... Hm?"

Soldier B: "Umm.....Hero-sama."

The boy in the wizard clothes looks up, pulls up his robe, and gives me a quill pen.

Soldier B: ".....Please sign."

There might be a catch. Do I write Motoyasu in Japanese?

Hm?

When I look closely, this child is a Demi-human.

Even in this country of human supremacy, when it comes to soldiers, there is room for Demi-humans.

Comparing his age and the cheap costume with the wizards and knights, he should be at a low level.

I silently write my signature on his robe according to the wish of the boy while preparing for any magic. There are no strange feelings or magic effects after I signed.

Well, it does not mean that nothing will happen later. I'll deal with it later if something does happen.

The boy with the wizard clothes smiles happily with a slightly red face.

What is this? It is itchy.

Soldier A: "This fellow is a fan of Hero of the Shield-sama. From a long time ago, he heard traditions of heroes from different countries and wanted to meet the Hero of the Shield."

Naofumi: "Wow....."

This party seems to extremely trust us and want to help. This boy is not talking, but people from the village of Toka who were saved during

peddling gathered with the same thought.

Well, should I try it?

I turn to the boy captain in front and muttered the party formation magic.

As for the conditions of the party, the party leader is me followed by Raptalia and then Firo.

Under that, the captain of the squad was given authority.

As for this party, my authority takes precedence. In other words, it is possible to steal all the experience points.

Soldier A: "This is....."

Naofumi: "You don't know?"

Soldier A: "Nope."

Naofumi: "If you are not in the party, go ask that fellow, and go gather any other people who want to participate. However, do not misunderstand. If you try to use me, or something impolite is done, I am dismissing you all immediately."

Soldier A: "Yes! Thank you very much!"

The two saluted me and left together.

I think that even in this country, I can trust a little.

It was only a moment where I felt that.

Naturally, as I said, if anything happens, I will not be lenient.

Chapter 50: Before the Storm

Old Man: "Lad, your armour is not ready yet. If you are here to use the kitchen, I would like to ask you to refrain."

Naofumi: "Why? I thought you gave me permission a while ago."

Old Man: "If you want to use my kitchen, some compensation is required."

After separating from the child soldiers, we stopped by the market to purchase large quantities of food.

Then we proceed to impose on our handy equipment store acquaintance and start cooking up a storm.

Is this food not my sincerity and gratitude for equipment store for providing cheap weapon and armour?

Firo: "Food! Food!"

For a while now, Firo has been consuming the roast meat and skewers that I have been making.

Old Man: "This smells great! Everyone who entered the shop was tempted by the smell. I went and checked when they left and they all went to the market to buy food."

Raphtalia brings the old man some food while he is making my armour at the counter.

Old Man: "Furthermore, some idiot stole some food from the dish the missy brought me. How did you produce such a taste?! There's been a crazy commotion since a while ago."

Naofumi: "Just kick the guy who stole food out."

Old Man: "The guy who stole food was generous and bought a weapon. Lad, with you here my sales record for the month is going through the roof."

Naofumi: "That's good. Take it as my thanks to you."

Old Man: "Alright. Not! This isn't some restaurant, it's an equipment store!"

For an equipment shop, you sure have a lot of additional pots and quite a big pan.

Thanks to that, I am borrowing a cauldron to make this world's unique curry.

Strangers: "....."

An aunt from the neighbourhood peeks through the ventilation window, along with several other adventurer-like guys.

I close the ventilation window with a bang.

The smell drifts to the front of the equipment shop.

Old Man: "Lad!"

I heard the old man's shout.

Seriously.....

After the curry was completed, we were evicted from the old man's kitchen and thus end our cooking session for Firo.

Firo still seems dissatisfied and wants to eat more. There are only half of the contents in the pot left.

Due to the pot left behind, the equipment shop later had a rumour about it having absurdly delicious food, but that is a story for later.

Firo: "Master, Firo wants to eat more food~"

I bought some skewers for Firo who inflated her cheeks with a dissatisfied expression while wandering the town for cheap food.

Naofumi: "Hmm, should we just go make something by the riverside?"

Firo: "Meat again?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, you're getting tired of it?"

Firo: "I will not get tired of anything Master makes~"

Naofumi: "Sure, sure."

We head back to the equipment shop to borrow an iron plate, which Firo carried. Well, we will probably become familiar with this place since we will barbecue here in the future too.

I buy the proper materials and start barbecuing by the riverbank.

Firo is concerned about insufficient meat so she went to the forest to hoard Usapirus.

We had to barbecue for a while until Firo was satisfied and started discussing about what to do next.

Raphtalia: "This is the first time we've taken it easy."

Naofumi: "Now that you bring it up, yeah it is."

Every day in this abnormal world has been a battle, and now looking up to the blue sky gives off a very peaceful feeling.

Makes one forget about the wave of disaster that is only a few days away.

Unexpectedly, Raphtalia plays with the ball that I purchased for her a while ago.

Naofumi: "Isn't that..... the ball that I bought for you?"

Raphtalia smiles when I point at the ball.

Raphtalia: "So you remember."

I thought she lost it a while ago. To think she still had it...

Raphtalia: "This is the first thing that Naofumi-sama gave me."

Naofumi: "You were looking at it so wistfully that anyone would have bought it."

Raphtalia: "I don't think so."

Firo: "Na?"

After Firo cleaned up the rest of the barbecue, she turned around.

Firo: "Onee-chan, what are you talking about?"

Raphtalia: "It's just something that happened before Firo was born."

Firo: "Hmm....."

I watch the ball bouncing around.

It looks worn out and some parts are torn. Perhaps Raphtalia was playing with the ball while I wasn't looking.

Naofumi: "Do you want me to buy you a new one?"

It's not an expensive item. If playing with balls is Raphtalia's hobby, then for the sake of her relaxation, I would buy more.

Raphtalia: "No, that is not necessary because this is my memento."

Naofumi: "I don't get it, but....."

If she wants to treat it as a cherished memory then I will not question it.

Naofumi: "Do you want to play together?"

Raphtalia: "Eh!?"

Raphtalia look at me in shock.

Naofumi: "What's wrong?"

Raphtalia: "No..... I just didn't think Naofumi-sama was someone who would want to play with balls."

Naofumi: "Well..... It is unavoidable I would be seen someone who thinks like that. Though, today would be a good day to take it easy and play."

Can we play volleyball with only the two of us? Well, there is always passing the ball back and forth without dropping it.

The ball is thrown at me and I raise my hands to return it to Raphtalia.

This is unexpectedly difficult..... Back then, I barely ever played beach volleyball.

Firo: "Master and Raphtalia Onee-chan are playing! Firo wants to play too!"

The bird finished her meal and started making a commotion while we

were tossing the ball back and forth.

Naofumi: "If you want to play make sure to control your power and not destroy the ball."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Raphtalia: "Fufufu."

Raphtalia tosses the ball very happily.

Even though her body is grown up, she is still a child.

Naofumi: "When the wave is over, I'm thinking of going to another country to Class up."

Raphtalia: "Okay. I will follow you everywhere."

Firo: "Firo too~"

The ball flies from Raphtalia to Firo and then finally me.

Naofumi: "Ah."

The ball flew behind Raphtalia and is about to fall to the ground.

Raphtalia: "Ei!"

Naofumi: "What!"

The ball was skilfully hit towards Firo with her tail.

Firo: "Wa..... Firo too."

Firo hits the ball with the wings on her back.

You guys..... Don't use parts that common human beings don't have.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama."

I wonder why this game is becoming one with strange conditions.

It can't be helped.

Naofumi: "Air Strike Shield!"

The ball is bounced back by a shield that appears in the air.

Raphtalia: "Ah, that's dirty!"

Naofumi: "It's not!"

Seriously.....This is child's play.

As a result of the cool down time, I lost. Afterwards we just played volleyball normally.

Raphtalia: "Well, what should we do now?"

It will be essential for Raphtalia to become stronger from Class up.

Additionally, whenever a wave appears, I am summoned. In the meantime, I should work on leveling up and earning money in a different country.

Naofumi: "We still have time. Raphtalia, Firo. Are there any accessories that you want?"

Raphtalia: "Accessory?"

Naofumi: "Ah, I can craft some so I was wondering if you two wanted any."

From a while ago, I already decided to reward Raphtalia and Firo because of their hard work.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, you're at the age where you want something like that right?"

Raphtalia: "Y-yes....."

Firo: "Firo too!"

Naofumi: "I understand. Now tell me what you two want."

Raphtalia seems to be dumbfounded.

Is this such a rare occurrence?

Firo: "Uhhh, Firo wants a hairpin."

Firo wants a hairpin huh..... that's surprising since I expected her to want a saddle or some reins.

Naofumi: "Hairpin? Why?"

Firo: "Because it won't dig into my skin after I transform."

You still mind that? Well, perhaps something to stick on her head would be good. I guess it is appropriate considering how old Firo looks.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia what do you want?"

Raphtalia: "Me? Let's see....."

Raphtalia thinks for a while before answering.

Raphtalia: "I want a bracelet. Granting an effect is important. It will be useless if there is no meaning."

Naofumi: "Huh?"

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama, an item that can raise my abilities would be preferable."

I wonder what. My mind seems to have trouble understanding Raphtalia's answer.

A bracelet that gives an effect. I thought she would have wanted rings, earrings, or a necklace.

Is my brain just bad?

Naofumi: "O-okay. I'll make it properly."

Firo: "Firo too~"

Naofumi: "Yeah, yeah."

We played at the grassy plain till the end of the day, then returned to the hotel to prepare for the wave.

Chapter 51: Third Disaster

Today is the day that the old man finishes creating the equipment I ordered. We arrive when the shop opens.

"Oh, it's the lad. You sure are early."

"I guess. So how is it? Were you able to finish it?"

"Of course. By the way, your pot of food has become an enormous topic for some reason."

"How would I know? Ask the guy who is spreading the rumor."

"That's impossible....."

The old man brings out our armour from the back of the shop.

Rather than making a barbaric suit by sewing bones to it, the dragon and chimera bones were grounded to a powder to make bone mail. Probably.

It's like Hokuto no Ken clothing Mark 2.

By the way, is this called a racing suit or a rider suit?

"Old man, do you want to make me the king of thieves that badly?"

It may be because originally the materials were meant to be made into savage tribal armour.

"Huh? What're you saying lad?"

As for wearing this..... Despite this being a fantasy world all I can think about is the Showa Era.

For now I might as well test its performance.

"By the way, how is this armour?"

"That was already quite difficult to custom-make; it's as good as Barbarian Armour +1"

"This +1 looks like it's not complete yet. Did you say whether or not there are clothes made from the Dragon skin to go with this?"

Even the design is different. The front is from Hokuto no Ken, and the lustre from the zombie dragon skin reminds me of rubber.

Only the chest has a pitiful amount of metal to protecting it.

What can I say? It's perfect to ride on a motorcycle with.

Since there are no motorcycles in this world, will I be roaring across the lands on Firo? Stop thinking about!

Barbarian Armour +1?

Defence Up Shock Resistance (Intermediate) Flame Resistance (High)
Darkness Resistance (High) Hp recovery (Weak) Magic Up
(Intermediate) Enchantment: Automatic Restoration

There are various resistances.

Automatic restoration..... I don't know the efficiency from this alone. I wonder if it will repair itself if it is ruptured.....

Based on these bonuses alone, the performance should be great. I seem to have to wear these clothes that cannot be called armour.

"What's up lad? Have you seen this armour before?"

"You do know I'm not from this world right? In my world..... the comparison for this would be clothes you wear while riding Philo Rials or horses."

"In that case, Master, wear it and get on Firo!"

Firo stares at me with sparkling eyes.

"Lad. What this little bird Missy just said sounds incredibly obscene."

The old man mutters with a bit of a disgusted look in his eyes.

"Shut up!"



Old man, did you make this armour with thoughts of harassing me?

"What's wrong lad?"

.....Should be different. There is no malice.

"W-well. I'll take it."

Raphtalia commented that I looked good dressed like that.

Wearing this outfit around town.....I feel isolated.

.....It's not even armour, it's more like clothes. Very sad.

Well, the preparations for the wave have finished without a problem.

Raphtalia's black bruises have recovered completely thanks to the strong holy water used every day.

I heaved a sigh of relief because it was able to be completely cured. There might still be a scar left, but I wanted to heal her as soon as possible.

Accessories for Raphtalia and Firo were also completed today.

"Here are the accessories you asked for."

"Yay~!"

"Okay."

"First off, Raphtalia."

I pass Raphtalia a bracelet made of jade.

"Thank you very much."

"The enchantment on that is Magic Up (Small). It will also act as a lightning rod for magic cast on you that lowers your Magic Defence."

"I'll treasure it."

"Is that really all you want? I can seriously make you some nice looking jewellery if you want."

"What are you saying? We can't afford to waste time on looks."

That's right.

It can't be helped if the person herself doesn't want it.

"Next, Firo."

I pass Firo hairpin made of amber.

I put emphasis on the shape to make it look like a wing, to match Firo's demon form.

"It has an enchantment for Dexterity Up (small)"

"Thank you master~"

"I was a little limited by the materials on hand. If you want any changes then endure it for now."

"There are no problems with it. I will use this accessory to its maximum potential."

"Yup! Firo will work hard!"

"I have high hopes."

We take the rest of the time to prepare. I made some arrangements with the kids who volunteered earlier.

Firo has already been briefed about fighting against the wave. At first Firo had a question mark above her head asking about what the wave was, but after a while she understood.

Medicine has been prepared. The carriage.....Is broken, and since the new one isn't completed yet, Firo pulled a cart instead.

Anyway, it seems to have become my duty to protect any villages in the vicinity since the other heroes just run off.

Though I am not actually needed to participate, it would be despicable to just abandon people.

00:05

5 Minutes left.

It seems I can sense where we will appear, so I let the volunteer soldiers know beforehand.

Change shield to the Chimeric Viper Shield.

00:00

It's time!

A loud sound similar to glass shattering echoes.

The scenery changes instantly.

We scan the neighborhood calmly.

"This is....."

Yeah. Near the village with that man who was bringing medicine to his mother who was suffering from an illness.

No matter how much they rush, the earliest anyone would make it here from the castle town would be a day and a half.

There are red cracks spreading through the sky.

"Hero of the Shield-sama!"

The volunteers who were also summoned run up to me.

As for the other three heroes----.

"Firo! If you're going to kick that spear bastard do it so that he flies towards the cracks. It'll help him get there faster."

"Okay~!"

Firo listens to my order and runs off.

Due to her speed, she catches up to the correct party.

"Eh----?"

As soon as the spear bastard looks back, he is kicked by Firo.

""Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!""

His whole party was kicked away. It feels good to see that fucking woman also getting blown away.

Though there wasn't much damage since Firo held back.

"Wh-What did you do that for!"

It seems the spear is trying to say something to us.

I ignore the spear and glare at the bow and sword.

"Stop being a fool and wasting time!"

"What is up with you right now!?"

"Yeah! We must defeat the enemies spawned from the wave!"

I am amazed at anger of the foolish heroes.

"Listen to me first, you can hunt the enemy afterwards."

I direct the volunteers towards the neighboring village. They nodded and ran off towards the village according to my orders.

"Now..... Stop interfering with our work!"

"It's different!"

Itsuki is surprised by my roar and looked at me with bulging eyes.

"Calm down and think about it. Because I cannot receive aid money, I will not fight against the main body of the wave. As far as I am concerned I will be trying to defend the towns and villages within the neighbourhood. Do you guys understand?"

"Yeah."

"You are disqualified as a hero."

"That's right!"

All their followers are taunting me.

"Now you guys. Defeating the enemies who spawn from the waves is your job. I do not know whether or not the wave is stopped if you defeat the boss."

"It is connected to the boss!"

Itsuki seems to have gotten excited and answers.

Such a thing doesn't matter.

"However, besides that we have important work.....do you guys

understand?"

"What would that be?"

Ren even you don't understand? I mean you should know since this world resembles a game.

Why don't you understand? To ask that would sound very sarcastic so I'll hold back.

"Do you guys know about the Knights?"

The the heroes close their eyes at my voice.

"They will come later."

I bring out a magic flare and show them.

"The distance from here to the castle town is one and a half days on horse or philo rial. That's too far!"

"Then, what should we do!"

"How did you get this information!?"

I point at the volunteers running towards the village.

"Now that I think about it..... How did you transfer with those people?"

"Seriously? You guys don't even know the Party function.....?"

"For companions? I thought we couldn't have that many."

"This is different..... A party leader is nominated and everyone who is within the party is a subordinate, that also makes them all part of the transfer."

Perhaps.....these guys. I have more knowledge about the wave compared to them?

"First of all that was confirmation. Now it is confirmed that we can bring help during the waves."

..... Nobody says anything.

"Do you guys know of the help and tutorial?"

"Yeah. We have mastered this world."

" Anyway, our top priority is to suppress the wave.....so, see ya!"

"Then fighting against the wave for you guys..... is a game?"

"What?"

"What about it?"

"Let's hurry and go!"

My question was disregarded by Itsuki who ran off.

"Motoyasu, do you know the meaning of my question?"

"Well..... Instant dungeon?"

No.....

"This is different. Is it a time attack wave?"

Ren.....that is also wrong.

"Is it like a guild war? or a game with large scale battles?"

There was a game in my original world where there was a big event in which the players had only a week to participate.

As expected, it seems that the only ones who can use the party system are the heroes.

In fact, if the knights were late last wave and if I retreated, the damage would be tremendous.

".....Do you understand it completely because you used to run a big guild?"

Since their cooperation is top priority I'll just be subtle about it.

Of course the Heroes who are ace players have to lead the charge.

But, to minimize damage we must cooperate with the residents of this world. The fact that they don't understand is amusing.

"I managed a team before."

Is Motoyasu's answer.

He glances at Firo's demon form. Well he probably doesn't want to be kicked.

"Then you cannot understand."

"I don't need to."

"Huh!?"

"It will all work out one way or another."

Sigh..... Am I a secretary making sure you do your work?

"I'm not interested in this."

Ren.....I'm not good at talking to people about guild warfare since I didn't participate.

He is armour is quite cool.

I want to know if this guy is capable of managing a large-scale guild.

"Anyway, this time we need to do our best, and make sure to bring knights next time."

I need to lay a foundation to combat the waves.

Both Ren and Motoyasu run off without hiding their unpleasantness towards me.

Hey, Don't spit on the road!

"Anyway. Let's go the village in the neighbourhood too."

"Okay~!"

We got in the cart, and Raphtalia hurried to the village with me.

"Ouch-!"

We arrived at the village just as the wave got there. Everything is covered in shadows, wolves, lizardmen, condors, and some goblins.

These guys remind me of Demi-humans, but all dark and covered with shadows.

Respectively they are called: Dark Condor, Black Wolf, Assault Shadow

Goblin, and Shadow Lizardmen.

And there was "Dimensional" added before each of their names.

They are just like ghosts that disappear into shadows when defeated. It's downright creepy. These demons are totally different from the previous wave; is this going to be the case from now on?

At any rate, I'll leave all the troublesome things to those guys.

That is.

"Acha-!"

I hear a strange battle cry from the old woman whom I fed medicine to. She is faring well with a hoe in one hand.

The volunteers are perplexed by this old woman as well.

"Ah, the saint! Thanks for the medicine! Acha-!"

The old woman bows to me after delivering blow after blow with the hoe to the demons that are rushing forwards. This old woman is quite strong, there are demon corpses left and right.

"Hey, you come over here and say thanks."

"Uhm right, Thank you very much."

The son of the old woman bows to me too.

"Anyway, for the time being please evacuate and take shelter, these enemies are spawning from the wave."

The volunteers are instructing the villagers to take refuge.

The intervals between more enemies arriving and the elimination of the current demons is quite small.

We also join the suppression of the enemy.

"Acha-!"

The old woman casually slaughters the enemies. Are these really the movements of a person who was about to die a month ago?

"My old strength was returned thanks to the divine blessings of the

saint. Hahaha!"

The old woman glares at her son and he also starts fighting to his fullest, but he seems quite shy.

However, he is not as good as his parent. The volunteers are barely able to put up a fight.

No one can compare to the old woman.

"Even though I look like this, back in my prime I was quite a famous adventurer. My level is the same as my age! Acha-!"

"What a reckless grandmother!"

I don't think even a thousand would be a match for her.

While I hold back the enemy, they are massacred by power that is comparable to Firo.

I'm scared that when the battle is over she will run out of battery and drop.

"What did I give that old woman to drink?"

"Who knows....."

Raphtalia watches the grandmother with utter amazement.

I will have to question her son closely later.

Anyway, now is time to treat any injured people.

"It is top priority for those who are injured fall back from the defence line towards the cart."

I perform treatment on injured people while giving instructions.

"Acha! Saint-sama, it seems there's a suspicious one among the invaders."

It seems there is a fairly big Dimensional Shadow Lizardman mixed in. He is about twice the size of the others.

"Raphtalia, Firo, we'll kill that fellow together."

The volunteers will be a burden.

"Okay!"

"Okay~!"

I run towards the big game.

The Dimensional Shadow Lizardman is brandishing a huge black sword.

I run in front of it and hold up my shield. A loud screeching sound can be heard as sparks scatter.

Snake's Poison Fang (Intermediate) activates and poisons the enemy.

But there is barely any effect. This kind of enemy is a reptile after all. However, poison is not what I was aiming for.

"Eryaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

A fearless Raphtalia pierces her sword right in to the abdomen of the Dimensional Shadow Lizardman.

"Deryaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The face of the Dimensional Shadow Lizardman is blown away by a single blow from Firo.

The Dimensional Shadow Lizardman falls over and collapses on its back.

"Amazing....."

One of the volunteers unconsciously lets his thoughts out.

"Good! You guys go around the village and do damage control."

If the grandmother, six volunteers, and some adventurers who live here go protect the village, a lot of the damage can be avoided.

There should still be other villages in this neighborhood. It will be dangerous if we do not go help as soon as possible.

"Use what medicine you need, the ride won't be comfortable. Let's get going."

Some volunteers get into the cart per my instructions.

"Let's go!"

"Roger~!"

Firo pulls the cart that has become heavier, and starts running with her explosive power.

When we arrived at the next village, some volunteers looked to be in pain, but it wasn't particularly bad so I ignored it.

This village seems to have taken a lot more damage than the previous one. Houses were burnt, and some villagers are injured.

"Hurry, go rescue anyone you can!"

"O-Okay!"

While slaughtering demons, we were waiting for the wave to end.

".....So slow!"

3 hours have passed since then.

We are barely able to defend the villages in the neighborhood, but dealing with endless waves of demons is not very helpful.

The evacuation of villagers was done properly, and the casualties amongst villagers were minimal.

The refugees were not attacked when spotted because we were here. So our offences and defences continue as is.

It would be too late regardless.

How long are those heroes going to take?

"Hero-sama, leave this place to us. Shouldn't you go support the other Hero-samas?"

The child soldier who greeted me first gave the proposal.

"There is no meaning if I go....."

If I go to help them defeat the boss, they will just complain that I went to steal glory.

"But....."

The volunteers look exhausted. Fighting for 3 hours against unending

enemies will do that to your stamina.

Raphtalia and Firo are also considerably tired. I am no different.

"Ahahahaha-!"

Firo kicks a Dimensional Assault Shadow Goblin while laughing.

Yup. Firo is still all right. That bird is a massive lump of stamina.

"Will you be fine?"

"Please leave it to me!"

There seems to be some stamina left over.

"Then I'll take you up on your offer. I'm counting on you."

"Okay!"

"Raphtalia, Firo, let's go!"

"Understood."

"Okay~!"

We left the village to the volunteers and adventurers, while we rode towards the boss of the wave on Firo.

Chapter 52: Grow Up

"It should be around here.....I think."

"I think so too."

"Yup."

A large, wine-red crack is spreading from the ground, acting as the foundation of the wave. One after another, demons crawl out from there.

"Hm?"

There is a fish-like ghost that is pure white with red eyes, a big wide mouth with fangs, and a brutal countenance.

But, it's lying down.

Did the big game from the waves already die?

It's very ghost-like..... There is a feeling that physical attacks will not work on this demon.

"A fish?"

"What the hell is this....."

"Hmm..... This doesn't look like too difficult of an enemy."

"You think so?"

"Normal attacks won't be effective. Only magic should have an effect."

There is knowledge from net games about requiring magic attacks.

"Then Firo can fight!"

"Huh? Won't a kick not work?"

"Yup. Firo, can also use attack magic!"

"Say that from the beginning!"

"Noo. Kicking is faster than magic."

Sigh..... Firo does not understand how useful magic can be.

Asking the person in question for answers is like trying to grasp clouds.

"Did those guys beat the boss?"

Where are they?

As I look around restlessly, there are sounds of clashing metal.

"Over there?"

"You're right. Let's go over there."

Firo also hears it, so we run towards the direction of the sound.

"Rinbu Rei no Kata ▪ Gyaku Shiki Setsugekka!"

The sky that is stained with red starts to shine.

When I look up, there is a red moon that looks like it was cast by an antagonist.

Then, something in the form of a person drew a circle through it and then there was a red flash.

""Guaaaaaaaaa!""

We arrived as simultaneous screams erupted.

Motoyasu, Ren, and Ituski are trapped within a tornado, while their companions are collapsed all over the place.





"Guha!"

What on earth happened here?

From what I can tell, the enemy fired off a huge magic attack at this place.

No, no, these guys should be considerably high leveled. They shouldn't have been defeated so easily.

But, what is going on?

Motoyasu was tossed near us.

"Meteor Spear should have hit....."

Ren mutters in response to Motoyasu.

"Metoer Sword should have worked....."

And Itsuki.

"Meteor Bow should have done something....."

What?

".....Do you guys want to be popular?"

The heroes have all fainted. Well, I think they aren't dead yet.

Meteor..... is that hip?

"Are you their reinforcements?"

After the tornado stops, a person appears from the centre.

This fellow is wearing a jet black kimono with silver embroidery. It feels like clothes that are to be worn during a funeral back in my world.

There stood a beautiful girl. Her face in no way inferior to Raphtalia. Her personality seems serious, and her hair is long.

But, something is off. Sometimes, she looks slightly translucent, just like a ghost.

Her weapon is an iron fan held with both hands, as though dancing.

This human-shaped woman seems to be the victor here.



な、なんだ!? ゾクツと背筋が凍りつくような嫌な感覚がする。
次元ノソウルイーターとは比べものにならないプレッシャーが辺りを支配している。
なんだこれ?
そして、シュタツという音と共に人影が現れる。
「この程度の雑魚に何を苦戦しているのか、勇者は貴方一人しかいないのですか?」

"The heroes of this world seem to be all bark and no bite, quite a disappointment."

That.....human-shaped woman declares as she turns around.

"Master~, this person is very strong."

Firo informs me while all the feathers on her body stand on end.

"Yes, I feel a strong pressure here. This strength is far from a normal demon."

Raphtalia also warns me while her tail is standing up.

"So you defeated these fools?"

I step on the fucking woman's unconscious face while asking.

"Hmm..... Is that how you treat your companions?"

It seems the woman in the kimono does not like my attitude.

"I apologize, but you can't be any more incorrect about her being my companion."

After trampling her face about 3 more times my anger is a little appeased.

"Doesn't matter, what you are doing is unjust."

"Speaking of unjust, this bitch has done far crueller acts. I have quite a grudge."

"Master is like a villain~"

"Shut up."

"I do not have a just argument for the enemy....."

Raphtalia is a little amazed as she mutters.

The gallery is being annoying.

"Can Firo do that too?"

Firo raises her foot and aims it at Motoyasu.

"Stop it, if you do it he will die."

"Okay~"

The enemy seems a little amazed at our attitude.

".....Although they are not your companions, your actions are not that of a just human's."

"Say whatever you like."

"Well, I lost in this world, but I cannot leave."

The enemy charges with her iron fan.

That's fast!

I raise my shield at once.

Gagin!

Damn.....That's very heavy.

Even the zombie dragon did not have so much weight behind its attacks.

Such a heavy attack from an iron fan, it would seriously be dangerous if Raphtalia or Firo took one of these.

"Raphtalia, Firo! Be careful.....She's strong."

"Okay!"

"Sure!"

"I am the Hero of the shield who deciphers and calls forth the power of nature to defend!"

"Fast Guard!"

After I cast support magic on all three of us, the fight begins.

The opponent grasped my intention so she changed locations. We chased, so that other heroes and their companions would not wake up and interfere.

She probably took down the boss of the wave too.

I receive painful wounds from the iron fan whenever I receive an attack anywhere besides my shield.

Whenever I have some room I cast heal on myself, but this is very intense.

Her attacks are not only quick, they are also extremely strong.

She tried to change her aim to Raphtalia and Firo but I prevent her.

"As if I'd let you!"

So to obstruct her I pulled her leg.

"Ugh.....Release me immediately!"

However, you cannot remove my restraints with something like that.

"Are you the same combat type?.....This is more troublesome than those people before."

The enemy remains nonchalant even after being subjected to Snake's Poison Fang (Intermediate).

As for her defence, I had to put that under serious reconsideration after she blocked an attack from Raphtalia and Firo.

In any case, she's strong. In everything.

The fact that the other heroes got defeated is proof enough.

"Master, Watch Firo's magic~"

Firo crosses her left hand over her right, and rushes towards the enemy.

"Here I come~"

For a moment, yes only a moment, Firo turned into a blur.

GeshiGeshiGeshiGeshiGeshi!

A shock that vibrates from impact is felt through the enemy.

"Damn.....!"

The enemy has a face full of agony.

"Seriously..... this person is so obstinate. To receive Firo's attack and not fly away."

"Such a heavy attack..... Its strength rivals that of the Hero of the Sword. To kick me that heavily eight times in an instant....."

Eh? You can see Firo's attacks?

"Firo, do it again!"

"Eh.....Impossible, My magic power is exhausted and it takes time to prepare."

Was that Firo's sure kill attack?

"Eat this!"

Raphtalia pierces the opening.

"Naive!"

The iron fan intercepts the sword at the last moment.

Bakin!

"Wh-"

Raphtalia's sword broke?

Just how much strength does she have? Originally iron fans can break swords, but that requires complete mastery.

Even though I applied Fast Guard, I am barely able to block with my shield.

And Firo has already used her trump card.

"Damn....."

Raphtalia backs off and pulls out a spare.

Is there any way to win.....

"Huff.....Huff.....That's quite enough."

No, we may have a chance if this becomes a battle of attrition.

This fellow fought against all 3 other heroes and their companions.

No matter who you are, there should still be fatigue.

"I'll end it with this."

The enemy's whole body starts glowing.

That's bad! This is the same attack that took out the those 3."

"Raphtalia, Firo!"

The enemy starts to rotate at high speed like a dance.

Raphtalia and Firo hide behind me, although just barely they were able to make it.

"Shield Prison!"

A cage made out of shields and magic surrounds us.

"Rinbu Rei no Kata ▪ Gyaku Shiki Setsugekka!"

A great storm descends from the iron-fan and starts cutting down my shields.

"Dammit....."

What an incredible attack. No wonder the other heroes got swept up in it, even I am barely able to hold.

"You two, are you okay?"

"Barely."

"It hurts....."

When I look back, both of them looked like they'd taken considerable damage.

I applied heal ointment onto the wounds. Because of the ranged cure skill, their wounds were gradually cured.

"Really?.....To receive my trump and stand.....Your defence is quite something."

The tornado stops, and the enemy appears again.

"I am honoured by your praise."

Though I am quite beat up, we haven't lost yet. But we have nothing to get us out of this pinch.

"Ei~!"

Firo moves at high speeds and damages the enemy little by little. This will be a long battle.

Whether or not we can win this battle of attrition is doubtful.

What to do.....

There is only one move in this circumstance that can reverse the situation.

"Raphtalia."

I catch Raphtalia who falls down.

"What's wrong?"

"Lend me your power....."

It seems Raphtalia guessed what I was going to do.

"Okay. I am Naofumi-sama's sword. Even if you go through hell, I will follow."

".....I know."

I believe it.

There is no fear at all that my trust will be betrayed.

But if I lose here, then Raphtalia and Firo will die.....

Though I dislike to, I wish with all my heart that I want to protect by all means.

I will absolutely not get consumed by anger. I swear so.....

I place my hand on my shield and think.

Shield of Anger!

Growth Up due to stone of the Zombie Dragon.

Ability improvement of the Curse Series, Shield of Anger!

Shield of Anger 2

Ability Unsealed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill "Change Shield (Attack)"
"Iron Maiden"

Special Effect: Self-Burning Curse Physical Strength Up Rage of the Dragon Roar Frenzy of Companions Then-----

Is this the last memory of the dragon that I absorbed into my shield? A scene is projected.

A part of the chest and the middle of the forehead is pierced by the Hero of the Sword.

The anger felt is far beyond imagination.

I lost to that human. I was able to understand how much of a humiliation it was for the dragon.

Grow Up.....Like hell!?

The shape of the shield changed from one surrounded by flame to one that resembles a dragon.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the shield, Barbarian Armour +1 also changed.

Is the cause from.....The decaying dragon core?

The Rider Suit changes to look like a Jet-Black Dragon.

And as compensation, a black shadow clouds my view.....

Chapter 53: Iron Maiden

Red Dragon Flame..... The Shield of Anger 2 that was changed by a black shadow.

"Uooooooooooooooooo!"

When I shout, the air vibrates as if the world resonated with me.

"What....."

The enemy stops fighting Firo and looks at me with a loss for words.

Just like the first time, it is extremely dangerous to hold the Shield of Anger. It is trying to consume my heart.

The shield's anger has increased.....Is this the result of my upgrades?

Damn..... My view is warped.

"Naofumi-sama."

Suddenly, I feel a gentle touch.

It is probably Raphtalia.

I.....I will not lose here.

I shake the black shadow off and restore my vision.

And I look the enemy straight in the eye.

"U.....Uuaaaa..."

What!?

When I look at Firo, I feel a strange resonance with her.....The flame from my shield stays on Firo without burning her.

"Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Firo sharpens her eyes like a bird of prey and kicks the enemy.

Is this due to the Dragon Core that was absorbed by the shield?

"W-What is going on? This is even heavier than before....."

The enemy is in dismay due to Firo's attacks. But, I can't tell if Firo is

self-aware or not. All I can see in her eyes is rage and violence for the enemy.

"What happened?"

The enemy approaches and asks.

"Oh, It's my trump card."

I still have my ego.

It's going to be alright. I did not yield to anger because there was someone who will believe in me.

I provoke the enemy despite all the cold sweat.

I also instruct Raphtalia with my eyes to stay away.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I can still restrain it."

I approached the enemy.

"Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!"

Special Effect, Roar.

It is probably something that increases the vibrations in the air.

"Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

In response to my roar, Firo recklessly charges the enemy with me.

"Damn....."

"Don't dodge please!"

"As if I'd do that!"

While the enemy is dealing with Firo using her iron fan. I also enter the fray.

Gagin!

Alright, the attack is lighter compared to when I had the Chimeric Viper Shield.

In this case, it is not necessary to hunker down.

The fire from the Curse revolves around me. According to my anger, the heat increases or decreases.

If I don't keep my anger in check, then the fire power would be extraordinary.

But, within the flames, the power of the curse still remains.

"What!?"

When Firo dived recklessly through my flames, she falls to the ground instantly.

Good!

The black flame will take down the enemy.

"But.....It's not an attack that I cannot endure."

.....Though she took my flames head, on it wasn't fatal.

"Rinbu Yabu No Kata ▪ Kikkō wari!"

The Iron Fan was retracted and came piercing towards me. It resembles an arrow. Dangerous!

I ready my shield with that in mind.

Gatun, a heavy impact, and pain can be felt throughout the body.

My body was damaged through the shield

"Damn....."

"Hey, was I supposed to fall from that attack?....."

It is hard to stay calm from the pain. But if I lose my cool, we all die here.

"It was quite a good attack."

That attack was probably meant for penetration, at least that's what it would do in games.

Even if defence is very high, it would be ignored and have no meaning.

There is also the possibility that it will do more damage the higher

defence their opponent has.

Is this the weakness of the Hero of the Shield?

This is an old rule of thumb from net games, there are numerous ways to deal with any problem.

I do not know if my knowledge from those games apply to this world, but there are some things that will always be true.

The enemy's offensive ability is simply too high while the shield is weak.

Next, avoid attacks. It is a common sense against enemies that use instant death attacks.

Finally, need some fire power. The way to overcome absolute offensive ability without dying is the role of a tank.

Until now, I tried to think of reasons that the shield was weak, but none of them really apply.

.....I don't understand.

Anyway, I need to concentrate now.

Using Fast Heal, I cure myself. I don't know whether or not the other party can heal, but I won't take any chances.

"I know the weakness of your attacks."

The enemy declares grandly.

"Your only attack is the black flame which is close range. It cannot attack me from a distance. And that also makes your roar useless."

Damn..... It hurts to be analysed.

She is quite suitable as a warrior. Insight is great. If it were someone else, she would not lose.

If someone like her is part of the wave then won't it become a disaster?

"However, once I take out your companions, you have no chance of winning from a distance!"

The enemy changes her aim to Firo.

"Gaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"You think I'd let you!?"

Damn, it takes too long to catch up since Firo and her are so fast.

Anything.....Isn't there anything on hand I can use?

Then it hits me.

Change Shield (Attack) Iron Maiden

It is the skill that comes with the Shield of Anger.

Doing a last all-or-nothing attack isn't too bad.

I think it was..... Shield Prison -> Change Shield (Attack) -> Iron Maiden.

This is probably a skill that can only be used by consecutively using different skills. It might be a combination skill.

"Shield Prison."

I use the skill that surrounds the enemy within shields.

"Please don't think I'll be stopped so easily."

However, it is extremely difficult to catch an enemy that moves with this skill.

Damn, this is also dangerous for Firo since they are moving so recklessly.

I don't know if you will receive a fatal injury.

The cage disappears doing nothing and only the cooldown time remains.

"Naofumi-sama, did you think of something?"

"Yeah, is there any way you can stop her from moving?"

It would be very dangerous, but it would give me the best chance of catching her within the cage.

"I understand. I'll do my best."

"W-Will you be alright?"

"I'll be fine. I can fight today thanks to Naofumi-sama."

Raphtalia takes a stance with her sword and concentrates.

Her tail is also standing up.....Is she going to use magic?

"Match my timing because I'll stop her."

"Yeah!"

After some light appeared from her tail, Raphtalia ran towards the enemy.

"Deryaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"To come from the front is truly foolish!"

An arrow of light that is the iron fan is fired towards Raphtalia.

But, Raphtalia dodges it by lowering her posture.

"Deei!"

The enemy was slashed at with the sword.

"You're full of openings!"

Raphtalia resumes her posture but is slashed by the enemy.

Su..... Raphtalia scattered and simmered into the air.

"What!?"

There is a fizzing sound.

Then, Raphtalia appears from behind the enemy and knocks her down.

"Now!"

"Got it!"

I respond to Raphtalia's instructions. Firo has already moved away since she can tell I am about to use a skill.

It seems she can be manipulated by the Shield of Anger.

"Shield Prison!"

"What--"

The enemy is caged by shields.

The cage seems about to break at any moment due to her attacks.

Not happening. I will not let the chance that Raphtalia made go to waste.

"Change Shield (Attack)"

I shout the name of the skill.

The shields that are available for changing to appear.

The shield which I choose is the Bee Needle Shield!

"--!"

The shields change and the inside is attacked.

An impact spreads throughout the cage.

Iron Maiden!

When I was about to shout the name of the skill, a sentence appears in my head.

"The foolish criminal will feel with their whole body the embrace of virgin iron in a single blow. Release a cry full of painful agony that will not be heard!!"

"Iron Maiden!"

A huge iron torture device known as the iron maiden appears as I chant and wraps around the cage.

"-----!"

The cage of shields breaks, its insides confined by the iron maiden and pieced, not letting escape even a single cry.

At the same time, my Sp hits O.

Th-this skill, does it use all of its caster's SP as the sacrifice?

And the effect time of the Iron Maiden disappears.

"Gufu--"

With her whole body penetrated, the enemy glares at me while breathing heavily.

"I am very dissatisfied.....But I have no choice but to withdraw for today....."

You can still stand after receiving such a skill?

"You think I'll let you escape!?"

"Ha!"

The enemy starts running towards the crack in the sky. When I look at Firo, she doesn't seem to want to chase.

It seems Roar is necessary to order Firo to charge recklessly, but I cannot use it because I have no more SP.

We almost beat her.

"My name is Glass..... You, what is your name?"

Before she entered the crack she turned around and pointed at me.

"Is it necessary for me to respond?"

"No it is not. But I want to remember the person who cornered me like this. That's it."

"As expected of a warrior, though there are a lot of things I want to know."

"Then, let me give the person who has the shield one piece of information."

What? What are you saying?

"It is a big mistake to think of me as a mere disaster. But, it is not I who will win, but the one beyond the boundary."

Hm.....This information is surely important.

I know nothing about what kind of thing a wave is.

Glass..... It is necessary to know the meaning of her words, but also about the meaning of the waves.

At least the enemy is an intellectual living entity.

I have been too obsessed with that Bitch Princess and Trash King.

The true enemy that we Heroes fight are these fellows from the wave.

Hm.....It seems I have enemies behind and in front of me.....

"Understood. Thanks for the information. My name is Iwatani Naofumi."

"Naofumi..... I'll remember it!"

When Glass declares that and enters the crack, it starts to disappear.

Shortly after, it vanishes.

I immediately change Shield of Anger 2 to another shield.

Although that shield gives me a temporary Power Up, I cannot use it for too long.

"Haah....."

"We did it."

"I guess."

"Funyaa..... Did something happen?"

Raphtalia just catches up to me as I turn around, and Firo falls to the ground in exhaustion.

"Was the wave settled somehow?"

"I think so."

"Firo is tired....."

"Is that so. Let's ignore the other heroes and go clean up."

Thus, the third wave in this world ended.

Chapter 54: Farewell

We returned to where the boss died to check up on those heroes who have fainted with volunteers and villagers.

So unnecessary.....

Well, I had to return to get materials from the wave for my shield to absorb, and since the Assault Shadow Goblin and Shadow Lizardmen were only shadows, they could not be absorbed.

No, I have a feeling that if i make a lump of shadows and compress it, I should be able to absorb it.

Shadow Shield

Ability Unsealed.....Equipment Bonus: Darkness Resistance (Small) The other guys are omitted because the only equipment bonus they provided was for stats.

The big ghost-like fish that the other Heroes defeated is quite desirable.

"Aan~"

"Don't eat it."

Because Firo was about to eat the head, I ordered her to stop.

As for why this bird went berserk, the cause is still unknown.

My speculation is that it should be due to the dragon core that this fellow carelessly ate.

"But....."

When I was about to pick it up, my hand fell through and onto the ground; it was quite surprising.

"How did you pick it up?"

"I used wind magic on my hand."

"Hah....."

I can't even touch it barehanded, this sure is quite the strange fish.

I asked the volunteer soldiers to bring the other heroes here. It seems their exclusive weapons are necessary.

Since one of them possesses a weapon with a cheap attribute that is useful, I'll have to borrow it.

According to Firo, the item itself has to have magic imbued.

My shield absorbs a part of the head.

Soul Eater Shield

Ability Unsealed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill "Second Shield" Soul Resistance (Intermediate) Mind Attack Resistance (Intermediate) SP Up Special effect: Soul Devour Sp recovery (Weak) Even though the demon head was dismantled, the name did not disappear so it doesn't really matter.

I absorb another part but there is no change either.

However, I am curious as to what the Second Shield skill does. As for soul resistance.....It is probably resistance against attacks of this type. The name Soul Devour makes me slightly anxious. It seems I can eat souls; it's quite unpleasant.

The shape of my shield changes slowly. The design seems to be based off of this demon's head since it is attached to my shield.

..... Its defense is greater than the Chimeric Viper Shield.

It seems Soul Devour is a skill that is exclusive to this shield.

So I reach out my hand. When I do so, I am unable to touch the flesh of the soul eater.

But it still feels different somehow.

Good.

I don't want anything that will consume souls, I don't have such a hobby. It's probably a counter effect. It will probably just absorb the enemy's SP.

Now then, what will the skill Second Shield do?

I'll experiment.

"Second Shield!"

Air Strike Shield -> Second Shield

An icon appears.

"Air Strike Shield!"

After I confirm the Air Strike Shield appearing, I once again call out:

"Second Shield!"

.....Another shield appears.

I see. It seems I'll be able to add another shield on top of Air Strike Shield within its effect duration.

This will have various uses, but the performance of the second shield may be different.

I pay more attention to the remains of the Soul Eater.

"I want to absorb the rest, but then those annoying fellows won't shut up about it....."

They probably won't shut up.

This is troubling since there are beings stronger than the heroes who are already the strongest in this world.

If those three are this weak, even if I become strong I won't be able to take it easy.

Sigh..... Should I just leave?

"Master, can Firo have the rest?"

The bird is slobbering everywhere while being noisy.

"Can't be helped....."

I cut the area from the back bone to the tail and give it to Firo.

Who ate it it one gulp.

"This texture is like a slime~"

"Wait a minute bird. When did we encounter slimes?"

"Uhhh you see~"

I'll omit the details and abbreviate.

As a result I was angry.

In the meaning that I didn't get to absorb any by my shield.

"Alright, let's help out with the reconstruction of the village."

Along with the volunteers, we started helping out around the village by processing demon corpses and reconstructing any damaged buildings.

Still, I cannot help everyone. So my top priority became making meals and treating injuries.

"Okay!"

The volunteers obediently did what I asked without question.

It seems I don't need to doubt them anymore.

One night passed after the long fight, and it seems the knights have finally arrived. Along with the volunteers, I was summoned by an angry knight leader.

"Bastard! who gave you permission to selfishly take my soldiers!?"

"This isn't the Hero-sama's responsibility! We were the ones who wanted to help and borrow his power."

"What? You lot call yourselves knights of Merlot Mark? By siding with the shield bastard?"

"You know..... this is quite the disgraceful scene. If you have a problem with our behavior, just get rid of us alright?"

The volunteers protected me by frankly expressing their opinions.

According to the stories I heard, the upper echelon of the knights had a meeting after they found out that the volunteers wanted to help a Hero.

"I think that if these guys weren't here, there would be much more damage."

The villagers who heard what I said also nod.

"The other heroes and their companions were brought to that building to rest after they were defeated by the formidable enemy who appeared during the wave."

Though they weren't asked to, the villagers take care of the Heroes and their companions. Thanks to the prescribed medicine, they will have a complete recovery in a few days.

Due to the fast recovery, they regained consciousness today.

"Hurry up, carry out Hero-sama and their companions and send them to the Treatment Institute Immediately!"

"Hey..... They are going to be fine. Priority goes to the villagers and others who are severely injured."

"The Heroes are our top Priority, for this world and our country."

What an arrogant answer.....

Well, it seems their problem is that I prioritized the treatment of villagers.

"Whatever. Go away, I'm busy."

"Wait, Shield"

The knight leader calls for my to stop, so I turn around and ask for the circumstances.

"What is it this time....."

"You need to give a report, so come to the castle."

"No thanks, that place stinks."

"I'm telling you to come!"

Do you have the authority? Even though this is meaningless why does it still have to be prioritized.

The volunteers lower their heads and look down, but I just ignore it and turn around.

"Hero of the Shield-sama I beg you, please go....."

.....Oh, this guy obeyed my instructions and acted properly.

I cannot coldly refuse, though it is also necessary to go collect my metal wagon from the old man.

"Hah....."

I look back while scratching my head.

"Fine. I'll go. But I'll only meet this guy once."

"Thank you very much!"

I nodded to the volunteer who expressed his thanks.

This, we went straight to the castle.

Next day.

We arrive at the castle town and enter the castle.

"The shield's companions have to wait in another room."

"Why am I the only one that goes?"

Why is this guy acting so overbearing?

"Hey, can I leave yet?"

This is going to be a giant waste of time.

"Please don't go. There are various things that you must hear."

"I would have liked to talk about them before coming here."

The process of how the other heroes got smashed and how we defeated the enemy was already explained.

It seems one of the volunteers confirmed what I said since he happened to see it.

In any case, if the trash king tries to force something on me, I'll just run away.

Due to Raphtalia and Firo, I will not be easily caught.

"Quiet! You are in the King's presence!"

I was guided to the throne and the trash king greeted me with a grim expression.

It seems he already heard the story. He seems to be irritated.

"Although it is regrettable, thanks to the shield the wave was defeated. Though I don't believe it."

"Is that any way to thank a person?"

"Insolence!.....Well, it's fine. I only want to ask one thing. Though I'm sure you're lying."

".....What do you want?"

It is a little annoying that he believes everything I say to be false.

"Shield, how did you outwit the other heroes and steal their strength? You have an obligation to speak, though I don't believe it. Now speak. Though I know you're lying."

.....So it's about that. The trash king is concerned that the other heroes are weaker than me.

Hah. I am so disgusted that I can't even talk.

Honestly, Glass beat the other heroes up.

Even though the Heroes outnumbered her they still lost.

Did I only win due to compatibility and the fact that the other party was worn out? Or were the other heroes weak and could not even exhaust her?

I should look around that vicinity when I'm free.

But, what to do here.

Alright.

I showed a radiant smile to the trash and gave him a thumbs down.

"Prostrate yourself if you want to find out."

"What?"

All that's on the trash king's face is a dumbfounded expression.

That's a very interesting face. I want a picture.

"Did you not hear me? It seems trash has poor hearing. I told you to rub your head on the ground if you want to know."

"Yo-Yo-Yo-"

"What's wrong? You sound like a screeching monkey. Oh I see, the trash king of this country is indeed lower than a monkey. Though I would rather be talking to a monkey."

The trash king's face is instantly dyed-red, and stares at me like I'm responsible for the murder of his parents.

Ah, this feels pretty good.

"You bastard-----!"

The cry of the trash king echoes throughout the castle.

Enemy from the wave in front, and trash king in the back.

But, I do not intend to be defeated by either.

And in this way I parted with the trash king.

Chapter 55: Departure

"I demand Decapitatioooooooooooooon!"

As expected of trash. My answer is equivalent to your crown.

"Opps, it looks like you think your guillotine can hurt me."

With a clang, the knights of the trash take out their swords and surround me.

"Did you guys forget during the wave that I am the one who defeated the opponent those other heroes got trashed by?"

I equip my shield and answer.

As for the knights, none of them dare to move.

An appearance befitting a hero. These are people that know of what happened during the wave, so they do not attack.

Even if it was a half bluff.

"What are you doing!? Kill this impudent bastard already!"

"Hey....."

I glare at the trash king and repeat.

"Do you not understand? The present me can enter the castle from the entrance, murder you, and walk out just like that....."

"Grrr....."

At last, this trash seems to finally know his position. His face is mortified.

"Do you believe I can actually do it?"

I learnt that in this world threats and bluffs during negotiations are necessary. Therefore, against this trash I'll use it to the maximum.

"If you're going to request a hero to do it, do you think they can win against me?"

"Grrrrr....."

The trash is grinding his teeth with frustration.

"Being able to say such a thing--"

"If you harm my subordinates? I'll kill you."

Before I lose the possibility, I will take the first move.

Since I have no clarification, I don't know whether or not the Iron Maiden skill can kill this trash.

But, I'm quite sure it will work.

If I also include the flames from the Self-Curse Burning.

The trash's expression turns blue when he understands his position.

"Do not bother me, trash. I will cooperate during a wave, but once it is over, do not disturb me."

This is my only threat, but I cannot reveal my trump card easily. I'd prefer that to be my last resort.

Even if I kill him here, nothing will be solved. This trash's successor will just appear and put me on the wanted list.

Even if I fight the other Heroes, it is doubtful that I can win.

Besides, if all three of them team up on me, I will lose.

"See ya."

I turn my heel and walk out of the throne room.

"Unforgivable! I won't forgive you Shieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeld!"

The trash's scream resounds throughout the throne room.

"That's my lineeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

I pointed at the trash before leaving.

After leaving the throne room, I pass by a noblewoman-like person concealing her lips with a fan and an expensive-looking dress.

The face is too well concealed to be able to tell her age. Perhaps late 20s.....?

Her hair is purple.....Quite a rare colour.....

"Thank you for participating, degojaru."

Was whispered to me as we passed each other.

Gojaru?

Dangerous, I almost turned around.

Hm?

A girl just like Raphtalia when she was small and Firo's humanoid form is behind the woman. Her hair colour is bluish. Also something you don't see much.

She is dressed well, is she her child?

However, they don't really resemble each other.....

Though her looks rival that of Firo's human form. Is this little girl also a bird?

Hm.....

I cannot remember who she looks like.

Oh well, that person is probably unpleasant. Remembering is just a waste of time.

So, at that time, we just crossed paths unintentionally. I had no idea this kid would become an important figure in a future uproar.

By the way, Raphtalia and Firo were waiting for me in another room.

And the fact that they predicted I would cause trouble and were even ready for escape was icing on the cake.

Anyway, we left there in a hurry.

The next day.

I show up at the equipment store to check on the requested carriage.

"Oh it's the lad. The carriage you asked for is done."

"Pretty quick. However old man, can you make anything as long as it's

metal-based?"

"I had my acquaintance help out, so I didn't make all of it."

Is this common for metal workers?

"Well, he's just one of those guys that can do anything as long as you have money."

"Lad, don't be sad just because you found out I can't do everything. I'm not versatile like you."

"I'm not omnipotent either....."

What does the old man think of me?

"Well it's parked in the back."

"Ah then let's check it out. By the way, Raphtalia-"

Raphtalia grasps my hand before I finish.

"What's wrong?"

"This sword is still fine. Let's conserve money for now."

"Well..... If Raphtalia says so....."

Though Firo is now our main attacker.

It shouldn't be necessary for Raphtalia to act unless it's urgent, and the same goes for me.

This sounds bad, but there may be weapons somewhere else that are better than the ones in the old man's shop.

We went around the equipment store to check out the metal wagon. The hood is metallic, and the whole carriage feels like an enlarged Christmas ornament that my parents bought.

"Wow~....."

Firo's eyes are shining with unprecedented brightness. She heads towards the front and grabs the handle.

"Firo is going to pull this right!?"

"Yeah."

"Yaay~!"

Firo is quite happy, with both her feet and wings flapping as if hoping to bolt off at any moment.

She has such a face.

"For the time being, let's carry in your luggage."

"Okay."

"Okay~!"

We transfer the baggage from our carriage that we used in between waves to the new one.

It took quite some time to carry the materials, merchandise, and tools.

"How is it lad?"

The old man from shows up when he has free time. And I answer with a thumbs up.

"Yeah, it's as great as I expected."

"I see, but it seems to be very heavy. Will the little missy be fine.....?"

"Yup!"

"This fellow here ran around the country with a carriage that had 3 carts attached."

"That's amazing."

"Rather, it's lighter than I expected so I'm a little disappointed."

"You know, stop being so stubborn!"

What are the standards for Philo Rial anyway? Why do they feel great when they pull carriages?

"Hahaha, do your best. So what'll you do from now on?"

"What will I do?"

"I heard about the commotion at the castle."

The old man says to me with a somewhat troubled face.

"That sure traveled quick."

"Rumors keep the town lively."

"Oh well. I did it so that trash would understand his position."

".....Though it's only a matter of time before you get falsely accused again."

"That's what I expected."

"If possible I don't want to know."

"I believe I asked this some time ago..... Are you going to go to Silt Welt or Shirudo Furiden to Class up?

An idea came to mind then, that what I should have done when threatening Trash was also get permission to use the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era. But if the class up is controlled by the Trash, I would also fear for Raphtalia and Firo.

I would rather not have that unnecessary anxiety haunting me. It would be best to get a free pass for Class up in any of these two countries.

"Well, I expected you to go to be forced to leave this country someday."

"What?"

It seems the old man is nodding his head as if agreeing with himself.

What does he mean?

"I would recommend you going to ShiruFuriden. Silt Welt is in turmoil....."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, humans there are treated just like the demi-humans in this country."

No wonder..... It would be unsuitable for me who is a human.

"But--"

"Thanks for the help. I'll be going to ShirudoFuriden."

We finished loading and got into the carriage.

"Well then, I expect you to visit a great number of shops."

"Thanks. Oh, right. Do you know of any weapons that have a soul attribute, or can damage ghosts?"

"I see, so you've gotten to the point where you need to prepare for such enemies."

"I can make something cheaply from certain materials."

"I cannot match you any more. If possible, don't come back for a while. I'll tell you where you can get materials."

"I understand. Thanks for all the help. Then, let's go."

"Okay~"

"See ya. old man."

"Later."

Firo pulls the rattling carriage.

Our present goal is a Class up. It seems to be quite far into the future.

With Firo's running speed, we should arrive in two weeks.

"That's!"

I hear a loud voice outside.

Before leaving the castle town, something hits the metal carriage.

"I found you!"

".....What?"

After making Firo stop, a little girl looks into the carriage and points at me.

Behind the girl is a knight-like guy.

These guys seems to have followed us for a while.

"You did something terrible to father!"

"Hmm?"

What? The girl with blue hair that I am not familiar with gets closer.

"What's with you?"

"Don't play dumb! I know that you can't hide it! You are an accomplished villain! The atrocious Hero of the Shield!"

This goddamn noisy kid. Is she some aristocrat?

That reminds me, I sold some cheap accessory to a noble before. Though it wasn't just once or twice. I can't remember how many times any more.

"I see, your father just can't tell quality. I am just smarter."

"What did you say!?"

But, Hero of the Shield = Evil person..... That's quite unpleasant.

Oh well, it's too late now.

"Tell your father. To polish his aesthetic sense next time."

"Boo, Boo..... I'll never admit it, mother is wrong, the Hero of the Shield is a bad person! I'll punish you!"

The subordinate knights step forward according to the girl's order.

"Hm. Can you keep them company Firo?"

"What~?"

"Just go."

"Okay."

"Ah....."

Firo stares at the goddamn kid and seems preoccupied.

"Holy Bird?"

"Eh?"

Firo inclines her neck and looks at the goddamn kid, puzzled.

"Hurry up and go!"

"Okay~"

Firo nods, and the carriage suddenly takes off.

"AH Wait-----! Don't run awaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!"

The voice of the goddamn kid fades into the distance.

The castle town sucks as expected. Other than coming for shopping, I would rather stay away.

Chapter 56: Shield Demon

"Let's continue peddling."

"I guess. Travelling expenses and the cost of weapons can get pretty expensive."

"I think so too."

"Though our food costs for a certain bird are the highest."

The Mileage to Food cost ratio on our bird is not negligible, but our horsepower is amazing. Feeding a demon is ridiculous, the sheer quantity required impossible to sustain.

So before all my money is consumed, I need to earn more.

We should be fine selling things in the villages and towns we stay at.

While thinking so, our treat begins. but.....

"I finally caught up!"

It is now evening.

The goddamn kid from the castle town caught up with us.

While peddling, I decided on an inn.

"What a persistent brat."

"We haven't finished talking yet!"

"Whatever. It's about your father. So what?"

"So what!? You suck!"

The goddamn kid's face instantly turns red. Quite an emotional kid.

It's annoying and hysteric.

"My father is angry at the shield."

"I see, that's great."

"No it's not!"

This annoying brat.

After deciding on a place to stay, the hotel charges are paid. I want to ignore her, but she is very persistent.

I wonder how far she intends to chase. I want to ask and make sure.

"What's wrong?"

Firo got bored of playing nearby and came back. By the way, even if a party member beats a demon far away, I still get a little experience.

Sometimes, all those minuscule experience gains block my view while peddling.

Though Firo brings me materials under the pretense of souvenirs.

"Ah....."

The goddamn kid stops and watches Firo again.

"Are you the Philo Rial that pulled the carriage?"

"Yeah, you understand."

"You are different from all the Philo Rial that I know of. It's my first time seeing one that looks like a child."

To be fair, only a few people have actually seen a Philo Rial Queen. We might be the only ones in the country.

"Master, did you need anything?"

"We are talking!"

"Start from the beginning."

Firo has been talking with her since they met.

"Shouldn't you be chirping?"

"Nope. Firo can speak words~"

"Wow.....Awesome!"

"Ehehe I'm amazing."

The goddamn kid approaches Firo and touches her.

Firo doesn't seem to mind.

Oh their mental ages are probably similar.

.....I can use this.

"If Firo agrees to it she can take her Philo Rial form and you two can go out and play together."

"Really!?"

"Yeah, go play until you're finished and then return."

"Yay~!"

The goddamn kid pats Firo with a smile.

"Master. What about Firo?"

"Play with the child. I order you not to injure her."

"Yay~!"

Firo saddles the little shit on her back.

Her expression instantly brightens.

"Yaay! We're so high!"

"Let's go play!"

"Ok!"

They happily run off together.

The knights chase after them with perplexed expressions.

"It's finally quiet again."

"Naofumi-sama, your expression right now is very evil."

"There's no problems. That goddamn brat is probably going to forget any grudges she has after this."

"Goddamn brat..... Naofumi-sama do you dislike kids?"

"Not particularly. If I disliked them I would have abandoned you and Firo a long time ago.

"Well, that's true."

I hate her because she is accusing me.

I'd like to avoid any falling sparks if possible.

"When we enter the neighboring country, they should stop."

If she's an animal enthusiast and just plays with Firo, it'll be fine.

".....I guess."

That day, Firo did not come back until very late.

It seems they were very excited about having new friends and played a lot. Well, it's good that they are happy about it.

By the way, the name of that goddamn kid is Mel-chan.

Next morning.

After eating a light breakfast, we leave the inn quickly. On the road:

"Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaait!"

I crease my brows and face palm.

I knew this was going to happen, but to think she would be this quick...

I already forgot about the fellow when we departed this morning.

"Ah, it's Mel-chan."

Since Firo stopped, I got off the carriage to welcome the goddamn kid.

"You should be glad, Firo-chan! I won't have the Hero of the Shield apologize if we can play!"

"I'm sorry. Are we done?"

"Don't apologize to me, do it to father!"

So annoying.

I can't deal with her.

"If you don't apologize, everyone won't be forgiven."

So she says, as the knight behind her pulls out a sword.

You want to fight?

Against a Hero?

Huh? The guy behind the goddamn brat is pointing a crystal ball at me.

What's that?

Suddenly I notice.

This guy.....He's not looking at me.

I feel a chill run up my spine.

This foreboding feeling and atmosphere remind me of when I was deceived by that bitch.

This atmosphere that I encountered in the past few months carried the intent to plunge another into despair.

I charge the Knight at once.

And my premonition becomes reality.

The knight aims his sword at the goddamn kid.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

"Air Strike Shield!"

The goddamn brats starts to scream. I immediately cast Air Strike Shield to intercept.

".....What the hell are you doing!?"

I stand in front of the goddamn kid and glare at the enemy.

"You Shield! how dare you hold a princess hostage!"

"Huh?"

Princess?

Regardless of who you are looking after, isn't it weird to call them princess?

The goddamn kid seems to know what's going on and her face turns blue.

"The shield is evil! I've known since the beginning."

The enemies are attacking us while saying so.

I protect the goddamn kid by pulling her close.

Gakin, the clashing of metal resounds in the area.

"Damn....."

The enemy starts to cast magic that rains fire.

Can't be helped. I'll cover the goddamn kid with my mantle to protect her from magic.

"You.....Demon of the Shield!"

"Firo, Raphtalia!"

"Okay!"

"Okay~!"

As per my instructions. Raphtalia and Firo charge the enemy.

Just as we counterattack, the enemy retreats on horseback.

"Fools."

Firo's leg power overwhelms horses. One of them is instantly blown off.

"Guaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"Ah, it's the devil!"

Additionally, we pursue the enemy and continue attacking. One, two, many were captured, but a few of them managed to get away.

"What the hell is wrong with these guys?"

Were they not the goddamn brat's guards?

A princess huh.

I have no choice but to perform a few interrogations here.

I ask the enemies who are bound by rope.

"Now then, you bastards, tell me why you are trying to kill a child. Only the reason."

"As if I have anything to say to a devil."

"Hooh....."

Devil, huh. It's been a while since I've been straight up called that.

Regardless of who, it's always Hero of the Shield.

"You. Do you understand what's happening to you?"

I give instructions to Firo.

"Food?"

The enemy's face turns blue.

"I will sacrifice myself for God..... God will lead me to heaven."

.....Religion.

Against these kinds of fanatics threats will not work.

"Hey brat, you have any ideas?"

The goddamn brat shakes her head in fear.

"Say, what religion do you believe in? It'll probably be to some stupid god anyway."

"The Three Heroes Church! You damn Devil! You dare mock God?"

As I thought. These fools can't stand it when their religion is mocked.

Now, if I can skilfully manipulate him with insults I may be able to get some information.

"The religion of this country."

Raphtalia mutters alone.

"Do you know about it?"

"This country mostly believes in the teachings of the Three Heroes. I did not believe since my parents were from a different religion."

".....Then this guy is just using religion as a tool for personal gains."

"Ah, Yeah."

I find a Rosary-like Accessory on the people who Raphtalia tied up.

"I'm going to place this on the ground."

"Hah....."

What a strange symbol. Three weapons pile on top of each other.

Sword, Spear, and Bow?

Quite an unpleasant lineup of weapons.

"Now, I will step on this tool if you guys don't speak obediently."

"St-Stooooooooop!"

The enemy's cry stops me.

That was quite early.....

Is this lump of metal so important?

Rather than anything special, it just reminds me of a fashion accessory, it doesn't even have any special effects.

Though it might just be the case for me since people in my world start wars for religion.

"Look at this."

I repeatedly stomp on the strange symbol with my foot.

"You devil of the shield! God will never forgive such acts!"

"I know, now tell me quickly why you're trying to kill her. Or is this the degree of your faith? Huh?"

"Damn....."

"To think there would be a devil stepping on god's symbol right in front of you. Shouldn't god be on your side?"

It's the opposite of the loyalty test.

Since this guy recognizes me as the devil, he will not stand by as I perform barbaric acts.

"If you spit it out I'll stop."

"I'm not going to listen to anything a d-devil has to say."

"Ah, I see."

I stomp on the symbol hard enough that it sinks into the ground.

"You bastaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaard!"

Hmm..... I wonder what happened.

Did he finally realize his position?

"Hey brat, who is this guy anyway?"

"Aau....."

The goddamn brat still seems to be recovering from the fear of almost being killed.

"Mel-chan. Master and Firo are here so you'll be alright."

".....Firo-chan."

The goddamn kid collects herself, gives me a look, and mutters.

"Uhm. These people are my father's knights."

"That reminds me, who is your father?"

"Father?"

"Yeah, which noble family are you from?"

"Uhm."

Not nobility? Then what is it?

She looks considerably well-bred, is she the daughter of a famous merchant?

Daughter of the accessory merchant? Though there should be no reason for malice if that's the case.

.....From this guy's speech and behavior, her dad should be quite powerful and respected.

I still think she's some noble's daughter.

"Father is the king of this country."

".....What?"

"Holt Clay = Merlot Mark the 32nd. I am Melty = Merlot Mark.....This country's princess."

Thus, I somehow became embroiled in a ridiculous conspiracy.

Chapter 57: The Church of The Three Heroes

"Alright, let's throw this guy away and leave the country."

I declare immediately after finding out that this goddamn brat is the second princess of Merlot Mark, Melty.

"Please wait. Are you just going to abandon a child who is being targeted?"

"She's the daughter of trash. I'm also going to be convicted regardless."

"But I think the circumstances are quite strange."

Hm, Raptalia's opinion does make sense.

The second princess who was almost murdered is shaking again, while Firo is babysitting her.

If she really is the second princess, there should be no reason for the knights of this country to kill her.

Is this just a big conspiracy, or factional strife? Why would they want the princess dead?

I am completely ignorant about the circumstances of this country's internal affairs.

"Mel-chan. Why were you almost killed?"

".....I don't know. I just came to complain to the Hero of the Shield because he hurt father."

"You came alone?"

"No. The imperial guardsmen knights wanted to come no matter what."

It seems the second princess is merely a puppet.

Even if I interrogate her, it would be impossible to get any information.

"Firo will certainly help you!"

"Hey, don't just go making promises without my permission!"

"Master. Firo wants to help Mel-chan."

"No."

"I want to help! I want to help! I want to help!"

"Argg, so annoying!"

Shit, I have a bad feeling about this. What's going to happen?

The knight who was watching begins to laugh.

"Finally, you understand your position as a devil."

"Shut up. I'm done with you."

"You can't escape. I'll be waiting here until the mission succeeds."

".....What do you mean?"

"Our goal is to kill the second princess and pin the blame on you, but even though the first condition cannot be fulfilled, it is fine. Your head will be worth a lot of money from now on."

That trash, to think he would do something like this...

You're willing to sacrifice your daughter to find a just cause for killing me!?

"Even if you escape abroad, the royal family's assassins will pursue you!"

".....Wait, why is it necessary to kill the second princess in front of me?"

If you wanted to pin a false charge on me, all you needed was the Bitch's testimony.

Even if the second princess is murdered somewhere else, they just need to claim that I did it.

Why aren't they doing that?

Suddenly, I recall that other knight's crystal ball.

Due to him fleeing first, he managed to escape.

If that was something that took photographs...

"Devil of the Shield, the fact that you participated in murdering princess

Melty has been spread to the other countries. You will no longer be able to take refuge there."

No wonder. In this country, they cannot cross the borders to search for me. If I manage escape abroad, then it will show that this country is weak.

As for the other countries, they will help the Hero of the Shield to try gaining me as an ally.

However, that will be impossible now.

There is a crystal ball that shows the moment when the Hero of the Shield might have murdered the second princess.

That is plenty of evidence.

Once they show that to foreign countries, I won't be able to seek refuge.

Wow..... I kind of respect how thorough they are.

That leaves me with 3 choices.

Choice 1

I ditch the second princess.

The knight of the trash that came to kill the second princess will fulfill his duty and give the country a just cause to hunt me.

I will live as a wanted man with a bounty on my head.

If it spreads to the other countries, the time that I stay as a wanted man will become even longer.

It will be the most dangerous when the wave comes. I will most likely be caught.

Choice 2

I take the second princess to the trash and explain the circumstances.

The second princess will keep her life, but this is trash we are talking about. The crime of kidnapping will not be cleared.

In other words, I can save the life of the second princess, but my

innocence will not be proven.

Choice 3

We go kill trash in an outrage.

The crime will be complete, which will lead to the 3 heroes, the church, and a massive amount of knights hunting me down.

The possibility of failure is too high.

"No matter the choice, my innocence will not be proven-! That trash king, to murder his own daughter to kill me!"

Very unpleasant!

Seriously, why is everyone blood related to the king so annoying?

"Hahaha! It's over for the Devil of the Shield. You will perish before the Church Three Heroes!"

"Shut up!"

I tell the knights to shut up while ordering Firo out of spite.

"You are allowed to kill them, but it's meaningless since a lot of them already escaped."

But, if my false charges are dropped, they will ask about the homicide.

"Still, that Church of Three Heroes....."

Church of Three Heroes

Three, Heroes, Church.

Now that I think about it, aren't these things all connected?

The symbol contains the holy weapons of those three.

But isn't it strange?

Sword, Spear, Bow, and Shield.

According to legends, these 4 are the only ones.

But the Knights view me as the devil, and the Church of Three Heroes is also hostile.

.....Is that it?

Upon arrival in this world, none of the adventurers wanted to become my companion. Naturally, the only adventurers they prepare are ones trusted by the country. It seems the religion known as the Church of Three Heroes is brought up a lot around the city.

Since the Church of Three Heroes calls me the Devil of the Shield, I am supposed to be an absolute evil within the country.

Who would willingly become the Devil of the Shield's companion? Were they not even aware of my situation, or were they trying to create a situation where I can be nothing but evil?

.....That seems to be the case. In this country, just saying Hero of the Shield will earn you a dirty look.

The majority of the knights are blind believers, and of course the royal family is no exception.

Thinking back with this information, I can't help but be a little amused at the rape accusations placed on me.

Since I am treated as a religious enemy, I was ignored intentionally and branded as a criminal without evidence. If I do anything bad, the citizens will just say "Because he's the Devil of the Shield."

That sister's hostility towards me at the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era proves it.

I can somewhat understand the trash king's thoughts.

If he wants to keep his standing as the king, he will not be able to treat the Devil of the Shield the same as the three heroes.

Currently, the reputation of the Hero of the Shield has improved within the country since I have been going around various places masquerading as the Saint of the Holy Bird and saving people.

Excluding the castle town, recently, even as the Hero of the Shield, there has been no more hostility aimed towards me.

The problem is related to the prestige of the church. I have no doubt

they will also add threatening the church of three heroes to my list of crimes.

Is that why they played the trump card that is the second princess?

But in the end, this is all merely speculation. No matter what I do, it will be impossible to get rid of the false accusations.

"Fa-father wouldn't do something like this!

Declares the second princess.

"Maybe....."

"Finish your sentence."

"Mother said that Father's forte is in warfare, but recently he also has quite a short fuse."

"Mother, huh....."

Speaking of which, I still have not met the wife of trash.

Good at war, huh.....That's certainly one hell of an enemy I've made. So far, nothing good has happened to me.

"Mother always wins when they play intellectual games."

"Aren't you just calling her cunning?"

Whenever I talked to him, all I felt was the he was a fool. Not sure how smart this mother will be.

"Father cherishes me, so he won't do something like this."

"Then why did such a thing happen?"

"Uh....."

The second princess seems ready to cry at any moment.

"Master is awful~"

"That's right. To make such a small child cry."

"She is the same age as you."

Did Raphtalia forget she was the same size about two months ago? Or

is it because she has a big sister relationship with Firo?

Well, that trash king wasn't exactly a good person. However, he does not seem like a criminal.

I think that the trash treasures his relatives.

There is also the possibility that this situation was entirely cooked up by the fanatics that are trying to label me as a devil at all costs.

Besides, is the current royalty even stable?

This might be a little forced, but what if there are two factions: one supporting that bitch and one for the second princess?

"What about your sister?"

The successor would want to nip a bad bud early.

That bitch would pull off such a plan.

"Wouldn't it be something like, 'I am the next queen. I need to prevent my younger sister from somehow taking the seat'?"

"If it's elder sister.....maybe."

"Well, I'm not denying that possibility."

"Since the old days, mother would tell me not to imitate my sister in entrapping people to get whatever she wanted."

Is this the bitch's plan?

I mean, even her own relatives are wary of her.

"Mother said that Father does not understand."

"Now that I think about it, you've been saying mother a since a while ago, but who is she?"

"Mother is the queen of this country. All year round, she is in charge of diplomacy. I am always with mother."

"So what does that have to do with us?"

"Mother will occasionally return to visit father."

"Uhh.....So about her diplomacy."

"Because I do not want war, I try my best everyday. Because of the wave, the world is in danger. Since I am the queen, it is my duty to protect my country."

From what I hear, she seems to be superior to the trash.

She might not patronize me.

Though a dangerous fellow may come after me to protect trash.

Hmm?

Thinking back seriously, did I not pass by this fellow in the castle after I parted from trash?

"The day before yesterday, were you with your mother? Is it that person with the purple hair?"

"That is my mother's body double."

"Body double huh..... Was there really such a feeling?"

Her outstanding purple hair left an impression.

"Yup. That's her disguise, and she talks funny."

"Wow."

Doesn't matter.

"She is greater than father."

The second princess just said something outrageous.

".....What did you say?"

"She is greater than father."

"What?"

"Naofumi-sama, in Merlot Mark, the queen has the power. This country's royal family is of the female line."

Raphtalia supplemented as if it was natural.

Then is that it?

That trash is a son-in-law!

"Naofumi-sama, why are you laughing?"

"This is too funny, that trash is just a son-in-law taken into the family? Ahahahahaha!"

"Master you seem to be having fun~"

"Do not speak ill of father!"

"Isn't it fine? He deserted you."

"I wasn't thrown away! Uwaaaan!"

Oh, the second princess has begun hitting me while crying.

What a healing scene. I see an annoying fellow crying.

"You're the worst, making a child cry and then laughing."

"I know."

Raphtalia got mad as expected.

"So is there any way we can clear the suspicions and save her life.....?"

In the first place why should I defend relatives of the trash and bitch?

Still, I cannot murder her.

Though this fellow's blood is bad, I would rather not dirty myself with it.

Sigh.....

However, I do sympathize a bit with her situation.

Being betrayed by blood relatives whom you believe in, the second princess has tasted the bottom of despair.

All right. There must be some method.

"Do you know where your mother the queen is?"

This is the first method. If trash is of no use, I'll meet and talk with the queen. Since she has more power than trash, our problem should be solved.

In this scenario, the second princess's survival has become a necessary condition. We will be heavily depending on whether she lives or dies.

It also seems from our talks that her mother is quite intelligent. Though I still have my doubts considering how stupid trash is.

".....I don't know."

The second princess shakes her head.

"I see."

There is no reason to flee to another country aimlessly in this situation.

I recall my talk with the old man of the equipment store.

If I'm not mistaken, the country of Demi-humans Silt Welt is the one that dominates humans. Merlot Mark's influence will be very low there right?

The possibility is quite high that the queen will find out and come to negotiate when she finds out that the second princess has left Merlot Mark.

Of course, it would be very dangerous for us humans, but we have Raphtalia who is a demi-human.

It might also be good if we disguise ourselves.

"Alright, let's run away to Silt Welt for the time being. We might be able to overcome this situation there."

"That's the country of Demi-humans..... I see, It could work."

Raphtalia seems to understand.

"I'll leave the negotiations to enter the Demi-human country to you."

"Okay!"

"Now second princess, I will have you come with us. Rest assured, I will protect you by all means. If you do not wish to die, then follow me."

".....okay."

The second princess unwillingly joins our carriage.

I do not dislike children if they understand.

But in this case, it would be better tell the truth about this trash king and bitch princess who are no better than filth to this world.

Since the situation demands it, our destinies have become intertwined. If either of us die, it's over.

The second princess is also still a child.

If we teach her about what's correct starting from the beginning, she might be able to understand.

"Then we'll be together from now on, Mel-chan."

"Yup.....I'll be in your care, Firo-chan."

Firo is in a good mood now that she found out she'll have a new friend to journey together with.

The second princess will be the key that leads us to victory.

If we lose her, we are done.

I covered the knights who fainted in the forest and changed our direction to Silt Welt while staying cautious.

Chapter 58: Wanted

"Umuu....."

I am observing the situation behind a bush.

It's been several hours since we picked up the second princess. Since there is a village nearby, we must be cautious.

Nearby is the village that was plagued by the dragon corpse a while ago. It seems what the knight said was true.

"Devil of the Shield Iwatani Naofumi slaughtered imperial guard knights and kidnapped the second princess while escaping. Wanted dead or alive. The prize-"

On the notice board within the village, there was posted a piece of paper that has quite a large amount of price money declared on it by the soldiers of the castle.

Is this seriously only a few hours after? They seemed too prepared for this.

I knew this was a set up since the beginning.

For some reason, they also assumed I killed off those knights that I caught.

I heard it.

If you strap a bomb on yourself and charge, you will go to heaven.

These guys are putting similar insane thoughts to practice.

"The Imperial guardsmen knights have memorized an image of the criminal! The Imperial guardsmen knight who brought the crystal ball to the castle also died after the duty was completed."

Furthermore. It seems that a hologram of me is being projected by the crystal ball. My face was twisted with wickedness, and I am strangling the second princess by her neck, which also appears to be bleeding.

.....Is that amount of fabrication even possible?

Should I make a habit of avoiding crystal balls at all costs in the future?

Though she looks pretty healthy despite being on the verge of death.....

When I look closely at the second princess's face, despite the fact that she is being strangled, her expression is more shocked than painful.

By the way, the country of Silt Welt is located southeast of Shirudo Furiden, which is northeast of our current location.

It seems that it's necessary for us to cross two countries, a considerably further distance than before.

We will somehow have to advance without being found.

"If you see the devil that has a strange bird pulling his carriage, contact the country immediately."

The crystal ball then shows Firo's image, and her expression is that of a bird of prey spitting poison from the mouth.

That's good. I can use poison since they put that in the forgery.

This is going to be a problem though, since Firo is our main means of transportation.

We might have to leave Firo somewhere.

"So, Firo, you understand right?"

"Noo~!"

As I finished scouting the village, I went to Firo and to let her know.

If we continue letting Firo pull the carriage to refuge, she will attract a lot of attention.

If it comes down to it, Firo could just abandon the carriage and run off with her superior speed. They would have a hard time catching her, but we would lose everything.

So, I have to explain the situation.

"We can't help it. Because you stand out."

In the sense that she's an unusual demon.

She is the reason I am known as the saint of the holy bird after all.

"Can't Firo just change into a different form before anything happens?
Firo will work hard!"

"How are you-"

Firo's body shines and starts transforming.

She will probably pull the carriage in her human form anyway.

Her neck and feet started extending.

"Gueeee!"

Firo has transformed into a normal Philo Rial that resembles an ostrich.

Well, the size is considerably bigger than average I guess.

"Can you maintain this figure?"

"Gueee!"

She nods.

"Can you only chirp in that form?"

"Guee!"

"I see."

I guess we will be fine if she can keep this appearance.

"Firo-chan is amazing!"

The second princess's eyes sparkles as she begins playing with Firo.

"Gueeee..."

This high pitched screeching is better than her toxic mouth anyway.

"When you're in that form, be quiet."

"Guee!"

My head was gripped by her foot.

Naturally, since Raphtalia and Firo rarely attack me, they forget that it violates the slave mark.

The demon crest appears on her chest and she rolls over in pain.

"Gueeee!?"

"Firo-chan!?"

"Seriously, what is it you don't like?"

"Don't use violence on Firo-chan!"

"I didn't. The demon crest only activated because she attacked me."

Though she is still sort of cute in this form, her communication is lacking. Like this, I don't know what Firo is saying.

It seems that this could be from my inner thoughts of "it would be nice if I had a pet that would unconditionally listen to me and not be noisy."

Firo returns to her human forms and starts whining like a child.

"It's painful!"

"You asked for it. Even you understand. Demons can't attack their masters."

"Ueh....."

The second princess is strangely worried about Firo.

Is it because they are friends?

"For the time being, I'm assuming you are fine with disguising ourselves."

Up until now, we were fine staying hidden as a saint, so it should work out somehow.

"Raphtalia..... can you make yourself look a little shabby, and wear a hat?"

So like this, the princess and I hid ourselves within the carriage while the transformed Firo and disguised Raphtalia took care of passing the village.

"Ah....."

Raphtalia meets the villager's eyes.

"....."

"....."

We pass silently.

"....."

"....."

The metal carriage passes the village as the soldiers watch.

"Wait."

We were halted.

I begin preparing for being found out; we should be able to deal with the people in this village.

"O-okay. What's wrong?"

"The other side of your carriage has a wing mark. It resembles the one on that devil bird....."

"N-no. I'm just a merchant.

"Hou.....May I confirm what is inside?"

This is dangerous.

The soldier puts hand on the door of the carriage.

What to do? I may be fine since I am wearing common clothing and my shield is in the form of a book, but the princess will be recognized immediately.

"Ah!"

The villager who made eye contact with Raphtalia suddenly spoke.

"What's wrong!?"

The soldier turns around to face the villager.

"I heard that someone spotted the demon of the shield a while ago over there."

"Really!?"

The villager nods his head.

The soldier starts running towards the direction indicated by the villager.

"Over here."

The villager knocks on the carriage.

"Hurry, before it's too late."

It seems he's going to provide a hiding place for us.

What to do..... the deceived soldier will come back soon and that will be disastrous.

"Please go. I'll stall them here."

Raphtalia senses my hesitation and decides for me.

"But-"

"I planned to do this since the beginning."

Is that so?

The second princess and I get off the carriage, and when we arrive at the house, I cover her with a mantle as the villager guides us.

"There was nothing."

"Huh? Was I wrong?"

"No, you reported as ordered and even gave details. He just got away."

"I see."

The villager finishes deceiving the soldier and he checks the carriage.

"Hmmm.....there are only miscellaneous goods. Is this medicine?"

"Yeah, an adventurer asked me to transport it. Hahaha."

While in disguise, Raphtalia answers with a wry smile.

"I see, well sorry I bothered you."

"No, it's fine."

The soldier leaves to patrol somewhere else.

The villager points Raphtalia in the direction of the inn and she responds obediently.

"Hmm....."

We were peeping from the window of the private house.

I was very nervous.

That was pretty dangerous. If that villager choose not to help us, there would have been an uproar.

"Saint-sama, are you all right?"

"Ah, yeah.....somehow."

"After Saint-sama saved the village, we noticed you were actually the Hero of the Shield-sama."

"And you guys don't condemn me?"

"Condemn!? No way. The saint saved the people of this village. There is no way we would repay kindness with enmity."

".....Are we safe?"

The second princess anxiously asks.

"You're going to side with the devil?"

"We received various things from the Three Heroes church. But, the Devil of the Shield kindly saved us from the disaster that the god of the sword caused."

The fight here was harsh. I also learned various things from this village.

It seems that the village is still recovering from after-effects of the plague.

"Although you might be called a devil, under these circumstances, we would be even worse than devils if we do not repay our favor."

The villager points at the second princess who about to ask.

"This is just a little conspiracy."

"Well it's fine if the princess went willingly."

The princess nods at the villager's words.

"Currently there are those within the country aiming for my life. The Hero of the Shield-sama saved me....."

The villager nods in understanding at the princess's answer.

"I get it. Some of us might be ungrateful though. So you should quickly escape."

".....I know."

"There is a cart in the back that is fully loaded with straw. Please hide in it, and several villagers will carry you to your companion who is at the inn."

"I am grateful."

Thanks to the villagers who carried the cart of hay and distracted the soldier, we rejoined Raphtalia.

"As I thought, we are in considerable danger in this carriage. Let's ditch it for something else."

"Gueee!?"

Transformed Firo informs me of her displeasure.

Her neck is shaking back and forth.

"Gue! Gue!"

"We can't help it! Do you want to be found and caught? The second princess, Mel-chan will be killed."

"Gu....."

Firo reluctantly falls silent at the mention of the second princess's life being in danger.

It seems she has become quite an important friend for her to care this much.....

"You're great, Firo. You can let go of important things for your friend."

"Gue?"

I pat her kindly.

Even if I don't understand what she is saying, she choose correctly.

"After this is over we'll certainly take it back."

"Gue!"

Absolutely. I understand.

"Sorry. Would you mind looking after the carriage here?"

".....Sure."

The villager seems to understand the situation and accepts it.

"I will be very grateful."

"You've already done enough for us."

"I see. Alright second princess, come here and change your clothes.
We'll be discovered instantly with what you're wearing now."

"O.....okay."

The second princess doesn't seem very happy about the idea of wearing cheap clothing, but given the situation she has no choice.

It seems that the apprentice's clothing from villager barely fits.

It's probably due to the villager having no children.

Compared to the second princess's usual clothing, now she looks like a shabby little villager.

Albeit a well-bred one since blue hair is only associated with noble-born children.

Well, I can worry about that as we travel. There is no reason to discard her old clothes.

It will be a little awkward to bring it around though.

"Fill the bags with miscellaneous goods."

I put the more valuable things inside the straw cart and cover it.

Anything bulky was given to the villagers.

We should be fine going for two weeks like this. This stuff will be useful for the revival of the village.

"Alright, let's go."

"Okay."

We leave the village quietly and while the villagers see us off.

Well, we were still seen by another villager.

After this, our best bet would be to avoid towns and villages as much as possible.

The wagon made a rumbling sound as we began to run northeast.

If possible, I hope the village won't be punished for helping us.

Chapter 59: Firo's Secret

The crackling of the campfire was the only thing that could be heard while we sat around.

There haven't been any enemies so far, but we cannot just take it easy.

In the first place, we are in disguise. From the first glance, it would be hard to tell that I am the Hero of the Shield.

But that's to be expected.

"Ahahahahahaha Firo-chan!"

"Ahahahahahaha!"

The second princess and Firo are running around the clearing without a care in the world.

Pleasant things in life include food, sleep, and a close circle of friends.

Since I participated many times in school events in a country school and excursions to seaside summer houses, I understand how they feel.

Once I became a university student, I also lodged at my friend's house.

But..... To think these two would be so chummy...

It might be because ever since Firo was born, she never had anyone around her age or size to communicate with, so it is understandable.

No, the feeling I'm getting is what an owner feels for their domestic animals.

This second princess is a little surprising though.

I thought that this culture looked down on animals and such.

It might also be how she is coping with this unexpectedly long journey that she had no say in.



"Don't be too loud! We may be found."

"Okay~"

After replying, they go right back to playing.

Seriously, after Firo made a friend it's gotten very noisy.

"Mel-chan, Firo will show you a treasure."

"Yay!"

After saying so, Firo opens a bag that is concealed within the wagon, and shows the second princess its contents.

I wonder what's in it. I am a little worried.

The treasure of that bird. Is she just collecting the stuff I throw away?

"Master wants to see too~?"

"Ah, yeah."

I approached Firo and took a look inside.

Oh, a piece of a broken sword. Also, trash jewels which I threw away after failing to make them into accessories.

An empty bottle. Glass marbles.

"It's shiny and beautiful!"

"Yeah, it's beautiful."

The second princess is putting on quite a subtle mask.

Well, it's just garbage.

Is it because birds like shiny objects? I heard something like this before, it was an uproar caused by a crow stealing valuables.

This might be related.

Hmm?

"What's this?"

Since there was something strange mixed in the bag, I took it out.

A big brown..... furball? It has the shape of a ball, but it is very soft.

It kind of stinks.

I have a really bad feeling about this.

"That is..... something that came out of Firo's mouth."

It came out of the mouth..... of the bird.

Is this comparable to a cat's hairball? In human terms it's barf.

Bullet of the bird = Vomit.

In other words, the hard objects like bones and whatnot that Firo eats are dissolved into.....this.

"It's finished!"

What is? I just realized I'm still holding onto the hairball.

I threw it away.

"Ah, Firo's treasure!"

"That's not a treasure! That's waste! If I see another one of those in your bag, I'm throwing it all away!"

"Boo....."

Firo and the second princess seem to have a few subtle exchanges in front of me.

"Hey, Second princess."

"Hm?"

"When Firo changed into her human form, you were not surprised."

"Yup. Because I saw it yesterday."

"I see."

So you already knew.

Well that's good.

Today's dinner is grilled skewers consisting of meat from the demons we encounter.

"Master is good at making food!"

"How is this skewer so delicious!? It's just meat on a stick!"

The second princess eats anything without flinching. It seems my fears of her not eating barbaric cuisine is groundless.

I was expecting her to take a while before she was able to eat this stuff.

My expectations were betrayed. It seems the queen brought her up nicely.

"If it's with Naofumi-sama, we can eat this everyday."

"Yay~!"

"I see, that's good."

Now then, for my spare time. I'm getting quite used to camping out.

Should I study the beginner class magic book and try to learn new magic?

After a few minutes, the second princess and Firo quiet down.

They are probably tired and sleeping.

Raphtalia is going to take a nap.

I can't sleep soundly if Firo or the second princess is watching the fire, and I have to prepare for any night attacks.

"Hmmm....."

Despite it being beginner class, there are various kinds of magic.

There is a ranged version of Fast Guard and Fast Heal.

Though I haven't read the book completely, some beginner class magic was learnt.

I now have magic that will increase offensive ability and speed.

I would like to learn the more difficult spells, but deciphering difficult

concepts and grammar is hard.

As the firewood burns, time passes.

While mixing medicine, I am unable to calm down. I haven't advanced much in poison compounding, but I can sort poisonous herbs and understand a few recipes.

There is no time to look for materials though.

"N....."

Raphtalia woke up with an absentminded look.

"Oh? Did I wake you?"

"No.....Do you want to change?"

"If you're fine with it."

"Okay."

Since Raphtalia is taking my place, I decided to lay down.

"Umm, Naofumi-sama?"

"What's up?"

"About Firo and Princess Melty....."

Raphtalia points towards Firo's Philo Rial · Queen form with trembling fingers.

The second princess's clothes are discarded and lying around Firo, who is sitting alone and rocking back and forth in her sleep.

"Ummmm..."

Based on circumstantial evidence.....Where is the second princess?

There is nothing behind Firo either.....

Even her shoes are there.....Where is her body?

"No way....."

No matter how much of a glutton you are.....

"Naofumi-sama, I don't want to believe it, but it seems you threatening

other humans with Firo eating them may not be a bluff....."

"Nonono! No way!"

"But.....Firo is..."

"U....."

Can it be? Did you recognize Friend = Edible partner?

Is that what you meant by wanting to help her no matter what?

"Raphtalia, let's do our best as fugitives."

"Yeah. Our crimes are certain now....."

Seriously, this fat bird does the most outrageous things.

"Funya?"

Firo wakes up and tilts her head.

"Raphtalia Onee-chan? Master? What happened?"

"Firo, where is Princess Melty?"

"Melty-chan? Melty-chan is sleeping within Firo's feathers."

"What? Not inside you?"

This is something that must be verified.

"Melty-chan. Wake up."

Firo lets her feathers on her back stand on end.

"N~?"

It is a strange sight to see, the second princess appearing from within Firo's back.

"What!?"

How is there enough room for a person inside of Firo's feathers?

But it is undeniable that the second princess came out of a strange place.

"Firo-chan How did you do that?"

"Master, did you wake me up to look for Mel-chan? Here she is."

"Firo's back is very warm....."

".....Why did you take your clothes off?"

"Because it's hot."

Ah.....That's not surprising.

"How did you get so deep?"

"Firo-chan's feathers are soft and fluffy, but also mysterious and thick you know? You want to feel it?"

"Ah, yeah."

What the heck is happening in Firo's body?

Since the princess is beckoning, I stretch my hand out.

The princess catches my hand and puts it into one of Firo's feathers.

"Uwaa.....This is quite deep."

I can put my whole arm into her.

As I thought, her temperature is hot.

If the princess snuggles up in here I may not notice.

It seems to only swell a little.

"What the heck is with this bird's structure."

"I know right....."

"Should we examine by plucking all her feathers? I might even make a profit from selling the feathers."

"No~!"

"No roughing up Firo-chan!"

Hmm.....Today it seems I have had a glimpse at the strange anatomy of this bird.

Chapter 60: Deviltry

Several days later.

Firo is pulling the wagon across the highway, while looking like an ordinary Philo Rial. We are mostly trying to ignore villages and towns, repeatedly camping out at night.

We're almost at the border.

"Gueeee!"

Firo cries in alarm.

Is it an enemy!?

The second princess and I hide in the straw to observe.

"Hehehe, hand over all your money and you may leave."

A familiar-sounding voice.

Why look at that, if it isn't the thief who tried to rob the accessory merchant before.

What is wrong with this guy?

He's seriously going to attack a wagon full of straw?

"Hey! Hurry up and leave all your valuables! Oh? you look pretty famili-"

The bandit's complexion instantly pales after he takes a look at Raphtalia in disguise.

"You look different."

It's probably not necessary to hide any more, so I jump out of the wagon.

Firo, who senses that it's not necessary to disguise herself, returns to her Philo Rial · Queen form.

"Are you fighting?"

The second princess anxiously asks from the midst of straw.

"Yeah, probably. Don't worry about it."

"Why not? Will we be okay?"

It seems about two thirds of the bandits haven't fought with us before, and most of them look at me with puzzled expressions while the rest turn blue.

"D-D-D-Don't be afraid. Th-This guy has a bounty now. I-If we beat him, we can get it."

He declares while stuttering and trembling.

That's one hell of a stutter.

"Even though I ransacked you last month, you're already back on your feet. Quite quick if I do say so myself."

One of his companions who had a puzzled expression prepares to attack.

"Sh-Shut up! Because of you I'm just a lackey in another group of thieves now!"

"Ah, so you guys merged?"

"The boss has returned to his country!"

"That's great. You should also resign from these types of jobs."

"Sh-Shut up! You're going to get it!"

They all take up their weapons and charge us.

"Firo! Raphtalia!"

"Okay!"

"Okay~!"

I step back to protect the second princess.

Neither Raphtalia nor Firo will lose to thieves of this level.

"Eat this!"

One of the thieves swings his sword at Firo.

"Firo-chan!"

The second princess pops out of the straw, extends her hands, and starts to chant.

What? The second princess can fight?"

"I command the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Blast them with water!"

"Ars ▪ Tzuvait ▪ Aqua Shot!"

Huh?

Water erupts from the second princess's hands and speeds towards the thieves.

Tzuvait. It is an adjective that makes a magic intermediate class. As for Ars, it means multiple magic systems.

"Uge!"

"Gawa!"

"Ugu!"

The thieves near Firo are blown away.

That packs quite the punch.

"I command the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Cut them with blades of water!"

"Tzuvait ▪ Aqua Slash!"

The second princess follows up immediately with another spell.

More water erupts from her hands, but this time instead of a ball of water, blades of water are released.

Somehow, I heard something dangerous.

She missed her target, but the tree that she did hit was cut in half.

"Next.....I'll use....."

She's gasping for breath. It seems to be difficult casting continuously.

"They have a magician! She's also an expert!"

"Firo-chan!"

"Okay~!"

The bandits who are staring at the second princess in surprise are kicked like toys by Firo.

"I'm finished over there."

"Not yet~!"

One of the thieves snuck around us by taking advantage of the confusion, and tried to jump the second princess.

"Air Strike Shield!"

"Argg!"

Right as he jumps, I summon a shield in between them.

"Not yet!"

The remaining thieves start charging at the second princess who is our weakest link.

"Second Shield, Change Shield."

I call another shield to protect her and then I instantly change shields.

I'll just use the Bee Needle Shield this time. They may accidentally die from sustained poison damage, so I'll just stun them with paralysis.

"Ugh,arg....."

One of the thieves is hit by my the second shield and falls down convulsing.

"Still not done yet!"

The first thief who approached the second princess begins to crawl.

"No, it's over."

"Ah....."

A big shadow looms over the thief. It seems he noticed too. I hear crying.

Probably one of thieves crying in resignation.

"I'll help Mel-chan!"

And with a thud, Firo just body slams him.

"You guys know the drill. Tell me where your hideout is."

I ask after tying up all their members.

"We'll never talk-"

"Firo."

"It's over there!"

"H-hey!"

It seems the newbie thieves don't know their position.

"What's wrong?"

One of the thieves who encountered us last time desperately pleas.

"That fat bird will eat us if we don't accept obediently!"

"Are you joking?"

"Does that guy look like he jokes?"

I was surprised as the thief talks.

"Who is that anyway? He used some strange skills and magic."

'Don't you understand!? That's the shield!"

"Eh!?"

The remaining members of the group of thieves all turn blue.

"The devil and his man-eating bird!?"

"That's right! That bird eats everything including the head. I'd rather just get kicked and get away!"

"Please just spare our lives! We'll give you all our property, even the leader's!"

It seems another rumour has been added to my notoriety.....

Raphitalia sighs and face-palms.

"If you tell a lie-"

"I know! so please spare our lives!"

The thieves inform me of their hideout location. Of course, we occupied it with overwhelming combat power.

That day, we spent the night at the bandit hide-I mean inn. And took everything the thieves accumulated.

It was mostly just food. But since we have been living like fugitives recently, and only eating demons, a decent meal was appreciated.

When we entered, the second princess was scared, but after a while she settled down.

Anything that was valuable was collected, and anything that was too troublesome to take was burnt.

Well, if anything is missed and the thieves reclaim it, I don't really care.

I half-smiled at the thieves who were despairing.

They were then rolled out of the hideout.

"Hey second princess, it seems you practice magic."

"Yup. I learnt it for self-defence."

"How much can you use?"

If the second princess joins our party, we could fight better in the future.

"What level are you?"

"Uhhh, I'm level 18..... I can use a few Intermediate class water spells."

That's unexpectedly low. Well, if we're judging by appearance and age, she would be very high leveled.

But intermediate magic huh?

"So you are good with water?"

"Yup."

Her hair is blue. Are they related?

"I can use a little earth magic too."

"Hoh....."

Her repertoire is unexpectedly wide.

"Oh right, does your elder sister use wind magic?"

I would rather not remember her.

I was hit in the back during that duel with wind magic.

Damn, I'm getting irritated just thinking about it. Let's stop.

"Older Sister? she is proud of her fire magic, and uses a little wind."

Oh, it makes sense due to her hair color.

"Your mother is good with fire and water?"

"That's right."

Not that it matters.

"This is probably for the best. For the time being, enter my party."

"Okay."

I don't intend to rely on her.

But this is insurance in the case of an emergency. It would be best if we didn't fight though.

There is always the risk of death.

I don't want to go in a direction that would not require us to rely on the second princess.

"Hey. Why did Hero of the Shield-sama make father so angry?"

"Now that I think about it, I didn't tell you. It all started when your sister framed me-"

That night, I told the second princess everything that trash and bitch did to me. Firo also seemed to be listening to my story for some reason,

but she stayed quiet. I did not hide anything or lie, I just told her the truth.

Well, my feelings and grudges were mixed in a little, but I'll just think of it as education.

"Father and Elder sister are cruel! Even though Hero of the Shield-sama said bad things to them I can't complain."

"Right, right."

"Mother even said to value the Hero of the Shield-sama as much as possible."

"What?"

What did you say? Doesn't the religion of this country designate the shield as the devil?

Is the queen different?

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, I'm just wondering what your mother thinks of me."

"Um.....I don't know. But she sent a letter to father telling him to treat all the heroes the same."

I understand the second princess's story a little; it seems the queen was worried this would happen to me.

Oh well, since it all happened anyway thanks to trash.

"Master, a lot of things happened before Firo was born."

"That's right."

"Eh?"

The second princess has a dumbfounded look.

"Uhhh Firo-chan, how old are you?"

"One month and three weeks old."

"Ehh!?"

Being surprised is correct. Her growth was rapid even for a demon.

"Firo-can is so precocious!"

"Ehehehe.....I was praised."

"You were praised?"

"Then I'm the older sister."

"Well, in the age category. Raphtalia over there is about the same as you."

"Raphtalia onee-chan is....."

Firo looks at Raphtalia with an extremely disappointed expression.

Raphtalia looks at me coldly.

Well, I understand your feelings since the bird said something like that.

"Wh-what?"

"Demi-humans..... even if we are the same age she feels older."

"Well..... I was not allowed to lose."

The atmosphere is delicate.

"Well, despite Raphtalia's age, her appearance suits her."

That would have immediately labelled me as a lolicon.

Also, both the second princess and Firo are children.

Not to mention, Raphtalia became my slave when she was a little girl.

"This is just how things work out."

"Naofumi-sama....."

These three would be considered a Loli-Harem.

I wonder what the other heroes would say.

"Anyway, we'll rest here today and cross the border tomorrow."

""Yay~!""

"Okay!"

Chapter 61: Persuasion

"Wow....."

I muttered unintentionally while looking around the checkpoints at the border to the northeast.

The reason I muttered is due to the enormous amount of knights patrolling the border.

Did they bring a whole army for this?

What're you going to do if another country attacks? That trash.....

Well, I was certainly expecting soldiers, but this amount is ridiculous.

"The Devil of the Shield will surely escape to Silt Welt! Do not miss him!"

"Roger!"

So insufferably annoying.....

They are being strict enough with the border patrol that not even ants can escape.

If it were just Raphtalia, Firo, and I, we may be able to break through the front, but now we have to worry about the second princess.

It is probably impossible.

Even if we do charge in from the front, the other Heroes may also be here.....

Well, they shouldn't have recovered completely from the last wave yet though.

Me charging in alone while they try to sneak past is also not going to work.....

However, how did they find out I was going to Silt Welt? They probably figured that would be the most disadvantageous country for them.

Either way, my imagination is running wild.

"What do we do?..... We can't pass the barricade, should we change roads?"

"Impossible....."

The second princess mutters.

"Why would it be impossible?"

"This seems to be an emergency deployment. Warnings will resound once people cross national borders, and soldiers will rush there."

"That's pretty severe....."

I imagine something like an infra-red alarm system. These guys probably have something like this set up along the border.

Even if we just camp on a mountain, it will only be a matter of time before we are discovered.

"Firo, can you evade them while pulling the wagon?"

"They were warned. It is impossible to get away since they have the warning line."

"Hmm..... They are strangely detailed."

"This is my mother's emergency plan, so no expenses were spared since it will be used in emergencies after all."

"It's quite elaborate....."

My Killing intent rises.

Though there is nothing I can do to release it.

"Can't we escape to Silt Welt through another country?"

The closest border is here, and we cannot choose any others.

We ended up bumping to a villager from the neighboring village.

Since we are in disguise, it should be fine. The second princess and I are hiding within the straw.

"Ah....."

Raphtalia and the villager make eye contact and there is a mysterious silence.

"Hero of the Shield-sama. It is dangerous here. I recommend you take a detour."

We were found out immediately?

I must reconsider Raphtalia's disguise.

"Ah, our country has improved a lot thanks to the seed Hero-sama gave us. Thank you."

Now that I look carefully. This guy is from the neighboring country.

Moreover, this guy looks like he's been peddling.

"I think your disguise will be fine if you add a little more dirt. I only recognized you since she is such a beautiful Raccoon Demi-human.

This is my fault. As expected, Raphtalia seems to be one of the better-looking raccoon demi-humans.

Or did she become a celebrity when we were peddling?

In the first place, when I bought Raphtalia, the slave trader said that the raccoon class's appearance is slightly bad.

Since they are very wary, they are able to disguise themselves.

"I'm sorry for everything."

"Don't even think about it. Compared to what Hero of the Shield-sama has done for us, this much is nothing."

I give him some silver in exchange for food.

Our food problem is quite serious due to Firo.

During our fugitive life-style, her stomach rumbled non-stop.

I'm afraid she'll drop in speed.

Our only advantages are Firo's speed and disguise ability.

It is practically our life line against bounty hunters and adventurers on the road.

"Oh a peddler? I want to buy something....."

Oh shit!

A soldier approaches the guy from the neighboring country.

".....Hero of the Shield-sama?"

Shit, we've been discovered by a soldier! Just as I was about to order Firo to silence him and run-

"It's me. I cooperated with Hero-sama during the wave."

Ah, now that I look carefully, he's one of the volunteer soldiers.

That reminds me, after parting with trash, I couldn't follow up on any of the others that came with me to the castle.

I was a little worried, but it seems like they're cooperating with us?

Though at that time I did not know about the story of the Devil of the Shield.

It must have been a considerably hard decision to go through with.

They might even have been demoted.

".....Did you get demoted?"

"No, for some reason there was no blame."

"I see, then you're on border patrol without getting demoted?"

"It's not like that. The majority of the knights are concentrated here."

Just for me!?

Hey hey. Just how much does trash hate me? It seems they really don't want me to go to Silt Welt.

Catching me might not even be their true purpose here though.

There must be something I don't know concerning the country called Silt Welt.

It might not be impossible to proceed after all.

My best hand = Whatever the enemy hates.

I don't know what, but there is certainly something I can exploit here.

"Anyway, It's dangerous here. Please escape as soon as possible."

"I am grateful."

"Don't mention it..... Hero-sama, are you troubled by the fact that we bumped into each other here, and that I recognize you as the Hero of the Shield-sama?"

.....Certainly.

At the time of the last wave, the other Heroes may have contributed to Glass's withdrawal.

They may consider my abilities above them, but.....

I would be murdered if we encounter again.

In any case, we change Raphtalia's clothes for some even worse ones and plaster her face with mud.

"For the time being, let's get out of here."

"I pray that your suspicions will be cleared up."

After parting with the villager from the neighboring country and the volunteer, we headed south to take a detour.

We had only advanced a little.

According to the volunteer's story, Motoyasu and Itsuki were on their way in a carriage.

.....I barely steal a glance.

One of their magicians seems to be chanting something.

"There! That cart of straw!"

I seriously hope that was not us. Immediately I have a very bad feeling.

Motoyasu and Itsuki rush up to our cart.

Shit! Why are you guys heading here?

It's probably that bastard that used magic.

I suppose it's some analysis magic.

I brush off the straw and jump off the wagon. Firo sensed the situation and returned to her Philo Rial · Queen form.

"So it was you after all!"

To them they were so close. Ren also appears.

Shit..... Can this situation get any worse?

"We found you! Free princess Melty!"

Itsuki points at me like he's some messenger of justice and makes a provoking face.

"Release what? I'm not restraining the second princess."

"Stop playing dumb, we have evidence!"

"That's right. You have no justice."

"Justice.....huh?"

Are the knights acting based on justice during the wave?

The reality is, everyone has their own sense of justice.

Wait..... If I think carefully this guy's sense of justice is very straightforward.

Back in the castle town, Ren was worried about the village of plague, while Itsuki just wasted my time on his useless justice impression.

Can I use this?

Well, there is no way they will believe me but I might as well try.

It will still be worth it trying to explain it once and the matter gets settled.

In other words, if I can turn their sense of justice against each other, we may get out of this yet.

An evil plot is hatched.

It is one of the situations that game enthusiasts long for.

If it works, this will make them doubt the country.....

"Are you guys saying that what you believe in is truly justice?"

"What are you saying?"

"The second princess is here without any injuries."

I show the heroes the second princess while maintaining readiness to defend from any attacks.

The second princess looks at me anxiously, and nods.

"Hero of the Sword-sama, Hero of the Spear-sama, Hero of the Bow-sama. The Hero of the Shield-sama is innocent. Rather, he has saved my life."

The second princess is not speaking with her usual childish tone, but rather with the authority of an authentic princess.

The expressions of those 3 visibly change.

In fact, they are just finding out they were used for evil.

Since these guys are basically lumps of justice, this will be extraordinarily disgraceful.

"Please believe me. There is a big conspiracy hidden behind this."

"But why did Princess Melty go to this guy?"

"I just asked him to protect my life."

The second princess explains what happened to them.

"Isn't it unnatural? Who would profit if the Hero of the Shield-sama kidnaps me?"

"Th-That's....."

Are you trying to look for a reason?

Your eyes are swimming.

"But, this guy is-"

"Did the country Merlot Mark not give the Hero of the Shield-sama

different treatment?"

"Certainly....."

"In the first place Mother was saying. When the time of misfortune comes, the people must join hands and unite to repel it..... There is no room for the Hero-samas to be fighting each other. Please lower your weapons."

The 3 heroes weaken their grips on their weapons and stood down.

Though they are still wary.

They were defeated in the last fight after all.

As the second princess said, we need to train together and get stronger.

If we are going to fulfill our missions as Heroes, we cannot just increase our levels. Both our weapons and levels must be sufficient.

"Do you understand? This is a conspiracy. I will tell you everything that I know. Whether or not you decide to fight will be up to you."

After I say so the bitch steps forward.

"Do not listen to the words of the Devil of the Shield!"

Shit! You bitch, I was just about to explain our circumstances.

What should I say.

In the first place is she even worried about her younger sister?

"The latest incident is already solved! the Devil of the Shield used powerful brainwashing on the second princess!"

Chapter 62: Common Destiny

"Ah.....Melty.....To think you would be brainwashed by the Devil of the Shield..."

"Elder Sister?"

The second princess gives the bitch a look of astonishment.

That bitch.....

This is absolutely disgusting.

What kind of shield can brainwash? If I had such a thing, I wouldn't be having such a hard time. To think she would claim I brainwashed someone without even flinching...

I mean, the purpose of religion is brainwashing.

What a joke.

"Does the wicked shield possess the power to brainwash? It seems fake....."

"I don't know if you have heard, but this was a suspicion of the church's from a month ago."

That's when I started peddling.

Selling medicine to sick people was my priority back then.

After that, rumors of me being the saint of the holy bird started spreading.

Indeed, that cannot be a coincidence. It turned out to be convenient for the church in various ways.

"This situation proves it. Were you guys not being clouded by the information he provided? And also about to help him? Is it common to help out criminals?"

"Some of the countrymen are also acting strange. If the Hero of the Shield can make an old grandmother energetic, he also might be capable of brainwashing."

That grandmother.....I instantly know who that is.

However, don't I have a say in this? These guys.....

It is true that a lot of people have helped me recently.

However, that's just repaying me for saving them.

What I don't know = The enemy's strategy.

These guys are also stupid enough to believe it.

"He is probably brainwashing his companions to talk for him too. We are currently preparing some church authorized personnel with the power to remove the brainwashing."

"What kind of power is that!?"

No one reacts to my retort

No, Raphtalia, Firo, and the second princess are also dumbfounded.

Let's think about this situation. The government is ordering the country to gather information, and also placing a high bounty on me. A lie that I have the power to brainwash was fed to the three heroes by the bitch, and she also has convincing fake evidence. Is that it?

Realistic forgeries. That's not impossible.

"Is the Hero of the Shield-sama that powerful?"

The second princess looks at me anxiously.

"Do I look like that to you?"

"Umm.....I don't think so."

"I kind of hoped for an immediate answer."

I wouldn't be struggling so hard if I had such a convenient shield.

If I can brainwash the soldiers, knights, magicians, and villagers, I could just become the lord.

I need to defend myself in this situation.

In other words, though this was arranged when they put that bounty on

my head, the authenticity that the shield can brainwash is doubtful to say the least.

Do you goddamn heroes not understand something so simple?

"So Raphtalia-chan and Firo-chan are being brainwashed forcefully by that guy!"

"You're wrong! We're not brainwashed!"

"We'll rescue you!"

"Firo wants to be with master!"

Motoyasu you bastard, still not giving up on Firo and Raphtalia yet!?

Just how much do you like women?

"We've heard enough! Hand over the second princess!"

"Eh!?"

The second princess was surprised to gasp.

".....Will you tell us what happened?"

Ren takes the lead and asks. This is a volatile situation. I want to avoid wrong choices as much as possible.

"In the first place I have no such power as brainwashing-"

"I do not believe it!"

"Shut up! You're annoying, Shogun!"

Since Itsuki prevented me from explaining I told him to shut up.

Aren't you a hypocrite deciding on right and wrong only after you get one-sided information?

"Anyway, this is a conspiracy. The King, that woman over there, or the church attempted to assassinate the second princess and frame me for it."

".....I understand what you said. We'll just have to take you into custody first. I promise not to harm your companions. Just wait till the inspection is complete."

"You actually believe it!?"

"That's right!"

"Hero of the Sword-sama! Don't listen to the words of the devil!"

"I would rather end this without fighting. The truth can be confirmed later."

As expected Ren is the only one staying calm in this situation and analysing.

.....Should I consider it?

".....No."

The second princess clenches my hand tightly and begs.

She is trembling and her face is pale.

"I will most likely be murdered....."

I confirm the surrounding situation.

The second princess probably will receive treatment different from us.

Since in order to remove the brainwashing, the second princess will be subjected to magic by magicians of this country.

And what happens will be as follows: A brutal curse will be removed from the second princess, but she will die because of its power.

Such a scenario will play out.

Ren will surely believe it and I will be branded the culprit.

The possibility that this is an event orchestrated by Bitch to frame me is very high.

To even aim for your younger sister.....

"Help....."

A small voice could be heard.

There is also no way to prove my innocence.

Sigh.....

"Didn't I promise?"

"Eh?"

During that day I was falsely accused to rape. Nobody believed me.

And now this matter concerns the life and death of the second princess.

Brainwashing..... what a convenient plot used by those that want to kill the second princess.

This is too obvious.....

Even I know that much.

The second princess's death means our defeat.

We definitely have a common destiny. Who would trust an untrustworthy person?

"Too bad. You cannot be trusted. Even if the second princess is handed over I will still be screwed. I promised her that I would absolutely protect her."

I place the second princess on Firo's back and tell Raphtalia to get on as well.

"Firo, I know you hate it, but abandon the wagon and run!"

"Okay~!"

"See ya."

I also jump on and Firo takes off.

"Ah, wait-"

"Okay let's go-!"

We are instantly 7 meters away. As I expected, Firo's leg strength is truly fearsome.

But those three aren't falling behind and keep pace.

"You think you can escape!?"

Itsuki shoots magic arrows at us.

"Air Strike Shield! Second Shield!"

I turn around and chant the skills. Blocking the attacks aimed at us.

The shield shattered with a loud crack, but the attacks have been neutralized.

"You won't escape!"

Itsuki's starts to prepare another arrow.

I cannot use the shield any more due to cooldown time.

"Eagle Piercing Shot!"

Itsuki's arrow glows after being shot and flies straight at us.

What the hell? The one you should be protecting, the second princess, is here too. Why are you using such a strong skill!?

While riding on Firo, I am forced to change my posture to receive the arrow.

"Master, are you okay?"

Firo supports me so that I don't fall over.

"That arrow..... Firo! It's coming!"

"Yeah, it's very fast."

The arrow which Itsuki shot is fast enough to catch up to the light-footed Firo.

At first glance I understand that it's a lump of energy. This doesn't look like a beginner skill.

I change my shield to the Chimeric Viper Shield and prepare.

I hope I can endure this.

I stare at the lump of energy. Then, I see an arrow.

It's flying fast and in a straight line.

.....Can it be done? Firo might fall over from the impact if I take it badly.

No.....Judging by the name of the skill, this is meant for penetrating.

Because I played a fair amount of Net Games, the names of bow system attacks aren't unfamiliar.

This arrow is meant to pierce a hole right through me.

It is a skill used specifically since I am here, with such high efficiency.

Then it's not possible to receive this arrow.

Can't be helped..... the only way to escape this penetration attack is to either get out of range or to catch it.

Can I do it? If I fail, this will dangerous.

Seriously, you guys totally forgot about the second princess right?

.....I start to focus.

I intensely concentrate on the flying attack, and while lightly putting my hand over its energy, I catch the arrow by its shaft just before it reaches me!

"What!? He caught my Eagle Piercing Shot with his hand!?"

Itsuki responds to my action by expressing his shock.

The shot of energy is unexpectedly weak; I just dispersed the power and caught the arrow.

"Wait!"

Ugh! Ren and Motoyasu catch up and take out their weapons.

I had to make some unnecessary movements to catch Itsuki's arrow and just barely stop falling off.

Our speed fell a bit as a result.

To think that they would have companions that could catch up...

"I do not want to attack Firo-chan! This is all your fau--Gefu!"

"Hindrance."

Firo stomps Motoyau in the face. Was it that unexpected?

This isn't the time now. Ren aims his sword at me.

Dokun.....

The shield pulsates, and I unconsciously stretch my right hand towards Ren's sword.

Fresh blood scatters and pain runs through my hand.

Why!? It is different from what I expected. Ren's eyes do not shift, as if he's being manipulated by something.

My shield suddenly glows red, and black flames are fired at Ren.

"Wh--"

This was probably unpredictable. Ren desperately defends with his sword.

Is that Dark Curse Burning? Did the core of the dragon killed by Ren react and counter attack from the shield?

To think the shield would change without permission and flash red!

Dokun.....Dokun.....

Oh shit. It would be impossible for Firo to run away from here if the shield of anger comes out.

"Raphtalia, give me your hand....."

"Yes? Naofumi-sama!? You are injured!"

An anxious Raphtalia looks at me with concern and stretches out her hand.

The pulsations settled down and subside.

"Firo are you okay? Escape as fast as possible!"

"Okay~!"

Firo regains her balance and runs at full power.

We lose the heroes in no time.

After that, Firo ran at full power till she was exhausted.

"We should be safe for a while here."

"Yeah, Firo-chan is fast~!"

"Firo is a little tired."

"That's fine.....but we lost all our luggage and our wagon."

"Can't be helped."

I have some stuff on me: portable rations, money, a knife, and simple cooking utensils.

But we lost Raphtalia's armour.....

I feel uneasy. I think it's showing on my expression.

"Since we did not cross the border, what will we do now?....."

We can probably run around the country aimlessly.

But we have to at least try to get to Silt Welt by a detour route.

We'll continue our fugitive lifestyle.

By the way, I cured the injury with a Fast Heal.

Chapter 63: Shadow

We are travelling south along the border, searching for any gaps within the border patrol.

Motoyasu is extremely annoying. He's been chasing us ever since.

There hasn't been any situations where we were truly in danger since that one back at the border thanks to Firo's swift running.

The strange thing is that there has been no sign of either Ren or Itsuki.

Did they give up? Or are they laying an ambush somewhere?

In the first place, trying to accuse me of brainwashing was irrational. Did they lose interest in this event and go back to leveling? I would understand if Ren gave up since he was already skeptical, but was it good luck for us that Itsuki is also nowhere to be found?

On the contrary, Motoyasu is way too persistent.

Either way, it is fortunate since his attacks aren't as strong as Ren's and he doesn't have any ranged attacks like Itsuki.

To be honest, Motoyasu seems more interested in Firo than actually bringing the second princess back.

Still, problems are piling up nonstop.....

"What should we do?....."

It is irresponsible to just pass every day being disgruntled, so I must consider what we should do.

Border patrol is too strict. Isn't there somewhere we can sneak over?

Living as a fugitive everyday won't solve anything, and my life is over when the next wave arrives.

In this case, recklessly crossing the border may not actually be a bad idea.

As it stands, our names will never be cleared. Those chasing me may also avoid Silt Welt.

That night, we discussed our course of action over the campfire.

Since Firo is stupid, she is not listening.

The second princess and Raphtalia had some reaction, but that was to be expected.

"It might be a little tough, but if we want to break through, then here is our best bet."

It would be hard to pull off. But as long as the other heroes don't interfere, my defense should be able to break through.

"You're right, we won't last if we continue escaping like this....."

"Yeah....."

"Mel-chan!"

Firo returns to her human form and starts playing with the second princess.

Kan!

Hm? I heard a strange sound coming from the scruff of my neck.

What? It's not painful but.....

I immediately turn around, and see a needle fall down.

"Master, enemies!"

"What?"

Was that a blow dart just now?

Or was it something Itsuki fired?

I cannot confirm anything due visibility since it's night time.

"I didn't notice until he attacked."

"What?"

Bofun!

A bunch of darts fly out of nowhere and Firo expands her wings to cover the second princess.

Can Itsuki even fire so many at once?

No, Leaving that aside!

The main usage of blowdarts are to apply poisons. Firo and I will be fine due to our poison resistance, but it will be dangerous if Raphtalia or the second princess get hit.

I have no idea what kind of poison they are using either.

If I know what poison they are using, I can make an antidote.

There were a bunch of antidotes in the wagon and carriage too.....

But I can't treat anyone in these conditions!

"Ah....."

I turn my gaze to Raphtalia. At that moment, a blowgun dart aimed at her appears.

"Air StI shout for Air Strike Shield in haste, but I don't know if I can make it.

Immediately, a high-pitched screech is heard and the dart was stopped.

"That was dangerous degojaru."

Suddenly, someone in jet-black clothes appears and defends Raphtalia.

His face is covered by cloth so I can't see it.

I can't tell if his voice is male or female. Who is that? A ninja? Degojaru?

"Hurry up and flee degojaru!"

In the shadows of the trees and bushes, fighting could be heard.

"Hero of the Shield-dono, leave this to us and run away degojaru. Wait for me after you have escaped, I want to talk with you degojaru."

"What is going on!?"

"There is no time to explain right now, I'll do it later degojaru!"

"Tch! Firo, Raphtalia, Second Princess!"

"Okay~"

"Yeah."

"U-understood!"

While riding on Firo, blow darts were flying around us.

"Do you know who that person was?"

"I think so, that is probably my mother's secret guard corps....."

Explains the second princess while we were getting away.

"Really?"

"Yeah. I know the person who helped Raphtalia-san. She is my mother's body double."

"Now that I think about it, her way of speaking is familiar."

Is she that woman I passed in the hallway after parting with trash?

Her behavior and appearance left a strong impression.

"So what exactly is going on? We got ambushed, but we have no idea who did it."

I would say it was Itsuki, but that guy should not be capable of such things.

Judging by his character, he would confront me head on.

"Assassination corps of the country.....maybe."

"There's an assassination corps?"

Now that's dangerous. Well, places where the nobles and kings completely trust each other do not exist.

That leads to a great deal of problems being handled behind closed doors.

It's quite simple actually.

"Though in reality they are the same as the secret guard corps....."

"You guys have separate assassination corps?"

".....I don't know"

"I see....."

I guess there's no choice but to hear from someone who knows.

After running a certain distance on Firo, we prepared and waited in case of more enemies.

"Hmm?"

Firo reacts immediately.

"Here it comes."

Suddenly, the ninja-like person appears in front of me.

"Sorry for the wait degojaruna."

"Ah don't worry about it. Thanks to you we got away safely."

"First of all, I should introduce myself degojaruga..... Have you already heard from Princess Melty degojaruka?"

"I heard you are a body double. And you are either from the secret guard crops or some assassination unit."

"That is not entirely correct degojaru. We are the special duty corps of the country, and our aliases is [Shadow] degojaru."

"I see."

"By the way, I do not have a name degojaru. I believe shadow shall suffice degojaru."

Shadow, huh..... Trying to sound cool?

I wonder if it's just the difference between my world and the inhabitants of this world.

Since there are ninjas, I'm reminded of the Showa era.

"So, who did you fight?"

"Shadows of the country and church degojaru."

"Aren't you from the same organization?"

"The organization is not unified degojaruyo. There are factions within the organization that are fighting each other degojaru."

There are so many things wrong with that, but I'll refrain from commenting for now.....

"Why did you help us?"

Since that's what I'm most curious about, I'll ask.

I have a few guesses, but none are concrete.

"I cannot answer that degojaru."

"I see. Are you sworn to secrecy?"

"All I will say is that this one works as Princess Melty's guard degojaru."

"I don't believe that."

She didn't even show up when the second princess was being attacked.

"I did not appear because I knew the Hero of the Shield-dono could protect her degojaru."

"You bastard....."

That means she knew but stayed silent.

Although, she seems fairly competent.

"Originally I was somewhere else with her majesty the queen, but I was ordered to watch over Hero of the Shield-dono degojaru."

The self-named shadow shows a map and points.

What she was pointing at was the neighboring country to our southwest. The opposite direction of Silt Welt.

"Right now, her Majesty the Queen is there degojaru. Since this country is in the opposite direction of Silt Welt where Hero of the Shield-dono is escaping to, patrols are scarce degojaru."

"Oh....."

For some reason, I feel that if I run away to the country to Demi-humans I would receive some recognition.

It occurred to me that there may be something in the country of Demi-humans that believes in the shield, similar to how this country believes in the Three Heroes Church.

I can probably safely go into exile there in cases like this, and it would be very bad for trash.

Though since they are putting so many resources to guard the border, that it makes it impossible to break through.

This distance can be covered by Firo in two and a half weeks, but it will be hard to advance since the other heroes are anticipating it.

Even though we have to take a detour, I want to go.

"This latest case has many things behind it degojaru. I will cooperate with Hero of the Shield-dono as much as possible degojaru."

"What do you mean?"

"Right now, the higher-ups of the Three Heroes Church are discussing about the activities of Hero of the Shield-dono degojaru. So I had no choice but to move and inform you degojaruyo."

"Hmm.....So in other words, they had a reason to maintain that farce of claiming I have the power to brainwash."

My activities recently consisted mostly of selling medicine and helping people who were in trouble.

However, as a result of those actions I solved problems that the other heroes have caused.

It seems that due to these events, people are starting to question the legend of the Hero of the Shield spread by the church.

If they can prove that I am capable of large-scale brainwashing, then the people's faith in the Church would be restored.

But won't it also mean that if I can prove my innocence, the Three Heroes Church will receive a devastating blow?

"What should we do degojaru? If you are planning on going to Silt Welt,

would you require help degojaruka?

"That's....."

Giving someone else a difficult job and relaxing myself is not one of my hobbies. Even if I do just escape, when the wave comes I'll be summoned into the midst of enemies.

That's very inconvenient.

The church, The bitch, and the trash king will all want to capture and torture me.

Rather than going into exile recklessly, and then getting summoned into a trap, this might be more effective.

If this goes well, my remaining days here will be easy.

But.....

"What would the queen gain from helping me? The Three Heroes Church may get destroyed."

"I cannot answer that degojaru."

Shadow is only giving me answers about the queen, but not what I should do next. Though she is certainly the queen's subordinate.

The second princess is someone we both need to protect, and since she is a subordinate of the queen, I cannot do anything that might disadvantage her.

As far as I am concerned, meeting the queen would be more beneficial for me.

Frankly, I cannot see what the queen's goal is.

From what I can make out of the second princess's speech and behavior, her goal would be to prevent wars between this country and another.

Furthermore, she understands what is happening to me, due to the deep-rooted and crazy legends in this country about the devil of the shield.

The shadow also said, "I want to cooperate".

It seems the queen does not share the same views as the Three Heroes Church.

That is just a safe line though.....

Hmm..... Perhaps she isn't my enemy.

Though it is also doubtful whether or not she can be called a friend, it is still better than my current hand and the present conditions.

"You saved Raphtalia, so I'll hear you out. Do I only have to meet the queen?"

This is nothing but a farce, and I don't really have any choice but to willingly participate.

"I don't like the idea of acting based on someone else's ideas, but it seems to be for the best. But if you deceive me....."

"I know degojaru. Then I'll leave at once degojaru. We don't know when the shadows on the church's side may show up degojarukara."

After saying so, she disappeared instantly.

Though my last words were a joke, it seems to have been taken seriously.

"Can we trust her?"

Honestly, I am slightly suspicious.

"It's alright..... because mother trusts her."

"I can't understand your mother....."

Though at least her thinking seems to be different from both trash and bitch.

So far, all I have is that she seems to be friendly, but that is only based on information from shadow and the second princess. Her true purpose still remains unknown.

I also cannot deny that this could all be another a plot to assassinate the second princess by the Three Heroes Church.

I have no other choices, so if this is a conspiracy by the queen to kill me, I am doomed.

In the end, we advance in the opposite direction of Silt Welt.

I do not want to believe it, but there is also a chance that the second princess was truly abandoned.

But, it is necessary to know the queen's agenda.

I cannot just view this situation as black and white any longer.

"Anyway, I have decided on our destination."

"Okay. Let's go."

"All right. Let's go. Firo-chan."

"Firo will do her best!"

We have taken a step from escaping abroad aimlessly.

Now we will set a course towards the southwest.



Chapter 64: Names

We changed our course and advanced southwest.

Since we have been riding on Firo for a while without a wagon, I'm getting cramps.

"Is there a cart somewhere that we can steal?"

Since I already have a bounty. It's just a wagon.....

"Noo~!"

Firo seemed to have a reaction to that "Firo won't pull a cart that is stolen."

Is this perhaps some Philo Rial sense of justice?

"Stealing aside, it's quite uncomfortable to ride Firo for a long time."

"Does the second princess also think so?"

"Ummm....."

The second princess gives me an unpleasant look and avoids my question.

What's wrong?

"Even though it will be dangerous, maybe we could have Raphtalia buy a wagon in a village....."

It would be nice to just have something to ride in.

Should I ask that shadow?

"Oops, it looks like nightfall soon. Shall we take a break?"

Just as we were about to rest.

""Gua!?"""

A wild Philo Rial A appeared!

A wild Philo Rial B appeared!

A wild Philo Rial C appeared!

The Philo Rials saw Firo and raised their voices.

They look familiar. Ah, they're the ones that ran away immediately before.

Somehow, these Philo Rial have the expressions of those determined to complete their mission, but after a while they run away again.

"What's that?"

"How rare, being able to encounter Philo Aria and Firiru classes in the wild."

The second princess seems to be looking at those Philo Rial with entranced expressions.

"I've this suspicion for a while now, but second princess, you really like Philo Rials right?"

"Yup! Ah....."

After the second princess nodded, she looked at me with an unpleasant face.

Just what did I say?

Gu.....

Firo's stomach growls.

"I'm hungry."

"Do not eat each other."

"Firo-chan is such a glutton."

The second princess pokes Firo with her fingers.

"Ehehe."

It's good that they are close, but their behavior is a little disgusting.

Like some idiot couples.

I finish preparing the campfire and start cooking.

"Hey, second princess."

I give her today's dinner, but she refuses it with a frown.

What on earth did I say?

"Mel-chan doesn't want to eat?"

"I'll eat. But....."

The second princess seems to be at a loss.

What is going on?

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

When Raphtalia asks, the second princess picks up her dinner.

"What's wrong Mel-chan?"

"Um....."

Firo asks the second princess and she shows a troubled face.

"I don't have the power to brainwash you know."

"That's not it!"

The second princess turns away and pouts.

Her usual attitude doesn't change. She happily chats with Firo's human form and, talks with Raphtalia happily.

But for some reasons she only gives me an unpleasant face, or just ignores me.

I can't understand at all.

After finishing our meal, I heard a few strange cries in the distance.

"The cry of a Philo Rial!"

The second princess strains her ears to listen carefully.

"The second princess really likes Philo Rials huh."

"Yup!"

"Why do you like them so much?"

When the second princess noticed I asked the question, she gave me another unpleasant look.

Another Philo Rial cry is heard.

"Because.....Philo Rials are legendary holy birds....."

"Legendary?"

"Yes. It is a common belief that Philo Rials are companions of Heroes that save people from demons in the olden times."

"That so?"

"Yes, in the past during another wave of calamity, the heroes used them as mounts."

"There were waves back then?"

Since it was something I heard from trash, I disregarded it.

However, there was a prophecy of the wave.

I wonder if that was it. Glass also said that thinking of the wave as a simple disaster was a big mistake.

Though I don't know if I'll get an answer, I might be able to get some hints from the second princess's story.

"When travelling with mother, she told me the story of Philo Rials."

"Interesting.....What stories?"

"You see, Philo Rials are the mounts of heroes, their support, and also their protectors."

"Right now Firo here is the same."

Raphtalia answers while looking at Firo.

Certainly, Firo is the cornerstone of our offensive power. Her legs are fast and strong.

Without Firo, earning money through peddling would have been very difficult. Not to mention our lives right now as fugitives are only possible thanks to her.

"Yes. The legends also describe the Queen of Philo Rials."

"Is that so?"

"Umm, the Queen of Philo Rials was also a hero's mount, and she helped them fight against the wave. It is said that the Queen of Philo Rials who also participated in the wave at that time is still alive and watching over the world to this day."

Did I just use such a legend as a substitute horse?

That also explains the reason why Firo was called a holy bird.

"You see, my dream is to one day meet the Queen of Philo Rials."

The second princess embraces Firo affectionately while saying so.

"The Queen of Philo Rials. They are capable of various transformations."

"Well, Firo is probably also a Queen of Philo Rials. She has all kinds of transformation abilities too."

"That's right! And since I could become friends with Firo-chan, my dream was realized."

Second princess, is that the reason you wanted to become friends with Firo?

"Queen, huh....."

Incidentally I start thinking about the second princess's mother.

I don't know what kind of persons she is, but if possible I would like to have a talk with her and ask about the story.

Since she is also a parent of that bitch. Half in expectation, half in resignation, according to degojaru's story.....I have to admit she does seem to be a good person.

Hmm?

I have a feeling there was some sense of incongruity just now.

I compare Firo with the second princess.

"Ahh, so that's what it was."

"What's wrong?"

"Well, according to legend, the Queen of Philo Rials is still alive now. Does that make Firo a princess of the Philo Rials?"

"Eh, so are you saying Firo-chan is not the Queen?"

"Who knows. Though there is no way to prove that the actual Queen still exists, right?"

As if the second princess understood something, she shook her head.

"Then are you saying that my dream of meeting the queen still hasn't been fulfilled?....."

"Did I say something bad?"

"No. Just that I would like to meet her some day."

"What do you want to do after meeting her?"

"I want to be friends!"

"I see I see, when the time comes I'll help you out, second princess. After the world becomes peaceful, you can search for her together with Firo."

"What about Master~?"

"I'm going back to my own world."

There is no reason to remain in this world, and if I had the choice I would go without hesitation.

Though I do not say that.

"No~! Firo wants to go with Master!"

"No, There's no way people of this world can come."

"I want to go! I want to go!"

"Endure it. Because the second princess will be your new master."

"No~!"

Oh my, its gotten quite noisy.

"Really.....Naofumi-sama will leave if it becomes peaceful."

"Yeah, what about it?"

"Nothing....."

Raphtalia mutters while looking at the campfire with deadpan eyes.

"----Don't call me that!"

"Hm? Second princess, what's wrong?"

The second princess seems to be talking about something while trembling.

"What did you say?"

"Stop calling me the second princess!"

While looking at me with tears in her eyes, the second princess shouts.

"What is with you suddenly?"

"The second princess is not a name! I am Melty!"

"What? Isn't that obvious?"

"Why does the Hero of the Shield-sama not call me by my name!?"

It seems the stress from the journey has finally exploded.

Raphtalia and Firo were just as surprised as I was and looked at the second princess with eyes of bewilderment.

"How many times do I have to say it!? My name is Melty! However, Hero of the Shield-sama just keeps calling me second princess, second princess! That's not my name, that's a position!"

"What? Did you just want me to call you by your name?"

"That's not what I mean! Why is Hero of the Shield-sama ostracizing me!?"

"Ostracized? Well, you are an outsider from the party after all."

"But we are friends sharing joys and sorrows now! Don't just call me by

my position!"

"Hmm.....But don't you call me Hero of the Shield?"

I can say the same about this second princess.

My name is not Hero of the Shield.

"Then I'll call you Naofumi in the future. So Naofumi has to call me by my name too!"

"Haah....."

"Hey! Call my name! Naofumi!"

To call me by my first name without even adding honorifics.

Though if I don't reply she is going to become even noisier.

Since I am troubled that there may be night-attacks despite camping out, I don't want to make too much noise.

In the first place..... the second princess even calls Raphtalia with honorifics.

But I remember the bitch calling my name with "sama".

That bitch called me Hero-sama, but.....

Well, this is probably alright.

"Fine. Melty. Is this fine?"

"You better remember it!"

"Yeah, Yeah."

Was she just displeased recently because I was calling her the second princess? Such a troublesome fellow. Or is it because she's a girl?

"Firo was surprised."

Yeah. Firo is noisy, but she's not hysterical.

Is it just noisiness peculiar to children?

Though for Firo it's fine, since her age is correspondingly short.

"So Princess Melty did mind it."

Raphtalia.....How did you know?

My name was called without me noticing.

"Since you helped me, give me your hand."

Since she insisted, I shook her hands.

Her fighting style is reliable, but unlike Firo, it has good affinity with me who uses a shield.

She can help with my business when peddling, and it should be easy for her to disguise herself.

"Are you praising me?"

"Is there something wrong?"

"Seriously....."

Why does Raphtalia looked troubled?

I feel like something strangely annoying happened.

"Well, should we sleep early to get ready for tomorrow?"

"Understood."

"Okay~"

"Uh huh."

Chapter 65: Legend of The Divine Bird

Several days after changing the way I address the second princess to Melty.

We have been making considerable progress in the opposite direction of Silt Welt thanks to Firo.

Setting that aside.

Recently we have been encountering a lot of wild Philo Rials.

At night their calls remind me of howling wolves in the distance, it is very annoying, especially in the middle of the night.

Is there a Philo Rial habitat around here?

I wonder while sleeping.

It was midnight when and I was sleeping when suddenly.

""Gua~!""

"Firo, shut up."

"It's not Firo."

That was fairly close to us though, if it wasn't Firo then what was it?

Are there more wild Philo Rials?

"Umm.....Naofumi-sama? I heard a lot of Philo Rial cries."

I notice another cry, and this one is quite near.

"Thanks for reminding me. Firo, do you know how many there are?"

"I don't know."

"Are they far off?"

"Well, They are coming."

"What?"

We look at Firo with strained expressions.

"Be cautious."

"Everyone said they are coming to meet with Firo ."

"Are they speaking to you with this cry!?"

"Yep."

She nodded. I feel uneasy at large amount of Philo Rial cries that could be heard.

The bushes all around us start shaking, and silhouettes of Philo Rials could be seen.

"What the hell is going on!?"

"Waa.....There are so many Philo Rial!"

Melty's eyes start to shine as she watches the Philo Rial.

"Umm, Melty. Listen well because I'll teach you something important."

"What is it?"

"Philo Rials eat everything. Firo and I may be alright, but if these Philo Rial attack, you and Raphtalia will be eaten."

"What are you saying Naofumi. Philo Rials are gentle demons. There is no way they would do something like that."

It's hard to keep a straight face after all that.

"Shit..... I can't get to the neighbouring country to meet the queen,if joke-like developments with wild demons happen."

The Philo Rials stop hiding and surround us.

There are way too many to count.

A bunch of Philo Rial eyes glowing in the darkness too.

There are Philo Rial as far as the eye can see.

The on earth is happening?

Maybe this is a territorial dispute between Philo Rial.

But Firo shouldn't be able to understand the concept of territory.

Firo may be recognized as an extremely high ranked Philo Rial, did they

come thinking of her as a menace?

However, since Firo didn't give us a warning cry, this may be different.

Or rather..... Did they come to scout Firo into their territory?

There is a possibility that is happening.

Alright, let's go with that.

"Firo, I hope you find happiness with these guys."

"What are you saying suddenly, Naofumi-sama!"

"Firo-chan is going to leave!?"

"We can't help it. These guys came to pick up Firo."

"Really!?"

"Separating from Master? No~!"

Firo, don't you understand the situation?

It's already too late. If we don't give up Firo here we'll be mobbed by a large amount of Philo Rials.

"Do your best for us, for these guys. Firo."

After this situation is solved I'll have to go buy a new Philo Rial. I hope the next one won't be so annoying.

"No~!"

While we were bantering.

""Gua~!""

A group of Philo Rials just to divided into two like that one scene from Moses and the Ten Commandments.

what the hell?

"Gua~!"

One Philo Rial walks leisurely towards us. It is also pulling some luxurious carriage.

..... There are jewels fitted onto that carriage.

I think I've seen some of those jewels before.....Where was it?

I suddenly look at the shield.

There is a jewel that looks the same as those on the carriage.

""Gua!""

A group of Philo Rials salute and bows towards the Philo Rial that is pulling the carriage.

Rattlerattle, the Philo Rial pulling the carriage stops before us.

"Wow..... that is cool. I'm jealous!"

Firo's eyes are sparkling as she watches the carriage.

I hate it. It's such an upstart carriage.

If I had the choice, I would rather not ride something like that.



「じゃあ自己紹介から……」

世界のフィロリアルを統括する女王をしている、フィトリア」

瞳の色は赤、フィーロに比べて
覇気が無いように感じる。

顔はフィーロに勝るとも劣らない
整った作りをしていた。

服装は、白と赤のゴシックドレスっぽい。
人型フィーロの服は青と白だから、
なんとなくフィーロと比べてしまう。

"Gua!"

The rope that tied the Philo Rial to the wagon comes off and it steps

forward.

Another Philo Rial walks up to the rear.

"What's that? What's going to happen?"

"Gueeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

When the Philo Rial surrounding the carriage calls out, the surrounding plants start glowing green and wind arises.

"Ah.....did they put up a barrier!?"

"Barrier?"

Melty's voice is full of surprise.

"Yes. Naofumi, doesn't it look brighter? From a distance all you would see is fog."

I pay more attention to the group of Philo Rials.

There doesn't seem to be anything like a dense fog.

"This is a high-class sanctuary type barrier."

"What's that?"

"There is a Forest of Illusion, according to legends, equipment of the old era heroes are said to be kept there; However, the fog of magic prevents all who approach."

"You know quite a lot."

"Mother likes stories about the Forest of Illusion. This fog resembles the one described in the stories. I'm surprised."

Does that mean? We can't escape from here even if we run?

"Will you be able to return if you enter the fog?.....We seem to have set foot inside the sanctuary of Philo Rials."

Melty seems totally entranced.

That reminds me, this fellow loves Philo Rials. Isn't this like a dream come true?

"Now's not the time for this!"

The plants shine until it's as bright as day.

What on earth is happening?

The Philo Rial that pulled the carriage starts to swell up, up the point where it's just a black silhouette.

Huge.....

The silhouette swells flabbily. There is probably a big chance that Firo will end up like that.

At first it had the appearance of a normal Philo Rial, but now it's 6 meters tall.

And..... it stops expanding when it reaches 9 meters. This figure is the same as Firo's demon form.

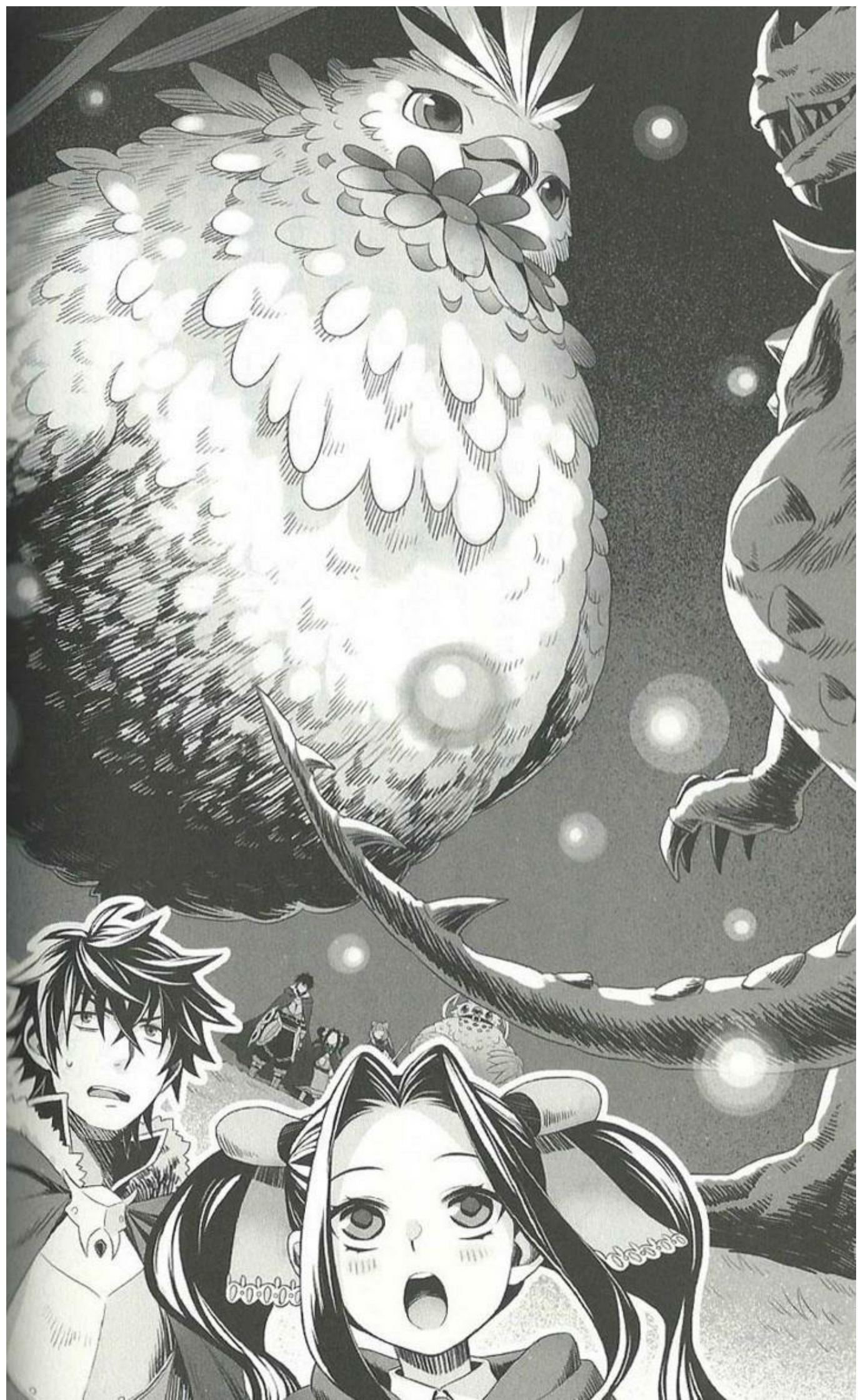
The same as Philo Rial · Queen (Temporary)

(Tl note: フィロリアル・クイーン(仮) not sure why there is a temp in the raws.) "Wow~.....Big"

I mutter, and Melty looks like she cannot contain her excitement.

Compared to Firo's colour which is light pink and white, that Philo Rial · Queen is white and azure.

A big difference would be a wing-like crown on top of it's head that Firo doesn't have.



"Kueeeeeeeee!"

With just it's voice, The vibrations could be felt to the bones.

"Yes.Yes. I understand."

Firo nods a few times and turns to us.

"Umm you see. It seems visiting in human form is impolite. she says."

Firo translates the words that it says. Oh, is it natural that you can communicate since you are from the same race?

"Because there is an ancient pledge and oath, I cannot speak with people easily. I hope you understand. She says."

".....Well, that's fine. But what business do you have with us?"

"Kueeeeeeeee!"

"First let's have some self-introduction. I am the Queen of Philo Rials. My old name is Fitoria. She says."

"Fitoria!? That's the name of the Philo Rial from the legends."

Meltly yells with an expression full of astonishment.

"Are you by any chance the Hero of the Shield? She says."

"Ah, yeah....."

"I apologize for the sudden visit. I have a little business here. She says."

"Wh-what would that be?"

I have a pain in my neck from looking up at the big Philo Rial.

"Kueee"

"Eh.....No~"

Firo gives her a dirty look. What are they talking about?

"Kueee!"

"Really!? All right. I understand."

"What did you talk about?"

"Umm you see. She wants to know Firo's ability , and she seems to want to fight Firo."

"Just Firo?"

Fitoria nods at my question.

"You see. I think we will have a good fight."

"Are you going to avoid killing each other?"

Fitoria nodded again. Although I was busy trying to meet the queen.....
A different queen shows up.

".....Isn't it fine then?"

"Kueeeee"

"Thank you for listening to my request Hero of the Shield. She says."

What a troublesome conversation. you should talk from the start if you are capable of it.

The Philo Rials surrounding us backs up when Fitoria expands her wings.

"Kueeee"

"Hero's party should fall back too. She says."

"Okay okay."

Raphtalia, Melty, and I went to the edge of the circle made by Philo Rials.

"Kueeeeeeee!"

"Here I go~"

Firo returns to her demon form and charges at Fitoria.

Chapter 66: Ahoge

"Ya!"

Firo attacks first.

She jumps with all her might and reaches the belly of Fitoria's gigantic figure.

"Kue"

Fitoria flaps her wings and dodges swiftly.

"Ha!"

While Firo was landing back on the ground, Fitoria slices at her with a wing.

"Oops!"

Firo barely avoids the wing by diving to the side.

"Firo-chan do you best!"

Melty loudly cheers her on.

""Guaaaaaaaaaaaa~!""

The Philorials similarly support Fitoria with their cries.



"I will not lose~!"

Firo charges up to Fitoria.

"Kue!"

Fitoria tries to bat Firo away using her wings, but Firo dexterously uses the wing as a scaffold and jumps for her face.

"Wow! Amazing~!"

Firo's attack unfortunately ends in failure, but she calls out in admiration.

"Very fast. But I won't lose."

After taking a stance with her wings Firo begins preparing.

Are you going to suddenly use your special ability?

"Yay, here it come~"

Firo's body becomes a blur.

In the next moment, a loud wham could be heard.....

"Kue"

At first glance, it seemed Fitoria was slowly waving her wings up and down.

"Waaaaaaaaa!"

Firo was blown into the air and knocked around.

After being Forced to expand her wings to control the air flow, Firo lands.

"To think you would dodge Firo's trump card so easily-"

"Kue"

Fitoria puts one of her wings on her waist and taunts Firo.

To act in such a carefree attitude.

Amazing.

Brushing off Firo's ultimate attack just like that.....

"As expected of the legendary Philorial."

Melty expresses her admiration.

I agree.

What can I say. Our combat expert Firo is being toyed with.

"How about this!"

Firo flaps her wings again.

"Firo commands the origin of power. Firo has read and deciphered a law of nature. Blow her away with a raging tornado!"

"Tzuvait ▪Tornado!"

"What?"

To think Firo could use intermediate magic! I doubt she could teach me.....

If you could have always used it, then you should have.

We could have ran away from those heroes easily if that spell was used.

The tornado brought forth from Firo's hands flies towards Fitoria-

"KueKueKueKueeeeeeeeeeeeeee"

"Kueeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

Firo's magic was enclosed and dissipated like it was never there.

"Counterbalance?"

Oh, that's a phenomenon that was described in the beginner class magic book.

Interfering with magic. However, that is only possible if the user has sufficient power and is able to analyse the magic as it is cast.

The proper magic system required varies every time.

It is difficult because the magic cast to counterbalance must be from the proper system, and also must be cast right before the magic hits.

It is easier to counterbalance high class magic than intermediate class

magic due to longer cast times.

"Wow.....Firo's magic is not effective either~"

Firo charges rapidly Fitoria again.

Without delay Fitoria strikes at Firo with her massive wings.

"Ha!"

With a thud, Firo raised both her wings to catch the colossal attack

"Ugh.....It's heavy.....But"

After barely withstanding the attack, Firo kicks Fitoria's wing away and jumps.

As expected, Fitoria who had her wing kicked away was not in position to defend against Firo who flew up to her face.

Thanks to coating herself with wind Firo's jumping power improved.

"Tei!"

Firo spun her whole body and unleashed a roundhouse kick at Fitoria's face.

It should have hit.

Yet despite all that,

"Kue!"

Fitoria was also coated with wind, and Firo was blown off into the sky.

Basaa~!

Still, Fitoria was slightly grazed and a feather was hit off.

"Kuee"

Fitoria was watching the feather that Firo hit down with a smile.

I noticed it.

Fitoria still has a something besides magic and physical attacks. There is still something she is hiding.

She hasn't moved one step either.

Just how strong is she?

Legendary Philorial. She certainly lives up to those words. Firo is being taken lightly.

She has absolutely no chance of winning.

"Boo....."

Firo is whining with an ill-humoured expression.

"I will not lose!"

All of Firo's feathers start to stand on end.

"Suuuuu....."

She takes a giant breath. I see, Firo is absorbing the surrounding magic.

Such a thing is possible?

And for nearly 30 seconds she does not move.

"Ok---"

Firo flaps her wings.

Everyone can see that wind magic is being condensed behind her.

This is most likely Firo's strongest finisher.

The prerequisite is too severe. It's not usable in actual combat.

"Here it comes!"

Firo flies at Fitoria with the speed of a bullet.

She rotates her beak, by dashing off the ground and flying low. This attack is the fastest by far.

Usually Firo's attacks consist of basic kicking and pecking.

What can I say. This attack resembles the finisher from an air-plane shaped robot in a strategy game.

(Tl note: An anon kindly informed me of what this was referencing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxkzaMVj2UE#t=140>) "Kue!?"

Even Fitoria widened her eyes in surprise.

With a large step, Firotia takes a step back and.....

It was over.

Fitoria stretched both her wings and her expression changed, her posture resembled one killing bugs with both hands, and squishes Firo.

"Kyu....."

When Fitoria opens her wings and a knocked-out Firo falls down.

"Firo-chan!"

""Guaaaaaaaaa!""

The Philorials start cheering.

We follow after Melty who rushes out first.

"Are you okay?"

"Yup.....ah....."

As Melty rushes up to Firo to check on her, Firo looks up at me.

After looking around restlessly I look down at her.

"Firo lost."

"But you did great.You fought well against the Queen of Philorials."

"She wasn't even trying, Firo couldn't hit her at all."

As Firo was sulking Firotia called with KueKue.

"What are you giving me?"

Oh, we're going to receive something?

"KueKue"

"I pass? Pass what?"

Fitoria pulls off a single piece of her beautiful feather crown and gives it to Firo.

Suddenly, the feather glows and is attaches itself to Firo's head.

Then it splits and disperses.....

On Firo's head is now an ahoge bouncing around.



"....."

Raphtalia and I are left speechless.

What just happened? What was that a reward?

"Eh?"

"Firo-chan is so cute!"

Melty is excitedly admiring Firo while the bird in question doesn't understand what is going on.

"Did something happen?"

"Umm....."

When I point on top of her, Firo timidly touches her head.

"Something strange grew! No~!"

Buchin!

Eh!?

She yanked it out with all her might.

"It hurts~!"

Firo is delighted about getting rid of the ahoge, but is also in pain.

Pyokon!

However, from where it was pulled out another ahoge appears.

"It grew again!"

"Ehh!?"

With watery eyes Firo sadly gave up on removing the ahoge after pulling it out several times.

Well, the ahoge isn't that bad.

"Kue Kue"

"You're terrible~!"

"What did she say?"

"Give up on pulling it because it will always grow back."

"Kue Kue"

"Eh.....So its become like that....."

Firo looks at Fitoria's feather crown.

What on earth did this legendary Philorial pass down to Firo?

I swiftly check Firo's status screen.

.....Her abilities have improved from before.

Perhaps, this is divine protection or something like a correction ability.

It's a good reward for Firo who is unable to level up.

"Kue Kue"

Fitoria points at me and beckons me with a Kui Kui.

"It's a gift for master."

"I don't need an ahoge."

"Ahoge?"

I'd rather not explain. If I tell her she'll annoy me about it.

"Kue Kue"

"She said it's even better."

"Hmmm....."

I don't know what it is, but I hope it's nothing strange.

I can't really refuse, so I approach.

"Kue Kue"

Fitoria points at my shield and gestures upwards.

"Like this?"

I lift up my shield. Fitoria pulls out another crown feather and puts it on the shield.

The shield has a huge reaction and absorbs it.

All of the the Philorial series has been unsealed.

"What?"

I check the skill tree and confirm that all of the Philorial shields are lit up and active.

Most of them are basic ability and equipment bonuses, there are Speed Ups too, Philorial ability correction, Growth Correction (Big Middle Small), GrowthOOCorrection (Big Middle Small) there are also shields received that I cannot wear.

What stands out is, Riding ability Up (Big Middle Small).

However, there are a lot of shields I cannot use since my level is insufficient.

It is nice to have unlocked all the Philo Rial shields though.

"I am extremely grateful."

"Kue Kue"

Fitoria nodded while smiling.

I was given quite an amazing reward.

Are the powers of Philorials condensed into that feather?

This is also very helpful since Firo cannot Level.

That reminds me, Melty said that in the legends the Queen of Philorials fought together with heroes.

Is Fitoria the origin of the legend of the holy bird?

Does that mean Fitoriea gave me her feather because she understands how the hero's weapon works?

"Kue"

"I have finished my business here so I will take my leave."

"Ah, Umm....."

Melty timidly calls out to Fitoria.

"Kue?"

"Please shake my hand!"

It is Melty's cherished wish to meet and befriend the legendary Philorial so she pleases excitedly.

For a handshake..... Are you meeting an idol or an athlete?

"Kue Kue"

Fitoria was dumbfounded for a few seconds before she stroked Melty's head with her large wings.

And she was embraced kindly with a smile.

Melty sunk quite deep into Fitoria's bosom.

"Wow....."

It seems Melty has also received a large service and was placed on top of Fitoria's head.

"So high!"

Melty is extremely thrilled.

Fitoria tells us to get back, and as we fall back.

She expands to twice her size.....18 meters.

That's as big as a building already.

"This is amazing!"



Melty's voice could be heard in the distance. Isn't that a bit too high?

Can this still be considered a Philorial? Just how much can it grow?

No, this form or it's 9 meter form should be it's original size, she is probably transforming.

.....Will Firo become that big too?

I look at Firo suspiciously.

"What's up?"

"Nothing."

If you seriously grow that big.....it'll be quite a problem.

To sustain that size the food expense would be astronomical.

Fitoria lives in the wild. Moreover, she's the genuine queen of the group. In those conditions eating regardless of amount would be fine.

But Firo is a pet Philorial. I have to take care of her.

Should I reuse the Bio Plants?

After Melty and Fitoria finished played, Fitoria changed back into form of a usual Philorial that pulled the luxurious carriage and shook Melt's hand.

"You see. I have an old oath, I can only say words of parting to humans."

"I see."

I wonder if this is just courtesy.

"See ya-"

"Eh!?"

That voice is the same as Firo's! That bird!

I mean she can even speak in the figure of a normal Philorial?

The Philorials surrounding us scattered when Fitoria disappeared.

"Ha....."

Melty sighed while seemingly enchanted.

"That was dreamlike....."

"It was a good dream."

I feel that was a monster that is capable of Armageddon.

To effortlessly toy with Firo who has the strength to kick around a dragon.

Anyway, I am looking forward to how much Firo has powered up.

Our journey South West continues.

Chapter 67: Jungle

"There's a village just south west of here."

Two days after the battle of monsters with Firo.

We are approaching the village where Motoyasu caused the plant problem.

By the way, the Ability correction from the Philorial Shield series takes precedence over the other equipment bonuses.

It is necessary to use any abilities that will help in combat since Raphitalia and Firo cannot level up.

The lower level Philorial shields finished granting their equipment bonuses after an hour or so.

Of course, this is a very generous gift, and at this point I'll take anything.

In the first place, releasing all the Philorial Series was more than what I could have hoped for.

furthermore Firo's speed became even faster due to the effects.

Well, this is great. We were very lucky.....

The problem is that the village south west of us has become a dense jungle again.

"This is my fault....."

"Probably."

We advance through the flourishing forest by pushing aside plants.

Metly was surprised to know that this was my fault.

To think the Bio Plant seed I gave to the villagers turned them back to square one.....

I don't have the right to judge Motoyasu.

"There are no strange demons."

Firo mutters while investigation the neighbourhood.

"I see."

Perhaps the changes I made are more powerful than I thought.

While pushing through the foliage we encounter a villager.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield-sama."

What should we do? Escape? No, I hear that a lot of villagers do not believe I did the things that warranted that bounty.

If that wasn't the case we would have been reported by those villages in the beginning-

"Thanks to Hero of the Shield-sama we can work in peace."

"Pardon?"

I question the villager as I look around.

"This?"

"Yes, can't you tell this is already an agricultural area?"

"All I see is a dense forest."

"We developed a large scale farming business thanks to the seed that Hero of the Shield-sama gave us."

The villager proudly points around while saying so.

There are bright red fruit-like tomatoes hanging off a bunch of plants.

"The only drawback is that only the same fruit is growing, but it has become a village specialty already."

"you guys are fast."

Hasn't it only been a month?

That is quite amazing.

"Then there have been no problems at all?"

"Nope."

"Then.....isn't it fine?"

The villager smiles wryly at my answer.

Long ago, the creator of the Bio Plant may have wished for this.

Now, his dream is being realized in front of my eyes.

.....It really is quite a spectacle.

"So where is Hero of the Shield-sama heading to? Isn't Silt Welt in the opposite direction?"

"Well, we are escaping this way."

I am troubled as to whether or not I can tell the villager. So I'll just give him a vague answer.

"Hah.....Seems to be quite serious."

"It is definitely not easy."

Well it's not their problem.

"Don't worry we will not inform any of the soldiers from the castle."

"Leaving aside whether or not that is true, you have my thanks."

Gu.....

"Firo is hungry"

Firo hungrily looks at the growing tomatoes.

That reminds me, a lot of Firo's food supply came from here.

"Go ahead."

The villager points towards the big fruits and tells Firo to eat.

"Yay~"

We also get some fruits while Firo begins gorging down.

These tomatoes have a subtle mandarin orange taste to them..... It is delicious, but I feel it is a little lacking.

Raphtalia and Melty eat while exclaiming their deliciousness though.

While resting and eating lunch, several villagers come and I give them some food that I cooked.

"I am grateful, in various ways."

"Don't worry about it."

"For the time being..... be careful."

I was indirectly warned about a dangerous plant.

"I understand."

We finish our meal like this.

"See you."

"Yup. I pray that Hero of the Shield-sama can prove your innocence."

We cross the dense forest for the border.

50 meters after parting with the villagers we are caught by a magical cage.

"Kya!?"

"What's this?"

"Wh-what is going on?"

It's about 40 meters in every dimension. A cage comprised of lightning.

Is this.....magic? Or is it some trap?

Did the villagers set us up?

So that they could capture us here!?

"T-Trouble! Hero of the Shield-sama is being attacked by someone-!"

Villagers that were watching yelled towards the village and it gets louder.

This attack.....It's not from them?

"I finally caught up, Naofumi!"

"You.....Motoyasu!"

Motoyasu's party appears after pushing aside the dense forest.

Did you hide yourselves in the jungle?

that must have been difficult.

"Naofumi, you won't be able to escape from this magical instrument [Thunder Cage]"

Melty inspects the cage and informs me.

"This is a setting trap, it must have been used by someone experienced."

"What is the purpose of this trap?"

"Never letting whatever it captures free."

I see, so this trap was used because we always rely on Firo's leg strength to escape.

"Maybe I can break it, but it will take some time."

"You know a method to definitely remove this trap?"

"If you can get the key away from the user....."

I consider for a moment, stare at Motoyasu, and then Firo.

"Are we going to fight?"

"That seems to be the case."

Raphtalia gets down from Firo and takes up a stance with her sword.

"Raphtalia, you don't have armour. Fall back."

"But....."

"Can Firo fight?"

"Yeah."

Motoyasu is vulnerable to any beautiful girls.

So far he has been treated roughly by Firo.

Possibly.....

"Melty can you remove the cage?"

"I can try.....But don't expect anything."

"Raphtalia, while we fight protect Melty."

"Okay!"

"I'll solve this brainwashing problem, with three people."

Seriously, who in their right mind would believe a shield has the power to brainwash.

I honestly honestly think that the ones framing me are the ones capable of brainwashing.

However, this guy is one of the Heroes referred to by the holy weapons manual.

Companion's thoughts = Not suspecting a Companion.

There is also the bitch and trash king supporting this guy.

I would be a fool to really believe this guy to be friendly.

"Motoyasu-sama, please save my younger sister from the brainwashing of the devil of the shield."

Hey bitch, stop adding oil to the fire.

"Hero of the shield-sama! And.....Spear....."

A villager calls towards us from outside the cage.

The villager looks at Motoyasu with a troubled expression.

I can easily imagine the reason. For the cause of the village's disaster to appear again, even if he is one of the three heroes it wouldn't be pleasant.

"You guys are also brainwashed too."

Motoyasu, that guy is absolutely infatuated with himself.

He looks me in the eye and prepares his spear.

"I won't be defeated like last time."

"..... What's with those lines."

I was summoned to a different world, and on the second day was already being looked down upon by Motoyasu.

Wouldn't it be fun to retaliate here?

I change the Chimeric Viper Shield and take a stance against Motoyasu. Motoyasu's companions, that bitch and two other woman.

.....There should have been another man.....But it's just Motoyasu. Did he throw away the unnecessary element in his harem?

We face each other with Firo standing in front of me, Melty trying to release the trap, and Raphtalia protecting her.

"What will win if the Spear and Shield fight?..... Of course it'll be me!"

Motoyasu declares while smiling full of conviction.

"Don't be a coward this time. Are you going to cheat again? Know your place, clown!"

Motoyasu was about to say something, but stops immediately.

It seems words have become unnecessary.

Very well. I am different from before.

Melty cannot fight, but I have Raphtalia and Firo.

In this situation where I can utilize the shield to it's full potential, I will not lose.

Now.....Let's see who is stronger!

""Uoooooooooooooooooh!""

We both step forwards and charge towards each other.

Chapter 68: Battle between Spear and Shield

"Firo, You take Motoyasu-"

I give Firo instructions as the battle begins.

Motoyasu cannot lay a hand on women. Especially Firo, Motoyasu even hesitates to point his spear at her.

Even if Motoyasu was able to attack Firo properly, she would be able to stop the spear.

"I am the queen who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Rain flames upon my enemies!"

"Tzuvait ▪ Fire Squall!"

The arrogant bitch sings an aria and casts Fire system magic.

"Naofumi! Firo-chan!"

"I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Hinder the rain of flames that pours on us!"

"Anti ▪ Tzuvait ▪ Fire Squall!"

Melty instantly counterbalances the intermediate magic that the bitch chants before going back to work on the cage.

However, she could not perfectly counterbalance it and the rain of fire still poured towards us.

Fortunately, it only hit Firo and I who were in front.

The jungle is set ablaze.

The area nearby instantly becomes a sea of flames.

Many villagers start to panic as the fire spreads.

"I will not forgive you for kicking Motoyasu-sama so many times."

The bitch is casting magic towards us seriously.

Melty is good at magic, but she is pretty good too.

There is a big difference between the bitch and Melty known as Levels, due to her being in Motoyasu's party.

"Firo, Are you okay!?"

"Yep. I'm fine-"

Firo doesn't seem affected by the rain of fire.

Well..... during the first wave I also barely felt anything when the knights barraged the area with magic.

But the biggest problem now is the surrounding Bio plants which have been set ablaze.

What kind of dumbass uses fire magic inside a jungle? Are you even thinking about your surroundings?

"I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Bless us with the rain we eagerly long for!"

"Tzuvait ▪ Squall!"

Melty directs her magic towards the jungle while Raphtalia protects her.

"Mein, Thank you."

Motoyasu who received the bitch's help shows his gratitude by giving her a thumbs up.

Everything this guy does is infuriating.

"Now! Motoyasu-sama please concentrate onto the devil of the shield! We'll hold that damned bird back with magic!"

Under bitch's comand Motoyasu's subordinates begins to chant.

"Here I come-!"

Firo ignores the chanting and charges straight at Motoyasu.

"Wait Firo--"

I don't understand what they are doing, but charging recklessly is not

going to help!

"Wing ▪ Tackle!"

Firo tries to tackle Motoyasu with her giant body coated in wind.

"Fube---"

As a result, Firo is blown off while spinning, she unfurls her wings to make a landing.

"That was surprising. But, here I go!"

Firo charges at Motoyasu again without learning her lesson. However, I have no idea as to what magic it was that Blew Firo off again.

This is not a feasible combat strategy.

While Firo is being pinned down, Motoyasu rushes at me--

"Eat this Naofumi! Meteor Spear!"

Motoyasu's spear shines brilliantly as shouts and leaps.

The energy condenses to cover his spear as it heads towards me.

"Guu.....!?"

I receive the attack with the thickest part of my shield.

Through the shield I receive a heavy blow that affects my whole body.

I'm guessing that was a finisher move.

Well, there is no reason to hold back in a real fight.

All the bones in my body groan under the pressure.

I think this is the worst attack yet.

Glass's attack wasn't as heavy thanks to the shield of anger.

"How's that! There's still more! Disorder Piercing! Rising Dragon Spear!"

(Tl note: SHORYUSPEAR)

Motoyasu unleashes his skills continuously. I fire the special ability of the Chimeric Viper Shield, Snake's poison fang.

Shit..... It's not effective because his level is too high!

An intense pain could be felt from the attack that I failed to block.

I understand that I'm bleeding even without looking.

Recover magic..... But Motoyasu won't give me the room to heal.

"Shield Prison!"

I trap Motoyasu within a cage of shields.

"Giant Windmill!"

Motoyasu swings his spear around like a baton, and cuts down the shields that I summon.

Damn..... His offensive power has already greatly exceeded my defensive power.

Whenever a cool down is off I cast a skill.

As expected there is no chance to win in a defensive fight.

What do I do.....

Firo can't even get close to Motoyasu thanks to the bitch and her subordinates.

"Firo commands the origin of power. Firo has read and deciphered a law of nature. Blow her away with a raging tornado!"

"Tzuvait ▪Tornado!"

"I am the queen who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. The Tornado shall disperse and disappear!"

""I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. The Tornado shall disperse and disappear!""

""Anti ▪Tzuvait ▪Tornado!"

The magic that Firo casts overpowers the counterbalancing of three people and breaks through, but it loses a lot of power.

"Yaay, Here I go~"

"Wing • Tackle!"

Firo tries to take advantage of the situation and charges Motoyasu immediately. but, she is blown off again.

This is.....looking bleak.

It seems those three are well prepared against Firo, and have taken measures in advance.

Motoyasu you bastard, I really want to kill you.

Fortunately Raphtalia and Melty were excluded as targets.

Are they looking down on use because we lack the power to kill them?

Perhaps if Raphtalia joined the fight, and Firo was not being suppressed.

It is evident that it requires three people, and they are barely stopping Firo.

Melty's speciality is magic. It would be possible to counterbalance, but her Level is too low.

I told Raphtalia not to step in because of her lack of armour.

No wait, if I approach together with Firo I should be able to hold back their magic.

At this point both bitch's magical power and my physical strength is starting to decline.

"Hm!?"

Bitch and her lackeys drink something.

Is that possibly a potion that recovers magical power?

Dangerous.....I don't think we can hold out until they run out of potions.

"What a tough guy. Thanks to the shield's skills he will not to fall down....."

Motoyasu seems to be out of breath as he continues using skills. I have

also received considerable damage!

I feel blood dripping from my body.

"I received good information and gotten strong in a different way."

So far, after coming to this world, everything has been developed through trial and error.

I did not choose the means of becoming strong.

Avariciously, I stacked equipment bonuses of unsealed shields.

Nonetheless.....I am still unable to win?

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"What's going on!?"

Motoyasu got distracted. One of his companions cried out.

I follow Motoyasu's line of sight and check.

One of Motoyasu's companions had a sword piercing her shoulder from behind.

Melty was considered too weak, and since Raphtalia was on defence she was ignored.

"You are only paying attention to Firo, there are too many openings!"

Raphtalia's figure suddenly appears.

"You!"

After her companion was stabbed, the bitch brandishes her sword and slashes.

"Hide ▪ Mirage"

When Raphtalia was about to be stabbed she disappeared like smoke.

Raphtalia used concealment magic that uses a magic sword skill to produce a phantom, hence Hide ▪ Mirage.

It appears to be concealment magic that utilizes illusions.

"Do not get carried away with mere illusion magic!"

"I am the queen who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Cut down the illusions!"

"Wind Flasher!"

The illusion magic Raphtalia was using to hide disappears. Raphtalia emerged from the mist that the wind cut down.

"There!"

The bitch thrusts towards Raphtalia.

Raphtalia.....is receiving the attack!?

Raphtalia has no armour. She's wearing villager clothes.

Bitch's sword is probably of a high quality. If something happens then we are finished.

There is no time to choose the means.

Shield of Anger!

With the thought of losing Raphtalia I activate the Curse Series Shield.

"Ah, Wait!"

"Uoooooooooooooooooo!"

Make it in time.....Make it in time.....Make it in timeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

The world instantly slows down. While my mind was being eroded I cast my skills.

"Air Strike Shield! Second Shield!"

Two shields appear between Raphtalia and the sword With a clang, bitch's sword was repelled.

"Haa.....Haa....."

I made it in time, somehow.

"Eat this!"

Motoyasu aims his skill at me who sighed in relief.

If I'm not mistaken, those are the movements for the Meteor Spear.

It seems while using the Curse Series, not only is my body enhanced, but also my kinetic vision.

I powerfully grasp the the shining spear head.

"Im-Impossible! Grabbing the Meteor Spear!?"

"You retard, you just used that skill a while ago! What kind of idiot would forget!? Fool!"

The counter effect of the shield of anger is based on the attack's strength. Self Curse Burning is activated.

The strength of this flame is influenced by my anger.

I was almost consumed by rage when I saw Raphtalia about to be stabbed. This generated an enormous amount of power.

"Uwaaaaah!"

Motoyasu's whole body was covered in black flames, and he was rolling around in pain.

Guu.....If I don't change shield I'll forget myself in anger.

"Not yet!"

The bitch hasn't learnt her lesson yet and tried to stab Raphtalia again.

Shit..... Cooldown time!

They are just about to end!

"Shield---"

Not in time!

Raphtalia was.....

The bitch's assassin's knife hits Raphtalia.

"Ahahahahaha, trying to deft me.....What!?"

Raphtalia disappears and all that's left is an after-image.

"Your magical power was not enough to completely nullify my illusion magic. Now it's my turn!"

Chapter 69: Judgement

Raphtalia appears behind the bitch and slashes.

Clang! The bitch barely blocks Raphtalia's sword with her sword by turning around.

There was probably another illusion piled upon the one that was dispelled.

"You're just a pebble on the side of the road!"

"To treat others as pebbles..... Is that that attitude of one meant to rule!?"

Raphtalia and bitch continue their game of cat and mouse while also insulting each other.

Bitch's sword must have been expensive. However, she is unable to break Raphtalia's sword.

I don't know if it's simply because Raphtalia's ability exceeds hers, I have to hurry and help...



"I will not collapse just yet!"

Motoyasu who was on the ground from Self-Burning Curse gets up with great difficulty and is barely able to stand in front of me.

"You think you can stop me with these kind of burns? I will not acknowledge it!"

Although Motoyasu has taken considerable damage from Self Curse Burning, he continues on without consideration for his body.

His steps are a little unsteady.

"This amount of damage is nothing that can't be fixed with recovery magic."

"Do you have someone who can apply it?"

I do not know what kind of magic Motoyasu uses.

When I look at his companions I see the one that wasn't stabbed desperately using recover magic.

Raphtalia and the bitch are still engaging each other in close combat, neither of them are backing off.

"Don't forget about Firo either~!"

"Firo!? Are you okay?"

Firo should have been induced into a state of frenzy when I took out the shield of anger. But she's showing no signs of losing her mind.

After the shield of anger's second form shield of anger 2 was unlocked, it's power increased without changing to that form.

I am also able to send my companions into a frenzy with the angry dragon's roar.

Maybe that's why I can stop the shield of anger 1 from sending Firo out of control.

"Whats up?"

When I look at Firo's head..... her ahoge is glowing.

"Somehow my body has become extremely light"

Black flames are covering Firo, her white limbs are being dyed black.

Firo's mind doesn't seem to be eroded though.....

It seems the reward from the Queen of Philorials is amazing.

"I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Cure this person!"

"Al ▪ Tzuvait ▪ Heal!"

Motoyasu's companion casts healing magic him after a long chant.

Range recovery, they had such a hand available?

"You saved me!"

But.....Motoyasu, you have made one big miscalculation.

The light of recovery falls onto Motoyasu and his group to heal.

"Alright.....Huh?"

The recovery magic that Motoyasu was waiting for barely did anything for him. Motoyasu tilted his neck looking puzzled.

"Did you think you could recover completely with just one cast? I'm sorry to disappoint you. I have my own hand to prevent that."

This is funny, the side effect of Self-Burning Curse slows down healing.

His long awaited recovery magic barely did anything.

"I think the outcome is decided."

His companions turn towards Raphtalia and starts chanting magic.

"Firo"

I give instructions to support Raphtalia.

"Okay~!"

Firo charges even faster than earlier.

As Firo approaches Raphtalia who is preparing to defend with her sword, both Raphtalia and the bitch back off to start preparing magic.

"Not yet!"

Without learning his lesson Motoyasu tries to stab me with his spear.

"Air Strike Javelin!"

A thrown spear flies towards me.

"Like that would work!"

I catch the flying spear.

Gakin! Sounds of metal clashing rings out when I grab the spear.

When I completely stop the spear, it disappears from my hand and reappears in Motoyasu's.

Throwing skills..... Certainly Self Curse Burning is ineffective at a long distance.

If you are a gamer you would understand after seeing it once.

"I won't.....I won't lose here! If I lose then princess Melty, Raphtalia-chan, and Firo-chan will all become tools for the devil of the shield."

..... In a way coming all the way here believing in justice in itself is somewhat praiseworthy.

But I am treated as the villain.

No way, In Motoyasu's eyes am I a mid-boss within a game?

What an unpleasant treatment. Who is a boss character.

"I will absolutely help you!"

"A buffoon of a womaniser coming here, it's too pathetic."

Don't you understand you're the one being brainwashed?

It's such a waste to not be directing your passion somewhere more productive.....

"Damn....."

He doesn't even respond to my remark. His Companions are being trampled on by Firo.

Well, his unyielding will is certainly Hero-like.

However, if you insist of blindly following justice like that, then there is no saving you.

"Give it up, you cannot beat us."

You don't even know your allies are the ones behind this.

I look at Melty anxiously while thinking about what's to do next.

Victory or defeat is also decided on whether or not the cage can be destroyed.

It is admirable that she can act so bravely knowing her own older sister is trying to have her assassinated.

.....Killing intent surges within me.

But if I murder anyone here my innocence will never be proven.

If I murder anyone, I will be no different than that trash who is trying to frame me.

I refuse to become an existence similar to trash.

To even sacrifice your own flesh and blood without hesitation.

Is that really alright?

No, I will prove my innocence!

"Not yet.....I haven't lost yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeet!"

Motoyasu suicidally charges me, it's like he's trying to die an honourable death.

It will be decide with the next move—

right before a decide a foreign sound echoes.

Applause is heard from a strange place.

"Iya~..... as expected of the spear, truly a strong will. It was a good

show."

The area is filled with magical pressure.

All of Firo's feathers stand on end as she covers Rapthalia.

"Eh--"

"Mel-chan!"

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"I-I am a princess! how dare you treat me with so impolitely--"

"Firo-cha--fube!"

And without any hesistation,everyone including Bitch and Motoyasu were kicked towards me, freely using high-speed magic Firo appears in front of me Everyone, whether friend or foe is gathered together at my feet by Firo.

"Master! We'll defend with everything!"

"What's happening Sudden--"

"Hurry up! Something big is about to come!"

"Damn! I know!"

While Firo was watching with a threatening attitude, while I use Shield Prison, Air Strike Shield, and Second Shield.

Just as the shields appear a huge pillar of light poured down on us from the sky.

"Guu....."

It was a heavy attack that shook my body to it's core I endure it while chanting Fast Heal.

Air Strike Shield and Second Shield are blown away immediately, and Shield Prison is barely holding up.

As the shield is protecting everyone from the sky a Bakin sound could be heard.

The Prison is destroyed and the light falls onto me. My shield is somehow blocking the thick beam of light.

As I was about to slip Firo wraps her wings around me and supports me.

"Uguguguuuuuuuuuu....."

The light reduces my physical strength.

"A little more.....It's over!"

The light suddenly vanishes but I still hold my shield ready.

Firo stands up and covers everyone with her wings.

The area around us.....It's all scorched-earth.

It looks like a meteor fell and we were at it's epicentre.

There were some villagers groaning outside the crater that was part of the aftermath of the magic the enemy cast.

It was horrible.

"Wh-What on earth....."

"Oh my what's this? To think the devil of the shield could withstand the High class synthesis magic [Judgement] and remain calm."

When I look towards the voice, what greeted me was the smiling face of the priest back in the church of castle town.

Followed by a dozen church officials, with some knights mixed in.

"You.....!"

Motoyasu looks at the priest in frustration.

They're not your reinforcements?

No wait, Motoyasu would have been caught up in that blow as well.

This is.....

"Oh dear oh dear, How could I forget to introduce myself. I am the pope of the Church of Three Heroes."

Chapter 70: The Pope

"The pope.....huh"

Wasn't that too extreme of a greeting? The power of that spell earlier was just barely tolerable even with the shield of anger.

Firo that fellow, why did you help Motoyasu's group too?

You should have just brought Raphtalia and Melty.

Well, it's fine. I'm curious as to what the Pope's real intentions are.

"To fire such magic at the two princesses of this country and the Hero of the Spear.....What are you thinking?"

"Hero of the Spear-sama.....You say?"

If I'm not mistaken, Heroes of the Sword, Bow, and Spear are objects of worship for this guy.

I don't know what is going on but.....

The Pope does not stop smiling while looking at me.

I wonder what. I am getting a weird feeling.

Will he keep that expression plastered on his face like a mask even if someone dies in front of him?

Does his face even understand how to change expressions?

That's the kind of feeling I'm getting.

"I have faith that the Three Heroes will save the people, and the world from the wave. The problem is, that fake pretending to be a hero."

"What do you mean?"

The pope answers as if it's an everyday conversation.

Motoyasu watches the pope with a dumbfounded expression.

"The queen candidates have already been killed by the devil of the shield. Don't mind worry about your corpses, they will be verified later."

"No way....."

Raphtalia was so disgusted that she didn't even feel angry.

The Pope, before he seemed like a fair and unbiased person, but it seems that was just my imagination.

"The devil of the shield acted aggressively, but god has granted him mercy. Therefore, I am here as god's spokesman complete the purification."

What an amazing reason. In other words, the reasonably priced holy water offered to us was available because we could have been dealt with at a moments notice?

At that time I had no idea of the big picture.....

Back then I would not have considered this a possibility either.

"Don't joke around! I am the next Queen! I cannot be murdered by a shield!"

"No no, don't worry about that. Be at ease, princess Malty. The person inheriting this country has already been prepared. All is as god's will."

Bitch' face instantly paled from that conversation, it seems this was all a conspiracy from the pope.

"It's a lie.....Right?....."

"Hahaha, No way."

"Stop joking around!"

Motoyasu yells at the pope and points his spear towards him.

"Did we not fight to save this country and princess Melty?"

"Oh right. This country, in the end will be used in the holy war for the world. After our church expels the 3 fake Heroes and the devil of the shield, the church's authority and power will consolidate."

"Fake hero....."

My face cramps as the Pope's answer is way too unpleasant.

"Yes..... The belief in the Church is shaken in various places since the

face heroes are causing trouble everywhere. Fake hero of the Sword caused an epidemic, The fake hero of the bow does not bow to my authority, and the fake hero of the spear caused an ecosystem to go mad."

All the things that I made up for.

Now I understand what Itsuki did, he usurped a bad lord who raised taxes to contribute to the church.

"Therefore, I already disposed of the sword and bow imposter."

The pope answers calmly.

"What!?"

"I have summoned the bow and sword to different locations, and the devil of the shield will be wiped from existence with [Judgement]. Such is the will of god."

Ren and Itsuki.....They were investigating too forcefully, and got themselves in trouble.

I expected Ren to at least be suspicious, but Itsuki too.....

To think they would behave in such a way. If Itsuki noticed wickedness he would act for justice.

No way.....Did they get ambushed?

Does that mean both of them are.....

"Did you murder them!? Everybody fought for the sake of this world!.....Ren!.....Itsuki!"

Motoyasu has an incredibly angry look.

Were you guys that friendly with each other?

I feel bad for those two, but I feel nothing besides sympathy.

"Do not call it killing. We are merely purifying the devils and imposters who deceived us."

"Wha....."

"We will inform the King and Queen like this. This country is being

controlled by the fake Heroes, although we purified them, the princesses were unfortunately....."

Wow~.....That's pretty far fetched. Will they even believe that?

Hm.....I can see the trash believing it. He might co-operate solely because I was killed.

We can barely fight, since all of us are exhausted.

Even though in this world I ostracised-- I will not become a pitiful person after the truth has become apparent.

In wars, regardless of whether or not you have weapons of mass destruction, if you win then it does not matter.

Truth is, I don't really understand either, but I can say this. I will not forgive ass-holes who are trying to destroy us for a selfish reason.

Motoyasu is at a loss for words and slowly turns towards me.

"Naofumi, a truce. I want you to lend me your power!"

"What an extremely selfish speech. I will not let you say you forgot what you said to me before."

Making a situation where I was attacked one-sidedly and not even able to escape.

In the first place this guy really did believe the shield was capable of brainwashing just a little while ago.

"I beg you! I.....I want to have a funeral for those guys. I can never forgive this guy!"

"Whatever. Only if we can win.

It will take time until the next strong magic is fired. However.

"Will you lend me your power? Do you think nothing of that guy!?"

"I am thinking of many things. I was going to be made a scapegoat. But Motoyasu, I have no obligation whatsoever to lend you my aid."

The situation is, the cage was broken so we should be able to escape by

riding on Firo.

"Rather."

I smile at Motoyasu and show him a thumbs down.

"Die please♪"

"Yooooooooooooou!"

Even while unsteady Motoyasu tries to punch me.

"Are you sure you want to hit me?"

If Self-Burning Curse activates after you hit me, you will die.

"Damn....."

Well, I can control it because of Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty.

"As expected, the devil of the shield and his companions the fake heroes will fight each other."

"Who the hell is this guy's companion?"

"Shut up! I won't depend on you! I'll take that guy down alone!"

"fufufu, I wonder if you can really defeat me."

The pope instructs his subordinate to bring him his weapon while laughing.

I wonder what it is. It's a big ass sword.....

It was a silver white sword decorated with ornaments.

Is that similar to a game where in the second half they get a sacred sword that talks?

(Tl note: Anyone know what game he is referencing?) Such complicated decorations.....It's probably quite strong.

The jewel buried in the middle of it gives off an unpleasant feeling.

"Wha.....That's-"

Bitch and Melty both pale at once.

"Naofumi! Take care, That-"

"First, the devil of the shield. You shall receive god's judgement."

Despite the Pope being far away he swings down the sword with a shout.

A shock-wave through the ground is coming right at me.

I ready the shield to receive it.

"Ugh....."

The impact was so strong I was almost blown off. It's damage rivals that of Motoyasu's meteor spear.

A big fissure is created in the ground.

Wait a minute, right now I have the shield of anger equipped!

What kind of weapon can deal such damage that Motoyasu's skill can't even compare.

"Naofumi. That. It's a replication of a legendary hero's weapon."

"A replication?"

Just how strong was the original!?

Ren who also uses the sword.....Motoyasu would be stronger, but they simply cannot compare to that.

I mean Glass completely ruined Motoyasu.

Her attacks would be a around 5 times stronger.

I was still able to defend against them with the shield of rage.

But this attack just now surpassed it by far.

"Why is such a thing.....They should have been lost hundreds of years ago....."

"It was not lost, it was stolen. The Three Heroes Church stole it."

There was a bomb conspiracy theory in a certain country during World War Two, that claimed they lost a large quantity of bombs, and to this day have never been found.

To think that is just a replica of the legendary weapon, will Ren's sword become that strong in the future?

Although I may be the Hero of the Shield, is it safe to give an individual such power?

If you have that kind of power from a mere replica, do yo guys even need to summon heroes?

I am curious.

"If you have such a think why are you summoning heroes. Can't you just mass-produce those and defeat the waves?"

Melty shakes her head at my question.

"To have similar power equal to a legendary weapon.....The fuel consumption is too huge."

"What do you mean?"

"To use that weapon once, several hundred people's worth of magical power must be sacrificed. Moreover, it is impossible to mass-produce now, that technology was from a lost era. It is a legendary weapon after all."

"That's great."

I have seen the anime. A giant robot using all of Japan's electricity to shoot one shot.

Something like that?

"Everyday believers have devoted their energies and risked their lives. This is for a crusade!"

Well they certainly are prepared.

Bringing out the replica of a legendary hero's weapon in such a place?

They said it was lost for several hundred years.

Was the thing accumulating magic for that many years?

Shit! To bring out something so troublesome.

.....No, it's just evidence of how cornered they were.

If we can overcome this, then our counter-attack will begin.

Right now is a crucial moment.

Chapter 71: Replica

Pope: “Well then, time to end the little test here. I shall start taking this seriously.”

The pope readies his sword.

Then, the form changes to a spear, the shape changed while retaining its luxurious design.

Looking at the weapons, you can tell it was made by the same person.

Naofumi: “It can transform!?”

Pope: “Of course, it is a legendary weapon after all. Sword, spear, and bow..... What shall I purify you with?”

Holy weapon of the Three Legendary Heroes.....?

The power of Three Legendary Heroes merged together in to one weapon turns its fangs against the Hero of the Shield.

That is quite the composition.

Even if I tried to escape.....Can it even be done against an opponent who wields such a weapon?

That shock-wave was too fast to dodge.

If he takes this seriously and uses a bow skill, it might even be impossible for Firo to escape.....

Pope: “You see, our power from the believers is limited. So allow me to end this with a single blow.”

The knights are wholeheartedly supporting the Pope in the background.

The weapon was pointed towards us.

The replica spear shines and from the light transforms into a three-pronged spear.

Motoyasu: “..... High Class Skill, Brionac!?”

Hero of the Spear Motoyasu cries out.

It is probably a skill name from a game which Motoyasu has played.

That means this is a considerably high-class skill.

It would normally do an enormous amount of damage, will the skill kill us.....?

Escaping is impossible, I have to block it..... Motoyasu and the others are unable to, only the shield can.

Is this move going to attack from all sides?

No matter what I have no intention of giving up.

Naofumi: "Firo!"

Firo: "Okay!"

Firo grasps my intention and throws me directly at the pope.

The moment the pope entered the range of my skill. I shouted its name.

Naofumi: "Shield Prison!"

A cage of shields imprisons the pope.

After I will use Change Shield (Attack) then Iron Maiden will surely kill him-Pope: ".....What kind of imitation is this?"

He didn't even need to take a posture, the prison was destroyed merely by the skill's after effect.

No way!?

No, I need to calm down and think about this.

The requirements to activate Iron Maiden weren't met, and it's my only other means of attacking.

I'll just burn him with Self-Burning Curse.

However, he grips the spear and begins his attack.

I think not.

Naofume: "Firo, Throw Motoyasu at me!"

Motoyasu: "Eh!?"

Firo: “Okay!”

Motoyasu who hasn't landed yet is hurled towards me by Firo.

Motoyasu: “Dowaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

Motoyasu shouts in panic while flying towards me at a high-speed.

Naofumi: “Motoyasu attack me!”

Motoyasu: “Ahhh!? Oh I see, okay!”

Motoyasu turns out to be quite sharp.

While I turn around Motoyasu readies his spear.

And with a thud the spear hits my shield.

That's right.

This is good.

Motoyasu: “Meteor Spear!”

Next, Motoyasu releases his skill towards the Pope.

Pope: “Foolish.”

However, Motoyasu's meteor spear was stopped by an unknown barrier around the pope.

Motoyasu: “What!?”

Naofumi: “Now try this!”

With me at the centre, the Self-Burning Curse flames fly out and engulfs the pope, Motoyasu is also hit.

The barrier surrounding the Pope suddenly vanishes and the flames—
Pope: “It's useless!”

The believers accompanying the Pope immediately begin chanting in unison.

Knights: “””Our god commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Purify this curse with a miracle!”””

Knights: “High Class Purification Magic [Sanctuary]!”

The area was dyed pure-white and my Self-Burning Curse was instantly removed.

No way!?

Certainly the curse power conflicts with holy power.

Was I deceived into buying holy water? Oh well, it did do enough.

High Class Holy Water should still be required to completely cure the curse.

But instantly.....

Naofumi: "Air Strike Shield! Second Shield!"

Before reaching the Pope I called the shields as a foothold, Motoyasu and I both use it to back off.

It seems the flames that also burnt Motoyasu were purified.

There is nothing I haven't used yet.

Naofumi: "Okay. Motoyasu's companion heal us with recovery magic."

Woman: "R-right! Tzuvait ▪ Heal!"

Motoyasu's wounds healed considerably.

This is becoming quite useful.

What's sad is that I'm forced to work with Motoyasu.

Pope: "Now then, are you finished with your farce? I would like to attack now."

As the Pope begins to activate a skill, the tip of his spear glows.

Pope: "This is as far as you go. I bid the devil and the imposter good-bye."

The spear shines even brighter than before and the pope smiles at us. His attitude is as if he completed an exorcism.

Firo: "Mel-chan!"

Firo instantly covers Melty. Raphtalia grasps my hand.

Motoyasu: "So this is it....."

Motoyasu mutters as if he has given up.

Malty: "I-I am going to become the queen of this country! How dare you be so rude-"

The bitch is screaming before death.

Motoyasu's companions begin to lose their composure and breaks down crying.

Is there any possibility that I can withstand this?.....

It's sink or swim, with nothing to lose, I step forward.

Of course I would rather not defend those guys.

I just want to protect Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty, they are the ones who have believed in me.

I ready my shield and step forward.

Raphtalia: "I'll accompany you."

Raphtalia follows me as I step forward. With her hand on mine.

We've gotten this far together.

I was brought to this world against my will and became the devil of the shield, and was forced to buy a slave to become my fighting force.

Of course even to now there is no sense of guilt.

Still, even in those days she believed in me.

Naofumi: "I'm sorry.....To bring you to such a place....."

Raphtalia: "No, Naofumi-sama I believe you can protect us all."

Motoyasu: ".....That's right. I don't know how the previous Hero of the spear was, but this is definitely one of his skills."

Not yet, I will not be finished in such a place.

The chance to finally counter-attack the mastermind is right in front of me.

Brionac.....I'm not sure which Celtic Myth it is from, but I will stop it.

The Pope raises the spear towards the sky-

Ren: "Hundred Sword!"

Itsuki: "Meteor Bow!"

Suddenly, a wave of swords and arrows rain down on to the Pope.

Pope: "What's going on!?"

Since I broke down the Pope's barrier, he was forced to stop casting his skill and twirl the spear around to deflect all the swords and arrows.

I turn my gaze to where the voice came from. There I see-

"Oh my. You two should have already been purified by the judgement of god, why are you here?"

Ren and Itsuki are standing in a line with their parties.

Ren: "Don't just kill me off without my permission. In the first place did you even confirm our corpses?"

Itsuki: "That was a close call. I barely made it in time."

Ren and Itsuki call out to us while preparing for battle.

Pope: "Oh dear, if there was even a need to confirm your bodies, then there would have been no reason to use that magic."

I look to where the attack previously landed.

Certainly, there is a slim chance of even finding a corpse within the crater.

Not even a trace would remain.

But I endured it though.

When looking at Ren my body feels heavy.

The shield makes a commotion about who I should be directing my hatred towards.

The rage of the dragon is producing anger meant for Ren.

I have to endure it..... I cannot act violently now.

Motoyasu: “You guys, how did you.....”

Motoyasu is looking at Ren and Itsuki like he’s looking at dead people.

Well Motoyasu isn’t wrong, it’s definitely strange that all the heroes have gathered in such a remote area.

The last time I saw them was in the opposite direction heading towards Silt Welt.

Ren: “A group called shadow helped us.”

Itsuki: “Yeah, it was a close call.”

Motoyasu: “Eh? Did a guy called shadow tell you about Naofumi’s whereabouts?”

Ren: “He said that he was on the church’s side.”

If I think about it, it’s strange that they’re able to predict our escape route and lay an ambush.

In other words, Motoyasu was able to pinpoint my location thanks to the help from the shadows on the Three Heroes Church.

We also met a shadow during our escape.

That reminds me.....

Naofumi: “..... I was told the shadows are splintered.”

Ren: “Yeah, the shadows who saved our lives said they worked for the queen.”

I see, the queen’s shadows are collaborating.

I’ll assume that the shadows who helped Itsuki and Ren are from the queen’s faction.

Is this because the queen has a hostile relationship with the pope?

At least now the queen and the four heroes are hostile against the Pope and his Three Heroes Church.

However.....These guys look like they came from an old weekly manga.

It's like they were waiting for the perfect timing to appear.

The leader of the heroes side is Motoyasu.

The Arch-enemy position is me.....? I'm not kidding.

Is it possible to clear up the misunderstanding if I had a companion character there? Like in the manga.

Unfortunately, I have no intentions of becoming a companion of Motoyasu or any of them.....

Ren: "A punitive force will be arriving soon! Surrender quietly!"

Ren declares as if he already won.

However, the pope doesn't seem to be worried at all.

Pope: "Our victory is certain no matter how many you bring. No matter what the armed forces bring they're just numbers, its meaningless!"

The pope gets in position to activate his skill again.

Ren: "I wonder about that"

Itsuki: "Of course."

The two heroes both shoot a skill at the pope.

Ren: "Meteor Sword!"

Itsuki: "Metero Bow!"

Arrows and Swords made of light head directly towards the Pope—

Chapter 72: Wrath Shield

“Meteor Sword!”

“Meteor Bow!”

Ren and Itsuki’s prided Meteor Series attacks are fired at the pope, but the pope is covered by another barrier, keeping a cool face while wielding the replica spear.

Ren and Itsuki’s companions also use their skills and magic, however the barrier is deployed again so nothing comes close to harming the pope.

“As expected of imposters, you only have this degree of strength.”

“Damn.....”

“This is harsh. To think he would have such a hidden-card to play.”

“What did you guys even come for?!”

Even with these guys our chance of success is still almost nil.

“Do you guys even have any plan in mind?”

“Just how much long do you plan on making fun of us?”

Ren and Itsuki’s weapons start to glow, but this time they charge up their energy before attacking.

“Thunder Slash!”

“Thunder Shot!”

The pope looks startled and his eyes open wide as he receives the attack, his barrier creaking.

“It’s too late! I’ve already bought enough time!”

The barrier was destroyed due to my Self-Burning Curse last time, and Motoyasu and the rotten heroes were also able to break through it this time.

“I could still fight..... But I’m out of SP.”

“That’s just the whining of a loser.”

I haven't helped them so far because I did not expect them have such strong skills.

Is it too late to jump in? Have I been too cautious?

"Fufufu..... foolish heroes. Did you truly think you could beat me, the wielder of the legendary weapon?"

The believers immediately use recovery magic on the Pope to heal him.

This is troubling. The attack that took so much effort to land was healed in one go.

"If the others help suppress you, I'll defeat you. It is my duty as a hero."

"Everyone. The aria of judgement will now commence."

The pope's believers nod and begin to recite magic.

"All of the imposters and their companions are evil."

Wow. Quite fanatic.

I'm not sure we can win this fight even if the reinforcements that Ren and Itsuki called show up.

"Now then, shall we finish this?"

The pope is going to seriously kill us. Brionac has been ready for a while and now he charges at us.

"Naofumi"

"What?"

Ren approaches me and asks.

"Let's combine our power and beat this guy."

"Honestly, co-operating with you guys is far too unpleasant."

It's impossible to successfully escape.

Furthermore, if they use the spell, "Judgement," again, I don't think that I can endure it.

"Someone must attack me with hostility, and then I must get in close

proximity of the pope. After that, get away from me – my attack will affect anyone in range.”

The only effective weapon I have is Self-Burning Curse. If it comes to close range I should somehow manage.

“I understand.”

“Then, what are you waiting for!?”

I cast support magic on everyone and issue instructions, preparing myself to protect those who will attack with close combat from both physical and magical damage.

The heroes attack, supported by magic, their defence buffed, in an unexpectedly organized formation.

“Let’s go!”

We rush towards the pope first.

The pope is ignoring us and concentrating on his skill.

The only way for me to deal a decisive blow is to receive a hit myself.

Since I regularly develop my defence, this skill requires a lot of damage to activate.

“Naofumi!”

Motoyasu’s spear hits my shield, activating Self-Burning Curse.

“Uooooooooooooooooooooo!”

The believers not singing the Aria of Judgement try to purify the flames, but of the barrier shatters anyway.

Immediately I cast Air Strike Shield and Change Shield, then use Hook to withdraw behind the other heroes. Hook’s special effect lets me manipulate it however I want, so I tie it around my arm and use it as an anchor.

“Thunder Slash!”

“Lightening Spear!”

“Thunder Shot!”

The other heroes use their strongest skills against the pope.

“Brionac!”

However, the pope counters with his skill!

The Pope’s skill and the heroes skills clash against each other, and the two side’s conflicting energies fill the air with the electric crackling.

“Goooooooooooooooooo!”

“Yooooooooooooooooou!”

“Deryaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

I am reminded of an old anime where two beams collide and fight for superiority in both offence and defense.

(Tl note: KAMEHAMEHAAAAAAAAAA)(Ed note: AVADAAA
KEDAVRAAAAAAAAAA) The heroes’ companions are also support them with magic, pushing the pope back little by little.

Or so I thought.....

“Fufu.....Is that it?”

The pope’s smile remains undiminished.

No way! He was holding back!?

“No..... Not yet! I will not be defeated yet!”

“That’s right! We can still fight!”

“Yeah, let’s raise the output!”

The three of them use all their SP on their skills.

Though it’s just a little I’ll try to help too.

But... I cannot rid myself of the ominous feeling that something is wrong.

“Now then, shall we end this soon?” The pope murmurs indifferently, increasing his power.

Shit! If we die here it would be troublesome!

I mean, I wanted this the other's to die, but the timing right now is terrible.....

I push away the Heroes to stop their skills and step forward.

I almost can't withstand the pain as energy passes through my body, but I hold out my shield and endure it desperately.

After what seems an age, the energy dissipates.

"Haa..... haa....."

"Interesting..... I did not expect the Devil of the Shield to be able to withstand that." The pope declares quietly, swinging the spear around.

"A-Are you okay?"

I look back, but all I can see is a blur.

Everything except for a small area behind me was completely destroyed.

Fortunately, I did not receive too much damage, thanks to those supporting me from behind.

"Tzuvait ▪ Heal!"

My wounds were immediately healed thanks to the recovery magic.

If the other three heroes hadn't reduced that attack's power with their skills, I would have died.

"Damn.....Our SP....."

"Me too."

"Same here."

I give the three of them SP recovery potions.

We probably won't have enough time to completely recover though.

I suddenly hear a loud war cry. It seems the reinforcements that Ren called have arrived.

"Now then, I have had enough of this farce with the devil. I shall

dispose of all of you and summon the true heroes. But first, why don't I keep those people occupied for now."

The pope changes the spear into a sword and takes up a stance.

The sword blade's shape takes on the semblance of a phoenix.

Perhaps this skill is even more superior to Brionac.

Dangerous..... those guys from the punitive force have no idea that the Pope has something like this up his sleeve.

There is the possibility they will all be wiped out at once.

"Everyone, Let's provide judgment together."

He intends to attack together with his subordinates. Although only a bit, we have gained some time.

"So we could only come this far....."

The other heroes are all pale.

No matter how reckless we act, our chances of success are low.....

No, wasn't it also like this against Motoyasu? Can I say that I did my best?

Did I do my best...?

Suddenly, it comes to me.

It's a desperate gamble, but we're dead anyway. We might as well give it all we have.

"Ren, come here for a moment."

"What's up? Do you have a plan?"

After I tell Ren to approach, he does so suspiciously.

Dokun, Dokun. (Sfx: Pulsing)

The shield's pulsing strengthens, and it begins to vibrate.

I was intentionally sealing off the dragon core's rage towards Ren up until now.

The memory is being projected in my vision again, and the shield wants to slaughter the enemy before me.

That's right..... More... Give me more anger!

Thanks to Raphtalia, I can control the massive amount of rage pouring from the Shield of Anger.

"Raphtalia, your hand....."

"Okay"

I join hands with Raphtalia and point my shield at Ren.

I look at Motoyasu and the Bitch to remind myself of the anger that I wanted to avoid.

All the hatred, and everything else is forgotten, all that is left pitch-blackness and anger.

Grow Up has been achieved due to released emotions.

Curse Series: Ability improvement of the Shield of Anger! Shield of Anger changed to Wrath Shield!

Wrath Shield 3

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield (Attack)] [Iron Maiden] [Blutopfer]

(Tl note: Blutopfer means Blood Sacrifice in German.) Special Effect: Dark Curse Burning Physical, Strength Up, Roar of the angry Dragon, Roar, Frenzy of Companions, Magic Sharing, Clothes of Anger (Intermediate) Instantly my heart is consumed by dark emotions.

"-----!"

Chapter 73: Price

“-----!” (Naofumi)

I shouted at the heavens.

Hate!

This whole world is hateful, I hate everything!

I'm going mad from everyone reproaching and accusing me.

I should just burn down everything with this power!

My vision is stained red and black, and everything I see becomes an object of my hatred.

“-!”(Naofumi)

Someone's voice reaches my ears, but I cannot hear it. It feels as if I'm submerged under water.

“-!”(Naofumi)

I feel something take hold of my hand – does it want to be incinerated!?

“Master, do you truly hate everything in the world?” (Firo) I feel trapped – everything that torments me will die by my hatred!

“Really? Is that what you really think?!”(Firo) Yeah, so what?

“Then, did Master hate the days he spent with Firo and Raphtalia onee-chan?(Firo) That voice..... An old memory floats to the surface of my mind: A young girl loyally following me wherever I go, nothing separating us.

Obeying me even while injured..... This recollection fills my view.

Later, too, my feelings of love are transmitted to a young bird that hatches from an egg and grows up under my care.

“That.....That is.....”(Naofumi)

“It's different. Since Master works hard, Firo can do her best.”(Firo) The darkness is gradually clearing up.

“That’s why Firo will eat master’s anger and hatred.”(Firo) My vision clears and I glance around.

“Naofumi-sama!”(Raphtalia)

“Are you alright!?”(Melly)

A few seconds have passed since I screamed, and I am being looked at with suspicion.

“Master, are you alright!?”(Firo)

“Did you help me control that?”(Naofumi) “Yup, Master was in trouble.”(Firo)

Firo hugs me from behind. If I look closely I can tell that she has been severely burnt by the black flame.

Not even Firo’s body could withstand the Improved Shield of Anger’s flames.

It must have been very painful, but Firo still worried about me without complaining.

(Tl note: I cried a little.) (Ed note: Bakahou, you softie.) “Firo, Raphtalia onee-chan, and Mel-chan all believe in Master, so do your best!”

“Yeah.”

All I wanted was to simply beat the wave, it was not necessary to be swallowed by my anger.

After all, I can crush one of the ring leaders who made me suffer.

That pope bastard conveniently used Melty, the other heroes, all of us.

I will..... kick that bastard’s ass!

“.....I’m going.”(Naofumi)

“There’s still a chance, even in this situation?”(Ren) “Yeah, I’ll be sure to kill him with my strongest shield.”(Naofumi) “What’s with that confident attitude? You looked like shit just a little while ago.”(Ren) Shield of Anger 2’s dragon-like figure has become even more ominous compared to before.

The dragon's features have morphed to be more devil-like, the horns curl around.

"I have a skill that I need to use, please help make an opening for me to use it."(Naofumi) "You... Can't be helped. I'll rely on you for now."(Motoyasu) "Right. It is difficult to trust you, but we have no other choice."(Ren) "All-or-nothing."(Itsuki)

"We'll use magic to help somehow..."(Hero companions) The heroes and their companions nod and turn to face the pope.

"Oh dear, Oh dear..... To think you would continue to put up this futile resistance. I hope you are prepared, because this is already over. Shall I perform the coup de grace?(Pope) Magical power gradually fills the area.

High-density light is going to be unleashed any moment now.

"Firo!"(Naofumi)

On my signal the heroes charge at the pope, and Firo faithfully carries me as ordered.

"Fly!"(Naofumi)

"Okay~!"(Firo)

Firo jumps while the enemies start to chant.

""High Class Synthetic Magic [Judgement]"" (Church Fanatics) A beam of cleansing light falls from the sky.

"Gooooooooooooooooooooo!"

I raise my shield above my head.

Crackling sounds can be heard as the light pours down onto me, but it is impossible to penetrate Wrath Shield 3's defense. The light barely does any damage to me even though I am right under it.

"To not even suffer a wound from Judgment."(Pope) The pope has a surprised expression on his face, all traces of his old smile gone.

What a suitable price for using the shield.

I'll teach him his place.

“No way... You won’t be able to block this!”(Pope) The pope points his sword at me and yells.

“Phoenix Blade!”(Pope)

A Phoenix takes flight from the Pope’s sword and rushes towards me.

“I can withstand that, no problem!”(Naofumi) I lower my shield in front of me.

Firo, understanding what I’m thinking, casts support magic.

A chant comes to my mind on its own. Are these the conditions for the Clothing of Anger (Intermediate)?

“I am the Hero of the Shield, commander of the origin of power. I have read and deciphered the law of nature. May the devouring flames become my power!”(Naofumi) “Wrath Fire!”(Naofumi)

Anger is now my power.

The flaming phoenix collides with me and doesn’t even singe my eyebrows.

“Wha! To nullify my skill...”(Pope)

“That’s quite ironic. Your bird became food for my holy bird.”(Naofumi) The barrier protecting the pope was shattered by the other heroes’ attacks and Firo’s powerful kicks.

“Phoenix Strike-“(Pope)

Firo’s sure kill dash!

Firo’s finishing move is strong enough to combat the pope.

“Meteor Sword!”(Ren)

“Meteor Spear!”(Motoyasu)

“Meteor Bow!”(Itsuki)

The pope changes his sword into a spear and prepares for the onslaught.

“The Stance of Heaven and Earth Reversal!?”(Motoyasu) Motoyasu yells

in surprise.

Is that another High Class spear skill?

“Tch... How dare you go against God’s will.”(Pope) Firo’s skill is repelled as light overflows from the pope’s spear.

“Gua!”(Ren)

“Gufu!”(Motoyasu)

“Gu.....”(Itsuki)

Is that a counter skill?

Just how tenacious are you!

“But, I will not be stopped!”(Pope)

“I wonder about that.”(Naofumi)

This time the pope’s weapon becomes a giant bow and he jumps away.

“You think you can run!? Firo!”(Naofumi) “Yep. Let’s go~”(Firo)

We instantly catch up to the Pope, and Firo tries to kick him.

However, as just Firo’s attack connects, the pope vanishes.

If he escapes here he loses.

Where is he hiding...?

“Hide Arrow!?”(Itsuki)

That’s Itsuki’s voice.

“That skill creates a large amount of illusionary copies of himself! Be careful!”(Itsuki) Damn... If I can’t target him I can’t do anything.

There are currently 10 popes, but their numbers are increasing.

“Fufufu, I was a little surprised by you, but shall we end this now?”(Pope) The popes hold up their bows and begin to cast a big skill.

“This is my strongest skill. Let’s see if you can withstand this, Devil of the Shield.”(Pope) The bows shine.

Shit, I should be able to block it but I can’t counter attack.

“I am the queen, she who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered the law of nature. Restrain him with ice!”(Queen)
“Doraifa ▪ Icicle Prison!”(Queen)

The lower half of a bunch of the pope’s mirror images freeze.

“Now!”(Queen)

Who is that!?

No, there is no time to worry about that.

I have to defeat this bastard now.

Blutopfer!

As expected, its chant floats into view.

“This is the name of the punishment for the foolish sinner, he who shall be sacrificed as a scapegoat to god. Become a sacrifice to the steel trap! Experience the intense pain of a being drained of all your blood!”(Naofumi) “Blutopfer!”(Naofumi)

Gufu.....

Wh-What!? The moment I cast the skill, blood begins to overflow from my body, my muscles begin to tear, and my bones start to creak.

This...Was it a suicide skill?

The pope smiles as he sees me heavily injured, but the next instant a giant red and black steel trap appears under his feet.

Quite unlike a normal steel trap, this one has multiple layers. It looks like the ground grew a shark’s mouth, with the Pope in the middle.

“Wha-“(Pope)



Gatun! A sharp metal sound can be heard the instant the Pope is bitten by the steel trap.

“Gugyaaaaaaaaa–”(Pope)

The pope’s scream echoes out.

Red bloods splashes over the steel trap and causes it to shine.

“Something of this degree–”(Pope)

This is... harsh.

The pope tries to take countermeasures, but the steel trap repeatedly opens and shuts, seeming as if it were ridiculing him.

“Guha.....It was all... for.....Go-God.....”(Pope) The pope fires off a few skills, but the steel trap isn’t even scratched.

Two... Three cracks start to appear on the legendary weapon replica. As the fourth crack appears, a shattering sound can be heard.

The steel trap suddenly falls to the ground and disappears, leaving the pope’s corpse behind, which, at this point, is nothing more than a lump of flesh.

“.....”(Everybody)

It was so gruesome that we couldn’t breathe.

All skills from the Curse Series are bloody.

Is it because the Curse shields erode the mind?

This is a definite reminder not to overuse the shields of this series.

“Th-The Pope has been defeated by the Devil!”(Church Fanatics) The Three Heroes Church followers mutter in utter despair.

“Yes... This is the end of the line for you lot as well.”(Queen) The punitive force surrounds the Heroes Church remnants and captures them.

Now that the pope is gone our victory is certain, but...

As the punitive forces work I slip off Firo.

A new attack skill, Blutopfer, was added to the Wrath Shield.

It is strong, but the price is too great.....

Chapter 74: The Queen

“Master!?”

Firo holds me anxiously as I was covered in blood.

The shield changed to the Chimeric Viper Shield by itself.

“What horrible wounds! Someone! Help master!”

A woman who looks like the commander of the punitive force runs towards Firo who was calling for help.

“Mother!?”

Melty exclaims in surprise towards the commander.

That reminds me..... The head of the punitive force looks like the person that was with Melty in the beginning.

I couldn't get a good look because of the fan though.

“Your efforts this time were quite amazing. Hero of the Shield-sama.”

It might be because of her that the pope was trapped.

“Everybody! Treatment for Hero of the Shield-sama is top priority! This is a royal order. We must save Hero of the shield-sama's life Without fail !”

“””Yes Ma'am!”””

The treatment team within the punitive force gathered around me and began chanting magic.

“Doraifa ▪ Heal”

Light surrounds me.

However.....There is no sign of the pain receding.

“Ar-are you cursed?..... For it to be so strong.....”

The treatment team cast de-curse magic with surprised expressions.

But..... It had no effect.

“Do a thorough examination! Everyone please hurry!”

The queen issues instructions to the treatment team and Firo follows hastily.

“Ugh.....”

My whole body is screaming in pain. But I will not lose consciousness here.

Because I still do not know whether or not the queen is friend or foe.

“Y-you are the queen?”

“Yes, I am the queen of Melromark, Mirelia Q Melromark. I’m sorry for helping so late.”

(Tl note: I have corrected Merlot Mark to Melromark and removed the = since they are just spaces.) “.....You were definitely slow.”

What does it matter.

Do you have power? Are you the true ruler of this country?

Do you even see the big picture behind this event?

there are a mountain of things I want to say.

My grudge towards her daughter and trash start to surface.

“Really.....this time was all my fault.”

“Mother.....”

“Mama, why are you apologizing to such a person!?”

When the bitch impeached, I could see a few veins appear on the queen’s smiling face.

“Malty..... Prepare yourself because there are a lot of things I need to say to you after we return to the castle.”

Gogogo..... The air trembles.

Though I’m not the one that this anger is directed at, a chill still runs up my spine.

With the snap of her finger a shadow appears behind the bitch and arrests her.

“Wait mama!”

“Silence this fool at once”

“Yes Ma’am!”

The bitch’s mouth is covered by a cloth.

“W-What are you doing to Mein!?”

“I am Mein.....Malty’s mother. By my authority, the fight between heroes is finished until we get back to the castle. Let’s return to Melromarc castle and rest.”

Motoyasu and the other heroes fall silent due to the queen’s aura of authority.

“Now then, Hero of the Shield-sama.....No, Naofumi Iwatani-sama. Your treatment is our top priority, so please rest. Everything will be prepared immediately.”

The treatment team starts bringing out various magic tools, medicines, and holy water to use on me.

I feel like an emergency patient in an ambulance from my world.

“But.....”

Why did the queen come here? Various questions appear as to why she isn’t in the country south-west of us.

“I know what you want to ask. Why was I outside of the country for so long, why I am leading the punitive force, why did I not come defend you sooner?..... There are a lot of things I need to tell you. However, that can be settled after you are healed.”

“Naofumi-sama!”

Raphtalia anxiously runs to my side while crying.

“I thought your heart stopped! Are you okay!?”

“Who.....knows.....”

I feel that I have suffered some grievous wounds.

My whole body seriously hurts, it would be too troublesome to stand up.

In her human form Firo and Melty come from the carriage.

“What terrible wounds.....Hurry come over here.”

One of the treatment team members see Firo’s burnt limbs and calls her over.

However, Firo doesn’t want to leave my side to receive their treatment because she is worried about my wounds.

“But, Master is.....”

“It’s alright Firo, Naofumi-sama will be cured by these people. Go have your wounds healed.”

Raphtalia gently strokes Firo’s head and whispers in an anxious voice.

“But.....”

“Naofumi-sama would hate to see Firo getting a scar because of him.”

Will you listen, Firo? She stares at me while tilting her neck.

Can’t be helped. Normally being so selfish and carefree, to be so anxious for my sake.

“I’ll be fine, so go over there.”

I squeeze out some instructions for Firo. When Firo reluctantly left to receive healing the treatment member nodded at me.

The treatment team use different recovery magic that seems to be effective against the curse.

“What a strong curse!.....”

Mutters one of the healers.

Yeah, this is certainly a strong curse.

It literally says Curse Series.

Since it's very effective, the price for using it is equally as high, such as directly receiving the curse myself.

It is very different from a mere spell.

"Prepare for Group Synthesis Magic [Sanctuary]"

Are you going to use that to remove the rest of Self-Burning Curse?

They aren't believers of the Three Heroes Church right? Then What religion are they following?

It does not seem to be the Shield religion.

As I think about such things my eyelids become heavy and it starts getting dark.

"Naofumi-sama!"

"Naofumi!"

Raphtalia and Melty shake me awake.

"Yeah? What's wrong?"

"Please stay conscious properly."

"What are you saying, it's like you think I died."

Well, in this situation I certainly might die.

Though I have no intention to die in such a place, I am tired in various ways.

I want to sleep.....just a little.

But, I can't sleep yet. We are still far from the safety zone.

However, I am unable to do anything in my present state.

In that case.....

"Raphtalia, if something happens run away with Melty on Firo."

"Understood. But I will be taking Naofumi-sama too. So no matter what, please wake up."

"Okay. I'll just sleep a little..... if anything happens wake me up."

During this exchange a memory appears.

..... I remember it.

The story where Raphtalia still looked like a child and would always cry and scream at night.

Raphtalia had to be ordered to do everything back then.

“My bad. It looks like there’s no breakfast this time.”

“.....It’s fine. Because, this time I’ll defend Naofumi-sama while you sleep.

(Tl Note: Referring to where Raphtalia was crying and screaming at night by the river and Naofumi defended her all night from monsters) After the conversation was over my consciousness went blank and I started dreaming.

It has been two days since then.

“Ugh.....Heavy.”

“Su.....Su.....”

“Munya.....Master~”

“Heavy.....Help.....Firo-chan.....”

When I awake I see Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty all on my bed.

“What the hell is this! Get up!”

I wake the three of them up immediately and scold them.

Instead of them looking down, all three of them smiled.

I was told that I got urgently rushed to receive treatment in Melromarc Castle.

The curse caused by Blutopfer was very serious, and even specialized curse treatments couldn’t remove it completely.

When I ask how to cure it, the answer I got was it cannot be cured by magic or medicine. It seems that the only way to cure it is through time.

But the burns and scratches were healed and my physical fitness has

recovered, I just feel lethargic.

When I check my stats, everything except defence dropped by 30%.

It seems until Blutopfer's curse is cured completely they will stay debuffed.

This is the price which I paid for meddling in troublesome things.

"So how long till I recover?"

"The rough estimate is a month for complete recovery."

A month huh.....that's long.

Will it happen before the wave?

That reminds me, I was unable to go to Silt Welt after all.

For the purpose of Raphtalia and Firo's class up, we ended up in a strange position.

"How is your condition?"

While I was lamenting about the absurdity of the world, the queen came over and asked about my condition.

I do some stretches to show my body's condition.

"....."

I feel that I can trust her a little since she gave instructions for my treatment even while I was unconscious.

The queen also asked the treatment team at the hospital how I was doing.

"I see. Then could you follow me?"

"Where are we going?"

"We are going to the castle."

The queen produces her fan and hides her face, generating a strange pressure.

"Mother is scary when she's angry....."

Melty hides behind my back and starts trembling.

I feel an unpleasant atmosphere, is that anger?

“Are you going to execute me?”

“I will do no such thing. Iwatani-sama.”

I feel her smiling as the atmosphere changes.

Does the fact that I wasn't attacked in my sleep mean this is safe?

“I just think Iwatani-sama would like to witness what will happen.
Hohoho.”

“What do you intend to do?”

“Please come to the castle, I'm sure you will enjoy it. There are various things I need to talk to you about as well, shall I answer everything Iwatana-sama asks after that?”

It seems the queen has created a situation where I have no choice but to go to the castle.

She is necessary for me to prove my innocent, so there is no way I can refuse.

Well there is no reason to decline for now.

“I want to ask one thing.”

“I would like to talk after we arrive at the castle but.....what is it?”

“You.....Did you send Melty to me so she would get involved in this incident?”

This is the problem I am worried about most.

Depending on the answer there is a possibility that all the heroes will be rounded up at the castle and gotten rid of, all according to the queen's plan.

“.....That concern is only a baseless fear. Would that be the correct answer?”

“Eh!?”

Melty trembling while staring at her mother.

“Melty didn’t say it, but she wanted to meet her father so much that she couldn’t sleep at night. So I let her be selfish and meet him.”

Meeting that trash. I was feeling uneasy when I thought the queen sent Melty to meet him.

” There is nothing to worry about. When such a thing happened I told shadow my ideas.”

“Idea?”

“Yes, I entrusted Melty to the Hero of the sHield, if he tried to murder her then he would have been arrested.”

The queen snaps her fingers.

Suddenly a group of assassins appear.

“What an annoying story.”

“.....I apologize to have troubled you. However, I think a lot of problems have been solved.”

“That’s not it. What would you have done if Melty died!?”

I cannot hide my sympathy for Melty as she looks down sadly.

“There were always two bodyguards following her and supporting Iwatani-sama in various ways.”

“I see.....”

“For example, the one knight who tried to assassinate her.”

One of the shadows transforms into the shape of a knight, just like that anime with the phantom thief!

“Villager.”

One of the villagers who helped us in village to the east.

“Merchant from neighbouring country.”

Even the guys from the neighbouring country that thanked me.....

Certainly, it was strange for a person from the neighbouring country to show up there.

“I’ll explain the circumstances later. Do you still doubt me even after the shadow appeared when Melty was truly in danger?”

That reminds me..... a shadow did appear when the Church ambushed us.

However, that was a really dangerous situation so I couldn’t think straight.

Firo and I were the only ones able to nullify the Three Heroes Church shadow’s poison.....

“Mother..... did you know I might have been killed?”

“It was a possibility.”

Melty hangs her head when the queen answers flatly.

well, as expected of the parent of bitch and wife of trash. Quite suitable to being a bad person.

“Are you people really parents?”

“I cannot argue about that even if I am one. There are a lot of lies that can be told.....Let’s see. Do you understand what it takes to be queen of such a country for years?”

Well.....Even if I impeach I don’t understand.

This fellow. I can only agree that she is trash’s wife.

“But.....I believed in Iwatani-sama. Is that a suitable answer?”

“.....Coward.”

“Otherwise I cannot protect this country.”

“Hah.....Wouldn’t it be better if you didn’t arrive?”

“Naofumi-sama!?”

Raphtalia speaks anxiously.

“It seems you are unable to refute it. I won’t spread it. In the first place,

if we were enemies I would not have received treatment.”

“Yes, certainly, I think you would want to be present for what is about to happen.”

If we share a mutual interest, then there would be no problems in lending a hand.

I don't know what you are after, but if necessary I will use the Wrath Shield again.

“I brought the carriage of the holy bird here. Let's return with the luggage.”

“Really!?”

At the queen's words Firo steps forwards.

“Yes of course. It's in front of the hospital, please confirm it.”

“Yay~! Mel-chan! Let's go!”

“Okay!”

Firo and Melty run out of the room together.

She really loves that carriage huh.

After watching the both of them run off, I stare at the queen.

“I feel disgusted.”

Although I have received some goodwill, I do not know her real intentions.

The queen antagonized the Three Heroes Church, and furthermore treated the devil of the shield favourably, I wish to know why.

I can't even think of a reason.

I do not believe in some noble reason such as fighting the wave together.

Or is there still information that I am lacking?

“I have a goal. I will use any means necessary to achieve it. Although the way we go about things is different, I believe I have the same feelings

as Iwatani-sama.”

Similar feelings as me.....

I don't know why, but I feel that I somewhat understand.

After coming to this world, I have experienced various things.

At least this person is talking to me as an equal.

“I will follow your instructions for now.”

“I am grateful. Iwantani-sama.”

After obtaining my consent, the queen smiles.

The smile has a strong will mixed in.

“Auckley.....Malty..... This isn't over yet.....”

(Tl note: Auckley = trashking for those who forgot.)

Chapter 75: Sermon

Trash: “Oh! Malt and Melty! It’s great that you defeated the shield and came back. Why is Malt tied up and gagged?”

The queen entered the castle with Melty and Bitch first to issue orders. The other Heroes followed after.

Those three didn’t like that I was leading the way. Though they cannot complain since the queen grandly declared in the latest incident, I was the one who contributed the most.

Firo pulled the carriage that we all rode in, and the queen informed the three heroes of the situation.

The pope’s death still hasn’t spread within the castle town yet, the Three Heroes Church is still active and that preventative measures have already been taken.

All parties concerned are currently being captured and transported.

Queen: “It is noisy when you talk. Can you shut it?”

Declares the queen as she briskly enters the room.

I can hear some extremely angry sounds from here.

As soon as I arrived behind the queen, trash’s face distorts in anger.

Trash: “Why is he here!? Execute him at once!”

Queen: “I won’t let you!”

The queen’s authority is above Trash’s so the Imperial guardsmen don’t move.

Trash: “Grr. That queen is an imposter! Arrest them!”

Queen: “You.....Mistaking me for..... Can’t be helped then.”

Queen: “I am the queen who commands the origin of power-“

Trash: “Wha!? This aria-“

Queen: “I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Restrain him with

ice!”

Trash’s whole body is frozen in a cage of ice.

He tries to talk to the queen but his voice doesn’t pass through the cage.

Queen: “Seriously..... When did you become so foolish?”

As she closes her fan the cage of ice disappears.

Trash: “That amount of magical power, and quality, you are certainly this one’s wife! What on earth happened!?”

Trash asks the queen with disbelief.

Trash: “Did the shield possibly-!?”

Are you just going to pin any bad thing that happens on to me!?

Stop it.

This is why I didn’t want to come to the castle...

Queen: “That’s not it. Seriously, do you actually believe that Hero of the Shield-sama has that power?..... Foolishness.”

The queen approaches the king and – slaps him on the cheek.

Dumbfounded, the trash takes a few steps back while trembling, and for some reason glares at me.

Queen: “This is not Iwatani-sama’s fault, I have already said this a while ago.”

Trash: “Urgh!”

He was slapped again.

Just as the trash was about to retort, the queen gave him another slap.

Queen: “Listen to me, you dared to disregard my order of not abusing your power and discriminating the hero while I’m outside the country!? Do you want a war!?”

Trash: “But, But he-“

Queen: “There are no buts! It is necessary to work together to prepare

for the wave, and you are supposed to help with that!”

The queen scolds trash severely to the point that he is not allowed to object.

The purpose of this is to show that the all the heroes are equal.

Queen: “Well then, let us reintroduce ourselves. I am the queen of Melromarc, Mirelia Q Melromarc. I hope you all will take care of me.”

Itsuki: “Ah.....Yeah.”

Ren: “Same here.....please.”

Motoyasu: “Wow.....amazing”

The other heroes all express their thoughts.

They are completely dumbfounded.

Queen: “Hero of the Shield-sama, I would like to request a little of your time later today.”

Naofumi: “For what?”

Queen: “Let us chat over a meal. Hero-samas except Iwatani-sama please rest in the guest room.”

Motoyasu: “What about Mein?”

Motoyasu asks while looking worryingly at the bitch, but she is being held down and unable to talk.

Queen: “We’ll be having a little conversation about her standing in the country. Depending on the circumstances you may get another companion, please prepare accordingly.”

Motoyasu: “O-Okay.....”

Thanks to the queen’s attitude, the other heroes were driven out of the throne room.

All that’s remaining is Raphtalia, Firo, Melty, and I.

Trash: “Fu.....”

The trash breathes a sigh of relief as he just shown the other heroes an

unsightly scene.

Queen: "What's with the "Fu....." Huh!? Our talk isn't over yet!"

Trash: "This one is not wrong! This is entirely the shield's fault!"

Bitch: "That's right!"

The bitch's restraints were removed and she stands by trash.

So noisy.

Bitch: "Mama! I was raped by that devil over there!"

Queen: "And what's wrong with that?"

Bitch: "What's wrong with that!? Mama, that was my first time! Does that mean nothing to you!?"

Queen: "You were a virgin? Did you think I wasn't aware? You already lost your virginity."

Oh, so she wasn't a virgin from the start?

Now that I think about it, pinning a rape accusation on me as she acted like a small fry adventurer, even if the princess declared that she was raped..... Since the Hero of the Spear saved her, it was at best an attempt, but rumours about me already spread.

The woman adventurer who the Hero of the spear saved, did he even notice she was being treated like a princess in society?

Either way, the bitch turned out to be an outrageous whore.

This is the best.

Bitch: "H-How do you know!?"

Queen: "You're thinking I had no idea about your affairs, is downright presumptuous. In the first place, if you were actually in a relationship with Hero of the Shield Iwatani-sama, then you might still be saved....."

The queen turns her gaze at me for an instant.

Me? With this goddamn bitch?

Naofumi: "Don't joke around!"

Queen: "Then I won't pursue. I expect it with Melty."

A bomb was just dropped.

Trash: "What are you saying!? Cute Melty is still young!"

Naofumi: "Seriously!"

It pains me to have the same opinion as the trash, but being in a relationship with Melty is a little.....

I haven't fallen so low that I would want to be in a relationship with a child.

Melty: "That's right! What are you saying!"

Firo: "What are you talking about-"

Melty: "Firo-chan does not need to know!"

Well, I'll just leave this alone.

Queen: "Refused! Melty will marry Hero of the Shield Iwatani-sama."

Trash: "What did you say.....!"

Queen: "Do you really understand? There are very little opportunities as perfect as this one to befriend old enemies, and what did you do?"

Trash: "What do you mean?"

I also understand.

Silt Welt probably believes in the Hero of the Shield. That would make them this country's arch-nemesis.

If the object of faith, Hero of the Shield, marries a woman of Melromarc and is a saint here.

Something like that happening will greatly improve relations between the two countries, and they may even become allies.

The situation would be perfect if the Hero of the Shield also has a child under these circumstances.

There would be no chance that they could become enemies after that.

Naofumi: "Unfortunately it is already too late."

Queen: "You think so?.....Melty, do you best for Hero of the Shield Iwatani-sama."

Melty: "N-no!"

At the queen's proposal of a political marriage, Melty refuses and blushes a deep red.

Well, it would be unpleasant to be married for politics at this age.

Of course, I won't take any actions to let this country prosper.

Just give it up on this.

Queen: "Oh? I heard from the shadow that Melty might have a chance."

Naofumi: "She had bad eyesight."

Melty: "Mu....."

Naofumi: "What. Oh..... did you hate having been seen as a child?"

What a troublesome age.

Queen: "It seems there is still some hope left. How about it? Melty will be the queen in the future. Won't it be good to break this country from the inside with a puppet?"

Naofumi: "In that case I would have been made your puppet. More than anything, I do not wish to remain in the world."

Queen: "There are no problems then..... Just get Melty pregnant with Iwatani-sama's child."

.....What an unpleasant thing to say.

In short, I can only return to my original world if I father a child as the Hero of the Shield with the royal family.

Indeed, this would be very effective for diplomacy.

It's actually quite brilliant. Is this a manga?

Queen: "All the chances of having an incompetent daughter and husband are removed. It is good that Iwatani-sama is still single. You will

win over an ally. If you domesticate her, then the next queen will be in the palm of your hands.”

Bitch: “Who would be with someone so ugly!”

What does this bitch want?

Can’t you guys just understand my viewpoint–

Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty: “””He is not ugly!”””

Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty refuted all at once.

What is up with all of you?

Bitch: “What? I just stated the facts. You all being angry and retorting just makes it true.”

Queen: “Let’s see. The fact that you are not a virgin is also undisputed.”

Bitch: “There is no evidence anywhere. Ask Motoyasu-sama. I was a virgin.”

Queen: “No, I’ve known this a long time ago. Your speech and behaviour does not match. Malt, if you’re going to lie at least make it believable. Although you may be able to deceive the Hero of the Spear-sama, it is impossible for you to deceive me..... In the first place, you used your body to have your way since the old days–“

And so the queen begins a sermon on the bitch.

However, it’s clear that the bitch isn’t actually listening; in fact no one is actually listening.

It seems the queen’s preaching has become a habit.

Queen: “When your younger sister was involved in a conspiracy, you not only took advantage of it without protecting her, but you even tried to dispose of her with the help of the church.”

Eh?

The bitch wasn’t taken advantage of by the church? Was it trash?

Perhaps, these two, are just stupid.....

Queen: "You probably thought you were going to be the next queen too."

Bitch: "N-No you're wrong!"

Well.....based on her magic chant she certainly desired it. In her chant she actually called herself the queen.

The queen just announced that the next queen is -, and it was not Bitch, despite what she believes.

After hearing this I was momentarily lost for words.

Bitch: "It's a lie!"

Queen: "It is the undeniable truth."

Bitch: ".....something so trivial, it doesn't even matter."

Wow...I just figured it out.

Even if you guys are corrupt you're still family. The queen is completely in control, Queen: "Next Aultcray"

At her gaze the trash winces and backs up.

Queen: "What were you doing? Without investigating the truth, and throwing out the Hero of the Shield, who our country should specially protect.....I am extremely disgusted. Where did the generosity of the old you that I fell in love with go?....."

Trash: "Th-That's because the shield is evil!"

Queen: "Malty was not raped. It was a farce. Now.....what else do you have to say?"

Trash: "Grrr..... The shield is evil!"

It seems no matter what this trash will still see me as evil.

In this situation it's just pouring oil on fire though.

Queen: "Seriously.....Where did all your wisdom go to.....? You've completely changed!"

The queen's veins are showing as she places her hand on her forehead.

Queen: "It seems you're not even going to defend yourself."

Bitch and trash both averted their gaze at that.

Well I understand that they're not going to apologize to me.

It's to be expected. Why did the queen have to show such a scene to me?

These guys aren't going to reflect on their actions.

Queen: "There is only one way to finish this, but that goes without saying."

The queen closes her fan and points at the both of them while declaring.

Queen: "I permanently deprive you two of the authority of the imperial family."

Trash: "What!?"

Bitch: "Ehh!?"

Trash and bitch both call out in surprise. It seems they don't understand just how heavy their crimes are.

This is reasonable.

Ah, this feeling is quite pleasant. I want to see more.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama..... what are you laughing at?"

Naofumi: "You don't know?"

Raphtalia: "It's not like I don't understand, but it is rude....."

Melty: "Mother..... is serious."

Firo: "Hm-?"

Firo tilts her head. She is completely lost does not understand anything that is going on.

Well she is a bird. The only thing she thinks about is her carriage and food.

Trash: “Why!?”

Queen: “Because your actions greatly deviated from the range of your authority. If you’re really sorry, somehow beg Iwatani-sama for forgiveness.....”

Naofumi: “You think I can forgive them?”

Queen: “Maybe various bribes can help you consider.”

Bribing huh.....I am interested, today is turning out to be pretty good.

Bitch: “If I am no longer considered royal, what will happen to this country?!”

Queen: “There is Melty. She is far superior compared to you, so this country will prosper.”

Well, it would obviously be much better if Melty succeeds as the queen, compared to bitch.

It seems she grew up a lot due to the latest incident.

Trash: “If this one stops being king then our allies will not remain silent.”

Queen: “I have already silenced them; Did you think I was doing nothing for these 3 months? That’s quite a large mistake.”

Trash: “Wha-“

Trash is surprised to the point his voice stopped working. He just opens and closes his mouth.

Queen: “In the first place who gave you the authority to summon the Heroes? This talk is over.”

Naofumi: “.....What do you mean?”

Queen: “Did Iwatani-sama not doubt it earlier? Why I, the highest power in the country, did not attend the hero summoning? I was out trying to improve diplomatic relations.”

I certainly did wonder about that.

If this person was in charge of the Heroes summoning then things would have been a lot smoother.

We would have been manipulated and be utilized to our full potential.

At least, I was sure to have been easy to manipulate when I arrived in this world.

Maybe the queen would have somehow pushed Melty the second princess on me, and it might have been a political marriage masked as a love marriage.

Queen: "First of all there is a problem that needs to be addressed. This country..... was only 4th in line to summon the four holy Heroes, as designated by the world conference."

Chapter 76: Trash and Bitch

Naofumi:” Wait a second!”

An outrageous statement was just dropped.

Other countries can call heroes? There are turns?

Then that means this country did something crazy.

Naofumi:”Explain it in detail.”

Queen:”Sure.”

The queen’s story is like this.

Damages from the wave were reported all over the world, there was a world conference and every country was represented by their king or queen.

Of course there are countries that are on bad terms with each other, Melromarc and Silt Welt for example. There is a prophecy that states the world is facing its end, so their hostilities were put on hold, and the conference was complete.

During the conference, the country Melromarc was fourth in line to perform the summoning.

By the way, each hero summoning is only supposed to summon 1 Hero. In many cases, they do not even appear at all.

Of course, which hero summoned is determined by discussion with the other countries.

Naofumi:” So, how did this country manage to summon us?”

Queen:”During hero summons it is customary to use a holy relic. A time and ceremony is then decided upon according to the summoning.....”

It seems the Three Heroes Church took advantage of when the queen was absence to summon the four holy heroes.

Queen:” The Three Heroes Church is a religion that has deep roots within this country, but from what I know they were very conservative.

Therefore, I overlooked this unexpectedly big plan.”

Naofumi:”That is quite the problem, is it not?”

To gather all the heroes are supposed to save the world in one place.

Queen:”Yes.....That lead to a lot of criticism from other countries. It was the problem I was taking care of.”

Naofumi:”What were you thinking, leaving the country to a fellow who might have caused a war.”

There was a big problem. The person entrusted with responsibility is horrible.

Trash:”What are you implying!”

Queen:”Silence!”

Trash shuts up after the queen’s thundering roar.

Queen:”It was not a problem before. Before the waves even started I was involved in diplomacy, our domestic affairs were also excellent, and I left the country to the one I trusted as my right-hand man but.....”

Naofumi:”But?”

Queen:”He died during the wave.....That person was respected by demi-humans too.....”

Quite unlucky.....So is that why all that was left trash and some other useless guys?

.....As expected, that level of incompetency was unnatural.

Right now the posts within the country need new and talented personnel, otherwise things will remain the same.

Worst case was trash having all the power, and those around him never speaking up due to fear. This was such a place.

Trash:”The truth is, it just came to me to perform the hero summons, and as a matter of fact all of the heroes appeared!”

The queen slaps trash.

Trash: "Fuguu—"

Yeah, it would be weird if she wasn't extremely angry after returning to her country and finding a mountain of problems.

Queen: "Even though it was foolish I had to depend on my successor because of a useless husband like you! When he died an unnatural death you didn't even investigate. The culprit was the Three Heroes Church!"

Trash: "Gufu!"

Queen: "Furthermore, the day right after the heroes were summoned you framed the Hero of the Shield! At least doubt the conspiracy a bit!"

Trash: "Guha!"

Queen: "And yet, I even told you not to discriminate against the Hero of the shield! do you understand that those actions could have caused a war!?"

Trash: "Geho!"

Queen: "And during the end of the second wave, you intentionally tried to take away Hero of the shield's slave, which I had to arrange through a lot of trouble!"

What!?

What did she just say?

Naofumi: "Wait a minute, you set up my meeting with Raphtalia?"

Queen: "I'll explain later. Right now I'm dealing with this guy."

Uwa.....she snapped.

Queen: "While you were acting beyond your authority the nobles started planning behind your back to take power. A riot started in Silt Welt, and Shirudo Furiden started preparing for war!"

Somehow.....I sympathize with the queen.

The people you can rely on within the country are all dead and you are protecting the country alone against other countries that might attack.

Amazing. I wonder what she had to go through to talk like that.

This hysteria, I only thought it was possible for women in their early twenties hitting their husbands.

I mean..... She is the mother of Bitch and Melty. Yet still looks so young.

Queen:"To cap it all off Melty wanted to selfishly meet you! I was at the limits of my patience. Therefore I set a trap!"

Trash:"Wh-What did you say!?"

Queen:"Did you even investigate the events happening around you? I let you dispatch a large amount of soldiers for emergencies! That was the start of this whole incident!"

The queen declares during her outburst.

Queen:" The Three Heroes Church is a heretical religion! Melromarc's religion is the Four Saint Faith!"

Trash:"Wh-What did you say!? That tradition was abandoned since the start of this country!"

Queen:"There are heretical religions that have no value and cause nothing but problems!"

Four Saints Faith?

Naofumi:" What is that?"

Melty:" A religion believing in the Four Saint Heroes equally."

Melty explains.

Well, now that I think about it, there should be a lot of countries that believe in the legend of the Four Heroes who saved the world.

Melty:"Even though originally the Three Heroes Church were an extremist faction that split from the Four Saints Faith.....I would explain more but I would need to start from the beginning of this country."

Naofumi:"I see....."

If Silt Welt has a religion following the shield, then it should be natural

for other countries to believe in all four.

In other words, Melromarc's dispute with Silt Welt is over the Hero of the Shield being hated.

The other country believes in the devil of the shield, and our religion is correct, did that lead to the Three Heroes Church's creation?

Where was the royal family in all of this?

Queen: "Fu....."

After slapping and abusing trash for a while, the queen covers her lips with her fan and turns to me with a refreshed look.

Queen: "There are various things about Iwatani-sama's actions.....that I want to talk about it later."

Naofumi: "I'll pass..... I would rather not hear those heroic tales."

Queen: "It is necessary to hear it. Because Iwatani-sama has also caused a lot of problems."

Uh..... I wonder what they are. I would rather not hear it.

To be frank, ever since coming here I did a few bad things Of course I am not going to reflect on it, and I do not intend to.

Queen: "For example, that incident at the demon dealer's with your demon."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

Queen: "That uproar at the bar."

To know about so much.

Queen: "I wonder who covered it up before my husband heard."

Naofumi: "Do I get a lecture too? It's regrettable, but I am not like this guy."

Queen: "No way..... I only want you to listen."

Naofumi: "I do not think what I did was wrong either."

Queen: "I guess. Though I was able to relax a bit while staying in foreign

countries thanks to your efforts. That isn't the problem."

Naofumi:"Hrmm....."

Queen:" For the time being, there a plenty of things before your punishment."

Trash and Bitch turn very pale.

It's the end of their road.

Queen:" Are you dissatisfied?"

Trash:" O-of course!"

Bitch:"That's right! Mama! I'm not to blame!"

Queen:".....Wasn't our parent and child relationship cut a little while ago? I literally disowned you. Go somewhere else.....No, pay for your crimes in the country."

The queen almost expelled her on impulse, but stopped halfway.

A sheet of paper with an amount of money written on it was handed to the bitch. The bitch turned even paler than a little while ago.

Bitch must have been spending money carelessly due to her social standing.

Bitch:" This is not an amount of money I can pay!"

Queen:" That is the price demanded from you from the guild. Trying to steal it from the treasury without permission.....You think I wouldn't notice? you will serve this country as a slave from now on....."

Bitch:"That's unreasonable!"

Queen:" If you hate it then save the world along with the heroes. I'll think about it if you play an active role."

The queen silences Bitch, and then looks at Trash.

Queen:" Why are you looking at me like I'm a different person!? You changed too, Aultcray."

Trash bends backwards.

Truthfully, there is no way this guy can go against the queen.

He should have acted more tactfully.

Queen: "Fight as a commander at the front line of this country against the wave, or lose your position and become an adventurer."

Trash: "Ku.....My wife, My queen. This one was swindled. Have mercy."

Bitch: "That's right. Mama, please postpone your judgement."

Queen: "Both your mercy and postponement are both over already.....
Oh, I have a good method."

The queen beckons me over.

I stepped forwards and waited.



Queen:” Iwatani-sama, what kind of punishment do you want to give these two? You have the right to choose.”

Naofumi:” Death! Capital Punishment!”

I answered almost on reflex. I must hate them unconsciously as well.

Honestly, other than killing no other choice exists for me.

This grudge of mine can’t even be solved with death.

Trash:”Gunu! You Bastard–”

Bitch:” Stop joking around–”

The queen raises her hand and silences the two.

Queen:”Really..... you will be satisfied with just killing?”

The queen suspiciously wraps her magic around me.

A chill runs up my spine.Annoying..... I instinctively realise who I am dealing with.

Queen:”Assuming you kill them. They would be released from whatever torment or fun you would have with them, for just a moment’s of satisfaction.”

Naofumi:”You.....No, keep talking.”

Queen:” Killing them is too half-hearted. If a dog is useful, you stroke it affectionately, keeping them tamed till death.”

To act so cold despite them being relatives.....

Queen:”Please think of this as my last feelings for them.”

Naofumi:”Yeah..... So that’s how it is.”

Basically, besides murder and forgiving, I will grant you anything else.

Queen:”Originally the authority of the country is with the queen, but following the scandal of the Three Heroes Church, the royal family’s position is being questioned by foreign countries.”

Naofumi:” Crucifying two incompetents would persuade the foreign countries wouldn’t it?”

Trash:”Shieeeeeld.....You bastaaaard.....!”

The queen ignores trash’s howling.

Queen:” Normally that would be the case. But, that does not apply to Aultcray.”

Naofumi:”Why not?”

Queen:”He is a fool now, but he was amazing back in the day..... since his name is well-known outside the country, settling this by killing him is impossible.....”

I don’t know what this trash did, but I understand the situation.

He is too well-known.

In the first place, I thought he had too much power for such an incompetent king.

Was it due to his past actions? It seems those concerned will not stay silent.

It would be extremely interesting to look down on such a man who has been deprived of all his past glory and dragged through the mud.

Naofumi:” I understand. I’ll listen to your plan,”

Queen:”I am grateful.”

Naofumi:” However, I wish for these two to taste hell on earth. That is the minimum condition.”

Queen:”Yes, of course..... Then what punishment would you like to start with?”

It’s a good idea..... I shouldn’t kill them.

Naofumi:” I’d like to start by pulling off their hands and feet.....”

I see the look in Raphtalia’s eyes and think about it again.

Although I have every right to do this, even I think that might be a little

too far.

.....What should I do? Something that would break them.....

Still I don't want to miss this chance that has finally appeared.

Raphtalia:".....Naofumi-sama."

The bitch holds both hands in front of her and starts crying.

Wow, what a performance. If I didn't know how she truly was I would have been deceived.

I'm quite sure she approached Motoyasu with this face.

I mean, when I was summoned she was the first one to approach me.

Raphtalia:" Stop acting foolish, and please stop with this revenge. Revenge only produces more vengeance. Naofumi-sama please endure it here. If possible, be more considerate for the queen."

.....

.....

.....

.....Sigh.....

"I guess so....."

That day, messengers on Philorials ran around the country of Melromarc, reporting to every village and every town.

Messengers:"Due to taking responsibility for recent events, king Aultcray Melromarc and Princess Malty, have changed their names to Trash and Bitch forever! Anybody caught speaking the wrong names will be severely punished!"

In every signboard in every city, every town, and every village, a similar letter was posted.

Everybody who saw or heard this message, regardless of social position all reacted the same.

""What!?"""

Chapter 77: Dogeza

Trash: "Who would force another to endure something like that!?"

Bitch: "Only a devil would do something like this!"

Bitch's face distorts terribly in anger.

Wow~ so refreshing. I never would have thought that a moment like this would be possible.

Naofumi "Hahahahaha! That's the face I wanted to see!"

Trash: "Bastard———!"

The names Trash and Bitch's have become official.

Naofumi: "Revenge only gives birth to vengeance..... It is a splendid phrase. You should endure. You should practice it.....Bitch."

Bitch: "Shut up! I will absolutely never forgive you!"

She tried to attack me, but the queen's assistants held her down.

Queen: "Since Bitch can use a pseudonym as an adventurer. What do you wish to call her there?"

Naofumi: "Whore"

Queen: "Then that will be her adventurer name from now on. Other than those two names, you may not use anything else."

Bitch: "I'll kill you! Anytime there's a chance I'll murder you without fail!"

Wow, even faced with such killing intent, I can only feel refreshed, nothing else.

Oh well!

Naofumi: "Hahaha! Try it if you can. If you lay even a hand on me it will be capital punishment!"

Queen: "Yes, so you have been deprived of that right."

I see, if it was me who executed a part of the royal family that would

undermine the queen's dignity and authority, so she has deprived me of the privilege. Well it's that sort of thing.

Naofumi: "This is so refreshing!"

Queen: "Now then, there is something that I wish to get Iwatani-sama's co-operation with."

Naofumi: "What is it?"

Queen: "During the last incident, didn't Iwatani-sama ask Trash to prostrate himself for an explanation?"

Both Bitch and Trash were forced on to their knees by the queen's shadows and knights.

Bitch: "Stop it! Who do you think I am—"

Trash: "That's right! This one is—"

Queen: "Aren't the both of you just an adventurer and a general?"

(Tlnote: 冒険者と将軍 Shogun is for Itsuki, so I changed it to general.)
The queen suppresses their complaints by informing them of their place.

Queen: "Prostrate yourselves."

Trash: "What, my queen! This one is—Stop it—This one will not bow! This one will never bow! nuooooooooooooo!"

Bitch: "Stop joking around! I will never kneel for this bastard!
Iyaaaaaaaaa"

Trash and Bitch were surrounded by several people, forced to prostrate themselves, and their heads are being rubbed against the ground.

A shadow in between the both of them speaks.

Shadow: "Go ahead—"

Trash: "Nuooooooooooooo!"

Bitch: "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Trash and Bitch are yelling extremely loudly.

Queen: "Shut them up!"

On the queens orders clothes are used to gag Bitch and Trash.

Trash:"Fumuuuuuuuuuuu!"

Bitch:"Muuuuuuuuuuu!"

They are violently resisting with everything they have, but they are outnumbered and overpowered.

Shadow:"Please, Hero of the Shield-sama! Lend us your power!"

Shadow#2:"Hero of the Shield-sama, please fight for this country!"

Their voices are imitated by the shadows and such phrases were spoken.

Queen:" How was that?"

Naofumi:" How was that you ask....."

Being asked that while watching them kneeling on the ground by force..... It is extremely refreshing, but.....

Although it is refreshing, this request is a little.....

Queen:"Maybe if you step on their heads?"

Naofumi:" Oh!"

Oh damn, I didn't even think of that.

Raphtalia:"Naofumi-sama"

I ignore Raphtalia's voice and begin to trample on the Trash and Bitch's head.

Maybe Raphtalia wants me to be a hero that everyone respects.

It is regrettable, but I am part of the commoners.

It would be troublesome to be misunderstood as a saint. Well then again, where would you find a commoner stepping on the head of a king?

But I don't understand Raphtalia. This degree of punishment is nothing compared to the humiliation I suffered.

So, can't you at least give me this much.

By the way, I did not stop even though Raphtalia called out.

There was a time I thought Raphtalia was another Bitch as well.

There is no reason to support Trash and Bitch, they have been agonizing us until now. This is natural.

Trash: "Muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!"

Bitch: "Fumooooooooooooooooooooo!"

Regardless of how much Trash and Bitch are being suppressed and humiliated, they are still resisting.

After a while Trash quieted down so he was released.

Somehow.....He has the eyes of a raped woman, in his eyes there are tears overflowing.

Just how much were you humiliated by bowing to me?

Bitch is still resisting.

Queen: "Oh my, this amount of torture should be about enough don't you think?"

The queen raises her hand and gives instructions.

Queen: "Pick them up and throw them out of the throne room."

Shadows&Knights: ""Yes Ma'am!""

Both of them were thrown out.

Whoa, that was a sight to see.

Asides from Firo who seems happy..... Raphtalia and Melty look at me with strained expressions, I feel that my evaluation may have dropped.

They don't voice their complaints, but I can understand that I may have gone overboard.

Queen: "Moving on, in order to request the co-operation of Iwatani-sama I gave them this punishment."

Naofumi: "Well....."

There is no reason to decline since so much was already done.

Against someone who can make their family do something like this, it's impossible to refuse. It's my own fault.

Queen: "First of all, did you have something you wanted to ask?"

Naofumi: "I want to ask about the Hero summoning and Four Saints Faith, the story of the legendary heroes and history of this country, how you arranged Raphtalia's purchase, and the reason you never showed yourself until now."

There are still some other things I wish to ask, but this is generally it.

Queen: "I see. Then, shall I tell you the story concerning the legendary Heroes?"

Thus the queen began the talk.

Queen: "The story of the four holy heroes is a favourite of mine. Though it differs for every country."

Naofumi: "How is it different?"

Queen: "I think Iwatani-sama already has a vague idea right?"

At the queen's question I nod.

Queen: "You are already aware that in this country there is no story about the Hero of the shield. They were deliberately erased.

Naofumi: ".....I see.

In that book I read before being summoned to this world, the shield was mentioned but not described among the four holy weapons.

I thought that was a story based on when I arrived to this world.....That book may be describing the legend of this country.

Queen: "A great achievement that the Hero of the Shield accomplished was mediating between humans and demi-humans, but that was omitted. As a result, the other heroes had a hostile relationship with him.

I see, does that mean the shield will be trusted by the demi-humans unconditionally, because he was their ally?

Queen:” As you can see, our country’s principle is human supremacy, you already know the treatment demi-humans receive here.”

Naofumi:”.....Yeah”

I have been in this country for more than three months, I’m aware of the demi-humans being slaves in this country.

Queen:” Due to such circumstances, we have very bad relations with Silt Welt. Our countries have been fighting for a long time.”

Silt Welt, the country with demi-humans following absolutism. These countries are like oil and water.

Certainly, making peace with them would be ideal.

Queen:”by the way, Iwatani-sama, the religion in Silt Welt is also a sect of the Four Saints Faith, where they believe only in the Hero of the Shield.”

Naofumi:”I roughly guessed it, but that seems to actually be the case huh.”

Queen:” Yes.....Now then, I’m sure Iwatani-sama understands how the Three Heroes Church came to be.....”

Silt Welt and Melromarc are oil and water. Both of their religions are branched off from the Four Saints Faith, and are divided in to the Three Heroes church and Shield Religion.

According to the Queen’s story, they have been fighting for a long time.

That means.....

Naofumi:”So I was summoned right in the middle of enemy territory.”

I see, I can only accept it.

It would certainly be troublesome if the enemy’s Hero was being treated as a saint here.

In the Three Heroes Church, the Hero of the Shield is written to be brutal and treacherous.

Even my world’s religion is the same. Every other god apart from yours

is the devil.

It's quite a common thing.

Did trash participate in the war against Silt Welt? Is that why he looked at me with such hostility?

Queen: "Now, returning to the story. When the wave was upon us, the conference of every country in the world agreed. Heroes needed to be summoned."

The queen was in another country attending the world conference as Melromarc's representative, and it was decided they would be the fourth to perform the hero summoning.

The legendary heroes are traditionally summoned by the most powerful countries, hero summons are supposed to be performed in Foburei.

(Tlnote: フォーブレイ <= If anyone has a better name let me know.) I don't know how many were summoned. However, whichever country succeeds in summoning them will get a big lead on other countries.

However, the four legendary heroes did not respond to the summons.

As a result of an investigation, it was found out that a holy relic was required to summon the four legendary heroes, and Melromarc unexpectedly summoned them.

It was even news to the Queen. Ignoring the summoning order in which the world has decided, and to use a holy relic for the summons.

Queen: "Let's omit my struggles, and just to clarify that after a long investigation it was found out that all of this was caused by the recklessness of the Three Heroes Church."

Naofumi: "I can only sympathize."

Queen: "I appreciate it."

Naofumi: "So what holy relic was used?"

Queen: "At first glance, what used was just a metal fragment. But no matter how hard we try, we're unable to understand it....."

Naofumi: "In other words, the reason we were summoned here is because of that holy relic?"

Queen: " Yes....."

If the summoning here failed would the holy relic have been used in some other country until it succeeds?

Queen: "And so the biggest problem we are facing, the four legendary heroes that were summoned here by that holy relic."

Naofumi: ".....Were only four people summoned?"

Queen: "Yes.....Therefore, that relic has become the most important item."

Naofumi: "If it's such a huge problem, did the other countries blame this one?"

Queen: " After I negotiated.....not likely. Iwatani-sama and the other heroes are greatly related in this. It would be a good idea to have a talk with them after this."

Naofumi: " Then why did the Three Heroes Church not just kill me and be done with it?"

Queen: "It is necessary to keep you alive to avoid war. They were hoping for the waves to kill you.....Probably."

Indeed, that is the world's enemy so the blame won't fall on the Three Heroes Church.

Naofumi: " Were they waiting for the other heroes to get stronger?"

Queen: " That also may be the case."

If I was murdered immediately there would be war. Was it because they could not cheat the other three heroes when we just got summoned?

Queen: " Well the other Hero-samas are a bit..... They do not understand the consequences of their actions."

Naofumi: " Yeah, I figured."

Those guys still believe this is a game. Only doubting visible evil and

not doubting their friends.

Queen: "Of course, there were others who acted as well. There have been large quantities of invitations from each country, particularly for Iwatani-sama. There were also plenty of donations towards the heroes. But you rejected all of them."

Naofumi: "What!?"

What the heck is she saying?

Queen: "Don't you have the memory of having done so yourself? It was on the third day you were summoned....."

Naofumi: "What?"

Chapter 78: Contract

I recall the third day I was summoned.

During that time I was doubting everyone after the false accusation.

Moreover, I was getting tired of people trying to deceive me by pretending to be friendly.

.....Eh?

Was there a chance that one of them actually wanted to be friends?

Everything back then that sounded good to me was just a lie for people to get close.....

Naofumi: "Do not concern yourselves with me!"

There were even some people who saluted and said they understood.....

Eh?

Then, does that mean I drove away everyone from Silt Welt because I told them not to concern themselves with me!?

Because I kept rejecting people.....?

Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit!

I drop on my knees and hug my head.

Queen: "As expected, I was also troubled. Moreover, Iwatani-sama was causing problems and crimes in various places."

Naofumi: "Urgg....."

The queen was thinking of me like that. The reproach in her voice was severe.

Queen: "Well there were situations solved that were thanks to you, so I'll overlook it."

Naofumi: ".....What do you mean?"

Queen: "You see, the heroes acted in order to remove the bad from this country."

If looking at the results they would all be successes.

Queen:” Iwatani-sama was crucial in solving the problems the other heroes caused.”

The other heroes caused problems, and I was the fire-man going around the country putting out their flames.

Queen:” After the Three Heroes Church lost power, We are asking for co-operation with the Four Saints Faith to right the lies they spread about you.”

The Three Heroes Church sure didn’t choose their methods.

Naofumi:”What about the other heroes?”

Queen:”As for the Spear, Bitch was with him, the sword, and bow seem to have been misled by false information from the guild.”

Did they just trust whatever they heard first.....?

Well, if the evidence they had to work with was little, it would make sense.

Though if it were me, I would just refuse the burden.

But since I don’t know, I cannot judge.

Naofumi:”Then next, Raphtalia..... did you have the slave trader show me her?”

Queen:”The more correct answer would be I gave instructions to a shadow. I do not know what kind of person this slave trader is.”

That reminds me, that fellow didn’t talk to me like it was our first meeting.

Slave Trader:”There was a customer who wanted to enslave a hero. So I intended to approach Hero-sama with that open possibility, but I’ve changed my mind. Yup.”

Those were the words that guy said on our first meeting.

Wanting a hero as a slave. It’s funny that such a person exists in this country.

Queen:" I heard the details. Please recall and think carefully. Do you think you can buy a slave with merely 20 pieces of silver?"

Naofumi:"Well.....I don't think so."

Considering the condition she was in, I wasn't suspicious about the price, though I didn't actually check the price of any other slaves.

It is doubtful that the wolf-man would have been sold to me for its actual price.

It seems compared to other shops it was remarkably cheap.

Seriously, that slave trader, what an outrageous fellow.

To help me and not talk about it.

Raphtalia:" Regardless of the circumstances in which I met Naofumi-sama, I am still grateful."

Raphtalia says so with a smile.

.....That's right. Even if there was something behind all of this, it doesn't change the fact that I bought Raphtalia from the slave trader.

If Raphtalia wasn't there protecting my back, then it would have been dangerous.

Raphtalia probably would have died if she had not met me either.

At that time, the slaves beside Raphtalia were put there to make sure I choose her.

In the end I used most of what little money I had accumulated. Buy a slave that should have been sold.

I would have likely doubted it if I was sold an excellent slave cheaply from the beginning.

However, betraying his expectations, Raphtalia grew up to be.....First class goods.

Thinking back carefully, that slave trader really helped me.

Naofumi:" Alright then, moving on. What is the reason behind you not

coming back to the country?”

Queen:”I think you understand from our talks. I was at the limits of my patience, and Melty wanted to meet Ault.....Trash, so I laid a trap. The preparations for cornering the Three Heroes Church were also completed.”

Thanks to her arrangements..... The fight swung in our favour.

Queen:”I did not think they would possess a replica of the Four Legendary Heroes weapon.”

Even if I had been warned beforehand about the existence of such a weapon, the fight would still be incredibly difficult.

Queen:”The pope was a foolish man..... If he changed the replica weapon to a shield to receive Iwatani-sama’s attack, and perhaps his life would have been saved.”

Naofumi:” It can become a shield too?”

Queen:”Of course. However, the replica only had one-fourth of the original legendary weapon’s power.”

Naofumi:” That was only one-fourth?!”

Multiplying that power by four times.....That’s just too ridiculous.

Well to be fair, if it wasn’t at least that strong it would not have been a legend in the first place.

Queen:”And my husband who had fought against our country’s nemesis Silt Welt in the old days, Trash has become a fool due to the long peace. If he was competent, or if his old wisdom returned, I would not be feeling this way now.”

Yeah.....I figured they did not want me to reach Silt Welt due to that kind of border security.

Is it possible that Trash wasn’t the one that sent all the knights to the border?

Oh well. We’re still in the middle of our conversion.

Queen: "Afterwards.....Let's see. I happened to be in range and helped out Iwatani-sama against the pope. After hearing all of this, do you still wish to go to Silt Welt and start a war?"

Naofumi: "Hrmm....."

Even if the queen thinks of me like that, is there any reason for me to protect them?

But.....

Queen: "By the way, Silt Welt, or Schildfrieden, whichever one Iwatani would have went to, I will tell you the outcome of your choice."

Naofumi: "Hm?"

(TLnote: Shirudofuriden is changed to Schildfrieden which means Peace of the shield) What does the queen intend to say?

Queen: "First, the Demi-human princesses, and nobles of various races will also approach Iwatani-sama, and thus a harem will be formed."

Naofumi: "That is disgusting!"

I feel nauseous thanks to the result of Bitch's actions.

A bunch of women approaching me with ulterior motives.

Queen: "Anything you want would have been given to you. If you wanted to conquer this country the people would have gladly taken up arms and started a war."

Hmm.....that does sound good. But a harem.....

I'll endure it.....

Queen: "Though you will be fine till then. However, for all countries and all religions, those in power will be corrupted and have their beliefs dyed black."

Naofumi: "What?"

Queen: "Iwatani-sama would be risking.....unidentified illnesses and unfortunate accidents."

Naofumi:".....I don't really understand."

Queen:" It was how the Hero of the shield in the past met his end."

I would rather not hear this.

Queen:"By the way,do you remember those adventurers who lied about wanting to be in your party?"

Naofumi:".....Yeah."

It was several days after I arrived in this world.

Queen:" Their horribly disfigured corpses were discovered several days later."

Naofumi:"Ge!?"

Queen:"There was also a soldier that asked for you signature a while ago."

Naofumi:"Yeah."

I gave it to him because he asked.....No way.

Naofumi:"Did he die!?"

That fellow did his job properly. I would rather not see him meet his end like this.

Queen:"No.....But, the clothes that Iwatani-sama signed was stolen. It seems he was stalked every day until it was gone."

Holy shit.....That's troublesome.

Queen:"Afterwords, the clothing was found to have been sold for a large amount sum in the black market."

Next time I meet him, I'll apologize.

Queen:"I had to protect those soldiers who co-operated with Iwatani-sama."

Naofumi:"Ahh, are you blaming them?"

Queen:" The knight leader was attacked by someone and murdered. The culprit has not been caught yet. Perhaps....."

With that, I've concluded that Silt Welt is an extremist country.

What can I say?.....Would going to Silt Welt be heaven or hell?

Of course, the queen's story may not be entirely correct.

Queen:"I think that it would be safer for you to build your own relationships that you can trust."

Naofumi:"....."

However, there is no reason to co-operate.

The pain that I have received until now is not something that will simply just fade away with the queen using her power, I'm still not convinced.

Although I was concerned indirectly, the punishment and explanation the queen gave a little while ago was done as the one in power in this country.

Yet, she was too benevolent and showed mercy.

I admit that I do recognize her abilities, but I do not trust her.

Anything can be said.

Because it would be troublesome for them if I went to another country, I am being kept here.

If what she says is correct, then I would be highly received regardless of Schildfrieden or Silt Welt.

There is no special reason to staying in Melromarc.

Queen:"....."

The queen is staring into my eyes while I think.

Queen:" Up until now, I have been covering for all the damage that Iwanati-sama has received until now. I understand this is a selfish. However, to me.....No, to this country, there is no other choice but to rely on you. If I can appease your anger with my head then I would gladly pay the price. If you wish I can even change my name. Therefore, please postpone your decision. I Mirelia Q Melromarc will take a magical

contract, and vow that you will not be treated as you have been previously.”

The queen bows deeply.

Melty is speechless at this scene, and Raphtalia can only watch with her eyes wide open.

Even Firo seems to have sensed something is happening from the atmosphere.

She.....is only really thinking about what is best for the country.

If I really wanted Trash and Bitch dead, then there is no doubt that they would have died.

Is Melromarc really in such a dangerous position on the global scale?

In other words, the fate of this country has been entrusted to my hands.

If I wished I could destroy Melromarc.

But—

Naofumi:”Only once.”

Queen:”What do you mean?”

Naofumi:” Your shadow has saved our lives before.”

Queen:”That means.....”

Naofumi:” I will believe you only once. Regardless of reason, there will be no next time.”

Queen:”Thank you very much.”

The queen lowered her head and bowed to me in appreciation.

This might sound good.

But I cannot go on doubting everything.

I.....No one is perfect.

The enemy of a Hero is not the country, it is the wave.

If Glass attacks while the countries are fighting each other, then we

will be done for.

I will not forget that the three heroes were defeated by her in the previous wave.

There is no need to forcibly increase my enemies.

The situation of being attacked from the front and behind has changed.

If I defeat the wave, then I can return to my original world.

I will concentrate on fighting the wave..... and Glass from now on.

This is actually quite a big step forwards.

Naofumi:” Are we safe diplomatically?”

Queen:”I get what Iwatani-sama is asking, for the time being all the problems have been dealt with. The only problem is not having a dependable Hero-sama. Therefore I wish to ask for Iwatani-sama’s co-operation even if I have to take an oath.”

Naofumi:”Are you going to punish the other heroes that you will be relying on?”

Queen:”Certainly. Due to the Hero-samas actions and assistance in subduing the Three Heroes Church their punishment won’t be too severe, but I still have to punish them due to criticism from the surrounding countries are increasing.....”

Naofumi:”Is that so.....that’s unfortunate.”

Well, I was hoping to show those fellows hell. Either way, if a chance comes I’ll take it.

There are still a lot of things to discuss, but I suppose this is our position now.

Queen:” Could you keep our conversation a secret from those three? Heroes are human too. I don’t know what they will do if weakness is shown.....”

Certainly, there were many things that probably can’t be said to those three heroes.

I don't know about Motoyasu or Ren, but Itsuki might go into frenzy.

Above all, the situation around me will be improving greatly.

Naofumi: "Understood. One of those guys....."

Queen: "Yeah. Afterwards, I have the responsibility to watch over."

Naofumi: "Is that so, well after this one enemy has finally disappeared....."

Queen: "I am very sorry..... Please forgive me for summoning you without permission and forcing you to fight."

Naofumi: "It's fine already. So what will you do from now on? Are you going to speak to those three?"

Queen: "Yes, we will talk about matters of your participation over dinner."

Naofumi: "Understood."

The queen gives instructions to a subordinate walks towards the throne.

Queen: "Melty.....Let's go."

Melty: "Ah.....Okay."

Queen: "Iwatani-sama, thank you for protecting Melty."

The queen lowers her head and bows in gratitude.

Firo: "Is Mel-chan going somewhere?"

As expected, Firo seems to have understood and looks troubled.

Naofumi: "The world Melty lives in is different from us. It is unlikely we will be able to journey together like before."

It was difficult to say that while I turn to the queen.

Firo: "Really?"

Firo looks at Melty who is crying.

Melty: ".....yeah."

Firo: "We can't meet anymore?"

Melty:".....No. We will meet again. Many times. But travelling together is impossible."

Melty faces the queen.

The queen nods in confirmation.

Firo:"But..... I won't say goodbye."

Melty:"Alright. However, Firo-chan is always welcome."

Melty tells Firo in a tearful voice.

It's a fact that our journey had a big influence on Melty.

When the waves are over I made up my mind to leave Firo with Melty.

Firo:"Even if we separate, Mel-chan will always be Firo's friend right!?"

Melty:" Yeah! No matter what I am Firo-chan's friend."



It was a touching scene, but goodbyes..... I'm not sure if you should be saying that now since we will still be in the castle today.

There is also no schedule for talking with the queen in the future.

But I'll stay silent.

Because this will deepen their friendship.

Having a good friend is important, for both of them.

Raphtalia holds my hand as I watch the conversation.

I clench her hand silently and understood without turning around.

Chapter 79: Dinner

We were guided to dinner with the queen after resting in a VIP room.

As the guided by the soldiers, we saw the luxurious tables throughout the hall.

Isn't this even more luxurious than the time Motoyasu and I dueled?

.....It's been a long time.

But my innocence has finally been proven.

I see the queen and Melty entered the hall holding hands.

The two of them approach me while looking like they have something to say.

Naofumi: "What's wrong?"

Queen: "Well.....Oh dear, I'll just tell you truthfully."

Naofumi: "?"

While I was looking puzzled, the queen muttered about something being deplorable.

It seems that Bitch and Trash proposed to carry a dish from the kitchen to me.

They reflected. Therefore they want to bring me a dish as some kind of atonement.

This information is immediately heard by the queen The two of them snatched two dishes by force in the hallway to bring to me.

This happened while the queen was in the hall preparing.

Queen: "It is an admirable attitude to carry the food."

Both of them had cold sweat running down their back as they tried to put the food on my side.

However, the queen ordered the soldiers to arrest them.

I heard the circumstances from the shadows supervising them in

advance.

Trash: "Wh-What are you doing!?"

Bitch: "I did not do anything!"

They were protesting while being arrested.

When caught, their reaction is as follows.

Queen: "Yes, I pray you did nothing too. Now then, both of you..... eat a mouthful of the food you tried to serve Iwatani-sama."

Trash: "Such an impolite thing will not be done!"

Bitch: "I did not do anything!"

Their pitiful selves repeat an excuse while resisting.

Queen: "Yes, I believe you. So eat."

Trash: "That would be rude to the shield!"

Bitch: "That's right! Something that was has already eaten should not be served!"

Queen: "That's alright. Just take a bit with some clean tableware."

Trash: "Certainly not!"

Bitch: "Disgusting!"

Queen: "Eat it!"

The soldiers force-feed the two of them the dishes they carried.

(ED: There is a short time skip here that isn't mentioned) Naofumi: "So, what has happened to them?"

Queen: "Trash went to the toilet, and Bitch was carried to the hospital."

Are they retarded?

Trash used a laxative, and Bitch used poison.

I should be fine thanks to poison resistance, but I don't exactly have a hobby of consuming poison.

However, these guys clearly aren't reflecting at all.

It would have been an excellent assassination. But their execution leaves much to be desired.

Naofumi: "They are going to be punished for this right?"

Queen: "Naturally. I'll give Trash and Bitch a painful experience every day until they give up."

Naofumi: "Uh huh....."

Queen: "It was good that they were caught so early. There was a chance that Iwatani-sama might have actually taken damage."

Naofumi: "I guess....."

Those guys didn't learn their lesson..... they don't deserve any praise for their tenacity.

It would be fine to be angry here, let's try to evaluate the queen's enthusiasm in punishing them.

Naofumi: "Observe them closely. If they are unhurt I will withdraw our agreement."

Queen: "Of course. Originally, the contents of their punishment would be supervised, then reported to Iwatani-sama periodically, until they stop misbehaving."

Naofumi: "Well.....That's obvious."

The queen also adds that there is always a shadow watching Bitch and Trash.

So if they do something bad then it will be reported immediately.

So each time Trash and Bitch does anything, I can choose to reward or torment.

They can even show me what's happening. This sounds very pleasant.

Queen: "Yes. So please think about the extent of their punishment. Surely they will do it again. Since all attempts will be prevented beforehand, punish them accordingly, since Iwatani-sama presence is necessary to help Melromarc."

Naofumi:”.....I understand”

The queen then declares grandly to all the visitors that have gathered.

Queen:”I, Mirelia Q Melromarc, would like to thank everyone here for participating in this event. Everybody, please enjoy the feast and have fun!”

The participants who gathered in the hall cheered, and my reason for participating in this event is completely different from last time.

Last time I participated for the money.

I understand that the country’s situation will become a lot harsher in the future.

Firo:”Wow~.....”

Firo’s eyes shine at the amount of food put on display.

This party seems to be a restaurant style buffet.

Everything is in placed like a luxurious restaurant for the important guests.

If you still want to eat more, just head to the buffet and get a refill.

We were guided to our designated table with our plates full.

Last time we just stayed in a corner and ate.

Naofumi:”You may go get more food after you finish that plate.”

Firo:”Really!?”

Naofumi:”There is a rule. You must maintain your human form.”

Firo:”Okay!”

After devouring the expensive cuisine in front of her, Firo begins to skip towards the buffet looking for more.

For Firo is it quantity over quality?

Somehow, Firo’s attitude reminds me of how Raphtalia was before.

Incidentally, I look at Raphtalia.

Raphtalia: "Wh-What is it?"

Raphtalia spoke bashfully while I stared at her.

Naofumi: "Is that enough? When you're done go get more."

Raphtalia: "I do not eat so much anymore!"

Naofumi: ".....It's bad for your health. Even during forced marching, replenishing your body's nutrients is important."

Raphtalia: ".....Haah....."

Raphtalia sighs deeply.

Did I say something wrong?

Raphtalia: "Uhm.....Naofumi-sama what kind of girls do you prefer?"

Naofumi: "What?"

There isn't really any kind of girl I particularly prefer.....

I would like to avoid such a topic since it makes me recall Bitch.

Raphtalia: "Err.....In your original world, did you have someone you liked?"

Naofumi: "What are you saying? There is no such person."

That is not my reason of wanting to return to my former world. Why would she think that?

Raphtalia: ".....Haah....."

Raphtalia sighs again.

Naofumi: "I don't really understand your questions, but I am only returning because I want to go home."

After everything is concluded I will not hesitate to return to my original world. But if I had to look for a reason.....

Then, suddenly I recall when I first arrived in this world.

Is my wish to return coming from the fact that I was deceived by Bitch?

These feelings, after recognizing them again seem to have become

stronger.

Mysterious Voice: "Hero of the Shield-sama!"

Naofumi: "Hm?"

When I turn to the direction of the voice, a volunteer who I recognized is heading towards us.

Ah, these two, one of them was the one that asked for a signature.

Naofumi: "I'm glad to see you safe."

SoldierA: "You have nothing to worry about.....That's not it."

I look at the soldier who received the signature.

Naofumi: "Were the clothes that I signed stolen? It's my fault."

The soldier shakes his head.

SoldierB: "It's all right."

Naofumi: "I see, if it's fine then I won't worry. So how did the signature get stolen? What happened?"

It seems to be the work of a group from the extremist country.

He got caught up in this unfortunate event.

Naofumi: "Can't be helped. Extend your hand."

SoldierB: "Yes?"

It's not the best thing I can give, but it can't have an actual form.

I shake hands with the soldier who wanted the signature.

SoldierB: "Ah....."

I wonder what the standards for handshakes in this world are. It would be bad if this was rude.

Naofumi: "I apologize for troubling you. I am grateful for your co-operation given the circumstances. Forgive me with this for now."

SoldierB: ".....Okay!"

The soldier nods very joyfully. His cheeks are dyed red.....

This child is probably one who believes in the Four Saints Faith or the Shield Religion. That's probably why he wanted my signature.

.....I hope some dangerous guys don't want the hand that I shook.

Was this too rash?

Naofumi: "If there is an opportunity I'll thank you properly."

Soldiers: " "Okay!" "

Just when I was about to speak.

Mysterious Voice: "Naofumi!"

Naofumi: "Hm?"

Motoyasu walks towards me while fuming.

.....Haah.

Soldiers who realized the situation rushes to stop Motoyasu.

Soldiers: "Please wait!"

Motoyasu: "Out of the way!"

The soldiers were knocked away and Motoyasu continued on.

Motoyasu: ".....Let's duel!"

Naofumi: "What's with you suddenly?"

Do you suffer an illness that forces you to fight me at every feast?

Motoyasu: "I heard about it! That you changed Mein's name selfishly!"

.....Haah. Were you seduced by Bitch?

Bitch is clinging to Motoyasu while crying.

Bitch: "Hero of the Shield-sama selfishly asked mama to change my name without my permission....."

Her acting isn't very good.

Hm? Looking carefully, Bitch's equipment is different from before.

All her luxurious equipment is gone, all that's left are cheap products.

Oh, was her equipment seized by the queen?

Well that's a shame!

Motoyasu: "Why are you acting so childish?"

Naofumi: "Hahahaha!"

Motoyasu: "It's not funny! Such a pitiful name!"

Naofumi: "I know right!?"

This is the consequence of Bitch's deeds.

I mean Bitch was carried to the hospital earlier as a result of her actions.

Motoyasu: "If I win, you will change her name back."

Naofumi: "I've already beat you—"

Motoyasu: "This time is different."

Naofumi: ".....I guess so. You are that kind of guy."

I have no reason for fighting at all.

I'm also getting a bad feeling.....

The crowd parts and the queen walks in.

Motoyasu: "Queen-sama! Please grant a duel between Naofumi and I!"

Motoyasu seems to think the queen would allow such an the duel just as Trash did.

Queen: "I will not."

Motoyasu: "Eh?"

Motoyasu expresses his surprise and seems flabbergasted by the queen's words.

Chapter 80: Invigoration

Queen: "Kitamura-sama, do not get Bitch's name wrong."

Motoyasu's mouth hangs open in astonishment.

What did he think would happen?

Queen: "As a princess her name is Bitch, and as an adventurer she is known as Whore."

Motoyasu: "Wha.....You! Are you even Mein's parent?"

Queen: "Yes, that's correct. But that was her previous name, now she is Bitch."

The queen instructs the soldiers with her eyes.

Bitch was peeled off Motoyasu.

Bitch: "Wait! What are you doing! I am--"

Queen: "What is a mere adventurer saying? You have no authority here."

Motoyasu: "What are you doing to her!"

Queen: "Kitamura-sama..... If you do not address her correctly, for every time that you call her incorrectly I will have to add another burden for her to shoulder."

Motoyasu has an unbelievable face and glares at the queen.

Queen: "There were many reasons to change her name. First of all, she falsely accused Iwatani-sama of rape, and then pettily took advantage of her younger sister (ED: Melty) life during the crisis, there are various other reasons but those are the main reasons. This is already a rather weak punishment."

Motoyasu: "What are you saying!?"

Queen: "I believe you would want to thank Iwatani-sama for this lenient punishment."

After not getting what he wanted, Motoyasu glared at me in displeasure.

Motoyasu: "The brainwashing-"

Naofumi: "There was no such power."

Queen: "Yes, That's right. Do not be deceived by false rumours spread by the Three Heroes Church. Iwatani-sama has gained the trust of the people with his own strength."

Naofumi: "That's right."

It seems that the queen is becoming slightly irritated.

Since her daughter's reckless behaviour is uncontrollable.

Did she not learn her lesson?

Though I still don't believe in her completely, the queen is really quite pitiful.

The queen raises her fan upwards.

Queen: "I declare that any allegations about raping adventures that have been placed on Hero of the Shield Iwatani Naofumi-sama to be nonsense!"

An applause breaks out.

When I glance at Motoyasu he is looking around the hall restlessly with an incredible irritated expression.

Motoyasu: "You, you think this is funny?"

What? You still think I'm a sex offender?

Is your desire for a harem so strong that it doesn't matter what a woman does?

Queen: "Now then, Kitamura-sama..... Please use her correct name. Keep in mind that every time the wrong name is used, her debt to the country will increase."

Motoyasu: "Stop joking around!"

Motoyasu glares at me for some reason.

Queen: "Iwatani-sama is not related to this. Now, call her name."

Motoyasu: "Wh-Who would call her that!?"

Queen: "Then I shall separate you and Bitch, and she will have no way to repay her debt. Isn't that right, Iwatani-sama?"

Naofumi: "Mhmm"

Queen: "This child—"

Bitch: "No, no way!—Motoyasu-sama!"

Bitch notices the situation deteriorating and begs Motoyasu for help.

However, everybody except for Motoyasu understands this is only for self-protection.

There is no way she could change so quick.....

Motoyasu: "Gu....."

Queen: "Kitamura-sama should understand by now. Because she was born a coward, and grew up looking down on others."

Motoyasu: "She is not like that! This guy is the evil one!"

Motoyasu points at me and declares.

Do you even understand that the ground you're standing on is gone? Are you still blindly believing the lies you were fed?

It would be fine to leave it to the queen. But, maybe I can solve this without violence.

Naofumi: "Very well. If you want a match so badly, I'll keep you company."

Queen: "Iwatani-sama.....Is this fine? It is fine to fight each other to prove who is correct, but killing is forbidden."

Naofumi: "Yeah, I understand. But, please remember that this is one-on-one."

I said that since I remember being struck in the back by magic.

Motoyasu: "That's a given!"

Naofumi: "Well, it can't be helped if you want to fight. But, stop and think for a second. Who was it that you could never land a finishing blow

on?"

Motoyasu was a little startled and continues to stare at me.

Naofumi:" If you seriously fight me without your companions, can you win?"

Motoyasu:"Ku....."

Naofumi:"By the way, I can heal myself..... I'm sure you can imagine the outcome in a war of attrition."

Though at that time I couldn't attack, unlike now.

As expected, Motoyasu's fighting spirit has been dampened thanks to that experience.

Naofumi:"Hey, if you've given up just say her name."

Motoyasu:"Shit....."

Queen:"If you do not say her correct name then I will separate you two."

Bitch:"Mama!"

Motoyasu:"Ah....."

Bitch shouts at the queen with a mortified expression. Motoyasu murmured inaudibly with an expression full of distress.

Motoyasu:"Whore....."

Bitch: "Shield! I'll never forgive you!"

Naofumi:"Say what you want, Bitch!"

The queen gives instructions to release Bitch.

Queen:"That's enough, please understand that you cannot make absurd demands against Iwatani-sama by abusing your power any more. Because my policy is to treat all heroes equally."

Motoyasu:"What about this is equal!?"

Queen:" Oh my. Did you think I would just overlook the misfortune that Iwatani-sama was forced to put up with while I was away? Did you ever treat all the other Heroes equally?"

Ren and Itsuki approach while this was happening.

Queen: "Hero of the Sword-sama, Hero of the Bow-sama, please understand. My daughter, Bitch falsely accused Iwatani-sama. As her punishment her name has been changed to Bitch. This was the result of sympathy as well."

Ren: "Ah.....Sure"

Itsuki: "U-Understood."

Queen: "Please treat the current situation as repaying Iwatani-sama for his past troubles. Since the rest of you hero-samas have already received plenty of preferential treatment compared to Iwatani-sama."

The queen said I would be receiving preferential treatment only for now.....But these fellows don't look convinced.

Motoyasu is standing worryingly beside Bitch while she looks at the queen with an unpleasant expression.

After Ren and Itsuki confirmed the situation and figured out it that everything is under control, they just stood there with unreadable expressions.

Rather, a feeling of "That's right....." could be felt from them as they look at Motoyasu and remember him being favored.

Queen: "Bitch. I'll be adding to your punishment seeing as the change of your name was not completed thoroughly, and that you have once again brought trouble to Iwatani-sama."

Bitch: "Shut up! Do not call me Bitch!"

Queen: "It seems you have not reflected in the slightest.....It cannot be helped."

The queen claps her hands and a wizard brings a familiar ink bottle to her.

Motoyasu: "Wh-What are you going to do!?"

Motoyasu notices the threatening atmosphere and raises his voice.

The soldiers hold Motoyasu back while the magician begins the ceremony on Bitch.

The queen pricks her finger with a needle and drips her blood on the ink.

That is.....ahh I see, so that's what is going to happen.

Bitch:"N-No! Release me!"

As expected of Bitch, she understands the current event as well.

She violently struggles but the soldiers keep her steady.

Although Motoyasu doesn't understand what is happening, but he recovers and readies his spear.

Motoyasu:"Stoooooooooooooop!"

As if they would.

Naofumi:"Shield Prison!"

While controlling my anger I change to the Wrath Shield and trap Motoyasu.

Bitch:"N-No! Stay away! Who do you think I am!?"

Queen:" Aren't you just a plain adventurer? No wait worse, you're a criminal. This is punishment for the failed assassination attempt of giving poison to Iwatani-sama."

As the queen is reminding Bitch, she gives the signal.

Ink is dropped onto Bitch's chest, and a pattern is carved there.

Bitch:"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

After Bitch screams for a while, then the pattern disappears as if it was never there.

It's different from Raphtalia's. Raphtalia has a tattoo, while nothing can be seen on Bitch.

Queen:" This is a high-class slave crest. It is not usually visible until certain conditions are met, and when it appears, punishment is dealt."

Something like Firo's demon crest?

Queen:"The condition is attacking Iwatani-sama. Whether by direct attack with magic or indirect attack with poison, nothing is allowed!"

Bitch glares at the queen with watery eyes.

Motoyasu:" Mei.....Whore, are you all right?"

Motoyasu is released from the prison, runs up Bitch and holds her.

I wonder if that was a smart decision. After receiving a serious counterattack, Motoyasu and Bitch must be extremely frustrated.

Queen:"Now then, shall we get down to business?"

Ren:".....What would that be?"

What a quick change of gears.

Is this the dignity of a queen?

It's quite nasty.

Ren and Itsuki's expressions are also cramping up.

Queen:"Yes, I think Hero-samas would enjoy this news very much."

What the queen is going to say?

While holding some doubts I listen attentively to the queen's story.

Queen:"A country that is off the coast.....Cal Mira Island has become active. I request the participation of all Hero-samas."

.....What island? How is it becoming active?

""Uooooooooooooo!?"""

The three of them have gotten excited.

Motoyasu.....are you forgetting Bitch?

You were looking extremely mortified a little while ago.

Naofumi:" What's that? Is there something there?"

Queen:"Since Iwatani-sama does not know I'll explain. That island is only active once every 10 years. There is a phenomenon where experience

earned in that area greatly increases during that time.”

The queen’s long story can be summed up like this.

The island, Cal Mira Island is famous as a holiday resort, and various demons inhabit the location.

It’s also famous for adventurers who want to Level up quickly during its active period every 10 years.

It seems this event will greatly help the four Heroes who are a bit weak right now.

Queen:” Of course, we have already requested for the island. So everyone, please participate.”

In online gaming terms would this be considered an event dungeon?

Do the enemies have an extremely good Experience to strength ratio?

If you are a gamer then you would be extremely pleased with this event.

If anything.....

Queen:” Preparations have been completed already, and I would like the Hero-samas to participate in this big event.”

Naofumi:”Event?”

Ren:”What will we be doing?”

The queen answers after hearing our questions.

Queen:”It is just the Hero-sama’s will be having a staff and information exchange with each other at Cal Mira Island. Of course, only if all four of you agree.”

.....

Heroes: “”””What——!?””””

The queen drops quite a ridiculous request.

The next day.

Trash:”Nuooooooooooooo!”

The queen is torturing Trash by freezing him in front of me.

I feel refreshed while looking at Trash's face in pain.

Queen:"Seriously.....Iwatani-sama sure is resourceful."

After hearing the story of Cal Mira Island, I agreed so that we could increase our levels.

According to my conversation with the queen, Cal Mira Island is also a great location for hot springs.

Moreover, it seems the hot springs have a healing effect on curses.

But there is a bad problem.

Even if I am good, Raphtalia and Firo still haven't Classed Up yet and cannot gain levels.

When I told the queen, she brought in Trash and thus such a situation happened.

Trash is being frozen and finally begins confessing after a while.

Queen:" It can't be helped. Please start your journey after receiving Class up at the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era for your companions."

Naofumi:"Are you not coming to the island?"

Queen:" I have some internal affairs. Instead, the shadows will be dispatched."

Well, I figured.

Naofumi:"Speaking of which, why are we doing an information and staff exchange.....?"

It seems the atmosphere has become unpleasant.

Queen:"Did you not like the idea?"

Naofumi:"Nope, I hate those guys."

Queen:"Well, you might be able to learn a different method to get stronger from the information exchange with the other Hero-samas."

Naofumi:"Well....."

That is one possibility.

What can I say.....Though it would be a problem to beat those guys without the Curse Series.

It should only be a matter of time before those guys obtain their own Curse Series, though by then they will be quite behind.

I don't like it, but it might be helpful.

Naofumi:"Why do we have to exchange personnel?"

Queen:"So that you can take into account how their companions fight while working together."

Naofumi:" Is that it?"

Queen:" No, this also doubles for information exchange. If they are careless you might be able to learn how they get stronger."

I should consider this very carefully. The reverse is also quite possible.

But with consideration of the wave, it s important for all of us to get stronger.

In the future when we will be fighting together, it would be helpful to know how these guys fight.

Queen:"For Trash to have such a good idea."

Naofumi:"This was proposed by Trash!?"

Queen:"Yes, though originally the plan was to give preferential treatment to Kitamura-sama."

I see.

In order to steal information from the other heroes to help Motoyasu.

This Trash, what a cunning old man.

Though I don't think I would have been included in the trip to Cal Mira Island.

Queen:"With that said, will you be going?"

Naofumi:"It's a good idea. It may be beneficial."

Queen: "I do not know how much aid money I can provide to Iwatani-sama yet since the treasury count is still incomplete. Please look forward to it after returning."

Naofumi: "I'm assuming that living expenses there is already paid for."

Queen: "Of course, those expenses have already been prepared. Now then, shall we go to the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era? Since preparations have been completed, let us make haste and begin the magical contract there."

Naofumi: "Understood. Let's go."

Raphtalia: "Okay"

Firo: "Okay~!"

By the way, Firo slept with Melty last night.

Melty also wanted to sleep in Firo's feathers..... I remember the teacher who walked in on that in the morning and screamed.

Thus, with the queen and Melty, we head towards the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.

Chapter 81: Class Up

When we arrived at the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era that sister at the reception desk before was gone.

Naofumi: "Where did that other sister go to?"

Sister: "She was arrested because she was part of the Three Heroes Church."

Oh, so she was labeled a criminal.

Well she was infuriating anyway. Too bad.

Naofumi: "Now what? Can we go Class Up?"

Queen: "First of all, please tell me who wants to do a class up."

After listening to the queen I look at Raphtalia and Firo.

Though we have already decided which Class to take, there is no telling what might happen.

Firo: "Okay~! Firo wants to go first!"

Firo raises her hand and declares that she wants to go first.

I look at Raphtalia and she nods.

Raphtalia: "Then Firo will Class Up first."

Firo: "Yay~!"

Melty: "Firo-chan do your best!"

In her human form Firo steps forward with a pitter-patter.

Sister: "Please get into a comfortable position, touch the Hourglass of Dragon's Era and focus your consciousness on it."

Firo: "Like this?"

Firo reverts to her demon form and slowly touches the Hourglass of Dragon's Era.

The sand near Firo's wing shines and ripples.

Queen: "Now then, let's proceed with the Class Up ceremony."

On the queen's orders the soldiers surrounding the hourglass pour some kind of liquid into the grooves the shape of a magic square etched into the floor.

Firo: "Huh? What is that sound?"

Firo strains her ears.

Queen: "Concentrate"

Firo: "Okay~"

Firo shuts her eyes and spreads both her wings.

The hourglass continues to glow, and the magic formation on the floor also starts glowing.

Firo stands in the center, and is being surrounded by light.

Queen: "Now, please choose your future possibility."

Firo: "Ah, Something popped up"

Firo mutters with her eyes closed.

The icon in Firo's view also appears in mine, a class tree appeared.

Queen: "Since she is Iwatani-sama's demon, you must choose."

Naofumi: "Ah, is such a thing even possible?"

All the possibilities of Philorials and their various abilities appear.

However.

Naofumi: "What Firo wants for herself, may not be what I choose."

If I don't choose, does it automatically pick the demon's choice?

I press the decline button on the screen.

Firo: "Wa! something came into view!"

It was probably what appeared in front of me earlier. It might be due to the influence of the demon crest.

Firo: "Which one to pick~....."

With her eyes closed Firo happily picks her possibility.

I'll allow Firo to decided for herself, since this will affect her whole life.

That's right. I'll tell Raphtalia the same.

Naofumi:" Raphtalia, I will let you and Firo choose whichever Class Up you want yourselves, since I will be leaving the world after the wave is over. It will be fine."

Raphtalia:"As long as Naofumi-sama chooses, it will be good....."

Naofumi:"Nope."

Raphtalia:".....I understand."

Raphtalia mutters while seeming dissatisfied about something.

If I decide selfishly and they don't like it, then it would be rough for both of us.

I want them to choose for themselves, because I trust them.

Now then, I wonder what Firo is going to choose.

Firo's ahoge is growing and shining brilliantly.

Naofumi:"Eh?"

The light shines brighter and buzzes, and then with a flash it was gone.

I was momentarily blinded.

When my vision recovers, I look at Firo who is blinking repeatedly. Her appearence.....There are no big changes.

But, her ahoge has become more luxurious, now it gives off the feeling of a mini-crown.....

Queen:"It seems the Class Up was completed successfully."

Naofumi:" I see."

I check her status. The ★ has disappeared wonderfully.

Her stats have nearly doubled.

Isn't this too amazing?

Melty: "Firo-chan is amazing!"

It seems Melty is pleased that Firo has powered up.

However, Firo has a delicate expression while walking over.

Firo: "You see.....Firo wasn't able to choose....."

Firo mutters, looking like she is about to cry at any moment.

Naofumi: "What went wrong?"

Firo: "Firo wanted to choose the one that can spit poison. But what came out was not what was selected."

Naofumi: "I saw your ahoge shine brightly."

Firo: "Mu....."

Melty is coaxing the depressed Firo.

Naofumi: "Then, next is Raphtalia."

Raphtalia: "O-Okay."

Before it even starts I'm getting a bad feeling about this.

Raphtalia touches the Hourglass the same way Firo did.

When the light shines, the soldiers pour the same liquid inside the magic formation.

As I thought, an icon pops up in my view again.

Now then.....pushing the refusal—

At that moment, Firo's ahoge splits in two and one enters my view.



Naofumi: "Wha!? What is this!? You bird!"

Firo: "It's not Firo!"

Not Firo you say!? Are you telling me that your ahoge can act independently?

Raphtalia's eyes open wide and she stares

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama!?"

The ahoge lands on the pop-up, disappears, and reveals a possibility that didn't exist before.

Light flows from me to Raphtalia.

Raphtalia:"Kya!?"

Raphtalia screams.

And the light disappears.

Thick smoke covers the room. This is quite different from Firo's.

The smoke clears up.....

I watch Raphtalia coughing. There are no apparent changes other than her hair colour being a brighter shade compared to before.....

Naofumi:"A-Are you alright?"

Raphtalia:"Oh, uh yeah. I'm fine....."

What happened?I worryingly check Raphtalia's status.

.....Just like Firo, the ★ dissapeared and her stats have nearly doubled.

Raphtalia:"What happened?"

Naofumi:"I have no idea either. The Class Up was chosen by itself.....I had a bad feeling, but there seems to be no problems."

Queen:"I see, that's fine then..... I wonder what chose the Class Up without permission?

Naofumi:"What are you talking about?"

Melty:" Ummm you see. I think Firo-chan's ahoge did it-"

Melty retells her story about meeting the Philorial Queen.

Queen:"I see, I would have liked to meet the queen of Philorials too."

Naofumi:"That's not the problem right now."

Is the queen's hobby searching for legends?

Wait wait, this isn't the situation to think about those things.

Naofumi:"I wonder why. I was uneasy and thought that there might be some abnormal transformations!"

Raphtalia:"Yes, me too. Though I had a feeling my body was shrinking,

but that doesn't seem to be the case."

Firo:"Master~, what are you saying?"

It seems something absurd in the world occurred.....

At any rate, there is nothing we can do about it, and nothing bad happened.

Maybe it was due to my luck finally turning around.

Naofumi:".....Don't worry about it. Anyway, how are your abilities and conditions?

Raphtalia:"I feel that power is surging through my body."

Naofumi:"I see, that's good....."

Queen:"Is it due to the Queen Philorial feather?..... I don't know what it was, but it seems to have chosen for you. I'm sure that you will be unable to change it."

The queen regretfully informs us.

Queen:"There are specific items that you can use during Class Ups to get more benefits. I pray that was a good thing....."

Naofumi:"Yeah....."

Queen:"So how much did their abilities grow?"

Naofumi:"Their abilities almost doubled."

Queen:"Doubled!?"

The queen is surprised.

Perhaps this is way better than usual?

Maybe it's due to the Philorial Queen's feather. If the growth rate is high, then I am glad.

Queen:"Originally.....any item that would increase the growth rate by 1.5 times is already amazing. They would generally be very strong."

Naofumi:"Is that so? Then this is great."

However, both of them have a delicate expression.

I understand your feelings.

Class Up—I am familiar with that since in games you should be able to choose your own.

Naofumi: "Well.....Do your best."

Raphalia: "uuu.....somehow I'm feeling quite melancholic."

Firo: "Firo too."

Melty: "Cheer up, Firo-chan."

Like this, our Class Up was complete.

Queen: "Next is the contract."

The queen shows a contract written on parchment to me.

Queen: "Please read it."

Naofumi: "Sure....."

The contract contains the following:

1. If any situation occurs that would harm the Hero of the Shield, the country will stop it at all costs 2. The country will co-operate and arrange preparations for the Hero of the Shield against the wave.

3. The Hero of the Shield will receive various preferential treatments.

4. Nothing is demanded of the Hero of the Shield except for fighting against the wave.

Lastly, the country will take responsibility when the contract breaks.

I request for a copy of the contractual document.....For insurance. So a copy of the parchment was given to me.

The contents are very advantageous for me.

I confirm many times that there are no play on words or contradictory terms.

I feel that I may have went too far, but after inspecting it for a while

there were no abnormalities.

Naofumi: "Well, this should be fine."

Queen: "Then, please finish the seal with a drop of your blood."

I poke my own finger with a knife and write my name in blood on the parchment.

The queen does the same, and the parchment begins to shine in the middle of the magic formation.

The light disappears and a golden bracelet appears around the queen's arm.

Queen: "If the contract is broken, then it will punish me accordingly. Please rest assured."

Naofumi: "Understood. So I guess it's official now?"

Queen: "Indeed."

There is a feeling of relief.....

Naofumi: "I should reconsider exchanging companions on the trip....."

Queen: "Please consider carefully."

Seeing as I am having trouble deciding, the queen answers.

Naofumi: "Hm?"

Queen: "If it goes well wouldn't Iwatani-sama be able to increase his companions?"

Naofumi: "Ah.....So that's what you mean."

This could be a chance for all the heroes, including me, to find out how the other hero companions operate.

Queen: "The Hero of the Shield is already not associated with anything evil. There may even be some companions that are dissatisfied with following their chosen hero."

Naofumi: "In other words..... a repicking from the first day....."

I am still holding a grudge from when no one helped me.

There is also no way I will lose Raphtalia and Firo thanks to them being slaves.

Queen: "Even if Iwatani-sama is not aware, some of the hero companions have already been changed. So, it might not be a bad idea to try it out."

Naofumi: "Change? Who went to who?"

Queen: "Every Hero-sama. More or less, compared to before their party is a little different....."

Since I never took a good look, I did not notice it.

What can I say? The companions of those fellows must have sobered up.

Their true colours must have shown.

.....That reminds me, that man in Motoyasu's party disappeared.

I thought he was just hiding and waiting for a chance, but he did not appear at all.

Well, as a man in Motoyasu's harem it was probably hell for him.

Besides, I feel that each Hero had an increase in companions.

Definitely. There are people who become friends in the middle of a trip.

If an adventurer, villager, knight, or magician has talent then they would be scouted.

It's a common development that happens in my favourite mangas and light novels.

I see. I am the unorthodox one, only taking slaves.

Anyhow.....

Naofumi:.....haah. I understand."

Queen: "There may be someone who wants to follow Iwatani-sama."

Naofumi: "But I do not trust anyone except for those with absolute obedience."

Queen: "Oh ho? But I thought you are developing a good relationship with Melty?"

At the queen's words, Melty trembles and blushes a deep-red.

It is probably from being humiliated.

Naofumi: "She's going to die if she didn't follow me, so there's no other way. She might be Firo's good friend, but she doesn't respect me at all"

Melty: "R-Right!"

She nods energetically. As I thought, Melty disliked me after all.

Queen: "It doesn't seem so though."

Melty: "Mother!"

The queen laughs and shows a heart-warming smile.

Did I say something funny?

Raphtalia: "Mu....."

I look over at Raphtalia and she seems to be sulking.

Naofumi: "What's wrong?"

Raphtalia: "Absolutely nothing!"

Firo: "Hm~?"

I tilt my head together with Firo.

Queen: "Isn't this fine? We have finished our business here, you should depart soon."

After leaving the building of the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era, we depart for the Island.

Queen: "Please look forward to your various rewards when you return."

Naofumi: "Rewards? What is it?"

Queen: "Iwatani-sama I heard you wanted to learn magic, so I will prepare magic books and crystal balls."

Ah, so it's something like that.

Mhmm.....Besides, if I do get another companion then I will need supplies.

Queen:"Crystal balls let you acquire magic quickly, but there is a lack of power. Whereas for books, it takes a lot longer to learn, but it is much stronger."

Naofumi:"So there was such an effect....."

When I read the magic book, it was explaining the basics of basics.

Besides, in the book it also explains how to adjust power, and other ways to tweak the spells.

Of course, in order to learn these things it will take time.

This is not a game, and time is limited. But, I should also avoid learning too much from the crystal balls since it's efficiency will be bad.

Judging from the other heroes actions, I am currently the only one that can read this world's letters.

It may be important to make use of this advantage.

Queen:" Will crystal balls be alright Iwatani-sama?"

Naofumi:"I can read a little of this world's letters, so..... If there is someone to teach me properly, and a book, it would be fine."

Queen:"I see. I'll arrange it."

Naofumi:"Also, can equipment be procured?"

Queen:"It is possible to give you weapons from the country's arsenal but....."

That reminds me, I still haven't visited the old man from the weapons shop yet.

It might also be good to see if there are any requests for materials from Cal Mira Island, perhaps it would be nice to get some materials myself.

Naofumi:"In the meantime, please prepare some degree of armour and weapons for us."

Queen:” Alright. Now then, I wish you a good day.”

Melty:”Naofumi, Firo-chan, Raphtalia-san, Good luck! Have a nice day!”

We parted from the queen, got on the carriage, and hurried to the town where the ship to Cal Mira Island is.

Chapter 82: Grave Visit

Naofumi: "We should be arriving at the harbor town soon."

The meeting spot for this event is at the harbor town.

The other heroes seemed to have travelled on a carriage the country prepared.

They started sooner, but it is likely that Firo overtook them.

Since we haven't been travelling on a carriage in a while, Firo is happy.

Raphtalia: "Ah, Naofumi-sama.....May we take a little detour?"

Naofumi: "Hm?"

Raphtalia informs me of the place where she wants to go.

It's not very far so there should be no problems.

Naofumi: "Sure, that's fine."

Raphtalia: "Firo, please turn here and head inland."

Firo: "Okay~"

The place we arrive at.....An abandoned village.

You can tell from the tattered building that this was a village.

There are houses without roofs and walls. Some are even burnt down.

The collapsed feudal lord mansion.....gave off a very plain feeling.

It looked brand new before it was abandoned..... However, I can't say for how long.

I should consider when this place was abandoned.

Raphtalia: "....."

Raphtalia was just staring at the abandoned village until we passed it.

When I look, there are numerous graves at the edge of the village.

Come to think of it, I heard that Raphtalia was part of a farming village near the sea, and it was the first to be attacked by the wave.

Could this possibly be.....The village where Raphtalia was born and raised?

Three months have already passed since I arrived in this world.

Considering the Hero summoning ceremony, four months at most.

I only need to look at this demi-human village that was here four months ago to imagine the intensity of the wave.

Certainly the queen did say that the one she entrusted internal affairs with died during the first wave.

Considering that he was also popular with the demi-humans, he might have been the feudal lord of this village.

Firo:"Raphtalia onee-chan, where are we going?"

Raphtalia:"Just going to the cliff to watch the ocean."

Firo:"Alright, understood."

As the carriage rattles and continues on, I continue to stare at the village that Raphtalia might have been born in.

Before long, we arrive at a cliff overlooking the sea, and Raphtalia gets off the carriage.

There is a pile of small stones at the tip of the cliff..... I think that is a grave.

Raphtalia picks some flowers blooming in the vicinity and places it before the tomb.

Then she clasps her hands together to pray.

The sun is setting, covering the area in an orange hue.

I could not talk to Raphtalia today.

If I think about it, Raphtalia lost her family approximately four months ago.

I think she is already very strong mentally.

Losing her family and living on.....No wonder she had such dead eyes

when I saw her.

Isn't there anything I can do for Raphtalia?

No, what will happen to Raphtalia when I return to my original world?

Though Firo will have Melty, Raphtalia has nothing.

Occasionally, Raphtalia anxiously asks about my reason for returning to my original world when this is all over.

Raphtalia: "Sorry to have kept you waiting."

Naofumi: "No problem. Let's go."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

.....When this wave is over, I'll have to think about what to do with Raphtalia.

Ren: "Uuu....."

Motoyasu: "U-....."

Itsuki: "U-n"

After all the heroes arrived at the harbour town, we all boarded the ship.

Incidentally, due to the ship's size, even Firo's carriage was able to be loaded.

So we were covered there.

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki were all downed by seasickness after half a day.

Since cabins were allocated, there shouldn't be any problems. However, all the heroes were gathered because the sailors wanted to greet us, and the three of them are vomiting into the sea while groaning painfully.

Naofumi: "Seasickness huh....."

Ever since I was small, for some reason, no matter the vehicle, I was never affected.

Probably due to the seasickness, the three heroes are overly friendly.

To be frank, I have no intentions of getting friendly with them, but.....

Motoyasu: "Naofumi seems to be fine....."

Naofumi: "Yeah, I don't get motion sickness easily."

Firo: "Kyahho~"

By the way, Firo is in her demon form and is swimming around the ocean.

No wait, is she swimming or floating?

Since this is Firo's first time at sea, she excitedly dived in. Occasionally she would ride the boat, and then jump back to play afterwards.

Although this is a big ship, I am still a little uneasy. It should be fine since Firo can use wind magic though.

In a crisis she should be able to hold her own.

Naofumi: "Ah....."

There is a big fish approaching Firo from behind.

Naofumi: "Firo, it's dangerous."

Firo: "Hm~?"

As Firo turns around, a shark-like demon opens its giant mouth to attack.

Firo: "Tei!"

Firo kicks the jaw of the demon shark and it flies through the air.

It was sent flying right onto the ship deck.

The sailors and adventurers scream.

As the demon shark struggled violently on the deck, Firo finishes it off.

Firo: "It is a big mistake to treat Firo as your food."

Then she proceeds to stuff her face with demon shark meat.

Naofumi: "Don't dirty the deck."

Itsuki: ".....I think you're glossing over something important there."

An extremely pale Itsuki mutters at me.

Well, it is indeed amazing, and speaking of amazing, I think of Firo.

Since the ship's rear has a ballista attached to it, I do not need to fight either.

By the way, this is already the second shark.

The first one was dismantled and absorbed by my shield.

Requirements for Blue Shark Shield has been released.

Requirements for Shark Bite Shield has been released.

Requirements for Shark Leather Shield has been released.

Requirements for Shark Meat Shield has been released.

Blue Shark Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Swimming Skill 1

Shark Bite Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Shipboard Combat Skill 1

Special Effect: Shark's Fang

Shark Leather Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: 2% Damage Reduction from the Aquatic System Special Effect: Shark's skin

Shark Meat Shield

Unsealing completed... Equipment Bonus: Agility 3

The swimming skill's description.....I can swim like everyone else.

Motoyasu:"....."

Ren:"I'm sure you are a hammer."

Itsuki:"Yeah....."

Naofumi:"If you guys think I'll drown if I fall into the ocean, tough luck; I can swim."

The seasick heroes are whispering with each other about whether or not I will fall into the sea and drown, so I warn them.

Ren: "that's not what I'm talking about"

Naofumi: "What is?"

Ren: "I think Itsuki is a hammer....."

Itsuki: ".....I am?!"

Motoyasu: "I think Ren is also one....."

Itsuki: "I think Motoyasu-san is one too....."

Did you guys analyze each other's swimming abilities?

Oh well, does Shipboard Combat Skill 1 improve my movements on a ship?

Is there even going to be a situation where I fight on board? Let's try it out when I have some free time.

Since this is the same demon I'll leave it alone. It seems even on the move my experience value and materials are increasing.

Sailor: ".....Are you guys alright?"

Some guy wearing clothes that make him look like a pirate, is anxiously asking the other heroes their conditions.....

Naofumi: "It's merely seasickness. Your worrying is unnecessary. They will get used to it after a while."

Sailor: ".....Right."

Naofumi: "And you are?"

Sailor: ".....Captain."

After looking closely I can see it's a woman. Her height is a little lacking.

Raphtalia is taller. Though I did not get a good look at her due to her clothing, she is a considerably beautiful girl.

Her face is probably good enough for Motoyasu to flirt with her.

She also seems young. To be a captain of a ship at that age, what is wrong with this world?

Captain: "I am the captain.....I also made the ship."

Naofumi: "Captain and Shipbuilder!?"

Captain: ".....Right."

Naofumi: "What a skillful fellow."

Captain: ".....Right."

Since a while ago all she is saying is ".....Right". What a downer.

Though she is skillful, she has problems talking.

Captain: ".....The sea is acting up."

Naofumi: "I see."

Captain: ".....A storm is coming."

Naofumi: "You can tell?!"

Captain: ".....No problem. Hero-sama should rest in the cabin."

Naofumi: "That reminds me, I haven't introduced myself yet. I am the Hero of the Shield. Those three over on the floor there are the other heroes."

Captain: ".....Right. Best regards."

As the captain mutters, a sailor yells about an incoming storm.

And so, we returned to the cabin.

Firo felt the waves rising, returned to her human form, and entered the cabin.

Though the captain speaks little, she is a hard working fellow.

The ship kept advancing, despite the storm."

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, it seems you aren't getting seasick."

Raphtalia: "Because I am from a village near the sea."

Naofumi: "Ah, do you have experience on a boat?"

Raphtalia:” Yup.”

By the way, as for what happened to the other Heroes and their companions.....They rested in their cabins the whole trip.

The ship was rocked in all directions throughout the heavy storm, but we arrived at Cal Mira Island the following morning.

Firo was extremely excited, and even Raphtalia widened her eyes.

Well you can guess the reactions of the other adventurers and new sailors.....

Cal Mira Island is a volcanic island that exceeds my imagination.

Is it because I am using Hawaii as a standard.....?

There is also no guarantee this map is accurate.

By the way, Cal Mira Island is a nickname, its official name is Cal Mira Archipelago. It seems that there are also various islands nearby.

Rather than the rough sea voyage from Melromarc, the waves near the archipelago are calm, and you can even walk across the islands during low-tide.

.....Can we ride Firo to another island?

Here and there, other islands could be seen.

Naofumi:” Now then, we have arrived at Cal Mira Island but.....”

I was amazed at the other heroes appreciating the island and being grateful.

All of them look quite sleepy since it was virtually impossible to sleep last night with all the rolling around.

Bitch’s face is pale, and she vomits. Serves you right.

Naofumi:”Are you guys weak to vehicles?”

Motoyasu:”Naofumi.....you are the strange one.”

Ren:”When the cabin was turned upside down, I thought we sank.”

Itsuki:”Coming to this strange world, there are many amazing things.”

Certainly, the ship was turned over a several times.

Every time I expected the ship to sink, but I was surprised.

Since it was troublesome to roll around, I made a hammock in the cabin and slept.

I wonder if the sailors are used to such things. They recommended that I make a hammock to sleep in when the storm came.

Even the captain said that such a big storm was rare.

Is it due to the wave of calamity?

If such a storm were to appear in my world, then any ship would surely sink.

After this boat trip, I am again realising this is a different world.

Chapter 83: Magic Lore

Raphtalia: "Fortunately, the ship did not sink, cast us adrift, and force us to start living on an uninhabited island."

Naofumi: "Don't joke about those things."

Raphtalia: "It wasn't a joke."

Naofumi: "Anyway, let's get to the hotel early today. We can't start the member change if we don't know the schedule right?"

That reminds me, the queen told me to go and greet the one in charge of this island.

Although this is a remote region, he should have quite a lot of authority since a lot of people visit.

Mysterious Person: "I welcome the four holy heroes and their companions."

A suspicious fellow who is holding a flag like a tour guide approaches us, while we wait for the other heroes to recover before departing.

He is wearing a Melromarc military uniform, and he looks to be a little past middle age.....That flag does not suit him.

Hapenburg: "I am Count Hapenburg, and I have been entrusted with this Cal Mira Archipelago."

Naofumi: "I-I see....."

The only hero who is completely fine is me, so I have to respond.

Hapenburg: "I look forward to our subsequent acquaintanceship."

Naofumi: "Ah.....Best regards."

Every hero greets Count Hapenburg and the guide employees following him.

Hapenburg: "Now then, Hero-samas I will tell you all about Cal Mira Archipelago, starting from the beginning."

Eh.....

He really was a tour guide. This is troublesome and annoying.

Naofumi: "We did not come here particularly for sightseeing....."

I would rather not go on a sightseeing tour and learn the island traditions, while there is delicious experience points to be earned.

Hapenburg: "Now now, since ancient times, the four holy heroes have trained here—"

While the count explains, we are guided past a market.

There were some strange objects.

Is that a penguin, rabbit, squirrel, and a dog with a santa hat? There is a totem pole made of four animals on top of one another and decorated.

The penguin has a fishing rod, the rabbit is using a hoe, the squirrel has a saw, and the dog is equipped with rope.

What the hell is that?

Hapenburg: "Oh? Hero of the Shield-sama has a good eye. Those are the pioneers who developed this island, Pengy, Bunny, Squirrley, and Doggy."

All Japanese-like. No, it's probably due to the legendary weapon's translations.

Hapenburg: "By the way, the Four Holy Hero-samas were the ones who named them."

For the Four Holy Heroes naming sense to be—

Ah, the count is still talking.

Hapenburg: "The Hero-samas befriended these demons, and gave them names similar to the animals in their world."

Their naming sense is terrible anyway.

Couldn't they have changed a little more?

Naofumi: "Then, are they somewhere on this island?"

Hapenburg: "No, when pioneering was completed, they left to look for new land. Afterwards, they were never seen again."

.....In short, they went extinct.

Also their existence is doubtful. Not to mention, demons pioneering.....

Firo:"Ehh..... they look delicious."

Firo says while drooling.

.....If I think carefully, this demon gets supreme joy just by pulling a carriage.

It is quite mysterious.

Something besides the totem pole catches my eye.

Naofumi:" What's that?"

Hapenburg:"It seems to be an inscription left by the Four Holy Heroes."

Naofumi:" Interesting."

I approach it slowly.

The possibility of the Four Holy Heroes being Japanese is high.

Even if it's not japanese, there might be some significant information from somewhere else on Earth.

It's not written in Japanese, what is it?

What.....

Motoyasu:"Oi! This isn't Japanese. It's a fake!"

The other heroes approached the inscription and verify that it cannot be read.

Hapenburg:"That is strange.....There is a tradition that this was prepared for when new heroes would appear....."

Motoyasu:".....Are you joking? This is a magical letter from this world."

Magical letter..... This is rather troublesome. Besides me, the other fellows didn't learn any letters.

What can I say.....The letters change according to the person. Such is the existence of magical letters.

For example, If I try to read Raphtalia's magic book on illusions, I won't be able to decipher it.

They just become funny words when I translate it.

However, Raphtalia can decipher it and chant the magic.

Though there is a common language for magic letters, it is still impractical, and unless you have an aptitude for it, you cannot use it.

Motoyasu:"Can you read it?"

Naofumi:"All of you relied on the crystal ball that trash gave, while I didn't receive any. I had to learn to read."

Motoyasu:"So what does it say?"

Naofumi:"Lets see....."

I read and try to decipher the inscription.

It is written in unexpectedly simple words.

"The Hero of the Shield.....commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a legend. Enhance everything!"

"Tzuvait ▪ Aura....."

I can use it on someone else. Let's see.....Shall I test it on Firo?

After waving my hand at Firo, she is coated in a film of transparent magic.

Firo:"Wa! Somehow Firo is full of power!"

Firo bounces around.

Even in her human form she jumps very high.

The status screen says that all stats have increased.

Itsuki's companion:"Aura.....Used by the legendary hero. It is an origin magic that raises all abilities."

Mutters one of Itsuki's companions in a quiet voice.

There is such a legend?

Itsuki: "Awesome! We'll learn it too!"

They start trying to read the magic I deciphered together like it's a game.

However.

Itsuki: "Huh.....I can't read it."

Naofumi: "That reminds me, you guys don't know the magic language."

These guys are frustrated, since they learnt magic from the crystal ball easily.

Itsuki: "Naofumi-san"

Itsuki turns to me and calls my name.

Naofumi: "What?"

Itsuki: "When did you get magic language comprehension on your shield?"

Naofumi: "I learnt it myself! Don't depend on your weapon for everything!"

Itsuki: "So stingy!"

Motoyasu: "That's right! Tell us!"

Seriously, these guys.....

It's like they have a problem understanding what I say.

The efforts you put in yourself will show in the power of your weapon.

Naofumi: "I was able to learn aura magic, but that does not necessarily mean you are able to as well."

Itsuki: "If you say so. If that's the case then there should be better magic for us."

He looks offended.

The reason is probably from thinking he is beneath me, even though I told him the truth. He was barely able to do anything against the pope.

He also already lost to me once.

Naofumi: "So where are we going next?"

Hapenburg: "Moving along, there are various inns located at Cal Mira Archipelago and the transportation—"

I will sum up the count's long story.

Since Cal Mira Island is active now, the demons are starting to increase.

Due to the increase in demons, the situation is troubling, so heroes and adventurers are called to subjugate them.

While we take advantage of the situation to raise our levels.

That's why, he would be grateful if we could go get rid of demons as quick as possible.

It is unnecessary for us to yield for any adventurers, but it would still be better to avoid any possible confrontations.

.....Just like manners in a net game.

There is always a small boat ferrying passengers across islands.

Worst case scenario, I should be able to cross it by swimming.

The hotel prepared by the queen was of the highest class.

It is better than all the hotels I've lived in before..... It could even equal the top-class ones in my world.

.....Was this originally a castle or something?

Anyway, it was gorgeous and the atmosphere was nice. The walls are made of marble and shining.

There is a stone statue in the middle that acts as a fountain from my world.

Did I come to Hawaii?

There was a luxurious carpet to walk on as we were guided to our rooms.

The hotel also took responsibility for the luggage and Firo's carriage.

Shadow: "Here is the schedule explaining the upcoming events degojaru."

The shadow that had a familiar speaking pattern was disguised as Melty.

Naofumi: "Melty?"

Firo: "Master~, That's not Melty?"

Shadow: "That's right degojaru."

Naofumi: "You....."

That's a confusing disguise. I seriously thought for a second that Melty came.

I can't even retort at how she was able to change her height.

Shadow: "Right degojaru. I was appointed to exclusively help the Hero of the Shield-dono degojaru."

Naofumi: "I know disguising yourself is your specialty.....But why Melty?"

Shadow: "So that Hero of the Shield-dono will feel at ease degojaru."

Naofumi: "This makes me feel sick instead, so stop it."

Shadow: "Understood degojaru."

The shadow takes off her Melty disguise and returns to her ninja garb.

It is disgusting seeing an acquaintance's face getting peeled off.

Naofumi: "Speaking of which.....What's with the way you talk?"

Shadow: "Gojaru?"

Naofumi: "Yea, that."

Shadow: "Just a habit degojaru. I can stop if necessary degojaruyo That reminds me, of when I had a bounty, and that villager in disguise helped me.

I didn't notice at all that time.

Shadow: "This is the result of princess Melty enjoying the way I speak, so I was made her exclusive bodyguard degojaruga."

Naofumi: "Ah, well it certainly makes you easier to distinguish from the other shadows."

Shadow: ".....You should not believe you can identify an individual shadow degojaruyo."

What? That is a very suspicious comment. It's like that shadow at the time was a completely different person.

Well, if I think about it, then it would be a problem if a shadow could be identified.

Naofumi: "So you are a different shadow from that one?"

Shadow: "You are mistaken degojaru."

Naofumi: "....."

Pain in the ass-!

Shadow: "I am just warning you not to identify me with just my speaking habits degojaru."

Naofumi: "Whatever."

I don't intend to learn how to tell you all apart either.

What I just learned changed nothing.

Shadow: "Let us continue our talk degojaruka. I will explain our schedule degojaru."

Naofumi: "Ah.....the staff exchange, wasn't every hero's agreement necessary?"

Shadow: "Does Hero of the Shield-dono disagree degojaru?"

Naofumi: "No, I don't.....It's just."

The other heroes will dislike it.

I don't know about Motoyasu, but Ren and Itsuki seem to have a habit of hiding themselves.

Actually, these guys have no idea of what I was doing Also during this event an information leak is unlikely.

Shadow:"I have already received the approval of the other Hero-donos degojaru."

Naofumi:"What?"

Shadow:" I said, I have already received their approval degojaruyo."

Naofumi:"I see....."

I am disappointed at how unexpectedly co-operative they are.

Am I just mistaken?

Calm down, I didn't think they would participate.

Shadow:"The queen has dispatched other shadows to reason with the Hero-donos, and get them interested in the strength of Hero of the Shield-dono degojaru."

Naofumi:"Well....."

If I think about it, their companions look down on me. If I perform outstandingly, what would they think?

Though there has to be a fine line while participating, since the cost of the Curse Series is too big.

Shadow:"All the Hero-donos are especially interested in Firo-dono."

Naofumi:"I see."

Firo is certainly extraordinarily strong.

According to Glass's analysis, Firo's strength rivals Ren's, there is also her movement speed and magic.

Firo:"Fue?"

Firo who was dozing off beside me, wakes up and looks at me sleepily.

I mean.....All of those guys are interested in Firo.....

That's a little irritating.

As expected, it must be a misunderstanding.

Naofumi: "And? What time will the staff and information exchange take place?"

Shadow: "I asked each Hero-dono degojaruka. For some reason all of the Hero-donos besides Hero of the Shield-dono wants to do the staff exchange earlier degojaru."

Naofumi: ".....Is information exchange unnecessary?"

I wanted to hear more about the Cal Mira Island's surroundings.....Though It doesn't feel good to ask those guys.

Naofumi: "I would like to exchange information first, some complications might pop-up. Is this request acceptable?"

Shadow: "It should be fine since the information exchange is done on the day of the staff exchange dogojaru."

Naofumi: "Understood. So how many days are we staying here?"

Shadow: "The whole trip is twelve days. Half of that will be the staff exchange degojaru. If Hero of the Shield-dono desires it, the staff exchange can happen immediately degojaru."

Naofumi: "Well..... it's a bit early at the moment."

Shadow: "Time is being wasted you know degojaru."

Naofumi: ".....We just received a sightseeing tour a while ago."

Shadow: "Can't be helped degojaru. Since Hero of the Shield-dono still has many things that you don't know degojaru. I will explain as best as I can degojaru."

The shadow's long story goes like this.

It seems that the staff change includes everyone, but it's only the hero that moves.

How the rotation works is, first I change with Motoyasu, second Ren, and third Itsuki. Raphtalia and them don't move.

Naofumi: "What kind of punishment game is this to be with Bitch right

off the bat?”

Shadow:” Half a day has already passed since our arrival degojaru. Please consider carefully degojaru.”

Indeed, the time spent with Bitch and her party will be shortest.

I need to think properly.

Naofumi:” Then I’m off. You guys do your best too.”

As I walk to the door I pay attention to Raphtalia and Firo.

Our party will be temporarily disbanded. Well, it’s fine since they are slaves.

Raphtalia:”Okay.....”

Raphtalia nods uneasily, and Firo doesn’t seem to understand what is happening.

Naofumi:”You guys are going to Motoyasu. Be careful. That fellow thinks with the lower half of his body. You must never permit it. Firo, if that guy causes a problem just kick him away.”

Firo:”Okay~”

Raphtalia:”Naofumi-sama.....I expected it but.....”

Raphtalia seems to be a little restless.

Speaking of which, the Hero of the Spear has been our enemy until now. Maybe that guy is trembling in excitement.

It seems reconciliation with that guy is impossible for now.

Let’s try to endure and befriend Motoyasu for now while analysing him.

Shadow:”Then I’ll guide you degojaru.”

With an uneasy feeling that I can’t get rid of.....I headed out.

Chapter 84: Cal Mira Island Jinx - Birth Arc

「This room is where the Hero of the Spear's party is staying」

After saying that, the shadow abruptly disappeared.

It's probably standing guard somewhere, but.....for what?

I have no reason to be polite to Bitch so suddenly opening the door is an option, but I'll knock anyway.

「.....」

There's no reply.

When I enter the room there's a super displeased Bitch chatting with 2 other women.

「——and then」

「Got it— ? 」

Somehow, they feel like easy women. Not really a type I like.

She closely resembles what in my world would be called a stupid woman, the loose kind that prostitutes and sits cross-legged on the ground.

To not even respond to a knock.

We have fought before, but after all this bitch really is detestable.

「Hey」

When I speak Motoyasu's women glance at me with a mocking expression.

「I'm the one who ended up partying with you until tomorrow evening in this comrade exchange, the Hero of the Shield」

For the time being I introduced myself, since this type of woman nags about every bit of rudeness.

Frankly, I want to return quickly.

「There, you guys say something as well」

I'll be careful to not be made into a laughing-stock.

「Don't wanna—.....」

「Right—.....」

「Tch ! 」

They sure have quite an attitude.

Bitch even had the nerve to click her tongue.

Hmm ? When I look closely Bitch's equipment looks good now.

Aah, Motoyasu must've bought it for her.

Meh I guess it's fine.

Do I have to spend another day and a half with this bitch?

Give me a break.

「Then it's sudden, but we're going monster exterminating right now」

「「Eh～」」

The women other than Bitch let out a stupid sounding voice. Bitch on the other hand ignores me.

I also don't want to talk with this person. Each of us ignoring the other is probably best.

「Let us relax a bit」

「Yeah yeah」

「Yeah yeah. Why not do it yourself——」

This is bothersome. Monster hunting is being put off.....

「That would be a problem」

There's a voice coming from the wall.

.....Haa.

「And, this is instructions from the country. If you disregard I wonder

what will happen to your beloved Hero of the Spear's standing..... ? 」

After my reply, the women reluctantly stand up and start getting ready.

Name.....I wasn't told but oh well. In the first place I don't want to know.

After all, it's absolutely impossible for me to ever travel together with these bitches after this.

「I'm sending a party invitation」

To invite to a party.

While I made a really annoyed face, the women were of the same opinion.

Shadow: 「First after shopping head to the place for entering」

With a clink a bag of money falls into my hand.

.....Just where is Shadow hiding?

Just in case I check the money in the bag and there is quite an amount.

With this I can live a week let alone 2 days.

「This time if you show up at the harbor the ferry will agree to transport you this time」

「Yeah yeah」

I disliked being together with this person for even one second, so I quickly left the room.

I walk around the marketplace at Cal Mira Island's harbor.

I have to go shopping, but what would be good to buy ?

equipment ?

supplies ?

Stuff like potions and healing items ?

And, when I look away for a bit Motoyasu's women are happily shopping at a store that sells accessories.

「Hey Hero of the Shield—」

They seem to be beckoning me in a fawning voice.

It's an annoying attitude. Just being with them gives me a stomachache.

「.....what ? 」

「I want you to buy this necklace—」

「Why would I」

「Motoyasu would buy it—」

「I'm not Motoyasu. Why do I have to buy it for someone like you」

「If you're not a bit nice even the shield will anger people, no ? 」

Bitch said as if she's making fun of me.

Just how belligerent is this bitch.

But, she makes a point.

Would it be bad if I didn't even appear to try getting along..... ?

Even if I'm approached I don't need something like Motoyasu's used women.

In the end I'm just a money source for shopping anyway.....right.

While thinking that, I checked out the accessories' price tag and all such thoughts vanished.

Expensive !

「What's this ! 」

No matter what this is too expensive.

I glared at the merchant: it was such a price tag that I forgot about the women in my want to yell at him not to underestimate peddling so much.

If it was just the twice the market price I can stand it as a peculiarity of a tourist highlight.

But, what is four times for.

「Hey」

「Yes. What is it ? 」

「No matter what isn't this too expensive ? 」

I snatch and point at the necklace Motoyasu's used women wanted.

Dummy sapphire necklace(mp+)

quality poor→(concealed)→normal

If it was Melromarc's currency it would be priced dirt cheap as an inferior good.

On top of that, just a glance would reveal that he's attempting to make it seem normal.

Even if he's working a fraud there are still limits.

It's 4 times a price that would get you change even for a high quality good.

Even if he's underestimating me this is too much.

Looking at his other goods, they were all fakes as well.

「This is an archipelago separated from the continent; it's only normal for prices to be a bit high」

「A bit? Even though you're going to the extent of fraud and putting these inferior goods out for sale」

「.....I'm running a business after all. When you consider this is a tourist spot, of course it becomes pricey」

This merchant, he plans to feign innocence.

The look in his eyes is disturbing.

He probably thinks he's just dealing with a normal claimer or something like that so he tries to shoo me away.

I have no choice.

「I happen to know a guy like this」

I show him the accessory merchant's introduction letter.

That accessory merchant seems to be quite famous in this neighborhood, so it might be helpful.

That merchant, he acted like he was ignoring me, but he snuck glances at the letter turning paler with each one.

「I think I'll turn this into a story. I'll make sure to remember you」

「P-please wait」

He came out of the store at an amazing speed and started groveling at my feet.

「What ? I'm busy you know?」

「Looking closely I got the price wrong! I'll sell it at the correct price, so please wait a moment!」

「No no, there's no need to fix it. I'm just going to tell him a story after all」

「Well, just wait a second! I'll offer it 30% off」

「30% off that price is still...」

「Of course, it's 30% off the normal price ! 」

「No.....don't want it」

「Please wait! I'll make it fi, no 60% off」

「That accessory merchant, where did he go again—」

「Se, 70%——」

「Wasn't it a trader's guild ? 」

「E, 80%——」

「To have even have been using fraud to sell low quality work at 4 times the market price——」

「There! I won't lower it past 90% off ! 」

Well, this is about right.

「Bought」

In business using connections, as well as threats and a danger to one's life, is the best way to make money. If the accessory merchant heard this guy is selling these kind of fakes, he'd definitely be shut down.

No matter what, this merchant was underestimating business. This amount of punishment is about right.

「It's not like I'm telling you to sell it cheap for little profit though. The ones who would be troubled would be merchants, including you」

Someone else who can also force him to sell far below the market price can deal with it after all.

If these guys pretended to be nice it would cause deflation. It's not always best to make stuff cheap.

If you try to sell something over-priced, it's no good unless there's something to attract customers.

It's normal to mark-up prices because the sight-seeing area is so far from the mainland. Furthermore, looking around it seems nobody else is trying to sell genuine accessories.

I don't know if this guy is chasing competition out, or possibly crushing them though.

That's why even though prices are so high people have to buy.

And as a result, the merchant guild's reputation drops.

「Just make it so as long as they earn money your customers will happily pay you large amounts of money」

「Meaning？」

「Just think about it, this place is in the middle of the activation period right？」

「Yeah.....」

「Just spread this kind of rumor. If you wear accessories made from this island's ore then lvling up will be easier」

「Huh？」

「You don't understand ? You'll put a jinx which has no practical effect on the accessories. And then what ? People aiming to lvl up will come buy an accessory here for good luck」

「I see ! 」

At the least, that's how I made money until now.

If I hear medicine is wanted I come sell it, if herbicide is wanted I come sell it, and if food is needed I come sell it.

The price was high, but most people smiled as they paid me.

In other words, when the price is high the customers' satisfaction is much more important than when it's low.

Hearing my idea the merchant stands up and clenches his fist tightly in comprehension.

「You got the rest right ? You just have to sell it expensively while warning whether it helps or not depends on oneself. With just this they'll be happy to pay. Then if you spread rumors about how much of an effect it had on the customer who bought it smiling, more customers will come」

The probability it will go perfectly is very low, but the first part will likely succeed.

That it's in the activation period mean experience points are increased. Even though if lvling up goes faster than usual it is because of the activation period, people will think maybe the accessories' rumors are true.

Afterwards observing the numbers and ability of the incoming adventurers will cause wishful thinking.

「I will go get to work immediately ! 」

The shopkeeper gave me the necklace, closed the store, and started to work.

「Fuu」

I did a good job.

The necklace was obtained for practically nothing.

「Here, you wanted it right」

When I tried to give Motoyasu's women the necklace they backed away.

「To get a discount you suck」

「Unbelievable」

「What were you thinking」

Kuh !

As blood rushed to my head, My mouth opened involuntarily.

「.....Don't you hate how you were fooled like a complete idiot ! 」

Annoying !

Such annoying people.

What the heck were they thinking to buy something that expensive without haggling.

At the least I did nothing wrong.

It's a good plan: the shopkeeper can profit and his customers will be happy.

「「「As expected the shield is the worst」」」

What's the worst.

If you don't think before you do you'll spend money like water !

Motoyasu's women kept grumbling about my haggling as we left the town behind us.

「You're the worst ! Fine. You'll get what you asked for! I'll show you hell ! Wrath Shield——」

(Shadow)「Calm down ! Hero of the Shield ! The Hero of the Spear's companions will die if you do that ! 」

「Let! Me! Go ! I can't kill them like this can I ! 」

「I came out to stop that from happening ! 」

The fact Shadow appeared and calmed my rage is of no importance.

Ever since this personnel exchange started I wanted to return.

That Motoyasu, just what's fun about being friendly with these kind of guys.

I can't understand that guy's crotch at all.

Shit ! Won't it end soon.

I don't care about lvling anymore, so let's find a way to quickly make now become tomorrow's evening.

Chapter 85: The Companions of the Spear Hero

After getting off the ship, and passing through a hot spring, we arrived at the demon's habitat. Now then, let's hurry up and level with Motoyasu's women so we can go home.....

Naofumi: "I want you guys to understand that your non-cooperative attitude isn't going to work, you are forced to help because I am a hero."

Bitch: "I don't need you tell me."

Woman 1: "Are you an idiot?"

Naofumi: ".....You guys are the fools."

Good grief, Why do I have to put with these goddamn women to go demon hunting?.....

We are currently in the middle of a Level grinding event.

I saw several adventurers fighting demons here and there.

This event feels very similar to ones in net games on Earth.

Well, the problem is with my companions.

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

This area is inhabited by Violet Blobs, Magenta Frogs, Yellow Beetles, and Cactus worms.

They don't seem very strong.

As I was analysing the area, a Magenta Frog jumps out of a bush to attack us.

Naofumi: "Yotto."

I hit the Magenta Frog's stomach in mid-air with my shield.

With a splat, the Magenta frog stuck to my shield.

Naofumi: "Hey"

I give instructions to Motoyasu's women.

Bitch: "What do you want?"

Naofumi: "Use your sword or magic to fight."

Bitch: "I know!"

Good grief, if you know then why are you making me explain.

Bitch: "Fire Slash!"

Bitch's sword erupts in flame as she recites her magic.

The fire shoots out from the tip of the sword and tears the Magenta Frog apart.

95 Exp acquired.

Hmm.....As expected, the strength to experience ratio is very good.

Naofumi: "Now then, for the time being, let's hunt properly."

Bitch: ".....fine."

Naofumi: "Good grief."

There is a limit to being uncooperative. Irresponsible participating is fine to some extent, but.....

No matter how much I think about it, there is no way they can become strong like this.

Naofumi: "Truthfully, I cannot attack on my own-"

Bitch: "Right. So lame."

Naofumi: ".....Mu!"

Who the hell is lame!?

Naofumi: "That reminds me, isn't your hero just a fool who thinks with his lower half and chases any women?"

Bitch: "What are you saying! Are you going to insult Motoyasu-sama!?"

Naofumi: "Am I wrong? If I am wrong then tell me how you usually fight."

Bitch: "Fine, I'll teach you."

Bitch, Woman 1, and Woman 2. These are Motoyasu's companions.

Woman 1 uses a sword and seems strong. I can see that her reflexes are good. She is the one who Raphtalia stabbed. Her hair is brown and medium length.

Woman 2's facial expressions constantly change, and she has a rod. Is she in charge of magic?

There hasn't been any magic support so far.....How do they usually fight?

When it was Bitch's turn she just disregards her explanation and says.

Bitch: "Our job is to support Motoyasu-sama in an emergency."

Naofumi: "What!?"

I yelled unintentionally.

What the hell is this bitch saying?

Woman2: "Other than that, Mal.....Whore-sama instructs us to cover Motoyasu-sama with magic."

Naofumi: ".....You don't fight?"

Woman2: "I'll fight if there is a melee. But, Motoyasu-sama protects us so that won't happen."

Protecting them.....

I have a headache.

In other words, while Motoyasu fights, these women just sit back and cheer him on?

Occasionally supporting with magic.....All the fighting is done by Motoyasu?

Woman1: "That's pretty much it. Sometimes I cut up weak demons with my sword, while she sometimes uses magic."

Naofumi: "What about Whore?"

Woman1:" Whore-sama burns them."

Other than the small fries left for the women, Motoyasu mows down all the stronger enemies.

That's like a Princess play in Net Games.....

Oh wait, Bitch used to be a princess.

Bitch:"Motoyasu-sama would always say to us:"Levelling up through such dirty methods does not suit cuties like you."

Woman1:"Therefore, our fight is to support and restore his spirit."

Woman2:"Right! So I put my efforts in cleaning equipment and learning support magic."

Bitch:"It is our duty to heal Motoyasu-sama's spirits afterwards. Every minute and every second of our attention is focused on Motoyasu-sama."

.....Feels disgusting.

I just imagine them behind me.

These women are strong enough to kick around the demons around here..... If they were to participate, would Motoyasu even need to fight?

Woman1:" I hope that Motoyasu-sama would rely on us a little."

Woman2:"Right. However, even without our power as support,he is cool."

Bitch:"Yeah, completely different from the Shield who cannot do anything at all, and has to rely on his companions."

Everytime Bitch opens her mouth she compares me to Motoyasu.

Naofumi:"Is that right!? But, right now you are hunting demons with me. I don't know about Motoyasu, but you have to attack for me."

Bitch:".....You suck."

Naofumi:"You're the one who sucks!"

Good greif, does Motoyasu actually enjoy accompanying these three parasites?

Bitch: "Motoyasu-sama would help us attack these demons."

Woman1: "He really is wonderful!"

All 3: "" "I know right~""

Bitch: "How can the shield compare? Forcing us to stay and defeat demons for him."

All 3: "" "I know right~""

Annoying!

I want to return already!

What is wrong with these girls.

Anyway, they are just putting on appearances for Motoyasu.

Something like.....

Wonderful! Hold me! Like that?

I can never understand the charm of such sluts.

To me it's like, they become the background.

Suddenly a strong demon appears and I take the lead to engage it!

A figure fighting with wind and flying freely comes to mind.

I mean, why am I being severely criticized here?

It's probably just Bitch and her followers, that influenced Motoyasu in the first place.

Feels disgusting.

At least, Bitch, Woman 1, and Woman 2 are fighting with the demon as per my instructions.

I cannot fight.

However.....Bitch keeps chanting magic and discontinuing it.

Somehow.....It's like she is waiting for something.

I'm trying to think of a what, but.....

And so, with these feelings 30 minutes has passed. I wonder where shadow went.

As I engage a demon with my shield, and wait for support magic to come.

“I am the next queen who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Target him and-”

“”I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature-“”

As they chant an unusually strong spell is about to be activated, Shadow instantly appears behind Bitch and puts a knife to her throat.

Bitch:”Hie!?”

Shadow:”Whore-dono and companions, your magic is giving off too much blood-thirst dogojaruyo.”

Bitch:”W-We did not do anything. Just cooperating with the shield.”

Shadow:”That’s not what it looks like degojaru.”

Naofumi:”What’s wrong?”

Bitch stops her magic as Shadow watches her closely.

Shadow:”A while ago I heard her muttering to herself degojaru.”

Naofumi:”And? Did you understand it?”

Shadow:”I did degojaru.”

Naofumi:”What was it?”

Shadow:”Seems to be about investigating the limits of the slave crest degojaru.”

Naofumi:”Ah.....I see.”

There were several conditions on the slave crest that prevent certain actions.

I understand because I tried it with Raphtalia and Firo.

Since Raphtalia is strong, it occasionally went off when she was overly

familiar with me.

Forgetting about the mark is easy since I don't use it.

Shadow: "The queen does not use contract slaves deogjarukara. She seems to be searching for a loop-hole degojarou."

The queen's conditions. Possibly.....

I recall the conditions the queen set up.

"The condition is attacking Iwatani-sama. Whether by direct attack with magic or indirect attack with poison, nothing is allowed!"

An attack aimed at me.....If there was one.....

Naofumi: "Were they targeting the demon with magic while I was in the way, so that the attack would hit me?"

Shadow: "That is correct degojaru."

Bitch: "Y-you're wrong!"

Shadow: "Then why did you stop and move to cancel your spells earlier degojaru?"

Bitch: "Th-That is because.....It was not to involve the shield in anything!"

What a desperate excuse.

Woman1&2: "That's right! We just cast magic according to the Shield's instructions!"

Shadow: "That spell I stopped earlier was at full power degojaruna."

Bitch: "There was no other way to defeat the demon!"

I wonder.....

In fact, not even 5 Cactus Worms can wound me a little.

Frankly, they are all small fries.

They would instantly become Firo's food.

Shadow: "It doesn't hurt for Hero of the Shield-dono degojaru?"

Naofumi: "Not at all."

Shadow: "Quite sturdy deogjaruna....."

Shadow just said something in a goofy voice.

Shadow: "Anyway, it doesn't seem like you are reflecting degojaruna."

Bitch: "I didn't know!"

Bitch has been completely seen through.

Shadow leaks a sigh.

Shadow: "Can't be helped degojaruna."

She extends her index finger and activates a status magic.

Bitch's slave crest appears.

Bitch: "Eh!? Why!?"

Shadow: "The queen has entrusted former princess Bitch's slave control to me degojaru."

Well, that's just how it is.

Bitch: "Kyaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The pattern glows and Bitch rolls on the floor in pain.

Seriously.....To do something so stupid.

Woman 1 and 2 are pale as they watch.

Shadow: "I hope you understand degojaruka, treat Hero-dono with respect, or else I'll punish you until you understand degojaruyo. After, I'll notify the queen degojaru."

Bitch: "Th-That's--"

Shadow: "If you understand then obediently listen to Hero of the Shield-dono degojaruyo."

The women held their breath.

A minute of punishment is not enough. I am also reaching my limits.

Naofumi: "Shadow."

Shadow:” What degojaru?”

Naofumi:”I am reaching the limits of my patience.”

Shdaow:”.....”

Shadow seems to think about my promise with the queen anxiously.

Naofumi:”Shadow, please remove all prohibitions on Bitch temporarily.”

Shadow:”I have to report what you do to the former princess you know degojaru?”

Naofumi:”Yeah, I know. Hey, Bitch. You really want to kill me? I’ll keep you company. Let’s not play with unnecessary strategies.”

Bitch:”Ku.....”

As the restraints from the slave crest are lifted, Bitch stares at me with intense hatred.

Naofumi:”Hey, Bring it.”

If you attack in close proximity I’ll burn you with Wrath Shield.

Naofumi:”Ah, just Bitch. Hey guys,just watch.”

Woman 1:”Ah, sure.....”

Woman 2:”O-Okay.”

Woman 1 and 2 nod and withdraw.

Bitch:”I’ll absolutely kill you with this!”

While glaring at me, Bitch doesn’t even conceal her killing intent and activates her magic.

“I am the next queen who commands the origin of power. I have read and deciphered a law of nature. Burn him to a crisp with the fires of hell!”

That magic.....Well, it’s an appropriate selection. It’s probably Bitch’s strongest magic.

Now then, I wonder what magic will shoot out.

“Doraifa ▪ Hellfire!”

Bitch summons a gigantic fireball in front of her.

Bitch: "Diiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!"

I prepare my shield to catch the fireball speeding towards me.

Naofumi: "Are you a retard? Your strongest magic is only this—What!?"

Bitch: "Uuaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The ball of flame hits my shield and just like a baseball against a bat, it's shot back at Bitch.

Until now, fighting in various ways and gaining experience, I have discovered that receiving magic at a specific angle deflects it.

So I thought it might be possible to reflect it back at the opponent.

That retard, shooting magic in a straight line, caused me to remember about it.

Bitch: "St-Stay away—gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Bitch is swallowed by the flames and throws herself on the ground to roll.

Naofumi: "Hahaha, you burn well!"

This is refreshing. Watching Bitch struggle.

Oh man. I wasn't content when the queen selfishly imposed penalties.

Finally I punished her with my own hands.

Woman2: "Mal....Bitch-sama!"

Woman2 casts water magic to put out Bitch.

Woman2: "Raising your hand against a girl, you are the worst!"

Naofumi: "You reap what you sow right? She wasn't even thinking about her magic getting rebounded."

Woman 2 applies healing magic on Bitch to heal her wounds.

Well, there's no way that can be cured easily.

Shadow: "Now then, I will impose the penalty degojaru."

Bitch:"GyaaaGuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!"

Bitch rolls over from the double whammy slave crest and the burns.

Woman2:"Wait a minute, this is too cruel!"

Shadow:"Punishment is punishment degojaru. Furthermore, I will notify Hero of the Spear-dono to increase the penalties degojaru, Prepare yourself degojaruyo."

Woman2:"Unbelievable!"

Naofumi:"Well then, shall we continue hunting?"

Woman2:"Who would follow you!?"

Woman2 shoulders Bitch and leaves without permission.

Naofumi:"Sure. Go away!"

This was completely her fault. Shadow seems to understand and speaks in a delicate voice.

Shadow:"The queen expected something like this degojaruga.....At least this much."

Naofumi:"By the way, since they are useless now, shall we kill some time together?"

Shadow:".....Haah. I understand degojaru. I am a poor substitution, but I will co-operate with Hero of the Shield-dono degojaruyo."

Naofumi:"Oh? You're going to help?"

Shadow:"If such a situation was to happen, I was ordered to assist degojaru."

Naofumi:"You are quite prepared."

Could have prevented this from even happening.....

In the first place, was exchanging parties even necessary?

Woman1:" Hey....."

My shoulder was tapped as I was talking to shadow.

Naofumi: "Hm?"

When I turn around I see Woman 1 with her arms crossed unpleasantly.

Naofumi: "What's wrong? You didn't return?"

Woman1: "Return? Don't joke around. That would trouble Motoyasu-sama."

Naofumi: "Ehh....."

Somehow she seems to be strong-minded, I don't think she would return even if she hated it.

Compared to Bitch and Woman 2, it looks like she has a sense of responsibility,.

Woman1: "Haah.....It was a lot to stand, trying to match up to those children."

Woman1 declares unpleasantly while scratching her head.

What's that?

Woman1: "Don't misunderstand alright? I still hate the Hero of the Shield."

Naofumi: "I was just wondering if you were like those foolish women, you seem to be a bit different."

Woman1: ".....That's rude. I am honest to myself. I don't want to fight, and if possible I would like to live luxuriously. The mission of Heroes or the World's fate doesn't matter to me."

Naofumi: "I agree with that."

If I could I would instantly throw out such a mission. In fact, I would rather not participate in the wave at all.

Woman1: "Do you understand? If I return here, it would be impossible to live luxuriously."

Naofumi: "You are very calculative."

Woman1: "You're annoying. I love taking it easy in the shadow of

someone strong. But that's it."

Naofumi:"And what's the reason for not returning?"

Woman1:" You are strong as well. Though I hate it, I will follow you."

Knitting her eyebrows in seriousness Woman 1 answers unpleasantly.

Woman1:" I do not discriminate against the strong."

Naofumi:'What strange logic."

Woman1:"Don't say that. So what now. I didn't cause any problems. So my stock with Motoyasu-sama should go up. I would rather not be in the same position as that parasitic princess."

I see.

They exist in my world as well. This fellow.

The women getting involved in delinquent groups in school, following those who are strong. Probably.

Following the leader around, receiving the overflow.

Generally the types to think in the long-term and take it easy.

Since I am Japanese, I can understand to some extent.

Woman1:"I think that former princess would abandon Motoyasu-sama at a suitable time. I don't think Motoyasu-sama likes troublesome women, and there will be a limit to how much he can cherish women."

There is a possibility that Motoyasu would trust those that didn't cause problems over the ones that do.

As for Motoyasu's part, Bitch seems to be at the top of the pecking order.

Is she aiming for an usurpation?

Woman1:" My father is a noble who earned his rank by distinguishing himself in the military, and my mother is the daughter of a merchant who made a fortune in business. When you haggled to buy that accessory I was amazed. Though it is the worse to haggle using blackmail when

buying something for a girl.”

Naofumi:”Yeah yeah.”

Let’s just disregard it, because I’m getting angry just remembering.

Woman1:”I also understand the point of this. I will analyse how the Hero of the Shield fights and report to Motoyasu-sama everything.”

Naofumi:”.....You really are aiming for being the best.”

Woman1:”Let’s leave it at that. Let’s resume hunting quickly.”

I have no choice but to change my evaluation of Woman 1.

She is calculating, but unlike Bitch she doesn’t seem to gain pleasure from looking down on others.

I’m thinking about Bitch again.

I feel she can be trusted in business. I don’t want to trust as a friend though.

Naofumi:”Well the headcount is the same as before. Shadow, do you accept?”

Shadow:”I understand degojaruyo.....”

I send a party invitation to Shadow and remove Woman 2 and Bitch. Thus we resume our demon extermination.

Woman 1 was a magic warrior so she could fight up close or far away.

Shadow is a very swift attacker. As expected of this country’s assassination corps, quite strong.

By the way, they are not slaves so I cannot see their status or levels, so I can’t tell what level they are.

Woman1:” You really are sturdy. I am surprised at how different you fight compared to Motoyasu-sama.”

Woman 1 says while defeating a demon.

From the conversation a while ago, I know that they only cheer on Motoyasu from the rear.

Woman1:" However..... That Raccoon woman is reliable."

Raccoon woman.....Raphtalia?

If she hears that then she would probably make a delicate expression.

By the way, Woman 1 is good at using me as a shield.

She observes the demons well, and uses adjusts in battle, she is accustomed to fighting.

The way she is pushing everything on me while fighting is pretty efficient, compared to Raphtalia and Firo who try to do everything themselves.

It's not a good feeling when pressed against a demon though.

However, she is not as good at ranged, she is distracted while chanting magic. Shadow had to defend her several times.

Demons are defeated, dismantled, and absorbed into the shield.

Woman1:"Hooh..... You can absorb the dismantled demons into your weapon?"

Naofumi:"Motoyasu doesn't know about it?"

Woman1:"He doesn't do it usually. Only on big game, like a Chimera or a strong demon."

Motoyasu should have absorbed some demon parts into his spear.....Does he not bother with meat and bone?

But, that doesn't really make sense.

I have unsealed most of the basic shields. Therefore, my ability has risen considerably.

The Meat system is inferior to the Bone system if released.

That must be why I cannot beat Motoyasu unless I use the Wrath Shield.

Of course, it could also be due to the fact that I started leveling late, but I can feel the difference between Motoyasu and my basic specs.

The same could be said for Ren and Itsuki.

It is funny that I thought the shield was weak a while ago.

At least in present conditions, the shield isn't inferior to any of the other weapons.

Or is it because in-game terms, we are still in the early stages?

.....I don't know.

Naofumi: "Oh right, there was something I wanted to ask."

Woman1: "What is it?"

Naofumi: "Were you Motoyasu's first party member?"

For some reason that memory is very vague.

But if I remember correctly, then it wasn't her.

Woman1: "No I'm not."

Naofumi: "Ah, is that so?"

Woman1: "I joined Motoyasu-sama one week after I started adventuring. When I entered the only other man in the party left."

Naofumi: "I see."

Woman1: "The former princess and her lackey tormented him until he left. Anyone who joined after me was antagonized."

I see, if you don't pretend to be stupid then Bitch would torment you until you disappear.

What an unpleasant party managed by women.

Are real harems like that?

Chapter 86: Murmurs

We returned to the main island after hunting all day, and Shadow guided us back to the hotel.

I took a bath in the hotsprings provided by the hotel.

Naofumi: "Fuu....."

Today's results. 4 Levels. 10 new Shields, all of them increasing stats.

Honestly, the only word I have for the efficiency is delicious. As expected, the activation period is astonishing.

At this rate, when we leave the island, we will have gotten considerably stronger.

That reminds me, Woman 1 said something about Motoyasu's women only party.

Ones who joined along the way, and did not fit in were chased out.

Woman 1 noticed this from the start and played dumb.

Originally, Bitch was one of Motoyasu's first four companions. Where did the remaining three go?

Where did that man go anyway. Maybe he joined Ren or Itsuki.

Shadow: "How is the water's temperature degojaru?"

Naofumi: "....."

Shadow's voice could be heard in the men's bath.

Where is it coming from? Where are you?

Shadow: "Even if you look, you won't find me you know degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "Are you a man?"

Shadow: "Secret degojaru."

Naofumi: "....."

Shadow: "The queen has assigned me to ask about the situation of your curse and its recovery degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "Well, there is a light prickling , but other than that I feel nothing."

When I look at my status, I can see that the stats are returning one by one.....I don't really mind either way.

Taking a leisurely bath isn't too bad either.

Hotspring therapy is also something I was looking forward to.

I look at the dimly lit area.

The hotsprings that I entered reminds me of ones made in ancient Rome.

Is it bad that I was expecting a Japanese-style hotspring?

Naofumi: "Hey, Shadow."

Shadow: "What degojaru?"

Naofumi: "The way you talk, and the way you dress is very similar to something called a ninja in my world."

Shadow: "That might be the case degojaruna."

What?

Shadow: "This is a secret matter, but it is fine for the Hero of the Shield-dono to hear degojaruna. Us shadows, are a culture taken from the east degojaru. Therefore, we are an existence that can be called both assassins and ninjas degojarushi. We are also knowledgable about the East degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "Hmmm....."

The East huh.....That reminds me, the Old Man from the weapon shop said he apprenticed there.

Are they Japanese-styled?

Or something Japanese like in this strange world. Something that reminds me of a game.

Naofumi: "Do you guys know how the East design their hot springs?"

Just recalling it makes me nostalgic.

I want to enjoy a Japanese-styled hotspring, since up until now, it has only been western-style baths.

Shadow: "The design you are speaking of is available on the main island degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "I see, I'll be looking forward to it."

It is also my job to relax in a hotspring.

After staying in the hotspring for a long time, I returned to my room and the day was over.

The next day.

I feel refreshed since I rested plenty last night.

Since Firo and Raphtalia are always there and making noise. Last night was very quiet.

Now that I think about it, how are they doing.....?

Staying together with Motoyasu who can only think with his lower half.

.....I hope there will be no big problems.

If there is a problem, do I have Shadow deal with it?

Woman1: "What are we doing today?"

Just as I finished breakfast at the hotel, Woman 1 talks to me.

Naofumi: "We'll hunt until noon, and then head back to the main island."

Woman1: "Ah, understood."

To raise our levels, Shadow and Woman 1 helped me defeat demons until noon.

For lunch I made sandwiches for Shadow and Woman1 with ingredients taken from the hotel.

Shadow: "Since I am working, I cannot eat degojaru."

Naofumi: "I see."

Woman1: "Then, I'll take it....."

Woman 1 takes the sandwich and eats it.

Woman1: "Nn.....Quite skilled. Why don't you open a shop?"

Naofumi: "Everybody who ate my cooking said the same."

I'd rather not elaborate on how something so simple can taste delicious.....I don't even know myself, but the food is delicious so it's fine.

Might be the cooking skill from the Shield.

Woman1: "Motoyasu-sama would occasionally cook for us too.....
Nevermind its nothing."

Ah, Motoyasu can cook, does it not taste good?

Is it the handsome appeal?

It seems that men who can cook in Motoyasu's world are popular.

Somehow, that fellow makes me think of French pasta.

Popular with women and cool.

Oh right, since we are in the Southern-like Cal Mira Island, will he have surfing as a hobby?

No way, before that fellow came here, Net Gaming was his hobby.

Now that I think about it, why does that fellow play Net Games as a hobby?

Well there is no way I can find out at the moment.

Ever since he got here he has been trying to make a harem.

Seems difficult.

Especially since there was a man in his party.

Oops, did I say that out loud?

Naofumi: "That reminds me, yesterday you said there was a man in Motoyasu's party."

Woman1: "Yes. In fact, after I joined two other men also did."

Naofumi: "Motoyasu had that many replacements? All I know is that including Bitch, there should also be a man and four other women."

Woman1: "Eh~, when I entered there was 5 women and two men."

Naofumi: "Hey.....That's a lot."

Woman1: "After I entered, several of the members got replaced repeatedly. Though there hasn't been a new member for a while now."

In short, Bitch was driving away the women with insidious harassment, while the men were disgusted with Motoyasu's flirting and left.

That seemed to be a common occurrence.

.....Whatever.

Naofumi: "Seems troublesome with that fellow."

Woman1: "Not really. I just play along with princess Bitch, and watch Motoyasu-sama fight. Besides, I can be extravagant, and get free experience. To me, that place is like heaven."

Naofumi: ".....That's fine then. As long as you are okay with it."

Woman1: "Well, feels like it will become dangerous soon. So I came here to investigate the secrets of the Shield to help Motoyasu-sama get stronger. Recently, there hasn't been much growth so I wondered if there was something to learn here. Plus, it's also for beating that disgusting princess Bitch. Once that is done and I become Motoyasu-sama's favourite, I will take it easy."

Those are some amazing lines.

If Raphtalia thought about such things, I don't think I could recover.

Though it's not my problem, I feel a little pity for Motoyasu.

Naofumi: "Are you fine with saying that to me?"

This girl, complaining to me because her companions aren't here.

She is troublesome in a different manner compared to the hysterical

Bitch.

I mean, I am the Hero of the Shield, why do I have to listen to complaints from Motoyasu's party.

.....Though I can't really complain since I have learnt various things from our talk.

Woman1:"Can't be helped. When you purchased that poor quality necklace, my opinion of you changed."

Naofumi:"You'll have to excuse me then. You knew the quality and still had me buy it.

Woman1:"I guess. Haah.....Motoyasu-sama's power comes from the kingdom, he doesn't attach any strings to the gold he gives out. Ah, I want to live luxuriously."

Naofumi:"Hey.....your family's social standing is pretty good, why are you sticking to Motoyasu? Wouldn't it be safer to live luxuriously away from this?"

There should have been a few life or death situations.However, she is still sticking with him.

Well, nothing will change even if I do find out.

Woman1:"My father is annoying since he is a Hero devotee. Frankly, living with my parents is uncomfortable. My mother does business, and if I stop being the companion of a hero, I would probably be married to some noble, or knight, and help my mother out in business. I can't take it easy there."

Naofumi:"Why are you telling me this?"

Woman1:"Do you think Motoyasu-sama would believe anything you say?"

Naofumi:"No way."

Woman1:"See? Though I did almost die. If I stick with him and raise my Level, then the rest should be easier."

True, I remember the time before the Four Heroes, namely us were just summoned.

The wave suddenly happened, families were lost, and orphans were sold into slavery.

If you are with a Hero then Class Up is free, and there are few humans above level 40. Isn't it a great deal?

Though I smell trouble in the future.

Woman1: "Well, Motoyasu-sama is not just a Hero, his face is also to my preference."

Naofumi: "Yeah yeah. That reminds me, Shadow."

Shadow: "What degojaru?"

Naofumi: "Are my companions being guarded?"

Shadow: "Of course degojaru. Nothing bad will happen to them degojaru."

Naofumi: "I'm just afraid of Motoyasu becoming a wolf."

Woman1: "Ah.....That's possible....."

Woman 1 recalls Motoyasu's nature and nods indifferently.

Your adverse nodding makes me more anxious.....

Woman1: "However, That girl's behaviour seems stiff, and I don't understand the bird."

Naofumi: "Raphtalia? That fellow doesn't match her looks. Her appearance is like that, but did you know she is a child?"

Woman1: ".....I understand that girl's troubles."

Naofumi: "Hm? Troubles?"

Woman1: "You don't need to mind it. Either way is fine."

Naofumi: "I see. Firo.....Will probably be tempted by food."

You can be friends through food, but for love.....I wonder.

What can I say, breeding should be standard behaviour for a wild animal.

I don't know much about her biologically, but I don't think there is such thing as a mating season.

Woman1: "That reminds me, Motoyasu-sama seemed to be devoted to the human form of that bird. Princess Bitch was jealous."

Naofumi: "That guy just has an angel fetish."

This fellow just won't stop talking about women. I'm getting tired of it.

Firo's appearance.....In short, a blond European blue-eyed angel, is probably his favourite.

Motoyasu came from Japan, there isn't anyone like that. As for the rest of the planet.....

That reminds me, there doesn't seem to be any angelic beings in this world.

Though the Demi-humans can grow wings, their hands and feet have claws.

Woman1: "Spending two days with Firo-chan and Raphtalia-chan! And like that he skipped out."

Naofumi: "And you are fine with Motoyasu doing that?"

Woman1: "The reaction from the other two was amazing. But, great men have great fondness for sensual pleasures, so I will overlook something like that."

Naofumi: "You're unexpectedly cold."

Woman1: "Whatever!"

In a sense, sticking with her is like touching poison.

I don't know what attitude she takes when talking to Motoyasu, she is easy to talk to.

Perhaps, that's what it means to be a good talker.

Naofumi: "I will not accept Bitch."

Woman1: "That's already water under the bridge. If you cannot forgive, then just push her away! Or something like that."

Naofumi: "Those words suck terribly."

Woman1: "Are you my father? Well, up until recently everything was just handed to her. Her plan did not go well because of you, so her unjustified resentment made her want to kill you, at least that's my analysis. How is it?"

Naofumi: "That's about right."

So you did have a good look.

In other words, it couldn't be helped since Bitch wanted to murder me.

No, I still don't know, and it is bugging me.

Woman1: "When I heard you tried to rape her, I thought it was suspicious, but I didn't have any obligation to stand up for you, and there was also another girl who got framed when she suspected something, so I pretended it had nothing to do with me."

Naofumi: "I don't buy it."

Woman1: "Well, I'll just end up getting myself strangled somewhere and die. I have no relations with that girl though."

Naofumi: "....."

Woman1's words were cold, I was frozen for a second.

Are all women like this?

With such feelings, we finished the demon hunt and returned to the main island.

Compared to what I imagined would happen, it was unexpectedly decent.

Chapter 87: The Spear Hero & My Companions

Firo: "Ah, Master~!"

When I returned to the main island hotel, Firo came out to greet me in her demon form.

I thought I told her to stay in her human form at the hotel.

Woman1: "See you. Keep your distance though."

Naofumi: "I know."

Woman 1 says good-bye to join up with Bitch.

Naofumi: "So what happened?"

Firo: "Uhhh you see, Raphtalia onee-chan got angry."

Naofumi: "Angry you say....."

Motoyasu, you've finally caused a problem.

The person in question was sitting there stargazing while pressing his cheeks together.

I wonder why. It feels like he's deep in thought.

Woman1: "Motoyasu-sama?"

Woman 1 is dumbfounded, as she sees Motoyasu like that.

.....I don't understand the situation. What's going on?

Naofumi: "Firo, what happened?"

Firo: "Hm~? Firo doesn't know."

Thought so.

I am an idiot for asking Firo

Can't be helped, I'll go look for Raphtalia, Motoyasu can be left to Woman 1.

And there she is. Her back is turned, but it is clearly Raphtalia..... even from a distance, it's obvious to me that Raphtalia is fuming.

The hair on her tail is bristling, and her body is emitting enough magic power to make the air around her vibrate.

Naofumi: "I-I'm back."

Raphtalia turned around when she heard my greeting, and the anger seemed to have dissipated.

Raphtalia: "I was waiting!"

Raphtalia rushes towards me with a tearful expression.

Naofumi: "Wh-What happened?"

I pray that it is not rape.

I don't think that is the case based on Motoyasu's reaction, but I have no idea what is going on.

Raphtalia: "That's--"

I'm told about Raphtalia's experience.

Raphtalia tries to explain to me what happened from her point of view.

Firo: "What's happening?"

After I left, Firo asked Raphtalia anxiously.

Raphtalia: "It's alright. All we are going to do is hunt demons with the other hero-sama until tomorrow night."

Firo: "Boo~. What about master?"

Raphtalia: "We'll join him a bit later."

And so, the situation was explained to Firo. Raphtalia was doing pushups while waiting for Motoyasu to arrive.

I will explain. Because it has already become a routine, I forgot about it, whenever Raphtalia has free time, she trains her body.

During our travels on the carriage, when not tanning demon skins, chin-ups and pushups are performed.

Recently, her arm strength has increased to the point where single fingered pushups are possible.

The physical training influences her status. Little by little, her status increases.

Motoyasu: "Sorry for the wait—"

Motoyasu walks in the room with a bouquet in one hand.

Firo: "Munya~....."

Firo is taking an afternoon nap.

Raphtalia: "677.....678....."

Raphtalia wasn't paying attention and continued doing pushups.

(sfx) Rustle* Motoyasu dropped his bouquet.

Well, entering the room of a girl who is waiting for you, only to see her doing pushups, Motoyasu was left speechless.

Motoyasu: "Ummm....."

Raphtalia: "680.....Ah."

Raphtalia stopped doing pushups and turned to face Motoyasu.

Raphtalia: "Welcome. Hey, Firo, get up. He's here."

Firo: "Muu.....Firo is sleepy."

Motoyasu: "Ah, right....."

While picking up the bouquet, Motoyasu enters the room.

Raphtalia: "My best regards until tomorrow."

Firo: "Best regards~!"

Motoyasu: "Gotcha, we have already met, but let's introduce ourselves again. I am Kitamura Motoyasu! Hero of the Spear. Please take care of me."

Raphtalia: "Raphtalia."

Firo: "Firo"

Motoyasu fashionably hands the bouquet to Raphtalia.

Motoyasu: "These flowers suit you cuties well."

Raphtalia: "Haa....."

Raphtalia receives the flowers and, it seems she was thinking of where to sell it.

Was it bad that I raised a girl with efficiency as a principle?

Furthermore, Raphtalia heard that flowers could be made into medicine.

I think it was an aromatic drug.

Firo: "This isn't very tasty."

Firo puts some flowers in her mouth.

Well, Firo prefers dumplings over flowers.

Raphtalia: "Now then, shall we go Level up at once?"

Motoyasu: "Let's go shopping at the market first."

Raphtalia: "I guess....."

Thus, Raphtalia followed Motoyasu to the market.

Raphtalia: "This shop.....It's closed."

Motoyasu: "That's strange. I could've sworn it was selling accessories a little while ago."

It seems Motoyasu wanted to browse the store that was closed.

After a little looking around, it was revealed that they were just a little late.

Motoyasu: "Oh well, let's look at various others."

Raphtalia: "Ah, okay."

Like that, following Motoyasu, various shops were visited.

Several hours were spent at the market.

Moreover, he would stay and talk to any pretty girl.

Random Girl:"Eh! You are the Hero of the Spear-sama?!"

Motoyasu:"That's right. Is there something you want to ask of me?"

It seems they wanted to ask the hero to show off a few spear tricks.

As a result, each girl gave him a note with the hotel they were staying at.

Skirtchasing.

While watching his gentleman act, Raphtalia's evaluation of Motoyasu fell.

And so, after shopping..... the day was almost over.

After shopping and leaving the market, Motoyasu walked in the direction of the pier.

Raphtalia:"Um.....To go back we have to return from the market."

Motoyasu:"It's fine It's fine, let's take a look."

Raphtalia:"Eh? But, today's leveling....."

Motoyasu:"Oh right, Firo-chan. Can you return to your angel form?"

Firo:"No!"

Since leaving the hotel, Firo has been in her demon form.

Afterwards, they went to the tourist spots of Cal Mira Archipelago main island, when the sun began to set, they moved to another island.

Crossing the middle of the sea during a setting sun, on a small boat.

Motoyasu:"I found something good in the shop a little while ago."

A souvenir made with a shell was handed to Raphtalia.

Raphtalia:"Umm....."

Motoyasu:"Don't worry about it, it's just a small present."

By the way, Firo was swimming next to the ship in her demon form.

It's a situation I can easily imagine.

I was listening to the story with a delicate expression.

Ignoring Bitch being violent at first, we listened to the story quietly. Firo didn't have to be there though.

Motoyasu: "Look, the setting sun is beautiful."

Raphtalia: "Yes, it is beautiful."

The scenery of a setting sun on the ocean is beautiful for Raphtalia. There was a mood, from the aquatic sea demons jumping out of the sea with the evening sun in the background.

While Raphtalia was staring blankly into the evening sun, Motoyasu grasps her hand.

Rejecting it, Raphtalia pulls her hand back.

Motoyasu just shrugs his shoulders with a feeling of "Don't worry about it".

At that time some veins appeared on Raphtalia's forehead.

Afterwards, she just smiled at Motoyasu, while not letting him grasp her hand.

After arriving at the island.

The sun already set. Raphtalia was preparing for a night battle against demons while Motoyasu dashed into the hotel.

Raphtalia: "Um....."

Motoyasu: "Hm? What's up?"

Raphtalia: "Are we not going to Level up?"

Motoyasu: "The day is already over you know. It would be dangerous to fight in such a situation."

Raphtalia: "W-Well.....But-"

Motoyasu: "Now, let's have a meal and take a good rest at the hotel. I'll make dinner, so look forward to it."

Raphtalia consented and bought various ingredients at the market place.

Raphtalia also bought various light medicines, such as a heal ointment.

Firo: "Food?"

Motoyasu: "That's right Firo-chan. So take your angel form."

Firo: "No!"

Firo was in her demon form while cautiously watching Motoyasu.

She used to kick him in the groin a lot.

After that, Motoyasu started cooking in the hotel's kitchen while showing off to the two of them in the corner.

Raphtalia seems to have thought that I would eat the food provided by the hotel.

Well, I didn't cook unless we were outside. I was making medicine and accessories at the inn. Recently, I have also been studying magic.

Motoyasu: "The food I cooked is ready."

Raphtalia: "S-sure....."

Motoyasu announced to Raphtalia while the dish was still sizzling, Raphtalia ate Motoyasu's food slowly, while Firo ate heartily.

Firo: "It isn't as tasty as Master's!"

Raphtalia: "Shh! Hero of the spear-sama will mind it....."

After hearing that Motoyasu has a cramp in his smile.

Motoyasu: "I'll make even tastier ones if you want. So, Firo-chan, Angel form!"

Firo: "No!"

Just how much of an angel-lover are you.

After that, they entered separate rooms. At that time, Firo finally returned to her human form.

Well, it's because I ordered Firo to be in human form whenever we were at an inn, to avoid damaging the place.

Firo:"Not sleeping yet?"

Raphtalia:"Not yet....."

Before sleeping Raphtalia stretches and studies magic.

Motoyasu:"Wa! Firo-chan's angel form is so cute!"

Firo:"Stay away!"

It seems Firo hates Motoyasu.

Did Motoyasu do something that Firo hates?.....He has.

Before Firo grew up, he called her lame and laughed out loud.

Furthermore, calling her a fat and plain bird. It would be weird if he wasn't hated.

Raphtalia:"Don't worry, nothing will happen."

Firo:"Really?"

Raphtalia:"Really Really."

Firo:"Muu~....."

Firo lies on the bed in human form and breathes deeply.

But her ahoge is standing on end, and she isn't sleeping soundly.

Motoyasu:"....."

Motoyasu silently approaches Firo.

Raphtalia:".....What do you intend to do?"

Motoyasu:" I just want to look at Firo-chan's sleeping face."

Raphtalia raises her eyebrows at Motoyasu's suspicious actions.

Motoyasu:"Anyway, while Firo-chan is sleeping, want to drink some liquor in a bar?"

Raphtalia:"What?"

Motoyasu:"Ah, you never drink alcohol before. Don't worry, just have a little and enjoy the charm of being an adult."

Raphtalia: "Charm.....huh"

Unexpectedly, Raphtalia was tempted by Motoyasu speaking about charm, and followed him to the bar.

While sitting down, Motoyasu orders the liquor.

It arrived after a few minutes.

The first drink was for Raphtalia. It seemed to be some red alcohol.

Motoyasu pours it into a glass.

Motoyasu: "A toast to your eyes."

Raphtalia: "....."

When Motoyasu winked fashionably at Raphtalia, something inside her seemed to have snapped.

Raphtalia: "There are things to do tomorrow, I'm returning."

While suppressing her urge to kill with a smile, the cup containing the alcohol she didn't drink vibrated with magic released from the body.

Motoyasu: "Eh? Ah-"

Like that, she returned to the hotel with the spare key and slept.

And, the next morning.

Raphtalia: "Good morning."

With the intentions to forget yesterday, Raphtalia greeted Motoyasu.

Motoyasu: "Ah, good morning. Raphtalia-chan. Firo-chan."

Firo: "Morninn-"

Firo sleepy returns the greeting with a yawn.

After having a light breakfast at the hotel, it was finally time to hunt demons.

However.....

Motoyasu: "I understand your strengths."

After a while of hunting demons, that line was said.

The demons aren't very strong, after advancing for a while, Motoyasu called for a stop.

Raphtalia:"What?"

Motoyasu:" Leveling up with such bloody fighting doesn't suit your lovely selves. Why don't you watch me fight?"

Raphtalia:"Huuh!?"

After saying that, Motoyasu rushes a demon that appeared alone.

By the way, if it was Firo, that demon would have been small fry.

It also should have been dealt with by a single blow from Motoyasu.

Motoyasu:"Meteor Spear!"

Certainly, Motoyasu is strong.

But he kept sending amorous glances, some how causing his sweat to glitter, and winking whenever a demon was killed.

Motoyasu:"How was it?"

Raphtalia:"----p!"

Raphtlia's patience finally reached the limit.

Raphtlia:"I don't know, so please stop it!"

It seems her head blanked out, and it seems that afterwards Motoyasu was shaking like a lamb.

while repressing her anger with a straight face, they returned to the main island hotel a little before noon.

By the way, Raphtalia and Firo only got 2 levels, so presently they are at 42.

What the hell, yesterday I got 6 levels, and am now level 44.

I wonder why Raphtalia is lower level than me.....

Motoyasu.....This is even less than what I expected.

I feel that there is some kind of conspiracy, but I can't tell based on the

story I just heard.

Anyway, Raphtalia's evaluation of the Hero of the Spear dropped fatally.

Chapter 88: Intuition and Analysis

I was amazed after hearing Raphtalia's story.

Rather.....It was expected.

So it's like this. Spending the first day like a date.

Shopping at the market and visiting tourist spots, crossing the sea during a beautiful sunset.

At night, cooking home-made food, and drinking liquor at a bar.

Then, the next day, showing off and being cool while acting all handsome.

Tentatively, after approximately analysing their strength, he tries to steal my subordinates by trying to appear appealing to them.

Though it seems Raphtalia and Firo didn't fall for it.

Naofumi:"How should I put it....."A toast to your eyes." you say, Is this the Showa Era?! Did you not have any lines that is a little more effective?"

Motoyasu:"In this world, all the older women were pleased with that....."

Ah, was it learnt from experience?.....In any case, think about who your partner was.

Though it is probably my fault, Raphtalia was raised with efficiency as a principle. Those who show leadership will have a higher evaluation.

Firo:"The person with the spear complimented onee-chan a lot."

Naofumi:"I see....."

Raphtalia:"What did you come here to fight for? Did you come here to hit on girls?"

Raphtalia continues to attack the dejected Motoyasu.

Are you denying Motoyasu's reason for existence?

Raphtalia:"If you do such a thing, when you encounter a formidable

enemy , your companions won't be able to help you!"

After declaring that, Raphtalia returned.

Raphtalia:"Is the next exchange tomorrow?"

Naofumi:"Ah, yeah....."

That's amazing. To make Raphtalia this angry.....

There was only one other time that I've seen Raphtalia this seriously angry.

It was during the results of the duel.

Well, that was Motoyasu's fault as well; Motoyasu himself is mopping about over there.

Woman1:"That reminds me, where did Bitch and company go?"

Woman1 was listening to the story too? She was comforting Motoyasu with a hand on his shoulder.

Naofumi:"Even though a day was wasted, experience still increased....."

Raphtalia:"Sorry....."

Naofumi:"No, that's not what I mean Raphtalia."

When listening to the story during the activation, contrasting with her usual habit of composure, her voice is full of emotion.

Was it because of that, it has nothing to do with levels, but the chances of victory against the wave?

Hm?

Woman 1 came over to us and said.

Woman1:"Is that assassin still watching?"

Naofumi:"Probably."

Woman1:"Then I'll supplement. Motoyasu-sama goes off and hunts alone at night.

Naofumi:"....."

I think I just gave a very unpleasant look.

In other words, when Raphtalia.....and the other girls were asleep, he was leveling up alone at night?

An image of a cool hard-working guy pops up, to make an effort in secret here, it seems a little strange.

Naofumi: "You think I have control of Shadow?"

Woman1: "Maybe."

Hmm, it isn't a bad hand to present yourself stronger to your comrades.

Certainly, if this can be kept up, then some in-fighting could be avoided.

Above all, Motoyasu's date plan needs to be investigated, but there isn't enough time.

It's not a bad hand, but it was Raphtalia that it was shown to.

That means this guy isn't thinking about leveling. so he's fooling around.

In the first place, the biggest drawback of this is.

His companions will not gain any levels, I can't do that.

For me who can only use a shield to defend, a companion is essential.

Therefore, it is necessary to always take care of the conditions of your comrades.

There is also the fatigue of constant night battles accumulating.

Of course, it is also limited to hunting the demons that appear only at night.

Naofumi: "Oh right. Raphtalia"

Raphtalia: "What is it?"

We talk in whispers so that it won't reach Motoyasu and them.

Naofumi: "How does Motoyasu fight? Is there something special you have to do, Like when fighting with me?"

Raphatalia: "Yup, the demons are not dismantled, the weapon isn't changed..... The weapon absorbs the same way as Naofumi-sama's."

Hmm.....It feels like there are corners being cut.

So for that strength.....Does Level mean everything?

There are those kinds of Net Games.

Raphtalia: "Though.....He took a tool out of the spear."

Naofumi: "Tool? It wasn't absorbed into the spear?"

Raphtalia: "Yup. It was different from a tool that was absorbed."

A tool from a spear.....How was it done?

At last, a chance to get proper information has appeared.

Naofumi: "Motoyasu, There's something I want to ask--"

The Motoyasu that should have been absent mindedly sitting there disappeared.

Woman 1 is also gone.

When I want to ask they are gone!

When did they disappear!?

Firo: "The person with the spear returned with that woman. They apologized to onee-chan."

Naofumi: "I-I see."

That's quick.....I wanted some time to exchange information.

What Motoyasu does, may not be the same as Ren and Itsuki.

Well, there are a lot of disadvantages, but there are also many benefits.

In any case, the heroes like Motoyasu are just existences that are a lump of information.

Though during the activation, it's only a matter of time before their secrets are exposed.

At least I learnt that Motoyasu has something that I don't know.

Simply because there is a possibility, that Motoyasu is playing around to hide it.

If I was Motoyasu, I would refuse the staff exchange, and during the activation, work hard and level up.

It might be simple to turn down if I think about efficiency. However, I may only find out here.

Even if it's just experience points, I'll gulp it down like a beggar, I have a feeling those three know something different.

My intuition is telling me that it would be wrong to decline it.

There is something.

Those three heroes, without fail, are hiding something other than level.

Because if it's just level, then it would be no different from adventurers.

This is supported by my knowledge and experience of Net Games up until now.

In Net Games there is something related to this event, and elements other than Level effect skills in real.

There is also the possession of rare items via financial power.

How many times have I encountered a person with only high Levels?

In a Net game, the administration makes equipment and rare items through trail and error that become important.

Levels are important at first, but later on it just becomes a comparison between acorns.

Therefore, the appearance of funds, organization strength, and rare items is required.

This world is not a game, but for some reason those three heroes still think that this is a game; I am curious.

It is common for activation events such as these to have a limit on Levels gained.

Beginner relief and Class Up promotions. Are job changes similar to a game?

In guilds, the members that have reached the level limit will help the new members in raising their levels.

Because Motoyasu was so laid-back, there was a similar feeling.

As far as he is concerned, his purpose is probably gathering information and looking for new companions right?

There is also a possibility of using the remaining six days after the exchange completed.

Otherwise, I cannot explain the composure of Motoyasu.

Ah.....

Naofumi: "Shadow"

Shadow: "What degojaru?"

Naofumi: "Is there some kind of law during activation? Like rumors, theories, even something that has low credibility is alright."

Shadow: ".....When I participated in the activation of Cal Mira Island, The experience worsens after Classing Up at level 80 degojaru. Of course, I entered more after that degojaruka, there is an upper limit to the inhabiting demons degojaru."

Right on the money huh.

In other words, those actions were in anticipation of that.

There is an upper limit.....just like a game.

If I had the same gaming knowledge as those guys, I might have fallen under the illusion that this world is a game as well.

I can roughly grasp the level of their party by counting backwards from here.

Assuming the Hero is level 70-80, their companion should be between 40-70?

It is safe to assume that everyone can reach level 80 in at least a few days.

After that, it wouldn't be so easy to gain when hunting. If there are demons on this island higher than 80, it would not be very delicious.

I know that in games, regardless of what, it is just a calculation.

Though I originally wanted to take my time with the hunting grounds during this activation, would it be better to look for shortcuts?

I feel like looking at a Walkthrough for net games.

However, the mystery has gotten even deeper.

In other words, taking Motoyasu as the lowest, Ren and itsuki should at least be around level 70.

Though, why are they equal to me when I use the Wrath Shield?

It is a fact that Wrath Shield is especially strong, but I am level 44. 20 levels lower than them.

Moreover, when fighting the pope, there was also an ability above him.

The mysteries don't end.

While deliberating such thoughts deeply, and returning to the hotel, Motoyasu was forgotten about.

Chapter 89: The Birth of Cal Mira Island Sports

After listening to Raphtalia's story, it was already evening, and the timing to go out has been missed.

If we go out now, it would be to another island for a night hunt.

Though time is precious, I would rather not night battle too much. It is dangerous.....

Shopping at the market would be fine, but.....I already went yesterday.

Till now I was making medicine and accessories, or studying magic, but as for the former, I am out of materials.

After returning I will be taught the latter by someone the queen prepares.

We who had free time were bored.

With that said, we decided to play at the beach until dusk.

Firo:"Wahoi~!"

Firo is playing in the sea.

She is having fun in water and noisily trying to dive underwater like a waterfowl.

It's that isn't it.

I feel that is swimming practice.

At first glance it seems she is drowning.

I mean, can you even sink?..... floating while her feet stick up through the surface. It is a very funny appearance.

Her pose reminds me of a guy that was killed in the same position somewhere. What was it again?

It was a village with a dog. I cannot remember the details.

These four months here of being separated from the Otaku culture, and

originally I could only inference animes based on their titles.



Naofumi: "Levels did not rise at all. Bad Raphtalia."

Raphtalia: "Ehh.....It can't be helped. After moving it was night..... It was also trouble since we had to return the next morning."

Naofumi: "This staff exchange is evil."

Raphtalia: "That's right.....I hoped that time back then would pass faster, though it is enjoyable right now."

Naofumi: "I guess....."

We borrowed bathing suits from the hotel to play at the beach.

What can I say, a tropical country's sea is beautiful.

Really, I've had this thought before, it feels like I came to Hawaii and Guam.

Naofumi: "Looking carefully, a lot of other fellows are playing on the beach like us."

Raphtalia: "Yeah, certainly....."

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, do you have the ball?"

Raphtalia: "I put it in the room at the hotel....."

Naofumi: "I see.....It should be possible to rent a ball somewhere."

For some reason even though I look around, there is no shop dealing with recreational goods.

There is a resting place, like a seaside clubhouse, but there are no stores for toys in order to play at the sea.

Since it's hot, there is a store that sells cold items.

However, a shop meant for playing at the sea doesn't exist.

.....There are no surfboards either.

For a guy like Motoyasu, surfing cannot be just a hobby. That's it.

While thinking and looking around I spotted Motoyasu.

It seems he has recovered from earlier, and is accompanying Bitch.

He didn't learn his lesson. It would be annoying to speak to him since Bitch is there, I don't feel like it.

Raphtalia: "What are you thinking about?"

Naofumi: "With great pains we are finally playing on the beach. I think beach volleyball would be fine."

Raphtalia: "There is training for the lower body on the beach that requires keeping the ball in the air! I'll get it!"

After listening to my suggestion Raphtalia ran selfishly.

.....I seemed to have raised a little bit of a muscle brain.

This was not aimed at training in particular.....

Raphtalia's criteria is fundamentally mistaken.....Though that's probably my fault.

Firo: "What happened to onee-chan?"

Naofumi: "She went to fetch a ball."

Firo: "Hmm. Play ball?"

Naofumi: "It seems so."

Firo: "Firo is bored. Going to play more."

Naofumi: "Oh. Do your best."

Firo: "Yeah!"

While drawing the lines for beach volleyball.....Raphtalia brings the ball.

The ball that was made from balloon for children, has been cherished by Raphtalia for a long time.

Training to strengthen the lower body on the beach, huh.....

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, you got a second?"

Raphtalia: "What? Go ahead."

I take a good look at Raphtalia's upper arm.

Always doing muscle training, though her muscles don't seem to be in proportion to her status gained from killing monsters.

Raphtalia: "What is it?"

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, are you hiding your figure with magic?"

Raphtalia is part of the raccoon race, specializing in illusion magic, and has affinity with light and darkness systems.

In other words, it is possible to fake her own appearance.

Raphtalia: "Why would I do something so useless?"

Naofumi: ".....Raphtalia, stay as you are. "

Raphtalia: "What.....? I understand."

Raphtalia's aspiration to improve herself is excellent.

After that, I explained the simple rules of beach volleyball.

It's not the full-fledged ones, just not dropping the ball, how to handle the ball, and passing to the other party.

Raphtalia: "Then I'm starting! Tei!"

Naofumi: "What kind of-!"

A fierce beach volleyball match on the beach began between Raphtalia and Firo.

From the beginning they start rushing to spike, it has already surpassed a competition and has become a fierce battle.

Both of their movements are quick. It's like watching wire action When I looked around, I noticed that people began to gather and happily mimic what they were doing.

Well, since there aren't that many people with balls, there is one that substituted a ball with a round cloth.....

Those who are imitating the offense and defense of Raphtalia and Firo can be called beach volleyball.

Raphtalia: "Is Naofumi-sama not going to do it?"

While performing a dash Raphtalia asks me.

Naofumi: "Nope..... I cannot do that."

Raphtalia: "?"

Did I say something strange? Raphtalia and Firo look like they are playing with the ball leisurely.

What a high level.

I could not keep up with their physical strength.

Naofumi: "I'm fine with just watching."

Firo: "Really? It will be more fun if Master plays together."

Naofumi: "This is closer to actual fighting than playing."

Is this is influence of Class Up, they've become superhuman. These guys.

If I keep them company I will have to get serious, and that's tiring. I'm also still in treatment.

Naofumi: "Oh right. There is also beach flag."

When I say that, Firo's eyes sparkle. The beach volleyball game was interrupted, she runs up to me.

Firo: "What is it!? How do you play!?"

Uh.....

Naofumi: "Anyway, stab a stick in the ground first"

Firo: "Okay!"

I pick up a stick and stab the ground with it.

Naofumi: "Afterwards."

Walk 20 meters from the stick and turn around.

Naofumi: "In the mean time, Raphtalia and Firo, come here."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Both of them obediently come to me.

Naofumi: "Then, face each other on the other side of the stick while lying down."

Raphtalia: "Like this?"

Firo: "This way?"

Both of them lie down according to my instructions.

Naofumi: "I'll say Ready, and Don! After I say that, get up immediately and pick up the stick I stabbed in the ground, the one who gets the stick wins. However, you must not interfere with your opponent."

Raphtalia: "That sounds fun."

Firo: "Yup!"

Naofumi: "Now for practice."

A gallery was made. It looks like some adventurers are excitedly watching with expectations.

Is it because this is a different world? There doesn't seem to be much playing here.

Naofumi: "Ready....."

Both of them are waiting for me to speak.

Naofumi: "Don! Go---!"

Immediately after, I was blasted with, and buried under a mountain of sand.

Raphtalia and Firo are the criminals. Even if just a little quicker, for the sake of winning they simultaneously kicked the sand.

By the way, it seems Firo won.

I was buried in sand and couldn't tell.

Firo: "This is Firo's victory!"

Raphtalia: "Next time I won't lose!"

Naofumi: "Kicking sand everywhere with such power! Know some limits!"

What we were playing at that time..... Carried on to become a major competition after.

Having said that, I did not know that this was a prototype for something else in this world though.

Raphtalia and Firo played at the beach until the day was over.

Some adventurers joined too, and the beach volleyball and beach flag ended in success.

Well, it was good for killing time.

Raphtalia seemed to be satisfied with body strengthening as a principle.

Chapter 90: The Significance of Personnel Exchange

The day after.

Returning to the hotel yesterday, I entered the hot spring and took a rest.

Entering the Japanese-style hot spring that Shadow talked about, little by little, I feel the tension in my body seeping out.

Well, the Japanese and Chinese styles have kind of been mixed together...

Among other things, there's a Kaminarimon¹ with paper umbrellas... Various things like the paper sliding doors have a kind of Chinese look to them. It feels like a foreigner's attempt at imitating a Japanese bath.²

I have no complaints though, I'm just anxious to find out what kind of country the East is. That goes regardless of whether they are nice or not.

Naofumi: "Well then, I'm off."

Raphtalia: "Please take care of yourself."

Naofumi: "I think it was Ren today... Make sure the plan doesn't turn into a repeat of Motoyasu's."

After all, I cannot deny the possibility of him being a closet lecher.

There are cases where those who act cool will turn around and chase after girls.

A bastard that won't help, but will if it's a woman.

How should I put it, I really don't know anything about that guy. Just that... when he was responsible for someone else getting hurt, he obediently listened to the story.

All I can say is, Ren seems like a cool adolescent male who styles himself as an ally of justice.

Raphtalia: "Right."

Firo: "Have a nice day~"

—

On the way to the room where Ren's companions are.

Naofumi: "...this is so unproductive."

I voice my dissatisfaction about the staff exchange to Shadow.

I understand the queen's idea behind it, but the stress isn't diminishing.

Shadow: "I see degojaruna. You're wondering why the queen suggested the staff exchange degojaruka. Because there have been no problems in the past, I was fine with this too degojaruga."

Naofumi: "You... having following the queen's orders for so long don't understand. Ah well, I've also thought about the various things that led to this agreement."

Shadow: "What things degojaru?"

Naofumi: "Aren't you guys covering for contingencies instead of the information you collect behind the scenes?"

Shadow: "Well grasped degojaruna."

Naofumi: "Because it's that queen behind it, it's a natural thought."

There is a limit to observations from outside sources.

Naofumi: "I'm sure you received information about the actions taken by the other heroes. But you wouldn't be able to come up with an explanation for Raphtalia's physical changes."

It's difficult to sort out what's real from the huge pile of miscellaneous information.

Naofumi: "Let's assume you manage to collect information on the heroes. You guys are still forgetting something very important. How are you supposed to understand the secret to a hero's strength?"

These weapons can absorb any materials from anywhere!

I mean, is it possible to understand the difference between mine and the

other's strength?

There are multiple shadows I assume, so it won't necessarily always be the same one watching. The result is that intelligence gathering becomes messy.

If the contents of the investigation are written down in a letter, the meaning conveyed in a voice would also be lost.

It's something that cannot be understood by someone who doesn't hold a hero's weapon. Hearing about it during the information exchange would be useless too. Considering those guys' habit of hiding themselves, it is also likely they would hold back and tell lies.

I can't help it, it's special! They might hide it with that kind of reasoning.

As it is, they will not talk easily, so it's only possible to examine closely for ourselves.

Shadow: "It can't be helped degojaru. This was done exclusively for Hero of the Shield-dono, I also haven't worked very long together with Hero of the Shield-dono degojaruyue."

Naofumi: "Ah, it can't be helped. If this could be finished in a day, it wouldn't be so difficult."

Besides... and this is important, the companions of each hero will be easily dyed with that one's standard of values.

In reality, Raphtalia objects against Motoyasu's policies. If I'm right, Motoyasu's companions too feel the same way about me.

However, if a personnel exchange is carried out, then our perspectives should broaden a little.

It also provides a chance for those used to the princess treatment to experience battles with the other heroes.

Bitch's situation is not worth mentioning, but Woman 1 managed to broaden her view by staying cool and resolving herself, and Woman 2 just looks at me like I'm an abnormal hero. However, when they fight together

with Ren and Itsuki, they should more or less understand.

It seems that for those fighting alongside Bitch as a companion... it's a situation of divide and conquer.

With that, I'll stop complaining.

Naofumi: "If only I could watch what the other heroes pull out when their companions fall into a crisis."

Shadow: "A crisis degojaruka? Being together with a Hero-dono, I would think means always being side-by-side with danger degojaruga."

Naofumi: "It's the opposite. The whole world knows heroes are at the top. In short, do not approach enemies stronger than yourself."

Shadow: "I see... there's that kind of thinking too degojaruka."

Their levels are usually rising steadily, so it's most likely their crisis opportunities are lacking.

They're following heroes who feel like they're in a game. When you only fight enemies that you can beat, your sense of urgency goes away.

It would be easy to fall under the illusion that they themselves are part of the privileged class.

Just by announcing that they are a hero's companion, they will receive preferential treatment.

Of course, a hero is not perfect either, so there will be at least once or twice when it becomes truly dangerous.

Even if they survive by luck, I imagine they would still feel a release afterward together with the hero.

Because all three heroes have great confidence in themselves.

In the first place, when Motoyasu's party ended up in a crisis like that, some companions involved fell out because of it.

Naofumi: "At the end, the companions might barely be able to understand how a hero is different having watched them every day. I imagine the difference would seem small. Besides, there is also

cultivating friendships to be considered.”

Shadow: “I understand degojaru. If anything riotous happens I’ll let you know degojaru.”

Looking at Melromarc and the rest of the world’s standpoint, it’s normal they would try to make the heroes get along with each other.

Not mentioning the internal discord that led to the loss during the wave, they’re on bad terms even at the best of times.

I don’t really want to make friends, but I understand that cooperating is necessary.

If it was just us, we couldn’t have beat the pope.

From now on cooperation will be important. After this island event is over and we get dispatched to some foreign country, us acting together during the waves won’t change.

However, the opportunity to talk at that time is gone at once.

That’s fine by me, but... to fight against Glass and them, I can’t just say I’ll go do my own thing.

Even though I hate those guys, we belong to the same side so cooperation is necessary.

Come to think of it... how do we participate in the waves around the world?

Do the waves gather around Melromarc’s vicinity since that is where the heroes were summoned?

That’s something else I’ll have to discuss with the queen.

Perhaps, after the personnel exchange, I wonder if Shadow’s findings are going to be reported.

Or is the plan to stick to their habit of hiding things from the heroes?

If I have to say regarding the goal this time, the purpose is to develop mutual understanding with the companions of the other heroes.

The heroes are introduced to skillful people. And so, if they feel they’re

lacking something, they'll ask a trustworthy companion and so forth... right?

Those guys, they won't ask because they think so highly of themselves. They're too quick to think they got it.

Well, it could simply be about recruitment.

The bastard Motoyasu tried to solicit my companions using his own special way.

The possibility of Ren and Itsuki also soliciting is not zero. It's actually rather high.

In their case though, they'd think about raising them from the bottom themselves...

Do demi-humans and demons get that strong? Well, that's also the sense I have.

However, there is a big contradiction when it comes to this theory.

They are not expected to get strong. That means, the games those fellows played did not have any demi-humans or demons who become that strong... is what I imagine.

That or it was never tried.

Is this strength from improving themselves?

I don't know.

How should I put it, I feel like the queen's goal is to raise the standard of all the heroes.

There seems to be some intention to treat me favourably, but it will be awkward from the world-wide standpoint if the other heroes are seen as weak.

That it's a planned compromise goes without saying.

Rather than only letting the shadows investigate, it's more reliable if we check things out for ourselves.

Though neither one should be left out.

Looking at it, while this personnel exchange certainly seems useless, it might be a decoy in order to make collecting information easier.

Gathering the heroes in the pretext of the island being active.

...I've probably read too much into things already.

Even if I am over-interpreting though, I'm thinking about how Ren and Itsuki's parties will act.

It won't be troublesome if nothing happens, but there'll be a big loss if anything does happen.

Shadow: "This is the room where the Hero of the Sword's companions are staying degojaru."

While deep in thought, I finally arrived in front of the room where Ren's companions are.

Naofumi: "Ahh."

I nod and knock on the door.

NPC: "Go ahead."

This time a proper reply comes. It's a big difference from Motoyasu's place.

I open the door and step inside.

NPC: "Welcome and thanks for coming. Hero of the Shield-sama."

Naofumi: "Oh, yeah..."

Because of my experience last time, it is somewhat anticlimactic.

Well then... Ren's companions number four people.

That's one more than Motoyasu. There were five in the beginning though, so it's gone down by one.

It's also reasonable to assume that some members were replaced.

Naofumi: "Though I'm sure you already know, you'll be working together with me, the Hero of the Shield, for the staff exchange today and tomorrow. The name is Iwatanai Naofumi."

I recognize three people from when we started, and the last one was added I guess?

NPC: "I look forward to working with you, Hero of the Shield-sama."

Naofumi: "Yeah."

All the members are polite.

But these guys... at that time, they showed me disdain and hid behind Ren.³

I won't forget that.

I can't be careless and let my guard down.

Representative: "Apologies for back then."

Naofumi: "Huh?"

A man who looks the representative... a warrior I guess? He bows to me.⁴

Representative: "Please understand, because of the situation with the King of Melromark, we knew that anyone siding with the Hero of the Shield would be put down a lot."

The others lowered their head to match the representative.

Representative: "Though you might feel those words mean little, for the next two days we ask you to please instruct us well."

Naofumi: "U-Understood."

Somehow... when the other person is strangely polite, it's unnerving.

My experiences until now make me suspicious that something may be going on behind the scenes.

Representative: "Shall we leave immediately?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, lets."

It's still too early to say one way or the other.

What happened was with Motoyasu's party after all. A voice then quickly cuts into my thoughts.

Magician: “So, where would be a good place for us to go raise our levels?”

A magician-like fellow at the back asks me in a natural manner.

Naofumi: “...eh?”

*

Notes & References

1. E/N: Lit. Thunder Gate.
2. T/N: See pictures of a Kaminarimon and a paper umbrella.
3. E/N: He’s talking about when the companions were asked who would be willing to join Naofumi.
4. E/N: He’s thinking in RPG terms, that the guy looks like a warrior/damage dealer.

Chapter 91: The Companions of the Sword Hero

Naofumi: "Sorry. Could you repeat that?"

Magician: "Where should we go to level up?"

It's not a hearing mistake.

What is this guy saying?

Naofumi: "hold on a second, what are you talking about?"

Magician: "Haah.....Umm, away from Hero-sama, where on Cal Mira Archipelago should we go to raise our levels? That's what I'm asking. Also, what materials would you like for us to collect?"

.....Uhh, the story was explained, but I still can't understand.

No, I can understand but.....What should I say?

Difference in policy?

Naofumi: "We'll go together this time. I'll send a party request."

Magician: "Understood. Hero-sama is going to a difficult place."

Hmmm.....Ren, what is your method of teaching?

What can I say, it feels like these guys are distanced from Ren.

After leaving the room, we head to the port to go demon hunting. While moving between islands I inquire again.

Naofumi: ".....Could you tell me about your hunting methods with more details?"

Magician: "Sure. So--"

The story of Ren's companions is like this.

Ren's policy is to have his companions fight at places appropriate for their level. And then, as they work to increase their levels they collect demon materials, ores, and tools.

Occasionally, when a powerful demon appears they defeat it together with Ren.

Magician: "Afterwards, we are always careful to absolutely never receive any attacks from the enemies."

Somehow.....

It's that isn't it.

Since I have a little bit of net gaming experience, this feels like guild managing, where high level players advise low level players.

I mean, it's completely like that.

Naofumi: "What does Ren himself usually do?"

Magician: "He is able to fight alone. He is probably waiting until we get stronger."

That's.....Just an optimistic interpretation.....

I understand the self-proclaimed cool guy Ren's policy.

He thinks it would be awkward to fight together with another. Or maybe difficult.

That's not his character. He is probably bad at talking with others.

I feel that he was playing solo even in his net games.

And the only companions he got were from an organization he belonged to, which would only come together to defeat strong monsters during large-scale events.

Or.....he was invited to a small guild by someone he knew.....

Maybe after coming to this strange world he is indulging in a superiority complex.

Oh, while thinking of various scenarios about Ren's behaviour towards his companions, we have arrived at the hunting grounds.

Representative: "Shall we go?"

Naofumi: "Right, since I am a shield, I will have the enemies focus on

me while you guys defeat them.”

Magician:”Eh? But won’t it be dangerous to be attacked?”

Naofumi:”.....Don’t worry. My policy is different from Ren’s, my job is to endure.”

Magician:”Okay.....”

While going in first, I attract the demon’s attention.

Cal Mira Island has many demons that only focus on attacking the first aggressor.

Therefore, they concentrate on the one leading the charge.

I am surrounded by 4 Yellow Beetles.

Well, in these hunting grounds everything is pretty much small fry that can’t even make me itchy.

By the way, each of the islands of the Cal Mira Archipelago have their own demon ecosystem, there are still some demons native to their islands that I haven’t encountered yet.

It seems that the further center you go in an island, the stronger the enemies become.

The island that I went to with Bitch’s party was a big mountain, but this one is like a forest.

Magician:”Y-You sure are sturdy.”

One of Ren’s companions mutters while I block an enemy attack.

Naofumi:”I guess, here. Defeat it quickly.”

Magician:”O-Okay!”

What can I say.....I recall the training aid provided for novices in net games.

I think Ren’s party has a good balance.

Two vanguards, and two rearguards. Those in front beat the enemies down with physical attacks using an axe or sword, while their backs are

being covered with magic attacks and recovery magic.

Without a doubt it's a reliable formation.

However, the only defense plan in a melee is to avoid the enemy attacks.

While concentrating on evasion, an easy battle will take longer.

Naofumi: "For the time being, receive some of the enemy's attacks. Concentrate on attacking, because the enemies aren't dying instantly."

While approaching the middle of the island, adventurers are becoming increasingly sparse.

Oh, Bitch and her party also came to this neighborhood.

Magician: "Hero of the Shield-sama fights completely differently compared to Ren-sama."

Naofumi: "I guess."

Certainly, compared to the other heroes, the shield's job is completely different.

Yet, I can still fight.

That reminds me, there are several things that I have analyzed and understood since coming to this abnormal world.

First of all, it is possible for the shield to fight evenly with those guys.

Next, the shield's way of fighting works on endurance, and counterattacking, it's the type of fighting that uses sure-kill skills.

It may only be the Wrath Shield, but by paying a great price, it is possible to mortally wound the opponent.

Like the Iron Maiden, or Blutopfer. There is also Dark Burning Curse.

However, it's a pain that they can't be used without the Wrath Shield.

Iron Maiden could be used with another shield, but the prerequisite is tough, it's still useful, but.....

The other heroes are still in their first stages.

Is there even an upper limit to levels?.....Can it exceed 100?

In net games there are many cases like that.

If ordinary person's limit is 40, how much effort would it take to get to 100?

If that happens it would be impossible to know the upper limit.

Naofumi: "Now then."

There's no use thinking about it.

It's a demon that I have already defeated with Woman 1.....

It wasn't dismantled and absorbed since I already got a new shield from it.

Representative: "Umm.....Are you not going to absorb it into your weapon?"

Naofumi: "I already unsealed it."

Representative: "Huh?"

The representative like man is surprised by something.

Representative: "Ren-sama did not say such a thing....."

Naofumi: "What?"

Does he still absorb more even after unsealing?

What's the reason?

Naofumi: "Do you know why?"

Representative: "No idea.....anyway, Ren-sama doesn't talk that much."

Hmm.....You don't tell your companions the details either?

Well, I also didn't tell Raphtalia the details of my version.

It is not something worth going into detail about.

Naofumi: "Oh well. I'll just follow Ren's example and absorb it. Even if the skin is tanned it's not worth selling."

Thus, demon's corpse was absorbed into the shield.

The next day.

After hunting till night fell yesterday, we rested at a hotel.

Ren's companions who didn't seem keen on night combat agreed obediently.

We split up after agreeing to go level up early, after finishing breakfast the next morning.

As a result, by evening I gained eight levels.

Representative:"It was very easy fighting, Hero of the Shield-sama."

Magician:"Yeah, after coming here our levels have raised significantly."

Huh, that was.....

What is there to say? These past two days have passed anti-climatically and without incident.

If compared to a net game, this is a party that feels very efficient.

The members are equipped with the necessary talents, being able to repair equipment, and being diligent in leveling.

It feels like being invited into a guild party as a temporary member.

It's already been four months huh.....sure is nostalgic.

I wonder how the management of the guild I ran is going after I disappeared.

By the way, it is evening by the time I returned to the main island with Ren's companions.

Until now we worked diligently on leveling up.

As a result, it was quite comfortable. at least to my knowledge it was also fruitful.....

Ren's companions don't seem like bad people.

However.....They are too dependant.

Being told to level at assigned locations to raise their levels. Therefore, at first when co-operating with companions it was awkward.

Well, on the second day after getting accustomed to co-operating they

were able to fight well.

Naofumi: "I'd like to ask one thing, what do you guys feel about Ren."

Representative: "Very strong. We believe that if we are by his side, then we can save the world."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

Apparently, to his companions Ren is a pretty reliable guy.

I thought about recruiting them based on their actions these past two days, but I stopped because I don't want to lose the trust that we build up.

It probably won't happen unless Ren dies.

In the first place, I would like to gather those with talent.

These guys aren't inferior, but there is no one truly remarkable.

That's my impression of Ren's party.

Compared to Motoyasu's party they are much better, but compared to Raphtalia and Firo, they are considerable inferior.

Though if they come to me I would not deny anyone.

At least my relationship with the party seems good.

Naofumi: "That reminds me, you guys fought with Itsuki.....Hero of the bow before right?"

Representative: "Yes."

Naofumi: "How did it go?"

This is going to serve as a reference, I just want to ask about it.

Representative: "It is similar to acting with Hero of the Shield-sama, he was using a bow in the rear."

Naofumi: "Hmm....."

Representative: "However, he did not help very much. We were not able to advance as far into the island as we did with Hero of the Shield-sama."

Is it his usual habit of concealment?

Ren is one thing, but Itsuki has a habit of hiding himself, I can't really use anything as reference.

I mean it's only natural to attack from the rear with a bow.

Well, I'll ask Itsuki's companions about it tomorrow.

Chapter 92: The Sword Hero & My Companions

Firo: "Welcome back Master~"

After returning to the hotel at the main island, Firo greets me at the main entrance.

I wonder. I have a very bad feeling about this.

Naofumi: "I'm back. How was it?"

Firo: "Nn~.....Umm you see. Onee-chan got angry."

Naofumi: "Not again....."

I wonder what the reason is-.....While hunting together with Ren's companions I had a foreboding feeling.

I enter the hotel timidly.

There I see Raphtalia, sitting where Motoyasu was last time waiting for me.

Naofumi: "Where is Ren?"

I mutter while looking around.

As I say so, from the entrance of the hotel Ren walks in.

Should I heard what he has to say before speaking to Raphtalia?

Ren: "Y-You....."

Ren sees me and his facial expression turns grim.

Ren: "What is with your companions? They don't listen to my instructions and go to other hunting grounds without my permission."

What's that? He's speaking like he's the victim.

Even if Ren is blaming her, Raphtalia is not one to cause problems without reason.

Ren: "If you don't mind, I would like to point out that the problem lies

with your training policy.”

I determined that I should hear it with Raphtalia.

I don't really want to approach Raphtalia, so I'll just call her over.

Naofumi:”Heeey”

Raphtalia:”Naofumi-sama! And.....”

When Raphtalia sees me she smiles, but once she finds Ren, it turns into an angry look and her tail bristles up.

I think that she is even angrier than that time with Motoyasu.

Naofumi:”What the hell did you really do?”

It wasn't simple when Motoyasu angered Raphtalia that much.

To be honest, I am a little anxious to find out what upset Raphtalia so much.

Ren:”No clue, she just operated as she pleased.”

Raphtalia:”As I please? Don't joke around!”

When Raphtalia approached and heard Ren's complain she snapped.

Raphtalia:”This person–”

This is Raphtalia's description of the events.

After I left, Raphtalia was becoming anxious when waiting for Ren, due to what happened with Motoyasu.

Firo:”Is someone coming today?”

Raphtalia:”Yes, like Naofumi-sama who is a hero, the person coming today is called Ren-sama.”

Firo:”Hmph.”

Much earlier than Motoyasu, Ren showed up at the room.”

Ren:”I'm coming in.”

Raphtalia:”Please.”

Ren enters the room after a knock.

The first impression Ren received seemed to be a more tranquil feeling compared to Motoyasu.

If anything, Ren doesn't talk very much.

Ren: "First of all I'll introduce myself. I am Amaki Ren, also known as the Hero of the Sword. My best regards for these next two days."

Raphtalia: "My best regards. My name is Raphtalia."

Firo: "Firo."

Ren crosses his arms and looks at Raphtalia and Firo from head to toe.

An awkward atmosphere was covering the area.

Raphtalia: "Umm....."

Ren: "Levels?"

Raphtalia: "What?"

Ren: "Tell me what level you are."

Raphtalia: "Ah, sure it's 42. Firo is the same as well."

Firo: "Yep!"

Ren: "42 huh.....Isn't it impossible then?"

Raphtalia: "Eh?"

Raphtalia did not understand what he meant by saying it was impossible so suddenly.

Ren's companions were the same, they did not ask for any explanations.

Maybe they got used to it after being together with him for so long.

Well due to following my efficiency principle.....Raphtalia listens obediently.

Ren: "Oh well, let's just go raise our levels for now."

While saying that Ren sends a party invite and Raphtalia accepts.

Ren: "Before we leave, buy some medicine if necessary."

Raphtalia: "Ah, Okay."

Though Ren is blunt, Raphtalia responds willingly since they will be leveling up properly.

Since I already distributed medicine, there was no need to buy any, thus they arrived at their island.

Ren: "Well then, I'll judge how much you are able to fight. I will watch while we advance."

Raphtalia: "Yes.....?"

Raphtalia has a sense of discomfort from the words Ren said.

And so, they fought demons that came from the mountainside of the island.

Ren: "Hmm.....well, the enemies around here should be at an appropriate level."

Raphtalia: "There is little resistance though....."

Firo: "Teel!"

Due to the Class up, Raphtalia and Firo's offensive power rose considerably.

As a result, the few demons felt weak.

In fact, the enemies are being slaughtered with a single attack.

What would the appropriate level be? Actually, is it even something you can compare with game knowledge after seeing?

Ren: "This area is appropriate for level 40s. You guys continue leveling here, I'll be heading somewhere else. Well, you guys seem pretty strong for level 40 anyway."

While leaving that message, Ren runs off from the party.

Those last words were a little unnecessary. If this is a net game, I'll return.

Raphtalia: "Ah, Excuse me-"

Ren: "I'll return in the evening. Fight until then. Gather the demons."

Raphtalia: "S-Sure....."

Though the demons were weak, they still gave good experience, so Raphtalia continued to defeat demons.

When it was evening, Ren returned and absorbed all the demons Raphtalia defeated into his sword.

Raphtalia had slight feelings of having her commission stolen from the demons she defeated herself.

Is she an NPC? Respect the other party a bit more.

Raphtalia: "That....."

Ren: "What's up?"

Raphtalia: "Are we not going to fight together?"

Ren: "Your levels are not sufficient enough to fight. It is common sense for the weaker ones to make an effort to catch up."

.....Raphtalia felt irritation at Ren's attitude.

Do you lack common sense?.....I feel there is a large gap of common sense between me and Ren.

If it was me, I would be going with them first and then ranking them.

But, in net games there are restrictions one experienced gained when the levels are too far apart, however in this world there doesn't seem to be such a restriction.

Otherwise, when Firo was still a chick she would not have been able to level up so fast.

Anyway, after they entered the hotel they had a meal.

Ren: "Well I'm off to level up a little more. See ya."

After Ren says so, he leaves quickly.

Those words show that he is at least diligent in this world.....Raphtalia convinced herself to go take a rest.

So, the next morning.

Ren: "What is your level now?"

Raphtalia: "Let's see, it is 48 now."

Raphtalia and Firo both leveled from yesterday's fights.

By the way, even if they aren't in the same party as me, the growth correction is still in effect since I am their master.

Ren: "Well.....It might be a little harsh....."

Ren looks up and mutters to himself for a bit before answering.

Ren: "Let's go deeper today. We'll defeat demons together this time."

Raphtalia: "O-Okay."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Raphtalia was secretly relieved that she could finally have a proper fight.

But not even an hour passed before she noticed that was a big mistake.

Along the way, Ren asked about the magic and skills that Raphtalia and Firo could use.

So Raphtalia explained her illusion magic, and Firo's sure-kill technique.

Ren: "Hmm.....There was a similar skill, is it an original name?"

Raphtalia: "Huh?"

Ren: "Nevermind."

While crossing the mountainside, they entered the hinterland in the middle of the island.

A big demon with a single head called Karma Dog Familiar showed up.

It seems to be a demon with long ears, and it resembles a big black dog.

I wonder if the enemy was unpleasant enough to trigger Raphtalia's trauma.

Ren: "Alright! You guys, fight as per my instructions!"

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Firo: "What are we going to do-?"

Ren: "First, attract the demon's attention and avoid its attacks. Then, use your finisher attacks on it!"

A very sloppy strategy.

Assault! Smash! Victory! Nothing is going to change.

Raphtalia gave up on attacking the Karma Dog Familiar according to instructions and dodged.

However, Ren was dodged to the spot first, so she had to move somewhere else.

Ren: "Don't stay so close to me! Think about it!"

Raphtalia: "O-Okay!"

If it was me I would have praised her. While I think about it, Raphtalia and Firo pulled maximum aggro on the enemy.

Thanks to having never co-operated with Ren before, their timings didn't match, and his order to prioritize dodging.

The result was, battle time was prolonged, and the battle with the Karma Dog continued while tiring out.

During the fight, Firo concentrated on attempting her arrow attack called High Quick.

Ren: "Meteor Sword!"

Firo: "Ah-! Move-!"

Just as Firo was charging out of the thicket, Ren appeared in front of her.

Due to that, the magic was forced to change direction and fail.

Karma Dog Familiar screamed and attacked Ren.

Ren: "Damn, so it was too shallow! What are you doing!? Hurry up and fight!"

Firo:"Fue-.....?"

Raphtalia:".....Illusion Sword."

Raphtalia as uses her special skill and hides herself to attack the Karma Dog Familiar's rear.

However.

Ren:"Tch!"

Ren failed an attack and dodged towards Raphtalia, while he clicked his tongue.

Raphtalia:"Wh-Why did you come here!?"

Ren:"Think about it a little!"

After a while the Karma Dog Familiar was finally defeated.

No wonder. Not only Raphtalia, but I am also getting irritated just listening to the story.

Ren:"Seriously, when you guys fight, look around a little! You guys should be focusing on attracting it's attention!"

Ren told Raphtalia, while confirming the Karma Dog Familiar's death.

Immediately afterwards, something inside of Raphtalia snapped.

Raphtalia:"Look around? That should be you!"

After watching Ren fight, Raphtalia brought it up.

First of all, the Karma Dog Familiar is a boss-class demon that Ren had trouble fighting with himself.

Also, during the fight, Ren was only focused on fighting alone.

The boss was one that even Firo's kicks only bent it back slightly.

In Raphtalia's honest analysis, it would have been stronger than the Zombie Dragon.

Raphtalia:"You are the one that lacks strategy. You were the one that told us to avoid the attacks and use our finishers. However, you kept blocking our way!"

Ren: "There is no mistake in my strategy. You guys just suck."

Raphtalia: "Please don't joke around! I explained our finishers properly! Yet, why did you still obstruct us!?"

Ren: "I didn't obstruct anything! You guys just had to attract the enemy's attention."

Raphtalia: "Then why did you not explain it!?"

Ren: "You should have known from observation."

Raphtalia: ".....Please stop it!"

Raphtalia's patience reached the limit.

Raphtalia: "We do not get along well enough to co-operate together, there is no way we can fight together easily!"

Ren: "That's why I am the damage dealer, defeating this guy—"

Raphtalia: "Honestly, you are a hinderance!"

Raphtalia personally disables the party and instructs Firo.

Ren: "Wha—You, what are you doing without permission!"

Raphtalia: "Please remain silent!"

While wading through the bushes, another Karma Dog Familiar appears.

Raphtalia made a party with Firo who consented.

After that, Raphtalia and Firo killed the second Karma Dog Familiar in one-third of the time it took fighting with Ren.

Raphtalia: "We shall take our leave now. Since it is more inefficient with us here."

While being sarcastic, Raphtalia left with Firo and fought easily until evening.

Being concerned about the time wasted with Motoyasu, they hunted until it was very late.

Ren: "Do you think such selfishness will be permitted!?"

Raphtalia: "What are you arguing about. Whether or not I have permission.....Who are you to decide?"

Ren: "What was that!?"

Truthfully..... He is talking with a lot of assumptions.

Requiring permission.....It's something that players get reported to administration for.

Naofumi: "Hey.....You, who are you to give permission for anything?"

Ren: "....."

Ren averts my gaze and mumbles under his breath.

Did you say it carelessly in a fit of rage?

Still, I don't think Raphtalia is in the wrong after all.

Though it wouldn't be beneficial to leave on bad terms.

Naofumi: "Or do you really have such power? Raphtalia is my companion. If there is something she did wrong then I will punish her. If Ratphalia did something, then explain the reason so I can understand."

Ren: "Ku!"

Hey there, something might be said to Shadow later.

In any case, no matter the circumstance I will defend Raphtalia. There is no reason for her to do anything wrong.

Naofumi: "What do you think a companion is? Do you think they are a chess piece that attracts attention from the enemy so that it doesn't come for you?"

In any case, this morning meeting.....is even shorter than with Motoyasu?

Oh my.....

Raphtalia: "If you keep doing such things, you will kill one of your companions someday!"

With that, Raphtalia angrily walks off back to the room.

Ren shrugs selfishly and glares at me.

Ren: "Your companion is selfish. Selfish people will die sooner."

That remark could be called the howling of a loser. I sigh while looking at the sky.

Ignoring your own rules and complaining.....

What can I say, there are more important problems to be worried about.

Representative: "Are you alright? Ren-sama!"

Ren: "Yeah, it's no big deal."

Ren walks off with his companions.....It is a little ironic, it looks like he's walking off with a junior in a guild.

I should stop worry about it.

There are such.....types. Those people who follow rules without question, and those that make them selfishly.

There are those that will take their juniors to a strong hunting field and kill them off, there's no meaning in co-operating.

With that said, I would rather not challenge someone who I might not be able to beat.

Well, that guy puts on a show of hunting alone. That might be the cause of their blind belief in Ren.

They are annoying in games, guys that only seem reliable at first.

When rare items appear those types monopolize the rare items. The only thing you can do is watch while that happens.

MO Type..... an episode is chosen while going through the story, in net games it's possible to enjoy it by solo beating the last boss of the stage..... However when compared to a complete MMO game, the bosses there are terribly stronger.

(Tlnote: Multiplayer Online and Massively Multiplayer Online. **MOタイプ**) I remember attempting such challenges and some one not getting the equipment he wanted.

I remember the complaints of that guy.

His occupation has a strong finisher, and he used a junior to stall for time in order to shoot it.

In addition to challenging first-class dungeons, it was a wipe-fest for members. Those that usually played solo would start complaining.

And then, when participating in fights at a high level, their friends were unable to catch up.

There are some net terms fit that hero-sama. There are various other nicknames as well. Besides, those that don't abide by the rules and slander others are reported to administration.

since I also ran a guild, I remember having to ban a few of those types.

I thought he would be a bit more competent, was it just my misunderstanding?

I didn't think there would be someone besides Motoyasu that would anger Raphtalia so much.

This.....Itsuki might also cause something as well.

Chapter 93: Tavern

Evening that day.

Accompanying an ill-humoured Raphtalia, we entered a bar on the island for a change of mood.

At first Raphtalia had an unhappy expression, but after a few minutes it was replaced with a smile.

The bar was overflowing with vigor and noisy adventurers clamoring over each other.

Some were talking about hunting grounds to raise levels, some were talking about accessories purchased that increase experience gained.

That fraud trader is doing quite well.

By the way, any bar fees for the heroes are paid by the queen.

Such a place truly feels like a different world Firo:”Ah! This place seems fun!”

Since Firo is a bird. Did she take an interest in the music being played here?

Naofumi:”Go for it. Don’t cause any trouble though.”

Firo:”Un!”

Firo runs off with a pitter-patter and starts dancing to the music.

As we sat down on a counter seat, our liquor was provided.

I drank lightly.

U-.....n. Even after coming to a different world, the taste of alcohol doesn’t change.

Feels like juice.

Raphtalia:”This is alcohol.....”

Naofumi:”Well, it should be fine for you Raphtalia, since your body is that of an adults.”

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Somehow, the feeling of Raphtalia putting her mouth gingerly on the cup is one of a child drinking alcohol for the first time.

Raphtalia: ".....It's slightly bitter."

Naofumi: "Yeah, I guess."

Though for me it still feels like juice and water.

I have never gotten drunk.

Raphtalia: "What does Naofumi-sama think of drinking alcohol?"

Naofumi: "Nothing particularly special.....I don't have a hobby of it. I just drink due to social situations."

Raphtalia: "So that's how it is."

Naofumi: "There are people in my world who don't drink it at all, it should be the same in this one."

Ren and Itsuki are minors, but in this different world, they are probably drinking.

Ah..... I discover Itsuki participating in a feast outside the bar.

I thought you were a minor.

Oh well, it's a different world after all. There shouldn't be any laws to punish him.

The possibility of Ren drinking is also quite high.

Naofumi: "It might be good to measure how much you can drink."

Raphtalia: "Right....."

Raphtalia puts the cup to her mouth and gulps down all the alcohol.

Naofumi: "How are you feeling?"

Raphtalia: "Let's see."

I recall a banquet in my former world.

There wasn't a sense of girls particularly avoiding alcohol.

Well, Raphtalia has been accumulating a lot of stress recently, I wonder if this would be good for her.

Since alcohol's original purpose since the primitive ages was to relieve day-to-day fatigue.

She's a patient one after all. I'm quite interested in her real thoughts.

Naofumi: "Hey, don't worry and drink."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

While recommending Raphtalia to drink, the bard's singing could be heard quite clearly.

When I look, Firo's demon form is singing along with the bard's performance.

At first the bard was surprised, but after hearing Firo's unexpectedly good singing, tension started to heat up.

It's fine if they are enjoying it.....

Hm? It seems Motoyasu also notices Firo singing.

Leave it alone. Even you wouldn't pounce on her demon form.

Motoyasu: "Sing in your angel appearance, Firo-chan~!"

Firo: "No!"

.....Alright. Everything seems fine.

After thirty minutes.

Raphtalia: "Can we please raise our levels with Naofumi-sama today?"

After drinking fifteen cups of alcohol, Raphtalia speaks her thoughts to me.

The line of being drunk is crossed ambiguously.

Except for her slightly red cheeks, she appears somewhat sober still.

The alcohol seems considerably strong.

Though it's nice for keeping company, it would be troublesome for the

effects to appear tomorrow.....

The boss of the bar couldn't hide his surprise at how heavy of a drinker Raphtalia is.

Apparently, the demi-humans aren't especially resistant to alcohol.

However..... The grape-like fruits put on the counter are very delicious.

The impression they give me are like condensed grapes, but also have a very refreshing after taste. Yet, after eating one..... My hand inadvertently extends for another.

No Name:"And that's game-!"

A guy that lost arm wrestling fell down over here.

Raphtalia:"Hey! We are talking here, please stop disturbing us."

Raphtalia declares while in a bad mood.

Usually she wouldn't say such things. Is it the effects of alcohol?

Her stress was accumulating quite a lot. The cause may not be just Motoyasu and Ren.

Thinking back, there was almost no rest while peddling, fighting the wave, and living as fugitives.

Venting may be necessary.

No Name:"Ha! Don't complain until you win in an arm-wrestle."

Raphtalia:"Is that so?.....Fine. I'll be your opponent."

Raphtalia rolls back her sleeve and declares her participation in the arm-wrestling match.

Well.....It should be fine. It would be troublesome if some-one got hurt though.

But.....These delicious grapes.

Boss:"Umm....."

The boss of the bar anxiously talks to me.

Naofumi: "Hm?"

Boss: "Is this going to be alright?"

Naofumi: "Well, there shouldn't be a problem."

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

Naofumi: "Yes?"

For some reason the boss of the bar's expression is pale.

Why is he pale?

No name: "Alcohol! Bring more alcohol!"

And with a very loud voice, a man brings a big barrel of grape-like fruits from the corner of the tavern and stirs it.

Is this the secret ingredient? Oh well, the fruits are delicious so it's fine.

The bar continues to bustle with such a feeling.

As for Raphtalia's arm-wrestling match, she insta-killed her opponent.

Who the hell can defeat her in arm wrestling?! And, there's yelling.

Firo is singing enthusiastically with the bard.

It seems this change of pace was good.

While thinking that, I throw more grape-like fruits into my mouth.

No Name: "Ah, What are you doing!"

A man points at me and yells loudly.

The whole bar falls silent in an instant.

No Name: "You, eating the Rukoru Fruit directly, do you want to die!?"

Naofumi: "Haa? Rukoru Fruit?"

Since there was another bunch in the vicinity I threw more into my mouth.

Immediately after, the surroundings grew noisy.

Is there something strange?

Raphtalia: "Na-Naofumi-sama. What did you do?"

It seems Raphtalia has awoke from her drunken state due to the commotion.

Naofumi: "Who knows? I don't understand why these guys are making a commotion."

This taste could become a habit. It might even be my favourite.

Let's have another.

I throw more into my mouth.

No Name: "Ah, You're still eating more!?"

For some reason, the whole bar's attention is focused on me.

Why on earth are you guys so surprised?

Another one is thrown in.

Motoyasu: "What's wrong?"

Motoyasu sees what happens and approaches me.

Naofumi: "I don't know, these unpleasant guys are complaining about me eating this fruit."

Motoyasu: "Interesting.....That fruit must be very expensive right?"

Naofumi: "Is that so? My bad. I'll pay later, so endure it for now."

Shadow will pay the money if I ask. Since the queen is on my side. I can eat in peace.

Boss: "Uhh.....They are indeed expensive.....but that's not the problem....."

The boss of the tavern answers badly.

What is it?

Boss: "Uhh.....Err, The Rukoru Fruit can only be drunk after mixing it with a big barrel of water. When you just eat such a thing....."

Naofumi: "Haa? What are you saying? I won't be fooled easily."

Boss:"No.....The truth is....."

Motoyasu:"Naofumi not getting drunk. Such a lie won't work on me."

While saying that Motoyasu picks up a Rukoru fruit and throws it in his mouth.

Motoyasu:"Oh.....What a rich taste, This is delicious--"

Right after Motoyasu said so, he fell forward and collapsed.

A loud crash resounded throughout the room.

Haha! This guy's eyes turned all white.

Speaking of which, is this fruit dangerous?

No name:"B-Big trouble! The Hero of the Spear-sama ate a Rukoru Fruit and collapsed!"

No name:"Quickly make him vomit it out!"

No name:"Right!"

The bar was thrown into another commotion and Motoyasu was carried off.

Seriously.....Isn't the fun atmosphere completely ruined now?

However, this thing seems to be highly condensed alcohol.

Naofumi:"Raphtalia, you want to eat one?"

Raphtalia:"No....."

Naofumi:"Then, does Firo want one?"

Firo stopped singing, came to me, and brought the fruit close to her mouth.

Suddenly, Firo snapped her mouth shut and took her distance from me.

Firo:"No!"

Naofumi:"You not being a glutton sure is rare."

Firo:"That fruit, It's disgusting!"

Hmm.....For some reason her reaction is very bad.

I didn't think Firo could possibly refuse.

No Name: "It's an Uwabamiiiiiiiiiiii!"

(Tl note: With the power of Rikai-kun and context, I figured out Uwabami ウワバミ means heavy drinker. Google gave me an elephant inside a snake.) No Name: "It's a monster!"

No Name: "Even the god of alcohol would run away with his tail between his legs--!"

The surrounding dissolves into chaos.

This fruit.....Is there some kind of joke?

I won't be fooled.

Naofumi: "I'm sorry for causing a disturbance. Shall we return to the hotel?"

Raphtalia: "O-Okay."

As we are about to leave the bar that was still in an uproar.

Naofumi: "Oh right, the gold will be paid later, a messenger from the Hero of the Shield will pay it, I think."

While saying that to the boss of the tavern, we left the bar and headed back to the hotel to sleep.

Later, there was an exaggerated rumor going around the island.....It was about the Hero of the Shield being a monster in the shape of a person.

Is the power of the Three Heroes Church still alive?

Chapter 94: The Companions of the Bow Hero

Morning the next day.

Naofumi: "Today I'll be heading to Itsuki's place."

Raphtalia: "....."

Raphtalia frowns slightly.

For something to already happen twice, I hope it isn't going to happen a third time.

Since Itsuki has a strong sense of justice. He shouldn't be doing the same thing as Motoyasu and Ren.

Naofumi: "Itsuki only cares about his sense of justice, so don't worry too much. The other guys had their reasons. And it's only for two days....."

Just to be sure, I caution her. I think they would be fighting around that neighborhood.

I'm not saying they should get along. I just hope that they can level normally.

Still, unlike Motoyasu and Ren, the bow can't fight alone.

If I remember correctly, Itsuki's vanguard was his companion with flashy armour.

Raphtalia: "O-Okay. I'll do my best."

Firo: "Have a nice day master~"

After leaving the room, something pulled on my hair.

Shadow: "The Hero of the Spear-dono is taking a rest for today's companion exchange degozaru."

Naofumi: "Did something happen?"

Shadow: "Treatment for Rokuru Fruit poisoning degozaru."

Naofumi: "That fruit huh-....."

Is it due to constitution? I had no problems with it at all.

It seems even in a separate world, I'm still as unaffected as I was in Japan.

Isn't it a little strange that my body's constitution didn't change at all?

Or, maybe the one Motoyasu ate was just laced with poison.

Also.....The reason I am fine might be due to the poison resistance granted from my shield.

Is Motoyasu going to be sleeping all day?

Since it's that guy, there should be a delicious event of being nursed by various women.

His party structure is totally one from a Gal Game as well.

.....I don't doubt that he'll rebound without trouble though.

Shadow:"Due to that, the exchange between Hero of the Sword-dono and Hero of the Spear-dono will just be for tomorrow degozaru."

Naofumi:"Hmph."

It's just right for Motoyasu. As for Ren.....There shouldn't be any changes.

Well, it's good for him since he won't have to deal with Bitch and her party for another day.

Shadow:"I received a strange report saying that the Hero of the Shield-dono can really hold his alcohol degozaru."

Naofumi:"Those fruits were extremely delicious. Did you pay the bar for me?"

Shadow:"It was paid properly degozaru."

Naofumi:"Then it's all good."

Shadow:"There is a rumour on the streets that you became the Hero of the Liquor you know degozaruyo."

I got attached to a strange rumour.

How can I be anything with alcohol if I can't even get drunk.

Naofumi:"That's not me. Stick that title to Motoyasu."

Shadow:"It has already been stuck to Hero of the Shield-dono degozaru. Rather, I am interested in why you are denying it degozaru."

Seriously.....It's gotta be one of those. Either the poison resistance keeps me from getting drunk, or the alcohol here doesn't work on humans from my world.

Shadow:"You have arrived while we were talking degozaru. This is the room where the Hero of the Bow-dono's companions are staying degozaru."

After saying so, Shadow's figure disappears.

Naofumi:"Now then....."

I knock on the door to the room anxiously.

No Name:"Go ahead."

A normal reply came.

It seems Motoyasu's place was the strange one.

The door opened from the inside.

No name:"Please come in. Hero of the Shield-san."

After entering the room, I see Itsuki's companions all in relaxed positions.

Different from Motoyasu's place where they were selfish, they are polite like Ren's.

They are very relaxed as well.

However.....Didn't Motoyasu come earlier?

Naofumi:"I am Iwatani Naofumi, Hero of the Shield, I will be responsible for the last personnel exchange. We will be acting together for two days. Nice to meet you."

I confirm the number of companions Itsuki has while exchanging

greetings.

Hmm.....5 people huh? That guy wearing the armour is crossing his arms patronizingly.

I have a bad feeling about this.

However, when our eyes met, he stopped.

Armour: "Right, nice to meet you too. We are Itsuki-sama's bodyguards, please watch us fight Hero of the Shield-san."

Bodyguards!

An amazing word just appeared.

Crap.....I just laughed. What the hell is that guy doing.

I somehow suppress my smile.

Armour: "Indeed, we five are Itsuki-sama's guards—"

Girl: "I'm sorry! I was asked to go buy something!"

The door behind me flew open and someone ran in.

When I turn around, I see a single girl carrying a tool bag on her back.

Girl: "Eh, Ah—Hero of the Shield-sama has already arrived?"

I wonder how old she is.....Should be around 14 years old? She gives off somewhat of a childish feeling.

She looks to be brought up well, and her genes look good. If it was Motoyasu, he would have hit on her.

She's petite though. Doesn't seem very suitable for combat to me. Does she fight by magic?

Though this voice is familiar.

If I'm not mistaken, she was the one that explained the Tzuvait ▪ Aura that I learnt.

You can't really tell at a glance, but it seems she may be extremely knowledgeable.

No Name: "Rishia is so slow! Hey, introduce yourself."

Rishia: "O-Okay!"

Armour: "The six of us are Itsuki-sama's guards!"

Didn't you just say there were 5 of you a while ago?

It seems one of them went shopping.

The atmosphere somehow feels disturbing.....

No Name: "Then, should we just go for now?"

Armour: "I guess so. We must receive teachings on our battling from the Hero of the Shield-san."

Naofumi: "Ah, sure....."

I wonder. This tension.

I feel that I can't keep up with it.

It seems there is no need to prepare anything, thanks to that girl going shopping earlier for all the necessary items.

As our party sets out, a feeling of anxiety remains.

When passing by the market, I witness a huge crowd gathering around the swindling merchant.

It seems he's doing quite good.

We got on the ship for transportation but.....

The ship is quite small for the seven of us.

Well, there isn't any space to walk, but since it's low-tide we should be fine.

The coral reef sure is beautiful.....

No Name: "Rishia, move close to the edge more."

Rishia: "A-Anymore and I'll fall over."

What is it.

Is the child-like Rishia's position very weak.....?

Before long, following a big wave a loud splash was heard.

Rishia: "GaboGabo....."

(Tlnote: I assume she is drowning, as I do not know proper drowning noises besides Glug Glug or something along those lines. I will be sticking with the Romaji. ガボガボ")

Sure enough, Rishia fell into the sea.

No Name: "She fell!"

I grasp Rishia's child-like hand and pull her back on the ship.

Armour: "Seriously.....you are bothering the Hero of the Shield-san!"

Naofumi: "Nah, the reason she fell was cause of you guys."

Since the boat is narrow, there should be no problem for her small child-like stature.

Frankly, these other guys are taking up way too much space.

Naofumi: "Perhaps if you guys remove your armour and equipment, there would be more room."

That flashy armour is taking up the most space. What on earth is up with this guy.

Rishia: "It can't be helped."

Naofumi: "What, can't be helped....."

What is going on.

Anyway, I pass Rishia a towel so that she can wipe of her child-like body.

(Tlnote: Yes he is calling her small alot, I'm feeling a little creeped out as well.) Rishia: "T-Thank you very much!"

Naofumi: "Make sure not to catch a cold."

Rishia: "O-Okay!"

She seems like a timid child.

The ship arrived at the island, and we got off.

This place seems to be full of hunting grounds

Seven people is a lot.

Naofumi: "Well then, the question now is, how do you guys usually fight with Itsuki?"

Armour: "Hero of the Shield-san. Can you do something about how you call Itsuki-sama?"

The guy who the flashy armour has an attitude and asks me.

This guy again?

Naofumi: "Wha?"

Armour: "Please, at least add some honorics when saying his name."

.....What did you just say?

Whatever I call Itsuki is up to me to decide. To think someone wants to correct me and tell me to add honorifics?

It seems that they are extremely loyal.

Naofumi: "Let me warn you, I am the Hero of the Shield, and I will be treated the same as the other heroes. Why should I have to address him like that?"

Armour: "Incorrect, Hero of the Shield-san you are not as active as Itsuki-sama, therefore Hero of the Shield-san must show respect to Itsuki-sama."

What a complaint.

It's an irrational argument. What this guy is getting at.....When looking around I see that, excluding one person, everyone has the same opinion.

Furthermore, that one person is the child-like Rishia.

I don't know what their real intentions are, but this is quite problematic.

Naofumi: ".....What do you think you're saying?"

In respect to activity.....Since Itsuki is operating under cover all the time, wouldn't his activities not be recognized?

He's been going on a journey of social reforms, but there are barely any rumors.

Naofumi: "Activity? Isn't Itsuki's reputation as a hero the plainest? I haven't heard anything about the Hero of the Bow's activities anywhere."

Armour: "Bastard.....You're just a criminal."

In an instant, Shadow appears behind him with a dagger to his throat.

Shadow: "Hero of the Shield-dono is not guilty degozaru. By the authority of the queen, anyone ridiculing Hero of the Shield-dono will be punished accordingly degozaru."

Armour's face is full of surprise from the sudden events.

Just like Bitch, his eyes are swimming.

He's just being warned for slandering though.

Shadow: "Especially since denouncing Hero of the Shield-dono is a felony degozaru. The act of betraying a hero's trust is something that must never be done degozaru."

It's fine to think it, but don't say it.

Oh well, did Itsuki's companions not believe in my innocence yet?

Itsuki's sense of justice is unusually strong. Did his narrow-mindedness infect his companions as well?

Armour: "Gu....."

Armour glares at me bitterly.

Naofumi: "Hey, I think this guy wants to return first."

Shadow: "Hero of the Shield-dono saying something like that is troublesome degozaruga."

Naofumi: "Well....."

It's just one person not raising his level.

I think it would be better for our hunting as well.

It seems I have become a synonym for evil somehow.

This guy has probably been with Itsuki for too long, he has been brainwashed.

Shadow: "At any rate, I expect you to answer properly when asked degozaruyo!"

Armour: "Tch!"

After Shadow disappeared, Armour clicked his tongue in vexation.

Naofumi: "Hey, let's talk for now."

Armour: ".....When we fight, Itsuki-sama is always defending us from the rear."

Naofumi: "I see-....."

Well, he does fight with a bow after all.

Do the people in this world even understand the advantage of Long-ranged combat?

When anything life-threatening happens, Itsuki will always save them.

Though I think he's only attack at long-distances when he gains favour, I'll refrain from asking now.

Rishia: "L-Let's just go defeat some demons for now!"

Rishia said aloud shyly, we began to talk one after another.

And then, we encounter a demon.

Armour jumps in front, and his companions follow him.

Armour: "Now! Hero of the Shield-san. Attack it."

Naofumi: "Why are you depending on me suddenly?"

Would Itsuki nock his bow here?.....

Naofumi: "Use your head a little, think about my job."

Armour takes some damage from the demon's attack to buy time for his

companions.

Meanwhile, his companions are attacking the demon.

I get that they have co-operation, but with me here the strategy is wrong.

Naofumi: "You, stand back."

I tell Armour to get back, and I stand in front of the demon.

It's still small fry. It's not even itchy.

Armour: "Gu....."

Armour voices his vexation.

Are you envious at how calm I am?

I think you being able to use a weapon is even more enviable.

Naofumi: "And then, Itsuki would get the final attack with the bow."

Armour: "Right, even a little of his power does major damage."

Well.....It's just an average way of fighting.

However, it feels like these guys are a human wall.

No Name2: "Itsuki-sama has the most outstanding offensive power among us all. Our role is to maximize his power."

A different warrior in armour answers.

There is no reason to approach if he can attack from long-distance though.

In short, wouldn't this make Itsuki have to be careful of friendly fire by mistake?

Rishia: "Afterwards, I assist in recovery."

Naofumi: "What about magic support?"

They can't be just dealing with Itsuki alone.

Naofumi: "I guess I'll do it if the occasion demands it."

Rishia: "M-Me too!"

Well, that's about it.

Their co-operation with me isn't the same as Ren's part, but at least it works.

.....Though the degree of co-operation from Ren's party is unnecessary.

Naofumi: "Alright, since the defence can be taken care of by me, you guys in armour just focus on attacking."

Armour: "Can you take it all?"

Armour declares with a provoking feeling.

This guy again?

Does Armour have a grudge against me or something?

Naofumi: "Of course, I don't have to act like I'm uninjured, unlike you."

There is no need to be cautious against small fry of this level.

In the first place, I could fully block the pope's all out attack.

This guy was there too, so he should understand.

Armour: "Bastard....."

For some reason this guy in flashy armour has quite a lot of pride.

He complains whenever I do anything.

Though I say that, our hunt proceeded without problems.....Not.

Random Adventurer: "You bastard! To kill-steal the demon that I knocked down! Your right to live is forfeit--"

Rishia: "Hii!?"

Armour dealt the finishing blow to a demon that a random adventurer was fighting.

No Name: "Don't break the rules of the island! Our bad, This guy just had a slight misunderstanding."

Enough already, I just want to return soon!

This is as difficult as Motoyasu's party.

The lecture on our first day here was completely forgotten about.

We were warned to never steal a kill on a demon that another adventurer is fighting.

This guy seems to be convinced that he is a special existence.

What the hell did Itsuki teach.....

Naofumi: "My head feels heavy....."

And then, after fighting a while, I noticed that the child-like Rishia fights very clumsily.

When I think she would stab the enemy with a sword, she recites magic and casts recovery on someone who is injured.

Though, it was already too late.

It feels like she doesn't have a grasp on her own role. I should pay close attention.....

Armour: "Rishia, Move forward more!"

Armour: "Rishia, Fall back!"

Armour: "Rishia, Recovery. Hurry up!"

Armour: "Rishia, Recite magic!"

Rishia: "O-Okay!"

I gave up thinking about it, since her bumbling about was always late.

Chapter 95: The Disease Of Justice

It was around noon, so I went to get something to eat, but...

“Rishia! It’s time for lunch” (Armor)(TL:lunch is said in English) “Y-yes!” (Rishia)

The armored guy orders the childish Rishia to bring out lunch.

He’s acting quite high and mighty. And why English?

Well, my shield is currently acting as a translator, I shouldn’t worry about his phrasing.

“You can do that much by yourself” (Rishia)

“What are you saying? In this party, you are the newest. You’re assigned to odd jobs.” (Armor) “Ha...!?” (Naofumi)

No coherent words escape my mouth.

What? Newest?

Eh?

The Hero party system member system may be organized like a company, but it’s a bit different, isn’t it?

Rishia is distributing lunch among her party members.

There also seems to be a Hierarchy she has to follow when giving out the food. Each time, she stops in front of a different person, bows, says their name and goes on.

I brought my own lunch, but with Itsuki’s comrades, the portions seem to be decreasing as Rishia continues to distribute.

The first person is the one with flashy armor. He gets a large piece of meat still on the bone, and a sandwich with another large piece of meat in it.

The second person looks like a soldier. He gets a sandwich and a piece of grilled fish.

The third person...

And so it went on.

From the remaining bag, Rishia takes out some fruit, and starts eating them.

What the hell is this, can't they just share food evenly?

This is...

"Do you have a hierarchy going on here?" (Naofumi)

In response to my question, the other heroes nod as if stating the obvious.

"Of course, our positions are decided by how much we are trusted by Itsuki, and our contributions to the group. Isn't it great? Does the hero of the Shield wish to hear more about Itsuki-sama's greatness?." (No Name)

"No, not particularly." (Naofumi)

"Don't be like that, after we met Itsuki, the first time we awakened to the voice of Justice was-" (Armor) And the companions of the bow went into a lengthy story about the Hero of the Bow's accomplishments, praising him at every corner.

I don't remember the contents of the story, and I don't want to either.

The stories were all about him hiding from the public eye and purging evildoers.

And about how through these actions, Itsuki convinced his party that he was the Hero who would save the world.

Is this supposed to be a religious cult?

He already seems to be their Messiah.

Anyways, here is my analysis.

The fact that Itsuki is always punishing evildoers leads to the belief that these people are always on the side of good.

And thus anyone who opposes them can immediately be labelled as evil. This eventually led to their current Tyrannical behavior.

Hmm... I believe there was a name for this type of person.

In a movie I saw a while ago, a foreign police officer continually defeated evildoers. Is he delusionally trying to be like that?

The police would be in big trouble if those people actually existed.

I can't remember the name of the movie now. I believe it was derived from...

As no large criminals were at large, his twisted sense of justice would cause him to issue the death penalty to small scale sinners as well.

He would then kill them, giving the excuse that 'they resisted'.

"This is tiring..." (Naofumi)

Even after we had finished hunting, Itsuki's companions continue to speak of his accomplishments at the inn.

I didn't really level up.

My attacks became dull after I had learned about their hierarchical behavior.

I'm not getting any good organizational advice either, am I.

They even continued talking when I was in the bath. I am sick of it.

"Fu..." (Naofumi)

After the bath, I go outside to look around.

More like I can't stand to hear those people anymore.

It's quite nice out here. I think I'll hide until they're finished.

Is what I thought when I hear footsteps behind me. I turn around.

And see the childish Rishia coming back with a bag from the Island's convenience store.

"Ah, It's the hero of the Shield" (Rishia)

"Yeah, Why are you here." (Naofumi)

"Um... I was sent out to buy stuff." (Rishia)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

Because she's at the bottom of the pyramid?

I'm surprised she can stand this environment that is getting infinitely close to bullying.

She's treated like a pack-mule. She didn't even get to introduce herself.

This is like a company with Itsuki at the top, and this girl at the bottom.

I've been through a lot, so I can kinda understand. I'm also a little interested.

"Hey." (Naofumi)

"Yes?" (Rishia)

"Why do you remain in that party?" (Naofumi)

It's probably uncomfortable, and they are a group that will do anything to accomplish their 'justice'. I would never be able to remain in that group.

I won't ask her to come to my party, but both Motoyasu's and Ren's would be more bearable than this.

"There's nothing I can do... I mean I just got here." (Rishia) "I'm asking why you don't leave despite everything they do to you." (Naofumi) "Ah, that's because I have been saved by Itsuki before." (Rishia) "Is that so?" (Naofumi)

"Yes..." (Rishia)

Rishia began to explain the circumstances surrounding her joining of Itsuki's party.

To put it simply, Rishia was the daughter of a fallen nobleman.

Her family had little money and just barely scraped through.

The village was ruled by a Noble family that was obtaining their funds through illegal means and Rishia's parent tried to sabotage their operations.

But all of their money was secretly taken by those people. All the villagers who also raised complaints against the noble family were

silenced.

And then... as Rishia's family had no money left to pay taxes, the Noblemen proposed that they could give Rishia in place of money. They threatened that they would kill her family if her parents didn't comply.

It seemed like a situation that Itsuki would pounce on readily.

That evening, Itsuki and his companions infiltrated the Villainous Nobles' Mansion and used the authority of the Hero to put an end to their dealings and save Rishia.

It seemed that Rishia felt greatly in debt to her saviors, and decided to join Itsuki's party.

"I... really want to repay Itsuki for saving me." (Rishia)

From my point of view, everything that Itsuki is doing is pointless, however, from Rishia's point of view, he must seem like a true hero.

I clearly felt Rishia's gratitude towards Itsuki in her story.

She had much more purpose than those other members who were just feeding their egos by playing hero.

"I see, so you have it tough." (Naofumi)

"Yes. It's not going very well." (Rishia)

"From the way I see it, you are more suited to play rear guard."
(Naofumi) She seems to be adept in magic, and on the front line, everyone treats her as a nuisance.

Her companions are also to blame. If she can use a sword, cast magic and perform healing, shouldn't they be making better use of her?

This may be because the party has too many members. No one notices the specialties of an individual member.

"I've never had any talent, I scare easily and I'm a klutz... If I had to pick something, I guess magic is my specialty, but Itsuki prefers members who take the vanguard, so when classing up I selected a class with higher close-combat skills." (Rishia) "... " (Naofumi)

So because she has ignored her strengths and focused on her weaknesses she has been unable to improve.

While Itsuki's fighting style does involve everyone being on the front line, if you throw an amateur on the front line, there's no point.

"Try not to be a Jack of all Trades, but a Master of all Trades" (Naofumi) (TL: He is saying don't be halfhearted. If you're going to do them all, master them all.) "Yes!" (Rishia)

She seems to have a lot of heart despite her size, she should be fine.

I had fallen to the very bottom before, and had crawled back to where I am with my own strength.

If Rishia works hard, she should become a useful party member.

"I'm sorry for keeping you for so long. I'll return with you so the others don't get mad." (Naofumi) "Thank you." (Rishia)

And that's how that night came to a close.

Armor and the others tried to reprimand Rishia for being late, so I had to come in-between them.

The next day was just one long headache.

Why must I put up with this. Like a curse, rumor had spread that a merchant was selling fraudulent goods. Itsuki's companions were discussing how to deal with the situation.

By the way, I told them that I had already dealt with the fraudulent merchant and that he had had a change of heart, so the curtain had closed on that problem.

If it was just me, I doubt they would have believed me, but Shadow helped corroborate my story.

It took a while before they seemed satisfied with my explanation.

...

"For the love of..." (Naofumi)

We were hunting Karma Rabbit Familia in the deeper parts of the

Island.

They weren't strong, but they weren't exactly weak.

I kept the monsters contained, so defeating them wasn't exactly difficult, but this party's attack power was way below expectations.

The party seemed to be based upon acting as a barrier to allow Itsuki to attack from afar, so its damage output was severely lacking.

If I was with Rafatalia or Firo, it would only take a few minutes to defeat these monsters.

I finally completed the conditions to unlock the Karma Rabbit Familia Shield.

—

Karma Rabbit Familia Shield

Abilities (Sealed)... Equipment Bonus, Scan (Small)

—

I'm not sure if he simply disliked my fighting style, but Armor left the party.

If Rafatalia or Firo had a problem, they would probably tell it to me before leaving.

After Armor left, the soldier-like guy began to act strange. He initially took on a high and mighty attitude, but he eventually left the party as well.

This continued for a while until the only one left was Rishia.

Of course, this allowed Rishia, who could take on any role to shine. By the time the sun reached its peak in the sky, we had safely finished hunting and had boarded the ferry back to the previous island.

Not that I care at this point, but Armor and friends are on the same ship.

I'm not sure if they think that Itsuki will be mad at them, but they seem to not want to return to the inn.

Talking to them will be a pain. I look at the ocean and calm my heart.

These two days were the worst.

I didn't even get much information on Itsuki and I wasn't able to recruit anybody.

But finally this crappy Information Exchange is over...

As I stare at the sea, I remember the events of the morning.

That's right... This morning Rishia gave me a piece of ore.

She said it was her way of saying thanks for listening to her story last night.

At the time, I had thought, 'As expected of nobles, even if they have fallen, they still raised such a nice girl', however now that I look back at it, her behavior back then was quite strange.

"It's a jewel that Itsuki regularly collected, though I don't know its use."
(Rishia) Is what she said.

At first I thought it was a material for modifying accessories, but if he regularly collects it, it must be for daily use.

Once I get back, I have to meet with the other heroes.

I guess I'll ask Motoyasu or Ren at that time.

AUTHOR NOTE (TL: Yes, the actual author): Note, The mental state Naofumi is referring to is called Dirty Harry Syndrome, I did not write it as it is the name of a movie.

Chapter 96: The Bow Hero & My Companions

I returned to the main island on boat by the afternoon.

.....I pray that Raphtalia isn't angry.

As I pray and walk back to the hotel, I see that as usual, Firo is waiting for me at the front.

Again?.....While thinking that, I notice Itsuki sitting nearby with a fed up expression.

Firo:"Hey, come on, heeey. Why? Whyy?. Come on"

Itsuki:"No.....I am-"

Firo:""I am" isn't an answer. Tell me. Hey, come on, heeey."

So, contrary to my expectations, instead of Raphtalia, Firo is constantly inquiring Itsuki about something.

What is it? I have no idea what is going on.

Itsuki:"Ah, Naofumi-san!"

When Itsuki see me, he approaches with Firo is still clinging to him, and points at her.

Itsuki:"Please hurry up and take this child back. Ever since I got back here, she has not stopped barraging me with questions."

Firo:"It would be bad to leave since master told me to stay with you all the way while he wasn't here right? Anyway, tell me the real reason, Hey, come on, heeey. Why won't you tell me?"

Firo is extremely curious about something and continues barraging Itsuki with questions.

This is the first time I've seen Firo like this.

Naofumi:"Errr, did Raphtalia tell you to pester him?"

Firo:"NNn~ It's different. Firo just wants to know. Though after that,

Raphtalia onee-chan got mad.”

Naofumi:”.....So it happened after all.”

I expected this after seeing Itsuki’s party.

The leader of Armour and them is Itsuki after all. Every action follows his code of justice.

Itsuki:”This girl did more than that other one who left half-way, but she keeps bothering me with the same question.”

Firo:”Come on, tell me. Heeeeey”

Armour:”This bird! To think you have the nerve to annoy Itsuki-sama.”

Firo:”Hm~? You want to play with Firo?”

Itsuki:”Stop it. She is not someone you can easily beat, she is the companion of a hero afterall. So you shouldn’t be fighting.”

Itsuki warns the flashy Armour who is about to go berserk.

Well, to be honest, it’s pretty obvious that the end result would be Firo toying with Armour.

In the worse case, we would be seeing dirty fireworks being launched. I guess Itsuki would also know what would happen to Armour if he got kicked by Firo as well.

Naofumi:”I’ll warn you now. What did you do to Raphtalia?”

She got angry, even after I warned her to turn a blind eye to his sense of justice.

Though, Raphtalia shouldn’t have snapped over something like that.

I’m not saying Raphtalia is at fault, maybe she just lacks some patience.

Even so, regardless of what Raphtalia may or may not have done, I won’t hold back venting on his group.

Since Armour and his buddies have boycotted me wonderfully.

Naofumi:”Also, make sure you manage your companions a little better. The only one who fought seriously to the end was Rishia.”

Armour:"Th-That's not it! We just couldn't fight well together with the Hero of the Shield-san."

Naofumi:"No matter how you word it, it's the same thing."

Itsuki:"It's the same here! What is with your companions?!"

.....Oh my, it seems that we have an unproductive and mutual dispute with each other on our hands.

Frankly, I'm getting tired of dealing with Armour.

Naofumi:"For the time being, let's not try to decide who is in the wrong. Since we are both calling each other's companions terrible."

Itsuki:".....Fine. then it's over, but I request your help..... without you, it seems that stopping Firo-san is impossible."

That's quite rare, since he is the Itsuki with an unusually strong sense of justice.

Is Firo's question that hard to answer?

Itsuki:"This matter is merely on hold. We will meet and talk about this tonight."

Naofumi:"We'll talk then. Since your companions were terrible as well."

It seems that the situation is too tense to exchange information.

I just pray that I won't be blamed for this situation by the other heroes.

Firo:"Heeeey, He still hasn't told me yet."

Naofumi:"Firo, give it up. No matter how much you ask that guy, he won't answer."

Firo:"Muu-....."

Really.....It seems Firo really wants to know.....

I'm quite worried about what happened.

Naofumi:"So? Where is Rapthalia?"

Firo:"Over there."

Firo points to the same location as before.

Haah.....Good grief. Is it my fault that all the heroes are causing problems?

Just like before, as Raphtalia was waiting for me, her tail is all puffed up.

Naofumi: "I'm back."

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama!"

As soon as Raphtalia hears my voice, she starts running to me.

Naofumi: ".....What in the world happened?"

Raphtalia: "Actually--"

I don't really want to hear it, but Raphtalia began talking about the staff exchange with Itsuki.

While feeling uneasy, Raphtalia was waiting for Itsuki.

Firo: "Who is it today?"

Raphtalia: "It's going to be the Hero of the Bow, Itsuki-sama."

Firo: "Heeh-..... That person with the strange hair is coming."

Raphtalia: "Seems like it."

It seems in consideration for me, she decided that she would try not to get mad at Itsuki and endure it.

Itsuki came later than Ren, but earlier than Motoyasu.

There was an audible door knock.

Raphtalia: "Go ahead."

Itsuki: "Excuse me."

After knocking on the door politely, Itsuki entered the room.

Itsuki: "I am the Hero of the Bow, Kawasumi Itsuki. My best regards for these next two days."

Raphtalia: "Yes, and my name is Raphtalia. Please teach us well, Hero of

the Bow-sama.”

Firo:”Firo.”

The self-introductions ended simply.

At that time, out of all the heroes, she had the best impression from his politeness.

It’s like she is saying I’m bad.

.....Am I actually? Though I was rarely ever courteous, since I would have been taken advantage of.

Itsuki:”Shall we go level up at once?”

Raphtalia:”Yes, preparations are already done.”

Firo:”Yeah! Let’s go-”

Thus, Raphtalia departed with Itsuki.

It seems that before arriving at the hunting grounds, Itsuki had a meeting with Raphtalia regarding the methods they would use to fight.

Well, since time travelling is wasted anyway.

Raphtalia and Firo explained the characteristics of their finishers, and their levels, while also explaining what types of demons they have fought on the island.

Itsuki wanted to gather a large quantity of demons in one area. then he would special skills to defeat them.

That was it. It seems that besides me, Raphtalia found that Itsuki was a hero worthy of respect.

There were also some stories about his strong sense of justice too, but that should be natural for heroes.

She said that, it didn’t take to too long to discover how big of a mistake that was.

Itsuki:”Alright, Raphtalia-san, you guys can do quite a lot, so we should be able to go quite far.”

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

And so, they advanced towards the middle of the island.

Itsuki: "I found a demon. I'll pull it so get ready to fight!"

Raphtalia: "Eh?"

Itsuki nocked his bow and shot an arrow at a demon that was quite far away.

The arrow hit the demon right-on, and it started approaching, but.....

Adventurer: "Wha?"

An adventurer who was trying to fight the demon watched it go with an astonished expression.

Adventurer: "Ummm....."

Itsuki: "Do you have a problem? Didn't we take the first attack?"

As a matter of fact Itsuki answered what Raphtalia and the adventurer have been thinking.

The rules weren't broken, but it's still quite provoking.

This behaviour is called "Mobbing" in net games. Whether it's acceptable or unacceptable depends on the game, so I can't make any sweeping statements, speaking of which, wasn't Itsuki under the impression that this was a console game world?

Well, it's not something worth worrying about. Or can he still not tell the difference between this and a game?

Adventurer: "Nevermind....."

It's not a violation of the rules. However, while they were thinking of it, the demon approached and Raphtalia attacked it with her sword.

Since it was a weak demon, it was easily killed.

Firo also slaughtered the demons that Itsuki attracted with his bow in one shot.

Though, Raphtalia felt that Itsuki's attacks unexpectedly lacked power.

The time he attacked was little as well.....

By the way, I didn't know, but it seems Itsuki's quiver endlessly produces arrows for his bow, the arrows appear simply by tightening his grip on the bow.

While deep in thought, they kept advancing.

Wherever they went, Itsuki would do a preemptive attack on the demons that any adventurers were trying to go for.

Raphtalia:"Umm, Itsuki-sama.....Could you please not perform those actions against the demons adventurers want to fight?"

Itsuki:"What are you saying? It's the law that we can kill it since we attacked first. Even the lord of this island said that there are too many demons and it's troubling, so we are fighting any demons we come across."

Raphtalia:"But....."

Itsuki:"A demon is coming. Please fight."

Raphtalia felt that something was off.

And then, while Raphtalia was in the middle of thinking.

She felt that Itsuki's attack power and the times he attacks is very little.

Raphtalia learnt Itsuki's level earlier. Since 75 was quite high Raphtalia decided to trust him.

Compared to Motoyasu and Ren, that attack power was too low.

While approaching the center of the island her convictions changed to doubt.

Demons called Karma Squirrel Familiar appeared.

They were attacked by a group of small black demon squirrels.

They were hard to fight due to their quick attacks and numbers. Raphtalia and Firo both fought, but it seems that these demons have a habit of calling their companions.

For any one that got knocked down, another one take its place.

Furthermore, the reinforcements weren't just from the same family, they also called in high level demons like the Magenta Frog.

Raphtalia: "Itsuki-sama! Hurry up.....use your area of effect attacks."

Itsuki: "Understood! Please wait a second! Arrow Shower!"

Itsuki aims his bow to the sky and shoots an arrow.

The arrow flew up and started multiplying itself, and rained down.....But it wasn't enough to defeat the Karma Squirrel Familiars.

Raphtalia: "Tei!"

It couldn't be helped due to low attack power.

While following Itsuki's strategy, Raphtalia continued to exert herself and fight.

"Firo is the origin of power. Firo has read and deciphered a law of nature. Blow them all away with a raging tornado!"

"Tzuvait ▪ Tornado!"

With perfect timing, Firo sends a bunch of demons flying.

Though, the disadvantage due to numbers is still prevalent. Raphtalia expected that if I had been there to trap all the demons in a prison, she could have blown them all away with magic.

At the time, Raphtalia was about to receive a serious attack from a demon when--

Itsuki: "Falcon ▪ Strike!"

At that moment, Itsuki fired off an arrow that turned into a bird of flame and instantly destroyed the demon that was about to attack Raphtalia.

Furthermore.

Itsuki: "Fire Arrow Squall!"

Arrows of flame started pouring around the vicinity, and all the demons

were wiped out.

Itsuki: "Are you alright?"

Raphtalia: "Y-yes....."

While looking at Itsuki with a skeptical gaze, Raphtalia looked around at the demon corpses.

In that instant, Raphtalia was ashamed to admit she thought Itsuki was cool.

Why? I think, at that moment he should have been naturally cool.

Raphtalia: "I was saved."

Itsuki: "That's good."

Firo: ".....Hey"

Firo pecked Itsuki's back with her beak.

Itsuki then turned around to look at Firo.

And Firo asks Itsuki with a face full doubt.

Firo: "Hey, why did you hold back your power?"

Chapter 97: Lies

“Eh?” (Naofumi)

At that time, Rafatalia was explaining things to me. I felt an unexpected aura coming from her.

Firo also has some aptitude for sensing presences, and she backs away.

Well, it's more like she lives by her instincts, she can interpret subtle signs.

Rafatalia was able to link all the unfortunate events that occurred until now, and make deductions based on that.

“W-what could you be talking about?” (Itsuki)

This is that, isn't it?

Itsuki did nothing until Rafatalia and Firo were in trouble. It's like that...

In action anime, when the hero's comrades were mere millimeters from death, the main character would make a flashy entrance and rescue them. That situation comes to mind.

I was an Otaku before I came to this world, I did think those scenes were cool But those scenes don't really exist in reality.

“Do you think Firo didn't realize it? From the start, the bow person was watching without doing anything wasn't he?” (Firo) “I'm asking what you mean by doing nothing.” (Itsuki) “The spear guy, the sword guy and master have relaxed before, but the bow guy was wa~y more relaxed. But whenever we were about to get hit, the arrow would come flying out.” (Firo) Firo extends her wings and gestures to show a rain of arrows.

So Itsuki was loafing around waiting for the moment to act cool.

“I'm saying, I wasn't doing nothing!” (Itsuki)

“Then why didn't you use the skill you used before again?” (Firo) “T-that's because of my SP and the cool-down time...” (Itsuki) “Shouldn't you have thought of that beforehand? I think that would make fighting

easier.” (Firo) Firo’s inquisition began.

Rafatalia, who had pretty much reached the same conclusion, does not stop Firo.

“Firo knows. Bow person, you didn’t prepare any arrows until Rafatalia-oneechan was getting into a pinch.” (Firo) “Wait, what?” (Rafatalia)

“You’re wrong. There’s no way I would do that.” (Itsuki) “Then why didn’t you fire any arrows?” (Firo)

(TL: Firo is asking questions like a child, you know when small children just ask long series of questions without visible animosity.) “No, I did fire them” (Itsuki)

“No, the gap between your skills this time was longer than the gap between the previous skills” (Firo) Firo corners Itsuki with a barrage of questions.

And from Firo’s mouth, complaints come one after the other.

“At first I thought that it was just that sort of weapon, but back then, I realized I was wrong. Hey, hey, why is Bow Person holding back?” (Firo) “And I’m saying that I wasn’t holding back!” (Itsuki) “And whenever Oneechan seemed like she was going to get hit, why did you look a little happy?” (Firo) “...W-what?” (Itsuki)

I was getting close to my boiling point, and was about to release my frustration. I think Rafatalia sensed this.

Firo’s childish inquisition shows no signs of stopping.

“You’re wrong. Why is this child saying such things?” (Itsuki) “Hey, Hey, why won’t you tell Firo?” (Firo)

Firo continues to pressure Itsuki, while tilting her head with a face full of curiosity Finally, Rafatalia, who has also had enough, joins Firo in her questioning.

“... If you could shoot attacks that powerful, why didn’t you do that from the beginning?” (Rafatalia) “And I’m saying there was a problem with my SP and cool-down time so...” (Itsuki) “We had bought you plenty of time

to recover SP. If you had shot an arrow at the beginning, the previous battle would have been much easier. Also, if you are that strong, why don't you shoot your arrows, do you have any intention of winning?" (Rafatalia) "I-I have my reasons. Every time I use my bow, I lose SP." (Itsuki) "Hey, Hey, why won't you tell us the truth? The Bow Person is lying. Firo can tell." (Firo) "... Is what she says. What do you have to say for yourself?" (Rafatalia) Rafatalia is so angry that I can sense Magic power seeping out of her.

I think Itsuki could sense Rafatalia's anger as well.

"When you shoot your bow, do you really lose something?" (Rafatalia) "Y-yes" (Itsuki)

"Well, if something is draining it should also replenish. Naofumi told me that SP recovers quite quickly" (Rafatalia) Even if it drains that quickly, there should be a limit.

He should have enough SP to fire off consecutive skills to some extent. But there's no reason for him to hold back at this point.

"Hey, Hey, are you possibly trying to act cool like the Spear guy?" (Firo) "Y-you're wrong. Do I look like someone who would show off like Motoyasu" (Itsuki) Itsuki's proud demeanor has vanished, and he is desperately denying the accusations.

But the perceptive Rafatalia only saw confirmation of her statements.

"Um, you know. I thought that because whenever me or Oneechan seem to get into a pinch, your eyes seem to sparkle." (Firo) Firo points her finger at Itsuki and strikes a pose. Her eyes are also sparkling (TL: They describe what seems to be the OBJECTION! Pose here) Rafatalia is staring holes into Itsuki.

"And when we get out of pinches by ourselves, you seem to make a sad face and you put down your bow." (Firo) "There's no way I would do that, I'm a hero, you know!" (Itsuki) "Then tell me, how much SP does each skill take, how much cool-down time do you need?" (Rafatalia) "Um... Each shot takes around half of my SP, and the refill time is 15 minutes" (Itsuki) "Your eyes are looking down. Bow Person, that's the same face

you were making when you were lying.” (Firo) Rafatalia’s hate is only growing.

It seems she will cut him down if he lies again.

Well, Rafatalia probably won’t go that far...

“I-it’s not a lie! What could this child be saying?” (Itsuki) “... Then the next time we meet that enemy, please shoot it in the beginning. It’s already been 15 minutes, so you should be able to do it. We’ll watch over you.”

“What the hell are you saying?!” (Itsuki)

“I want to check if you’re telling the truth. I believe in you. Please use your arrows until your SP runs out. After that, retreat to a safe area, and we’ll help you.” (Firo) “D-do you plan on making me fight alone!?” (Itsuki)

“There’s no problem, we want to see just how strong the Hero of the Bow really is. The Hero of the Spear did this too.” (Rafatalia) And so, Rafatalia pressured Itsuki into fighting.

And, as if on command, another Karma Squirrel Famillia appeared.

Rafatalia went into hiding and began counting with her own heart rate.

The Karma Squirrel Familia Charged, and Itsuki fared quite well... He unleashed a large rain of arrow on the incoming enemy. It dealt a lot of damage.

“That attack was much more potent than any of the ones he used when fighting with us.” (Rafatalia) “T-twas a coincidence... how strange.” (Itsuki)

“Your arrows had much more power behind them than before.” (Firo) Firo continued to corner Itsuki

And then...

「Falcon▪Strike!」

In one shot, every single one of the Karma Squirrel Familia lay down

dead.

Itsuki wipes off his sweat.

“You’re out.” (Rafatalia)

“Hah?” (Itsuki)

“It has only been 6 minutes since you last attacked. Even for exaggeration, this is too much.” (Rafatalia) “A-are you sure it’s not your imagination?” (Itsuki)

“That’s enough. I can no longer trust a liar like you.” (Rafatalia) And with that, Rafatalia left the party.

“Wha-Are you just going to leave like that?” (Itsuki) “As long as you lie, I cannot leave the back line to you, and I cannot fight in the front to protect you.” (Rafatalia) The road back had little danger, and Rafatalia was easily able to return by herself.

Firo was still curious about why Itsuki was holding back, so she stayed in the party and kept pestering him.

“Oneechan, Firo will fight with the Bow Person.” (Firo) “Yes, that will probably bring less trouble to Naofumi. But you shouldn’t trust that man.” (Rafatalia) “Understood!” (Firo)

And that’s how, in just the first day, Rafatalia left the party and went to level on her own.

She vented all her anger on the poor monsters, and eventually calmed down.

It seems she hates lies.

And Rafatalia is a warrior, she hates people who hold back.

...

“In just an hour, you lied to your comrades. I can’t believe you. I have no desire to leave my back to your bow.” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia confronts Itsuki and says as such.

Her gaze is colder than ice.

To be more specific, her eyes are dead. (TL: imagine Yandere stare) This is the first time I have seen Rafatalia like this.

“Itsuki-sama! What do you think you are saying to Itsuki-sama!? I won’t allow this!” (Armor) An angry Armor tries to go after Rafatalia

Rafatalia stares at him expressionlessly.

“I hate people who care for nothing but their pride.” (Rafatalia)
Rafatalia grabs Armor’s extended arm and squeezes it tightly.

His gauntlets are letting out a metallic creaking sound.

I am honestly afraid right now.

That’s just how angry Rafatalia is right now.

“The hell, this girl is ridiculously strong.” (Armor) Despite her looks, Rafatalia does possess high strength.

If you take away her self-control, this is what will happen.

“Please leave it at that.” (Naofumi)

At my command, Rafatalia stares at Itsuki for one last time, and finally lets go.

Chapter 98: Evaluation Session

Itsuki: "St-Stop it."

Armour: "But Itsuki-sama!"

Itsuki: "The truth is different, she is only judging me. I'd prefer if we could settle this opportunity to settle in a peaceful manner."

Armour: "I-Is that so. I understand."

Armour realises he's at a disadvantage and relaxes. Raphtalia also loosens her grip on his arm.

Raphtalia: "Don't bother even trying to lie. Now, when will your companions be informed about your need to satisfy your sick sense of justice."

This severe remark was fired at Itsuki.

Itsuki: ".....I pray it doesn't come to that. At any rate, there will be a time in the future where you will be forced to rely on me."

What's that.

I have concluded, that is the howling of a loser.

In the first place, why would Raphtalia ever need to rely on Itsuki, before me.

I can't imagine a situation like that.

Is he in some way be similar to Motoyasu?

Could it be, his sense of justice isn't strong, but he just wants to be praised?

Could his strong sense of justice actually be.....His sense of self-satisfaction?

Am I thinking too much?

I doubt that it's probably not that awful.

I just want to believe it. Otherwise, it would be hopeless.

Itsuki: "Well then, I'll be looking forward to tonight's meeting."

Naofumi: "Uh huh, there are a bunch of things that I need to ask as well."

Itsuki: "Right, this way I can also inquire some things from Naofumi-san."

And with that, Itsuki and his companions went back to their rooms at the hotel.

However..... Originally it was Motoyasu, and then it was Ren. It appears as if Motoyasu is the most decent out of the three.

Raphtalia: "Good grief! Why are all the heroes except for Naofumi-sama like that!?"

She's at her wit's end.

It's not that I don't understand her feelings. Regardless of his merit, that guy is called a hero.

I know of a guy in a game that would call this so-called hero a hypocrite. This Hero is like a thief after all.

Not to mention, that selfish sense of justice, concealment principle, and focus on self-satisfaction.

Though..... This one time evaluation meeting might not do any good.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, Firo as well, listen to me together."

Raphtalia: "What is it?"

Firo: "What~?"

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, I think your ideals are just a little too far-fetched."

Raphtalia: "Eh!?"

Raphtalia answered with a surprised expression.

Naofumi: "I guess I may be the cause, but at the end of the day, they're human being's first and heroes second. What you know about the heroes in legends, they most likely were all told only their grandest moments, but

in reality they could have one, two, three, four, five, or even six kinds of defects.”

Raphtalia:”That many?”

Naofumi:”.....Don’t mind that. Legends are meant to be dramatized. Look, for example that saying of great men have great fondness for sensual pleasures, if this world’s heroes were truly like that, would it have ended the way it did?”

Raphtalia:”W-Well.....”

I just learnt this proverb, but I understood it since there are similar words in my world.

Naofumi:”So, there is no need to mind every single detail. Those guys have their own way of fighting. Just take a good look.”

Raphtalia:”Okay?”

Naofumi:”If you take a good look at how Motoyasu fights, you will know that instead of having his companions get hurt, he would personally go out and fight. Is that the attitude of a hero?”

Raphtalia:”I-It is.”

Naofumi:”If you take a good look at how Ren fights, he doesn’t make his comrades do the impossible, and if they fight a tough opponent, he will lend his power as a hero.”

Was I a little harsh on this?

Well, that guy lacks strategy, but I feel that it’s just from his habits. It would only be possible to judge if I experienced it.

Raphtalia:”Well.....”

Naofumi:”If you take a good look at how Itsuki fights, he would absolutely never let his companions get hurt, it would be impossible to fight if he didn’t have confidence in himself. Heroes are meant to be relied on.”

Well, all of his followers are out of control.

Even I think it's a little painful.

However, we haven't even started looking at where they were bad, but we don't even understand our own bad areas.

Naofumi: "I am also the same, perhaps I too was following my ideals too much."

Raphtalia: "....."

Naofumi: "From the beginning, there are no perfect humans. The reason why heroes are powerful is due to their weapons..... for example, even if they are strong, it doesn't necessarily mean they are also strong mentally as well?"

Raphtalia: "R-Right....."

I am the same, before I came to this world I was very carefree.

Then, I had to deal with a world of swords and magic.

To know that it's reality is a little unpleasant, and instead I embrace it as a dream.

Giving a normal guy special powers, and lifting him up with praises of "Hero".

If you observe and think about it, the four heroes summoned, for better or for worse are all humans.

There is no perfect human.

I don't know the criteria used for the selection.....But, thinking about it there are certainly some heroic dispositions.

Take Motoyasu for example, he is a feminist who is incredibly fond of women. Thinking back, when he heard about Raphtalia being a slave, he took the righteous action to release her, although from my standpoint he is just an annoying guy.

Ren wanted to go save the village that was in trouble.

Even Itsuki, though he's a little inconsiderate, I think that his attitude on not allowing bad things to happen is to some extent, Hero-like.

While this may all be true, I naturally still have no reason to get along with those guys.

Even after considering all that, their problematic behaviour stands out too much. However, it's not as if I am defending those guys, I just want Raphtalia's consciousness of a party to improve.

Naofumi:"After being with me for some time, do you know where I am lacking?"

Raphtalia:".....Naofumi-sama is.....There are times when you smile while looking at the misfortunes of others."

Gu..... I was self-conscious of that, but Raphtalia still had to say it.

In fact, when I heard about the misfortunes of merchants and villages, I was happily thinking about all the business and profits I would be making.

Most recently, I was laughing at bitch while she burned from doing bad things.

I don't intend to fix it though.

Raphtalia:"Also, you are not a polite person, you don't lie, but there are times when you argue out of a promise."

Wow..... her words really cut.

Even if you don't say it, I am still somewhat self-conscious of it.

I think it would be fine to not keep some of those promises.

Though it's not like I'm going to change that, is that where I'm lacking?

Raphtalia:"Your words are bad, you are naturally insensitive sometimes, and also naturally dense, you are not thoughtful and you don't understand what's on people's minds."

Naofumi:"That's an overstatement."

I question what was just said.

Who is naturally insensitive. I am aware that I'm not thoughtful though.

Naofumi: "W-Wow. When you put it like that, perhaps I'm not even recognized as a hero by Raphtalia after all."

Raphtalia: "There is no such thing!"

Naofumi: "I'm glad that you think so. Still, just like I have bad traits, those guys are also the same. Just look at the big picture this time."

Though, it looks like she still doesn't understand.

If you understand the weakness of those guys, then it would be easy to set up counter-measures in the future.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, if you don't mind me saying, your ideals are too high and wilful. When things get unpleasant, it's fine to run away. Just understand that."

Raphtalia: "Okay....."

Raphtalia casts her eyes downwards and stays quiet.

It feels like what I said is a little exaggerated, but you can improve yourself by observing others.

Something that could be applicable to the bad parts of those heroes, but there are many things that might happen in the future.

It is important to be cautious for anything in the future.

Firo: "Heeeey, what about Firo?"

Naofumi: "You're noisy."

Firo: "So mean~!"

Raphtalia: "Haha."

Thus our little party comes to a conclusion.....But when people gather, problems will occur.

Although those three are having a problem now, it doesn't necessarily mean that it won't happen to us.

In order to avoid that, it is necessary to properly observe all the party members.

Naofumi: "You must pay attention to yourself and your companions, view things objectively."

Princess play, Solo play, and establishing recognition, looking at the companions of those guys I feel that I must prevent my companions from getting those problems.

As for hierarchy, jeez give me a break. A New companion.....If I get a new slave or demon, it would be unpleasant if Raphtalia and Firo bullied them.

I want to believe they aren't that kind of children but, it things like bully may take place.

That said, if a new guy joins, it would be impossible to promote him immediately.

This isn't just limited to Raphtalia and Firo, it also applies to me.

Hypothetically speaking, if the problem occurs from me, it's likely that in the future there would be no improvements.

I'm the Hero of the Shield, the companions of the other three have directly received my influence.

It's expected, Raphtalia and Firo aren't enough, it's necessary to increase my companions.

If the number of companions increase, leading becomes more difficult. Considering the problems caused by the other three and the possibility of it happening, it is necessary to improve my party's relations from now on.

Naofumi: "You guys must not think that just because you are a companion of a hero that you are right. Avoid causing trouble. During the meeting, try not to give up half-way."

With that said, it is troublesome to associate with that guy.

There is probably going to be some false accusations on Raphtalia at the meeting.

Honestly, I want them to give me a break.

Raphtalia:".....I understand. I apologize."

Raphtalia seems to have understood my position and reflected.

Naofumi:"Well, it's not bad to chase your ideals, but it's not good to dwell on useless things."

Raphtalia:".....Okay"

Firo:"Okay~"

Both of them mutter and nod their head as I watch.

Naofumi:"In any case, it would be good if it was someone like Raphtalia or Firo."

Before being strong or weak, it would be someone who will always avoid causing problems.

This week, I was painfully able to realise how easy it was to associate with Raphtalia and Firo.

Naofumi:"So with that said. I have high hopes for the both of you. My best regards for the future."

Raphtalia:"O-Okay!"

Firo:"Okay~!"

When the reflecting meeting was finished, Raphtalia was depressed.

There are still some other things I haven't heard.....

Naofumi:"By the way, Firo, you were together with Itsuki the whole time?"

Firo:"Uh huh."

Naofumi:"Did he do something different from me?"

Firo:"Hm-....."

Firo plays with her ahoge while thinking about it.

What could it be?

Firo:"Uhh, you see. He said something about Bonuses and Percentage

from the demons.”

Percentage? Bonus?

Was he hiding something after all? Bonus.....something like equipment bonus? As for absorbing the demons..... I'll try to use multiple materials.

There is also that ore that I got from Rishia, I could possibly discover something from it.

Chapter 99: Cal Mira Island Jinx - Trending Fad Story

Since we came back early in the afternoon, we decided with Raphtalia and the others that the evening is still young. While spending time studying medicine and magic is good... playing at the beach before was good too. And, with that thought in mind, we're off for a walk in the marketplace to enjoy a change of pace.

Naofumi: "Is there something here that you need, Raphtalia?"

Raphtalia: "Nothing this time."

Firo: "Firo's stomach is empty."

Naofumi: "Yes, yes."

Providing Firo with light meals from the food stands, we meet with a crowd in front of us. Just then...

Fraudster: "Please wait. We have lots of inventory so there's no need to push. Please form yourselves into a line!"

This voice... it must be the merchant who was ripping people off. He's sure raking it in. I see selling based off of that jinx is going well.

Fraudster: "Ah!"

Hm? My eyes meet Fraudster's who's directing the people in line from on top a high platform. Fraudster comes down from the platform and pushes his way through the crowd in my direction.

Fraudster: "Hero of the Shield-sama!"

I don't remember ever identifying myself as a hero around here... well, I guess something like the heroes being on this island would be common knowledge. Somehow or other, it'd be possible to feel the difference in atmosphere. And then, how could he not know when my hero equipment is a shield?

Naofumi: "Sure looks like your business is booming."

Fraudster: “Yep! It’s all thanks to Hero of the Shield-sama!”

Raphtalia: “Did you do something?”

Raphtalia and Firo incline their heads to listen.

Naofumi: “Ahh, actually...”

I tell Raphtalia and Firo about what happened on the first day we came to the island. Hearing about my actions that were bordering on bad, Raphtalia nods in consent.

Raphtalia: “Ahh, so that’s why you were closed when we came by with Moto... Hero of the Spear a couple of times.”

He’s already not even getting a ‘-sama’ any more. Well, it can’t really be helped. It seems after being with the heroes she no longer holds any respect for them. For the time being, I’ll just have to reflect on it. I don’t think an understanding can be reached. I wonder if it’s at the point where I, too, am called without honorifics.

...that’s rather uncomfortable.

Naofumi: “Always address me with a ‘-sama’.”

Raphtalia: “Huh...?”

I’ll leave the ‘-sama’ matter alone for now. While Raphtalia looks at me perplexed, I turn back and talk to Mr. Fraudster again.

Naofumi: “So? Why did you call me? If you’re only thanking me then you still have many things to sell. We can talk when you’re closed.”

Fraudster: “Tch, it’s not usually like this. Please come into the store.”

Naofumi: “Why?”

Fraudster: “I want to show you my gratitude as well as various other things.”

Naofumi: “Hmm...”

His financial standing must be quite good now from all the profits he received, so I should be able to expect some small expression of thanks. He might be on cloud 9 from the scheme consistently earning him

money. If I'm going to get something I should get it early. I can work on the problem of being called with a "-sama" later.

Naofumi: "Sure..."

Fraudster nodded and led me into the store.

...the portable tent is gone. This is a proper shop built out of stone. So the renovation has already been taken care of. I wonder how much profit has been flowing in. It's obvious from the line in front of the store. The jinx trade must be formidable.

Fraudster: "It's over here."

Going around the store we entered from the back entrance. The sales people were bustling about in the shop selling accessories for the merchant. In the workshop at the back then, artisans were taking turns making lots of accessories out of processed ore.

...isn't this too profitable? If it doesn't die down I'll get anxious. I mean, who's to say how many adventurers are coming to this island? Thinking about it is impossible.

Fraudster: "Soon, the island god festival will start and we'll be able to open a food stand by the alter."

Already, it seems they want to turn it into a special product for those who come visiting, by turning it into a kind of shrine amulet.

Naofumi: "Now, what was this gratitude you were talking about?"

Fraudster: "It's this here."

While saying that, he handed over a bracelet he was carrying. Calmira Island's own...

Miraca Bracelet (EXP Bonus Small)

Quality Top Grade

A red... actually a pure blood red gem was given to me. The effect, too, is considerably good, and the quality is high.

Naofumi: "What should I say, it really does have the effect of increasing

experience points.”

Fraudster: “This is the highest quality bracelet made with the Miraca ore found on this island. So that I could thank you by all means possible, I had it prepared. Ah, the granted effect came about by chance and won’t be found in another accessory.”

Well, that’s how it is. It’s not like they’re selling things that really have a jinx attached. Or rather, it was surprising that there really was a system where accessories could provide a boost to experience points.

Naofumi: “Miraca ore, eh.”

Since the workshop had been opened to me, I took the opportunity to look through the ore. The quality of any one of them was bad. What, all the gems here are nothing but garbage. It seems it’s not easy to find something that will help you out in battle.

Naofumi: “Isn’t this one considerably expensive? From what I’ve seen, it seems this high a standard is hard to keep up.”

Fraudster: “As expected you figured it out... that’s correct. The biggest issue with Miraca ore is it’s poor quality.”

Naofumi: “Hmm...”

Fraudster: “Comparing the level of gems...”

Naofumi: “Is it okay to accept something that’s so rare?”

Fraudster: “Yes. I received the cost for this piece a long time ago from the lessons I received from Hero of the Shield-sama.”

Naofumi: “How do you mean?”

I should have only given him tips on how to make people happy to take out their gold.

Fraudster: “Until now, I thought that doing trade meant grasping the other person’s weakness. However, I wanted to try using the same trade methods I saw the Hero of the Shield-sama using. Ahh, this is definitely the true way of commerce.”

Up until that point, the Fraudster had tried to swindle all his customers. However, then I talked to him about how to do trade, how to sell things at an unreasonably high price, while the customers buy them with a smile on their faces. Provoking resentment had been the only way he knew how to perform a good trade.

Naofumi: “Is that so... when the fad dies out, you have to be careful not to go back to the way you worked before.”

Fraudster: “I’ve already played my hand. There’s no need to worry.”

Naofumi: “Oh? What makes you able to say that?”

Fraudster: “There’s some small collaboration.”

Saying that, Fraudster points out his collaborator.

...the accessory merchant smiles at me and waves. You came to the island too, huh.

Accessory Merchant: “As expected of Hero of the Shield-sama, even in this backwater area you were able to drum up such an interesting and fresh new business.”

Fraudster: “Please meet our store’s merchant trade sponsor.”

Naofumi: “Huh, you...”

Is your nose attuned to the smell of money? Well, that’s the thinking that comes across. While he’s that kind of trader, I’m reluctant to associate him with money-mad people.

Accessory Merchant: “At the moment, the fame of Calmira Island accessories is going through the roof. Ha ha ha.”

Naofumi: “Well, more or less.”

There’s no real efficacy. At worst, we might have to put some countermeasures in place if the mood turns sour.

Accessory Merchant: “Yes, well. There are a great number of success stories verifying that rumour. Who would feel the need to pursue the truth?”

With a black aura coming out, both merchants laughed. What unpleasant faces. They'll chew it to the bone, this island.

Accessory Merchant: "Let's add a rumour about the colour later."

Naofumi: "...what do you mean to do?"

Accessory Merchant: "You'll just have to look forward to that."

Naofumi: "Not even..."

Accessory Merchant: "Won't Hero of the Shield-sama take stock in the store too? I'm fine with anything you'd like to do. Why don't you become the shop's store manager?"

Naofumi: "I'm not about to step into your shoes."

I know. This guy wants me to eventually inherit the merchant guild and take charge of its success.

Accessory Merchant: "Is that so. Please feel free to drop in any time you like."

Naofumi: "...please pardon me as it's unlikely I'll be back once I'm done."

Fraudster: "Please choose something you'd like for your companions as well."

Naofumi: "Oh? You're sure being generous."

Fraudster: "Yes... since it's been so profitable I'm likely to explode from being overweight."

The Fraudster and the accessory merchant won't stop laughing with that face. That face is one that has gotten drunk on the dark side of business dealings. It's a scary thing, doing business. Some people hate the dark side and some people love it... that should be remembered.

In the end, both Raphtalia and Firo received Miraca series accessories. Raphtalia got a strap to dangle from her sword. Firo got a shoelace strap.

Miraca Strap (Stamina Recovery, Medium)

Quality Top Grade

Miraca Strap (Magic Power Reinforcement, Medium)

Quality Top Grade

Naofumi: “This seems bad somehow.”

Accessory Merchant: “Don’t worry about it so much, just accept it.”

I try to ignore my feeling that the shadows of those guys are laughing. For those guys, that’s their way of life. I don’t care if a riot happens and they get caught later. In case my fault is unreasonably brought up, I can just show this accessory and play the victim after all.

Naofumi: “For the time being, we should probably get together if any problems come up.”

Accessory Merchant: “Perish the thought. Hero of the Shield-sama worries too much. Well, I guess that’s proper for a merchant.”

Naofumi: “It’s perfect because of the promise. Do you know what to do when I’m together with the other heroes?”

Merchants: “ “Yes, we’re ready.” ”

That harmonizing of words is unpleasant. Honestly, do you really get it?

Chapter 100: Hot Springs

After that, Since we lightly played at the sandy beach while the day waned we returned to the inn, then I looked for the shadow to ask about the schedule.

Naofumi: "That reminds me, what time is the meeting?"

Shadow: "After Heroes bathing and meal degojaru."

Naofumi: "I see. "

So after a bath and dinner is the meeting huh, and how much information I can draw out from those guys, everything is hanging on me.

Before that.....

Naofumi: "Then I'll go to the bath.."

Raphtalia: "Aa, Yes. We'll also take a bath shortly."

Naofumi: "Aah. "

So, leaving those two behind, I went to enter the bath.

Naofumi: "Fuuu..."

Soaked in a Japanese style hot spring of open air, I let out a sigh while looking to the sky.

*Since it's also a hot spring, lately it's good and refreshing entering the bath everyday.

Feels like my body's sluggishness is considerably improving too.

Though I've yet to recover from my status.

Or maybe despite my body being sluggish, I'm getting accustomed to it.

So, I had entered the bath with that good feeling but.

Motoyasu: "Oh? Well if it isn't Naofumi."

Motoyasu enters the bathroom.

Where is the spear?

After saying that, If I look well enough, there is a really small spear attached to his waist.

Figured it was like that.

I too had reduced the shield as much as possible and placed it on my back.

Since I'm not able to remove it from the body, it helps to be able to change where it's attached.

After pouring hot water on himself, Motoyasu enters hot spring bath.

Naofumi: "You already fine after that hangover?"

Motoyasu: "Can YOU talk?"

Naofumi: "You ate that yourself right? I didn't tell you to eat it."

Naofumi: "Well, seems like your world is a different Japan, with a different constitution. "

Motoyasu: "Yea Yea."

Well, not like I was drunk though.

To begin with, I'm sure you had fun being nursed by the bitches.

Though you might have not realized it with a hangover and all.

Motoyasu: "Heeey. It's quite a good bath ya know."

Motoyasu raises a loud voice toward someone.

Who's he talking to?

Itsuki: "I can see that myself. How many times do you think we've come here?"

Itsuki and his male followers had entered.

Thus, seeing Motoyasu, Itsuki makes a turbid expression.

Itsuki: "Because I have a lot of things I want to say to you in the meeting, Please keep it in moderation."

Motoyasu: "Those are my words but it's an hot spring you know? You

gotta enjoy it."

What are you enjoying?

Was what I was thinking but then I noticed Ren was among the group as well.

Well, today's the meeting after all.

Something like this happens too.

Firo: "Master-"

Jumping over the fence, Firo comes to the mens bath.

Of course, in her demon appearance.

Naofumi: "Hm? Something wrong?"

Firo: "I want to enter with Master. "

Naofumi: "You are a bird. Enter a different hot bath. Actually, rather than a normal bath, go to a bird bath."

Firo: "Noo"

Such a selfish fellow.

Well.....

Naofumi: "Get rid of any loose feathers."

Firo: "Yay"

Firo soaks in the bath next to me.

Motoyasu: "Bathing together with Firo-chan."

Motoyasu approaches here with some disgusting eyes.

Firo backed off and used me as a shield.

Motoyasu: "Firo-chan. Your angel form if you will."

Firo: "No!"

This guy is persistent.

How much can a guy like angels?

To begin with, is bathing together with a bird so much fun?

I don't understand.

Motoyasu starts bathing in high spirits.

Motoyasu: "With that, We all did the party exchange so, who do you guys think is the most beautiful girl?"

Uwaa... He thought of an awfully stupid topic.

This isn't a school trip.

No, Maybe for Motoyasu it's like a school trip from his world?

Ren and Itsuki are making questionable faces too.

But, maybe he thought this out for the sake of making conversation with Itsuki.

Motoyasu: "Next, have you guys already done it? I... heheh."

Motoyasu is endlessly annoying.

What does this guy want to do.

Rather, that statement reeks of a virgin.

Was this guy really a ladies man?

This is a tremendously unpleasant mood.

I just entered, but should I leave?

Motoyasu: "Hey, Naofumi, you've already done Raphtalia right?"

Naofumi: "Why are you turning the conversation my way?"

This guy, to talk as if there was nothing between us.

Rather, who was it that was glaring at me as if I was their parents enemy when it was the incident with the queen.

Is this light mood something a hero needs?

Can't be.

Motoyasu: "Isn't it fine. This time's festivities is for the sake of growing friendships right?"

Naofumi: "What are you misunderstanding?"

Well, The official stance may be like that, but truth is, it's for drawing out information.

No... If it's Motoyasu, It's likely friendship.

Though I'm sure it's less friendship than snatching women to him.

Ren and Itsuki have memories I'm sure.

Excessively unpleasant expressions shoot toward Motoyasu.

Motoyasu: "Anyway, I'll tell ya my particular cute girl rankings."

Naofumi: "I refuse."

Itsuki: "Unproductive."

Ren: "Not my hobby."

While saying that, Ren and Itsuki couldn't silence Motoyasu.

Just listening is useless.

Motoyasu: "My type of girl is Whore, Raphatalia-chan, Firo-chan, and Rishia-chan."

Naofumi: "....."

What the hell is Motoyasu's taste.

All members and types scattered all over.

It's fine as long as the face is good?

Itsuki: "That's so isn't it. Whore is a former princess after all. It seems her personality is bad, but I was normally interacting with her during my time."

And here Itsuki is joining into the conversation.

A armor is.... muttering something to Itsuki's ear.

I can slightly hear it.

*Something like talking to Itsuki about their own taste or so.

Every last one of them is going with the flow.

Ren: "Well, you say the Queen's personality is bad, But I don't mind it."

Then, Ren jumped in too.

You... Didn't you say this wasn't your hobby?

Ren: "Rather, Raphtalia-san personality is severe right? Or perhaps damn serious. she's hardheaded. But her face looks is very put in order."

Motoyasu: "Right?"

Itsuki: "...Certainly, her face is good. Though her personality is bad."

Again, why are you guys getting swallowed into Motoyasu's pace.

It's easy to spit out a complaint, but I don't want to play along with them.

Or rather, It's not that her personality is bad, You guys handled Raphtalia wrong.

Firo: "Is Firo cute?"

Firo asks me of all things in the world.

Naofumi: "Who knows."

Firo: "Buuu....."

Motoyasu: "In my heart Firo-chan is the cutest! So turn into your angel appearance."

Firo: "No!"

Motoyasu, is her human form really getting to you that much?

Even though if you raise a Philorial yourself, It'll become similar to Firo.

Motoyasu: "Rishia-chan has some praiseworthy cuteness too... I'm jealous of you Itsuki."

Itsuki: "No... that girl is..... "

Itsuki, somehow seems to be getting embarrassed.

The guy who will do anything for the sake of being an ally of justice.

*Doubt grows in me too about how Rishia became a party member of

Itsuki's, with how he likes to stir up trouble just to get the fame for solving it and all.

Ren: "Was there such a person?"

Seems like she was outside Ren's view huh.

Well, I can't negate the possibility of Itsuki's party moving on his basis.....They may have feigned friendliness with Ren and Motoyasu.

In the first place, Rishia's weak good luck, or rather, she's not very self-assertive herself.

If you look at it from Ren's side, there were only plain people.

Motoyasu: *"Seems like everyone and me has the same realization."

Itsuki: "Well, in general that's right. If it's just the face."

Ren: "....."

Ren and I ignore in silence

Rather, what's with this conversation.

No, probably something between men.

Firo: "Firo's going back to Oneechan now. "

Naofumi: "Aah, Just go."

Firo: "Yea!"

And, the cheerfully nodding Firo jumped over the fence and returned to the woman's bath.

Now, guess I'll leave.

Somehow, it feels like Motoyasu is in high tension, and wants to open up a conversation with just men.

Motoyasu: "Hey, Naofumi, How far have you gone with Raphtalia-chan?"

Naofumi: "That again, As I said before, we don't have that kind of relationship."

Motoyasu: "Well, Surely Raphtalia thinks differently."

Naofumi: "What are you joking about..."

Motoyasu: "Then, was there no kind of action?"

Naofumi: "None."

Motoyasu: "Well, Then maybe Raphtalia approached you or so?"

Naofumi: "No Approaching or anything. In the first place, she's a kid."

Motoyasu: "Are you dense? Then Raphtalia hasn't undressed or anything? I can't tell with the clothes and armor but her proportion is good right?"

Seems like I gotta keep him company for us to move on.

He really is a troublesome guy.

Naofumi: "Come to think of it, Before..."

An event at the time I was peddling.

It was a time when we went to a famous region with hotsprings all over to sell things.

The inn I entered likewise had a hot spring.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama....."

*The evening of that day, Raphtalia, who was wearing a bathrobe, entered the room and talked to me while I was in the middle of compounding.

Somehow, in an appearance only of wrapped in a towel, I remember her seeming embarrassed to me.

Not knowing what she was thinking, Raphtalia undid the large cloth and displayed her own body.

Raphtalia: "H, how is it?"

She acquired muscles to an extent, I know her breast were big too, from that time she hugged before, I thought they would become a hindrance.

How should I say, They are plump, I thought where did all that power

come from.

Her hair was wet too.

Thought there were some scars on her back , now there's no trace of them left.

Because the time I got her to show me them before, since I had effective medicine for scars I smeared it on them..

Raphtalia was showing me its whole body shamefully.

Naofumi: "Well, It's gotten considerably better right? There's a huge difference between now and the time we met."

Raphtalia: "Eh? Um..... is it just that?"

Naofumi: "Is there something else?"

To my question, somehow Raphtalia had her mouth opened wide as if she was astonished and at a lost for words.

Naofumi: "Also, you'll catch a cold if you stay naked like...."

Firo: "Ah! Oneechan got naked!"

Firo returned to the room and raised a fuss.

Thus took off her one piece, got completely naked and charged here.

*Firo: "Let Firo mix in too!"

Raphtalia: "We aren't mixing! What is that?"

*Normally, from the standpoint of the naked Firo, She was eager to get naked.

Naofumi: "And that's what happened. "

Motoyasu: "This dense motherfucker-----!"

Motoyasu with a look of some anger, came swinging his fist at me.

I stopped and gripped that fist.

Naofumi: "What's with you so suddenly."

Motoyasu: "That was a open appeal! To not chow down on a meal set

before you is rude!"

Naofumi: "What are you saying. I said it before didn't I? Raphtalia's a kid. And also 'damn serious', she wouldn't be thinking of such a thing."

Try having a relationship poorly, and when it comes time to fight waves she's pregnant and not covered as war potential.

Among other such things.

Raphtalia who gets fired up for a mission wouldn't desire such a thing.

Rather, I'm sure she'd hate it.

I view creating an environment for Raphtalia to fight easily as my motto.

Motoyasu: "That level of denseness, I can't believe it."

Motoyasu, seems like he willfully consents and backs off.

After that, Motoyasu instantaneously switches over, this time shifting his focus on the fence.

Motoyasu: "If we are men, then the obligatory pe-ek-ing, is our responsibility as Heroes!"

Naofumi: "How is that responsibility!"

Motoyasu: "Look, you guys are interested too right?"

And here, Justice dumbass Itsuki isn't keeping silent.

Itsuki: "You mustn't do such a thing!"

And while saying such things, Itsuki doesn't stop Motoyasu very much, instead he gets closer.

You too huh.

Armor and other men are interested too and are gathering around the fence.

Hey Queen.

Seems like Friendships are deepening in a difference meaning.

Ren: "Stupid."

While Ren grumbles such, he doesn't try to get out the bath.

I don't want to go along with these guys anymore.

Naofumi: "Bath in moderation."

Because I'm quite fed up I leave the bath.

Motoyasu: "What Naofumi, you aren't joining in?"

Naofumi: "I said it before, I have no interest."

To insist on what seeing the body of a real woman.

Even under normal circumstances, I recall bitch and become instantly unhappy.

In the first place, if I impudently stay in this place, I might be charged with an unjustified crime again.

They say a wise man keeps away from danger.

So if even Shadow and me are talking in the room safely, when something happens, I would have an alibi.

Motoyasu: "Seriously dense. I understand Raphtalia-chan's hardships."

Naofumi: "Whatever."

Maybe the Raphtalia in your head is in love with me, wants a relationship and is merely waiting for a chance to strike, but reality's different.

She only has respect towards me as a hero.

From such a Raphtalia it'll become a betrayal of expectations.

Sheesh.... they say great men have great fondness for the sensual pleasures, but how about loving it too much.

Motoyasu will surely, after the waves are over, have various experiences with women.

The party by the Bitch for the Bitch is on the verge of collapse.

Naofumi: "Fuu."

After the bath, I cool myself off in the room.

Up until just now, Shadow and I had some idle chat, but they said some kind of report came in and vanished.

Before long, I could hear the sound of footsteps and Raphtalia in a towel came rushing in.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama!"

Naofumi: "What? Were Motoyasu and them found peeping?"

Raphtalia: "Aa, Yes! Just now, the other heroes are reflecting."

Sheesh..... Well, It was the Shadow's observations after all.

*Though this says as friendship is deepened, becomes silent, and is so.

Now that I think about it, what is the standard of peeping in this world?

The norm in my world is around Edo Period or so there appeared to be holes for peeping use in the bath.

Here the men's bath and such had been separated but comparatively in different inns in the region there was mixed bathing.

Raphtalia: "Not that! Naofumi-sama was?"

Naofumi: "Why do I need to peep?"

Raphtalia drops her head crestfallenly to my answer.

Raphtalia: "...I thought talking with the other heroes would have awoken something in you a little.. "

Naofumi: "Awoken?"

A different power or the shield's true strength maybe?

I want to awaken that.

Unfortunately, nothing.

Firo: "What's wrong with oneechan?"

Firo who came back, tilted her head to Raphtalia who head was

dropping.

Naofumi: "Who knows."

What made Raphtalia get so depressed?

Naofumi: "What's got you depressed? Did being seen naked by Motoyasu put you into shock?"

Raphtalia: "I wasn't seen!"

Naofumi: "Then that's good. "

Raphtalia: "Haaaa, whatever.. "

Raphtalia returned with a weary look after just stepping out of the bath.

By the way, after retuning I asked for the reason but, I didn't get a reply.

Chapter 101: The Conference of Heroes (Start)

“Now then, it’s about time to head to the meeting.” (Naofumi) After eating at the inn, I proceed to the conference hall.

I go there following Shadow’s instructions.

“Well, I’m off.” (Naofumi)

“Good luck.” (Rafatalia)

“Luck~!” (Firo)

After a quick word, Rafatalia and Firo take their leaves.

I went outside of the large inn and go up a long spiral staircase.

The view of the island through the windows on the staircase is breathtaking.

...?

What is that? There seems to be a bridge of red light descending on the adjacent island.

It isn’t my imagination... right?

Was that there yesterday?

“It’s here-gojaru” (Shadow)

We had climbed a tower-like structure and reached the top floor of it.

I enter the room. In the center is a table with documents distributed in intervals around the edge.

Ren and Itsuki are already seated.

“Thank you for earlier” (Itsuki)

“Do you enjoy spying on others?” (Naofumi)

“You jest, do you think that we are actually having fun?” (Itsuki) He seems to be making a bored face now, but just a few moments ago he

seemed to be having the time of his life.

What convenient Justice.

“You were also there, so you are an accomplice.” (Naofumi) “...fuun. It seems that an unnecessary charge has been placed on me.” (Ren) “Then you should have just gotten out quickly.” (Naofumi) I am accusing him because he stayed in the bath for a pointlessly long amount of time.

These perverts.

“So, where is the ever-so-important head pervert?” (Naofumi) “Ah! Sorry. I’m late.” (Motoyasu)

As we were talking, Motoyasu enters the room while laughing.

For now, we all sit in the seats prepared. The arrangement of the room gives off the feeling of knights sitting around a round table.

“From here on, the Four Heroes will begin their Information Exchange Meeting. I, Shadow, will serve as Moderator and Guide for this meeting.” (Shadow) Shadow gives a short introduction.

“From tomorrow onwards, Cal Mira Island will truly awaken, so we have called the heroes together to share information on greater methods of training to prepare for the next wave-gojaru. Please keep that in mind as you discuss-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Wait a second!” (Naofumi and Itsuki)

Me and Itsuki chime in at the same time

Wait wait wait... what do you mean by ‘truly awaken’?

What does that mean we have been doing until now?

“What is it, Heroes of the Shield and Bow-jaru?” (Shadow) “Are you saying the Island hasn’t awakened yet?” (Itsuki) “It has started-gojaru. But the greatest awakening effects come starting tomorrow-gojaru.” (Shadow) ...?

I still don’t understand.

“What are you so confused about? It’s obvious isn’t it?” (Motoyasu) “I agree.” (Ren)

Ren and Motoyasu act as if this sort of thing is common sense.

“Of course, the awakening comes in stages and the greatest prizes come at the end.” (Motoyasu) “Yes, yes.” (Ren)

“How should I have known that! Please explain from the beginning.” (Naofumi) “The Earl should have already explained it-gojaru” (Shadow) ?

Now that I think about it... he did say something about powerful monsters appearing at the center of the islands once they were awakened... something about how those monsters held the greatest EXP or something...

I thought he meant the monsters we had been dealing with every day.

Was the red glow a sign that the islands were awakening?

“I didn’t hear anything about this!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki responds with a shout.

Ah, right. Itsuki’s sense of this world comes from computer games.

Did his games not have events that raised gained exp in stages?

He may have ignored tht Count’s speech because he assumed he knew everything already.

“Anyways, from tomorrow onwards, stronger boss-like monsters will begin to appear?” (Naofumi) “Correct, It’s the perfect place for raising levels.” (Motoyasu) “I can’t wait” (Ren)

“And that’s why the Hero Information Exchange is happening today-gojaru.” (Shadow) Instead of heading forward without any information, I guess sharing info now would be best.

Fumu... I guess there’s no choice.

It should be fine

...?

You people... what is that” (Naofumi)

I point to the strap that the other three heroes have attached to their

weapons.

“Oh, this? It’s an item famous on this island that speeds up leveling.”
(Motoyasu) “Yes, if you have this equipped, it increases the EXP
gained.”(Itsuki) “You didn’t know?” (Ren)

...I’ll check it just in case.

Miracle Strap

Quality Very Poor

There are no exp increasing abilities. That man is doing well.

“Does it really have that ability?” (Naofumi)

“You really have never heard of it? It’s quite famous.” (Itsuki) “You need
to improve your information gathering skills.” (Ren) “Yes, Yes, It really
works!” (Motoyasu)

... The one who is the origin of the accessory and the rumor is me, but...

Crap. I feel happy.

These people are being tricked.

“Why are you smiling creepily right now?” (Itsuki)

“It’s nothing.” (Naofumi)

“Since you didn’t have this, you might have fallen behind.” (Ren) “Do
you even have any motivation?” (Motoyasu)

“I’ll buy one later.” (Naofumi)

The ones who received them seem happy and they do technically have
the genuine goods.

“Maa... laugh sound let’s get back on topic.” (Naofumi) This is bad. My
sides are hurting.

Is it possible that... the trust spawned from the lie created a realistic
effect.

There is a chance that the games Ren and Motoyasu played had event
items like this.

Well, they're not losing anything by wearing it.

"Well then, Heroes, please begin talking about what you learned about the other heroes' comrades-gojaru." (Shadow) Comrades... huh...

And all of a sudden, my high spirits subside.

"Naofumi, you should train your party properly." (Ren) "Right. To just leave the party, what the hell are you teaching them. Firo-san's inquisition was excruciating." (Itsuki) It's time. They all suddenly turn on me.

Don't stay silent, Motoyasu. Well I guess Motoyasu can at least understand why he made Rafatalia mad. And he won't complain about a girl.

"That is my line. Rafatalia isn't very picky. It seems she couldn't accept or understand the actions of the other heroes." (Naofumi) "What you say?" (Ren)

"I also understand why she was mad. In Ren's case, it was a lack of direction, and in Itsuki's case it was lies." (Naofumi) "And I'm saying I didn't tell any lies." (Itsuki)

He's still saying that.

He's been cornered this far and he still doesn't give in.

Well, as long as he's next to Ren and Motoyasu, I guess he can act like he is correct and I am deluded.

"Falcon Strike, was it. It was a big skill that used half your SP and had a cool-down of 15 minutes, right?" (Naofumi) "Really? I don't remember it being that sort of skill." (Ren) "u....."(Itsuki)

"You said something like? That's a blatant lie, isn't it?" (Motoyasu) As I thought.

If he had an amazing skill like that, he would have used it on the pope.

Well if you want to pace yourself in a battle, you wouldn't use your strongest skills.

“She looks up to all the heroes. She got mad because that very hero turned out to be a snob.” (Naofumi) “Aren’t you one as well?” (Itsuki)

“Yes, Rafatalia gets mad at me quite often.” (Naofumi) I don’t plan on helping these people, but I have talked to Rafatalia and convinced her that Heroes are people too.

I guess that’s also an effect of the personnel exchange.

“I have already warned Rafatalia. I believe she acted based on strong emotions. Your Party members left my party as well. Should I point out your party’s shortcomings?” (Naofumi) “T-try it if you can.” (Itsuki)

Itsuki seems to have no intention of giving up.

Well, I finally get a chance to tell him off.

“Then, Itsuki. What do you think a party is? There is a hierarchy, and they believe themselves to represent absolute justice. Do you plan to start a religion? Those people did nothing but talk of you.” (Naofumi) “Yeah, I felt that as well. They were polite, but they only talked of you. I was sick of it by the end.” (Motoyasu) “Yes, they spoke as if you were some sort of Messiah. That is dangerous business. Their hunting etiquette was also terrible.”

Ren and Motoyasu also felt it. They side with me.

So those people acted the same with all the other heroes.

“T-there’s no choice if I want to represent justice. I’m a hero, you know. They all just respect me. There is no Hierarchy.” (Itsuki) These are harsh accusations.

Ren and Motoyasu also seem to understand this. Itsuki is avoiding the main points It seems he is afraid of rebuttals.

“They kept on spouting nonsense that sounded like the teachings of the Three hero Church.” (Ren) “They did not!” (Itsuki)

Is what Itsuki said, but, as the other heroes, including me, said as much so he cannot really refute anything.

“On to Ren. I sensed a large disconnection in your comrades. When they

introduced themselves, they asked, 'So where do you want us to go train'." (Naofumi) "That's right. At first I did not know what they were talking about. Can you really call those comrades?" (Itsuki) Itsuki, should You really be saying that?

"I got the feeling that they were like the younger members of a guild. You choose what hunting ground they go to, but don't get involved any further... It's difficult to call those people comrades. You can pair up with whoever you want, but those people could have paired up with any other hero and nothing would have changed. " (Naofumi) I don't know if I should say anymore, but from here on collaboration is important.

We also need to share information regarding our levels. It will be good information when fighting stronger enemies.

"Those people seem like they could operate even if you didn't exist." (Itsuki) "What are you saying? Isn't it better if they learn to fight even if I'm not there?" (Ren) He's trying to approach this rationally, but I think he shouldn't deny his own existence.

"Your party seems like a group of adventures from a guild that could break off at any time and form their own guild. If left alone, they might grow without your knowledge" (Naofumi) Wait, that's brilliant

That level party. If it grew, we might have an effective army to combat the wave.

It was a random idea, but it might actually be effective.

Now that I think about it, there is no real need for us to do anything. This world's adventurers can work something out.

"Shadow, that was a brilliant idea. Please report it to the queen." (Naofumi) "Don't go deciding things by yourself!" (Ren)

Ren is quite nervous.

? Shadow whispers something into my ear.

"That will be troublesome-gojaru." (Shadow)

"Why?" (Naofumi)

“Actually, it is only the summoned heroes that get to hunt freely in this world. If the force gets too big, the environment will...” (Shadow) (TL: Monster Hunter) I see, so it’s a problem with the amount of available monsters...

Well, it doesn’t happen in games but I guess that here, monster populations can decrease.

“Your comrades, you know. You should get closer to each other. If they get stronger, then they’ll become like Itsuki’s comrades.” (Naofumi) (TL: He’s implying that if he will become more of a legend than a person if he doesn’t interact more.) “And I’m telling you you’re wrong.” (Itsuki)

“They Won’t!” (Ren)

“When you’re gone they’ll say... Ren-sama is a wonderful person. Would you like to hear some wonderful stories of his exploits?” (Naofumi) “Gu...” (Ren)

Ren can’t say any more, so he stays quiet.

Well, there shouldn’t be any more problems with him and my party. I warned Rafatalia, it should be fine.

“What about your places Rafatalia?” (Ren)

“I won’t brag about her. Rafatalia gets mad at me for my behavior as well.” (Naofumi) I want to believe I’m respected, but I don’t really know.

“What do you want to tell me about Rafatalia?” (Naofumi) “She... She left my party.” (Itsuki)

“I could say the same.” (Naofumi)

“Then this argument won’t get anywhere.” (Ren)

Understanding that chastising my comrades won’t get anywhere, Ren turns to Motoyasu.

“Motoyasu, do you have anything to say about Naofumi’s comrades?” (Ren) “None. Rafatalia is very diligent, and I was also at fault.” (Motoyasu) Now then on to Motoyasu...

I didn't really learn anything new from Rafatalia about Motoyasu.

I can berate his party as well, but it seems Bitch acts differently around the other Heroes, so I don't think I will get consensus.

If I go about this wrong, I might end up taking damage myself.

"Motoyasu's party is... does anyone have anything to say about it?"
(Naofumi) "They just cheered me on. I was speechless, is that supposed to be a cheering squad?" (Ren) "That's not a party. While I was out fighting, they had returned to the inn" (Itsuki) Ren and Itsuki say these statements with a bitter face.

So they behaved like that with everyone else as well...

"We're heroes aren't we? Shouldn't we be the ones on the front lines?"
(Motoyasu) "Being the vanguard is fine, but this is completely different. Those people only fought when there was no other option." (Itsuki) "To be honest, I think you would be better off without those people. In my case, they said they wanted to watch me fight, and eventually returned to the inn without slaying a single monster." (Ren) Even as I stay silent, Ren and Itsuki pile on complaints.

But I am of the same opinion.

It seems those women were at least trying to act supportive in these cases, but I won't say anything.

"Naofumi, what about you?" (Ren)

"If I say anything, a fight will break out." (Naofumi) "I-I see." (Ren)

Bitch and friends were acting differently with the other heroes. There is a possibility people will rise to their defenses.

There are many things I want to say, but I wanted to hear the others first.

I will let this opportunity slide.

"Now then, let's end the discussion of comrades at this-gojaru. Please keep these complaints in your heart as we continue the meeting."
(Shadow.) "Understood." (Ren)

“...I’m not satisfied, but I’ll leave it here.” (Itsuki) “Okay.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Yes.” (Motoyasu)

None of these people are repenting, are they.

Chapter 102: The Conference of Heroes (During)

Shadow: "Next, please inform each hero-dono of the problems pointed out from each other's comrades degojaru."

Naofumi: "Raphtalia did that at my place. Motoyasu is a skirt chaser, Ren has co-ordination problems and focuses on training his juniors, Itsuki likes to stir up trouble and then solve it himself, he is also a liar."

(Tlnote: Itsuki was described as a マッチポンプ (Match-Pump) and through googlefu I found it meant it means the person who strikes a match to burn something (in a fun more often than not) and tries to extinguish a fire when it flames up) What can I say, I put myself in an unnecessary position, the companions of the heroes should have pointed all these out.

Motoyasu: "Now from my place."

Motayasu raises his hand and declares.

Motoyasu: "The opinions from my companions are as follows, Ren is cold, Itsuki is holding back, and Naofumi is out of the question."

That's so simple.....

Motoyasu: "Ren, you being cool is a good thing, but it would be better if you think about getting to know more people and befriending them. Itsuki, you should step it up as hero more. Naofumi.....As for you--"

Naofumi: "That's the opinion of someone firing an attack magic at me from behind you know."

Shadow: "I will act as confirmation of that degojaru. Since former princess Bitch has designated Hero of the Shield-dono as her sworn enemy, her remarks have no meaning degojaru."

Motoyasu: ".....Understood."

With a light-hearted feeling, the complaints Motoyasu's companions have ended.

Rem: "Next is me."

Ren raises his hand and says.

Ren: "Motoyasu, my companions opinion on you is, for what reason are you fighting? I heard that you were a serious skirt chaser. Next is Itsuki, you are holding back. Naofumi seems to have no problems."

Itsuki: "Why is there nothing on Naofumi-san!?"

What do you mean by that. You're saying it as if I will cause problems wherever I go.

.....I did cause some though.

Ren: "No, those guys watched Naofumi fight and said: "Hero of the Shield-sama is very reliable." It's not my opinion."

Motoyasu: "Rather. Holding back huh.....you are cutting way too many corners."

Motoyasu and Ren brought to light the issue of Itsuki cutting corners on a daily basis.

Itsuki: "That's not it! I'm just concerned about not standing out--"

Naofumi: "Concerned about waiting for your companions to be in a pinch? That was one of the reason's Raphtalia got angry."

Motoyasu: "That's terrible. I can agree with Raphtalia-chan about getting angry when you produce drama."

Motoyasu takes advantage of the situation and calls out Itsuki.

You did something similar too.

Itsuki: "That's why I said that wasn't it."

Naofumi: "However, you are still a liar."

Motoyasu: "Yeah.....looks like it."

Itsuki: "Please quit over it already!"

Itsuki interrupts with a half crazed feeling.

But I told him It is the consequences of his own actions.

Motoyasu: "Now then, It's your turn last Itsuki."

Itsuki: "My turn. What does Motoyasu fight for? You even tried to pick up women from my side. Ren-san. What about you? You left and went to fight alone..... Furthermore, I heard that Naofumi-san was selfish and cruel."

Naofumi: "They were a group of people who could only think about justice. Their manners on the hunting grounds were also bad. Shadow, have you already investigated?"

Shadow: "Yes I have degojaru. Hero of the Bow-dono's companions were extremely self-assertive degojaru. They blackmailed other adventurers and monopolized demons, there was also a bunch of other problematic behaviours degojaru."

Ren: "Speaking of which, in internet terminology, you were mobbing demons by attacking first. I'm warning you."

Ren takes advantage of the situation and warns him.

Right, this time it's Ren huh.

Itsuki: "What is that?"

Motoyasu: "It is impolite in net games to intercept a demon that someone else is trying to fight."

Explains Motoyasu.

Naofumi: "You shouldn't be relying on that kind of thing. That was already explained in the beginning during our island tour..... Since it would cause an uproar that we don't need. To be frank, your legitimacy as a hero is damaged."

I supplement with my input.

When pointed out by all the heroes, Itsuki had no choice but to withdraw.

Itsuki: "Gu.....I understand."

Naofumi: "Those hero companions saw Itsuki's conduct, and learned

from that.”

Itsuki:”Well, I’ll keep Naofumi-san’s selfish advice in mind.....You’re the worst.”

Though it’s Itsuki’s turn he bad mouths me.

Well, I had it coming.

Itsuki:”I-I say, Motoyasu-san. What is up with you!? Did you not pick anyone up!?”

Naofumi:”I thought so too. Don’t you already have a woman? Yet you guys are peeping at the ladies bath like it’s a manga!”

Though I resent Itsuki, Ren, and Motoyasu..... Didn’t you guys think it would be bad and stop while peeping?

Motoyasu:”Oh man. Isn’t it a man’s duty to chase after girls? I do not regret it.”

Naofumi:”.....When you say it like that it feels like you’re praising yourself.”

In a sense he’s great.

There is a sense of defeat when he just comes out and seriously declares he wants to make a harem.

Motoyasu:”.....This is unproductive. Let’s stop it.”

While looking at our cold expressions, Motoyasu decides to stop it with a refreshing smile.

Since you understand and say that it’s useless.

Shadow:”Now then, the main subject of the information exchange between heroes will start now degojaruyo.”

When Shadow decided to move on.....Everyone fell silent.

Perhaps their habits of concealing themselves will be dealt with here.

Itsuki:”.....Naofumi-san. Why don’t you start speaking first?”

Naofumi:”Why me..... I came to this world without any of your

background knowledge you know?”

Itsuki:”Nevertheless, your companions are unnaturally strong for their levels. This could also be related to that abominable shield you possess.”

Ren:”That’s right, I would also like to hear that story first. From the beginning that child Raphtalia, and that demon named Firo are unnaturally strong.”

Motoyasu:”Right.The strengths of Raphtalia-chan and Firo chan are so remarkably dependable.”

.....Is this their purpose?

That means, Raphtalia and Firo didn’t let these guys know about their growth and the curse series.

If I simply speak about it that should be it.

Naofumi:”If I speak about it, can you guys compensate me with information?”

Itsuki:”What?”

In such a situation with this much recognition and materials, I can negotiate plenty with my opponents.

Do you guys assume that I’ll just give up all my information just because you caught on I’m hiding it?

Naofumi:”How about it? You guys called the shield a weak job, and cut me off without teaching me anything. Even if I tell you guys the secret of my strength, there is no guarantee that you guys will tell me. This is necessary.....Do you understand?”

Itsuki:”There was nothing in particular to teach.....”

Ren:”Look at the Help section.”

Motoyasu:”Well.....I certainly didn’t talk in detail.”

Each one of them answers awkwardly.

Naofumi:”In any case, didn’t you guys say nothing? The self-proclaimed cool one just told me to look at the Help section. Are there efficient

hunting grounds in the Help section too?"

Your expressions all look like they want to draw information out of me.

However, with those attitudes you won't be hearing any stories.

It is a fact that during negotiations both parties are equals, and it is also a rule of negotiating to be able dominate to the atmosphere.

Right now, the atmosphere in the room is that if they want to hear information from me, then they must also speak.

Will you guys still push forwards even after I added this one element?

Naofumi:"Oh right, by the way, it is impossible for Shadows to grasp any secrets of your power."

Shadow:"That's Right degojaru. It is impossible for us to fully grasp how strong each respective hero-dono will become degojaru."

Naofumi:"Just like you guys have a habit of hiding yourselves, I do too. The time has come for us to speak unreservedly."

Ren:"Tch!"

Ren clicks his tongue in vexation.

Naofumi:"Before, During the last wave.....You guys already lost once. If that was handled poorly you guys would have died."

Itsuki:"What are you saying? That was a battle event. We were meant to lose."

Naofumi:"Ha?"

Ren:"No, if us Heroes or our companions are defeated, we are carried off to the hospital. We will not die. There is divine protection."

Motoyasu:"That surprise fight against the Pope was evidence, as we were carried to the hospital."

What the hell are you saying?

Are their head okay?

Shadow:"You were rescued by us degojaruga..... What are you saying

degojaru? Sometimes Hero of the Shield-dono says words that I cannot understand degojaruga, What kind of thing is it degojaruka?"

Shadow speaks in an unusually perplexed voice.

I have the same opinion.

These guys, right now they are declaring "We are immortal. We won't die no matter what." opening.

Naofumi:"Tentatively, I defeated the one who you guys weren't able to beat."

All Three:"""We can defeat you(Naofumi-san), who has a weak job easily."""

.....What are these guys saying?

Revival at the hospital after defeat? Does this feel like a game? Did you guys seriously call that a battle event?"

So, even though they lost, they didn't count it.

Though my job was mocked as weak, I feel no anger at all.

Th-This is.....

Itsuki:"Since it doesn't matter,continue talking."

It doesn't matter.....Whether or not these guys treat this as a game.

Oh shit. Something is very dangerous. They need to rethink their consciousness immediately.

Naofumi:"You guys know this isn't a game right? There is no way to return if you die!"

Itsuki:"That's why we have divine protection."

Ren:"Indeed."

Motoyasu:"That's right."

This isn't working..... It's useless to continue talking.....

Right now, this sense of impending crisis can compete for the top or second worst problem ever since coming to this world.

Although, I can see why they aren't cautious, I can't do anything but adjust the conversation accordingly.

Naofumi: "Haah.....Let's scratch what we have and start the review from the beginning, let's start by discussing things you can get from the help section."

Itsuki: ".....Can't be helped."

Ren: "Yes, there's no point for us heroes to work against each other."

Motoyasu: "Well, the results won't change."

The answers these guys give sound like they already given up halfway.

Anyway, let's inquire about their methods of powering up.

Let's reassure my pace that was ruined by their ambiguous answers.

Naofumi: "Right, there is someone who lies, so let's pool our information together first. So if a lie is told, it can be spotted. Surely a hero of justice that will save the world and keep the balance, won't just lie, am I right Itsuki?"

Itsuki: "I-I did not tell any lies!"

Naofumi: "I wonder about that. Lying feels awkward, am I right Ren?"

Ren: "Ah, Yeah."

Naofumi: "Liars are hated by women, am I right Motoyasu?"

Motoyasu: "Th-That's right."

Something like this? By building a premise of sealing off lies, we can start our discussion.

Off the top of my head I know that Ren dislikes anything uncool. Motoyasu always takes a good look at women. Itsuki is Righteous, well that justice is also for self-satisfaction, in this situation where lying would equal being evil, it would be difficult to lie.

If that is pointed out, it would be unlikely for false information to appear.

Naofumi: "Then Itsuki, you speaking about the most basics of basics is good enough."

Itsuki: "Wh-Why did the talk progress like this Naofumi-san?"

Though Itsuki arches his eyebrows unpleasantly, turns his face to us and starts talking.

Itsuki: "The Hero's weapons will unseal new skill trees."

Naofumi: "That's right."

Itsuki: "There was a game I played called Dimension Wave that had a skill tree resembled the one in the system, but the selections changed and it got bigger."

Naofumi: "Hm? It wasn't exactly the same?"

Itsuki: "Yes, it was almost the same, but there are many weapons that I don't know of."

Then that means he doesn't know all the information of the weapon.

Certainly if I know what the unsealed ability would do, I would know the effect of the shields from the demon system and slave system.

Itsuki: "After changing once, when you change your weapon back to before the difference would still be there."

The other heroes also nod.

Tentatively, are there other changeable parts too.....

Don't get caught up in that now.

Ren: "Next is me."

Ren raises his hand and speaks.

Ren: "This is a continuation of Itsuki's story. When the materials of a demon are absorbed and unsealed, Equipment bonuses can be gained by equipping it."

That is reliable information. It is something I do all the time.

Ren: "Well, this equipment bonus system is a little different from the

Brave Star Online system that I was using.”

Naofumi:”It’s different?”

Ren:”Yeah, the acquisition of skill points and skill levels for skills. It means that even after equipping, it isn’t available to use at any time.”

Well, It’s certainly something that isn’t too different from what I can agree with.

Even in games that I played, your character got skill points to distribute, and in the game you could make your characters original.

What can I say, I don’t think that I can acquire all of the skills from the trees from releasing the shields.

However.....so far there is already a difference, do these guys think it’s the same as those games?

Ren:”That’s right. I am not wrong.”

Naofumi:”Yeah.”

Ren:”But, us heroes are probably the only ones that can acquire all the skills.”

.....Ah, I see. Usually adventurers can only learn a limited amount of skills. But we obtained cheat-like powers due to the legendary weapons.

Motoyasu:”Next is me, the weapon can copy another weapon from the same system. There is a weapon copy system.”

Naofumi:”Ha?”

Motoyasu:”Yes, although this was a big difference, but I was saved due to the strong weapons available.”

Ren:”Right, We are heroes. Such a thing can be done too.”

Motoyasu:”I think everyone here understands that the assortment of goods in the weapons shops and the mercenaries in the capital of country Zeltbull are good.”

At Motoyasu’s words, the other two nod as if this was common sense.

Naofumi: "What is that!?"

Chapter 103: The Conference of Heroes (End)

I reject the sudden accusation in a loud voice.

Weapon Copy?

There was nothing written about this on the help screen. I've been in this world for four months. I have committed the contents of the help screen to heart.

From this person's explanation, it seems he modified all of his weapons the second he got them.

"Naofumi... You don't even know that? I'm surprised you've survived until now." (Motoyasu) Damn. It's pissing me off. This person's eyes are pissing me off.

No wonder I was getting nothing but strange shields.

I never got any normal shields like, 'Iron Shield' or 'Round Shield' or 'Buckler'. I did think it was strange.

"Did you find that function on your own?" (Naofumi)

"More like, isn't it common sense to use the weapons from the weapon store? The weapons were weak at first so I obviously visited the store." (Motoyasu) Now that I think about it, I had previously decided to leave my shield as it was and had tried to equip a sword.

At that time, 'System Warning. To the holder of the Legendary Weapon. You have tried to equip a weapon besides your Legendary Weapon' had popped up.

At that time I had realized that I couldn't equip any weapons.

"I received a system warning, but Weapon Copy never came up." (Naofumi) "Ah" (Itsuki)

"Oh course." (Ren)

My head was starting to hurt.

Of course, I am the shield, but the first thing any adventurer looks for should not be a shield.

I already had a basic shield so I looked for a one-handed sword or anything else I could use as a weapon.

Is that why I never notices.

“... To advance the conversation, Ren, why did you already know which monsters to hunt to advance your weapon.” (Naofumi) “How?... Isn’t it common sense to check the identity of your drops?” (Ren) Drop!?

Ah... In normal Net Games, monsters do drop items.

Items that had no relations to the actual parts of the monsters.

“The Store also sold some high quality items. They had plenty of ingredients. It really gave off the feeling that I was in another world.” (Ren) “Yep” (Motoyasu)

“And there were a lot of useful items within the monster drops.” (Itsuki) It seems that a lot of useful information is coming out one after the other.

And it seems that it applies to all the weapons.

It feels like the time I first came to this world. The feeling is unpleasant.

“Preparing equipment was basic and then comes” (Ren)

“Learning skills, correct?” (Itsuki)

“... for argument’s sake, please explain in greater detail.” (Naofumi) It feels like these people are teaching it as if it is common sense. I’ll strengthen my heart, and inquire further.

“Once you acquire recipes and skills, if you feed them to your weapon, the system makes them for you. If you do it enough times, the weapon learns the skill by itself.” (Itsuki) The system does it by itself! What the Hell!

It seems that it will still boost effects if you make it by hand, but as long as you have the recipe, the weapon makes it by itself?

So the reason Motoyasu had Holy Water was because he made it himself?

And it seems the materials come from monster drops.

“The drawback is that the weapon can only store items made from drops.” (Ren) “It really lightens the load.” (Itsuki) (TL: there was a hammerspace system...) It seems that the system has some shortcomings, but I lived without any of the benefits.

To think I would be getting so much useful information. I motion for Shadow to take notes.

“Regarding hunting grounds, we’ll need to set some ground rules.” (Itsuki) “Right... We could divide by level, but the monsters will probably be the same across the islands.” (Ren) “We need to make sure our hunting grounds don’t overlap.” (Motoyasu) “Correct.” (Itsuki)

“Well then is there anything else?” (Ren)

I pound this information into my head as I listen quietly.

“Then I’ll tell you my special method of becoming stronger.” (Itsuki) Itsuki sticks his chest out and begins talking.

“In this world, the rarity of equipment is everything. After that is Money. If you don’t build these up from the beginning, there is no point.” (Itsuki) “What a blatant lie.” (Ren)

“To mix in a lie after starting off with true statements, you really are the worst.” (Motoyasu) And all of a sudden, Ren Itsuki and Motoyasu are in disagreement.

In one sentence, the atmosphere had deteriorated.

“W-What are you going on about! This is definitely the truth!” (Itsuki) “No, It’s a lie.” (Ren)

“Yeah, you really are a liar.” (Motoyasu)

“N-no! I never lie.” (Itsuki)

? Itsuki’s behavior is clearly different from before.

It's not the same behavior as when he was defending his lie. He currently seems to be genuinely angry.

Well, Itsuki has been being called a liar for the whole meeting. Getting mad is understandable.

I suddenly remember something.

"Now that I think about it, Itsuki, you seem to gather this gem quite often." (Naofumi) I take out the gem that Rishia handed me and place it on the table.

"Y-yes, this is useful in strengthening weapons." (Itsuki) Refining, huh. Well, it is a game-like system.

"It's important to strengthen your weapons to their limits." (Itsuki) "I bet there are risks of failure. Please tell us all of the details truthfully." (Motoyasu) Motoyasu warns him.

"There is no failure!" (Itsuki)

No failure? What does that mean?

I don't get it.

"What are you talking about, there can't be such a convenient gem." (Naofumi) "For a while, you have been doing nothing but deny me. Ren, please explain it to him." (Itsuki) "Me? Fine, I'll tell the truth to Naofumi." (Ren)

Why am I being singled out... But it's the truth that I want to know.

"In this world, level is everything. As long as you raise your skill level, things will work out." (Ren) "Lies are not good." (Itsuki)

"Yes, please stop lying with a straight face." (Motoyasu) So which is it!?

"Naofumi, it seems like you'll get nothing useful out of these people, so I'll specially tell you. To strengthen your weapons, you must increase your proficiency in them" (Ren) "Proficiency?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, if you use the same weapon for a long amount of time, it will get stronger. And when a weapon becomes obsolete, you can convert that

proficiency into energy and transfer it. Storing energy unleashes extreme powers. This is most important” (Ren) “Why are you lying in the heat of the moment?” (Motoyasu) “Don’t be bothered by these people. All that’s important is rarity. In normal games, low level rare items would lose out in late game, but the Legendary weapons are different.” (Itsuki) Just by listening to these people makes me want to try out different things.

However, everything they say is a mystery. I don’t know what to believe.

“What a guy. He can say such lies with a cool face.” (Motoyasu)
Motoyasu derides Ren.

“Yes, you shouldn’t listen to him. He’s lying.” (Itsuki) “I really don’t know what’s going on. What should I do?” (Naofumi) “First open your weapon tree and check your weapon proficiency.” (Ren) As told, I open my weapon tree and look at the Chimera Viper Shield, a shield I use quite often.

I just see the normal status window.

What am I supposed to check?

... nothing is happening.

“There’s nothing, but...” (Naofumi)

So it was a lie. It’s not like I believed him, but this guy is also a liar...

Weapon Copy also seems dubious.

“That can’t be! I know what you are doing, you’re making me out as a liar!” (Ren) “I also don’t have that function.” (Motoyasu)

“Me neither. It wasn’t written on the Help Screen.” (Itsuki) “Wha... Never Mind! The me that tried to help you was an idiot.” (Ren) Ren makes a dejected face and sits back in his chair.

The usually cool Ren has taken quite a bit of damage.

I have to assume that everything they told me is a lie.

It wasn’t written in the Help, so...

“I was still in the middle of my conversation. To strengthen equipment,

you take energy from items and then you can add percentage points to the equipment through enchantment.” (Itsuki) “Like +10% attack?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, this process takes up a lot of time, but there is a 0% chance of failure.” (Itsuki) “That’s a lie. You’re giving Naofumi knowledge from a separate game.” (Ren) “And I’m saying it’s not a lie! By absorbing items dropped from monsters into our weapons, we can increase our stats. This applies to all forms of the legendary weapons. Like increasing the level of another job.” (Itsuki) (TL: I don’t know if this is a specific reference, it applies to a couple of games) Ah, so that’s why Itsuki was mentioning monsters and percents earlier.

To even lie to Firo, he is quite thorough.

“Yes, Yes, they keep saying bullcrap, so let’s leave Ren and Itsuki aside and move onto me.” (Motoyasu) “I don’t really want to hear it...” (Naofumi)

It seems everything I have heard so far has been a lie.

“To be blunt, this world is all about strengthening weapons! Using your equipment to their utmost level is exponentially more important than level. As long as you get status bonuses, you can overcome level gap. Even a terrible weapon can be strong if upgraded!” (Motoyasu) “That’s a large lie!” (Naofumi)

“Let me continue Naofumi-san!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu starts talking to me out of nowhere.

“It changes based on the weapon, but you can then use a special gem to enchant weapons. In the original Emerald Online, there was a chance of losing the weapon, but for the legendary weapons, that chance is zero.” (Motoyasu) “There is no such system!” (Itsuki)

“Yeah!” (Ren)

This has turned into nothing but a shouting match. Shadow also seems to be troubled.

I’m just as troubled as Shadow.

“It’s all about status enchantment. If you feed your weapon the souls of different monsters, the effect is different. If you fight the same enemy for a while, you get attack bonuses against that enemy.” (Motoyasu) “Please stop it already.” (Itsuki)

“Yeah, you are speaking of a different game.” (Ren)

Ran and Itsuki shout at Motoyasu in loud voices

“For the love of... Why must all of you speak such lies?” (Motoyasu)
“That would be you!” (Itsuki)

“Hello Mr. Pot, can I introduce you to Mrs Kettle?” (Ren) (TL: Personal touch, the dialogue is getting boring)

“Um... I’m sorry to intrude, but...” (Naofumi)

I’m beginning to see the connection.

It seems that Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu have seen different things.

“Could it just be that each weapon works on a different system?” (Naofumi) “... Yes, it seems that way. It’s the same for what happened with my skills.” (Itsuki) “That makes sense. But Itsuki, we haven’t confirmed whether or not you are lying” (Ren) “But that means that none of this information will help me...” (Naofumi) And the conversation was back on track.

Well these people got genuinely angry, so I guess they weren’t lying. They had nothing to gain by lying here anyways. This meeting was organized by the queen to help combat the wave, anyways.

“Well, last is me.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, you haven’t said anything for a while, so now tell us everything.” (Itsuki) “... I have take no responsibility in whether or not he lies or not.” (Motoyasu) These people...

“First, what do you want to hear?” (Naofumi)

“Why are Rafatalia and Firo so strong?” (Ren)

Having these people understand my abilities may save my life one day.

So I just tell them the truth.

“Yes, that is the bonus from the Slave User and Monster User shield series. They speed up the growth of monsters and slaves. They pretty much increase stat gain, and the effects are quite potent. Firo also gets bonuses from the Filo Rial Shield series.” (Naofumi) Should I also tell them about the Ahoge Class up item?

“There was no such skills in the shield users of my game.” (Ren) “I agree. An ability that convenient comes close to Cheating. Where did you get such a shield.” (Itsuki) Cheating, huh. Well, I can’t argue with that.

“I got the Slave User Shield when I absorbed the ink used for making the Slave Seal. I got the Monster User Shield by absorbing the Egg Firo was born from.” (Naofumi) “Well if you can prove your absorption ability, we will believe you.” (Ren) “He may be lying.” (Itsuki)

“Say what you will.” (Naofumi)

“Then next. When fighting the pope... Your battle abilities were surprisingly high. I’ve never seen such an ominous Shield in my games.” (Itsuki) Itsuki is staring at me with doubting eyes.

How troublesome. (TL: He says Fuyukai Desu if you wanted to know) “Where did you get that power? No, let me rephrase that. Where did you meet god?” (Itsuki) “Wha?” (Naofumi)

“Where did you meet God, and get the power to cheat? In the forums for my game, I have read about a User who was able to meet God and gain that ability. Answer me.” (Itsuki) (TL: really? REALLY?) You! Even if it’s a joke, you shouldn’t go that far.

... Since coming to this world, I have met much misfortune, but phrases that annoy me to this extent are rare to come across.

“I’m not cheating!” (Naofumi)

“For the Shield to have that much attack power, you must be cheating.” (Itsuki) Ren and Motoyasu nod.

“Where did you get that power? If we were to obtain it, our powers

would increase exponentially. Please tell us.” (Itsuki) He has already assumed that he is correct. I’m getting a bit angry.

“You don’t think I could have gotten power through honest effort?” (Naofumi) “Like hell.” (Itsuki)

He believes that the shield will always remain weak.

It’s a legendary weapon. There’s no way it can be as weak as he believes.

I just earnestly raised my stats by unlocking new shields and made use of the powerful Curse Series, that takes a toll on my body every time I use it.

Yet this person is asking where I obtained the ability to cheat.

“That shield originated from a shield called The Shield of Rage, and evolved into a series called the Curse Series. The conditions under which it appears are... uncertain, but it manifests whenever my rage crosses a certain boundary. I got it when I first fought Motoyasu.” (Naofumi) At that time, I was swallowed by an uncontrollable rage.

I can’t imagine what would have happened if Rafatalia hadn’t been there to restrain me.

“Isn’t it written in the Help? That shield requires quite a high price. I wonder if you would be able to control it. By the way, all of my stats besides defense have been halved since I used that skill on the pope.” (Naofumi) Ren’s eyes look like they are going through the Help.

And as expected, he says...

“... There’s no such item in here.” (Ren)

Nonono, It’s written in mine.

Well, only after I unlocked the Shield of Rage.

“Maybe it only appears after you have unlocked it.” (Naofumi) “Did your net games contain such potent cursed items?” (Ren) “Nope, it also did not shields that need compensation to work.” (Motoyasu) “If you’re going to lie, you need to make it more believable, Like Motoyasu and Ren” (Itsuki)

Itsuki's comment pushes Ren to the Limit. He stands up, points at Itsuki and says...

"You're one to talk, you compulsive liar!" (Ren)

"What? Aren't you the one constantly putting up a cool façade?" (Itsuki)
"Yeah, Yeah!" (Motoyasu)

"And you're a Skirt-chasing Idiot! Do you plan to self destruct defending another woman?" (Both Ren and Itsuki) "What you say?!" (Motoyasu)

"And Itsuki, his shield may absorb things, but you have your meat shield to do that for you." (Ren) "They are absolutely necessary!" (Itsuki)

"And you, Do you plan to act like this is a game, and play Hero? Death is the end! If death isn't absolute, then why did you people pursue me when I had that death warrant?" (Naofumi) "I don't believe it's a game to that extent! I thought that only heroes could kill other heroes! That I would be able to kill you since you became a Demon Lord." (Itsuki) "What a convenient brain you've got there. Are you sure you haven't played too many games that your brain is rotten? You might have thought it was a game event, but what you were trying to do was simple Murder."

(Naofumi) "The you that came under suspicion is at fault. And I didn't believe it was an event!" (Itsuki) "Right! It's fine if you see this as an event, but you see us as nothing but villains." (Ren) "Ren! Do you plan on saying more!? Do you plan on having it out with this hypocrite Itsuki more? Who do you think you are? This world's savior? If god has sent you to punish me, then I want to go and kill that god." (Itsuki) If this world had a god, I want to smack the hell out of hm. He dropped me into this living hell.

Don't outsource for heroes!

"What are you saying to the god who made this wonderful world?" (Motoyasu) "I won't offer my thanks to someone with such a dubious existence." (Itsuki) From here to the end of the meeting, I don't really remember.

What followed was a long stream of verbal abuse.

Shadow tried to get the meeting back under control, but it was already way past the point of no return.

The first one to get fed up and leave was Itsuki. Ren soon followed. Finally, Motoyasu drudged off.

Chapter 104: 1/4

Naofumi: "Ugggh."

I groan after the three of them left the meeting room.

After calming down and thinking about it, I couldn't help but grimace.

I'm thinking about all of the information drawn out of those guys.

But, I have no idea how to judge what is the truth, and what is a lie.

.....As I compile their claims on a memo, I groan again.

It is common for us to absorb the dropped items from demons.

Come to think of it, I forgot to explain the reason for dismantling the parts.

Well, they should be able to understand this much.

Next is weapon copy. It seems this is where the differences in the games those guys played starts.

When a weapon is already found from the same system, it becomes possible to equip that weapon after unsealing it.

Besides compounding, the weapon can also act as a proxy for other creation skills.

All of their claims match up until here.

Let's come to a conclusion on the claims of their respective strengthening methods after seeing it myself. I don't know what each respective differences in characteristics their weapons have compared to my shield.

There is no game that I can use as a model, not to mention it feels like I'm reading an unfinished book.

.....Though they also took a stab at my shield's power to train companions.....

Ren.

Level dependence.

Proficiency: The more the same weapon is used, the more the power increases.

Energy Grant: Hidden power can be unlocked by using energy granted from resetting the weapon's skill proficiency. Additionally, items absorbed into the weapon can be converted into energy.

Rarity Increase: By using energy, it is possible to increase the weapon's rarity. Overall ability will improve.

Motoyasu.

Everything is decided by his weapon. The weapon's original strength doesn't matter much, everything relies on Spirit Enchants. The necessary stats are needed to wield though.

Tempering: Equipment can be strengthened with the use of ore.

Spirit Enchant: By giving a weapon the fragment of a demon's soul to absorb, special powers can be granted.

Status Enchant: Stats can be increased.

Itsuki.

Everything is decided by bonuses granted by a weapon's rarity.

Reinforcing: A weapon's power can increase by using a specific type of ore.

Item Enchant: Items absorbed into the weapon provides energy that has a chance to increase the weapon's attack percentage.

Job Level: Stats can be boosted up by absorbing items acquired from specific demons.

(Tl note: ドーピング Doping, I couldn't really find a way to fit this into the sentence without it sounding weird. Example: Stats can be doped up by absorbing....." This makes me cringe for some reason.) Something like this.

It's falling apart splendidly.

There's Energy for Reinforcement, Tempering, Skill Proficiency, and Rarity is also covered.

There's also as many as three enchantment systems.

In the first place, all three of them are from worlds where games are common, but each one of them is operating with a different game in mind.

Moreover, even the genres are different.

VRMMO, Ordinary MMO, and Console Games.

I don't know VR well, but MMOs and Console games can't possibly have the same system.

Due to bad experiences with fan games.

For some reason or another, there was a similar system used in my old world.

If I think about it like that.....I can say that their insistence of knowledge on other games is a lie.

But.....Is that really the case?

I turn my eyes to the shield.

I think that the influence of previous owners has left the legendary weapons with these results.

I mean that would explain the curse series.

The series couldn't be found when I looked through the skill tree before, it only appeared at the time I thought Firo died.

I see. It's influenced by.....The heart.

It may not have appeared if I denied it from the beginning.

Weapon Copy..... Since all three of them agreed to it, it's not a lie.

The drops were the same. However, I did not understand it.

I open the weapon icon to investigate.

.....Of course It's still not there.

Is it in a completely different category? Is the system structure different from those guys?

Legendary Shield.

Negative..... Of course.

I denied it somewhere within my heart.

Perhaps.....Is that why I can't do the things that those guys can do?

If I look at it from a purely objective standpoint, my field of view should widen right?

There are drops! There is copying!

I recall those three at the same time. It's not impossible.

Believe it..... Believe in it. Imagine the screen with the drop list that pops up when a demon is defeated.

I press the system menu on the shield.

The menu opens with a ring.

A window appeared with parts of dismantled demons, and other items that were absorbed pop up.

Naofumi:"What the hell is this!?"

It seems the power of believing exists.....Didn't me being cautious and skeptical narrow down my own possibilities?

.....Somehow, when I press the item menu, I can open it and verify what the monsters dropped.

Ah, a plant that can be used for magic power water came out. The materials for soul healing water also appeared.....

Various things just appear. It would be amazing if everything was pulled out.

Beside that.....Ah, there's a considerable amount of garbage. There are some demon entrails too.

I turn my attention to Itsuki's ore.

That guy really purchased that ore. He even explained how to use it.

I can't help but try to believe it.

It exists. He was even angry to that extent. He shouldn't have told a lie.

.....However, nothing shown up.

I am denying this somewhere.

I just don't believe that a liar will tell the truth.

Is the power of my trust not enough? Feels like an anime for children.....

However.....I'll still believe it.

Shadow:"Hero of the Shield-dono?"

Shadow speaks to get my attention. But I decided that in order to preserve my life, I started a glaring contest with the shield.

Is it acceptable that you were deceived? You legendary shield. Believing helps. I will absolutely never lose.

Believe it!

Itsuki's Reinforcing happened. There is also Item Enchant.

Otherwise, we are only slightly stronger than the usual adventurers.

I believed in the idea, and pressed the icon on the shield.

ZaZa.....The icon distorted, but only for an instant.

The next moment.

With a ding, an item for Reinforcement appeared.

Naofumi:"Alright!"

I let the shield absorb the ore I got from Rishia, and let the shield search for the corresponding request.

Found it.

Shark Bite Shield 1/20

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: On Board Combat Skills 1.

Special Effect: Shark's Fang.

To experiment, I reinforced the Shark Bite Shield.

I see, looks like reinforcing is easy, with the number 20 appearing next to it.

This enhancement method is somewhat similar to a game in my world called Monster Hunter.

I mean..... Since there is a number in place, I can avoid jumping to conclusions.

I did not suffer so far without reason. There are many who use a shield and move sluggishly..... It would be a bad habit to only use strong weapons. A combination of a shield and a one-handed sword is by far the strongest, with it being easy to move, and strong to defend.

Though for convenience, in that game, a the bow was exactly that. Perhaps it might be similar. Well, the difference would be magic since it didn't exist, Let's use the energy from an item that was absorbed before.

.....There are a variety of effects.

Oh? From the blue shark's intestines, I discover an aquatic monster damage mitigation skill. Let's try it out.

The probability of the first try will absolutely succeed.

Shark Bite Shield 1/20

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: On Board Combat Skills 1.

Special Effect: Shark's Fang.

Item Enchant Level 1: 2% Damage Reduction of Aquatic Monsters .

Since there still a little left, I'll try it again.

Ah, a failure! It became zero. But, I'll continue.

I got it to level 2.

Shark Bite Shield 1/20

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: On Board Combat Skills 1.

Special Effect: Shark's Fang.

Item Enchant Level 2: 3% Damage Reduction of Aquatic Monsters .

While getting carried away and apply more, I stopped at seven. The success rate for 8 is rather low.

Shark Bite Shield 1/20

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: On Board Combat Skills 1.

Special Effect: Shark's Fang.

Item Enchant Level 7: 16% Damage Reduction of Aquatic Monsters .

.....This will be amazing when fighting against aquatic type demons.

At any rate, another gauge exists, I think Itsuki's word for it was Job Level. Let's try it out.

Defense Job Level 1

Defense Gauge 0/5

A large number of the internal organs from demons was absorbed, and the button was pressed repeatedly.

It looks like after 1, the rate the gauge rises slows down.

Defense Gauge 5/5

Gauge up! [Defense +1]

Defense Job Level 2

And the Defense Gauge now displays 0/6.

Furthermore, when I wanted to add another item, a cool down time appeared.

It seem it is necessary to increase it regularly.

Quite long-term. Though, it doesn't seem too ridiculous to gather.

At any rate, the others probably didn't lie either.

First of all is Ren.

While praying as strongly as that time with Itsuki, I open a menu, I

habitually use the Chimeric Viper Shield.

Chimeric Viper Shield 0/30 C

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield]
Detoxification Compounding Improvement Poison Resistance
(Intermediate) Special Effect: Snake's Fang (Intermediate) Hook
Proficiency: 100

Somehow, the stats have already risen enormously, but.....

Isn't it already increased by about 1.5 times? It's defensive power alone is formidable.

It seems the maximum is 100.

As I was playing around the menu with my finger.

Would you like to reset skill Proficiency?

A system message popped-up.

I press "Yes" with some hesitation.

Then, the ability reverts back to the shield that I knew.

2000 Skill Energy Acquired.

.....I select the Chimeric Viper as the target.

Ah, insufficient.....The requirement is 4000.

For the time being, I convert enough Skill Energy to upgrade.

I hear the sound of something being filled.

Chimeric Viper Shield (Awakened) 0/30 C

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield]
Detoxification Compounding Improvement Poison Resistance (High)
Special Effect: Snake's Fang (High) Long Hook

Proficiency: 0

Its base ability went up considerably.

What is this!?

Do I increase the rarity Now? C is an abbreviation of Common.

As I thought, Energy is still insufficient. Let's continue to convert and increase it.

Challenge!

Failure!

Like I'd fail!

Success!

Chimeric Viper Shield (Awakened) 0/30 UC

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield]

Detoxification Compounding Improvement Poison Resistance (High)

Special Effect: Snake's Fang (High) Long Hook

Proficiency: 0

UC.....Uncommon.

The ability has improved by about 1.2 times.

After several more challenges, I managed to raise it up to R. With just That It's ability went up considerably.

The amount of increase is abnormal. The Proficiency also increases.....
Wait a Minute!

Furthermore, there is also Motoyasu's claim.....I believe and open the menu. I already believe all of it greedily.

Shit.....There isn't any ore that Motoyasu used for Tempering.

Let's test out Spirit Enchant.

Since I gathered a large amount of demon soul fragments from Magenta Frogs on this island, let's use it!

Chimeric Viper Shield (Awakened) 0/30 R

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield]

Detoxification Compounding Improvement Poison Resistance (High)

Special Effect: Snake's Fang (High) Long Hook

Proficiency: O

Magenta Frog Spirit: 16% Damage Reduction of Poison Monsters.

Let's also try out Status Enchant.

Do you use these materials?.....Oh! The results are random.

The Result, magical power was added.

Chimeric Viper Shield (Awakened) O/30 R

Ability Unsealed..... Equipment Bonus: Skill [Change Shield]

Detoxification Compounding Improvement Poison Resistance (High)

Special Effect: Snake's Fang (High) Long Hook

Proficiency: O

Magenta Frog Spirit: 16% Damage Reduction of Poison Monsters.

Status Enchant: Magic Power +20

Huge! That amount of Magical Power is huge!

Oh, I can reset. However, since the amount of materials I used isn't small, let's stop for now.

The shield has become remarkably stronger than before.

Though the stats are a little messy, it is still a plus for me.

Though I was bewildered about Itsuki and Ren's similar description of Rare and Rarity.

It wouldn't be wrong to remember it.

Let's take the opportunity to check Help.

Naofumi: "....."

Sure enough, everything is added.

This is good.....I can even use the systems from old net games which I know.

Naofumi: "Huh?"

No matter how much I think or pray, I have no idea what to say to

them.

Since I already strengthened myself considerably already, any complaints won't be convincing.

Anyway.....

Naofumi: "Shadow....."

Shadow: "What degojaru?"

Naofumi: "Notify the other heroes. Tell them that everything said here was true. No one told a lie. Tell them that unless they truly believe each other, it won't work."

To think that such a thing would happen. That reminds me, the queen did say so before.

The pope's replica weapon only had 1/4th the power of the real thing.

Due to the results here, I can understand. No, that already exceeded the worst-case scenario.

If they stalled to put the replica in its original form, and wasn't outwitted.....It would have been impossible.

After I give advice to Shadow, I leave the meeting room and head back to mine.

Chapter 105: Weapon Copy

That day, I went back to the inn and tried feeding ingredients into my shield. An Icon popped up.

For now, I want to make a basic Heal pill.

...To make one pill, the mix time is 5 minutes.

It seems the required time increases based upon the level of the recipe.

5 minutes later.

A chime sounded off, and the system message, 'Mixing Complete' appeared before my eyes.

I confirm the result.

—

Heal Pill

Quality: Normal

—

Did it come out as 'Normal' because the materials used were bad? No, the quality decreased too much I'll try using better materials.

—

Heal Pill

Quality: Normal

—

I ran some more tests, and it seems that the Quality is stuck at normal.

So even if all I have is 'Poor' materials, I will be able to make 'Normal' goods? This might be a good source of profit.

And the shield can make medicine while I do other work.

The quality might increase if I raise my level.

Well, right now, the Queen is sponsoring my living costs, so I don't have

to worry about money though.

“Master, what are you doing?” (Firo)

“? Firo, huh.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah” (Firo)

As I test a lot of things in the Carriage, Firo wanders over.

At the inn, Firo is usually either in the room, or in the carriage. If she has free time, she will come over to the carriage.

“Master, Firo was about to kick the person who was doing strange things in Firo’s carriage” (Firo) (TL: Referring to Naofumi)

This bird is saying some scary things. Well, I guess I can trust her to guard my merchandise at least.

It seems that Firo really treasures this carriage. Every morning, she comes and does maintenance on it.

Normally, the Iron Carriage would rust in the sea air, but due to her daily maintenance, that doesn’t seem to be an issue.

It may be because we have taken a break from peddling, but the bird had a lot of free time. The Carriage is way too clean.

It’s so polished that it is reflecting light like a mirror. The carriage itself seems to shine.

For a Filo Rial, the carriage is a precious item. If someone is messing around in it in the night, there is no surprise that she will come and check.

By the way, though she can do maintenance, she cannot do repairs.

Whenever something starts to look off, Firo comes shouting to me to fix it.

“Is Master going to sleep in the Carriage tonight? Let Firo sleep with you~.” (Firo) “Wrong, I’m just testing a few things.” (Naofumi) “fu~n” (Firo)

I guess I should go to one of the weapon vendors on the island... Now

that I think about it, it's already midnight.

I guess tomorrow is fine too.

After this, I will try reinforcing my equipment. I'll try modifying a normal shield.

"Welcome back. What happened? Did you have any progress?"
(Rafatalia) When I returned to the room, Rafatalia asks this to me.

"I learned quite a bit. I still need to test a few things, so I will be busy tomorrow." (Naofumi) "That's good. Will we be making an honest effort to raise our levels starting tomorrow?" (Rafatalia) "Well... I have to... I guess we could do that." (Naofumi) I can get some monster drops as well.

I'll look for some monsters that look like they will drop something useful.

"Please step back." (Naofumi)

"Yes.....?" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia tilts her head and steps backwards. I had previously found a sword. I try to take it out of the shield.

With a bang, the sword falls out of the shield and hits the floor.

"Wa!" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia lets out a sound of surprise.

"W-what is this?" (Rafatalia)

"It's something that a monster left behind." (Naofumi) "A monster was holding something like this?" (Rafatalia) "Now then..." (Naofumi)

The monster that dropped this was... Brown Pill Rabbit.

I analyze the item.

—

Iron Sword

Quality: Normal

—

Well it was a small fry.

“Rafatalia, your sword is starting to rust. Please use this for a while.”
(Naofumi) “Ah, Yes. Thank You...?” (Rafatalia)

Picking up the mysterious sword, Rafatalia critically looks over it.

Firo starts to sniff it.

“It smells like Pill Rabbit” (Firo)

Wow. She got it right.

As expected of a Filo Rial. Even though she looks like this, she is still a monster.

Well, I guess tomorrow will be fun.

I looked through my drops, set my shield to produce some random medicine, and went to sleep.

The next morning.

I wake up, eat a light breakfast and go off to look for a weapon store.

They have them. A wide variety of shields.

“Can I look at this for a bit?” (Naofumi)

“Go ahead.” (Weapon Dealer)

The price is really high. Probably because this is a tourist attraction.

Or because a lot of adventures have been visiting as of late.

On its off season, I wonder how the islanders make money.

Do they sell monster goods? There are some unusual ones here.

I don't really want to imagine cooking with Magenta Frog Meat.

Does this Island even have an active economy? I'll ask the Accessory Merchant later.

“Naofumi-sama?” (Rafatalia)

“Ah, Rafatalia, Firo, please wait a bit.” (Naofumi) “Okay...” (Rafatalia)

“What is master doing?” (Firo)

“Just Wait, you’ll see.” (Naofumi)

I take one of the Shields hung on the wall and touch it to the Legendary Shield.

Beep. An icon appears in my field of vision.

Weapon Copy activated.

—

You have unlocked the Iron Shield

You have unlocked the Red Iron Shield

You have unlocked the Pink Iron Shield

You have unlocked the White Iron Shield

You have unlocked the Brown Iron Shield

You have unlocked the Blue Iron Shield

You have unlocked the Sky Blue Iron Shield

Etc... (TL: looks like the Hero can accessorize.)

—

I unlocked the Iron Shield... and all its color variations...

Now that I think about it, my initial Small Shield did have color variation as well. At that time, I didn’t really care, as it didn’t unlock any extra stats.

I question the usefulness of such a system.

I wonder if the balloon shield also has such function. I have still yet to unlock that shield.

The monster came in Orange and Red variety, there might also be a Normal variety.

Anyways, I repeat the process for the other shields in the shop.

Round Shield, Buckler, Knight Shield, Copper Shield, Bronze Shield, Steel Shield, Gold Shield... There were also things like Leather Shield.

It also seems that all the store's shields have color variation as well.

The amount of shields I had greatly increased. I didn't feel like going through all the bonuses.

They all probably only raised stats, so there shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Some skills may have been mixed in, but going through all these shields will take time.

"I guess that's it." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Shop Vendor)

The Weapon Dealer tilts his head and stares at me.

Though the store's inventory wasn't the best, I still got a lot of shields.

Once I finish leveling up here, I'll go see the old man at the weapon shop. He probably has a better selection. (TL: Referring to SmithBro)
"Have you found something that interests you?" (Store Vendor) "? No..." (Naofumi)

Now that I think of it, I got some useless weapons with the Monster Drops. I'll try to sell them.

"Please wait for a second." (Naofumi)

I go to a place where the vendor cannot see me and take out some weapons from the shield.

"Would you be interested in buying this item?" (Naofumi) "Sure, can you let me appraise it?" (Vendor)

I hand over the Bronze Spear I had taken out to the Vendor.

"It seems to be quite solid. There also seems to be a minor enchantment on it..." (Vendor) The dealer can see things that I can't.

"It doesn't appear to have an inscription, so the price will drop a bit. Is that okay with you?" (Vendor) "Is there supposed to be an inscription?" (Naofumi) Now that I think of it, it makes sense.

If someone famous made it, there should be a way of telling. Something

like a signature.

“It’s in good condition, so the price shouldn’t drop too much. But where did you acquire this item?” (Vendor) “That’s a secret.” (Naofumi)

If this person had been suspicious of me, I would have played it off by lying, but we haven’t reached that level yet.

So it’s a weapon without a maker...?

“Wait, if I look closer, there is something like an inscription on it... It looks like a shield.” (Vendor) Was there something like that?

“Some smith probably made it while thinking of the legendary heroes.” (Vendor) “Things like that can happen?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, long ago, weapons like these popped up all the time. Even now, they sometimes come up. Many Smiths admire the Legendary Heroes and inscribe their creations with their Marks.” (Vendor) “Then this mark won’t really raise the price will it.” (Naofumi) “That would be correct. Though the quality is good, one who would put such a mark on their creations is simply a dreamer without a name.” (Vendor) The Vendor’s appraisal is a bit troubling.

“Well, an adventurer drawn to the magic of the Awakened Islands will probably buy it. I’ll take it for 20 Silver coins.” (Vendor) “Understood” (Naofumi)

I give some other Items to the Weapons Vendor. My total profit is 90 Silver Coins.

If I had discovered the drop system earlier, I could have probably improved Rafatalia’s equipment early on... But there’s nothing I can do about that now.

After I left the Weapons Shop, I changed my Shield to an Iron Shield and look at the equipment bonuses.

Ah, it seems the Iron shield comes with a Skill

—

Iron Shield 0/10 C

Ability... Equipment Bonus: Shield Bash

Skill Proficiency O

This is obviously an offensive skill.

I can't wait to see it in action.

“Um... That shield looks like the one that was being sold at the store but..” (Rafatalia) “Ah, the legendary weapons can copy the abilities of weapons sold at the store. That way, if a hero finds a good weapon, he will actually be able to equip it.” (Naofumi) “That... Seems a bit like stealing.” (Rafatalia)

“It's not like I'm taking the item, I'm just making a copy of it. And what am I supposed to tell the store vendors?” (Naofumi) “...yeah...” (Rafatalia)

Well, I also have complicated feelings about it.

Is this like pirating games and manga online?

It's like bootlegging a movie at the theater to watch later. (TL: No Moa)
It's a crime, isn't it. Yeah it is.

But this is an alternate world. Mine didn't have anyone with legendary weapons.

And in this world, the one who gets fooled is at fault.

I won't complain about it, and I won't avoid doing it.

I mean, the other three are doing it as well...

I do feel like I'm doing something bad... but I have to get used to it.

I think The Old Man will happily let me copy his shields if I ask.

I think the other heroes probably stopped at his shop and copied all his weapons first.

I'll have him make more equipment for Rafatalia as compensation.

“Next, let's go to the market place.” (Naofumi)

I'll see if they are selling any of the Enchantment Gems that Motoyasu and Itsuki were talking about.

I wonder how much they will cost.

The result: very few people actually sold them.

They mostly only carried the Gem I had already got from Rishia. Its name was the Prani Ore.

I had already cleared the conditions to unlock the Prani Shield when I tried the weapon enhancement technique Itsuki had talked about. It gave +1 Defense.

Unfortunately, it seems that my Chimera Viper Shield requires a different Ore.

When I checked the Help Screen later, the required information had appeared.

—

About Reinforcing

You can reinforce an item up to the denominating number, which has a minimum of 5 . However to strengthen stronger items, you will need more valuable items as ingredients.

(TL: i.e., if a shield says 1/20, reinforcing will take it to 2/20 and 20/20 is the maximum) – And these ingredients seem to only be made by people with high Steel-working skills. But with my skills, it seems that I am able to extract Prani Ore by myself.

Originally, Prani Ore is a soft, cheap, malleable metal that is used to increase the volume of gold products.

It made something like Gold Alloy, if too much Prani was added, the value would decrease.

It seems Itsuki was able to feed it to his bow to produce other valuable ingredients.

I will probably have to learn some Metal Working Skills. That way, I could mold the items sold by stores into more valuable materials.

“Then, should we go hunting?” (Naofumi)

“Yes” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

We’ll finally be able to do some honest-to-goodness level grinding.

And I can see the effects of my new shields.

My expectations are quite high.

“Now then, go quickly! Your body’s still in good condition, isn’t it?

Achoo” (???) “Mother. I can do it, relax!” (???)

“.....” (Naofumi)

I hear a familiar voice from the market place... But I won’t turn around.

Chapter 106: Days on Cal Mira Island

For the time being.....We are travelling by ship.

It seems Firo has completely mastered swimming. When she swims she looks like a penguin.

Firo:"Master."

While floating in the water Firo grabs onto the reins for the boat that I am holding .

.....I have a very bad feeling about this.

Firo:"Let Firo ferry the boat."

Naofumi:"Huh?"

While sitting on the boat with one hand on the oars, I think about the request.

Well, I understand what she is trying to do.

Naofumi:"Raphtalia, you don't seem to be vomiting."

Raphtalia:"I am fine on boats!"

That's a relief.

I nod and strongly shake the reins.

Firo:"Go~!"

Firo gallantly swims forwards while pulling the boat at high speeds.

Raphtalia:"Wa-Wa-Waaaaaah!"

As we were being ferried a funny voice was heard.

Well, it is normal to be surprised.

Raphtalia:" It's just like a foreign Dophi Ship."

What's that?

If I remember correctly, a Dophi is a demon that resembles a dolphin.

I can somehow imagine that.

Ships being pulled across the sea by large quantities of Dophi.....I imagine it to be such a place.

We are being very efficient, since Firo is able to do it herself.

Or rather, does Firo even know where she is heading towards? In more ways than one.

Firo: "Where is the island?"

Raphtalia: "Over there."

After confirming where the island Firo is supposed to ferry us to, she changes the direction she is swimming in.

This fellow sure adapts quickly.

Firo: "Master~, next time we play, dive with Firo to the bottom of the sea, it's very beautiful."

Naofumi: "I'll suffocate."

How long and how fast can you dive for in the sea?

I would hate it. Coming to a different world, and drowning while playing in the sea.

Firo: "Onee-chan can dive for a long time, she won't lose to Firo."

Naofumi: "Really?"

Raphtalia: "Y-Yeah..... Diving is my forte."

Well, if she couldn't swim, her parents would not have pushed her into the sea, away from the demons when the wave happened.

Raphtalia: " Shall I fetch some seafood for later?"

Naofumi: "That's fine..... But it always comes out at the hotel."

Raphtalia: ".....That seems be the case."

I'm getting slightly tired of seafood. Well, the dishes here are mostly in Meunière style, there is an absence of sashimi.

(Tlnote: Meunière: Rolled lightly in flour and sautéed in butter.)

Raphtalia: "Is it safe to eat it raw?"

Naofumi: "Dunno....."

Firo: "Is it delicious?"

Naofumi: "Let's feed it to Firo and see."

The problem with feeding it to Firo is that there is still the possibility that it isn't safe for us.

Naofumi: "Next time I'll make some food from my world."

Firo: "Yay~!"

Raphtalia: "I'm looking forward to it."

Naofumi: ".....Though it'll probably be from the East."

A cook book would be something I would like to search for soon. Incidentally, it also seems that my shield has a cooking skill.

And so, while chatting idly, we arrived at today's destination surprisingly swiftly.

Well, we were able to see it from the start, it barely took us any time at all to get here.

Naofumi: "Th-That was surprising."

While getting off the boat, my legs were trembling, and I am having trouble standing.

Knowing the ridiculous speed that the boat travelled to its destination at is surprising.

Firo's speed is quite considerable.

After arriving at the island, we comfortably move to the hunting grounds.

As a result, the experience points that demons give are increasing every time. Of course that's excluding the Miraka Bracelet.

If equipped, the experience increased even more.

Anyway, for the time being since Raphtalia is the lowest level, she equips the bracelet first.

Raphtalia: "It's been a while since I hunted demons with Naofumi-sama."

Naofumi: "Now that I think about it, that's right."

Due to one thing or the other, from the fight against the pope all the way to Cal Mira Island, the only fighting that was done was from Firo.

Though I don't think it has been that long either.

I mean.... when we were living as fugitives we had to hunt demons in order to procure food.

Naofumi: "From now on let's level up together at this Cal Mira Archipelago. Do your best."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Firo: "Okay~!"

As we chatted and worked on raising our levels, we noticed that there were more people on Cal Mira Island than the day before.

As expected, the adventurers don't really head towards the center of the island much.

Well, usually the upper limit for them is level 40. Unless they are a chosen adventurer it would be dangerous.

Though that might not be the reason I rarely met them.....

Just that.....How should I say it, those who are overly greedy will turn into bone.....

I am reminded of the law survival of the fittest.

How many adventurers have died on this island?

I refrain from questioning it too much since they aren't in the same class as us.....

Raphtalia: "Tei!"

Firo: "Taaaaa!"

Demons are cut apart in a single one of Raphtalia's sword strikes, and

the demons that are kicked by Firo resemble meat paste.

.....Correction, Raphtalia and Firo still have quite a lot to spare.

Furthermore, since I was strengthened, I can efficiently and safely defend against large numbers of demons.

Oh right, there is that Shield Bash.

Naofumi: "Shield Bash!"

I set my sights on an enemy, chant the skill to hit with my shield. Therefore, the demon was hit by the shield.

I watch as the Yellow Beetle is smashed.....and I hear a nice smack.

Though, it didn't seem to do very much damage.

However.....Its movement stopped.

It seems to have been stunned for about three seconds.

This is a skill that inflicts an abnormal state called Stun or confusion.

Though it's still a problem that i can't do any damage.....

Firo: "Bug~"

Some munching sounds resounded.

.....During the opening that the yellow beetle shown when its movement stopped, it was pitifully finished off with Firo eating it.

Cool down time is 5 seconds. It is easy to use. Doesn't cost much SP either.

(Tlnote: WHAT!? 3 second stun on a 5 second cooldown that doesn't cost much SP? Can somebody yell: "NERF!")(?) As we approach the center of the island, the demons increase in levels, and Raphtalia was struggling slightly.

Naofumi: "Are you alright?"

Raphtalia: "There are no problems!"

Firo: "This is nothing~"

Well, by struggling I meant, instead of needing one attack, now it's two.

So, at the center of today's island, we encountered a Karma Dog Familiar.

Similar to a circular orb.....A big dog with a pitch black body, had wings growing out from some magic-lens object from its back.

This breed of dog.....similar to a Golden retriever? It's an indescribably deformed demon. However, it doesn't change that this is still a brutal demon.

I confirm the displayed name as Karma Dog.

Is it the boss of this island?

I can't imagine the guy that summoned something like this Karma Dog Familiar as his familiar.

Naofumi:"Tzuvait •Aura!"

I use support magic on Raphtalia and Firo who challenge the Karma Dog.

The Karma dog tries to attack me by biting me with its enormous fangs.

Naofumi:"Hmph!"

The karma dog clamps down on my hand with its mouth, as I try to hold it down.

With a loud clang, I stop the movements of the Karma Dog.

Naofumi:"Shield Bash!"

I use one strike of Shield Bash on the Karma Dog.

If Raphtalia and Firo can take advantage of this opening it would be good.

And, contrary to what I thought, the Karma dog wasn't showing any effects from the Abnormal state, does it have a resistance?

For just a moment, I felt the power of its bite weaken, but it seems to be recovering quickly.

Its movements are fast though, but thanks to me holding it down, we can fight it safely.

After defeating it, we are able to catch up since the experience gained is considerable.

And so our everyday life on the island continued as such.

The next day we defeated a Karma Squirrel. Of course, it included the Familiar.

During yesterday night I checked the skills included in the shields that I obtained.

It was quite fortunate that I got a skill called Highten Reaction that informed me of any hostilities from demons.

I used it in the beginning in the hunting grounds.

Naofumi:” Highten Reaction!”

I tilt my neck, puzzled, as nothing happened. Then Firo blinks several times.

Firo:”Master, there’s a strange feeling of something flying around everywhere.”

It was brought to my attention.

At first I didn’t understand what happened, but I immediately thought about it.

It was due to the swarm of demons aiming at me.

Of course, it included the ones that other adventurers that were fighting.

The effective range is about 15 meters.

As expected, I had to return their demons and apologize to the other adventurers for troubling them, during that time it came to light that I was the hero of the shield.

I had no intention of hiding it, but there are some obstinate guys that have a problem with me.

Still, Highten Reaction has no effect on demons that are above a certain level of intelligence.

Similarly we defeated a Karma Rabbit, and I absorb it into the shield.

Ah, it had a charm that was considered a good rare item. Of course, when a demon is defeated it will be dismantled before absorbing.

I wonder what principle they appear on? It's quite likely that it could be from the dimensional crack.

And then, an ore called Oracle Ore dropped. After confirming the ore, it seems to be one of the necessary materials used to reinforce a weapon.

Therefore I started gathering it.

Since a weapon called Karma Dog Claw dropped, I took it out and gave it to Firo to equip.

.....But it's size didn't fit. We were fighting against Karma Dogs for a while, and a larger sized one dropped so we finished without trouble.

Though the size is all over the place.....Can't anything be done about it?

Firo:"Master~ This is claw is ominous~"

Naofumi:"Don't worry about it. It's probably not particularly cursed."

Firo:"Though-.....When kicking, some black stuff sprays out and the demons become unappetizing. The enemies before were more tender~....."

Hmm.....I wonder if it's because the weapon has a darkness attribute. Do you want a different weapon to make your food with?

Naofumi:"How about you Raphtalia?"

A Karma Rabbit Sword dropped from a Karma Rabbit for Raphtalia.

Raphtalia:"For some reason my body has become very light, it is very peculiar."

Before coming to a different world, using weapons dropped from bosses would be very exciting, but for some reason it doesn't seem so good.

I should probably ask the old man at the weapon shop to make weapons

from the materials from the Karma bosses.

Well, it should be fine since the offensive power is good.

Though the bad point is that it doesn't have blood clean coating, so the weapon won't last a long time.

While staying at the hotel, I can make my shield a whetstone, and there are also a lot of other shields to go through.

Let's give priority to that.

I should take the weapon to the old man for the coating.....It is necessary to prepare for the next wave too.

It would be best for it to pass anti-climatically.

As our levels rise steadily, a sense of impending crises also rises.

For the time being, to combat the anxiety, I will continue to collect shields from new demons and open up more possibilities to deal with any problems.

I cannot do anything without being careful.....

Well, should I check out the area where unknown demons inhabit after the wave.....?

I have the queen's funding so gold should be no problem.

Anyway, Including Raphtalia and Firo, we started strengthening ourselves.

Chapter 107: Cal Mira Island End

The Next Day

I defeat a boss called Karma Penguin and check the drops.

...penguin plushy?

What the hell is this?

I take it out of inventory.

“W-what is this?” (Naofumi)

“It looks like a stuffed animal.” (Rafatalia) “It’s wearing sleeping clothes” (Naofumi) It’s a Penguin Plushy in a Santa Suit. It seems familiar for some reason.

For argument’s sake, I check its status.

—

Penguin Plushy

Defense Up, Impact Resistance (Small),

Water Resistance (Large),

Dark Resistance (Small),

HP Restoration (Weak),

Magic Amplify (Medium)

Autonomous Repair,

Increased Swim Time,

Size Correction,

Skill Correction (Small),

Race Change – Monster (When Equiped)

—

...It has quite a few useful abilities. It’s basic stats don’t even lose to my Barbarian Armor +1.

Increased Swim Time... but I don't plan on swimming any time soon.

"It seems to be some sort of Legendary equipment. Rafatalia, please wear-" (Naofumi) "NO! There's no way I can fight while wearing that." (Rafatalia) As I thought.

I also refuse to wear this.

"Then Firo, wants to wear it" (Firo)

"How are you going to wear it. Don't you hate clothes?" (Naofumi) "It seems fun!" (Firo)

And the second Firo grasped the doll, it increased in size.

? Is that what they meant by size correction? How useful.

"Firo will wear it." (Firo)

Firo says as she equips the penguin.

Firo now completely looks like a penguin. A Santa bag also appeared for some reason.

"Wha... Don't those clothes look a little stiff?" (Naofumi) "D-do they?" (Rafatalia)

"Ah, I can't put any power behind my attacks." (Firo) "Then take it off." (Naofumi)

Was that the effect of Race Change? As her race changed to something besides Filo Rial, she no longer received any bonuses from my Filo Rial shield series.

It doesn't seem we can use this...

"Um, Firo wants to wear it to sleep" (Firo) "Well, I guess that works." (Naofumi)

It does look like something you would sleep in.

"...Or Naofumi-sama could let me wear his armor, and then wear this. The stats won't be wasted." (Rafatalia) "Rafatalia...You want me to fight in this?" (Naofumi) Well, if you just look at stats, this is most efficient. It is better equipment than my Barbarian Armor.

...

Because of my shield, my equipment isn't taking any damage, but Rafatalia's equipment needs to be repaired.

(TL: If Rafatalia wears it, she should get additional bonuses from Demon Tamer Shield) "...fine." (Naofumi)

"Then we'll decide by lottery who wears it. According to Firo, it is hard to move in." (Rafatalia) "I-I understand." (Naofumi)

For some reason, it seems we both just don't want to wear it due to appearance.

The Result...

"Master looks so cute!" (Firo)

"Damn! I'm taking it off when we get to the inn!" (Naofumi) I can't let the other adventurers see me like this! Just as Firo's shape had changed, I now look like a penguin.

I look like a stuffed animal.

But as I say that, Rafatalia's defense greatly increased upon donning my Barbarian Armor, and we had no problems hunting the other Karma Penguin Familia and Karma Penguin.

I can't let the other Heroes see me wearing this.

But my face has also changed so as long as I hide my shield no one should find out.

"By the way, did you dismantle the monsters?" (Rafatalia) "Oh, right." (Naofumi)

I was so focused on drops that I forgot to dismantle and absorb the monsters.

For now, I dismantle and absorb the Karma Penguin we just defeated.

Now then what should we do about the others?

Firo begins running around eating the fallen penguins raw. It's not a sight for children.

“Don’t eat too many.” (Naofumi)

Starting a fire is a pain. When we get to the inn, food will be ready, so I don’t feel like cooking.

“Yes~” (Firo)

For the love of...

Now then, I turn my back to the desolated field of penguin carcasses.

“Pe~” (Karma Penguin)

Paku!

“? Did you just hear a strange sound?” (Naofumi) “Yes, I wonder what it was” (Rafatalia) “Firo didn’t notice” (Firo)

Om nom nom, Firo answers while engrossed in eating penguin meat.

I thought it had come from Firo’s direction but...

“Was it my imagination?” (Naofumi)

Maybe a nearby Karma Penguin Familiar had cried out.

It did sound like that.

“Gefu~” (Firo)

“Firo, please eat in moderation.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Firo)

That day, we were able to level without a problem. Twas a bit anti-climactic.

Maybe because of the things we have been experiencing until now.

But for Level Grinding to be this easy, I can see why the others still see this as a game.

It was a day like that.

Oh yeah, it seems that I unlocked Karma Penguin Familia Shield and Karma Penguin Shield some time along the way.

—

Karma Penguin Shield (Awakened) 0/25 C

Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus:

Diving Level 2,

Water Resistance (Small),

Fishing Level 3,

Speckle Status Correction (Medium)

Special Effect : Diving Time Up

Weapon Proficiency 0

—

Karma Penguin Familia Shield (Awakened) 0/10 C

Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus:

Diving Level 1

Fishing Level 2

Speckle Status Correction (Small)

Weapon Proficiency 0

—

It seems like it comes with various abilities and status corrections as a bonus.

However shields like the Chimera Viper just came with high stats. I don't understand the system.

And what is Speckle supposed to mean? It doesn't give any explanation.

It is then that the Penguin Plushy comes to mind.

Wearing that item did give a lot of miscellaneous bonuses.

“Rafatalia...” (Naofumi)

“W-why are you looking at me with those eyes? I’m definitely not wearing it.” (Rafatalia) I pull Rafatalia’s name out of the cup we used for the lottery.

“Today is your turn.” (Naofumi)

Firo is... Well, I’m happy she was born as a Filo Rial.

By the way, this is something that we learned later, but if you wear this costume you can dive in the ocean for long periods of time. But that doesn’t really matter right now.

Later... Firo has learned to move in penguin form without issue.

It seems that she enjoys playing around in that form.

Once again, a normal day of level grinding has passed. It is now the dusk of the last day.

The EXP bonuses slowly subsided, and eventually disappeared altogether along with the red light.

“These days were quite useful.” (Naofumi) “You’re...correct” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia answers with a troubled face.

Well, it’s not like I don’t understand.

We’re about to get on the boat set to return to the main land.

Though I had the initial advantage in levels, the result was Me: Level 73

Rafatalia: Level 75

Firo: Level 74

We reached around the limit that the Island could help us. I was told the bonus was not particularly helpful past level 80, and getting through the 70’s was difficult.

Motoyasu calls down to me from the boat.

“It seems you’ve gotten stronger. Isn’t that nice?” (Motoyasu) “Yeah!” (Firo)

Firo is currently floating next to the boat. It is still docked.

“Firo, he wasn’t talking to you” (Naofumi) “eh?” (Firo)

“Returning to subject, I am now 30 levels higher than when I got here.” (Motoyasu) “Me too... but I expected a little bit more.” (Itsuki) “There’s nothing we can do about it.” (Ren) “The monsters were just too weak.” (Motoyasu) “Ah... well that is true.” (Itsuki)

By the time we had reached level 70, the Karma Series bosses were nothing but small fries.

Firo and Rafatalia’s statuses have sky rocketed.

I have tested new methods and found different ways to increase my stats.

By the way, I still have many shields that are still sealed.

We may have been able to increase our levels, but that does not necessarily mean we have gotten strong. I think Rafatalia and Firo realize this too.

It seems that Level is a sort of magical property of an individual, and things like skill and intelligence are separate.

I don’t think I have the reaction speed or mentality to take on stronger opponents yet.

This is an unfortunate side-effect of grinding.

In the net games I used to play, there were mountains of players who thought they were strong simply by leveling up in special events.

They didn’t realize that level and skill level are separate items.

We should train to prevent that.

“Oya? Is it not the hero of the Shield?” (Swindler) “...You.” (Naofumi)

The swindling merchant calls out from a boat that is docked next to the one we are about to board.

It seems to be some sort of Cargo ship. Many boxes are stacked on it.

“Well, the Awakening is now over, have you ended business?” (Naofumi)
“Ended business? Surely you jest. I am merely switching to another enterprise.” (Swindler) “I see...” (Naofumi)

What does he plan on doing? I have a bad feeling about this.

“It’s a secret. I’ve been bound to secrecy.” (Swindler) The swindler cuts off explanations.

It seems that the rumors of the EXP raising accessories he sold at Cal Mira have spread quite far.

However, rumors being rumors, some information is lost over time. Though the accessory was supposed to only work on the islands, people are now saying that they work everywhere, and testimonies are already popping up.

“I think you should get out of the accessory industry.” (Naofumi) “What are you saying? Miracle Gem Accessories are still flying off the shelves.” (Swindler) By the way, they supposedly have a property that makes them break easily. Once they have lost their effects, they shatter and the customer must purchase another.

It seems I have started quite a dubious industry. I have some doubts.

“I’ll work hard! See you Again, Hero of the Shield!” (Swindler) It seems that his inventory has finished loading. His boat departs first.

“Well... There’s nothing I can do about it now.” (Naofumi) All I did was give him some advice. The rest is up to him.

“Well, we should board our boat too.” (Naofumi) “You’re right.” (Rafatalia)

“Board~!” (Firo)

And so, we boarded the boat and waited for it to depart.

Chapter 108: False Accusations, Again

The other heroes seem to have all boarded the ship. I was informed by Shadow as the ship departed.

I am thinking about the future while watching the sun set over the sea.

First of all, what are all the things that I need to ask the queen when we get back to the castle town?

Next, I need to go to the old man's place to prepare for the next wave. On that topic, should I ask the queen for materials?

If there is time, it wouldn't be bad to go demon hunting ourselves for the materials.

Afterwards, there is also that thing about completely tempering my shield. There is a limit to how many reinforcement materials I can get on the island.

At night, I headed up to the deck after finishing dinner .

I watch the sea and feel the evening wind.

.....I found Firo exercising by swimming after her meal.

Just how obsessed are you with swimming right now.

(TLnote: マイブーム MaiBumu..... Apparently it means:" Something that a person is currently obsessed with."

I'll pretend I didn't see anything.

Naofumi:"Hm?"

I see Motoyasu at the corner of the deck..... And I also discover Rishia there.

Flirting again? That reminds me, Rishia was also included in Motoyasu's beautiful girl ranking.

Just how much do you want to make a harem.

Do you even know what Itsuki would say?

For the time being, I'll warn him a bit.

Naofumi:" Hey. Motoyasu, why don't you stop flirting here--"

Motoyasu:"Ah! If it isn't Naofumi! I beg you!"

Motoyasu seems to have a pale complexion and pushes Rishia to me by her shoulders.

Naofumi:"What's up with you?"

Motoyasu:"It's fine! I'll leave it to you!"

What's the matter? To think that womanizer would entrust me with something..... When I look at Rishia, she seems surprised.

For some reason.....Her eyes are swollen up and bloodshot.

Rishia was probably sitting down in that corner crying over and over.

Naofumi:"Wh-What's wrong!?"

Motoyasu:"Th-Then with this I'm done!"

Naofumi:"Wait! Surely you didn't.....Not on a ship....."

Did you fall so low as to commit a crime?

Since she didn't obey did you say: "It's alright, it'll only hurt in the beginning....." and rape Rishia?

It does seem like a Motoyasu's modus operandi. That guy seems like he could nonchalantly steal someone else's lover.

And so, it leads to her being so upset and crying.

What a terrible sleazebag. I'll never let you escape.

Motoyasu:"Th-That's not it!"

Naofumi:"Then prove it."

Rishia:"Mo-Motoyasu-sama isn't responsible....."

Rishia muttered in a hoarse voice.

Damn, was I just over thinking?

As expected even Motoyasu isn't rotten to this degree.

Naofumi: "Then what happened?"

Motoyasu: "There are certain circumstances. But I'm no good at dealing with it. Therefore I'll entrust it to you!"

After saying that while laughing, Motoyasu escaped back to his cabin while trembling after a large sigh.

That's the first time I've seen such an expression on Motoyasu.

Or perhaps, Is that guy the type that is not good at dealing with women?

Was it because of what type Rishia is? That guy's good luck looks a little weak.

Firo: "What happened~?"

Firo noticed the situation and asked after returning to the deck.

Rishia: "Please don't worry about it."

Naofumi: "I'm afraid I can't do that, I feel uneasy thinking you might have been raped by Motoyasu."

Rishia: "No.....I just couldn't put up with it any more."

Naofumi: "You couldn't put up with Motoyasu:"

Rishia: "Th-That's not it!"

Though still tearful, for a moment she looked slightly angry. Did she get a little vigor back?

Rishia: "Motoyasu-sama tried to cheer me up at first too.....As I thought, I don't think I should talk about it."

Naofumi: "Don't say something like that.....You help me once before, I am grateful."

It was Rishia that taught me about the ore that Itsuki uses.

If Rishia is troubled, I want to co-operate as much as possible.

Rishia: "No.....Really, please don't worry."

After saying that, Rishia escaped by departing.

Naofumi:”.....What was that about?”

In the end, only unpleasant examples of what might have happened remains.

Next morning.

I was reading a book in the cabin while questioning Rishia’s attitude last night.

Naofumi:”I’m worried after all.”

For some reason.....This is something that by all rights I could ignore, but my heart is noisy.

This feeling resembles the time when Melty was attacked by the guard and when I was falsely accused by Bitch.

I have a very bad feeling about this.

Raphtalia:”Is something wrong?”

Naofumi:”Just a little. I can’t relax so I’ll just go investigate something a little.”

Raphtalia:”I see.....”

I left the room as Raphtalia continued to do push-ups.

What on earth could have happened? I can’t understand this by myself.

I feel a little anxiety as I eavesdrop on Ituki’s cabin.

For some reason, happy voices could be heard.

Am I over thinking too much?

Rishia:”Ah.....”

Then I see Rishia, who is for some reason staring enviously at the cabin.

When she noticed me, she ran away.

.....What is wrong? Really.

I might be able to discover the circumstances by questioning Motoyasu.

With that reasoning I knock on the door to Motoyasu’s cabin.

Woman1: "Yes~"

Woman 1 Opens the door.

An amazing smile that I have never seen before was shown to me.

This girl.....She can make such a face?.....

Is this an act to get along with Bitch and Woman2? Frankly, it makes me sick.

To have the ability to make such a face when she habitually has a deadpan expression.

Women are scary.

Woman1: ".....Ah, It's you! If it's just you, then I can remove the mask!"

After a few seconds, her facial expression dampened tremendously, vented her anger for acting towards me.

I absolutely cannot understand why she would be angry.

Naofumi: "Is Motoyasu here?"

Bitch: "Is there a reason why I must tell you?"

Naofumi: "Heey. Motoyasu~"

Bitch: "Don't ignore me!"

Woman2: "Yeah Yeah!"

Woman 2 is taking advantage of the opportunity. I pretend that Bitch isn't in my field of view and ignore her.

I would rather not come here due to the trauma from before.

This guy doesn't matter to me.

Motoyasu: "What's up with you Naofumi, everyone here seems to hate you."

Motoyasu talks to me while being sandwiched in a harem-like situation between Bitch and Woman2.

What an irritating pose.

It would be impossible to ask about his position without being sarcastic.

Naofumi: "Such a thing doesn't matter. I just want to ask about something."

Motoyasu: ".....What is it?"

Naofumi: "The matter from last night. Something about entrusting me before you left."

Motoyasu: ".....I understand. However, after that I'll leave everything to you."

Naofumi: "Leaving it to others.....well fine. I'm acting on curiosity. I'll accept the risk that comes along with it."

There is an idea forming in my mind, as that guy Motoyasu comes out of the cabin with a pale face while telling his followers to stay.

When we head up to the deck, he is still looking at me with a pale face.

Motoyasu: "About Rishia-chan's situation."

Naofumi: "Yeah."

I can't get the reason why Rishia was crying from questioning her.

So I'll ask Motoyasu about the circumstances, since I think he is kind to women.

Motoyasu: "To tell the truth—"

The situation was explained from Motoyasu's point of view.....

After hearing Motoyasu's story, and realising that my intuition was right, there was a lump in my throat as anger surged up.

Naofumi: "Itsuki————!"

I forcefully kick down the door to Itsuki's room.

The door opened with a loud bang, and everyone inside stared at me simultaneously.

Itsuki: "Wh-What is it!?"

Armour: "Hero of the Shield you bastard! What do you want!"

Naofumi: "What do I want? Ask yourselves! You trashes!"

Due to my loud voice, the whole ship felt noisy.

Itsuki and Armour flinched momentarily due to my oppressive attitude.

Itsuki was the first to recover and he raises his voice in anger as well.

Itsuki: "That's why I asked what the hell happened!"

Naofumi: "Do you seriously not understand yet!?"

This is dangerous, if I keep this resentment smouldering in my heart, then the Wrath Shield will appear.

If Ren comes, it would go on a rampage.

Armour: "I don't know what suspicions you have, Hero of the Shield!"

Armour tried to grab me.

So I avoided Armour's arms and applied a joint-locking technique.

[The rules of a legendary weapon, it is prohibited to have a weapon other than the exclusive weapon]

(Sfx*) Bashin* Bashin* I received pain through my arm, but I ignore it.

Am I prohibited from even doing a Joint-lock attack?

Throwing was okay though, what's the difference?

Armour: "Ouch! Owowow!"

Naofumi: "I came here to talk to Itsuki. Don't get in my way, you small fry!"

I thrust away Armour, and glare at Itsuki.

I haven't felt this anger in a long time.

Since I calmed down a lot thanks to Raphtalia.

I don't intend to suppress it now.

Naofumi: "You.....For someone who has a habit of claiming justice, you know nothing!"

Itsuki: "What are you....."

While angrily looking at Itsuki, I see that Rishia ran towards the commotion and is looking in to the room.

Itsuki: "Seriously, the reason I think you are so mad, is it that thing?"

Naofumi: "So you do know."

Itsuki: "She is the bad one."

Naofumi: "Don't joke around!"

The story that I heard from Motoyasu, it's—

The reason that Rishia was grieving that way.

On the last day of activation, Rishia finished shopping for the day and returned to her companions.

Itsuki: "Rishia-san. Was it you?"

Rishia: "Eh? What are you talking about?"

After Rishia returned, she tilted her neck to Itsuki's disappointed question.

Itsuki: "It's not use to pretend you don't know. You are the one that broke my accessory."

After saying so, Itsuki brought out his cherished bracelet that was cruelly broken.

Rishia: "Eh? I-I have no idea. What is that?"

Itsuki: "To think you would tell a lie like that.....There is evidence."

After saying so, Itsuki directs his gaze to his other companions.

Armour: "Yes, we all saw it. Rishia broke the bracelet that Itsuki-sama cherished and hide it."

No Name: "That's right."

No Name2: "I saw it."

Rishia: "Ehh!? Th-That's not it! I didn't do anything.....I really didn't

know!”

Rishia pleaded desperately.

However, Itsuki doesn't believe it.

Itsuki: "So do I not believe in the eye-witness either?.....I can't be helped. I intended to forgive you if you apologized..... Rishia-san, please leave the party starting today."

Rishia: "N-No way! I really didn't know anything!"

At that moment, Rishia saw that Armour was chuckling faintly.

However, Rishia at that moment was clinging to Itsuki and pleading to not be thrown away.

Rishia: "I beg you! Please! Let me stay near Itsuki-sama!"

Itsuki's eyes swim around and seem to be tormented with a little sense of guilt.

Armour: "It's not okay to permit it here, Itsuki-sama!"

No Name: "There is suspicion that Rishia leaked information to the other Heroes."

Armour argued with his companion backing him up.

Itsuki: "It's regrettable, but.....Farewell."

Rishia: "Itsuki-sama!? I really really beg you! Please reconsider, I'll do anything!"

At Rishia's tearful begging, Itsuki turned his back and didn't respond.

Armour: "How long are you going to provoke Itsuki-sama's pity! You liar! You don't have the qualifications to approach Itsuki-sama!"

Itsuki's companions forcibly expelled Rishia out.

After that, even though she wanted to approach even a little.....The results were the same.

This was roughly the contents from Motoyasu's story on Rishia.

Chapter 109: The Reason For Rejection

Motoyasu Relates Rishia's story to me with a pale face.

"At first I was curious as to why she were crying and got a little worried so I called out to her but... sorry... I... I can't stand to see girls like this... Can I leave it to you?" (Motoyasu) I couldn't hear Motoyasu's words to the end.

Now that I think about it, Motoyasu was killed and sent to this world due to his popularity.

So he can't handle dark girls like this.

Those girls that appear in Galge, yandere was it? (TL: Galge: Non eros Dating Sim) In my world, games with those types of girls existed as well.

They became famous for their morbid bad endings.

Listening to Rishia, who is getting close to being a stalker, might have awakened his trauma.

But Motoyasu, that isn't the important part.

From the story, it seems Rishia is innocent.

It seems that a separate culprit has framed her.

I hate false charges more than anything. There's no way I can let this be!

So I go after Itsuki to abate my own rage.

"When I said there was no room for further questions she went and tattled to the other heroes... Do you think that will make me take her back in?" (Itsuki) "Rishia didn't tell me anything. She went to the womanizing Motoyasu." (Naofumi) "What I said was the truth. Rishia lied. It seems that she forgot the debt she had to me and tried to use me. The result is obvious." (Itsuki) "You have no doubts as to whether or not she is lying?!" (Naofumi) "You... Do you think I cannot trust the comrades I have built trust with for months? The newcomer Rishia is the dubious one here. I will believe the words of my comrades." (Itsuki) This person...

He thinks I don't know anything so he's spouting bullcrap.

I made sure to gather information before coming here.

Did you think that I, who is used to false charges, would come here without evidence and act on feeling alone?

Rishia isn't the culprit, and I have already figured out the culprit's identity.

Well... my information mostly comes from Shadow, though...

It seems that the Culprit is another member of Itsuki's party.

Shadow already told Itsuki about it, but Itsuki chose to trust his Comrades words over Shadow.

Shadow even told me the contents of that conversation.

I've come this far, it's time for me to go on the offensive.

"No matter what you say, there was a witness! And it's an unrelated person, there's no reason they would tell a lie. And it's weird in itself that your comrades didn't catch the culprit at the scene of the crime."

(Naofumi) "For you to have investigated that far... There's no choice. It's all for her sake. The others are merely giving her what she deserved. They merely found that Rishia had been stained with the color of evil, and carried out the appropriate punishment." (Itsuki) "Wait, what are you talking about." (Naofumi)

"Rishia called my party members villains and left the party. She cares not for her comrades." (Itsuki) "...?" (Naofumi)

What is he saying?

I can't keep up with his explanation.

Could it be a conspiracy? An accusation in name only to get her to leave the party?

"And Rishia isn't suited for fighting. We all discussed and decided it would be best for her to return to her home town and live in happiness." (Itsuki) "Yes, it was all for Rishia's sake." (Armor)

Armor comes in and confirms Itsuki's words, but I have no idea where this conversation is going.

Doesn't that just mean that Rishia had a false crime placed on her for no reason?

There's no way she can return home like this.

And so,

As far as Itsuki knows, the matter with Rishia was settled. But Rishia, who was left in the dark, was troubled. So Itsuki and his comrades put a crime on her to force her to leave.

That is the real crime here.

Cares not for her comrades? Bull\$h!t!

They were just too used to dealing with villains that they treated her as one as well.

This isn't a game!

In a game you could just get her to leave the party with a press of a button.

This guy played console games if I remember correctly.

Does he think that Party Members are NPCs?

I feel worn out and look in Rishia's direction.

Even now, Rishia looks like she is about to cry. She is staring at Itsuki in silence.

"To be honest, in my party Rishia was the one who fit in the least... Instead of willingly rushing into dangerous situations, it is best to let her live in peace." (Itsuki) "You're just avoiding the main issue! How about her feelings!" (Naofumi) "That isn't what I'm saying. A battle for the fate of the world cannot be won on feelings alone!" (Itsuki) "Then why did you fire her without telling her anything." (Naofumi) "Then I will say it bluntly. She does not provide any useful manpower. I thought she would get stronger over time, but if she refuses to raise her skills, it's better for

all of us if she just returned home!" (Itsuki) Ah. He said it.

So he's just shifting the blame now isn't he.

"Then why didn't you just outright tell her that? Were you afraid of becoming the villain?" (Naofumi) "Of course not! Where are you getting these ideas." (Itsuki) "If you have to make her a scapegoat because he can't muster up the courage to tell her to leave, then it's the truth." (Naofumi) "But in regards to her ability, the road ahead will be difficult. We are swallowing our tears and wishing for her happiness." (Itsuki) "That's only you. What do you think other people's lives are?!" (Naofumi) From what I can see, she has a high potential for magic.

However because of you, she forced herself to wield a sword and even classed up to aid your fighting style.

And yet you're just going to abandon her like this. You then justified your actions by making up reasons.

Dammit!

She would have understood if you just told her.

In the end, you just didn't want to become the villain.

Isn't this the same as what happened to me?

The end was decided before I could do anything. Itsuki seems to think this matter is already settled.

"This is a good opportunity. Rishia, I can't put up with you anymore. Frankly, you are weak." (Itsuki) So he's finally become like this.

In order to make sure his situation doesn't worsen, he has decided to say the truth.

And because he sensed he was getting cornered, he decided to make Rishia out to be the bad guy.

Where is your justice now? What self-righteousness, what Hypocrisy.

Even the Swindler and the Slave dealer are better than this.

At least they understand that they are at fault.

They are much better than a kid who acts on a whim and then labels his actions as justice.

“...” (Rishia)

Rishia tries to let out her voice in response to Itsuki's accusation.

“Rishia?” (Naofumi)

“She's just trying to get sympathy. Now leave, both of you.” (Itsuki)

“People like you... do you plan to put more charges on us?” (Naofumi)

“When did I ever place false charges on you!” (Itsuki) “I won't let you act oblivious now! Remember when you ignored Bitch's cheating and acted like I was the one at fault? And that time when you accused me of taking your funds?” (Naofumi) “The matter with Bitch had nothing to do with me.” (Itsuki) What do you mean ‘nothing to do with me’?

How did your Hero of Justice spirit not go off there?

“Anyways, at this point in time, we cannot conclude that you did not take the funds.” (Itsuki) “But haven't we already found the culprit?”

(Naofumi) “Wha!? What nonsense are you spouting now?” (Itsuki)

“It seems you really don't know.” (Naofumi)

“Don't look at us like that. If you know the culprit, just say it.” (Itsuki)
He seems to be genuinely curious right now.

“It's the Three Hero Church.” (Naofumi)

“Are you alright in the head?” (Itsuki)

“Itsuki, you're not actually very smart, are you?” (Naofumi) “Gu-! What makes you think that.” (Itsuki)

I myself don't consider myself to be smart.

I'm actually quite stupid.

If I was smart, I wouldn't have been fooled by Bitch.

My grades were average and my parents gave up on my education.

But if this person isn't the culprit, I think I can figure it out.

“The Church had one didn’t it... A legendary weapon in the shape of a bow.” (Naofumi) “Ah...” (Itsuki)

So he finally noticed. He seems stunned.

The Church was fundamentally against us summoned heroes. They definitely had reason.

And when he had accused me before, where had he been?

Right in front of the church. They had probably fed him the info that I was the culprit.

Now that I think about it, it was quite simple.

“T-that matter is irrelevant now.” (Itsuki)

“Itsuki, you...” (Naofumi)

How selfish can this person get. Does he care not of the hearts of others?

I can feel my anger rising.

The blood is rising to my head.

This feels like when Bitch placed false crimes on me. No, it’s different.

This is...

“I see, I thought you were a troublesome person, but you had a strong sense of justice and you would make a good hero. But your value as a person was only this much? You’ve betrayed my expectations. I’ve had it with you.” (Naofumi) (TL: How I felt a few chapters ago) I give him a cold stare and leave the room.

I’ve heard something like this before.

The opposite of love isn’t hate. It is Apathy.

That means the opposite of Hate is also Apathy.

To me, it looks like Itsuki has already lost interest.

There’s no point in getting mad at a person who no longer cares.

“You have no right to be telling me that. Please stay away from me from

now on.” (Itsuki) Itsuki shouts at me as I leave. His voice is louder than I have ever heard it.

Ah. I see

So this stems from his childish desire for praise. He hates it when people’s opinions of him drop.

“It’s no longer of my concern. I have no intentions of dealing with your tyranny any more. I hope you don’t break any more expectations.”

(Naofumi) “I’m telling you to get lost!” (Itsuki)

I ignore Itsuki, who has drawn his bow. And walk away.

“This is the last time you can get so full of yourself.” (Itsuki) Like I care.

His opinion of Rishia... Remains unchanged.

It can’t be...

As I head towards side of the ship, I witness Firo Jumping out of the water.

On one wing, she is carrying a drenched Rishia.

“This Onee-chan suddenly fell in. She was sinking, so Firo helped her out.” (Firo) “Suicide...” (Naofumi)

To be depressed to that extent...

I can understand Motoyasu’s dislike of this type of person a bit.

Just because the person you like bad-mouths you, it doesn’t mean you have to die.

“Good job Firo.”(Naofumi)

“Yay~” (Firo)

I pat Firo’s head.

If it hadn’t been for Firo, this story would have reached the worst possible ending.

If that happened, I would have trouble sleeping at night.

And there’s something I have already decided.

“Now then, Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“Cough Cough” (Rishia)

I pat Rishia, who is coughing up sea water, on the back and speak.

“Firo of my party has just now saved your life. What will you do with that saved life?” (Naofumi) “...Let me die. Itsuki has abandoned me. There is no worth left in me living.” (Rishia) “The person who decided that is none other than you.” (Naofumi) “Then please let me decide my own death.” (Rishia)

“If you think that way there’s nothing I can do about it... But there is one thing I can’t forgive.” (Naofumi) If I just let it end this way, my anger will never subside.

“Will you accept these false charges? Do you not want to get back at them?” (Naofumi) “B-but I...” (Rishia)

“Don’t you want to make Itsuki say, ‘Please come back, I need you’?!” (Naofumi) “I-I knew I was weak from the beginning...” (Rishia)

“Who decided that a person has to stay weak forever? The only person who said that is Itsuki. All you have to do is get stronger.” (Naofumi) Back at the start, I too had been called weak and useless. The other heroes looked down on me.

That’s why I can’t overlook this behavior.

“...Really?... Can I really become strong?” (Rishia)

“I promise you this. I’ll definitely force Itsuki to acknowledge your strength.” (Naofumi) I’ll make him regret ever abandoning her.

“That’s why Rishia. Until you find a way to get stronger on your own, I will help you. No, I’ll make you strong!” (Naofumi) I’m merely acting on a grudge right now.

Rishia resembles me too much. She was falsely accused, and looked down upon. So for her sake and mine, I must make her stronger and let her get back at Itsuki.

“Join my party.” (Naofumi)

Rishia reaches out for my hand. She hesitates for a bit, but finally grasps it.

“My heart still belongs to Itsuki...” (Rishia)

“Ah, I’m fine with that. I’m not asking you to believe in me. Believe in whatever you want to believe and you should be fine.” (Naofumi) I’m not like Motoyasu. I’m not acting because Rishia is a woman.

I just cannot forgive Itsuki for picking her up and throwing her away at his own convenience.

I can also feel the similarities in our circumstances.

And that’s why I can say for sure...

“You will become strong no matter what.” (Naofumi)

「……本当に……私は強くなれますか？」

「お前が強くなる方法を見つけるまで手伝ってやる。いや、強くしてやる！」
これは意地だ。

冤罪で嵌められ、弱いと蔑まれていた過去の自分と重なるリーシアを
絶対に強くして樹を見返してやる。

「俺の所へ来い！」

リーシアは俺が差し出した手を、戸惑いながら掴む。



Chapter 110: The Girl of Misfortune

Anyways, Rishia has become our comrade for now but...

When I was walking back to my room, I was stopped by Rafatalia.

“Um, earlier I heard Naofumi-sama shouting, but what happened?”
(Rafatalia) “Ah, don’t worry about it. Itsuki just did something unbelievably infuriating.” (Naofumi) “Hm? Who is the person behind you?” (Rafatalia)

“U...um” (Rishia)

“I believe she was... anyways, let’s return to the room. We can talk then.” (Rafatalia) It seems that Rafatalia could read the situation to some extent.

We return to the room and I explain the circumstances to Rafatalia. I also conduct introductions and say that she will be a comrade from now on.

For obvious reasons, Rafatalia listened with a face composed half of amazement and half of anger.

“That person is...” (Rafatalia)

“U-um please don’t say bad things about Itsuki.” (Rishia) “Even after going through that, you will still defend him...” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia seems quite surprised.

I feel the same...

“If Firo hadn’t been there, she would have been dead.” (Naofumi)
“Praise Firo more.” (Firo)

“Yes, yes. But I just praised you earlier.” (Naofumi) “Eh?” (Firo)

Looking for more praise, Firo turns into her human form and forcibly puts my hand on top of her head.

This sensation is... The Ahoge is annoying.

“Itsuki isn’t at fault. It’s all because I am weak.” (Rishia) Rafatalia

grabs Rishia's hand. Rishia looks like she is going to cry again.

"I understand. He is important to you, right." (Rafatalia) "Yes..." (Rishia)

"I think I can understand. Let's work hard together." (Rafatalia) "...Is Rafatalia like that too? Ok, I will do my best." (Rishia) ? is it just my imagination or is there a strange aura directed at me?

Well, as long as they get along.

It's a hundred times better than forming an antagonistic relationship.

"Rishia, you will be travelling with us as a comrade. Please think of a way to make yourself stronger as you do that." (Naofumi) "Do your best." (Rafatalia)

"Oh yes, and stalking Itsuki is henceforth banned." (Naofumi) "I... I understand." (Rishia)

"We'll only be on the ship for a few more hours, so you should be able to handle it." (Naofumi) It will be bad if she develops a stalking habit.

It's probably better for her to keep her distance for now.

"I'll make an effort." (Rishia)

"Also... Itsuki probably won't do anything, but for your sake I think you should avoid meeting him face to face." (Naofumi) Time will probably heal these wounds.

I also try to avoid him. Dealing with him is a pain.

If I need to ask him anything, I'll use Shadow.

"Shadow" (Naofumi)

I call Shadow. And he/she/it appears immediately.

Where is this person watching us from usually?

But besides me, Shadow seems to observe the actions of the other heroes as well.

"What is it-gojaru?" (Shadow)

“What are the other Heroes planning to do? Oh and is there anything my party has to do?”

“The Sword and Bow will start on missions when we reach the main land-gojaru. I have been told to take the Shield and Spear to the Castle when the boat docks-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

So Ren and Itsuki already have jobs to do... and Me and Motoyasu have to go to the castle.

That’s fine by me. I have to ask the queen something anyways. Does Motoyasu have anything to do at the castle?

Ah, Bitch’s punishment.

Well as long as we head off after Itsuki departs there shouldn’t be a problem.

“Now then, what should we have Rishia do?” (Naofumi) “Hiii-!” (Rishia)

“What’s with that voice? I won’t give you an impossible job.” (Naofumi)
She did all the odd jobs at Itsuki’s place.

Does she think I will do the same?

I just wanted to confirm party roles.

I hunted with Itsuki’s party for two days. I know her specialties.

Rishia’s specialty is being a Jack-of-all-trades.

CQC, Attack Magic, Healing, Support.

Having someone who can perform all of these will truly benefit my party.

The front line has Rafatalia and Firo, so that aspect is probably fine.

Should I assign her to the currently-vacant Magician position?

She can use all types of Magic and is quite resourceful, so there shouldn’t be a problem.

Level and Status aren’t everything.

If you use your head, you can achieve results past your stats.

This is perfect.

I give out the party roles.

I assign myself to defense, healing. The Support Role There's no point if I switch now.

Rafatalia is the Vanguard.

In battle, she is weaker than Firo, but against skilled opponents she can use illusion magic to gain the upper hand.

Firo is on offense.

She has high basic attack and speed. She can also use ranged magic. Her specialty is crowd clearing.

And I have to make a new position for Rishia considering her strengths.

I begin the explanation to Rishia, who seems to be afraid.

"Don't worry Rishia, Naofumi may be sharp tongued, but he's not as bad as you would think" (Rafatalia) "... I'd like to ask this once, but why are you two suddenly so close?" (Naofumi) What do you mean 'not as bad as you would think'?

Well, I am used to dealing with dangerous people like the Slave Dealer and the Accessory Merchant "T-that is..." (Rishia)

Rishia looks in my direction but stays silent.

What is she looking at?

"Are you wondering what my position in battle is?" (Naofumi) "No..." (Rishia)

"Don't say no. I'll gladly tell you." (Naofumi)

"He's this sort of person." (Rafatalia)

"... I see..." (Rishia)

For some reason, Rishia is no longer afraid. I don't understand women.

Why are women so complicated? In Galge, it was so simple...

"Now that I think about it..." (Naofumi)

I stare at Rishia from head to toe.

Her equipment is quite sub-par.

It must be because of the Hierarchy. The higher members get all of the good equipment.

To be useful, she must first have good equipment. To have good equipment, she must prove to be useful. This vicious spiral made it so that only her level rose and her equipment stayed the same.

“Rishia, what is your level?” (Naofumi)

“? I’m level 68.” (Rishia)

She answered quite simply.

I can’t check her status, but she will probably be a helpful asset.

Rishia’s base specialty is Magical Attack and Healing. If I leave these to her, our party should become more diverse.

But I am worried about my own defensive capability.

Rafatalia and Firo are quite tough. I don’t need to worry about protecting them to that great of an extent.

At 68, her defense will probably be behind the other two.

I also have to worry about the abilities she has that Itsuki never bothered to train.

“I feel bad about it, but for now, to make up for the difference in stats, you will have to wear this.” (Naofumi) I hand the Penguin Plushy to Rishia.

It’s really durable and out-ranks Rafatalia’s and my armor in stats.

“Naofumi... That is...” (Rafatalia)

“There’s no choice. This is currently the best armor in our possession.” (Naofumi) All of the other excess equipment I have right now is around the same level as Rishia’s current gear.

By the way, I currently have 3 of the penguin suits in my possession. We

hunted way too many of those things.

But we didn't get any other plushies from the rest of the Karma series.

"Ah, this is..." (Rishia)

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"Itsuki also had something like this... It was a Squirrel Plushy." (Rishia)

"He-... So did he wear it too?" (Naofumi)

"He said it was powerful equipment and asked if anyone wanted to wear it. But everyone rejected it." (Rishia) "So you ended up wearing it?" (Naofumi)

"Of course" (Rishia)

What do you mean of course? Don't accept it so easily.

She really is too positive.

That was definitely a form of bullying, and yet she can simply laugh about it.

"It was wonderful Equipment. But when I took it off, my comrades took it." (Rishia) "What sort of Equipment was it?" (Naofumi)

"When I wore it, I got a lot of bonuses, and fighting became easy." (Rishia) "Well the enchantment on it is quite powerful..." (Naofumi) The Squirrel suit probably also had Magic Amplify as an ability. It has a good compatibility with Rishia But is also stands out in another way...

Itsuki is skilled at hiding so I think he can wear it just fine.

"Once we get off the boat, you can take it off." (Naofumi) "You want me to take it off?" (Rishia)

For some reason, Rishia stares at me with a troubled face.

What is with this reaction?

"Are you bothered?" (Naofumi)

"It's good equipment, and if I wear it, no one will be able to notice if I am sad." (Rishia) That is the logic of a loser.

She is acting like a bullied child.

“Are you really okay with that?” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Rishia)

Yes!... really?

This will be difficult. It will probably work out fine, but if her heart doesn't get stronger then getting stronger will be difficult.

Saying no one will notice her crying if she wears the suit...

“You can wear that at the beginning, but you eventually have to graduate from it.” (Naofumi) “Sigh” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia has a complicated expression.

Does she have a problem with Rishia's behavior?

I don't think their compatibility is bad... but I can't judge yet.

“Anyways, let's get stronger one step at a time.” (Rafatalia) “Yes!” (Rishia)

Only her response is high-spirited.

I feel she will get along well with Ren's people.

And so Rishia puts on the Penguin Plushy.

“How do I look? Dood” (TL: Please help me. I have no idea what sound a penguin makes) “ah... It's.... fitting.” (Naofumi)

It makes her stand out quite a bit..

I remember the me that was there before I came to this world It seems that there are now two people who will happily wear this costume including Firo.

As a Hero, I was supposed to gather human companions, but now it feels like I've gathered nothing but monsters.

“I will be under your care from now on.” (Rishia) “Likewise.” (Naofumi)

“Welcome. Your clothes match Firo's” (Firo)

“Welcome to the party” (Rafatalia)

And so we welcomed Rishia as a new member.



Chapter 111: The King I can see as nothing but a Fool

After Shadow told us that Itsuki had departed, we get off the boat.

After that, we use the carriage and comfortably proceed towards the castle town.

There seemed to be an event going on at the gate. I'm about to enter the city when-I see something that makes me doubt my eyes.

Trash is wearing nothing but his mantle and some pants. He is walking around in a comical manner.

The Queen is watching from a lavish carriage parked behind him.

"Welcome back Iwatani." (Queen)

".....?" (Naofumi)

Rafatalia tilts her head in confusion at the spectacle. Firo cranes her head to see better, and Rishia is making troubled arm gestures. By the way, she is still in the penguin suit.

"What... is that?" (Naofumi)

"It's the king dancing around in clothes only stupid people can see of course." (Queen) ... The Emperor's new Clothes? Clothes only stupid people can see? The person wearing them looks quite stupid already.

Right now I am experiencing two spectacles.

I'm not sure if I'm supposed to see a man dancing around half naked, or a man dancing around in stupid clothing.

Well, it doesn't really matter to me.

"Is something weird?" (Firo)

Firo seems puzzled.

Ah... Firo is also an idiot.

Perhaps she can actually see all his clothes. (TL: Emperor's New

Clothes Fairy Tale Reference) “That person is naked, is there a party?”
(Firo)

... or not.

I occasionally treat Firo like a child, or a bird-brained fool.

However, I realize that she can sometimes be surprisingly sharp.

“I dread asking, but Why?” (Naofumi)

“Are you asking because you can see the clothes?” (Queen) Which is it?

My head hurts.

Is he wearing them or not?

“Wisdomless Darling, where do you think you are going?” (Queen)

“gunununu...” (Trash)

The Queen watches over Trash with a sadistic expression.

Trash notices me and starts staring at me as if I was the boyfriend his daughter suddenly brought home.

But if he tries to do anything to me, he will only be punished further.

Why is it? For some reason, I am starting to pity the man. Perhaps I just question the Queen’s punishment methods.

I approach Trash and ask...

“Trash, why must you follow all of the Queens’s orders?” (Naofumi)

“you bastard-!” (Trash)

Trash looks like he is about to lash out, but then he senses the Queen’s stares and calms down.

“Please talk with the Shield.” (Queen)

“gu...” (Trash)

The Queen orders Trash around.

I really wonder why he is obligated to obey.

Is he in love? Nah, love should wither after a hundred years.

(TL: He's saying they've been married a long time.) "Do you want me to raise your punishment?" (Queen)

"If you will." (Naofumi)

"Gu... I will listen to my wife, but definitely not you!" (Trash) "Exactly. I want to see you suffer." (Queen)

Is this the Queen's fetish? Could she simply be a Sadist? Does that make Trash a Masochist?

The world of fetishes is quite wide.

I won't pursue this matter any further.

"But seriously, why?" (Naofumi)

"You'll never understand." (Trash)

And Trash runs off by himself.

I can't understand him, but he probably has his own reasons.

The people of the town watch Trash leave with troubled expressions.

This country is done for isn't it. In multiple ways.

"... That person understands that he is at fault. But his emotions do not allow him to forgive you." (Queen) "sigh..." (Naofumi)

Is this something that only his wife can understand?

But for the king of a country to act like that... I can understand it if no one is watching, but to run off down the central shopping district...

I'm surprised the Queen is able to understand this person. What does she see in him?

"Iwatani, please go ahead to the castle. I still have many things I must prepare." (Queen) "Understood... Wait, you're not making another set of 'Clothes only Idiots can see', are you?" (Naofumi) "I wonder. Well, it's something I had ordered before you set out to Cal Mira." (Queen)

"Understood" (Naofumi)

In a few hours

I was lead in front of the throne.

It seems that Motoyasu's party has just arrived here.

They took their time. I wonder what happened.

"I've been expecting you." (Queen)

The Queen says whilst looking at Bitch. Trash is... absent.

But if he were here, he would just complicate things more.

"Now then, how did you find Cal Mira?" (Queen)

"Couldn't you have just invited all four heroes to ask?" (Naofumi) "That is a plan for another day." (Queen)

I think Itsuki and Ren were invited to come in a weeks' time.

"Queen, isn't it cruel to leave the King in such a state?" (Motoyasu)
Motoyasu asks the Queen with a slightly worried face.

So he saw the spectacle as well.

That might be the reason they are so late.

"That is the severity of the crimes my husband committed, Kitamura. Even if you are a hero, this is not a matter you should interfere with."
(Queen) "But still-!" (Motoyasu)

"And there was a reason for that festival. We must somehow reclaim the valuable funds that that father-daughter combo frivolously spent."
(Queen) "ku..." (Motoyasu)

"Kitamura, please continue to oversee Bitch's punishment as well."
(Queen) "Moth-Queen! I was only doing what was necessary for the sake of the world." (Bitch) Bitch realizes that Parental sympathy will not come. She tries to use logic But...

"The bills came for Expensive Accessories, Precious Metals, Clothes. A luxury rental estate and several visits to numerous expensive night clubs. Is that what you call the sake of the world?" (Queen) So the Queen was tracking Bitch's spending... Also that women seems to be ridiculously loose with money.

I would have fired her on the spot.

“Also, you also attempted to attack Iwatani during the personnel exchange. For that, the length of your sentence is increased.” (Queen)
“You Can’t!” (Bitch)

“If you are travelling with Bitch, you must shoulder her debt to some extent.” (Queen) “gu...” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu looks angry. His fists are clenched.

How has he been handling Bitch’s spending before?

“I will transfer some of her debt to Kitamura. Please be prepared to receive reduced rewards from missions for a while.” (Queen) “...Fine. But if I pay off the debt, then let her go! Change her name back as well.” (Motoyasu) It seems Motoyasu is misunderstanding something.

“This and that are separate matters. Unless she puts an honest effort towards saving the world, she will not regain her freedom.” (Queen)
“Aren’t you being too cold.” (Motoyasu)

“For a princess of a country to frame a hero, and try to assassinate her sister this punishment is still too light. Does Kitamura wish for something more severe?” (Queen) If this continues, Bitch’s punishment will only increase. Motoyasu senses this and stays quiet.

“Let’s turn the conversation back a bit.” (Queen)

The queen raises her arms, and Shadow appears carrying a plate full of Lucor Fruits.

“Bitch, you said before that Iwatani got drunk and tried to violate you, correct?” (Queen) “O-of course!” (Bitch)

“That is odd. My report stated that Iwatani was a god of all liquor. That he doesn’t get drunk no matter what.” (Queen) Motoyasu’s face turns blue at the sight of the Lucor.

Will this act truly prove my innocence? But... Where the hell did you get information on my alcohol constitution?

“Doesn’t get drunk? What are you saying. That was just a trick to make

a fool out of Motoyasu.” (Bitch) “Then have a bite.” (Queen)

Shadow presents the Lucor fruit to Bitch.

“Why must I eat it?!” (Bitch)

“There’s no choice... Iwatani, please taste test the Lucor Fruit.” (Queen)
“? If you’ll let me eat it.”(Naofumi)

This fruit is slowly becoming my favorite food.

However, it is quite expensive so I don’t think I will be able to eat it often.

I eat the Lucor Fruit presented to me.

Yep, this thing is delicious.

“u....” (Everyone)

Shadow, and everyone else in the room stares at me with their mouths open in amazement.

Is it that deadly?

“Now then, please eat one as well.” (Queen)

“T-the one you gave him just now was definitely fake.” (Bitch) “Fine... Iwatani, only eat half of it this time.” (Queen) “Yes Sir.” (Naofumi)

The thought of having an indirect kiss with Bitch sickens me. But if I follow the Queen’s orders, I will be able to see something nice.

I bite off half of the Lucor and give it back to shadow.

Ah...Rafatalia and Firo are now making very weird faces.

I can’t tell Rishia’s expression as she is still in the penguin suit, but she seems to be facing a wall and putting her head against it in anguish.

Is this food really that disgusting?

“N-no! There’s no way I’m eating it! There’s no-” (Bitch) “Just eat it already!” (Queen)

“S-stop it!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu steps in front of bitch and reaches toward the lucor.

Not happening.

I approach Motoyasu and look him in the eye.

“Oh yes, about that matter with Rishia...” (Naofumi)

“Why are you bringing that up at this time!?” (Motoyasu) “She was deeply impacted by Motoyasu, who is a nicer person than me. She was always watching from afar. That’s right... Broken under the Bow’s oppressive regime she found solace in your kindness. She is now infatuated with you, she wants to monopolize you. She is now waiting for you behind every corner, sharpening her knife.” (Naofumi) (TL: If you didn’t get it, he is awakening Motoyasu’s Yandere Trauma)

“Wha.....t.....!?” (Motoyasu)

“He?” (Rishia)

Rishia lets out a surprised voice.

She is still wearing the suit so Motoyasu doesn’t recognize her.

“Where could she be watching you from? She might be staring at you even now...” (Naofumi) “Now that I think about it, I can feel a stare!” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu, you’re imagining it.

Rishia is definitely here, but I don’t think she is staring at you.

Is Rishia even a Yandere?

As long as she only likes Itsuki, I don’t have to be afraid.

“U....wa....a..aa.a..aaa” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu is looking around frantically and moaning under his breath.

How scared can he be right now?

Motoyasu really REALLY hates Yanderes.

I seem to have found a good weakness. I’ll try it next time as well.

This is even more effective than Firo’s Groin Kicks.

“M-Motoyasu!?” (Bitch)

Motoyasu has frozen up, and Bitch gives an expression of surprise.

“Now!” (Queen)

Shadow once again advances on Bitch with the lucor.

“Why do I have to-Mugu!?” (Bitch)

It was quite a surreal experience. I saw Woman one trying her hardest to hold back her laughter.

With perfect aim and timing, Shadow had tossed the lucor into Bitch’s mouth as she was speaking and forced her to eat it.

“Oh, also we have testimony from the innkeeper that you were seen taking the key to Iwatani’s room that day. I bet you used your authority to silence him, but mine is greater than yours.” (Queen) The second after the Queen says this, Bitch’s face turns red and she collapses.

“Bitch!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu recovers and catches Bitch before she hits the ground.

“Please take her to the Infirmary. She will be fine.” (Queen) That was a surprisingly satisfying event.

“Naofumi, you are laughing darkly again.” (Rafatalia) “Sorry, there’s no way I can’t laugh here.” (Naofumi) “a ha ha~” (Firo)

“... Firo, why are you laughing?” (Naofumi)

“Going with the flow.” (Firo)

“You know, um...” (Rishia)

Rishia waddles over. She seems troubled.

She should relax more...

“There’s a mountain of other evidence. For example, let’s examine Kitamura’s old chain mail.” (Queen) “W-what are you doing?!” (Motoyasu)

“I won’t do anything. But can you please confirm the inscription on that chain mail?” (Queen) “There’s nothing like that!” (Motoyasu)

“Every blacksmith puts an inscription, a sort of magical signature on their creations. In this city, it is considered to be a sort of obligation to inscribe them.” (Queen) “Really?...” (Motoyasu)

“They are usually made so that the Merchants guild can identify when where and by whom they were made quite easily.” (Queen) I didn’t realize it. So the items I got from the old man also have inscriptions?

“By Iwatani’s testimony, the Chain Mail he bought was stolen. So I will just need to verify the inscription on it.” (Queen) “T-this was a gift that Bitch saved up for and gave to me.” (Motoyasu) “Yes, I understand and believe you. But to clear all doubt, let’s get it checked up just in case.” (Queen) Old Man... So you are even helping me here.

He was the first person to believe me over Trash and Bitch.

“If that armor is proven to have been honestly bought by Bitch, then there is no problem but otherwise...” (Queen) There’s no doubt about it. I already know the results “... Understood, let’s check.” (Motoyasu)

“This parchment contains the inscription on the Chain Mail Iwatani purchased earlier. Please compare it to the one on your armor.” (Queen) The Queen hands the parchment to Motoyasu.

Motoyasu takes out the chainmail and searches for the inscription ... When he finds it, his face turns pale.

“Next up, Naofumi, is this yours?” (Queen)

And she hands me a single set of clothing.

It is clothing I wore upon coming to this world. It gives off a nostalgic feeling.

“It’s something I found in a store in ShieldFreiden. It is Iwatani’s isn’t it?” (Queen) “... Yes, it’s a bit dirty, but there is no doubt.” (Naofumi) It might be a difference in culture, but this world’s fashion is completely different from mine.

There’s no mistake. It’s the cheap set I wore as casual clothes.

The pants are even there.

The entire set is around 3000 Yen, but it feels so nostalgic that I want to cry.

(\$28.10 USD last I checked)

Now that I think about it, was the selling of these clothes the cause of Trash's current stats?

Is that why he is currently half naked?

I had completely forgotten about them until now. This irritates me for some reason.

I should be angrier right now.

Not only does he summon me against my will, he frames me and leaves me penniless. I even lose all the Items I have on hand.

"Is this clothing from Naofumi's world?" (Rafatalia) "Yes. I never thought I would get it back." (Naofumi) Rafatalia stares at the clothes with interest.

I got Rafatalia after I already lost these. It's not unusual that she is curious.

I have a lot of better equipment now, so these clothes are not helpful, but they are still important to me.

Bitch had probably taken them and sold them. They were unique so they might have fetched a high price.

"That's good. We traced the route this item travelled, and found a merchant who admitted to purchasing it from Bitch." (Queen) "This is a lie! You're just making things up! I won't believe it!" (Motoyasu) Well, I expected this.

Motoyasu desperately shouts out these words and then runs off.

What a difficult person.

Where does he even plan on going?

"I told you didn't I, Kitamura. Please remove this person and take her to the infirmary." (Queen) After the Queen confirms that all members of

the Motoyasu party have left, she shuts the door.

Quite a few vicious things were said without any thought given to Motoyasu, Woman 1 or Woman 2.

Woman 1 understands, but Woman 2 is on Bitch's side.

That party is quite scary. I don't really want to meet them again.

"Well then, let's leave this matter here and go on to your job." (Queen)
Did she call Motoyasu's party over just to issue a punishment?

I find that fact more funny than the situation itself.

"You're smiling again." (Rafatalia)

"Ha Ha" (Firo)

"Please don't laugh." (Naofumi)

It seems that it will take a long time for my acquired cynicism to go away.

Rishia is also letting out a troubled voice.

By the way, she was saying

"Will the princess be alright?" (Rishia)

"Rishia, don't misunderstand. That is not a princess. That is just the In-debt Adventurer, Bitch." (Naofumi) "Feeeee..." (Rishia)

Rishia pops out of the Penguin costume. She is shaking.

It seems her evaluation of me has dropped.

It wasn't even that high to begin with.

"About her debt, the amount she currently owes is 5000 Gold Coin. I hope she can work it off during the next wave." (Queen) 5000 Gold! That's a lot. Last wave, Motoyasu earned 4000 Silver for his efforts. Paying it off will take a while.

Well, what to do next. Should I go to the weapon shop and see what they have?

I believe the Old Man said he would take custom orders.

“You’ll need better Swords, Claws and armor for the next wave. Perhaps the royal Blacksmiths can do something. Please follow me for a second.”
(Queen) “Ah...” (Naofumi)

The Queen leads us to the warehouse building next to the castle.

Chapter 112: Warehouse

At the warehouse that stinks of a dusty castle. It seems the equipments for the knights order is kept here.

A place where excellent equipment is located in a RPG.

I will confirm it one by one.

Wow.....Most of these are expensive all-purpose equipments but they have strict requirements.

Queen:"The demands of Iwatani-sama were not finished yet.....I apologize."

The swords that are lined up here are already better than the magic silver sword that Raphtalia was using..... The problem is that the offensive power of the Karma Rabbit Sword is still higher.

It seems quite hard to use..... Let's go ask the old man at the weapon shop.

I mean, the direction this is heading in isn't bad Naofumi:"Don't worry about it. Let's makes some compromises."

Queen:"Thank you very much. You can use the materials collected here instead."

Next, we are shown the warehouse keeping various materials.

The queen passes me a document that has letters written on parchment.

Queen:"This is a list. You can make a custom order to a blacksmith master for your orders."

Naofumi:"Mhm.....I appreciate your cooperation."

Material System.....

Naofumi:"May I take a little?"

Queen:"Go ahead."

I absorb a little bit of each material stored within the castle to unseal

new shields.

There are a ton of things that are too far down the skill tree, but a lot of excellent ones increased.

It would be impossible to unseal all of them before the next wave.....

Naofumi: "Afterwards, for the blacksmith, I have a guy that I want to request from."

Queen: ".....Is that so. If that's how Iwatani-sama wants it."

The image of the old man in the weapon shop that took the trouble to make my protective gear and our weapons springs up.

He has helped me out in various ways.

It feels like I would be returned good with evil if I order equipment or weapons from places besides the old man's weapon shop.

Above all, that guy's skill can be trusted.

There are a few more problems to deal with before the wave.

I just noticed something this place.

Naofumi: "Where did the other heroes go?"

Queen: "I had them go quell a wave in the neighboring countries."

Naofumi: ".....Come again?"

That reminds me.....There certainly was such a feeling.

That waves are happening not just in Melromarc, but all over the world.

Naofumi: "How do they participate?"

Queen: "It is possible to fight the waves of a region by letting your weapon resonate with the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era in their country."

Naofumi: "Wait.....That means it's possible to not participate when the wave is happening in Melromarc?"

Queen: "Yes. That's what it means."

Hey!

Won't it be bad for you if I found that out? to think she would explain it and point it out naturally.

If I knew about this before.....I would have already quickly escaped from this country.

But I wonder.....The situation right now isn't bad, and I will have to fight a wave eventually.

I wonder if the Hourglass of the Dragon is a device that works like a save point in net games.

I wanted to know this before!

Queen:"Iwatani-sama? Do you know there are appearances of heroes other than the four holy heroes?"

Naofumi:"Come again?"

That's the first time I've ever heard of such a story.

Queen:"Then shall I explain?"

The queen's eyes sparkle.

There was a time when I heard about the queen liking legends, from Melty when we were talking about the legend of the Queen of Philorials.

Queen:"There is a legend about the Seven Star Heroes almost as famous as the legend of the Four Holy Heroes."

Naofumi:"Seven Star Heroes?"

Queen:"Yes, it is a legend of heroes that are chosen by seven weapons, just like the Four Holy Heroes."

As many as seven huh.....

If all of the other weapons are on a different system, it feels more like a game.

In an RPG it would be certain that one of these guys will become a companion in the future.

However.....In this world, when I hear about guys that use legendary weapons.

I think about some people who only make matters worse.

Queen:"Due to the problem in our country created from Trash and the Three Heroes Church, we had to close our eyes and abandon the power of the Seven Star Heroes."

Naofumi:"Hmm....."

Queen:"The thing is, it is said that the Seven Star Heroes and the Four Holy Heroes are deeply related to each other, they are called Supplementary Heroes--"

The queen continues to talk about legends for a long time.

Raphtalia only knew about the Four Holy Heroes and listens intently. Firo is dozing off to the queen's story.

For some reason Rishia seems to already know about it and keep calm.

Naofumi:"Then, just like me, are there as many as seven other Heroes that were summoned?"

Queen:"No."

Naofumi:"Is it something else?"

Queen:"It is common throughout adventurers to yearn to become a Seven Star Hero. In short, there are those that become heroes by answering the summons, and there are those from this world that can become heroes."

(Tlnote: For those that read the christmas side story.....So many things just clicked.) Someone from this world that can by-pass the summoning limitation and become a hero.....

Is it something from the common sense of this world?

Since I am called a hero, some strange person would probably not be chosen.

Queen:"Tentatively, if the hero summoning using a legendary weapon

fails, the weapon will be available to look for chosen ones among the commoners.”

Naofumi:”.....Isn’t there a feeling of a legendary sword sticking in the ground?”

Queen:” The sword is a weapon of one of the heroes among the Four Holy Heroes, I’m certain that it would not be stuck in the ground.”

Indeed. There will be plenty of those that will want to challenge it.

If they are chosen, they get stronger and national aid will be received.

There is no reason not to yearn for it.

Queen:”There are many more heroic epics about the Four Holy Heroes around the world. There is a possibility of a Seven Star Hero appearing whenever a war occurs.”

Naofumi:”Hoh-.....”

Queen:”After the recent wave happened, a majority of the Seven Star Heroes appeared.”

Naofumi:”Was it that much of a crisis?”

Queen:”Yes. Well.....Iwatani-sama has already encountered one of the Seven Star Heroes already.”

Naofumi:”What? Who?”

Queen:”That is.....It’s better for you not to know.”

Naofumi:”Speak. I am bothered by who.”

Queen:”There is no advantages to finding out. That one is already.....”

Shadow:”Queen.”

A cautioning tone could be heard from Shadow.

Queen:”That is a state secret. If it leaks out I don’t know if it could lead to a war or not. Please excuse me.”

Naofumi:”.....I still want to know.”

Queen:”If that person was as splendid as before, I would have gladly

talked about it. Someday.....Please wait until that time comes to talk.”

Naofumi:”Is just the name fine?”

Queen:”The name of that formerly excellent person is Rouge. Twenty years ago, he is the Seven Star Hero of the Cane that saved a lot of countries, including this one by facing off against Silt Welt, which at the time was scheming world domination.”

Naofumi:”You’re praising that guy very highly. Are you acquainted with this guy?.....”

If it was twenty years ago, he must be considerably old.

When thinking about my acquaintances, the grandmother, slave trader, and accessory merchant.

The latter two are out of the question, the grandmother would be someone to consider.

That rampage after her dramatic revival with the medicine.

But, I feel it’s someone different.

.....Who? I seriously don’t know!

Queen:”It’s a story you will hear someday.”

In other words, the queen won’t tell me.

Queen:”That person was remarkable back in the day too.....”

..... She said the same thing about trash with this expression.....

Naofumi:”Rishia, do you know?”

Rishia:”Ah, yes. King-sama is the Seven Star Hero of the Cane-sama.”

Naofumi:”Huh?”

Rishia:”Right now, it’s a fact that thanks to the king the country of Melcromarc exists now. I heard stories from papa that he was a great person, known as the Virtuous King of Wisdom.”

No No No way, that lump of foolishness called trash has the power of a Seven Star Hero?

Impossible! I couldn't even see a cane on him.

What Virtuous King of Wisdom. They might be mistaking it with Foolish King of Ignorance.

Naofumi: "Don't say such a funny joke Rishia."

Rishia: "It's not a joke though.....I think his figure a while ago is surely a plan or something. my mama said that as long as King-sama is hero, Melromarc would be peaceful."

Naofumi: ".....Therefore your papa and mama become fallen nobles."

Rishia: "Fueeee....."

(Tlnote: Holy shit. Low blow dude.)

According to what I heard, it might be some famous scheme mentioned in my world.

Laying a trap by acting foolish or something. I have a feeling not to carelessly read too deeply into this.....

No way.

This has got to be that. That is the real thing.

The real one could be dead, and Trash is just inheriting the place.

Queen: "By the way, it looks like the one wearing the suit recently joined."

Naofumi: "Yeah, she came from Itsuki's place."

Queen: "I know the circumstances. Was it house Ivy Red?"

Was there such a name?

Incidentally, she is from a fallen noble family.

Queen: "I remember those local nobles. By all means, I hope that you fulfil the mission of saving the world with Iwatana-sama."

Rishia: "O-Okay."

With that, the conversation and getting was done.

Looking at the suit Rishia is wearing, it's impossible to tell whether or not she is embarrassed.

I mean, to be able to notice that is a human.

Naofumi: "That reminds me, Rishia what do you want to do in the future?"

Rishia: "What to do?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, did you not hear it from Itsuki? The reason why Raphtalia and Firo are so strong is due an ability within my shield. I am asking whether or not you want to apply it to yourself as well."

I explain the power of growth correction.

Rishia: "There is such a power? Just by raising levels..... To be strong."

Naofumi: "Normally you would have been strong, but you are a jack of all trades and master of none, I though it would be best to apply some protection."

Rishia approaches me and leans forward.

Naofumi: "Rishia, do you want to become strong?"

Rishia: "Yes!"

(Tlnote: Is it just me, or is this really creepy?) A good answer with strong enthusiasm.

To answer those feelings, I clearly say.

Naofumi: "Then, become my slave."

Chapter 113: A Way to Become Stronger

Rishia: "Fueeeeeee~~~~~!"

A loud pathetic voice echoes throughout the warehouse.

And Rishia begins to run from me like an escaping rabbit.

She is demonstrating her judgement in a strange place.

Naofumi: "Catch her! Bring her back alive!"

Raphtalia: "What is with those strange lines!?"

Naofumi: "It's nothing, I just wanted to say that phrase."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Naofumi: "Do-Don't! Firo, I'm kidding! Catch her normally! Don't use any power on your feet!"

Raphtalia: "The beak is no good either! Rishia-san will die!"

Oh shit, my joke may have turned into a tragic disaster. Let's be careful.

Firo catches Rishia and carries her back on her shoulders.

Rishia is behaving violently.

Rishia: "Please release me! I want to go back to my hometown! I want to return to papa and mama! Itsuki-samaaaaaaaaaa~!"

Naofumi: "It was only a joke....."

Rishia: "About making me a slave?"

Naofumi: "That was the truth."

Rishia: "Wh-Why would you do that!?"

Naofumi: "My shield grants demons or slaves growth correction."

This is the biggest bottleneck.

The correction ability, multiplies with the demon and slave correction.

If I use this, Rishia should be remarkably stronger.

It would be good if there was something for companions.

Naofumi: "Do you want to try it out and see?"

Rishia: "Huh?"

Naofumi: "Rishia, cut your hair a little."

Rishia: "Sure....."

Rishia cuts her hair with a knife and hands it to me.

I let the shield absorb it.

Rishia: "Fue!?"

.....Nothing happens.

As I thought, the Companion Shield didn't unseal even though I got the hair from a companion.

Maybe it's due to my relationship with Rishia not being very deep.

Naofumi: "Anyway, there is no choice other than becoming a demon or a slave."

Rishia: "Demon? I heard there is a secret dark medicine called Ghoul Powder. Shall I prepare it?"

Naofumi: "You.....won't you die?"

A companion with an immortal attribute huh?.....Perhaps it might be strong due to removal of the human limiter.

As expected, my conscience would hurt if I made Rishia a zombie, I would like to avoid that.

I mean, does Rishia want to become strong to the point where she stops being human?

Naofumi: "Well, you are free to choose Rishia, though you won't really receive any protection."

Rishia: "But....."

Naofumi: "Think carefully, what is necessary in order to become strong? You must greedily explore every single possibility. I am only showing you how."

Rishia:”.....”

(TInote: Come to the dark side.)

Rishia was lost in thought and was at a loss.

It’s something you have to deal with yourself. There is no other way.

All I can do is supplement here and there.

Naofumi:”Well, since you are already level 68, and considering the speed of level ups, you wouldn’t receive that many benefits anyway, so it might not even be needed. But I still think that the growth potential is better than nothing.”

It would be meaningful to do if we started at low levels.

Doesn’t this feel like a game?

From the start the high level guys were betrayed and killed. Or their growth was just bad.

Queen:”Logically speaking, would putting someone under Iwatani-sama’s care since level 1 be the case for the best growth?”

The queen asks me.

Naofumi:”That’s right. However, there is no method to return to Level 1.”

Queen:”There is.”

Naofumi:”.....There is?”

Such a convenient thing exists?

If we could use it, it would be perfect for Rishia.

The problem with being level one is the amount of time and effort required to grow.....Wouldn’t it be a problem to have her shoulder such a risk?

Queen:”Yes, originally it was used as punishment to reset the levels of adventurers who commit crimes. The effect of Class Up disappears simultaneously.”

Ah, there is such a penalty.

Thinking about it carefully, it would be a menace to have high level adventurer becoming a criminal and threatening nobles.

The punishment for those people would be to make all of their effort in vain.

That's certainly scary.

Naofumi:"Where is it done?"

Queen:"It can be performed at the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era."

(TInote: What the hell is that thing, is it the box from Redshirts?)

Naofumi:"Is that so..... Rishia, what do you want?"

Rishia:"What do you mean?"

Naofumi:"I have a method that will help you become strong, I will only compel you to fight for me. You are free to choose your Class Up. Consider starting over again from level 1."

Rishia:".....Okay."

Naofumi:"Let's see. The deadline on whether or not you want to return back to level one will be after the coming wave. There is no time now."

Due to there being no time, I am concerned for Rishia's life if she would return back to level 1 then. It would be best to at least finish the wave.

Naofumi:"However, You only need to become a slave.....Don't run away! There are no restraints other than—Listen to me!"

Whenever I talk about slavery, Rishia tries to escape. What a troublesome fellow.

Naofumi:"I will not force you to do anything cruel, I just ask you to fight!"

Rishia:"Fueeee~~~~~!"

Naofumi:"Fine, Rishia I'm just showing you a method to become stronger. What are you going to do?"

At my words Rishia's eyes swim around.

Her answer is equivalent to whether or not she will become a slave.

.....Is it Raphtalia?

Naofumi: "By the way, Queen, would it be possible to apply the same slave crest that you did to Bitch?"

Queen: "Yes, if that is what Iwatani-sama desires."

Naofumi: "Then that means. Although I will hold the reins, I swear that I won't bind you to do anything."

Raphtalia: ".....Unless you are being extremely selfish, he will not do anything. I can prove it."

Rishia: "Raphtalia-san....."

Firo: "Master. Is Firo being binded?"

Well, the words of Raphtalia and Firo that I have brainwashed will probably not reach Rishia.

Naofumi: "I won't force you. If you hate it then we'll leave it at that. Think about it until then."

The conversation ended here, and I turned to face the queen.

We'll let Rishia's matter slide for now, moving on to Trash abandoning the power of being a Seven Star Hero and staying in this country.

I wonder what the reason of doing something like that and not complaining.

That reminds me, the queen did say this to Trash before.

[Fight as a commander at the front line of this country against the wave, or lose your position and become an adventurer.]

From a different viewpoint, that's telling to fight with the Power of the Hero of the Cane.

The bottleneck of this country, it's general.

In the first place. That manner of speech was as if the whole world

recognizes him as a hero, wouldn't it be impossible to bind a hero?

For instance, if Melromarc lost the right to Trash who is a Seven Star Hero, Melromarc would then have to beg Trash to remain.

In short, that would mean recruiters coming from every country while Trash continues to stay here.

Was that parade meant to get them to leave?

However, seeing Trash's attitude, it doesn't seem like he will leave.

But why? Unlike me, he is probably not ignorant about this world's common sense.

To be made an ice pickle, and a naked king, some thought must have went into it.

Does he like the queen that much?

He did say "A bastard like you wouldn't understand your whole life."

Let's change my thinking for a second.

There is a possibility that Trash is troubled by the appearance of scouts.

In short, he already doesn't want to be a hero anymore.

When I look, I don't see a cane in his hands.

It could simply be that he doesn't have the will to fight anymore due to old age.

Oh well. Let's fix and prepare our equipment for the wave now.

Naofumi: "I'm going to go and order weapons."

Queen: "Understood. I will entrust it to the weapon shop that Iwatani-sama relies on."

Rishia: "Ummm—"

Naofumi: "Hm? What's wrong?"

Rishia has her hand in front of her chest..... I can't see her expression, but her voice is full of determination.

Rishia: "I have decided.....Please enslave me!"

Naofumi: ".....Are you fine with it?"

She came to a conclusion quickly.

I thought that it would take longer, since it was Rishia.

Rishia: "Yes! I want to become strong!"

Rishia: "U.....Ku....."

The ceremony finished without any problems.

A High-class slave crest was engraved on Rishia's chest.

Just like Bitch, after a while it turned invisible and won't be seen again unless invoked.

A prohibition list appears in my view.

However, I take off all the checked items..... and, it was rejected.

Apparently, if I remove all the restrictions to activate the slave mark, it doesn't work.

I'll just check off a trifling item and be done with it.

.....I'll check down her ability to lie to me.

I also thought about the possibility of her doing something like Bitch.

Or in the case of her being a spy sent by Itsuki.

Though those possibilities were mostly gone when she selected to become a slave.

Rishia: "Haah.....Haah....."

Naofumi: "Are you okay?"

Rishia: "Yes. I'm fine."

Naofumi: "I see, then that's good."

While thinking that it's wrong, I confirm Rishia's Status.

Naofumi: "Tsu—"

Rishia: "What's wrong?"

Naofumi: "N-Nothing, it's fine. Don't worry about it."

I was involuntarily at a loss for words.

What is this.....This is fatally low compared to Raphtalia, Firo, and I.

Although she is level 68, her stats are 1/5th that of Raphtalia's.

I understand the reason Itsuki dismissed her as weak.

However, I will not abandon her. This is a chance for me to see just what I can do.

Are commoners the same?

Surely.....These stats are the same as Raphtalia's early period.....

A peculiar trait is that all her stats are around the same.

There isn't any weak or strong points.

However, due to it being originally low, the feeling now is that everything is lacking.

Are you really level 68?

If she didn't earnestly accept the strengthening method, it would have truly been dangerous.....

Naofumi: "Th-Then let's go to the weapon store."

Rishia: "Okay!"

Raphtalia: "Sure."

Firo: "Go~"

After a long absence, we headed to see the old man at the weapon shop.

Chapter 114: Meteor Shield

Naofumi: "Yo. Old man, Long time to no see."

Our carriage was stopped behind the weapon shop, and we entered.

Old Man: "Oh. If it isn't the lad. I was surprised that you got a bounty a few days after departing."

Naofumi: "Guess so, I was in a serious trouble back then."

Old Man: "Apparently it looks like you were able to prove your innocence."

Naofumi: "Yeah, thanks to your help."

I felt glad finding out that the old man tried to prove my innocence to the false charges today.

It's not just that, he helped me out in various other ways as well.

Naofumi: "Thank you."

Old Man: "Stop it, it's making me itchy."

The old man scratches his head in embarrassment.

Old Man: "Though.....I don't think today's parade was a good idea."

Naofumi: "Well he's probably like that normally."

Old Man: "Back in day he was excellent though."

Naofumi: "Do you know about it, old man?"

Old Man: "Hero of the Cane? Was it back when I was ten that the king was still active? I was in another country."

Naofumi: "I see....."

Leaving aside Trash's story, I want to move on to the main topic.

Since it's the old man, I should be able to get favorable conditions for weapons without a problem.

Naofumi: "Since I obtained the queen's support, I want to ask you to make weapons and armour for me."

Old Man: "Oh? A special order? Aren't there other master blacksmiths within the country you can employ?"

Naofumi: "I came here with expectations of your weapons."

Old Man: "Lad....."

The old man seems to be deeply moved, and is holding his feelings back. Since I bought most of my equipment till now from his the old man. There is also a sense of security too.

Old Man: "Then I'll work hard to answer the lad's expectations. What do you want made?"

Naofumi: "Here is the material list."

I show the old man the material list I got from the queen.

I don't know whether or not this amount of materials is too much or too little.

Naofumi: "Old man, I want you to make weapons and armour that you think are suitable for us from these materials."

Old Man: "Understood. However, there seems to be some fairly rare materials here. I'm itching to test out my skills. What about the money?"

Naofumi: "The country can foot the bill."

Old Man: "The lad has gotten a fairly good position."

Well it is certainly comfortable.

There are materials, tutors, social positions, and money for equipment.

If it's like this, there is no reason to not stay here.

I will fight against the wave after all. If there is an advantageous environment, I don't want to waste time.

.....I'm a little anxious about it, so I should take some precautions.

Naofumi: "Then....."

I glance at Raphtalia and Firo.

Both of them put their equipment, the Karma Dog Claw, and Karma Rabbit Sword on the counter.

I also point at the penguin suit, and put the ores obtained from Cal Mira Island on the counter.

Old Man: "You brought a lot lad. Is the missy wearing these like pajamas a companion?"

Rishia: "Fue?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, that's Rishia. Though she has that appearance, the contents are human."

Rishia: "Naofumi-sama, that explanation is indeed a little....."

Naofumi: "Can't be helped. You don't want to take off that costume."

Does Rishia like it very much? She seems to be wearing it all the time.

Her face is always hidden, could it be possible a new fetish came out?

Old Man: "L-Let's leave it at that. You brought a strange weapon.....This is certainly the perfect weapon for the missy."

The old man answers while appraising the Karma Rabbit Sword.

It is difficult to use in various ways, but the offensive power is very high.

I want to ask the old man's opinion before we customize or replace it.

There is also the option of melting and reforging too.

Naofumi: "The problem is that this thing doesn't have the Blood Clean Coating. Can you do something about it?"

Old Man: "To process it at this stage..... It's accuracy would decline. Is that fine?"

Naofumi: "I'll be relying on you."

Old Man: "Fumu.....That's fine, but it might be interesting to try some improvements."

Are you going to add some parts like the barbarian's armour?

It might be good to ask about it.

Old man: "You keep bringing me interesting requests lad."

Naofumi: "I guess. Oh right, old man. Can this child Rishia choose a weapon?"

Old Man: "Hm? Go ahead.....Take off the suit and show your hand."

Naofumi: "Rishia."

Rishia: "I-I like swords."

Naofumi: "I want to leave the rearguard to you though....."

After looking at her status I don't really want her to take the front.

If she suffers even a scratch, she may just die.

Both her defence and agility are low. Worst case scenario, she gets caught up in Firo's kick and dies.

If it's the power of magical attacks, even Rishia may be able to manage to some extent in the rear guard while I protect her.

I'll ask whether or not she can use ranged magic later, if she can use it, then she can support Raphtalia and Firo from the back with magic.

Rishia: "I can do either!"

Old Man: "I appreciate the enthusiasm, but for the time being let me take a look."

Rishia: "Okay....."

Rishia timidly takes off the suit and extends her hand to the old man.

Old Man: "Another beautiful woman. The lad must be happy."

Naofumi: "Happy? You think that I'm anything like Motoyasu?"

Old Man: "A blockhead as usual huh, the young lady's troubles increased again."

Raphtalia: "Yes.....Seriously."

The old man says that and Raphtalia nods in understanding.

Old Man: "Fumu.....It looks like you have good compatibility with a rapier. If you want to become a rearguard, then one with a defensive blessing will be good."

Rishia: "I see, can you choose one for me?"

Naofumi: "Wait, is there a bow or a spear she can use as well? She doesn't have any power so I can't really recommend it."

Rishia: "Fue.....A bow is no good!"

Naofumi: "Is it unpleasant due to Itsuki?"

Rishia: "That's not it, I'm just scared that I will hit somebody."

Naofumi: "Ah, so that's it."

Do I have to worry about friendly fire by accident now?

It seems her respect for Itsuki is still there.....Is he still a hero to her?

Naofumi: "Anyway, how long would it be?"

Old Man: "The wave is soon, so a little over a week. I'll do the best that I can within that timeframe."

Naofumi: "Understood. And....."

The Old man asks about the penguin suit.

Old Man: "How is this done? Can it be disassembled? I mean.....Who was it that made this."

Naofumi: "Ah, that. It's performance is excellent, but the appearance is bad. A demon dropped it.....it's bad, to put it simply the legendary weapon produced it from the demon's materials."

That's about it. These kinds of things are dropped by demons.

It makes me realize again that this is a different world. I didn't realise .

It's not funny that I didn't realise before. Those guys that knew before are strange.

In the first place, how does a porcupine like animal drop a weapon that has nothing to do with its physique.

Old Man: "Don't make such unusual things.....Though it's clear that its effects are excellent....."

Naofumi: "Can you transfer the effect on to something else?"

Old Man: "It would be difficult. I'll give it a try from various angles, but don't expect too much. At that time, I'll ask you again since some fine tuning would be needed."

Naofumi: "I'll be relying on you. Should I leave the barbarian's armour here?"

Old Man: "That's fine.....Just, I'll be using it as an experimental basis for the missy's armour."

For Raphtalia huh. I hope it goes well.

Raphtalia: "Wh-What is it?"

Naofumi: "Don't worry about it."

A rather unpleasant feeling aches, I don't know if it's a bad premonition.

This feels like a reconstruction that will go bad.

Rishia: "For some reason it feels exciting."

.....The expectations of a fan of stuffed animals.

It seems like this will go down a bad direction.

For someone like Rishia to excitedly anticipate something, it's quite a flag.

At worst, would I have Rishia wear it?

Firo: "Master~ can we go yet?"

Naofumi: "Yeah, ten more minutes.'

Throughout the whole thing, Firo has been quietly carrying the materials.

That reminds me.....There are some other materials that I unexpectedly got on the island.

Materials not available when I give priority to drops.

Drops not obtained when I give priority to materials.

It was difficult.

Naofumi: "Oh right, I completely forgot about it. Hey old man, can you show me your shields?"

Old Man: "I don't really think you need a shield right.....? Ah, is it for the young ladies?"

Naofumi: "It's something else. It's fine to tell you about it."

I tell the old man about weapon copy.

As expected, he is frowning.

Old Man: "To blatantly say towards me the shopkeeper, that you are performing a theft."

Naofumi: "Should I do it silently instead? I think it should be a service provided by the country."

Old Man: "Well.....The other heroes are doing it silently..... Can't be helped. It doesn't matter if its the lad's request. I'll show you my favorite."

With that, I copied every shield that the old man had in his shop.

I copied various shields, such as the Magic Silver Shield, Heavy Shield, Iron Shell Shield, Magic Shield, and so on.....

Is the Iron Shield and Iron Shell Shield different?..... Magic Shield seems to be a shield that can convert magical power in to a shield.

I mean, I have heard it before, but is the shield an item that is considered a weapon after all?

It's naturally being sold at a weapon store.

I'm not complaining since I am copying the shields one by one.

Well I have consent from the owner.

Old Man: "That should be it, ah wait a moment lad."

After saying so the old man goes to the back of the store.

I heard the sound of him going upstairs, and there is a lot of clanking going on.

The old man returned after a while.

Old Man: "Thanks for waiting. This is a shield that is rare in this country."

It's quite boorish..... However the shield that the old man brought also has a strange luster to it.

Is the metal used iron? However, there is a strange atmosphere.

I appraise and judge it.

Iron Meteorite Shield Quality: Normal

Naofumi: "Iron meteorite?"

Old Man: "Yeah, this shield is made of an unusual ore that fell from the sky. It's a display product of Zeltbull. A prototype of the iron meteorite series."

Naofumi: "I see.....Hm? Display product? Why do you have it?"

Old Man: "It's from back in the day."

Naofumi: "Uh huh."

I wonder why this article is not for sale.

Ah, Motoyasu was saying that Zeltbull had a good assortment of weapons.

Did he touch and copy one?

Old Man: "Here, try it."

Naofumi: "Ah, Right."

I take the iron meteorite shield handed to me by the old man.

And I activate Weapon Copy!

Iron Meteorite Shield 0/20 C

Ability Unsealed.....Equipment Bonus: Skill [Meteor Shield]

Proficiency O

It finally appeared!

The shield version of the meteor series those other heroes used!

By the way, there are various colours, but that's normal in the status system.

Am I now part of the foolish four?

Well, that depends on its efficiency.

I change my shield to the Iron Meteorite Shield.

Old Man:"Ooh"

The old man speaks in surprise.

Naofumi:"A strange skill appeared, let me try it out."

Old Man:"Wha--Hey!"

Naofumi:"Meteor Shield!"

And, I shout. A thin wall of light appears around me. it's effect is 2 meters centering around me.

Sp consumption is.....Around 5% of it all. The cool down time is short, 15 seconds huh.

Based on what I saw, I have a feeling that this is a skill that creates a defense wall.

Raphtalia:"What kind of skill is it?"

Naofumi:"I think it's a skill that will create a defensive wall....."

Raphtalia:"Hah."

Raphtalia touches the wall surrounding me.....for some reason she slipped right through.

Raphtalia:"Is it something different?"

Firo:"Hmm~....."

Rishia and Firo slip through the same way.

Since the Meteor skills of those other guys had such high-efficiency, I didn't think it would be a garbage skill.

Old Man: "Seriously, don't do something strange within the shop—Fube"

The old man tries to pass through the wall but gets knocked back.

Naofumi: "Ah, can only party members pass through?"

Depending on its durability, it is a skill that can work as ranged protection.

If I think of its uses, it's quite excellent.

And.....The effective time is about 5 minutes. While factoring in the cool down time, this is quite an excellent skill.

Old Man: "Good grief, think about it for a little before you do anything lad."

Naofumi: "Sorry, I wanted you to see it since it is your best."

Old Man: "If you say any more, it will become a complaint."

Naofumi: "I'll leave it at that for now."

Afterwards, I told him about Motoyasu's tempering technique with ore.

There is some in the material list, there is a delicate line to align until it's satisfactory There is fewer compared to other ores.

It's possible that Trash wanted to gather it for Motoyasu, but the queen was a step ahead.

Since a lot of it is necessary, I need to think of a different way to obtain it.

Naofumi: "See you later old man. If you need anything for the weapon shop, just ask the castle with these documents."

Old Man: "I understand lad. Please wait expectantly."

Naofumi: "Yeah, I'll be relying on you."

Thus we left the weapon shop.

Chapter 115: The Curiosity of the Weapon Shop Owner

The next few days passed without issue.

We went out every day to prepare for the wave. Sometimes we would go to the mine and search for rare materials, and other times we would fight monsters to raise our levels.

In the mine, I would feed all the gems we acquired into the shield and we would also eliminate any nearby monsters.

For Firo's legs, it doesn't even take a day to return to the castle.

At the castle, I would mix medicines or learn magic. Rafatalia and Rishia are also studying magic under the court magician.

For some reason, after the class-up Rafatalia has begun to be able to use magic other than Illusion. She has started absorbing new types of magic into her fighting style like a sponge.

But even for her, there is not much she can learn in 2-3 days.

The court mage says that in 2 weeks, she will be able to utilize Dreifach Class magic. I am waiting expectantly.

(TL: Apparently a magic level, if anyone has a better translation of ドライフ be my guest) This will be useful in the future.

I was unable to save the people of the plagued village on my own, so I am studying medicine. For some reason the Medicine Shop owner went to the trouble of personally teaching me.

This world's medicine is very effective, however only a select few actually studied and sold it.

They seemed to make up a sort of Apothecary Guild.

However the Church and Apothecaries were constantly fighting over treatment methods, and there are very few skilled people among either of their members.

The Church is putting its resources towards researching Healing Magic. This magic can heal extremely severe injuries, however it is not effective on disease.

The Apothecaries are putting their efforts towards mixing medicine. They are making progress towards eliminating diseases, however are unable to heal severe physical wounds.

Both sides have few advanced equipment and skilled individuals, the Medicine shop owner complains.

I wonder what field I should direct Rishia towards for support.

In order to make her stronger, I have a lot to learn.

By the way, Firo is spending her time playing with Melty.

The Wave will come in 4 days.

I go to the Weapon Shop to check on the old man's progress.

"Oh, it's you kids." (Old Man)

"Are there any new developments?" (Naofumi) "Let's see... The Bird Girl stopped by with her friend to play." (Old Man) Friend?... He's probably talking about Melty

She's the princess set to take over the country, you know. Wait, for now she is the only princess.

He should already know as he saw my wanted poster.

And Melty is being too carefree, playing outside after all that stuff happened.

"You brought some mysterious ingredients, boy. I used the Black rabbit materials you gave me to try to reinforce the sword, and it immediately turned white." (Old Man) "Ho-..." (Naofumi)

"I applied a Blood Deterring Charm to the sword. It's not as effective as the coating, but it should work for your purposes." (Old Man) Blood Deterring Charm?

Is it a level below Coating?

“Ah, it somehow gives off a better feeling than before.” (Naofumi) “I sharpened the edge, and put some light enchantments on it. The process went well.” (Old Man) “This is incredible.” (Naofumi)

“I tried to do the same on the Bird Girl’s claws and it went well. For this one, I used the Black Dog Materials.”

“Wow...” (Naofumi)

For some reason, Firo’s claws have turned white as well.

It looks like a curse was lifted from them.

I inspect these two items.

–

Usauni Sword, Quality High (TL: Rabbit is Usa) Item Effects: Agility Up, Magic Up, Pierce Power Up, Blood Deterrent – Inulut Claw, Quality High (TL: Dog is Inu)

Item Effects: Agility Up, Magic Up, Pierce Power Up, Blood Deterrent –
“You do good work.” (Naofumi)

“Thanks” (Old Man)

These weapons have increased in quality considerably. They will be a major asset. I wonder if they already had preset names, or if the Old Man named them.

Usauni... Inulut... I believe they were the legendary monsters of the islands.

“I also finished this spear.” (Old Man)

–

Speckle Spear

... Effects pretty much the same as the others.

–

“Who here can wield a spear? Also where did you get that spear from?” (Naofumi) From that name, was it made from the Penguin Ingredients?

“I thought it was odd, but when I started using some of the remaining ingredients, this was the result. The ingredients almost ran out, it was difficult.” (Old Man) “That was unnecessary...” (Naofumi)

Well, I guess there's no harm. Worst comes to worse, I'll give it to Rishia. She's even wearing the Penguin suit, It will be quite fitting.

“This is still under construction. Try giving it to the Lady in the Costume.” (Old Man) “Keep up the good work.” (Naofumi)

“Sure. But... The problem is the modification of the Penguin Suit that you ordered...” (Old Man) With a sorry face, the old man goes into the back of the shop and pulls out what used to be the penguin suit.

“Oy... It's slightly different, but it's definitely still a costume.” (Naofumi) The whole suit has turned white.

“I think I am going crazy. When the Bird Girl came over to play, I got inspired to try something, and it turned out like this.” (Old Man) “... I have a really bad feeling about this. What sort of inspiration was that!” (Naofumi) “What is that?” (Rishia)

“Come on, Rishia!” (Naofumi)

Rishia touches the suit. She is shaking.

...

“Hey, Old Man. No matter how you look at it, this is impossible.” (Naofumi) “I also think that it turned out wrong.” (Old Man) The Old Man looks like he is going to cry.

That's right... What was once a Penguin Suit is now a Filo Rial Suit.

(TL: Rishia OP, she will get, Demon, Slave and Filo Rial Shield Bonuses) And no matter how you look at it, Firo was the Model.

It is pretty much a Firo Suit.

—

Firo Plushy

Defense Up,

Agility Up (Large),
Impact Resist (Small),
Wind Resistance (Large),
Darkness Resistance (Small),
HP Restoration (Weak),
Magic Amplify (Medium)
Autonomous Repair,
Pulling Skills Increased,
Carrying Capacity Increased,
Size Correction,
Race Change-Monster (When Equiped)

—

... Both me and the Old Man avert our eyes from the Costume.

“Wa-Is this imitating Firo?” (Firo)

“It definitely looks like you.” (Rafatalia) “What a wonderful Costume!”
(Rishia)

“Hey! Don’t just equip it by yourself!” (Naofumi) Rishia immediately puts on the suit.

“How do I look? Kue! Kue!”

... There is now a bird-form Firo next to the human-form Firo.

Well compared to the real thing, it is a bit smaller.

It’s quite a sorry sight.

I go and check Rishia’s status.

High! Is this the effect of the shield?

What was once 1/5 of Rafatalia’s stats is now 1/3!

For an equipment to be this effective... The Race change also gave her

Filo Rial Shield Bonuses.

Well, as long as it's effective, I guess it's fine.

"Yes. Apart from the appearance, it is fine." (Naofumi) "How cruel."
(Firo)

Rishia seems happy with the Firo Suit.

However Firo seems to be protesting.

"This is all I can do for now. Next time, I'll make some actual equipment for the girl." (Old Man) "How about me?" (Naofumi)

"I can make it, but I don't think it will be ready in time for the wave."
(Old Man) "I see." (Naofumi)

Well, with the defense of the Shield, my armor has taken very little damage to begin with. I guess I can leave it as it is for now.

"I'll pop by later. Thank you for your work." (Naofumi) "Sure. Oh yes, boy?" (Old Man)

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"I can also make you new shields." (Old Man) That's right. With these strange ingredients, he can also forge new shields that I have yet to acquire.

Feeding materials to the Shield will not necessarily guarantee a new shield, it will be more efficient to have the Old Man forge shields out of the drops.

Should I leave some materials from the next wave's boss to the Old Man?

"If I run into some interesting materials, I might ask for that. Please wait 'til then." (Naofumi) "I'll be waiting, boy." (Old Man)

And as such, we prepared for the wave.

I have been using the methods the other heroes gave me to strengthen the shields already in my possession as well.

Soul Eater Shield (Awakened) +6 35/35 SR (TL: Super Rare) Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus

Skill: Second Shield

Soul Resistance (Medium)

Psychological Attack Resist (Small)

SP Up

Passive: Soul Eater

Sp Recovery (Weak),

Drain Effect,

Intangibility,

Undead Control

Proficiency 67

Enchantment Level 7, SP +10%

Bonus against Undead (Defense +50)

Status Enchant (Endurance +30)

—

I am currently raising my proficiency. For some reason, upon strengthening, this shield's stats went higher than the Chimera Viper Shield.

I guess this is because this is from the boss that came after the Chimera. Its abilities' effectiveness also went up with reinforcement.

The abilities Drain, Intangibility, and Undead Control appeared after awakening the shield.

Just as its name implies, Intangibility allows me to pass through solid objects... But going through a single wall takes up all of my SP. And that

was quite a thin wall at that. I wonder what will happen if I solidify inside a wall. (TL: The Wizardry generation knows) Undead Control allows me to manipulate undead monsters to some extent. I tried using it on some Skeletons, but it immediately dried up my SP.

I don't think I can use these functions.

But by stats alone, my Defense is now 4 times what it was when I got back to the castle.

Yesterday, I let myself get attacked by all sorts of monsters, and I didn't even feel anything.

... However, I myself never let damage get through to me to begin with.

After leaving the Old Man's store, I go to the Castle's courtyard to experiment.

Chapter 116: Blue Sand Sound

I called Rafatalia, Firo and Rishia to test something.

I plan studying magic after this, but that can wait.

"Naofumi, what happen?" (Rafatalia)

"I have something to ask of you, Rafatalia" (Naofumi) I remove the slave limiter preventing Rafatalia from attacking me.

I do this prior to the test because she will suffer due to the slave crest if I don't.

"I wanted to test the defense on the shield I've upgraded. I gave you permission to hit me." (Naofumi) "Huh...." (Rafatalia)

"Try bare-handed first. Don't hold back." (Naofumi) "I see." (Rafatalia)

While hesitant, Rafatalia hits my chest with great force.

The impact let out a loud sound.

But i felt no pain, only a sentation as if bitten by a mosquito.

Was this the extent of Rafatalia's fist.....

How would it turn out if i was struck by a sword?

Though it may be foolish, and it would be unpleasant to get wounded, I want to test out how much i can endure.

"Lets use a sword next" (Naofumi)

"Oh, that. Are you sure?" (Rishia)

Rishia asks fearfully.

I understand her feelings. If you look at it from an ordinary person's view, this doesn't look normal.

"I'm trying to see how much i can withstand" (Naofumi) If i can endure one of Rafatalia's attacks, I feel I'd be fine for the moment.

I do not know how high my defense is, or if it's better.

"Here i go" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalis swings her sword at me with without serious intent, I can tell she held back somewhat.

A light sound is made as it hits my shoulder.

"This is hard...." (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia says in a tearful voice as she drops the Iron sword in her hand.

I did not recieve any damage.

This is amazing, It's as if my body has become metal.

My body is normal meat and flesh when i touch it.

Did i gain more muscle since coming to this world?

Including Lvs I feel this body has become on suitable for fighting.

Well i have been involved in a lot of fighting these 4 months.

Well i use more physical strength like in older times where one got around by foot or carriage. Can't even compare to the time when I was a geek.

"Firo next." (Firo)

"Oh, good." (Naofumi)

"Yay!" (Firo)

I uncheck Firo's demon crest.

I'll know i have great defense if i block one of Firo's attacks, I want to know.

"Well then, let's go" (Naofumi?)

Firo changes into her demon form, she raises her leg high ready to kick.

Mississauga Mishimishimishi Biki.[TL: this is onomatopoeia explained soon]

"Wh, what is....." (???)

The sound of Firo's powerful leg muscles contracting can be heard.

Past experiences can tell me. This is dangerous.

biki bikibikibiki![TL: More onomatopoeia]

"It stopped"(Naofumi?)

"Yes!"(Firo)

I ready my shield at once.

With a roar, vibrations are felt. A shock runs through my whole body.

"You trying to kill!"

I may have been taken back if i didn't prepare myself. For this.

With a smile i gaze over at Firo, i can't complain.

I felt my eyebrows furrow for a moment.

"Wow, master is really sturdy" (Firo)

"What was that kick just now!" (Naofumi) "Well, it's a kick using all the power, can't be used in real battle" (Firo?) That was a serious kick from Firo..... She completely didn't take it easy.

"I use power as if kicking the Spear guy" (Firo) I sympathize for Motoyasu, it's his end if he's kicked with this power.

I feel like watching that a little also.

"Want to go flying into the horizon?" (Firo?) "You, think a little more about your actions!" (Naofumi?) No, I'll definately be killed.

Wonder if the kick would send you into the horizon.

Or into a different world..... if you think of it like an anime.

However, I was able to establish the strength of my defense.

I was able to prevent all of Firo's power, which is comparable to Glass.

I do not know how much stronger, but i can anticipate further effects.

"Hmm.....Alright"

"That's not for you to decide, it's for me"

"Well i think that's ok"

Does this person have some wild perception?

That was a little scary, let's go check the items a second time.

"Well it's ok.... no one was injured... so let's go back for tonight"
(Naofumi) "Umm" (Rishia)

I turn slowly towards Rishia.

"Eh?" (Rishia)

"You don't need to do it, you are good." (Naofumi) "Y, Yes" (Rishia)

I was not damaged by Firo, or Rafatalia. It would be impossible if Rishia tried.

It would be bad to strain oneself.

Though it feels like she has frail health, it is a defeat if it minds it.

"Since the next wave is near. Train you magic for today" (Naofumi) You should raise your level in earnest.

Though Rafatalia seems to do simulation exercises with the knights.

"Yes"

"I understand"

"I'll go study with Firo and Mel chan"

"Let's go like that."

Because she is the princess of this country, it is natural, but Melty tends to only study in the castle.

Now that Bitch has been deprived of her inheritance rights, what such thing do you need as the next queen.

Maybe Monarch studies? There was a similar thing in my world.

It may be said that she studies every day and make it the utmost proper country.

Speaking of Melty, if i find spare time while being taught compounding and magic, i go to my place.

Studying with Firo can also be fun.

.....Let's forget how i complained about being caught up with Firo while studying a few days ago.

Firo's head is not good, Melty's might also be going bad. Yeah. [idk]

Now that i have to time to myself, i think I'll strengthen..... the Wrath Shield for the time being.

Wrath shield Ⅲ (awakened) +7 50/50 SR

Ability unsealed equipment bonus, Skill [Change shield (attack),] [Iron Maiden] [Blutopfer]

Special Effect: Dark Curse Burning S, Strength UP, Super(orMighty) Dragon's Rage, Roar, Frenzy of Companions, Magic Sharing, Clothing of Anger (medium).

Proficiency O

I seems the shield can't preform item, spirit and status enchantments.

Still it's abilities imporved tremendously.

The problem is, that the moment i switched to this it started trying to take over my consciousness, a fearsome problem.

Preperations for the wave are coming along well.

The next day.

3 days until the wave.

"Queen Speaking"[Knight?]

"What? "(Naofumi?)

After lunch a meeting with the queen was hailed.

Preperations are almost done, then just wait for the wave.

As is expected, it would be severe to fight against Glass with only us.

Which is why we gathered the heroes now, but who knows if they'll listen.

"How are you Heroes? How went the waves of other countries?" (Queen)
"Heroes, except Iwatani, participated in the wave of other countries

between these few days and seem to have let you suppress it safely. Iwatani is alright....it isn't a big problem treating our country exclusively." (Queen) "'I'm anxious to say its a big problem but - Tsu!?" (Naofumi?) A sound that could break glass is heard from the corner.

A big shock shook our heads.

The sound was similar to the Wave starting, but it was.....delicately different.

"...Something happened just now"

"?"

I look around.

Although i though i was trasnferred to the wave, I didn't go anywhere, I was still in the castle hallway.

"What happened?"(???)

"I don't know...but something just happened that is certain"(Naofumi) The call the icon of a red hourglass to check the wave in the corner field of my view.

The timer had stopped at 3 days.

Next to it another icon appears..... a blue hourglass with a "7" engraved into it.

"Another hourglass has appeared, with a 7 engraved into it, but i don't know what this means" (Naofumi) Calling up the Help menu, i verify if there are no new items.

But it seems.... Information can not be found.

What's going on?

7 ... the story of the Seven Star Heroes, i recently heard the story.

Could it be?

"A Hero may have been defeated in some wave somewhere"

"However, these brave heroes participated in other waves, but just in

case... I will look into other countries and seek information"

The Queen gave instructions to a messenger soldier to gather information.

The opening of the case was here

Chapter 117: When Game Knowledge Betrays You

Note: all the other heroes' motivations are currently 100% Naofumi's conjecture. Don't get so mad... yet...

Chapter 117: When Game Knowledge Betrays You

It was only a few hours later that we realized exactly what had happened.

A messenger riding a gravely injured dragon flew to us.

“What is happening?” (Queen)

The Queen shouts with the face of someone who has just failed a mission. We are all gathered in front of the throne.

“T-there's big trouble! The seal holding the legendary Magical Beast, the Spirit Turtle has been broken!” (Messenger) “Spirit...?” (Naofumi)

Spirit? As in referring to ghosts?

The Spirit Turtle... In my world, I remember it was a sort of legendary beast.

He often appeared in games as one of the 4 minor holy beasts Does this world have some system like that as well?

The major 4 are Seiryuu, Byakkou, Genbu and Suzaku. The minor 4 are Phoenix, Spirit Turtle, Quilin, and Dragon.

Many people think they are the same, but they are slightly different.

But from the feeling I am getting from this conversation, this beast is probably Genbu.

In Mythology, The Spirit Turtle was said to carry Mt. Horai on its back. (TL: In Chinese, Mt. Penglai) Genbu was a tortoise-like beast with a snake for a tail, and long legs.

The Chinese said that Mt. Horai was a legendary mountain in the east inhabited by immortals. Whether it is based on a real location or not is

still up for debate.

(TL: I know others may translate it as Tortoise but by his mythological reference, the beast that carried Horai was definitely a turtle. It was even often described as swimming through the ocean and being mistaken as an island. So I'm pretty sure it is Spirit Turtle, while Genbu is a Tortoise. Right now, the beast may very well turn out to be Genbu, so I cannot say for sure what to translate it as.) "It can't be..." (Queen)

The Queen's face has turned pale.

... That means the situation is really bad. I might get dispatched.

"In my world, there was something similar so I can kinda understand, but is the seal breaking something that bad?" (Naofumi) "Yes. Long, long ago, the beast suddenly came into existence. It's a monster that all four summoned heroes had to work together to seal." (Queen) "I see..." (Naofumi)

Did the seal weaken from the wave? Or did the seal just run out naturally?

The Help menu says that when the hour glass stops, a calamity even bigger than the wave is imminent.

"And to make it so that the seal never breaks, the four heroes of the time never told anyone how they set it. We do not know how to reseal the beast." (Queen) "Did it break because of the wave?" (Naofumi)

"Unfortunately, that is quite likely." (Queen)

"But that does not explain the 7 that appeared on the hourglass." (Naofumi) 7-that number holds many ominous connotations.

I hope it just means that the situation has to do with the 7 star heroes.
If not, then...

"U-um..." (Messenger)

As he speaks, the messenger's face turns blue.

"What? Do you have some information?" (Queen)

“T-that is...” (Messenger)

The Messenger averts his eyes from our gaze.

? What is it? He’s staring intently at my feet.

“Speak up.” (Naofumi)

“T-the truth is...” (Messenger)

The Messenger began to elaborate on the situation.

“I was told that the seal was broken by the four summoned heroes, the Sword, Spear and Bow.” (Messenger) “Are you certain?” (Queen)

“Yes! They all visited the town it was supposedly sealed in and performed some strange ritual. After investigating the town thoroughly, they destroyed a statue in the shrine. It was only after that that the seal broke. The heroes were last seen heading for the beast.” (Messenger) The Queen looks pale.

But based on the messenger’s words, this reaction is appropriate.

“Itsuki!” (Rishia)

Rishia tries to run off to some unforeseen destination.

“Firo, please capture Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“Yes~” (Firo)

Firo chases after Rishia and promptly captures her.

“Unhand me! I need to go save Itsuki.” (Rishia)

For her to be devoted to this extent... Itsuki sure is lucky.

“But... Why would the Heroes take such idiotic actions... Why did they even know how to undo the seal?” (Queen) “The heroes other than me should be quite knowledgeable about this world.” (Naofumi) They probably used the knowledge of the games they used to play to undo the seal.

Now that I think about it, Itsuki said some incomprehensible statements before.

He told Rafatalia, 'You will come to rely on me someday,' and he told me, 'This is the last time you can act so conceited.'

Did the feelings of inferiority he got from those times cause his current actions?

The turtle will probably give a lot of EXP and some valuable items.

The three heroes probably headed there because they became overconfident after defeating the Level 80+ wave bosses of other countries.

Again with the Game Knowledge. They should quit it already I bet they plan to beat the Spirit Turtle to one-up me.

Even after all of this, they only care about strengthening their own characters.

I'll bitch about it to them later.

"About that..." (Messenger)

"They unsealed it correct? So how are they doing in regards to defeating it?" (Naofumi) The Dragon Hourglass is still stopped. Those gamers will never pick a fight with an enemy they cannot beat.

They should soon be celebrating in a nearby village.

There's no food tastier than food on someone else's tab anyways.

"Well... After heading for the turtle, the heroes are currently MIA, and the Spirit Turtle has yet to be stopped." (Messenger) "What?!" (Naofumi)

What the Hell

There's no way they would unseal it if there was no chance of winning.

Well, that's just my opinion as a hero.

I have a bad premonition.

There's a possibility that something is impeding them from fighting the Spirit Turtle.

But for a monster so powerful that it could only be sealed to be released

into a populated area...

This is really, REALLY bad, isn't it.

"Shadow, what information do you have?" (Queen)

"I followed each hero, but..." (Shadow)

Shadow appears next to the queen and whispers into her ear.

It doesn't seem to be the shadow I know that says -gojaru "... It seem the situation is ... uncertain." (Queen)

Two days later.

Me and my party had departed with a large squad of knights to a neighboring country to join the fray.

We will be the front line of this war.

Our job is to make sure the damage caused by the Turtle is kept to a minimum.

So far, 5 Cities, 3 Forts and 2 Castles have fallen to the beast.

The Spirit Turtle is a Gigantic monster, and it is usually surrounded by numerous subordinate monsters. These subordinate monsters are tasked with finishing off all those that flee in the Turtle's path.

It seems to be headed towards areas with high populations.

"Will the 7 Star Heroes be participating as well?" (Naofumi) "We have sent out a request, but currently, we are the closest to the Beast. It will take several days for the others to arrive." (Queen) If I leave it to the 7 Heroes, the sacrifices will be great. This has to do with my duty as a hero.

And I don't know if those heroes are strong enough to depend on at this point.

Also... If the monster is strong enough to render the other 3 heroes missing, I myself am in quite a bit of trouble.

But it doesn't seem that I will be able to run.

If I weigh fighting here with being considered a traitor and having the

other heroes come after me again, I would rather perish in this battle.

I have to do this.

The other heroes better have not just unsealed this thing and disappeared to show the queen my lack of worth as a hero...

However, I cannot deny that I do lack such worth.

The risk is too great, so they probably won't do that... probably.

I guess I should act as if the other 3 are dead.

Their Game knowledge... The item that allowed them to believe that they understood everything about this world. It finally betrayed them, and caused them to underestimate a terrifying enemy.

That is the only explanation I can think of for their failure.

Perhaps in their games, it was a different beast that had been sealed away.

"... No matter what happened to the other 3, I have no choice but to fight. So how powerful are our current forces?" (Naofumi) "We have this country's knights, our soldiers, various vagrant adventurers and some other armed forces sent from neighboring countries... But some countries have already attempted to confront the turtle and have suffered crushing defeats." (Queen) "They advanced without waiting for the heroes?" (Naofumi) "There's no way a country can refrain from fighting when a monster is destroying it right before its ruler's eyes." (Queen) "... I see..." (Naofumi)

It may have been rash, but there was no choice for those people but to fight.

It's not like I can't understand their feelings.

"So the only hero you can count on... is me." (Naofumi)

If I allow even one casualty, my reputation will only get worse.

If the other three heroes are the culprits of this calamity, then I, the fourth hero, must step up and act like a hero for once.

... Acting heroic isn't like me at all.

I am up against a monster that can destroy countries overnight, and I am fighting with nothing but a shield. This may seem very reckless. But if I do nothing, nothing will result.

"I can see it." (Queen)

The Queen calls out from the carriage Firo is carrying.

I'm speechless as I stare at the monstrosity on the horizon.

"Um... Is that Mountain over there moving, or is that my imagination."
(Naofumi) I'm supposed to fight that?

It's far away, so I can't see it clearly but this is even larger than the largest dragons of the games in which you hunt monsters. (TL: Probably referring to Monster Hunter, but I don't know) It truly is the size of the Turtle said to move an entire country on its shell in my world.

There seemed to be the wreckage of a town on top, and the Turtle is carrying it all on its mountain-sized back.

"Queen, in the legend of the heroes that fought this thing, how exactly did they fight it?" (Naofumi) "It seems they got inside of it from the city on its back, and placed a seal on its heart." (Queen) So that means we first have to stop that thing, and then get inside of it somehow... No, stopping it will take more forces than we can muster.

"Do you have a plan?" (Naofumi)

"There is one. The turtle seems to be headed for areas with high population. We can estimate its course, evacuate the cities and castles in the way, and set up ambushes to hold it down in those cities." (Queen)
"That isn't all is it?" (Naofumi)

"After that, we plan to follow the legend and send you inside to attack the heart." (Queen) Should I try to damage it with Iron Maiden or Blutofer?

I had just gotten over the shield's curse... but looking at that thing, I don't think I have a choice.

“But with that plan, the casualties will be quite great, won’t they?”
(Naofumi) If we enter the Turtle, he will probably start rampaging.

So while we proceed towards the heart, a lot of damage will be done to the forces on the outside.

“...Yes” (Queen)

“Unhand Me! I... I Won’t fight! The Shield. Send the Shield!” (Trash)
“.....” (Naofumi)

Trash is sitting in the seat next to the Queen.

The Queen is currently performing an iron claw on his face to prevent him from escaping the carriage.

... This person does not look like he will be of any help.

“I understand the risk, however there is no other way we know of to rid the world of that monster.” (Queen) Trash’s interjection completely ruined the atmosphere.

Why is this person even here?

He may be the general, but I feel the army would be better off without this idiot.

I guess he is here as the Hero of the Cane, or the former Wise King to increase troop morale.

“We’re done for... in many ways.” (Naofumi)

“Meaning?” (Queen)

“Well for one, Your husband is done for. Also, that plan will result in too many casualties.” (Naofumi) It’s too risky and too rash.

But I can’t decide anything unless I can see just how powerful an attack from the beast is first hand.

All I know right now is how many people attacked it and lost.

“... Let me try fighting it as a test.” (Naofumi)

We’ll decide our next course of action based on whether I can withstand

its attacks or not.

“Fue...” (Rishia)

“Rishia, We are going to go scout out the power of the Spirit Turtle. Depending on the situation, I am counting on you to relay the information to the queen.” (Naofumi) “B-but I’m” (Rishia)

“I understand your concern. That costume should greatly increase your speed. You don’t have to go on the front lines, but please observe the battle and report your findings.” (Naofumi) This doesn’t look like an opponent I can beat with just the power of a Hero.

And it also doesn’t seem to have any intention of backing down.

He’s as large as a mountain. If I encountered such an enemy in a game, I would run. However if I ran here I would only be making more enemies of the shield.

I should start off by trying to fight it.

“Understood. I will help relay the situation.” (Rishia)

“I’ll also leave magical support to you. Worst comes to worse, we’ll have to retreat and wait for the Star Heroes to arrive.” (Naofumi) “Iwatani, your performance will affect the morale of all of the troops fighting here. Please be careful.” (Queen) “Yes Ma’am.” (Naofumi)

We unattach Firo from the Queen’s carriage. Firo takes us all on her back.

“Firo, we’ll be fighting that giant thing.” (Naofumi)

“Yes~!” (Firo)

“Rafatalia, just fight as you always do. As the Queen said, if this doesn’t work out, we can always think of another plan.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Rafatalia)

“Rishia, only think about your own safety. If worse comes to worst, retreat and report the results to the Queen.” (Naofumi) “Y-yes.” (Rishia)

I give out orders and prepare for battle.

“Let’s go.” (Naofumi)

Firo starts running at full speed. We begin our assault on the Spirit Turtle.



Chapter 118: The Spirit Turtle, Recon Battle

“It’s much bigger up close.” (Raphtalia)

Before my eyes, the large turtle is getting closer step by step.

There is an earthquake every time it takes a step, it is making me stagger.

“That seems to be the case.” (Naofumi)

“.....We should escape.” (Rishia)

“I understand your feelings.” (Naofumi)

It’s been about a month since the heroes came and let this out..... It is reckless to fight against an opponent that those heroes from before couldn’t beat.

.....There is a reason why I can’t leave, it can’t be helped.

Well, let’s test something.

It should be fine to withdraw immediately if it gets dangerous.

“That turtle is huge~” (Firo)

“Fueeeeeeee! Itsuki-samaaa!” (Rishia)

A swarm of demon bats are coming from the first mountain-like shell.

Are these the Spirit Turtle’s Familiars?

“Meteor Shield!” (Naofumi)

Immediately the Meteor Shield I learned expands, and I fall back to Rishia.

“Highten Reaction!” (Naofumi)

The swam of Spirit Turtle’s familiars fire rays of light at us from their eyes.

Thumping sounds could be heard as the barrier is struck.

so they can use long-range attacks huh.

[TL gagingagin was the sound in the original. I changed it to thumping since that's what i think of when i imagine a barrier blocking attacks.]

“Tei!”(Raphtalia)

“Teriyaa!”(Firo)

Raphatalia and Firo exit the barrier to attack the spirit turtle's familiars.

“Gyiii!” (Familiars)

The familiars die off as each attack hits.

However, they are too numerous.

Since this is just reconnaissance there aren't that many methods to go about things.

“Taha!” (Raphtalia)

“Oryaaa!” (Firo)

The familiars fall with a gasugasu, as Raphtalia and Firo cut them down.

It might be good to analyze the fight in case of something surprising.

“Are you alright?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. But, I think it'll be hard to bring it down.” (Raphtalia) “I see.”(Naofumi)

A thud could be heard, and something falls from the Spirit Turtle.

A gorilla-like Demon with a turtle shell on its back is now coming towards us.

“Zweit Aura!” (Naofumi)[TL: In reading some comments on Yoraikun's page I found out the author is using a lot of german in special skills. Zweit seems to mean second or tier 2 spells, and Raphtalia is capable of learning Dreifach, or third/tier 3 spells with practice.]

I apply support magic on Raphtalia and Firo.

“Fast Guard!” (Rishia)

At the same time, Rishia applied defensive magic on me.

That was good judgement.

It seems that status and smarts aren't related.

“Go! Yin-Yang Sword” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's sword alternates between black and white glows, as it cuts through the demon.

It was split into 2 black and white spheres, they collide and destroy the demons.

Is this a certain kill sword attack that Kills two birds with one stone!?

“Critical Quick~” (Firo)

Firo becomes a blur as she quickly flies off towards the enemy and kicks.

What is that? The same attack?

That's what I thought, but Firo's speed doesn't fall, and unleashes a flurry of kicks onto the demon.

“Umm you see~, its an instant version of High Quick.” (Firo) It's an attack is easy to maintain.

That is certainly useful.

“Fue, Fast Water Shot!” (Rishia)

Rishia slips through the barrier and fires her Water Magic at the familiars.

Yup. They didn't die.

But, they have been slowed down.

“This may be good.” (Naofumi)

Well, there is a large margin between us and familiars of this degree.

The problem is the main body. Maybe, the other heroes struggled against the main body.

There is also the possibility that they are fighting within the body.

“Anyway, let’s try to fight it!” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Okaay~” (Firo)

“Fueeeeeee!” (Rishia)

And so, the closer we get to the spirit turtle the stronger the demons become.....As we arrive in front of the spirit turtle, it recalls all of its familiars.

Of course, it’s gigantic when seen up close.

A village can be made on its face alone.

Now, what to do?

The turtle turns its gaze towards us.

“————— ! ”(Spirit Turtle)

It lets out a tremendous roar, I have to cover my ears.

This is not a friendly attitude.

I activate Meteor Shield again, to repel the familiars as I check the status of the spirit turtle.

The turtle moves its foot towards us.

“That’s dangerous!” (Naofumi)

It sends forth a powerful kick. I raise my shield to prepare for the attack at once.

With the sound of glass shattering Meteor Shield is broken, immediately after, I’m hit by the Spirit Turtle.

The shock goes through my whole body.

“gu.....” (Naofumi)

I am pushed back a few steps.

“Na-Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Master?” (Firo)

Raphtalia and Firo manage to get in behind the shield without trouble.

Rishia had slipped under my mantle understanding the situation, letting out a ‘fueeee’.

“I-I’m fine. Here it comes again.” (Naofumi)

Despite being trampled, it doesn’t seem I suffered any damage.

The cooldown for Meteor Shield has passed too.

Let’s try a new approach.

Right after that, Rain clouds gather in the sky, and the familiars surrounding us are swept away.

It’s the Queen and her guards, they’re providing cover fire.

It’s an attack that if not timed correctly, would have hit Raphtalia as well.

I think it’s an attack that can only be fired after I used my meteor shield.

“Alright! You guys, attack it for the time being!” (Naofumi) It’s a problem that I don’t understand this monster, but it might be weaker than it looks.

“Tooooo!” (Firo)

Firo lands a powerful kick on the enormous jaw of the Spirit Turtle.

“————— ! ?” (Spirit Turtle)

The Spirit Turtle’s head was bent back.

“Waaaaa...heavy~” (Firo)

“It’s not over yet” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia cuts across the limits of the Spirit Turtle’s neck while it’s head is bent backwards.

A crevice was made into the turtles neck, as the sound of vegetables being cut could be heard.

Blood gushed out.

However, the cut was shallow, the wound quickly regenerated, and the Turtle turned it's angry gaze at Firo and Raphtalia.

.....It's not going to fight, huh.

Raphtalia and Firo have become immensely stronger as well.

I'm aware that i got stronger, but is that enough?

This is a hard fight to some extent, but it's not an enemy we can't beat
If that's the case, those guys.... they could have won, why did they leave?

Now, it is impossible to deny the possibility that it could have been left
to annoy me.

“————— ! ”(Spirit Turtle)

A large magic formation appears before the Spirit Turtle.

.....I have a bad feeling about this.

Immediately, Raphatalia and Firo are forced to the ground.

“Gu~uuuuu” (Firo)

“Wha, What is that.....” (Raphtalia)

“What happened?” (Naofumi)

“I-I don't know. But my body is stuck to the ground....It's heavy”
(Raphtalia) That's Dangerous! I don't understand, but Raphatalia is in
danger.

“Fuee?” (Rishia)

Rishia, who was under my cloak, let out a goofy sound.

This girl, doesn't have any problems.....Right?

The Barrier created by Meteor Shield was vibrating.

It's good to see this defended against something.

I approach Raphtalia and Firo to get them into the barrier.

“Ah, It feels light again” (Firo)

They both stand up and approach.

From the looks up it, it's safe to say this is Gravity Magic.

However, the Spirit Turtles Magic wasn't able to break through my magic defense.

After confirming that we are not moving, the Spirit turtle tries to trample us.

You think I'd let you?!

"Shield Prison" (Naofumi)

I use Shield Prison on top of Meteor Shield.

A large clank sound can be heard, the prison breaks and the foot is blocked by the meteor shield.

.....It seems to be supporting the weight of the spirit turtle for the time being.....

The barrier starts creaking.

It'll break as it is.

"We're moving, come with me." (Naofumi)

There is no reason to continue being trampled.

"Okay!" (Raphtalia)

"Okay~" (Firo)

"Fueee....I understand" (Rishia)

After those three understand what is going on, we escape from being trampled by the Spirit Turtle.

With a thud, the Spirit Turtle raises a cloud of dust.

Ah, it seems that Meteor Shield also prevents the dust cloud.

"We should be able to endure this for the time being" (Naofumi) "It shouldn't be able to pinpoint our location within this cloud of dust." (Raphtalia) "Firo thinks we should be able to beat it right? but only if its magic is stopped." (Firo) "Fumu....That might be a chance to attack but...." (Naofumi) The area rumbles as familiars drop down.

Is it being overly cautious? It seems to be verifying that we were defeated.

There's no time. What should we do.....?

"Isn't there something we can do?"(Naofumi)

".....There is. Block the next attack."(Raphtalia) "Yeah. Firo will put everything in to the next attack"(Firo) "Can I count on it?" (Naofumi?)

We can only attack the turtles neck. It may be possible to kill it if we attack seriously.

"I'll leave it to you" (Naofumi)

"Yeah"(Raphtalia)

I take a stance in order for Raphtalia and Firo to deliver the their special moves.

Firo's stance looks familiar.

She flaps her wings.

The magic power is so condensed that you can see the flow of wind from behind.

"Whenever you're ready Raphtalia onee-chan" (Firo) It's faster than before! Can it now be used in actual combat?

"Wait a little longer" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's tail begins to puff up.

She has condensed a suitable amount of magic also.

"My preparations are complete. Let's go." (Raphtalia) "Yeah!" (Firo)

Raphtalia gets on Firo's back releasing her magical power.

"Spiral....."(Firo)

"Eight Trigrams....." (Raphtalia) [TL: 八極陣 got any other suggestions?]

Dust swirls around them, light gathers around Firo.

The light forms into an Yin Yang symbol and parts into eight.

For some reason Raphtalia's attacks are oriental.

"Strike!" (Firo)

"Heaven's Sword!" (Raphtalia) [TL also Fate Sword. Karma Sword]

Becoming a straight light, Raphtalia and Firo pierce through the Spirit Turtles throat.

The Spirit Turtles eyes are colored in surprise.

No.... because the head is already decapitated, it could not react.

The huge neck and body of the Spirit Turtles was pierced so beautifully, it tore off the head and sent it flying.

Fresh blood spewed from the Spirit turtles neck, and rained down.

It's huge body falls to the ground with a thud.

"We did it" (Raphtalia)

It should be dead since the head is blown off.

That was unexpectedly easy.

It doesn't appear to be the type of enemy we have to enter the body and seal the heart.

Cheers are heard echoing from behind.

"Fuhee....." (Rishia)

Firo touches down on ground with experience, Raphtalia does the same.

"We did it." (Raphtalia)

"Yeah, you guys did great" (Naofumi)

If we could hit high-powered moves like these, we'll never lose.

It feels like we may have become stronger than the other Heroes.

"That's amazing." (Rishia)

"Rishia, you work hard too, to become like that." (Naofumi)

"Fueeeeeeee?! That's impossible." (Rishia)

"It's not impossible. You can do it!" (Naofumi) "That's impossible for

me!” (Rishia)

Rishia thinks about tearing the head of the spirit turtle and fervently denies it.

I can’t train her spirit.

“Well then, let’s have a victory party--” (Naofumi) The sound of something wriggling comes from the direction of the Spirit Turtle.

Everyone notices the sound and turns their sight on to the spirit turtle.

The body of the spirit turtle stands up.....The meat on its neck starts to wriggle.....

The body and head regenerate and make it seem as if nothing happen.

“Wha.....” (Naofumi)

What happen?

How strong is you regenerative ability? Didn’t it just lose its head? Like a Hydra.

It seems this regeneration ability is related to the reason why those heroes of the past had to seal the heart.

“————— ! ”(Spirit Turtle) [that’s all he says, nothing]

“Argh!?” (Naofumi)

The Spirit Turtle let’s out a roar.

No.... I see something bright rise from the body through the throat.

A shiver runs up my spine.

I jump before everyone and use Meteor Shield, along with Shield Prison.

Highly concentrated lightning erupts from its mouth.

It’s like a particle gun you see in anime.

“Gu....u....” (Naofumi)

“Na-Naofumi-sama!?” (Raphtalia)

“Waa!” (Firo)

“Fueeeeee! ?” (Rishia) [she really loves making this noise.]

The cage is broken, the barrier is also penetrated, the smell of burnt skin passes through my nose.

However, with all of this pain passing through my whole body, I can't lose consciousness.

That brief moment felt like an eternity.

“haa...haa....” (Naofumi)

I feel light-headed, I see the Spirit Turtles attack has stopped.

This is like the damage I received when using Blutopfer.

No, more than that....

I feel some places with deep burns.

“Master!?” (Firo)

“Naofumi-sama” (Raphatalia)

“Hero-sama” (Rishia)

Ku.....I try to chant recovery magic, but i can't concentrate.

At that moment, a warm light pours around me.

My wounds heal quickly.

However, there isn't enough time to heal completely.

“Zweit•Heal!” (Queen)

I use magic I had to learn these past few days, and I block the spirit turtle's finishing kick.

Good, I can think clearly again.

That was probably support magic from the queen.

I was saved. Soul Eater Shield was not enough to endure that attack.

Fortunately that finishing move from the spirit turtle needs time to recharge.

When I look back, everything that I wasn't guarding vanished, the mountain behind us is missing.

"Firo, restore your magical power." (Naofumi) "Okay!" (Firo)

I throw Firo a magic potion I had prepared, she drinks it quickly.

"It's bubbly~ tastes like fruit." (Firo)

"...people, call it a carbonated soft drink" (Naofumi) Indeed, I think that mana(mp) potions taste like soda without sugar a.k.a. carbonated water, but to sum up my world's drinks in one phrase..... as expect of this wild kid, she's quite sharp in unusual case At any rate, with this Firo is at maximum potential.

"It looks like attacks from the outside will be impossible. Let's withdraw" (Naofumi) While blocking the attacks of the Spirit Turtle, I expand Meteor Shield. I dodge his foot.

The earth shakes every time as it raises its foot again to trample us.

However, this is our chance.

"High Quick" (Firo)

Firo carries us and leaves in haste.

Really, it broke through my defense, it'll be impossible to win with a frontal attack against a guy that can even regenerate his head.

It looks like we have no choice but to attack the heart.

Riding Firo, we withdraw from the Spirit Turtle.

Chapter 119: Strategic Countermeasures

“As expected, this is quite tough.”

I have returned to base, and am resting with the rest of my party. I head to the Strategy Meeting taking place between the leaders of multiple countries.

“Ah, The Hero of the Shield.” (Someone)

“Please, save the world.” (Someone else)

“I beg you, because of that, our country is...” (Someone else entirely) The faces of the country leaders are quite pale.

The situation is quite grim. There will be no hope if I run here.

But... The difference in their treatment of me now is annoying.

Well, these people are from different countries. They may not know about my false crimes.

“We were watching from the back line. For it to have regeneration power to that extent...” (Queen) The Queen speaks up with a worried face.

Trash... Doesn't seem to be present.

But I think he would be a nuisance if he was here, anyways.

“I thought we had a chance of victory... but I guess we will have to defeat it in accordance with the legend.” (Naofumi) “Yes... But the problem seems to be how to get you onto that giant.” (Queen) “Now that you mention it, I have been seeing dragons flying around for a while.” (Naofumi) On the way here, I saw many soldiers preparing and riding on dragons.

I guess they were making preparations to infiltrate the turtle's insides.

“Will it be possible?” (Naofumi)

“The problem is the monsters that accompany the beast. It will be nearly impossible to break through a swarm of monsters that dense, and

make it to the Turtle's back." (Queen) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

An impenetrable defense...

If it is just my party, we might be able to break through. But we have no idea how to seal the heart.

"Just to make sure, but you do have personnel capable of putting a seal on the heart?" (Naofumi) "Yes, we have investigated the matter and have found a method we are certain will work." (Queen) "Is it something that my party will be able to perform?" (Naofumi) "That is..." (Queen)

The Queen stays silent.

It seems we will not be able to do it alone.

It's not that convenient, I guess.

"I see..." (Naofumi)

"It's something we'll need an entire platoon of magicians to perform." (Queen) "So we will need to infiltrate the Turtle with an entire army, and somehow reach the heart with minimal casualties?" (Naofumi) "...Yes" (Queen)

If only the spell was long range, our lives would be so much easier.

So we need to buy enough time for an entire platoon to enter the body.

I look at the map on the table. It shows the location of the Turtle and near-by cities.

It's getting very close, If we don't hurry, more cities will be destroyed.

"Have you completed the evacuation procedures?" (Naofumi) "That has been... Difficult." (Queen)

"I see." (Naofumi)

Just by getting close, this monster causes large-scale earthquakes. The fissures themselves can collapse buildings and block off escape routes. This is very bad.

And this monster is proceeding with clear purpose and direction.

Now that I think about it, it hasn't shot out that powerful attack yet.

"What was that large scale attack that thing released on my party?" (Naofumi) "We are currently investigating it. It has not released one since." (Queen) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

It seems that it will take time before he can use such a large-scale attack again.

Or that it has yet to find another opponent worthy of firing it at.

Regardless, I will have to buy time for the Magician army to infiltrate the body.

And I need to help evacuate the populace...

"How far have evacuations progressed?" (Naofumi)

"It doesn't seem we will make it before the Turtle arrives." (Queen) So this event will result in a really large amount of deaths.

What should I do.

I could try attacking it head on, while trying to destroy the heart, but there is a possibility that the result will be the same as when we destroyed the head.

It might be impossible to kill this monster.

"Why is it attacking densely populated areas, anyways?" (Naofumi) "This is just from our investigations, but it doesn't seem to be searching for food or resources." (Queen) So it isn't trying to sustain itself.

So it is attacking of its own will.

I can't think of a reason.

"Moreover, we have observed that it is not heading for the areas with the highest human populations." (Queen) "What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"It also seems to be heading towards area with the highest monster populations." (Queen) So is it like an animal that enjoys going after ants' nests, and that wants to make sure that no bugs build homes on its

territory?

It's not only attacking humans.

A monster like this...

I direct my gaze to Firo, who is resting outside.

This Filo Rial Queen may be able to attack it head-on and win.

Though I don't know exactly how strong either of them are.

But I guess I shouldn't try to test that.

"Will the ground troops be able to somehow board the Spirit Turtle's back?" (Naofumi) "It's taking all of their manpower just to hold back the subordinate monsters. The flying unit may stand a chance, but breaking through the wall of monsters will be difficult." (Queen) The plan isn't perfect, but there's no choice.

"If I stall the Lesser Monsters and the Spirit Turtle, will the Army be able to get on its back?" (Naofumi) If I can take on its strongest attack, then stalling might not be impossible.

When it was fighting my party and me, I was able to draw its attention, and its advanced slowed.

Worse comes to worst, I can just stall it until evacuation measures are complete.

Though I don't know if I can stand that attack consecutively.

"Well, I'll need a bit of back-line support." (Naofumi) "... Please wait for a second." (Queen)

The Queen and the leaders from the other countries begin to discuss the plan.

"How is it? Taking an all or nothing chance?" (Someone) "We're acting too fast! If we are to go with that plan, it is better to wait for the 7 Star Heroes' Arrival" (Leader Person) "But at this rate, several cities and castles will become sacrifices before they arrive." (Person) "You're only saying that because your country has yet to face any casualties! This

monster needs to be defeated as soon as possible.” (Another Person) This is getting quite heated.

Right now, the integrity of the four summoned heroes is in question, so I can't really say anything.

Of course there are objections, and the counterarguments are understandable. Such is politics.

“That's right, if we let that man defeat it, we can reduce the casualties to an absolute minimum.” (Someone) “But he is the cause of this tragedy is he not?! One of the four heroes!” (Person I do not like) “Let me ask you, what is a hero?” (Naofumi)

It does not seem I can remain silent for much longer.

I am supposed to be the Shield Hero, the one who will save the world.

Even if I don't want to.

“T-that is...” (Person I do not like)

In response to my question, some people begin stammering out answers.

“A hero is a strong person who uses his power for just cause. It is someone with courage” (Queen) The Queen presents this answer.

Good, if this person understands, then we may be able to proceed as planned.

“Heroes are all about Heart. No matter how hopeless the situation, they can never give up. Heroes must possess a will to protect the people!” (Naofumi) What the hell am I trying to say.

Even though I'm the one who said it, I feel disgusted.

And anyways, I'm not that good of a person to begin with.

But don't these things appeal to everyone?

Things like Courage, Justice, Will and Heart?

“If the people stationed here do not have enough power, then I will become their shield and protect them”. (Naofumi) “Hero of the Shield...”

(Person)

It seems I have left an impression on these people.

I spoke quite loudly. I bet my voice reached quite a few people outside as well...

“Hero of the Shield. Please forgive our previous words of cowardice.”

(Person I didn't like) “Don't mind it. I am used to being hated by the people. Let me take on the hate the people have for the four heroes.”

(Naofumi) I hold out my hand to the person who looks like a Shogun from another country.

“So for now, I want all of you to lend me your power. Let's work together and defeat this monster.” (Naofumi) “YES!” (Shogun)

The Shogun-like person firmly grasps my hand and exclaims loudly.

How simple. (TL: Just as Keikaku)

And so the plan to defeat the Spirit Turtle was finalized.

And it seems I raised the morale of the leaders.

We'll work together to defeat the monster, and I will fight as a hero of justice.

“Now to return to topic, let us find a way to reduce the amount of casualties.” (Queen) ...The Queen is staring at me with a complicated expression.

Well, she knows that I'm not this sort of person.

The Queen restarts the meeting.

“Even though the Seven Heroes have yet to arrive, do we have enough soldiers capable of using the sealing spell?” (Queen) “That is.. As long as they learn it by the time we are ready...” (Someone) “Then do you think they will be able to proceed without issue? The army will be advancing regardless of whether they learn it or not.” (Queen) “But to safely reach the heart, we need to...” (Someone) “But that will only result in more damage. The best course of action is to seal the beast as fast as possible. Do you think the Hero of the Shield can hold out until the Seven Heroes

get here?" (Queen) ...The leaders exchange some more words.

That's right. The 3 heroes that caused all of this are currently missing. Even if we amass the seven heroes, it is not certain that we will attain victory.

As the shield, I am probably the only one capable of restraining the Spirit Turtle.

"Iwatani, please protect the Magical Platoon as they proceed towards the heart." (Queen) "I had that intention from the beginning. But once the platoon has infiltrated the turtle, I'll only hold them back. My job is to decrease casualties. I'll definitely buy those people enough time to complete their mission." (Naofumi) "Understood. Does anyone have any objections?" (Queen) "..."

No one spoke up. There was no way that they could.

There is a strong feeling of unity present in the room.

All that's left is to snatch victory.

"Well then, the mission will commence after all the preparations have been carried out." (Queen) The meeting is adjourned, and I leave the tent. I take a deep sigh, and Rafatalia calls out to me.

"Naofumi-sama, did you do something again?" (Rafatalia) I had purposely raised my voice so people outside could hear.

But by her reaction, it does not seem that she was listening.

"Yep, it was the same as what happened back at Cal Mira." (Naofumi) "Sigh... I don't understand what you are saying, but I guess that's alright." (Rafatalia) "Oneechan, Master said that he would protect-" (Firo)

"Silence Bird." (Naofumi)

If Rafatalia did not hear, then it's fine as it is.

Truthfully, she will probably just sigh and look at me strange ?

Rishia is staring at me with admiration.

Why are her eyes sparkling like that?

“I’m inspired! It’s scary, but I’ll do my best!” (Rishia) So both Firo and Rishia heard my speech.

Why is Rafatalia the only one left out?

I later found out that she had gone out to fetch water.

Replenishing the water supply is also important.

By the time she had returned, the camp was already astir with the trouble I had caused.

Most of the things I have caused so far have been no good, so there’s no helping it if she thinks I did something wrong.

“Now then, I’ll tell you the decision reached by the meeting.” (Naofumi)
“Yes” (Rafatalia)

“It’s been decided that I will stall the Spirit Turtle to give the army an opportunity to infiltrate it. Rafatalia and Rishia will be helping out that squadron. Firo, help me fight on the outside.” (Naofumi) “Yay~!” (Firo)

“I understand, but will Naofumi-sama be alright fighting that beast without us?” (Rafatalia) “I can’t even feel the attacks of the lesser monsters, and after the army has succeeded in its infiltration, I will follow on Firo.” (Naofumi) If all else fails, I can use the Shield of Wrath to hold off the Monster.

I haven’t tried to use it yet as I was testing my Soul Eater Shield. The Wrath Shield will probably be able to take the Spirit Turtle’s attacks.

But I’m not sure if I can control my feelings.

Last time, Firo helped me get through it. I guess I’ll have to count on her again.

“Rishia, don’t be afraid. There is a possibility you might find Itsuki inside of the Turtle.” (Naofumi) “Yes! I’ll try my hardest!” (Rishia)

This girl is more energetic than usual.

“And fix that talking habit of yours.” (Naofumi)

“Fue...” (Rishia)

“Yeah, that. Every time you feel uncertain, you let out that sound. Listening to it is annoying.” (Naofumi) “Fueee!?” (Rishia)

“Hey, are you picking a fight or something?” (Naofumi) “I-I’ll work on it...” (Rishia)

If she gets over it, she will mature mentally.

The first thing she must change is her own heart.

Rafatalia was like this at the beginning as well. It’s fine if she just progresses slowly.

Chapter 120: Stalling for Time

“Illumination magic should be fired after the troops finish mounting the Spirit Turtle. Please hop on then, Iwatani-sama” (queen) “Understood. Then, operation start!” (random soldier)

“Roger that. Everyone! We're going!” (shield)

“Okay” (raphtalia)

“Oka~y” (filo)

“I'll do my best!” (rishia)

Ans thus Filo and I faced the Spirit Turtle for another assault.

During that time, Raphtalia, Rishia and half of the Allied forces circled around the Spirit Turtle's back to mount it.

“Together with Master~” (filo)

Filo let me ride on her in good humour, and ran towards the Spirit Turtle.

Such a fearless kid.

I checked the number of Mana Potions and.... medicine.... and stood before the Spirit Turtle.

“—————!” (turtle)

As the Spirit Turtle detected us, it simultaneously released a swarm of familiars.

And then it used its body to trample down on us.

“Zweite Aura! Meteor Shield!” (shield)

I chanted protective magic while raising my voice, and deployed Meteor Shield.

The Spirit Turtle's foot rained down on us and caused an earthquake.

As if I'm going to take that obediently!

Just like that, we evasively dodged its foot before Meteor Shield could be

broken.

Fissures formed in the ground.

In the midst of a dust cloud being raised, I used my whole body to grasp the Spirit Turtle's foot before it could lift its gigantic leg.

“—————!?” (turtle)

It seemed that the Spirit Turtle raised its voice in surprise at being unable to raise its leg at will.

Such a sorry state.

gu....gu gu..... clench

Nevertheless, if I show even a little hint of an opening then the Spirit Turtle will try to raise its leg. And in terms of strength, I don't have nearly enough to prevent from being thrown out into the air.

The good thing is that the neck didn't extend up to the tip of the forefoot that we were on. I'll try to make use of that.

“—————!” (turtle)

Familiars were released in our direction.

Now!

A large number of magic circles were deployed in the sky, and fire came raining down incessantly.

A wave of supporting magic swept down from the rear and descended upon the familiars, stitching up that interval.

“Tahh!” (filo)

Filo kicked the familiars away, protecting me.

“How long do we hafta wait?” (filo)

“Who knows” (shield)

gu gu..... clench

This is bad, if I lose even a bit of focus I won't be able to restrain the Spirit Turtle's foot.

All the same, it's only focusing in my direction so the rear was defenceless.

“Master.....that” (filo)

I looked behind the Spirit Turtle, through the gap in its legs. Well, what I could see was no larger than a speck.

A ladder or rope hung in order for the army and Raphtalia's party, who had circled to the rear, to climb onto the depths of the Spirit Turtle's shell.

It appeared that there were also wyvern-riding soldiers who boarded the Spirit Turtle favourably and were lending a hand.

All right.....

A crackling vibration transmitted through the Spirit Turtle.

This is.....

The Spirit Turtle turned to use and tried to fire its special move.

“Filo!” (shield)

“Kay!” (filo)

Filo hid behind my back.

The Spirit Turtle opened its mouth and fired that intense thunder, intending to wipe out its own foot together with us!

I immediately changed to the Wrath Shield.

Anger ignited in the depths of my heart

“Master” (filo)

Filo's arms and legs were covered in black flames.

Not yet..... I could endure it. Because Raphtalia and Filo were lending me their strength.

There was a dazzling flash, which was immediately followed by a loud roar one beat later.

I held out the shield and defended with the Wrath Shield.

..... There wasn't any pain like the last time.

As expected from the Wrath Shield. I'm unharmed.

As I thought that, and waited for the Spirit Turtle's attack, I realised a time counter had appeared in the corner of my vision.

4 : 37

This number that was decreasing every second.....

What the?

When the number fell to just below 4:30, the Spirit Turtle's attack ceased.

All right, I withstood it. And then I realised. Somehow strength wouldn't enter my body.

“Master?” (filo)

What just occurred?

I checked my status.

.....My SP became 0!?

What the? Why was my SP 0?

It couldn't be that that Spirit Turtle's attack also drains SP, can it?

I changed to the Soul Eater Shield and recovered SP by stealing it from the swarming familiars with a counter-attack.

I summoned Meteor Shield.

The number that appeared when I changed into the Wrath Shield has disappeared.....

I have a bad premonition.

Could it be that that number was the duration that the shield couldn't control me, or otherwise Filo, converted into a numerical value?

It seems like something bad would happen if it reached 0.

The Spirit Turtle regenerated its burnt foot and trampled down on us.

“No way!” (shield)

Like before, I seized the Spirit Turtle's foot to halt it. If I changed to Wrath Shield, the Dark Curse Burning S would activate from the neighbouring attacks and Filo would be caught up in it. I can't change it until the very last moment.

When I did, the Spirit Turtle took a breath as though to say it was waiting.

No matter how much, wasn't this a bit quick!?

Sweat dripped down my face unpleasantly.

It had an ability to drain SP.... would spit out a lightning attack with that recovered SP, and then sucked away the SP I acquired again.

I could remain uninjured with the Wrath Shield but my SP would be absorbed. I'd receive a lot of damage with the Soul Eater Shield but, because it invalidates the drain and steals SP, it would take time before the lightning attack could be fired.

So it's like this?

“Tsk! Shield Prison!” (shield)

I aimed at the Spirit Turtle's head and summoned a cage.

However, the cage was broken as soon as it appeared.

As expected, I can't encase something as large as that.

Well, it looks like I can't attack with Iron Maiden.

I withstood the next lightning attack by changing into the Wrath Shield.

However, I lost all the SP I had as compensation.

I changed back to the Soul Eater Shield to counter but.....

When I look to the vicinity, the familiars hadn't finished assembling together.

“Are you alright, Master?” (filo)

“Gu.....” (shield)

Should I get on Filo and flee?

The power of that attack is no joke. If it misfired and hit the allied troops, it would have caused a serious loss.

I deployed Meteor Shield with the SP I just managed to recover.

“Filo, it might be painful but bear with it” (shield)

“Kay!” (filo)

I caught the lightning attack with Filo supporting me up.

“Guu.....” (shield)

The lightning attack pierced through me for about 30 seconds.

It's a pain I've never felt when I was in my original world. This feeling was like receiving an electric shock together with the pain of my whole body being roasted.

..... My consciousness took a leap.

I chanted recovery magic concurrently with supporting magic invoked by the troops behind me.

My wounds healed but I lost physical strength and accumulated fatigue during the time I was recovering from the injury.

“Filo's also gonna go” (filo)

“I'll leave it to you” (shield)

If Filo could blow away the head, that would buy us some time.

Filo took the stance for her special move, established her aim and attacked.

“Spiral Strike!” (filo)

Filo's assault arrived at the Spirit Turtle's throat and pierced through.

And yet, it may be because Raphtalia wasn't there but, it didn't manage to sever the head.

Before our eyes, the Spirit Turtle's wound repaired itself with an unpleasant tearing sound.

“Fuee....” (filo)

Filo sought refuge in my barrier as she landed and dropped her shoulders in fatigue.

The Spirit Turtle once again opened its mouth to spit a lightning attack.

Wha..... did the time for the next attack shrink because of the damage!?

“Filo, get away the next time this guy tries to stomp on us” (shield)

“Kay!” (filo)

I braced myself so that Filo could have time for her magic to recover; Filo's feathers bristled as she concentrated.

Speaking of which, the duration of the Spirit Turtle's lightning attack and the time it takes for Filo to accumulate magic power is equal.

The Spirit Turtle spat out its lightning attack and I changed to the Wrath Shield to resist it.

And then, the Spirit Turtle's blackened leg regenerated again and it attempted to stomp on us.

“Now's the time!” (shield)

“Oka~y!” (filo)

Filo retreated back at a high speed and I stopped Spirit Turtle's trampling with the Wrath Shield, then started running towards its face.

Dark Curse Burning S activated and black flames coiled around with me as the centre.

The Spirit Turtle's leg and face was thoroughly burned by the cursed flames.

“How's that!” (shield)

Dark Curse Burning S has an effect of diminishing recovery. It might be able to seal that miraculous regeneration power.

If that's the case then stalling for time will be easy.

However....the blackened leg and part of the face regenerated as if nothing happened.

“————— ! ” (turtle)

W-What vitality.

“Master” (filo)

“Yeah, I know” (shield)

I changed the Wrath Shield into the Soul Eater Shield to economise the time.

This will turn into.... quite a drawn-out battle.

Once again, I instructed Filo as I endured the lightning attack.

“Filo, please go and ask the queen, who's monitoring the timing, for the state of progress. This is quite relentless. Make them hurry up as much as possible” (shield) “If I do that then Master will.....” (filo)

Filo replied with a voice that seemed like it would break into tears at any moment.

“I'll be fine.....” (shield)

“.....okay” (filo)

That Spirit Turtle let out a mortifying cry, possibly because it couldn't steal any SP.

I think I can endure until the next discharge.

Filo kicked the enemy away.

“High Quick!” (filo)

With high speed, she ran down to where the queen was.

I materialised Meteor Shield with SP taken from the familiars, and repeated the action of pinning down the Spirit Turtle's foot.

It was difficult, because all the lightning attacks made the footing worse. There were fissures caused by the earthquakes as well as crater

ruins.

This is harder than I thought.....

The Spirit Turtle's familiars forcefully attacked the barrier made by Meteor Shield.

.....If I didn't learn those strengthening methods from the other heroes, wouldn't I have died?

Well, this situation is the fault of those other heroes.

<As one worthy of the origin of power, Filo is commanding: She's reread and understands the terms, blow away those creatures with a tornado of intense vacuum> “Zweite Tornado!” (filo)

The familiars surrounding me were blown away by a tornado “I'm back~!” (filo)

“How was it?” (shield)

“They're hurrying but said to hang in there for a bit longer” (filo) “I see.....” (shield)

“Ah, also, this is medicine to recover stamina” (filo) Filo took out some medicine from a bag she wasn't carrying when she left, and gave it to me.

It was a candy-like medicine.

When I put it in my mouth, there was a minty taste. I felt like a bit of strength had returned to me.

“And this was also set aside for Master's use” (filo)

“What?” (shield)

....it was a Lukor fruit [T/N: Remember that alcoholic grape thing? See ch93 for more detail]

“Yes, yes” (shield)

I also put that in my mouth.

.....I felt more strength return than from the candy. When I checked the status magic, SP and MP was recovered.

The Lukor fruit had a recovery effect. I'll remember that.

With this, the curtain closed on the long battle of suppressing the Spirit Turtle I don't want to do this offense-defence thing a second time.

This repetition of sometimes using the Wrath Shield to resist, sometimes using the Soul Eater Shield to endure.

The barbarian's armour had become tattered here and there.

Its self-repairing was no longer able to catch up.

So intense.

“Haa.....Haa.....” (shield)

The Wrath Shield's time counter had dropped to below 0 : 30. Around this point, Filo also started tearing at her head seeming to be enduring something.

I also had a dark emotion taking over my heart, which made my mind start to become strange.

“M-Master..... Filo is already.....” (filo)

Filo, who wanted to release the anger that didn't have anywhere to strike, and I. We're almost at the limit.

I can't change to Wrath Shield any more.

“I understand. I won't change it any more! Endure it!” (shield) “Okay” (filo)

I endured Spirit Turtle's lightning attack with the Soul Eater Shield.

How many times have I endured this roasting sensation. I'm already fed up with just this. Should we flee?

Just when I thought that, the illumination was fired at last.

“Alright! Let's go!” (shield)

“Hooray! Filo will do her best!” (filo)

The Spirit Turtle regenerated its foot, and in the instant it tried to stomp down, I got on Filo's back and passed through its legs at high speed.

Tsk! That Spirit Turtle, it's trying to crush us with its whole body.

The Spirit Turtle's stomach drew nearer second by second, as the ceiling was lowering.

“High Quick!” (filo)

Filo changed her course midway using a high speed movement, turned her back and escaped from the front, dodging earthquakes by leaping over them and changed direction as she landed.

And with a huge leap, she jumped onto the Spirit Turtle's shell.

Chapter 121: The Message from the Hero

“It’s good that we jumped on the Turtle, but...” (Naofumi) The ground is shaking. More specifically, the Spirit Turtle’s whole body is shaking.

But its head can’t stretch far enough to look at its back. I don’t think it can concentrate on its shell.

I check my surroundings.

The place we landed is quite close to the ruined city.

The buildings give off a Chinese sort of feeling. Possible because of the Chinese legend that the Spirit Turtle carried the city of immortals on its back.

“Firo, can you sense where the army is?” (Naofumi)

“nn... Probably... that way?” (Firo)

Firo points to the mountain range outside of the city.

That direction is towards the back of the Turtle, so she’s probably correct.

“For now, let’s leave the city and meet up.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Firo)

I get on Firo, and she runs towards the mountains.

... There are quite a few corpses littered around the ruined city. It seems the cause of death is attacks from the Spirit Turtle’s familiars.

The cause of all of this is those three idiotic heroes.

Why would they do such a thing...

The putrid smell of rotting bodies is making me feel sick.

“Master, please hold Firo tightly.” (Firo)

“Sure.” (Naofumi)

Firo runs while kicking Familiars that look like Gorillas and Yetis.

Along the way, a familiars that looked like floating eyeballs and bats also appeared. These ones seem to be more powerful than the others.

But none of them are a match for the speeding blur that is Firo.

We still have yet to get out of the city.

... For a while, I have been seeing nothing but carcasses.

As I think this, I see the shadow of a person.

I wonder if it is one of the Army Soldiers...

But it is definitely a corpse. The dead bodies on the turtle's back have begun to move.

"Even after death, his body is being controlled by something... Something like that?" (Naofumi) I've only ever seen Zombies in games. In reality, fighting them while looking at their decrepit faces is quite mortifying.

The only undead I have ever encountered before was Skeletons. Apparently, finding undead monsters that still had flesh is quite rare.

There's no way I can fight these.

A child zombie appears and Firo is unable to kick.

"Let's avoid it." (Naofumi)

Even though Firo will happily eat most humanoid monsters, even she cannot bring herself to fight a child.

"I'm sorry master..." (Firo)

With amazing leg power, Firo jumps out of the swarm of Zombies that had begun to form.

If they were doomed to have such a fate after death, it would have been better if they had been hit by the Turtle's lightning and been obliterated without leaving a trace.

But I'm just stating my opinion here.

"That girl... looked a bit like Melty" (Firo)

Melty is in the castle, but Firo's imagination is running wild.

I couldn't see anything in that child that looked like Melty.

“Why would this Turtle make that child do such a thing?” (Firo) Firo looks down at the ground.

That’s right. I can’t seem to see the turtle’s goal.

It’s not eating anything, it’s just going around and killing as many things as it can.

As if killing in itself was its goal.

“We need to hurry to Oneechan.” (Firo)

“Yeah...?” (Naofumi)

I see a building that looks like a temple.

The architecture is not of eastern origin. It looks like a Greek temple from my world.

In a game, a building like this would usually contain a useful clue or key item.

“Please stop by that building.” (Naofumi)

“Yes~” (Firo)

I carefully peer inside.

Perhaps due to the Turtle’s walking, the temple is half collapsed.

Is this the statue that the other heroes supposedly destroyed in here?

I search the temple but cannot find any artifact with a relation to the Turtle.

I should have probably gotten more information from the queen.

It seems that I am wasting my time.

“This is...!?” (Naofumi)

On a mural on the wall, I see some writing.

... It’s in Japanese.

“What is this...” (Naofumi)

If anyone is once again summoned here from Japan... if you are reading

this, please... this.

Th...Monster was se... but the... Seven Eye seal will probably... ek
someday.

From what we learned, his purpose is..... and to protect this
world's.....

I pray that the blue sand..... and the seal never breaks.

Though having more victims may benefit this world.

Looking back, we have paid a large price by sealing this monster But...
be... greed. If you... read these letters... for the... living in this world...
defeat... Monster.

...way to defeat it is.....

... and then use the eight... courage... -Keiichi

(TL: The Hero's name, I don't know the exact pronunciation, 桂一) (TL:
BY THE WAY, THIS WAS REALLY A PAIN, I CAN'T REALLY HELP YOU
DECYPHER THIS) ... The writing is faded and scratched out, so it is
difficult to read.

But I can pretty much guess what is written by context.

Something like the seal we placed will someday break.

The dragon hourglass will turn blue and display a warning.

However, the Turtle's objective and the ever-so-important sealing
procedure are illegible.

More victims may benefit the world? Even though this was left by a
hero, I cannot make sense of it.

And this isn't an Anime or a Manga. Why is only the most important
information omitted?

This writing seems to be very old, so I can't really complain to anyone.

The only piece of info I really got was the person's name, Keiichi.

I don't know his last name, but there was definitely a Hero of that

name.

Apart from the cracks caused by the turtle's walking, this was already an old piece of writing. There isn't much else I can learn from this.

There's a high possibility he comes from a different Japan than me.

I don't know how long ago this Mural was painted, and I'm not sure that this world even records its history accurately.

But thinking about this won't really help anything.

Is the number eight connected to something? I can't read any of the text around it.

...

"Can Master read this?" (Firo)

"Yeah, sort of." (Naofumi)

"hm... these letters are a little weird." (Firo)

"Yes, these are not letters used in Melromark." (Naofumi) By the way, it seems that the countries around here all have different languages and writing systems.

The shield acts as a translator, so I can probably manage with the language barrier, but as for writing...

"There doesn't seem to be anything else of interest, we should be on our way." (Naofumi) "Yeah!" (Firo)

We leave the temple and continue towards the mountain.

"It will be difficult to locate Rafatalia and the others." (Naofumi) We enter the mountain range and continue heading towards the turtle's rear.

It looked like a rocky mountain from afar, but the base of the mountains are surrounded by dense forests. It will be difficult to find the army squadron.

From what I know, the legends say that there is a cave that leads into the Turtle somewhere around here, so the army is probably searching for a cave as well.

There is also a possibility the entrance was somewhere in that village.

And where are the other heroes, anyways?

They could be inside the Turtle fighting, but they could just as easily be lost searching for the entrance on top.

“Firo, can you sense the others?” (Naofumi)

“Over there I think.” (Firo)

I leave navigations to Firo

Occasionally we find a soldier’s corpse lying around.

“We need to hurry.” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Firo)

Firo speeds up, and we find the army squadron locked in battle.

Since their forces are very large, it is difficult to miss them.

Rafatalia is on the front lines destroying the familiars one after the other. Those that can still move are aiding her in battle.

Rishia is frantically casting support magic from the rear.

There are also many who have deserted due to the onslaught of monsters.

“Alright Firo, We’re helping them!” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Firo)

Firo rushes in at the speed of sound and sends the familiars in front of Rafatalia flying with a kick.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Rafatalia)

“Yep, we’ve finally met up. What’s the situation?” (Naofumi) “We are in the middle of looking for the cave.” (Rafatalia) “You still haven’t found it?” (Naofumi)

“According to the magic brigade, it is impossible to locate it with magic because the Turtle is constantly moving.” (Rafatalia) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

So the troops have been manually searching for it whilst fending off attacks from these monsters.

The number of familiars seems to be infinite. That must have been difficult.

As I think this, an army recon squad comes running in.

“We have located a cave that seems to be the one we are looking for. Its appearance matches the one spoken of in legend.” (Recon Person) And the Recon squad leader points deeper into the mountains.

“That’s good. I’ll hold off the attacks, please lead us there.” (Naofumi)
“Understood” (Recon Guy)

“Everyone, Follow the Hero of the Shield’s lead!” (Army person) “SIR YES SIR” (Entire army)

We continue to drive off the familiars and proceed to the cave the Recon Squad found.

Chapter 122: Exploration

Naofumi: "Be careful."

Raphtalia: "Okay."

Raphtalia uses magic to create a ball of light that illuminates the cavern.

I am in the lead while Raphtalia, Firo, Rishia, and the allied forces follow along.

Eyeball-like familiars and caterpillar-like familiars were appearing from the walls of the cave, though they weren't that strong at fighting.

The problem is this cave.....This structure is as complex as a maze.....

The walls aren't living beings but stone and mud.

Naofumi: "Do you know the way?"

Soldier: "More or less, I was assigned to the reserves because I investigated caves in the past."

Naofumi: "That's helpful."

It would take too much time to map this place out from scratch after all.

We spread open the map to confirm the location.

As I thought, the cave has a complex maze-like structure.

The ironic thing is that there is another entrance at the back, where the town was.

Shit.....

Well, it can't be helped since I didn't know. In the first place, it was just Firo and I.

It would be meaningless if I didn't meet up with the group that is supposed to seal the heart.

The problem is.....it seems that the location of the heart isn't shown.

Perhaps it could be on the way, unless we can stop the spirit turtle from regenerating, we won't be able to stop it from advancing.

Doesn't seem very reliable huh.....

Naofumi: "Oh?"

After checking the map, I find a spot that is somewhat bigger than the rest. It would be a good idea to put together a search group and have the rest wait there.

Honestly, too many people would burden our movement.

There's no problem if there were guys that could match Raphtalia and Firo's level of performance, but it would be cruel to demand the same as these two from the rest.

Anyway, tricking the allied forces into thinking this is a break would be fine. Let's go with that.

Deciding what to do, I mark the large space on the map of the cave, and tell the allied forces the goal.

Eventually, the space opened up according to what was shown on the map.

Originally I thought the map was based entirely on guesses, but it might be dependable after all.

It's good that we have arrived at our desired location, but.....

Firo: "There's some huge demon."

Within the large clearing is a large demon, which has a presence suitable to being the spirit turtle's familiar.

It would be useless to compare its huge total length to the other familiars.

Looks like the purpose of its deployment here at the plaza is to remove invaders like us, it's like that game called Prisoner's Base.

(Tlnote: I'm sure most of you guys played this before in elementary.
http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/chasing_games/prisoners_base.htm

It feels like a Mid-boss from RPGS.

It's the spirit turtle after all. This should be considerably stronger than the other small fries.

The problem is the number of them.

We can still keep our composure with just one, but if there are more it would be dangerous for the allied forces.

Raphalia:"Since this is the case. What shall we do?"

It would be troublesome for another to appear after we defeat this one.....Should we just try it?

Naofumi:"Alright, fortunately there is only one, we will defeat it and then observe the circumstances. You guys in the allied forces, pay attention to the rear."

Soldiers:"Roger!"

Firo:"Okay~"

Rishia:"Fuee.....I'll do my best."

Naofumi:"Haah....."

As usual, Rishia said those words I warned her about.

Well, it's not like it's going to stop all the way just because I warned her.

Right now what Rishia needs is confidence and experience.

It would be nice if she could act like she did with the queen, I want her to become strong, not only from levels, but also from actual combat experience.

With that in mind, you could say that the spirit turtle is the perfect opponent for that.

.....Though it's just a slightly drastic measure.

Naofumi:"Alright, Charge!"

We charge towards the familiar that is occupying the plaza.

This is different from the gorillas and yetis outside.....A turtle-man type? It's a monster that spans a full 4 meters in length.

Firo:"Teryaaa!"

Firo kicks the familiar's shell with all her might.

A loud crack resounded and the shell caved in, it was sent flying into a wall and its movements stopped.

Raphtalia:"Yaaaaaa!"

With a flash of her sword, Raphtalia cuts off the familiar's head.

That familiar is so unreliable.

Rishia was trying to attract its attention with weak magic attacks, and she also supported Raphtalia.

In the case that we are targeted, I have the meteor shield up to defend.

For the time being her understanding of cooperation is lacking. Just a passing mark.

Or rather, the cooperation itself isn't a problem. We can expand on that after strengthening her body.

The problem is that her abilities are affected by her status.

.....What was she concentrating on before?

Raphtalia:"This thing is quite disappointing."

Raphtalia swings the blood off her sword after confirming the annihilation of the familiar.

It was certainly much weaker than expected.

I mean the spirit turtle was so tough. Was I too cautious?

No, the allied force is behind me. Being very cautious is just right.

Firo:"Yup. It was only a little bit hard."

Raphtalia:"Firo did you kick the hardest place intentionally?"

Firo:"Because everything else is soft~"

Raphtalia:"That's wasted movement."

The two of them are having a silly conversation.

It's like a conversation between a genius and a prodigy.

Rishia:"The two of them are very strong."

Naofumi:"Rishia."

Rishia:"Fuee—I'll make that my goal!"

Hrmm.....Put in the effort and strive to get there, don't just say it.

This has completely become a habit.

Naofumi:"As for reinforcements.....it doesn't seem like there are any."

Raphtalia:"Seems that way."

Apparently there is no trap that causes us to defeat the thing endlessly.

Soldiers:"Amazing....."

Our group of allied forces exclaims this to us.

For us who fought though, I'd say it was weak, but.....

What is the average level of our forces?

If it's around level 60 I'll cry.

Shadow:"Hero of the Shield-dono."

Shadow appears. Speaking of which, where were you?

The knife in her hand was drenched in the blood of familiars, so it looks like she was fighting somewhere else.

Naofumi:"What happened?"

Shadow:"I am investigating this place according to the plan degojaru."

Naofumi:"Right.....I mean, why did you come?"

Shadow:"As per the plan, I was assigned to guard the allied forces degojaru. Other than that, the queen told me to ask Hero of the Shield-dono for orders degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "That's fine."

To have shadow guard the allied forces.....For the time being this guy can act as a military unit.

Are the familiars of the Spirit turtle that strong?

Well..... I should regard the allied forces as a special unit that seals the spirit turtle.

I'll calculate where I should assign our combat ability.

Naofumi: "Alright! To each of you from the allied forces, I intend to search for the spirit turtle's heart with this place as a base. It is important for everyone to protect this place. We will begin the search."

Allied Forces: "R-Roger that!"

The tension is gone as the allied forces cautiously begin to rest in the plaza.

It seems they have become considerably fatigued from the extreme tension and continuous fighting.

I didn't expect that they would fight till they were this tired.....

Is it the shield's influence?

Or is it just that Raphtalia and Firo are strange?

In any case, without thinking about various things we won't be able to reseal the spirit turtle.

Naofumi: "Shadow.....Do you know the average level of the allied forces?"

Shadow: "The average level of the military units for sealing the heart of the spirit turtle is 65 degojaru."

.....It's not as bad as expected.

What? Is the difference with growth correction this big!?

Since Rishia's stats are so low, is this the standard without growth correction?

No no, I expect that's not the case.

Since Itsuki's reason for dismissing Rishia is because she is weak.

.....That Rishia at least has some war potential now thanks to the Firo costume.

Should I ask the old man to make more Firo costumes? There are only two pieces of material required.

Mass production of the Firo costume huh.....

I wonder if it's possible by plucking Firo's feathers.

Firo:"!?"

Suddenly Firo's feathers stand on end restlessly like a wave.

Raphtalia:"What's happening?"

Firo:"Something strange is in the air!"

I didn't say anything and she still noticed.

.....What a sharp fellow. It seems plucking her feathers is impossible.

Naofumi:"Shadow is stronger than that fellow though."

I know since we fought together a little back on Cal Mira Island.

Having a unit that is on Shadow's level is extremely convenient, they should be useful.

Shadow:"Temporarily, our assassination unit will enter the battlefield degojarukara, we are knowledgeable on levels and martial arts degojaru."

Naofumi:"Then take half of the shadow corps to defend, and the remaining half to search."

Shadow:"Understood degojaru. That being said, right now there are considerably less shadows degojarukara, please don't expect too much degojaru."

Naofumi:"I know."

The shadows tailing the other heroes are missing.....They probably can't move due to the situation, or dead in the worst case scenario.

To that extent the allied forces should be more dependable when including them.

Anyway, the strategy has been decided.

There is still a long way to go. We will look for the heart as the allied forces take a break.

Naofumi: "Rishia, you wait here and fight with the allied forces if demons appear."

Rishia: "U-Understood!"

Naofumi: "Raphtalia and Firo, you two are searching with me. Firo use your nose. I'll be relying on you."

Firo: "Okay~! I'll do my best~!"

Raphtalia: "Roger."

We left Rishia behind and we advanced towards the caves that started to diverge.

Chapter 123: Blue Hourglass

How many dead ends does this make now?

I check the map, and confirm that everything is mapped out.....The road connected to the heart of the spirit turtle still hasn't been found.

Naofumi:"Hmmmm....."

Sometimes we encounter familiars, but they aren't a problem since Raptalia and Firo are here.

Every time we come across a dead-end, we head back to where Rishia and the allied forces are to confirm it.

They encountered some familiars several times as well, but somehow they were able to defeat it with Rishia leading the way.

With those stats..... It's thanks to the Firo costume

Naofumi:"Shit....."

As this continued, the spirit turtle approached human villages and we started getting impatient.

In the first place, this kind of cave, as long as the spirit turtle isn't some artificial life form, shouldn't the dungeon walls be made of meat?

I wonder. It feels like we haven't even found the entrance yet.

Or is this cave itself a mistake?

According to the map this should be the bottom layer but.....

Shadow:"Hero of the Shield-dono."

Shadow appears and updates my map.

.....All the dead ends have been filled out.

Naofumi:"What happened? Was there a mistake in the legend?"

Shadow:"Not exactly degojaruka.....But we have checked for hidden doors degojaru"

Firo:"Hey Master~"

Firo is having a good time kicking the ground.

Naofumi:"Can you check one more time? Or should I just go ahead and dig?"

A tool to dig will be necessary.....That reminds me, I have a digging skill.

Firo:"Hey."

Shadow"The allied forces have already packed their luggage degojaru."

Firo:"Hey!"

Naofumi:".....What!?"

Firo is trying to get my attention by calling out.

Firo:"Umm you see. The floor.....Isn't it kind of strange?"

Firo rubs her foot and on the ground and hits it.

By the way, there are no echoes, and I even confirmed that there is no hidden floor.

Naofumi:"What's strange about it?"

Firo:"It's a living creature."

Naofumi:"Of course we're inside the a mountain on the back of a giant monster."

Firo:"That's not it!"

Firo smacks her foot on the floor again.

The floor ripples with a boing sound.

Naofumi:"Hm?"

That sound.....It was strange.

Come to think of it.....That strong acid water from the intermediate class recipes that I wasn't able to make before should be suitable here.

I recall exactly how, and make it with my shield.

Naofumi:"Firo stay back a little."

Firo: "Okay~"

I take the strong acid water from the shield and pass it to Raphtalia.

Naofumi: "Scatter that."

Raphtalia: "Ah, Okay."

Raphtalia scatters the strong acid water on to the ground.

Spirit Turtle: "——!"

The floor wriggles and reveals its true form!

The mucus bodied huge eyeball opens up like mochi, and a turtle shell appears in its place.

(TInote: Mochi is a japanese rice cake. As for what's happening, it's like this <http://imgur.com/EH3CyDz> but with a giant eyeball (ew)) Shadow: "I see, so it is a mimic type familiar degojaruka, no wonder we couldn't find it degojaru."

Naofumi: "Since it was dormant, it didn't show any signs of being alive, so that's why we were never able to sense it."

To think that even Shadow and Firo couldn't sense it.....What a splendid cheat-like familiar.

Naofumi: "Kill them!"

Firo: "Okay~"

Raphtalia: "Roger!"

Shadow: "I too shall go degojaru!"

Every attack on a mimic type familiar kills it.

The mimic type familiars shrink like a slug and then disappear into vapor when they die.

Shadow: "So the path was concealed in such a place degojaruna."

When we confirm the disappearance of the last familiar, a path appeared.

That means, all dead ends up until now are doubtful.

That being said, let's proceed down this path first.

Naofumi:"Let's go."

All members nod and follow me.

After advancing a little, I felt the wall, temperature, and air change.

The wall itself is warm and pulsating.

Firo:"This feels strange."

Raphtalia:"That's right.....I feel a little sick."

Firo:"Does Firo's mouth feel the same?"

.....What an unpleasant thought.

It does seem like Firo to say something like that huh?

Naofumi:"I wonder if we entered the spirit turtle's body."

It still feels like a cave though, but it's for real now.

Our foothold is squishy, and pulsing could be heard.

Anyway,let's verify where the heart is.

Thinking about it, the demons and white clumps flying towards us are like platelets under a microscope.

(Tlnote: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platelet>)(Tlnote2: as for the white clumps 白い塊 I googled it and I lost my appetite.) Thanks to my meteor shield repelling them , Raphtalia and Firo were able to kick them around.

Apparently, these familiars appear to be the immune system.

Every now and then, parasite-like caterpillar would appear, spreading potent acid wherever they go.

Naofumi:"It would seem that bringing the allied forces here would be hard."

The demons appear quite frequently. Since we are getting close to the heart, the defense would be stronger.

Shadow: "Shall I return and guide them here degojaruka?"

Naofumi: "No, we haven't found the heart yet. In the first place, there is no conclusive evidence that this is the correct path either. We'll get to where it's at and clear it out."

Shadow: "Understood degojaru."

As we advanced forwards a little, a red muscle dangling from something is blocking our path.

.....Either way, a gimmick of this kind will just be cut open.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, cut through it."

Raphtalia: "Ah, Okay."

Raphtalia cuts the red muscle.

The wall of meat opens up and a path appears.

Shadow: "Houu.....You understand it well degojaruna."

Naofumi: "I don't know about the other heroes, but frankly that muscle was suspicious..... I do know a few things you know."

Shadow: "So that's how it is degojaruka."

Now then, after advancing a bit, what blocked our way this time is a blue muscle.

Haah.....Even if you change it a bit, the path is still here.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia"

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

After cutting it down in the same fashion, the path in front opens up, but the red muscle behind us is restored.

Uggh. So troublesome.

Furthremore, just like a warning, every time we cut down a muscle, demons from the immune system appear.

Though.....We advanced quite far.....

We heard the beating of a giant heart from behind a door.

After cutting open a blue muscle we found it.

However, after seeing the inside, the double doorway in front of us closed.

That's troublesome, it seems that unless we cut somewhere else, this won't open completely.

Naofumi:"As if I'd let you! Raphtalia, cut the red tube!"

Raphtalia:"O-Okay!"

After cutting open the red one, the inner part of the door opened.....I rush forwards while deploying the meteor shield.

Naofumi:"Firo! There should be another muscle somewhere, tear it up!"

Firo:"Mkay!"

The meteor shield makes a cracking sound.

It seems the attack outside was more concentrated.

After Firo checks the area, she uses Spiral ▪ Strike to tear apart the muscle on the wall, and that causes massive bleeding.

Spirit Turtle:"——!"

I heard a voice that could be from the heart in the interior.

It was probably painful.

Regeneration.....Seems like it's trying.

Do we have 30 seconds?

Naofumi:"Let's go!"

Raphtalia:"Okay!"

I advance through the path opened to the heart.

After a while I discover a white muscle. The rear opened when it was cut.

Ha! Obediently let me conquer you!

Naofumi: "Shadow, if continuing through this place is the path, then it is your duty to report it."

Shadow: "Understood deojaru. Do you want me to carry out the order now degojaruka?"

Naofumi: "No, After a little more."

Before long, an out-of-place blue building came into view.....

It was a blue Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.

The size of it is smaller than the hourglass in Melromarc. It's just that it exerts a somewhat light presence inside the body of the spirit turtle

Naofumi: "Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.....?"

Raphtalia: "It's blue."

Shadow: "That's right degojaruna."

Firo: "There's less sand."

Right, as Firo said, there is less sand in this blue Hourglass of the Dragon's era compared to the other one.

Firo: "Also, what are those letters of there~?"

In the middle of the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era, written not with letters of this world, is a familiar character, the number 7.

What on earth could it be?

Also on the hourglass..... there are marks similar to a scale The whole thing seems to only have about 1/10th of its quantity left.

I try to gently touch it.

And my hand slips through, it seems I won't be able to touch the blue hourglass.

Something is different about this Hourglass of the Dragon's era from the country's.

That one has the function of informing us when the next wave will appear and Class up, but I don't understand what this can do.

Naofumi: "There's no use worrying. Our first priority is to confirm it."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Naofumi: "It will be fine to investigate it later."

Firo: "Okay~"

After advancing past the blue hourglass for a little, we discover the heart.

Its magnitude was more than 6 meters, the heart is divided into two different colours.

Naofumi: "So this is the heart of the spirit turtle huh."

Shadow: "Looks that way degojaruna. It's a very ominous creature degojaru."

An eye direct's its gaze towards our voices.

No matter how you look at it, that is not a welcoming gaze.

Spirit Turtle: "——!!"

Do we seal this guy?

*Pew, light hits the meteor shield and is reflected off.

(TLnote: シュツ I have no idea, but it's light so I'll just go with pew)
Furthermore, a high-powered laser is discharged from the eye.

The eye on the heart of the spirit turtle opens wide and vibrates.

Familiars of the spirit turtle appear out of nowhere.

What a troublesome opponent. It's not necessary for us to fight it, we'll have to group up with the allied forces to come and seal it.

It can probably call an unlimited amount of familiars.

Naofumi: "Should we weaken it for now? Shadow go back."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Firo: "Mkay!"

Shadow: "Understood degojaruyo."

Raphtalia and Firo jump out from the barrier and attack the heart of the spirit turtle.

Both of them can't help but unleash their respective finishing moves.

Raphtalia: "Yin-Yang Sword!"

Firo: "Critical Quick~"

Both their attacks hit the eye of the spirit turtle's heart.

Spirit Turtle "——!!"

Hey hey, it's raging it's raging. The vicinity around us vibrates.

A huge magic formation develops on the heart of the spirit turtle.

It seems to be doing something.

Naofumi: "Raphtalia, Firo, get back."

Raphtalia: "Roger."

Firo: "Okay~!"

Both of them fall back within the range of the meteor shield as I prepare for the attack.

The spirit turtles heart shoots..... a black ball of magic at me.

I receive it.

The meteor shield shatters like glass.

When the black ball hits the shield and light is distorted.

My body is heavy!

This magic is super gravity.

My body feels incredibly heavy.

However, my defensive power won't be suppressed by something of this degree!

Naofumi: "Deryaaaaaaaaa!"

I divert the ball of light to the right, and the ball of supergravity is repelled.

As expected, I won't be hit with something as powerful as that electric attack from outside.

Well, that's what it feels like. I don't think the spirit turtle would do something that would destroy its own heart.

And so, the tube streaming around the spirit turtle's heart is analyzed.....Some kind of white spirit is circulating through it.

It is scattered around the room centering from the heart.

Naofumi:"Meteor Shield!"

I once again put up the meteor shield.

.....I should receive it, once.....what kind of attack is it?

I must receive it to analyze it..... Though for now I should be careful.

Naofumi:"Alright, we're not going to fight now. We'll withdraw and bring the allied forces here."

Shadow:"Roger degojaru."

We postpone the battle against the spirit turtle's heart and withdraw.

Chapter 124: Heart of the Spirit Turtle

Rishia: "A-Are you guys alright!?"

When we came back, Rishia and the allied forces greeted us.

Naofumi: "We found the heart."

Soldiers: "Ohh!"

The allied forces let out delighted voices.

The problem is getting these guys there.

Just like a while ago, it would be difficult to get to the heart.

Naofumi: "How is the damage?"

Soldier: "Before Hero-sama returned we were attacked by demons nine times. There have been some victims."

Naofumi: "Fumu. Anyways, victory is before our eyes."

Rishia: "Umm.....did you find Itsuki-sama?"

Naofumi: "No we did not."

Come to think of it, the other heroes still haven't been found.

Did we just miss them?

That's a pretty painful thought. Since there are hidden floors here. They might have entered by destroying if they knew.

Could they be fighting somewhere else on this mountain?

No.....Surely they witnessed that disastrous scene in the town. Normally after seeing a scene like that, the subjugation of the spirit turtle would become top priority.

So far my analysis of those guys tell me that they aren't bad to that extent.

No way, did they get annihilated after all?

This thing is a monster. So I can't deny that possibility.

Should I prepare for the worst case scenario?

Rishia: "I see....."

Naofumi: "Don't be discouraged. It's better than finding a corpse."

Rishia: "Fuee—Okay."

Orders to protect would be evaluated higher. They shouldn't be that desperate.

(Tlnote: Not sure about this line.)

Naofumi: "It's fine to look for the other heroes after we seal the spirit turtle. You guys from the allied forces come with us. From now on, the demon's attacks will become even more intense. Prepare yourselves. Even heroes aren't almighty, if possible try to protect yourselves!"

Soldiers: ""Yes!""

The group of allied forces nod and raise their voice at my instructions.

After this..... Let's concentrate on which units that I expect will make it to the heart.

It has to be that huh. I had to rely on volunteers last wave since I was weak. Yup.

When I think about future waves and fighting with the strength of others.....it's harsh.

How many sacrifices will there be.....

We bring the allied forces and head back to the depths of the cave.

Along the way, I explain to the allied forces the various attacks of the spirit turtle's heart.

Also for them not to be defeated between the gaps of Meteor Shield, Air Strike Shield, and Second Shield's protection.

Soldier: "As expected of the Hero of the Shield-sama, to go through the effort of analysing the enemy to prevent our sacrifice."

Naofumi: "I.....guess so."

It's not possible to protect.

It's not possible to defend them against the attacks of the opponent when they are attacking as well.

I am only conveying that.

Naofumi: "Just that, I wasn't able to grasp the real nature of the white lump attack that the heart fired before our withdrawal. Be careful."

Soldiers: " " " " " Roger! " " " " "

The familiars that appeared along the way were barely beaten by Raphtalia, Firo, Rishia, and the allied force's attacks.

When the cave walls became walls of meat, the allied soldier's breathes got taken away.

As everyone carefully proceeded, the sound of the heart beating could be heard.

Opening the Red muscle and closing the blue line were assigned to the allied forces, while Raphtalia and Firo dealt with the attacks from the front and behind by familiars.

Those parasites that suddenly appear are a problem. They appeared when the meat walls were torn down so the response was late.

There were some casualties.

Mental fatigue started appearing on the group of allied forces.

When someone was caught by the immune-system like familiars.....He was melted right before our eyes.

(Tlnote: Ew.)

Those with weak spirits vomited on the spot.

Naofumi: "Don't stop! Anybody who stops here becomes their prey! Anybody who is separated has no hope!"

I lead the way and protect, while Raphtalia and Firo defeat the enemies.

And shadow was standing by, at the last gate mechanism.

Naofumi: "Heeey."

When I call out the door opens.

Naofumi: "Are you okay?"

Shadow: "I wouldn't be opening the door if I wasn't safe degojaruyo."

Naofumi: "I guess so."

Since she is good at hiding, there doesn't seem to be any problems.

As I thought, Shadow is dependable.

This is just my selfish wish, but I want a companion like Shadow.

Naofumi: "Alright, the spirit turtle's heart is just beyond this point. Everyone from the allied forces, I'll be relying on you."

Raphtalia: "Right. But Don't start until we weaken the spirit turtle's heart."

.....That's right.

Well, there shouldn't be any problems considering Raphtalia, Firo, and Shadow's attack power.

Even Rishia and the group of allied forces should be able to have some effect due to their numbers.

Soldier: "It takes time to prepare the ceremony."

Naofumi: "So we should be playing for time then?"

There's this too?

Can't be helped.....

Naofumi: "You guys can't prepare the cast beforehand?"

Soldier: "Right.....The ceremony requires us to stay within a certain range."

So it's come down to that huh.

During that time, the power of defence from the shield will be useful.

Naofumi: "Then I'll protect you guys from the allied forces as you

concentrate on the ritual. Everyone else will defeat the familiars that appear while Raphtalia and Firo weakens the heart.”

Raphtalia:”Understood!”

Firo:”Okay~!”

Soldier:”Roger!”

I see Rishia making a face that asks what she should do.

Rishia:”What should I do?”

Naofumi:”You are-.....”

What she should do is a delicate question.

(Tlnote: 微妙なライン Delicate Line?)

She is more reliable than the group of allied forces, but I feel anxious for her compared to Raphtalia.

Her movements have become faster, the person in question is also delighted about that.....Though there is fear that she doesn’t understand what is ahead.

Naofumi:”I’ll entrust Rishia to cover the rear. Before you go, your job is to report to me if something unexpected happens.”

Rishia:”O-Okay.....”

This is the only thing to do for now.

On the way, everybody held their breaths due to the blue hourglass. It is still somehow intimidating.

Huh? Did the sand increase slightly?

No, It’s just my imagination. Some sand might have collapsed due to swaying slightly.

Now, let’s head to the decisive battle.

Soldier:”This is.....the spirit turtle’s heart.....”

Somebody from the allied forces expresses.

It is certainly ominous.

The spirit turtle's heart lets out a sound that's like a roar.

The eye opens widely and its pulsation strengthens.

I remember from a while ago.

Yeah, we won't withdraw this time, and we will defeat you.

Naofumi:"Let's go!"

Everyone:"""Oohh----!""""

The magic corps from the allied forces starts preparing the ceremony by chanting magic.

Following up, Raphtalia and Firo start attacking the spirit turtle's heart.

And the other allied forces start cutting down the familiars that appear.

I interfere with the familiars aiming at the magic corps with Highten Reaction, Air Strike Shield, and Second Shield, I also use Change Shield to give status debuffs.

In addition Shield Bash is also utilised.

My SP decreases considerable, and I use the Soul Eat ability on the Soul Eater Shield to replenish. I also use a convenient Sp recovery (Small).

Raphtalia:"Naofumi-sama! As expected, there is a lot!"

Firo:"Yeah! There is no end."

Since the fight we had before was just reconnaissance, our combat time was short. Due to that, we couldn't measure the number of reinforcements.....

Familiars are appearing in the room with the spirit turtle's heart from the wall, the ground, and the ceiling.

The heart doesn't remain silent, and throws all of its familiars at us, and also shoots lasers.

The spirit turtle's heart is aiming towards the magic corps that is reciting the magic for the seal.

What's this? Does it intend to fire something?

A magic formation appears on the eye of the spirit turtle's heart.

Is it the supergravity magic!?

The magic begins to form at high-speed.

It's something else!

I stand in front of the magic crops and ready my shield.

Immediately after that I realise that my hunch was correct.

A high output laser was released from the heart's pupil.

Naofumi:"Whoa!"

Several people who were in the way of the laser were disintegrated without a trace, and when it hit my shield, I was blown a few steps back.

Naofumi:"Damn....."

This laser doesn't end like the normal ones, it is still going. It is a very thick beam. Sort of like a deadly attack from a game.

The firepower is lower than the electric shock, but it would do more than hurt if I was hit.

Naofumi:"Deryaa!"

I change the angle of the shield, and deflect the laser.

The ceiling of the heart room was scorched.

Fresh blood drips from the ceiling.

Well, it regenerates in a bit, as if it was never there in the first place.

Raphtalia:"Naofumi-sama!"

Firo:"Are you okay?"

Naofumi:"Yeah, No problems here."

The one outside was still stronger. The heart probably can't withstand it though.

We can win when the sealing ceremony is completed.

Naofumi: "Is the magic seal not completed yet?"

Soldier: "Just wait a little longer!"

Naofumi: "Alright, Raphtalia and Firo use your best attack to weaken it."

Raphtalia: "Okay!"

Firo: "Okay~!"

According to my instructions, Raphtalia and Firo use their finishing attacks.

Raphtalia: "Yin-Yang Sword!"

Firo: "Critical Quick-!"

The spirit turtle's heart starts to shake in agony as the ceiling starts to tremble.

Not yet?

Does damaging the monster's source of vitality weaken it?

For the time being let's concentrate our attacks.....I have a very bad feeling for some reason.

Raphtalia: "With this--"

Firo: "How's this!"

Raphtalia and Firo cut apart several tubes that are connected to the spirit turtle's heart.

Spirit Turtle: "---!?"

The movement of the eye on the heart weakens remarkably.

With this we should be able to buy some more time before the sealing magic completes.

Soldier: "It's completed!"

Naofumi: "Alright! Go!"

Soldier: "Okay!"

"""We command the origin of power. We have read and deciphered the

truth, Four spirits of calamity, become the wedge that stops the spirit turtle here and now!”””

Hm!?

The spirit turtle’s heart starts to move suspiciously.

A large white mass circulates through the heart and scatters in all directions!

Solider:”High Class Group--!?”

The white mass flies everywhere, including towards the allied forces.

I use Meteor Shield, Shield Prison, Air Strike Shield, and Second Shield to defend the magic corps as much as possible.

Naofumi:”Whoa!”

Rishia:”Kyaa-”

Naofumi:”Damn.....

However, a small part of the attack wasn’t prevented completely, and it hits the rear.

As I was holding the shield in front, I look back.

Damn.....There were an unexpectedly large amount of casualties.

Naofumi:”A-Are you guys okay!?”

Soldier:”My apologies, we have failed.....”

A person from the magic corps reports to me.

Chapter 125: Possibilities

“Not Yet! Report your situation!” (Naofumi)

“The people who received the attack have yet to recover. We are confirming the situation.” (Soldier) How is the front line holding up?

I look towards Rafatalia and Firo, who are currently battling around the heart.

The assaulting familiars seem to be endless. Both of them are exhausted.

When the chance comes, they break through and reach my location, but their faces are pale.

“A-are you two alright?!” (Naofumi)

“Y-yes... but... my Mana is...” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah... you know... they absorbed our mana...” (Firo) Ku... how troublesome. This attack has the same effect as the electric blast from the head.

I receive an information report from the back line.

“A large number of troops have died from Mana depletion.” (Soldier)
“How is the situation on the front?” (Naofumi) “Because of the Hero of the Shield’s protection, they have begun to prepare the sealing magic for the heart.” (Soldier) “I see...” (Naofumi)

For my Drain resistance to come in handy in a place like this...

The casualties are great, but we will still be able to carry out the mission.

“It might be difficult, but please finish the sealing preparations as quickly as possible!” (Naofumi) “S-sir yes sir!” (Magicians)

By this pattern...

The Spirit turtle’s heart begins releasing the magic energy it has stored up.

I rush in front and hold up my shield to deflect the blasts of energy.

“_____!” (Spirit Turtle)

“Gu-...” (Naofumi)

The output is even higher than before.

The white masses the heart had released are now re-assimilating with it to increase the output.

Long! The duration of this attack is much higher than any of the others I have withstood. My HP begins to drop.

“Guuuuuuuuuu-...” (Naofumi)

I can't change my position or the blast will be reflected on our forces.

“Mu... Don't use Firo's power to hurt Master!” (Firo) Firo takes a stance.

“Rafatalia Oneechan, Costume wearing Oneechan! Please keep monsters away from Firo for a little bit.” (Firo) “Y-yes!” (Rafatalia)

“I Understand!” (Rishia)

Rafatalia and Rishia get into formation and repel the swarms of monsters from Firo.

“Suuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu...” (Firo)

Firo takes a very deep breath.

I can feel the wind gathering around her.

The white masses that had returned to the heart are being pulled away.

More specifically, Firo is sucking them in.

The white clumps are forcefully pulled towards Firo, being drawn to her strong magic.

Soon, the magic blast weakens.

“Good job, Firo!” (Naofumi)

“Gepu-” (Firo)

I look behind me and see Firo waving happily. She looks slightly more

inflated than before.

...Did she eat those things?

“Payback.” (Firo)

Firo faces the heart and opens her mouth. Something comes out.

I think it is the air that she sucked into her body.

A sphere of pressurized air flies towards the heart.

“_____!!!” (Spirit Turtle)

The turtle hastily deploys a magic barrier around its heart, as if it sensed the dangers presented by Firo’s attack.

The familiars, as if protecting the organ, fly head on into the ball of air.

But the sphere merely sucks in any monster that gets close, and continues to fly at the heart.

A large sound fills the area, and the magic barrier around the heart breaks.

The heart is reconstructing its defenses. It’s the perfect time to activate the seal.

“Now!” (Naofumi)

“Ha!” (Magicians)

『We have read and understood the origin of power. It is the time for the Truth of the world to manifest. Now become that chains that binds one of the four: the Spirit Turtle, this beast of Calamity! 』

A large magic circle appears centered around the heart.

The turtle is currently focused on healing the damage caused by Firo’s attack, it is unable to perform a follow-up attack.

This is the end!

『Large Scale Covenant Spell: ‘Magic Sealing’!』

Ribbons appear from the magic circle, and begin encircling the heart, which has almost finished repairing itself.

“_____!?” (Spirit Turtle)

Badump... badump... ba... dump... ba... (TL: If you have a better onomatopoeia, be my guest.) The beating sound of the heart gets fainter, and eventually fades into nothingness.

The monsters outside seem to have also stopped. From the next room, I can hear some noise.

“YYYYEEEEAAASSSS!” (Soldiers)

They are celebrating.

“Victory! We Won!” (Soldier)

“Hooray!” (Soldier)

“It was long and difficult, but we finally did it!” (Soldier) (TL: death flags all around)

Fuu.....

“Oneechan, Firo is returning these.” (Firo)

“? Firo, what are you doing?” (Rafatalia)

Firo suddenly throws up all of the white clumps she had inhaled at Rafatalia. Are they Spirit attribute? Maybe I should absorb them.

Rafatalia’s face color is getting better as the Drain effect wears off, but her expression is getting much, much worse. It’s as if a bug had dropped down her back.

Slapping the White clumps away, Rafatalia begins chasing Firo around in rage.

“Oy, Firo! I definitely won’t let you off easily!” (Rafatalia) “Ahaha~” (Firo)

Sigh It seems we were somehow able to finish the sealing.

“...- Master!?” (Firo)

Firo suddenly stops. Her face is pale.

Badump! Badump!

The heart beat sounds resume.

With the sound of breaking glass, the magic circle breaks apart.

“How could this be!?” (Naofumi)

“Firo did her best, so why?” (Firo)

The eye on the heart grows very large, and releases the beam attack once more.

“This thing knows not when to give in!” (Rafatalia) “Yeah!” (Firo)

“Was it a failure?” (Naofumi)

“No... the spell went perfectly... but it was able to shrug it off with ease.” (Magician) Dammit! Damn it all!

We don’t have any forces left. The head has regenerated. We cannot seal the heart.

... No there still has to be a way. I can’t give in.

“Rafatalia, Firo, can you handle it?” (Naofumi) “Leave it to me.” (Rafatalia)

“Yes!” (Firo)

Both Rafatalia and Firo prepare to unleash their respective strongest attacks.

Even though it’s broken free, there must be some information I can gain from this exchange.

“Tell the troops in the back lines to fall back!” (Naofumi) “B-but-” (Soldier)

“If possible, try to support these two, otherwise, tell them to focus on protecting themselves. Worse comes to worst we will have to retreat!” (Naofumi) “U-understood!” (Soldier)

The army follows my command and withdraws the back line.

And Rafatalia, Firo, Me, Shadow and Rishia prepare for battle.

「Zveit Aura」 (Naofumi)

I cast support magic on the party. The two rush forward.

「Spiral Strike!」 (Firo)

「Hakke Destiny Slash」 (Rafatalia)

(TL: Hakke, Japanese pronunciation for Bagua
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagua>) Forward! This may be rash, but there are no other options.

“_____!?” (Spirit Turtle)

The two fighters rush the Heart of the Spirit Turtle. The turtle tries to summon familiars to protect it.

But those two are putting all their magic remaining into this strike. The familiars have no effect.

There is a grotesque sound. The heart has been pierced.

“...” (Rafatalia)

“This is the limit” (Firo)

“I understand... please stand down.” (Naofumi)

I observe the heart. Just as when it had been sealed, the beating has stopped. Did we do it?

Most of the arteries around it have been reduced to scraps of flesh. The heart itself has a large hole in the center.

If it could recover from this, it would truly be immortal.

...badump.

__!?

Before my very eyes, the arteries restore themselves and the hole begins to close.

“Wha...” (Rafatalia)

“What tenacity...” (Naofumi)

“Fueeeeeeeeeee...” (Rishia)

I also want to say Fueeee.

“The mission... was a failure-gojaru. We must call a retreat-gojaru.”
(Shadow) “And after that? Can the seven star heroes win against a
Monster like this?” (Naofumi) Out of rage, I unintentionally speak my
mind.

“T-that may be so-jaru... but staying here will not accomplish anything-
gojaru.” (Shadow) “Ku...” (Naofumi)

Shadow’s right. Nothing has come out of fighting for hours inside of
this thing.

Where is it getting all of this vitality?

If a monster like this appeared in a game, then no one would buy it.

“... I understand. We’ll retreat for now and think of another plan.”
(Naofumi) “... Sir yes sir.” (Soldier)

The hearts of the soldiers is heavy.

To fail after we had found victory. The mental damage inflicted is quite
high.

Carefully avoiding danger, I lead the men away from the heart and out
of the Turtle’s body.

“It will be easier to escape from the town than from the mountains.”
(Naofumi) The mountain path is heavily sloped. With the earthquakes
caused by the moving turtle, the footing is unstable.

Though we may have to deal with the rubble, it will probably be safer to
dismount from the town area.

“We are thankful to you for finding a safe escape route.” (Commander)
The army’s commander gives me words of thanks.

“Don’t mind it. Protecting is my duty.” (Naofumi) But... for all our
efforts to come out in vain...

The only information we got was that the sealing magic didn’t work.

Is there no way to win?

I fend off monsters as we head towards the exit in the town.

“This is...” (Naofumi)

It’s a building similar to the temple I investigated with Firo.

“It seems to be a temple-gojaru.” (Shadow)

“You can tell?” (Naofumi)

“I have been trained in scouting out buildings-gojaru. There are lithographs of the messages left by the heroes all over the place -gojaru.” (Shadow) “Lithographs? Are they of the message I saw in the other temple?” (Naofumi) “Perhaps these were made using that as reference-gojaru. Selling lithographs of these messages was this town’s specialty-gojaru. There were probably more but the entire town has been destroyed with the awakening of the Turtle-gojaru.” (Shadow) Reference? Could there have been people who could write in Japanese here?

Hmm... so this temple contains various lithographs...

Keiichi left the method of defeating the turtle. Perhaps, I may find a lithograph of his message.

“Can you let me look around for a bit?” (Naofumi) “I do not believe now is the time for that-gojaru” (Shadow) “The previous message I saw had writing regarding how to defeat the Spirit Turtle. However the most important info was left out. (Naofumi) “How surprising, then we must search through these records-gojaru.” (Shadow) My party and the rest of the army search for and gather all the Lithographs we can find.

These paintings are not very well done, they seem to be mass-produced varieties, with a simple picture of the Turtle and words printed on them.

And these works have also been damaged by the Turtle’s movements.

“Can you read it-gojaru?” (Shadow)

“How is it?” (Rafatalia)

Like a jig-saw puzzle, I gather the pieces of various mass produced pictures. Many of these have shattered beyond recognition. I don’t think I can decipher this.

“I have found more.” (Rishia)

Rishia comes carrying a large fragment of a Lithograph.

... Finally, something I can read.

Even more so than the wave, his objective is... to stop...

I can also make out the words Head, Heart and Same.

I have to think, what would the Hero Keiichi want to leave behind?

Along with the head, you must... to defeat this monster, then... It's cut off here.

Now that I think about it, from the start, Keiichi has been talking of a method to defeat, rather than seal it.

So in the past, people had already figured out the method for defeating it.

So why was it sealed until now?

I don't understand.

If I can't understand this point, I have to move onto the next.

I must gather some useful information from this.

Head, Heart, Same were used on the same line.

... Could it be that? That thing in Games and Manga...

(TL: You know that thing in Megaman EXE and in Neon Genesis Evangelion, that thing.) However there is no way of testing that theory.

“What?! Is that true?!” (Soldier)

As I am deep in thought, the army people are getting noisy.

“What's wrong?” (Naofumi)

“Look outside. The Spirit Turtle is approaching a city that hasn't finished evacuation!” (Sodja Boy)

Chapter 126: Versus the Spirit Turtle, the Final Battle

... I guess I can't waste any more time.

Now that I think about it, we spent way too much of it inside of the turtle.

It seems that due to our nervousness, we hadn't noticed just how much time had passed.

If I don't leave to help out now, many deaths will result.

"There is something I would like to test." (Naofumi) I pull out all of the medicine I have on hand and give it to Rafatalia and Firo.

"Naofumi-sama?" (Rafatalia)

"Master?" (Firo)

"Go back to the turtle's heart. I think I figured something out."
(Naofumi) It will probably take everything these two have to stop the heart again.

I know this, but there is no other option.

"Master?" (Firo)

"There's something I must do outside." (Naofumi) "Outside?" (Firo)

"Yeah, I can only do it once, so I'll have to retreat after that, though.
Rishia, please come support me." (Naofumi) "Fueee... I understand."
(Rishia)

"You couldn't be..." (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia is staring at me.

I'd like to speak with her more, but she probably already knows my intentions.

Rafatalia was there as well.

"If this plan fails, we have nothing left. At that time, please assist in the

army's retreat." (Naofumi) "I can't! What about Naofumi!?" (Rafatalia)

"I understand the danger. If I can't defeat it here, please return with the Seven Star heroes and try to hold it off." (Naofumi) The number on the blue hourglass was most likely the Spirit Turtle's life span.

And the number never went down no matter how many times we killed it.

"If we do nothing here, many more innocents will die. Rafatalia, you understand that, right?" (Naofumi) "...Yes, but..." (Rafatalia)

I put my hand on Rafatalia's shoulder and pat it gently.

"It's fine. I won't die. Even if the mission fails, I will do my best to allow the people to evacuate." (Naofumi) "but..." (Rafatalia)

"I know I am acting out of character, but if we can't stop it now, then our journey will just get much, much harder from here on out." (Naofumi) I mean a lot when I say this.

I plan to take on the crimes the other heroes have committed. Even after we deal with this turtle, the wave will continue.

The Blue sand and the Red sand. The message from Keiichi has made me certain this Turtle and the Wave are related.

The things I hadn't even thought about before are now coming together in my mind.

There are four heroes, and their weapons can be strengthened with no visible limit. That means that unbelievably strong enemies were set to appear where these bonuses were needed.

If I can't beat this monster here, stronger enemies will appear alongside it.

I want to avoid that at all costs.

"I understand, but still I wish to stand by Naofumi-sa-" (Rafatalia) "Have you ever seen me hurt by an enemy attack?" (Naofumi) "N-no..." (Rafatalia)

“Then worry not. I’ll say it again, but I’m not the kind of Good Samaritan that will sacrifice his life here. I will live and return to my old world.” (Naofumi) “.....” (Rafatalia)

“Regardless, after I use that skill, I will be left unable to battle. Then Rishia can help drag me out.” (Naofumi) If they launch a surprise attack on the heart, it shouldn’t have enough time to retaliate.

All I need to do is match the timing.

This is a last resort. If this does nothing, then this mission has had no meaning from the start.

I’ll put my hope on the small fragments of information I have gathered.

The risk is high... but worse comes to worst the Seven Star Heroes can take over battling the wave.

I am a little worried about the heart’s energy blast but Firo should be able to avoid it.

“The problem is getting back to that room.” (Naofumi) “”I got there using an underhanded method, but for these two...

“Leave that to me-gojaru.” (Shadow)

“Do you have something?” (Naofumi)

“I prepared something just in case we had to reach the heart again.-gojaru” (Shadow) “Thank You. I’ll leave those two in your care.” (Naofumi) “Understood-gojaru.” (Shadow)

“Now then, Rafatalia, Firo and also Shadow, Go take out the heart! Rishia, please back me up. This is the plan-” (Naofumi) Rishia and Shadow show clear disapproval of my plan.

Rishia also witnessed my fight with the pope. She didn’t know the long-term effect it had on my body, but she did witness the immediate effects.

“Fuee... You’ll die!” (Rishia)

“Isn’t that a bit much-gojaru?” (Shadow)

“This is something I must do. Rafatalia and Firo don’t have attacks

large enough to finish off a monster of that size. I have to do this.”

(Naofumi) “If the Hero of the Shield retires here, it will greatly affect troop morale-gojaru.” (Shadow) “If I was sure of the Seven Hero’s

prowess, I might have been able to back down, but when there’s a city that is about to be attacked right before my eyes, how can I stop?”

(Naofumi) “...understood-gojaru. I apologize for making the recuperation you did on Cal Mira meaningless-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Likewise, I apologize for always relying on you like this.” (Naofumi) I somehow managed to convince the other two, and I give Rafatalia and Firo the orders to assault the heart.

“I’m sorry for sending you back after we just escaped.” (Naofumi) “Don’t worry about it.” (Rafatalai)

“No Problem~” (Firo)

“I’ll leaving the attack timing to you. It will be difficult, but I trust you can do it.” (Naofumi) “I understand.” (Rafatalia)

The Turtle’s is almost at the city’s gates.

Even if the plan fails, I must fight the beast to bide for time.

If I can just slow it down a little...

“Naofumi-sama, We’re off. I wish you luck.” (Rafatalia) “Master, fight!” (Firo)

“Remember to escape as soon as you destroy the heart!” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Rafatalia)

“Yep!” (Firo)

In truth, I also don’t wish to fight.

But to defeat this thing with the smallest amount of casualties possible, I must do this.

I don’t think I am wrong.

Rafatalia rides Firo, and disappears into the Cave we just came out of. With Firo’s legs, they should be there soon.

“Men, protect yourselves and follow my lead! Let’s go!” (Naofumi) “Sir, Yes Sir!” (Army people)

“Y-yes!” (Rishia)

Before Rafatalia can make it to the heart, we must reach the head.

“Meteor Shield! Come on Rishia, I’m counting on you too. Fight on!” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Rishia)

Rishia clenches her fists tight and follows close.

On the way, we run into a Yeti-like familiar.

「Zveit Aura!」 (Naofumi)

I cast support magic on Rishia.

“Amazing, my body feels light.” (Rishia)

Rishia quickly takes out the Familiar’s eyes and pierces it’s heart.

Though her base stats are low, due to the bonuses from the Firo Plushy and my support magic, her attacks have become quite potent.

She developed a knack for observing the situation when studying under Itsuki.

For her, seeing through a monster’s weakness is quite easy. I don’t have to protect her against monsters of this caliber.

The Yeti dies before it can even realize it has been hit.

“I-I did it!” (Rishia)

“There are more coming, don’t falter!” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Rishia)

Nice response, it seems she has gained some confidence.

We eventually get out of the town, and head into the mountainous area.

... The city is right at the Turtle’s feet.

Damn!

“Isn’t that Melromark?!” (Naofumi)

I see a Lo~t of familiar buildings.

The Turtle moves slowly for its size, but its stride length and lack of rest itself makes up for this The Spirit turtle has crossed the Melromark national border. That's right, it was going for places with high population densities. Of course, Melromark's castle town is an obvious choice.

The Queen's predictions were quite off.

I can see people evacuating in every direction.

If they just run like that, who's going to help those who can't run?

Not yet...!?

The Spirit Turtle steps into the city. The buildings collapse like toys beneath its feet.

(TL: It was then that Melromark received a grim reminder. They had lived in fear of the Turtles) Some attack spells are shot from the Castle's direction.

But this monster withstands it without even getting a scratch.

Its magical resistance is too high.

When we first fought the Spirit Turtle, the Queen's army tried to back us up with support fire, but it had had no effect.

Gu... The Turtle is headed directly for the castle.

Rafatalia, Firo, are you there yet?

Suddenly, the Turtle's body clenches, as if it had been hit by a heavy blow.

I can't see its full facial expression, but its eyes show that it is in great pain.

Good, the heart has stopped.

Wrath Shield!

A number appears in my field of vision.

30 Seconds Left. But 30 Seconds is more than enough.

"Rishia, I leave the army's safety to you! If something bad happens, call

for an immediate retreat!” (Naofumi) “U-Understood!” (Rishia)

The Target is the head.

It still hasn’t noticed my presence, so I must act fast.

...wait.

If I stop here, Melromark will fall into ruin.

How much grief have these people put me through?

I will never be able to forget the humiliation this country made me feel.

This is my chance to get back at this country isn’t it?

...wrong.

There are many kind people here as well.

Old man, Melty, Apothecary, the Volunteer Soldiers, The magic shop...
Even though he doesn’t really count, the slave dealer is there too I still haven’t thanked these people for the kindness they showed me.

Now isn’t the time for vengeance. Now I can finally repay my debt.

「Blutopfer!」

Blood erupts from all over my body. My flesh rips apart and my bones creak.

The pain is even stronger than last time. My head is throbbing.

Is it because I strengthened the Shield of Wrath?

But I knew what was coming this time. I was mentally prepared.

I wonder if my body will hold up...

“Hack...” (Naofumi) (TL:Cough sound, throwing up blood) Please endure, I can’t fall just yet.

I’ve paid the price. Under the Turtle’s head, an unbelievably large Bear Trap manifests from the ground.

The Spirit Turtle is still concentrating on healing its heart, so its reaction speed has dropped.

“_____!?” (Spirit Turtle)

A faint scream escapes its lips. The ground below my feet is shaking.

Then a loud metallic bang is heard. The trap closes, digging into the Turtle’s flesh.

With a creek, the trap opens again and once more...

“!!!!!!?????????” (Spirit Turtle)

The Turtle lets out an unbelievable scream that echoes throughout the area. It tries to rampage It’s too late.

You... Are already dead!

(TL: He really says Omae wa mou... Owarida!)

Bang! The Bear trap closes for a final time. There is not a shred of the Turtle’s head left.

Having finished its purpose, the Giant Bear Trap is swallowed by the ground.

...Will it regenerate again?

...

My conscious is fading. I change my shield to the Soul Eater Shield.

Wait! What about the Familiars?

When I turn around, the Army is rushing at me whilst cheering.

“The Spirit Turtle and its familiars have stopped moving entirely!”
(Soldier) As I hear this, my vision slowly fades to darkness...

(TL: The world is red... no the one that is red is me...) “___mi-sama!”
(Rishia)

I hear Rishia’s shocked Voice. I think she caught me. She’s wearing the Firo Plushy so it’s hard to tell, but it’s probably Rishia.

Firo... never calls my name, anyways.

Anyways... I can’t stay conscious any longer.

Did I act too rashly...?

“Rishia, please... Rafatalia... Queen... Report...” (Naofumi) I’m sleepy. I pray I’m still alive when I open my eyes.

I wonder what death is like. I’m a bit scared.

Chapter 127: Overprotective

「Uuu.....heavy」

I remember this feeling.

I open my eyes and check the surroundings.

Looks like I was put to sleep in the healing house's bed.

When I look I see Firo is sleeping while leaning on me, and Raphtalia fell asleep while sitting in a chair.

This is still fine, but for some reason even Melty is sleeping with Firo.

Again huh. When I use Blutopfer it always ends up like this.

「Ah, you regained consciousness ! 」

Rishia just came into my sick room carrying a water bottle.

Unusually she's not wearing the costume.

Thinking about it Rishia looked like this didn't she.

She's always wearing the Firo costume so I forgot.

「Raphtalia-san, please wake up. The hero of the shield regained consciousness」

With a sway Rishia shakes Raphtalia.

While watching that I checked my condition.

There don't seem to be any wounds. The healing house's people probably dealt with the curse too.

But, the lethargy following my body around nearly makes my eyes spin.

As expected, the stat reductions are having quite an effect.

「You guys ! Heavy ! 」

I moved Firo and Melty and got up.

「Nnya ? 」

「Ah, Naofumi-sama ! You woke up ! 」

「Yeah, I must've worried you」

「Of course I was worried ! Truly, you were so unreasonable」

I ignore Raphtalia's grumpy scolding and look at Rishia.

If I obediently listened to this from the beginning the sun will set after all.

「What's the situation ? 」

「Are you listening ! ? 」

If I say no she'll probably get angry.....

Well, I am not listening though.

But there's no reason to start a quarrel.

「I'm properly listening. There's a lot of other stuff I want to know」

「Eeeeto...one day's passed since then」

One day.....When I released Blutopfer before it took 2 days so it's pretty fast.

As usual my condition's bad, but it's the kind of thing you get used to.

「The queen ordered your treatment to be of the utmost priority」

Which means, it's probably safe to think I received expensive magical and herbal treatment.

There wasn't even a place to give treatment in the castle town before.

「What happened to that turtle ? 」

「It's life ended right before Melromarc was going to take casualties」

「I see」

While I was unconscious, it's good it didn't revive or something. It seems that method was right.

「Right now, they're in the middle of disposing of the remains」

「Understood. By the way」

「Nn.....」

「Why is Melty here ? 」

「Etto, Princess Melty heard the hero of the shield was seriously wounded and——」

「Wa, wa, wa——— ! 」

Melty, who just woke up, yells in a loud voice to make Rishia, whose eyes are glittering, shut up.

Just what kind of situation is this.

Just as before, Melty still has a hysteric part to her.

「While I was still sleepy just what kind of made-up stuff were you trying to say ! 」

「I, I'm extremely sorry ! 」

Aah, when dealing with a princess Rishia is also unable to act strong.

Raphtalia and Firo are used to it after all. Rather she seems to dislike stiff attitudes.

「Then Melty, I'm already fine, so return to the castle」

「Is that the way you talk to someone who came to visit you worried ! ? 」

「Oh, that's right. While you're at it call the queen. There's a mountain load of things I want to ask her after all.」

「In the end it's that ! ? I got it already ! 」

Melty storms out at a pace unthinkable for a princess.

And then right after turning around, she stuck her tongue out and taunted me.

Like a child. No, she is a child.

Isn't it an action fitting for her age.

「Just what are you laughing for. Stupid Naofumi ! 」

「Wait Melty-chan ! You sure do talk the talk. Your Lordship」

「Follow her and come back」

「Yeah」

Firo followed after Melty and left.

「Then.....」

The noisy person disappeared.

However, even then there's no need to stay on my side forever.

I get up from the bed and stand.

「Are you fine? Resting a bit longer would be.....」

「The injuries are already healed so it's stamina only. Right now I want to check the situation for myself」

I check the status.

.....Uwaa. There's only 30% of before I lost consciousness. My defense staying unchanged is the only relief.

While dragging my heavy body, I look outside from the healing room.

.....I can see a shell as big as a mountain range is blocking out the sun.

Other than that, I can see guys doing repairs.

Losses ended up heavy. On the other hand, if it hadn't been stopped there the castle would've been destroyed.

.....That's right. The wave is coming in 2 days.

Preparations need to be made.

With that thought, I focus on the hourglass floating in my vision to measure the exact time.

Huh ?

The red hourglass' number is still frozen.

And then, I'm able to confirm that the blue hourglass' icon is still moving.

.....Etto。

The number is 8 ?

I have a really bad feeling.

Just in case I check.

This time the remaining time in the blue hourglass is displayed.

Roughly.....3 and a half months ?

What's happening?

If this is the time until the next wave, or alternatively, some seal dissolves then.....it's quite long.

No, if it's preparations to fight a monster that caused that level of damage then it's short?

I don't know.

「Excuse me」

When I turn to the voice the queen enters the room.

Behind the queen there's also the Allies' top brass.

「How does your body's condition seem to be ? 」

「Not that good」

「I have come with a message from an expert healer. You will need at the fastest 3 months to recover. Also even if you go with house rest, he wants that move to be prohibited until full recovery」

「Even if you say that, if I hadn't used it the castle and town would've been annihilated」

「.....I understand. Regardless, it's the healer house's healers' appraisal that if you end up having to use it before you recover, you'll definitely die」

「I see.....」

There's that large of a risk ? Well, even I knew it took a large toll.

To be honest, it's not like I used it because I wanted to, and if I can avoid having to use it I'd prefer it as well.

「I got it. As expected I won't use it」

I don't want to use a skill that damages me anyway. From now on I'll avoid using Blutopfer.

「Then, how about the repairs ? 」

「Yes, we took heavy damage, and the disposal of the upside-down turtle is holding us up」

「Can that thing even be disposed of ? 」

What can I say, it's currently as if an actual mountain came to the castle.

「Right.....According to the investigation squad's analysis rather than dispose it's better to leave it」

「That's about right. It seems disposal is more getting rid of perishables such as the meat」

「Yes」

It's true the disposal of that mountain-like monster's body will be problematic.

However leaving it to rot until it spreads diseases would be a true problem.

「Currently, we're in the middle of butchering the meat」

「Are you collecting the familiars and materials ? 」

「Yeah, the kind of things Iwatani-sama would want were in advance」

That saved me.

There's the soul eater shield's example.

The turtle's shield will be really strong. Probably.

It seems's I'll also be able to absorb its heart and familiars.

「The rest I think I'll explain at the castle」

「Aah.....By the way it's about the hourglass but」

「I know about that matter as well」

There were 2 days, so preparations are already finished by now it seems.

It's really helpful the explanation's fast.

「Then, guess I'll go」

「Wouldn't it be better to rest a bit more.....」

says Raphtalia, who is worrying about my body.

I understand the feelings, but there are some stuff I might do at the very least.

It's best to rest my body only after I've dealt with the troublesome stuff.

「No, either way I only have to talk. Since I'm only tired there's no problem」

「.....I understand. But no matter what don't overdo it, okay?」

「Yeah yeah」

It's true I'm exhausted, but not to the point that I'll die. I'd prefer if I wasn't treated like an invalid.....。

Was Raphtalia always this overprotective?

Chapter 128: A Hero's Treatment

“Thank you Hero of the Shield-sama~!” (random citizens)

“Hero-sama~!” (more random citizens)

I was heading towards the castle however, because Firo had already gone ahead, I rode in the carriage provided by the queen and the citizens of the castle town waved at me like I was in the middle of a triumphal return.

Such materialistic guys.

Well, I knew that the population has that kind of simplistic thinking from anime and history.

I waved back with no problems. If this was a few months ago, there wouldn't even be any trash flying around.

No matter what, I was the devil of the shield.

Speaking of which, after we overcame the first wave, I was glared at as if saying 'why are you there?'

I'd be delighted if I could just receive the proper appreciation but I just get cheated.

Before long, I entered the castle and proceeded to the conference room.

The troops from the Allied Forces were waiting together with the queen.

“Hero of the Shield-sama, this is in appreciation of your efforts in suppressing the Spirit Turtle, really, thank you very much” (queen) “Your introduction is good. I'd like to hear the status report. In relation to the wave” (naofumi) The status of the wave and others, I have a mountain of things I want to ask.

The Spirit Turtle was a state of emergency so everything is in chaos but there should be a lot that they've investigated already.

“.....I understand. Currently, the Hourglasses of the Dragon's Era throughout the world have stopped.” (queen) “Throughout the world?” (naofumi)

“Yes. Every hourglass has stopped” (queen)

“There was a blue object inside the Spirit Turtle that resembled an Hourglass of the Dragon's Era, that too?”

“Ah, Naofumi-sama” (raphtalia)

Raphtalia raised her hand.

Raphtalia and Firo came back after fighting in the heart so maybe they know.

“This is about when we suppressed the Spirit Turtle but when we were returning from the heart, I saw that hourglass go poof and disappear” (raphtalia) “What?” (naofumi)

“Everything disappeared, I saw it turn into a light and vanish” (raphtalia) What did that mean?

I looked again at the hourglass with the time of the invasion of the next wave.

As I thought, there's about 3.5 months remaining.

“That matter is currently in investigation. We will report it in due course” (queen) “I understand. I don't know if only the heroes can realise it but even on my side, the hourglass' arrival prediction time has stopped” (naofumi) “Alright..... We'll also ask the Seven Star Heroes about their side” (queen) “However, three and a half months is projected on another hourglass. Objectively looking at that...” (naofumi) Immediately, the atmosphere became heavy.

I don't think I was wrong to reveal that, like in a chain reaction, there would be an appearance of a monster after the spirit turtle.

Since it was the four spirits, there should be Phoenix, Kirin and Dragon.

“The time limit is 3.5 months. To prepare until then would be the appropriate action” (naofumi) “As you wish” (queen)

“What's the damage count?” (naofumi)

“.....it's fortunate that only 7 towns, 4 fortresses and 2 castles have been

decimated. If more villages were included.....” (queen) “I see.....” (naofumi)

“The victim total is.....the count has not been finished yet” (queen) It's not looking great. There's still the danger of the more appearances of monsters that will cause this much damage.

“Jeez, what's become of those 3 heroes?” (naofumi)

To do this sort of thing and leave it behind yet not showing themselves.

They weren't inside the Spirit Turtle and they didn't come out from the back.

Where was Itsuki – who Rishia was worrying about – wandering about.

The most likely scenario was his death.

However, the image of them dying didn't cause any excitement in me.

Those guys are irritating rascals and annoying with their fake heroics.

“Is there no report of seeing them anywhere in the Spirit Turtle?”

(naofumi) “Not at present. We sent out a search everywhere but we don't even know they are” (queen) “Hmm....” (naofumi)

It's an enigma. What were they trying to do by breaking the seal.

I hope that it's not something like there was a strong weapon hidden in a labyrinth underneath where the Spirit Turtle was sealed.

If that's the case, it won't be forgiven with just a punch.

“And, this is concerning those heroes who broke the seal but...” (queen)

“Hm? Do you have something?” (naofumi)

“In order to avoid more disorder, we've concealed the identities of the ringleaders who broke the seal” (queen) “What?” (naofumi)

“We're concealing it for now but, an inquiry about who's responsible will produce a big risk so....” (queen) Indeed, that's the case.

If the country announces that this great disaster happened because of the heroes, it's quite capable of causing a disservice to unrelated heroes as well.

Three of the Four Sage Heroes caused this calamity. It's not necessarily true that other heroes won't do it.

But before that, the chaos.....in this case, it's the heroes credibility.

Looking at the triumphal return, I can sympathise with how much the inhabitants of this world expect from the heroes.

If it was discovered that heroes were responsible for this, there might just be a riot.

And having to suppress the riot and the waves simultaneously, until finally everything falls together in mutual destruction.

The country should choose not to publicly announce the truth, but that the Spirit Turtle was defeated by the hidden heroes. That sort of visage is better.

This feels like the so-called result of 'playing hot potato with the responsibility issue'.

It's a common occurrence but, it's quite.....

“Also, the heroes are extremely powerful beings and so we will be needing an equal strength to administer justice” (queen) Catching them will also be a pain.

Which is why we have to conceal the truth.

“However, isn't this truth already well-known?” (naofumi)

“It's still at the stage of gossip. That said, it seems each nation being silenced so there won't be much influence on the support of the populace. We're persistent and announcing that this incident was from a wave” (queen) One's livelihood will also be affected when the heroes they believe in, even when there are waves that hint towards the end of the world, in promote havoc.

It can't be helped, you can't even understand it.

“.....Nevertheless, there are still rumours” (queen)

The queen added a supplement.

“I've spread a rumour about being punished so so that it won't appear to the other heroes as anything more than simple gossip. Of course, I've had a large publicity campaign about the Hero of the Shield, Iwatani-sama, being very active but.... just from looking at the status quo in the castle town, it doesn't seem very necessary” (queen) “Half-hearted! Catch the ringleader! Just fighting the waves! Isn't this all just punishment for me!?” (naofumi) Couldn't put up with it all, guys raising a commotion appeared. [??]

In this case, catching said people and turning them into a slave would be good but....they can't do that, can they?

If enslaving was possible, it would have been more efficient to enslave us four when we were first summoned.

With the high-grade slave crest, it could even be hidden from the masses.

To begin with, the fact that that Trash didn't enslave me is proof enough.

It seems improbable even if I enquire about it now.

The problem is that hard to handle guys would be useless as slaves.

Well, thanks to that, I didn't end up becoming a slave.

“Have I mentioned it's because it was determined that Iwatani-sama and the Seven Star Heroes could do this?” (queen) “Grr...Nevertheless, couldn't you just face everyone and say 'we are the country' or some other meaningless line!” (naofumi) There problem is that isn't it.

Even if they've become rotten, those guys are still heroes so it's hard to tell their followers to arrest them.

Stopping a riot is also a pain.

If it was me, I'd fight but it'll be quite severe to fight with my status having fallen to just 30%.

At the least, I shouldn't be fighting until I've had a full recovery.

I do have the option of leaving it to Raphtalia and the others but I don't

know about trying that.

I don't want to burden them with that risk.

“If course if it's possible, I'll have you participate in waves as you've been doing until now. However, heroes are people who possess power. There's always the danger of them going on a rampage. Can't you understand that we can't even say that there are no countries who watch vigilantly for the opportunity to try to assemble heroes?” (queen)

“Melromarc, you vixen! Are these your words!?” (naofumi)

“Certainly our country has its faults. But this argument should have already finished. What do you intend by bringing up this political question again? Are you saying that there aren't people who would use powerful heroes as government tools?” (queen) So troublesome.

If Melromarc and the other countries could just offer heroes a prize and not penalise them, the heroes would immigrate to a nice country by themselves, but there's a risk of becoming a tool of the government.

That's why I can't judge them strongly.

I had already rejected any invites from nice countries before I even knew of them so I couldn't have done that though. If it's them, it might be possible that they have.

Really, this group is too much, we're not getting anywhere.

There's even 1 person in the party, me who also thinks that.....

“I understand the hero's treatment. Also, in regard to just this disaster.....is reconstruction possible?” (naofumi) The tension of the Allied Forces suddenly dissipated with my query.

Ah, indeed it was quite intense.

“The Allied Forces have taken damage from the infiltration and induction”

“I'm sorry for not being able to defend against it all”

As the Hero of the Shield, I originally had to take action so there won't be any victims. In spite of this, a substantial amount of damage has been

dealt.

“No.... they would have been satisfied, everyone who participated in the infiltration said that they could avoid death thanks to the Hero of the Shield-sama being there” (queen) “I'm pleased to hear that” (naofumi)

“The neighbouring countries took a lot of damage and much time is needed to rebuild” (queen) “.....I see” (naofumi)

“To be honest, supporting Iwatani-sama is also quite difficult” (queen) I could only nod at this. If they said they could still give me a lot of assistance even after suffering such devastation, I'd be concerned about where they would get the money from.

“We will assist as much as possible, but when compared to what we had planned.....” (queen) “Yeah, I know. If I want money, I'll do something about it myself.” (naofumi) At this point, you should be gathering money for reconstruction instead.

I saw the damage in the castle town when I was coming here.

¼ of the castle town had been crushed by the Spirit Turtle. Land reclamation is essential for the sake of the people who lost their homes.

Reclamation.....that's it.

“Hey, aiding with something that's not money is okay right” (naofumi) “Yes, it would be more helpful for us if it was something other than money with the current conditions” (queen) This would solve the Allied Force's issue, as well as the thing I thought of so far.

“Then— “(naofumi)

Chapter 129: Social Standing

“Can you grant me some land?” (Naofumi)

“Land? That will probably be fine, but can you explain your reasons? I thought Iwatani was indifferent to the state of this world.” (Queen) “I understand I am asking for quite a bit.” (Naofumi) Staying in the same city as the army is something I would like to avoid...

The Queen probably understands this.

“When we were inside the Spirit Turtle, I noticed something. To put it frankly, this world’s army is weak. If I do nothing about this, we will not be able to reduce casualties during the wave.” (Naofumi) “You Bastard-” (Country Leader)

The one who spoke up is a commanding officer, but the soldiers around him restrain him.

I knew this would happen. That’s why I wanted to remain silent.

“Iwatani has made a rational analysis, let’s hear him out.” (Queen) “We also have testimony from some soldiers. According to them, the Shield’s companions had super-human strength and preformed magnificently. Compared to that, we...” (Another Leader) The other leaders hang their heads and say nothing.

I have worked with various branches of the military, including the fighters, mages and assassins. This is my analysis of them so far.

“I’ll concede that if the army wasn’t there, we would have been destroyed by the turtle. But that is exactly why.” (Naofumi) “Muu...” (Country Leader)

The commander that spoke up lets out a sound of defeat and sits back down.

These people are annoying because of their pride, however they can be quite easy to deal with.

“When I say they were weak, I’m talking about the entire army’s attack

power as a whole. As we have not established the exact connection between the Turtle and the wave, there is a possibility that even stronger enemies will manifest as the wave progresses. That's why I want to raise a fighting force to combat these disasters. I'll also need some money, but that is secondary. For now, I would like to request for some land to set up a base." (Naofumi) "I see where Iwatani is coming from. We have also yet to reward him for his efforts, so I guess this will be a good opportunity." (Queen) "Then my country can-!" (Leader Person)

"No, my country will-!" (Another Leader)

"I apologize, but I have already decided upon a location. I understand what you all are trying to say and am grateful, but I must ask you to stand down for now." (Naofumi) It will be troublesome to build a base in a country I know nothing about.

And you people just had your towns destroyed by the Turtle. Your people are still suffering.

This isn't the time for you to be giving away money, land, or manpower.

"Someone please get a map." (Naofumi)

The Queen takes a map from Shadow and spreads it on the table.

"... I would prefer it to be close to the Castle Town, but what location does Iwatani wish for?" (Queen) "Here." (Naofumi)

Without hesitation, I point to a spot near the harbor we went visited to get to Cal Mira. It is on the coast.

"...!" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia has a shocked expression, but she doesn't speak up.

"I see... That land was the location of the first wave. It faced heavily casualties and has now been abandoned. Is that alright with you?" (Queen) "I plan to start from scratch anyways. Instead of being close to the Castle, I think it is best to choose a location that fits my preferences." (Naofumi) "I understand. But for you to own such land, I must present

you with some sort of nobility.” (Queen) “I plan to return to my world after this. I don’t think I need a permanent title or anything.” (Naofumi) “I shall present this land to you along with the title of Count.” (Queen) “Hey...” (Naofumi)

If I were to become a count, then I would have to deal with troublesome things like land disputes and inheritance.

If this was a light novel, wouldn’t I have to work my way up from knight?

I know about the title hierarchy from a manga I read a while ago.

Though that manga was set in recent times instead of the medieval times.

(TL: I don’t know what manga this is)

Duke, Marquis, Count, Viscount, Baron.

These are known as the five ranks of nobility, and the higher you go up, the more prestige you get.

Titles can be based on either Family or Land ownership rights. In my world... in Europe, nobility was decided by the amount of land one was given to control...

I think.

This gave birth to many different conquests for land and many different nobles arising.

And many people controlled more than ten-thousand acres of land.

But I don’t know if that applies here as well.

“Iwatani might have a child in the near future, so we must prepare for that.” (Queen) “Hell no.” (Naofumi)

Her intentions are being revealed quite casually.

Do you really want me to marry Melty that badly?

“Whatever. If it is completely necessary, I will take the title of count.” (Naofumi) “Please wait for a moment, there are rituals we must go

through to bestow the title unto you.” (Queen) “That sounds like a pain.” (Naofumi)

“However, you have really helped us this time around. I would like for you to properly receive the title as a reward for your efforts.” (Queen) I guess if a hero defeats a monster of that caliber, then simply handing over some money isn’t enough.

It did kill many people.

“And I am excited to see the change that happens through the country. If the Shield hero who is worshipped by the demi-humans were to become a noble in the Human-dominated Melromark... I told you about it before, right? About the capable person of this country.” (Queen) “Hm?” (Naofumi)

Now that I think about it, when Trash’s reign of terror ended I heard something about that. That a capable person of this country had died in the wave. He had helped facilitate Human-Demi-human relations.

The Tanuki-human Rafatalia lived in a province heavily populated by Demi-humans.

I see, the land I am asking for was formerly that person’s?

“The land that Iwatani requested belonged to that person. He was quite popular and trusted by the people.” (Queen) ... The Queen seems to be reading my mind.

The various leaders are listening to the conversation intently.

“This will create a lot of rumors, be they good or bad. Fine, I’ll leave the land to you.” (Queen) “Don’t expect too much.” (Naofumi)

“Now then, please come to the throne room for the ceremony.” (Queen) “Understood” (Naofumi)

We are led to the throne room.

The Queen hands me a ceremonial sword.

Unless I have the intent to equip it, the system will not give me a warning, so it is probably fine.

It won't look good if it shoots out of my hands.

Before reaching the throne, I receive some instruction from Shadow.

I'm supposed to draw the sword and present it to the Queen, after which she will touch both of my shoulders with it and present a title unto me.

"Hero of the Shield, Iwatani Naofumi, has arrived!" (Guard) The Castle Guards are playing instruments reminiscent of Trumpets.

It's loud. It's annoying.

I confidently walk towards the Queen, who is standing in front of the throne.

I take a subservient pose and lower my head, while unsheathing and presenting the sword to the Queen.

The Queen grasps the hilt, and slowly taps both of my shoulders with it.

"Hero, for your valiant efforts, my country courteously bestows unto you the Title of Count." (Queen) And the Queen returns the sword to me.

"We expect great things from you." (Queen)

I return the sword to its scabbard and stand up.

"That's how it is. It's supposed to be a more grandiose celebration than this." (Queen) "Don't. That would be a pain." (Naofumi)

"Is what I thought you would say. However, the populace needs some form of celebration to advertise your newly gained authority." (Queen) "I got it." (Naofumi)

With this, I think I will be unable to walk the Castle Town's streets anymore.

Is that the Hero of the Shield? Yeah that person. Hmm... Just like the rumors say, he looks like he is up to no good.

...

Is what I used to hear.

Ah! The Hero of the Shield! The one that defeated that Monster and

saved us all!?

...

People point at me and shout. It is now difficult to walk around for a different reason.

It's not like I don't want to be noticed, but this is enervating in itself.

"Now then, I will be talking to representatives of another country for a while. If anything happens, please allow me to help." (Queen) Wait, where was Trash during all of this?

... Ah, there he is.

He is staring at me with an irritated expression.

Is he under surveillance, and unable to approach me?

As I think this... I notice he is wearing a collar. (TL: What sort of play is this?) "___!" (Trash)

Whenever he tries to speak, the collar seems to glow.

It appears to rapidly tighten. Can I laugh?

I think I will laugh.

"____!!" (Trash)

He seems furious.

But the collar shuts him up whenever he tries to scream.

I give a cynical smile.

"Naofumi-sama...?" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia says in a stern tone.

"I mean, how can I not laugh? Look at him." (Naofumi) "Anyways, I also have a lot of things I want to talk to you about." (Rafatalia) "I understand, but today I'm tired. Let's go back to our room and rest." (Naofumi) When I woke up today, it had already been past noon. The days are passing by too quickly.

"See ya, Trash of the world. Your bitch of a daughter's situation is

uncertain, and the other heroes are yet to be found. You will be forever remembered as the Foolish King who led 3 of the 4 heroes to their demise. Good for you, you'll be famous." (Naofumi) "____!!!!" (Trash)

Trash points his finger and tries to advance on us as we leave the throne room.

But the soldiers surrounding him succeed in restraining him.

He can't even talk to me anymore. The Queen does good work.

Is that man really one of the Seven Star Heroes? That's definitely a lie.

Chapter 130: Level Reset

I lie down on the bed in the guest room and rest my body.

Ah, indeed it's heavy. When I lie down, I can really feel it. The effects of the curse are strong and quite severe.

The sun has set already, what can I do.

By the way, Firo is with Melty. Their relationship is quite close.

“Thank you for your hard work” (rishia)

Rishia voices these words of gratitude.

“Come to think of it, you're not wearing the costume” (naofumi) “Ah, Yes. I thought we weren't going to fight for a short while so I took it off, but is that displeasing?” (rishia) “No, it's just become habitual, I wasn't telling you to wear it” (naofumi) “Rishia-san is, how do I say it.... it seems like you enjoy wearing the costume” (raphtalia) “Yes. When I wear that costume my body becomes lighter.” (rishia) That's because there are various enchantments on it. It's quite convenient.

“It was amazing, Naofumi-san” (rishia)

“Ah, at last you call me by my name” (naofumi)

“Eh, ah....” (rishia)

“Don't worry about it. I'm not particularly angry.” (naofumi) Perhaps Rishia gained some courage after prevailing in a big battle.

This is a joyous thing.

“There's territory. There's also court ranking....this is quite a big promotion” (raphtalia) “I was originally a hero..... it doesn't really excite me though” (naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, what is your desire?” (raphtalia)

Raphtalia asks me with distrust in her eyes.

Speaking of which, she started to speak out when I specified the territory I wanted to the queen.

“Is this about today? It's just as I said. It's unfortunate but the allied

troops just aren't reliable. Judging from the tough battle from before, if we don't make a private army of troops, it'll be quite relentless from here on.” (naofumi) “But still, why the damaged area from the first wave?” (raphtalia) “That's also in accordance with what I said during the day, we'll be doing a variety of thing so please be prepared.” (naofumi) “Hah.....good grief, it seems as though we won't have any peace if we're together with Naofumi-sama” (raphtalia) “This is all just until we finish overcoming the waves. Please bear with it” (naofumi) “I understand” (raphtalia)

“Fufu, you look just like an old married couple” (rishia) Rishia dropped a bombshell-like announcement.

Well, Raphtalia is the one who I've known the longest in this world, I kind of understand.

We're not a couple though.

“Wha-wha-what are you saying!?” (raphtalia)

Raphtalia yells, her face colouring in embarrassment.

Ah, indeed, Rishia has stepped on a land mine and brought on imperial wrath by mentioning that love affair.

Originally she was just an ordinary slave, but Raphtalia is a more kind-hearted and meddling person than others.

She lost her family, her home was snatched away; I can easily imagine her grief.

In other words, Raphtalia is fighting so there won't be more people in the same situation as her.

With such a noble purpose, Raphtalia wouldn't be thinking of love affairs.

To begin with, Raphtalia's outer appearance may be that of an adult however, in terms of age, she is still a kid.

She's not old enough to be falling in love.

Well, Rishia is in love with Itsuki so those kind of feelings are, for better

or worse, a woman's.

Which reminds me, how old is Rishia? Her appearance gives the impression of a middle school student.....so around 14 years old.

It seems a bit premature but it is another world.

“That's right, Rishia. Raphtalia doesn't like those kind of jokes. Be careful” (naofumi) “Na-Naofumi-sama.....” (raphtalia)

A blushing Raphtalia regained her composure.

There there, provoking others isn't good.

“O-Okay....?” (rishia)

Rishia tilted her head in confusion whilst staring at Raphtalia and I.

“Well then, we'll be engaged in a variety of things tomorrow. Rishia, what are you going to do?” (naofumi) “What do you mean by 'what am I going to do'?” (rishia) “I'm referring to resetting your level. Since the wave has been pushed back considerably, if you want to re-level up, now is a good time” (naofumi) “Eh, ah!? Tha-that's right isn't it.....umm” (rishia) “The one to decide is Rishia. Consider your actions properly. Seeing as this is a good opportunity” (naofumi) “Okay. I will think about it for a bit” (rishia)

Thus, we rested thoroughly and prepared for tomorrow.

“Now then” (naofumi)

After eating breakfast at the castle, we have a quick chat with the queen.

Since the timing was just right, I ask Rishia.

“Have you come up with an outcome?” (naofumi)

“Ah, yes..... I also want to become as strong as Raphtalia-san! Therefore I have decided to start over” (rishia) “Is that so, well then....” (naofumi)

When I turn to face the queen, the queen also nodded.

“Then I will give instructions to perform the service by means of the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era” (queen) “That'd be a great help. Today

we'll be occupied with a lot of things” (naofumi) We leave the castle and travel to the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.

Ah, we should put on a robe to obscure our face. If we don't do this, guys will be following after us in groups, even the queen “I heard the story from the queen” (soldier)

A soldier guides us to the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era.

.....As I thought, the hourglass has stopped.

For some reason, the sand has solidified and doesn't fall.

“Originally this is only used as a punishment for criminals though” (soldier) “Just a bit” (naofumi)

“I heard the rumours. The Hero of the Shield's comrades possess strength rivalling that of the heroes', so what's the secret to that strength?” (soldier) What a nosy soldier.

It would be a burden to get involved in something strange. I limit my answer to something ambiguous.

“No, it's just simple harassment. This kid is a subordinate of someone I hate, you see, I thought I'd reset her level and send her back to him” (naofumi) “Fueeeeeeeeeeee!?” (rishia)

Rishia lets out a dreadful cry.

“I-is that how it is!?” (rishia)

Read the atmosphere.

Raphtalia looks at me with a shocked face

Where is Firo looking? She's gazing into the horizon.

Sigh....I bring my face close to Rishia's ear and whisper.

“The harassment thing is a lie. If I tell the truth to that kind of fellow, mercenaries and adventurers will swarm us, wanting to be strong. Your Itsuki also had a habit of concealing, right?” (naofumi) “Ye-yes” (rishia)

Jeez, I'd like you to sense these things.

What adventurers, in the end it'd just be a gathering of ruffians.

After they acquire a certain amount of power, guys who are really eager should enlist to become soldiers in a country somewhere.

Even if they reach the level cap prior to a class up, guys who become adventurers either don't want to enter a guild or are wannabe criminals.

What I want to make is a private army who will listen to my instructions, not guys who are just strong.

After the weak become strong, complaints will be raised. At any rate, I would have to deal with those kind of guys in the distant future.

“And, how do I reset the level?” (naofumi)

“Firstly, put on this choker and stand on the magic circle in front of the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era” (soldier) I give Rishia the choker that the soldier was holding out.

Rishia put on the choker and stands on the magic circle just like the instructions.

Perhaps some sort of power of resistance will be removed by wearing the choker.

“Is this really alright?” (naofumi)

“Yes!” (rishia)

Rishia's decision was firm.

Hm? There are people to help with the service, just like during the class up, but they had prepared a stretcher.

“There is a reaction from the resetting. A few days of rehabilitation will be necessary, I think” (soldier) I see.....

That's right, if the stats that were natural until suddenly drop, the body will become heavy....

Since I'm already like this, I think that if someone returned to level 1, then they would become unable to move for sure “There are individual differences though” (soldier)

While saying that, the soldier starts the ritual.

The Hourglass of the Dragon's Era shines, filling the magic circle with power.

It's similar to the scene from the Class Up.

“Right now in this place, there is someone here to release their power for the sake of choosing a new path. Oh, world. Show this person the path and give them a chance.” (soldier) “u....ku....” (rishia)

Rishia moans in the centre of the magic circle.

“A feeling of p-power escaping is...” (rishia)

As I thought, it's that kind of feeling.

Before long, something suddenly emerges from Rishia and I affirm it scattering in all four directions.

“It's over. How's your body's condition?” (naofumi)

“Eh?” (rishia)

Rishia repeatedly opens and closes her hands.

“It doesn't feel very different” (rishia)

“Was it a failure?” (naofumi)

“That shouldn't be the case?” (soldier)

I slowly check Rishia's status.

Right.

It's returned to level 1.

It's just that.... there's almost no change in stats.

The bit that rises from levelling up is almost non-existent, so there's no sense of discomfort even when returning to level 1.

..... If this was reversed, it would be considerably harsh.

If she has no disposition for battle, then what should I do.

I can't just depend on the shield's growth correction.

“By the way, should Raphtalia and Firo do it too?” (naofumi) “No.....I am....” (raphtalia)

“Firo doesn't want to do it either” (firo)

Well, these two don't really need to.

Growth Correction started when Raphtalia was level 25 so its not like it would be meaningless.

Firo also has the Philorial Series Growth Correction to depend on so there shouldn't be any loss.

Well, if we don't proceed gradually, offensive power won't be enough and we'll become unable to fight.

Moreover.... it seems that the moment Firo resets her level, she'll become a baby chick.

I don't know what kind of growth Philorials have though.

Fixing her upbringing is good but since the one in question doesn't want to do it, there's no need.

“Is that so, then let's head to the next place” (naofumi) “We're ready whenever” (soldier)

The soldier in charge bows his head.

The interaction is considerably different from before.

I'm aware that I'm staring back and inspecting him.

He's a bit childish but.....my evaluation of him rose a little.

Chapter 131: Where We Met

“Where do you plan to head next?” (Rafatalia)

“I think I have to see the guy I don’t want to meet.” (Naofumi) “What?” (Rafatalia)

“Eh-?” (Firo)

“W-where would that be?” (Rishia)

Rafatalia looks at the path I’m following. She seems to understand. She holds back a sigh.

I’m surprised she could guess from that sentence. Is she an esper?

... I guess she had saw it coming when I obtained the land.

“Are you selling Firo?” (Firo)

“Is that man really that scary?” (Naofumi)

Firo seems to understand as well. She looks at me with the eyes of an abandoned puppy.

Firo usually acts quite carefree, but I guess she got a trauma from this place.

Though I think she could kill that man instantly if she set her mind to it.

Is it that phenomena where an elephant has his leg tied to a tree as a child, so he doesn’t try to run away as an adult? (TL: See Baby Elephant Syndrome) It might be something like that.

“Calm down, I’m not selling anyone.” (Naofumi)

“I got it...” (Firo)

“Eh? Wha?” (Rishia)

Rishia... she’s a noble so she probably knows.

Granted, a fallen noble. There is also a chance she doesn’t.

I head down a back street and end up in front of the ever-so-familiar

tent.

“My, my...” (Slave Dealer)

The slave dealer, who I don't want to meet, greets me with a bored expression.

If you think about it, there are very few people who would go out to buy slaves in the middle of the day.

This person is more famous in the town as a Monster Merchant.

“If it isn't the Hero of the Shield. It's been quite a while. I've heard much about your victory.” (Slave Dealer) “Yeah, it's been a while.” (Naofumi)

“I was sure you had forgotten about me.” (Slave Dealer) “I wouldn't be able to forget about a shady character like you even if I tried.” (Naofumi) It's quite hard to forget this man. He has a sort of unique aura.

It's a feeling similar to the accessory merchant.

I guess he needs to act like that to run this business.

The last time I was here was when I came to purchase Firo's claws. It was around the time I was forbidden from using Class Up.

At that time, I had tried to escape to Silt Welt or Shield Freiden to Class Up Firo and Rafatalia.

I believe that this man had some connection to the Queen... Though he has never personally met her.

“You've been quite busy. I didn't think you would have dubious ties to this country's government.” (Naofumi) “That doesn't change the fact that I approached the Hero of the Shield because I found him interesting.” (Slave Dealer) “Yes, I'm aware of that.” (Naofumi)

“Now then, how can I help you today?” (Slave Dealer) “It's about your real profession.” (Naofumi)

“Oh!” (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealers eyes sparkle for a moment.

What are you so excited about. Don't think it will be easy to short-change me.

Is he happy that a famous person like me is fighting with his slaves?

While this is a fact, that doesn't mean they are powerful because I bought them from you, you know.

"What price range are you looking in?" (Slave Dealer) Currently, I have 5000 silver coins remaining of what the Queen gave me.

I'll need the old man to make some more weapons, so I shouldn't spend to frivolously here.

"For now, I would like to purchase some Demi-Human slaves around the price of 3000 Silver Coins. If possible, I would like them to be of low level." (Naofumi) "What do you plan to use them for?" (Slave Dealer)

"Why do I need to tell you?" (Naofumi)

"I know. You acquired some land and need some slaves there." (Slave Dealer) "I think I've said this before, but don't ask for things you already know." (Naofumi) Really, how much does this person know... If he told me he could see the future, I might believe him.

"Please come over here." (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer leads me to the back of the tent.

As we start to follow him, Firo stops us.

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"... I don't want to go." (Firo)

It seems the darkness of the tent and the smells are setting off her trauma.

I'm already used to it, but I know it isn't a nice scent.

"Do you want to wait over there?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah..." (Firo)

Fir nods as she stumbles towards the monster egg display.

You know Firo, that's where we first met you.

Don't eat those, I warn her, as I continue to follow the Slave Dealer.

"Um... What are we looking for?" (Rishia)

"We're going to get people in positions similar to yours." (Naofumi)

"Fueeee!?" (Rishia)

"Even though fallen, you're still a noble, aren't you? And before Itsuki saved you, you were in a similar situation weren't you? Please read the situation." (Naofumi) This country has an active slave trade. Nobles and other rich folk should be well aware of its existence.

Why is Rishia so surprised?

Is she unexpectedly quite dense?

"T-this is a... I never noticed." (Rishia)

"But they don't deal in human trade." (Naofumi)

"I see..." (Rishia)

We follow the slave dealer, and end up near the cages where I first saw Rafatalia.

"... This is where my fate changed..." (Rafatalia)

I am also reminiscing about that time.

Though it wasn't that long ago, it feels like years have passed.

"Let me pick out some slaves that are within your budget. I'll even give you a slight discount." (Slave Dealer) "How generous." (Naofumi)

"I hear you are starting up quite an interesting town. It's quite exiting! Perhaps you will become my best customer after this." (Slave Dealer)

"Well... I just come to fulfill my needs." (Naofumi)

"Though business may seem to be slow today, I have already earned a large profit from The Hero of the Shield's fame." (Slave Dealer) "What do you mean by that?" (Naofumi)

"During negotiations, if I bring up your name, they expect their new

slaves to turn out like your companions. Even if I overcharge, they seem to knowingly accept it.” (Slave Dealer) Rafatalia did earn herself quite a bit of fame during the last battle.

She outclassed the entire continental army in ability. If people learned this is the place that sold her, I guess business will improve greatly.

“Ah, besides those, there is also another type of slave I wish to purchase.” (Naofumi) “What may you be interested in?” (Slave Dealer)

In response to the Slave Dealer’s question, I turn my focus to Rafatalia.

I approach her head on and put my arm on her shoulder.

“W-what is it?” (Rafatalia)

“Rafatalia, is there anyone here from the village you used to live in? I don’t care about the price, pick anybody you recognize.” (Naofumi) “!?” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia widens her eyes in surprise.

“U-um... Are you really okay with that?” (Rafatalia)

“What are you saying at this point in time? Employing people who used to live in that land is the most efficient option for reconstruction. They might have to fight a bit, but our main objective for now is resettling the land.” (Naofumi) Rafatalia probably has the wish to go back to the village she used to live in tucked in somewhere in her heart.

It occurred to me when I visited the graveyard with Rafatalia. I need to work hard so that when I leave this world, Rafatalia will still have a place to call home. Even if I’m gone...

Of course that isn’t my only reason.

Rafatalia’s former village is on the sea, and if you walk a few hours from it, you can reach the mountains. As people used to live there, the ground is relatively level and ready for agriculture.

It’s the perfect area for testing various things.

(TL: It’s perfect for both farming and Farming)

Because of the wave, I won't be kicking anyone out of their homes either.

"Oh, Slave Dealer, can you ask around the store you got Rafatalia at? I'm willing to buy back slaves from nobles if I must. They'll probably be willing to part with them if you mention the Hero of the Shield."

(Naofumi) My popularity is rising in this country. There's no reason I shouldn't use that.

"You plan to motivate your slaves by giving them their previous homes, all while putting them to work? The thought process of the Shield intrigues me! I understand. I'll ask around." (Slave Dealer) "Now then, Rafatalia, do you see any familiar faces?" (Naofumi) "... Please give me a moment." (Rafatalia)

On a side note, that silk hat... he seems to jump on board any idea I suggest.

I'm scared of his ulterior motives. I'll investigate his movements later.

The Slave Dealer shows Rafatalia around the cages containing the slaves, and she carefully examines each individual one.

"-Found one!" (Rafatalia)

So there was one.

Rafatalia is pointing her finger at a Demi-Human child... It's a man with dog-like features. His age seems to be around 10. He's a little larger than Rafatalia was when I first met her.

"You're Kiel-kun, right?" (Rafatalia)

"...Who are you? Why do you know my name?" (Kiel)

So he wasn't listening to our previous conversation.

"You forgot my face? I might have gotten a bit bigger, but I'm Rafatalia." (Rafatalia) "Eh!?" (Kiel)

The boy named Kiel looks quite surprised.

"That's a lie. The Rafatalia-chan I knew was smaller than me, and she

isn't as beautiful as you. Though she was kinda cute..." (Kiel) Kiel says this as if talking about a deceased person.

"Then I'll prove to you I'm the real thing. Two months before that incident happened, you were looking for a pretty shell to give Father for his birthday so you dived into the ocean. You almost drowned, so Sadina jumped in to rescue you and together, you..." (Rafatalia) "...Eh!? Are you really... Rafatalia-chan?" (Kiel)

"That's right, and after that, remember when you accidentally ate a poison mushroom you found in the field, messed up your stomach, and hid to avoid being scolded? You told me to keep it a secret when I found you. You had even wet your pa-" (Rafatalia) "Wai-! Yes! I believe you! You're Rafatalia-chan." (Kiel) Memories from the past? How charming.

But the contents seem to be quite embarrassing.

"Rafatalia-chan. Why did you become so big... so pretty?" (Kiel) "You know, I am currently the slave of the Hero of the Shield." (Rafatalia) "Eh!?" (Kiel)

"Naofumi-sama is quite a trustworthy person. And by his request, I am currently searching for the people who used to live in our village." (Rafatalia) "D-do you mean me? Can I finally go back home?" (Kiel) "Yes, but... You will be employed as Naofumi-sama's slave, and put to work. I guarantee he won't do anything evil, though. Do you want to come with us?" (Rafatalia) The child Kiel fidgets and blinks a lot as he listens to Rafatalia's request.

His face is slightly pale.

"Is the Hero of the Shield that man over there?" (Kiel) Kiel stares at me.

What's with that attitude.

"That's right. He might have an evil look around his eyes, and he might have a habit of smiling cynically whenever something bad happens to the people he dislikes, but he's a good person." (Rafatalia) "Are you even trying to persuade him?" (Naofumi)

She seems to be casually throwing in complaints against me. She's

grown to be quite confident.

But trying to persuade someone with those words is impossible.

If it were me, those words would make me even more cautious.

If I heard those words, I would think that Rafatalia had been brainwashed by a shady person.

... It hurts that her complaints are right on the mark.

“He’s the hero that saved this country. Don’t you know about him?”

(Rafatalia) “Now that you mention it, it has been getting noisy as of late... Will I really be able to go back to that village?” (Kiel) “Yeah. Your mother and father... won’t be there, but if we work hard together, we can rebuild that village.” (Rafatalia) “...I understand.” (Kiel)

Kiel nods and grabs Rafatalia’s outstretched hand.

“I’ll add him to your purchase, Please continue to pick out slaves with that girl.” (Slave Dealer) “I’ll need to prepare a few things in regards to that matter. Leave that to us.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Rafatalia)

“Fufufu, I feel that it will be getting interesting around here.” (Slave Dealer) “Let’s go, Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“How wonderful...Yes!” (Rishia)

Rishia follow closely with teary eyes.

Does Rishia not do well with these sort of stories? She seems like she would be an avid reader.

(TL: I believe Rishia is crying for joy at Kiel and Rafatalia reuniting)
Firo suddenly runs over.

“Are you done yet?” (Firo)

“Oh right... Firo, there’s a favor I would like to ask of you.” (Naofumi)
“What?” (Firo)

“Please take Rishi and go level grind for a bit. Go hunt until you feel satisfied.” (Naofumi) “Fue?” (Rishia)

Firo’s eyes sparkle and Rishia lets out a confused sound.

What is so surprising?

Did you forget about wanting to get stronger?

“I’m going have to train my newly attained slaves anyways, so this will be good practice. Also, I will be troubled if Rishia stays at level 1 for too long.” (Naofumi) “B-but how am I supposed to train with Firo-san?” (Rishia) “Don’t worry, you just have to ride Firo and make sure you don’t fall off. You’ll still gain EXP. Firo’s carriage is a rough vehicle to ride, you may need to train yourself. Rafatalia went down this road herself. This is killing two birds in one stone.”

It’s a leveling strategy often used in online games. It’s also used in various console RPGs.

A high level character fights with minimal support from a low-level one.

If I leave it to Firo, things should turn out just fine.

“Then, Firo will be off~!” (Firo)

“Fuee!?” (Rishia)

Firo turns into her monster form, grabs Rishia and throws her on her back. She then proceeds to sprint out of the tent.

“FUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE-” (Rishia) Rishia’s scream of terror fades into the distance.

“Now then...” (Naofumi)

I put on a cloak and leave the tent.

There are some other places I need to stop too.

Chapter 132: Acquaintances

I don a cloak and begin to walk around the town.

As expected, the damages are quite severe. The effects of the Spirit turtle are still clearly visible.

There is also clear signs of damage caused by the onslaught of familiars.

As I'm walking, I arrive at a familiar store.

Good, this building is still standing.

There aren't really any visible damages. The building seems to be conducting business as usual.

I walk into the store... The Old Man's store.

"Welcome." (Old Man)

"I'm happy you're safe." (Naofumi)

"That voice... boy, is that you?"

I take off the hood of the cloak and greet the old man.

Luckily, he doesn't have any visible injuries.

"Why are you wearing such a suspicious cloak?" (Old Man) "I don't want to stand out." (Naofumi)

"Well, you have become quite famous, lad." (Old Man) Yep, that's my main problem right now.

I'm not like Itsuki. When people call out my name in praise, it sends shivers down my spine.

I don't think popularity is bad in general, but having the people of this country praise me doesn't make me feel good at all.

And right now, I have too many things that I have to do. I can't waste my time dealing with these people.

"Well I guess having people flock around you would get annoying after a

while.” (Old Man) “By the look of it, this store hasn’t really been effected.” (Naofumi) “Pretty much. I was able to drive off all the monsters that came this way.” (Old Man) “Good job on that.”

“I saw it. You stood on that monsters neck and suddenly started bleeding, but then a large thing came out of the ground and killed it.” (Old Man) “You saw that?” (Naofumi)

I guess it is quite a feat to be able to focus on that while being swarmed by monsters.

I wonder just how strong the Old Man is.

I don’t really feel like finding out either.

“I was on the battlefield, so I was able to witness it: your power.” (Old Man) “I see. Old Man, What level are you?” (Naofumi)

“I have long since given up on becoming an adventurer. Please don’t pry any further.” (Old Man) My question was denied. Really, what level is he?

He’s at least done Class Up once, and he is on a level where he can fight on par with the Spirit Turtle’s Familiars.

... at least 70, probably.

“You’ve been through a lot since you first came here. When I first saw you, I couldn’t believe you would be able to change the world.” (Old Man) “I was of the same opinion.” (Naofumi)

I casually converse with this Old Man. He really has done a lot for me.

The Old Man looks around me intently.

“Is it just you, today?” (Old Man)

“Yeah” (Naofumi)

“What happened?” (Old Man)

“Rafatalia is currently working on a different job, and Rishia has gone hunting with Firo.” (Naofumi) “What about you, boy?” (Old Man)

“The city is quite damaged, so the castle has put all of its manpower into helping rebuild. Because of that, royal weapon production has been

ordered to cease.” (Naofumi) “I guess they’ve got no choice...” (Old Man)

“Yep.” (Naofumi)

I can’t ask him to make me anything right now. For now, I guess I should get his advice.

I’ll probably need something later. I’ll have to think about it.

“How’s the store going?” (Naofumi)

“A calamity of this scale just happened. Everyone is rushing out to buy weapons.” (Old Man) “So Business is booming.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, I’ve sold so much that my store room is almost completely empty.” (Old Man) “Isn’t that just peachy.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah but... for people without any passion for weapons to just go out and buy them in a panic... It feels a little sad.” (Old Man) There’s no helping it. The town was almost destroyed. It’s not surprising that people with no skill are rushing to obtain armaments.

It’s probably like that. In preparation for the apocalypse, people are frantically looking for weapons and armor to increase their chances of survival.

From what I’ve seen, there’s been no looting yet. They seem to be heading in a positive direction.

“Is that all you needed today?” (Old Man)

“Oh, about that...” (Naofumi)

I’m debating whether or not to ask him about arming the new slaves.

The Queen has already approved my proposal, so I can probably get some second-hand equipment from the army, but getting any more than that will be logistically difficult in this time of crisis.

These items are quite important. I don’t want to risk it on second-hand goods.

There’s also a problem of upgrades and maintenance. Well, first I should tell the Old Man the Situation.

“I received some land from the Queen, I’m planning to start a business there.” (Naofumi) The Old Man will be really helpful in procuring equipment, and various other tasks. I’ll try recruiting him.

“So what relation does that have to me?” (Old Man)

“I’ve come to scout you.” (Naofumi)

When starting up a new town, iron goods are essential Plus, I’m already certain of his skill. I can place my hopes on his equipment.

“I had kind of figured it out. But I have this store.” (Old Man) “I know. I won’t force you or anything. Perhaps... I may send someone to you to ask to be your disciple.” (Naofumi) “Ah, so it’s like that... I got it, boy... Though my skills aren’t that great, I’ll try to train anyone you send me.” (Old Man) Okay, I’ve got some approval.

If there’s a skilled slave, maybe I can send him to learn under the Old Man.

After that, I just have to buy the equipment. I don’t plan to make the Old Man teach for free, either.

“Don’t be so modest. I’m confident in your skill.” (Naofumi) “Ha, I’m working my hardest to meet your expectations.” (Old Man) “Next is... Oh right, do you have any information about the other vendors?” (Naofumi) “Ah, right. The Magic shop collapsed, didn’t it?” (Old Man) So that big magic shop collapsed... It was on the Castle Town’s main street. It was also on the side of town the Turtle attacked from.

...

“Were the employees Okay?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, the owner escaped without a scratch. The problem is that the Store is now gone. She’s currently taking refuge in Ryut Village.” (Old Man) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“The Medicine Shop has gotten quite busy.” (Old Man) “There were quite a few injured in the disaster, so that business is thriving as well.” (Naofumi) “Something like that. But the clothing stores seem to be losing

business.” (Old Man) Fumu... So no one I knew dies.

I don't have to go around the whole town to investigate.

“Well, I'm starting a business, so please give my regards to the other vendors. The place is...” (Naofumi) I tell the Old Man about my land. I also talk about the village that it will be centered around.

Right now, The Hero of the Shield is popular. There may be some people willing to jump on the bandwagon.

It would be best if I could have some people that I trust among them.

The village isn't exceptionally far from the Castle Town anyways.

“Got it, Got it. Everyone was worried about you anyways, my boy. Some people may be willing to go with you.” (Old Man) “I have a debt to those people, so I'll give them some preferential treatment. Old Man, if you ever feel like moving, you can come any time.” (Naofumi) “Got it, Got it.” (Old Man)

And with that, the Old Man casually avoided the topic. However his gaze seems to be serious.

“You have something else to ask, don't you?” (Old Man) “You can tell?” (Naofumi)

“Boy, every time you come here, you come with a mountain of requests.” (Old Man) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I don't really want to show it. I take off the cloak and show him my armor.

The Old Man gives a look of understanding.

“It was an intense battle. It held up well.” (Naofumi) The Barbarian armor is in a terrible shape. Its defense has also dropped considerably.

It's autonomous repair function did not activate at all. I wondered if it was beyond repair, so I took it to the Old Man.

“The Core Piece is not very damaged, but... everything else is gone case.” (Old Man) “Can you fix it?” (Naofumi)

“Hmm... It’s not like it can’t be repaired but... that depends on the materials. It will also cost a bit.” (Old Man) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Will you put in a request? I got some rare materials from that Monster for cheap.” (Old Man) They have more of those parts than they can handle.

It seems that a large quantity of materials were set aside for me, but still the turtle has way too many materials for the town to get rid of all of them.

“I am overstocked on those materials. If you pay a little money, I can make a lot of stuff for you.” (Old Man) “Is that alright with you?” (Naofumi)

“Don’t worry, if it’s a request from you, I’ll definitely carry it out. I also want to experiment with unknown materials.” (Old Man) “...” (Naofumi)

This man’s generosity towards me... it seems to be endless.

His skill level is also on a level I can respect. To be honest, I really want him to come work in my village.

Right now I am just starting out. Once I’ve finished setting up the village, I’ll invite him again.

“Well, in a matter of priorities, I guess the armor comes first... After that comes making a shield. You won’t necessarily lose any money on that one.” (Old Man) “Yeah, worse comes to worst, I can just copy it, and re-sell the original.” (Naofumi) “So you do get it. Well, please leave your armor here.” (Old Man) “Understood.” (Naofumi)

I take off my wreck-of-an-armor and hand it over to the Old Man.

“As for the core piece, I think you should hold onto it.” (Old Man) “Is that alright?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll embed the core in later. You can pay for it at that point in time.” (Old Man) “Thanks.” (Naofumi)

“Boy, what do you plan to do while waiting for your armor?” (Old Man) “I think I’ll borrow a second-hand one from the castle. Or maybe I’ll wear

the Costume.” (Naofumi) That costume does have some useful features attached. If only the appearance could be changed...

Rishia seems to be forming a strange affinity for it, but... that’s not my problem.

“Anyways, I’ll leave it to you.” (Naofumi)

“Got it!” (Old Man)

My negotiations with the Old Man are complete. I put the cloak back on and leave the store.

Chapter 133: E Float

“Now then...”

I put in a few requests with the Old Man. I could go meet up with Rafatalia and the others, or I could go talk to the Queen. I have some questions about her plan from here on out.

I might be able to get some second-hand equipment as well.

I return to the castle, and ask for the Queen’s location.

It seems that after the meeting ended, she went to her office to do paperwork.

“Queen.” (Naofumi)

“Iwatani? What is troubling you now?” (Queen)

“Can you spare us some equipment?” (Naofumi)

“Sure, there’s no issues with me doing that. However, much of the equipment we currently have on stock has been heavily damaged during the previous battle.” (Queen) “I know, but right now I don’t need anything high class. If you’re not using it, can you hand it over?” (Naofumi) “It’s for managing your new land, right?” (Queen) “Correct.” (Naofumi)

“Oh, right. Iwatani, I have a favor I would like to ask of you.” (Queen)
The Queen’s tone makes it sound like it is quite a big deal.

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I have finished speaking with the other countries... it’s about managing the heroes for the next waves.” (Queen) “Fumu...”

Though we still don’t know the meaning behind the blue hourglass, the red hourglass may begin to move again soon.

The red one only had 3 days left on it. It will be difficult to prepare if it suddenly starts moving again.

The other 3 heroes are still missing, so there is a large problem regarding man-power.

“Many countries want to focus on Iwatani as a main fighting force. There are also plenty of countries that want to deny entry to the other heroes.” (Queen) “Of course, after that...” (Naofumi)

The information has been hidden from the general public, but the leaders won't want to let those who caused this calamity to enter their countries.

Even countries unrelated to the incident wouldn't want the same thing to happen to them.

“Of course, that only applies if they are still alive. If they are found, can I leave it to you to arrest them?” (Queen) “You remember that my stats won't recover for another 3 months, right...?” (Naofumi) “I know I may be asking the impossible. I do think that they will return to this country, if they do return, though...” (Queen) “Why is that?” (Naofumi)

“Because of spreading rumors, most of the countries besides this one have decided to place restrictions on the movements of the heroes.” (Queen) “Doesn't that mean you can monopolize the heroes?” (Naofumi) ... What a fearsome woman. Somehow got to gain exclusive access to a massive fighting force.

“The belief is spreading that the heroes other than the Shield were false heroes...” (Queen) Well I can understand their train of thought. They could have just obtained weapons that change shape.

It seems that in the past, production of such items was possible.

“The belief is spreading that the summoned heroes other than Iwatani were fakes, and that they should instead depend on the strengths of the Seven Star Heroes.” (Queen) What sort of belief is that?

The mindset of people overcome by fear scares me.

...Though I don't know what sort of people the Seven Star Heroes are in the first place...

“The contributing factor to this belief was a rumor that began circulating during the last wave.” (Queen) “Ah, the fact that all the heroes other than me lost?” (Naofumi) “Yes, there were many people who

witnessed that battle, so it was impossible to stop the spread of such a rumor. The rumor had almost died down, but then they had to go off to another country and cause this disaster..." (Queen) Fake Heroes...

It's the same thing that happened to me before. I have to be careful not to get any bad rumors spread about me.

"There is also the question of their strength. They are definitely strong, but they are not on a level that is impossible to attain by a normal person..." (Queen) I don't really know exactly how strong those 3 are, so I can't really say anything in regards to that.

But they are probably still sticking to their own systems of enhancement instead of trying the others.

"But it will be troublesome if no country accepts charge of them... So I have decided to make this country the only one to accept them." (Queen) Shadow should have told them about how to unlock the other systems, but they stubbornly stuck to the belief that this was the world of the game they knew.

Looking back, their way of doing things was quite half-assed.

If they had only attempted to trust the others, they may have been able to get 3 times the enhancements as before.

Because I was oblivious, I tried out all of the systems and got my weapons to this level...

They're just like Rafatalia and Firo when they had reached their level 40 cap before classing up.

Though their level rose beyond 80, that doesn't mean they were getting particularly stronger.

Because I properly strengthened my equipment, I can keep up with Rafatalia and Firo, but I'm not sure about the others.

"Oh yeah, what about Bitch?" (Naofumi)

"There's still a faint response from her... If I want to, I can still activate her slave crest." (Queen) "I wouldn't really care if she died, though..."

(Naofumi) "... Bitch has some uses while alive, so it would be troublesome if she died. And she still owes me some money." (Queen) "Uses?"
(Naofumi)

"Well, her punishment helps entertain Iwatani... plus if she never repents, there is still something we can have her do..." (Queen) "Hmm..."
(Naofumi)

What will you make her do?

I think I will feel motivated to find her if you tell me.

"Do you want to know what I plan to do to her?" (Queen) "No, I feel it will be more fun to find out when the time comes." (Naofumi) If it's something cruel, I think it is better to hear it whilst in front of her. It will give off a 'surprise party' sort of feeling.

"Ah right, have you already gathered the necessary materials from the turtle?" (Naofumi) "Yes. I was just about to call you to collect them. They are lying around the training grounds in front of the warehouse. You may do as you wish with them." (Queen) "Got it." (Naofumi)

I part with the Queen, and look around the front of the warehouse as instructed, and begin to feed the large mountain of Spirit Turtle and Spirit Turtle Familiar materials to the shield.

...

As I was doing it, I noticed a giant eyeball, and a chunk of a brain matter inside of the mountain.

Did they go as far as to take apart the head and bring it all the way here?

This head is probably the one that Rafatalia and Firo were able to cut off during the Recon Battle.

There were also things that looked like parts of the heart, and a moss like substance. There's even some lumber.

If I want to feed the shield all of this, I'll have to stay up all night. I'll leave some meaty bits to cook later...

—

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Carapace Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Skin Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Flesh Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Bone Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Blood Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Bodily Fluid Shield (TL: (° 5 °)) You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Leukocyte Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Muscle Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Heart Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Myocardium Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Capillary Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Heart Eye Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Iris Shield

You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Sacred Tree Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Familiar (Bat Form) Shield You have unlocked the Spirit Turtle Familiar (Yeti Form) Shield ...etc (TL: Quite a pain to translate anatomy terms) I unlock a ridiculous amount of shields from the Spirit Turtle Series.

All of them have really high base defense.

The one with the highest defense is the Spirit Turtle Carapace Shield. It's base is many levels above the Chimera Viper.

I guess enhancing this weapon will be fun.

Now then... to look at its stats...

It seems that a skill can be unlocked by awakening it.

—

Spirit Turtle Carapace Shield 0/40 C

Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus

Skill: E Float Shield

Gravity Field

C Soul Recovery

Magical Barrier (Large)

Weapon Proficiency O

—

E Float Shield... Is that short for Erster?

What sort of skill is that?

I should probably test it.

「E Float Shield!」

The word ‘On’ appear in my field of vision. In the air, a shield manifests.

... Is it something like Air Strike Shield?

I think this as I try to approach the floating shield...

As I walk forward the shield moves as well to match my movement.

?

Is it a wall that moves with me as the base? It’s like a combination of Air Strike Shield and Meteor Shield.

I wait for the skill to wear off.

...It’s not disappearing.

Its effective time is quite long. I don’t have time to wait for it to vanish. I’ll figure out its effect time later.

C Soul Recovery is probably the ability that the Spirit Turtle had. The ability to steal and recover SP as you attack Gravity Field is an ability that seems to be common in the Spirit Turtle Series.

I believe it will force objects to be drawn to the ground, but as I am the

only person here, I can't really test it.

...

As I am deep in thought, the E Float Shield begins to spin in the air in front of me.

What is this?

It's getting in the way. Go away.

And with that thought, it does indeed move away.

...So it can move to whatever location I command it to move to.

This might be quite useful.

Its effective range is 1 Meter from me.

The on-off icon that appears makes me think it is probably a Semi-Passive skill.

My SP is slowly decreasing over time.

I think I will be able to keep it up for quite a while. As expected of something made of Spirit Turtle Materials.

"Change Shield!" (Naofumi)

I change my equipped shield. And instead of disappearing the floating shield changes to match my new shield.

Hmm... This could have quite a few uses. The only flaw is that I can only bring out one at a time.

This shield may become part of my main repertoire. But that depends on the quality of the shield the Old Man makes for me.

The other Shields are... There are some with nothing but high base stats, and others with plenty of Stat Increasing effects.

? I spot an abnormal shield within the list.

—

Spirit Turtle Heart Shield 0/45 C

Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus

HP Recovery Increase (Small)

C Magic Snatch

C Gravity Shot

Tenacity Enhancement (TL: Literally Life Force Up) Weapon Proficiency
O

C Magic Snatch... It probably lets me steal magic power. C Gravity Shot seems to be an offensive ability.

(TL: Though he may be stating the obvious, most of the skill names are in english while his explanation is in japanese.) Tenacity Enhancement? If this were a game, it would increase my endurance.

There are still plenty of shields to examine. I'll look through them later.

Chapter 134: Balloon Shield

“Naofumi-sama”

As I am testing out my new shields, Rafatalia comes running over.

She was gone for quite a while. Did she finish gathering her fellow villagers?

“I went to many different stores with the Slave Dealer, and managed to gather quite a few people.” (Rafatalia) “I see... Okay, I’ll go check it out. Do you think I have enough funds?” (Naofumi) “Yes, I was sent over to ask what you wanted to do with the remaining money.” (Rafatalia) “I see. I’ll head over to the Slave Dealer’s place then.” (Naofumi) “Yes, let us go. Where are Firo and Rishia?” (Rafatalia) “I sent them out to hunt. I think they will be out for a while.” (Naofumi) I don’t know how far Firo went.

I don’t think she will go to a place where even she will have trouble.

Her feral instincts are quite sharp.

“Ah, but first I have to say something to the Queen.” (Naofumi) It will probably be best to prepare to depart tonight.

Time is of the essence. I need to see just how much I can train these people.

“Hmm? Have you finished preparing?” (Queen)

The Queen appears behind me. It seems she went out for a walk.

I fed most of the materials to the Shield, so the mountain has pretty much disappeared.

... The Queen must be pretty busy right now. It’s not strange for her to look for a change of pace.

“For the most part. Please send the rest of the materials to my village. I plan to make the meat into a meal sometime in the near future.”

(Naofumi) With the new slaves I will be getting, the need for food has risen exponentially.

It’s not that I can’t procure food on my own, but there’s a lot I need to

do right now. First I need to work on reestablishing the village.

“Then I shall dispatch a platoon of soldiers to assist in your work. Please use them as you will.” (Queen) “Ah, thanks. I plan to head to the area now to prepare.” (Naofumi) “If you need anything, please feel free to ask. We will do our best to meet your needs.” (Queen) “I got it. The first things I’ll need to do is to collect construction materials and put up theft countermeasures. I plan to depart tonight, so please prepare the men by then.” (Naofumi) If a hero were to load a carriage with a large load of slaves it would seem quite shady. That’s why leaving in the night is probably best.

I thought Firo’s eyes would be like those of a bird, but she can see at night just fine. Travelling at night is no problem.

“I understand.” (Queen)

After hearing the Queen’s response, I thank her and leave the castle. I head for the Slave Trader’s tent.

“Hero of the Shield, I have gathered the slaves at your request.” (Slave Dealer) “Yeah, I heard from Rafatalia.” (Naofumi)

When I enter the tent, I see some Demi-Human children, 8 in total, staring at me from inside cages.

All of them are watching my every action with fear.

Some of them are even shaking.

“I thought there would be adults here as well...” (Naofumi) “In the wave, most of the adults perished... We don’t know the fate of those that survived...” (Rafatalia) Even if they survived, Rafatalia was unable to discover their locations. Or perhaps she found that they had died afterwards...

If they had fled during the First Wave, there is a possibility that they escaped to Silt Welt or something like that.

Finding them will probably be impossible.

Anyways, I don’t plan to dig very deep into this.

“Now then, I’m sure you have already heard it from Rafatalia, but I will declare it again here.” (Naofumi) It’s probably best for me to act strict here.

At the start, Rafatalia was a coward and Firo grew to be selfish.

To avoid these problems down the road, I should treat them with discipline.

“From now on, you all are my slaves. You will travel to your former village and rebuild it, while training to get stronger.” (Naofumi) If I show kindness here, I will be looked down upon.

“I hate lazy people the most. If anyone begins to slack off, I will sell them without hesitation. You got that!?” (Naofumi) As I say this, I see the Slave Merchant issuing commands to his subordinates. One strikes an instrument reminiscent of a gong.

... Who told him to do that?

Look at them, they look afraid.

... No that’s probably my fault.

“Hiiiiiii-!” (Child)

“R-Rafatalia-chan, is this really the guy!?” (Child)

“Mama-!” (Child)

My ears hurt.

But what I’m running isn’t a charity. I must raise a force to combat the wave.

“Now then, I will start the Slave Contract.” (Naofumi) As I raise my hand, the Slave Dealer lets out a smile. He hands over some Slave Contract Ink.

I put a drop of my blood into the ink.

And the process of putting the slave crest on the children started.

“Yes, what do you plan to do with the rest of the money?” (Slave Dealer)
“I plan to continue peddling, so if you have a monster I can use for

transportation, it will help.” (Naofumi) ... The Slave Dealer’s eyes are still sparkling. Please stop it with that look.

“Then, shall I contribute a Filo Rial to your cause?” (Slave Dealer) “No, I have my hands full with a Filo Rial as it is. Please offer a different species.” (Naofumi) “Are you not good with Filo Rials?” (Slave Dealer)

“I would prefer a monster that won’t lose to Firo in skill. One that may be able to help plow the fields.” (Naofumi) While wandering town, I didn’t see only Filo Rials and Horses. I’ve also seen animals that looked like Cows and Caterpillars hooked up to carts.

And if I raise another Filo Rial... My hands are full with Firo.

“Master, I’m Hungry” (Naofumi’s imagination)

The thought of more of those things is enough to make my face pale. I only want to raise them one at a time.

Among magic beasts, Filo Rials need to be raised with quite a bit of discipline apparently.

They might add a good amount to our fighting power, but for now, we are still just reconstructing. I don’t think I can raise a Monster with an appetite of that level.

I still have a lot of Spirit Turtle meat, but I don’t plan to waste it all at once.

I should first start with something I can actually handle.

“I see... Then I shall find a beast for you.” (Slave Dealer) “I’ll leave it to you” (Naofumi)

“Do you want to purchase one from an egg? Or would you rather have a fully grown one? Raising them from eggs makes them more compliant later on in life.” (Slave Dealer) “I guess an egg is fine for now.” (NAofumi)

“Understood. Yes.” (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer walks towards the part of the tent used for Monster Sales.

I look through the restrictions I can put on the eight new slaves.

It seems I can also put a punishment for revealing classified information.

I'll decide on their specific tasks later.

It seems that the slave registration process has ended. As I look outside, I see the sun has already set.

We can leave after Firo and Rishia arrive.

After a while, Firo comes running in.

... There is no one on her back.

Did she fall off?

Firo skids to a halt in front of me.

"I'm home~!" (Firo)

"What happened to Rishia?" (Naofumi)

"?" (Firo)

"P-please let me down...urp..." (Rishia)

It seems that Rishia hasn't fallen off. She is grasping onto some of Firo's feathers on her rear as if her life depended on it.

It seems that she almost fell off when Firo was going at a high speed.

Firo sits down, and Rishia falls off of her quite abruptly.

"Urp..." (Rishia)

Rishia is making sounds quite unbefitting of a noble.

-Please hold for technical difficulties. (TL: Yes, it really says that) "Now then, to check the results." (Naofumi)

These two have been out since just before noon. The sun has already set, so...

Ah, Rishia's level has risen by 20. The results aren't bad.

Her stats are even higher than they were before the Reset. It seems that

the Growth Correction effect is working properly.

“I can see stars. Itsuki-sama... Is that you in the afterlife?” (Rishia)
“That’s an illusion. Firo, please snap her back to reality.” (Naofumi) “Got it” (Firo)

Firo lightly slaps Rishia’s cheek.

Is what it looked like, but Rishia is sent flying. Is she all right?

“Wha!!! Where am I!?” (Rishia)

“Oh, so you were okay.” (Naofumi)

“I thought I was dead!” (Rishia)

“Yeah, but you gained 20 levels to show for the experience. Your stats are higher than ever before, aren’t they?” (Naofumi) “He?” (Rishia)

Rishia checks her own status.

“Wow, Amazing!” (Rishia)

For her to be this amazed at her own stats...

Now then.

“Rishia, I have a job I want to give you.” (Naofumi)

“W-what is it?” (Rishia)

“I want you, Rafatalia and Firo to help me manage the new Slaves and monsters I have acquired” (Naofumi) “I-I see...” (Rishia)

“Rafatalia and Firo are already strong, I want you to act like their elder and train with them.” (Naofumi) There’s no point in just leveling up.

Rishia, who leveled up down a wrong path before is a good example of this.

I plan to have Rafatalia and Firo assist them, but I don’t just want to build a party with a high level.

Gaining combat experience is also important in itself.

So for a while, I’ll take Rafatalia and Firo off the front lines.

This way, these people will be able to gain a strength that can't be measured in level.

"You're going to get stronger, right? Good luck." (Naofumi) "B-but that was for Itsuki-sama, and he..." (Rishia)

"He's not the type of person to die so easily is he? When you meet up again, don't you want to make him tell you that he needs your power?" (Naofumi) I think it's fine if he is dead, but I'm saying this in order to further Rishia's growth.

"I got it! I'll do my best!" (Rishia)

Rishia seems to have gained motivation. She stands up.

Good. Her heart has become stronger than before.

All that she needs now is diligence. Probably.

"I'll wait expectantly." (Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Rishia)

"Master, what do you want Firo to do next?" (Firo)

"Please get the carriage. We'll be carrying a lot, so also bring some carts. There should be a lot in front of the warehouse." (Naofumi) "Yes! Ah, I found this for you." (Firo)

And with that, Firo begins to pull out the corpses of various monsters.

I've seen all of these before. Whatever, I'll just feed them to the shield anyways.

—

You've unlocked the Balloon Shield

You've unlocked the Red Balloon Shield

You've unlocked the Orange Balloon Shield

You've unlocked the Yellow Balloon Shield

—

What?

The monster I absorbed was a normal balloon. And I unlocked all of the other Balloon Shields with it.

For arguments sake, I look through the new shields. All of them only effect stats.

But the Balloon Shield is the only one with a strange skill.

—

Balloon Shield 0/5 C

Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus

Monster Book

—

Its stats are terrible. Even worse than my initial Small Shield.

But what does it mean by Monster Book?

I test it.

With a beep, a window appears in my field of vision.

... It displays all of the monsters I have fed the shield up until now.

It even says where I found them. It also seems to have the ability to lead me to a specific species of monster if I wish to encounter it.

How convenient.

It records the data of any monster I absorb.

However, it doesn't seem to display the number of monster species of this world.

In high spirits, Firo went and got the carriage I had parked at the castle.

To be honest, if it weren't for Firo, the voyage would probably take a few days.

"Hero of the Shield, as you have requested, I have prepared you some

eggs. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) The Slave dealer appears carrying a number of eggs.

“Ah, I’m grateful.” (Naofumi)

“Do you know when your next visit will be?” (Slave Dealer) “Well, I still have money left over, so I may come again soon to buy more slaves.”

(Naofumi) “Well then, I will wait expectantly for that time. If I find one of the slaves you were looking for, should I contact you?” (Slave Dealer)

“Yes, please do.” (Naofumi)

“Understood.” (Slave dealer)

“Then I guess I should be off.” (Naofumi)

I hear the sound of Firo pulling the carriage getting closer.

“...but before that...” (Naofumi)

I turn around and face the Slave Dealer, who is rubbing his hands together.

“I’ll make dinner.” (Naofumi)

I use the Spirit Turtle meat that Firo brought back with her, and begin cooking in the tent.

It’s a basic hot pot consisting of meat and soup.

The turtle has a bit of a unique taste, but it shouldn’t be a problem.

“Wha?! This is Delish!” (Child)

“What is this? It’s better than what mom used to make!” (Child) “Yeah! Why is that?” (Child)

“Naofumi-sama is a very skilled chef, you know.” (Rafatalia) “Yeah! Firo loves to eat master’s cooking.” (Firo)

The slaves seem to be getting closer over the delicious meal.

“This is just perfect. To eat a meal personally cooked by a hero. I might fall for you.” (Slave Dealer) The Slave Dealer also managed to obtain some of the food in the heat of the moment... If I worry about it, I lose. I’m cooking in his store, anyways.

“If you find more of the villagers, you might get to eat it again. Work hard.” (Naofumi) But the Slave Merchant seems lost in his meal. I’m not sure if he heard me.

It’s like a welcoming party. Things will get busy from here on out. I need to make sure they get proper nourishment or they won’t hold up.

And like that, after the meal the slaves boarded the carriage and we leave the castle town in the darkness of the night. Towards our new home.

Chapter 135: Artificial Feeding

I let Firo pull the carriage and we march in the middle of the night, we arrived at the outskirts of Raphtalia's village in the morning.

"Master, we have arrived." (Firo)

"Good." (Naofumi)

While I was sleeping Kiel tried to play a prank on me and got reprimanded harshly by Raphtalia.

Of course with the exception of Raphtalia and Rishia, the slaves got harsh restriction and the slave mark got set to activate immediately if they tried to attack me.

Also, because of what Bitch did before, now I immediately awake when something happened.

On the first day we went to work with the slaves to demolish the building wreckages.

"This house is my important home." (Kiel)

Kiel shouted in rejection.

"It's good to treasure your house, but the roof has fallen, the walls are destroyed. It's a pity, but accept that there are houses that can be repaired and those that can't." (Naofumi) I searched for stuff that either have monetary value or can still be used, but they are either robbed or there simply none, there are still some items remains, but they are already too rusted to be used.

The water well seems salvageable.

The field... seems need some considerable maintenance.

"I understand the feeling of not wanting to discard your memories, but from the standpoint of reconstruction the stuff that are going to get in the way need to be discarded." (Naofumi) "But-" (Kiel)

"Kiel-kun! Stop saying selfish things!" (Raphtalia) Raphtalia warn him. Well, it's not necessarily need to stop him.

Even so...

“These are the house that you had lived in.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Kiel)

“Then, the new house that will be built here will be yours.” (Naofumi)
“Eh?” (Kiel)

The brat called Kiel looked at me with puzzled expression.

“Understand the condition that you will become the one who will manage the communal house. You will become responsible for the place where the others are gathering.” (Naofumi) “U-un.” (Kiel)

Kiel nodded to my ambiguous words.

“That’s why – NOW! Firo!” (Naofumi)

“YES!” (Firo)

The moment Kiel showed an opening. Firo charges at the deserted house and promptly did flying kick at the fulcrum of the house and destroyed it.

“AaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?” (Kiel) (TL: Yes, scream louder)
Leaving the dumbfounded Kiel, I went to the next task.

Before noon the materials for building houses and the castle’s soldiers that the queen prepared arrived.

Stones, lumbers... and is it plasters?

“Hero of the shield-sama objective is to reconstruct this place?”
(Soldier) The soldier seems to have heard the story from the queen.

“Aa, at the very least I want the roof to be constructed before the day end. I’m aware of this unreasonable request but I’m counting on you.”
(Naofumi) “We might be soldiers but we do have some knowledge about construction. So please leave it to us.” (Soldier) “Please do.” (Naofumi)

Construction and.... Conscription but do they have any relations? (TLN : It seems the queen picked the soldiers that know how to construct stuff, probably engineer corps or something) And then I realized it was about to become noon

“For the time being we will left the building to the soldiers, Raphtalia, Firo, and then Rishia.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Raphtalia)

“Wha—at?” (Firo)

“What is it? (Rishia)

Those three replied to my call.

“After this I will start making lunch, after you finished your meal you three along with the slaves will go out and begin demon extermination.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah.” (Firo)

“I’ll do my best.” (Rishia)

“I’ll leave the squad composition to you. Having too much people will be detrimental on the EXP that will be obtained okay.” (Naofumi) (ED: Just from how they used their words you can guess who spoke) I haven’t attempted to do an actual measurement, just how much will the amount decreased?

More like, how does the distribution system works? Or they sharing it I have no idea at all.

“Is there anyone who knew the details?” (Naofumi)

“Um...” (Rishia)

Rishia raised her hand apologetically.

“What?” (Naofumi)

“The people who are inside the party receive the same amount of EXP. The maximum limit for that is 6 people. Any more than that will cause it to decrease.” (Rishia) Oh, so that’s why you were left out.

Though if I said that she would probably cry ‘Fueee’ so it’s better to stay silent. It’s annoying In an expedition with a large amount of people there doesn’t seem to be a problem in dividing the group That mean that it is sufficient to organize 6 people in 1 team In the case that multiple team fighting against one demon it’s better to separate into different areas.

“I’ve understand.”

“Yes. Then we will be splitting up.”

“Leave it to me.”

I gave authority to Raphtalia to make a party.

At the present the slaves numbered 8 that’s why Rishia led 2 person, Raphtalia and Firo led 3 person.

“Then I’ll start cooking lunch so lend me a hand.” (Naofumi) “Yes!”

Then the three people begin to help as much as they can.

“Raphtalia-chan will be helping out?” (Kiel)

Kiel who just recovered from his absentminded state began to stare at me when I am in the middle of making preparations for cooking while asking Raphtalia.

He recovered pretty quickly. Is it because he is still a child?

“Raphtalia-chan is bad at housework.” (Naofumi)

“Erm...” (Raphtalia)

With a troubled look Raphtalia send me a glance

What? What kind of stuff do you expect me to?

She seems want to show her friend his good side, Raphtalia timidly began to open her mouth.

“Should I help?”

“Should I just randomly grill some meat or make some soup? I would prefer it if it were a dish that I could just leave over a fire for a while.”

The meal that I made tastes good so I’ve been the one who did the cooking I’ve already used to it. Lately everyone has been leaving the cooking to me.

“It’s enough if you just help me clean-up.” (Naofumi) I began to cut the ingredients to chunks. The meat was large so it was kind of hard to cut with a cooking knife With that said, when Raphtalia was the one who

cook the food they didn't taste good and Firo just said to leave all the cooking to me...

I ignore their complaints and began cooking.

"Food is coming out of the shield!" (Firo)

Firo stared at my shield enviously with great excitement.

"Ah, It was made with the shield's skill." (Naofumi) "It's awesome."
(Firo)

And the food that served is spaghetti like food that is unique to this world.

The name of the food seems to be naporata.

To be honest It sounded like the variety kind of pasta from my world, the shield seems to change the name of the item so it resembles the item from my world.

"It tastes somewhat... normal." (Firo)

"Yeah... normal." (Raphtalia)

Seems like the food quality was affected, it tasted normal and it doesn't contain the subtle delicate tastes.

It doesn't taste bad. But it doesn't taste good either. It's definitely normal.

"Master's cooking is way better." (Firo)

"That's true. Even when it's cold the food that Naofumi-sama made is still a delicious." (Raphtalia) "I-I got it." (Naofumi)

For some reason those two had a reproachful gaze that made me remember that I've been looked at with those kind of eyes.

Come to think of it, these two no longer satisfied by food from restaurant and only pleased by the food that I cooked.

I don't think it's possible to become a gourmet after just eating my food once. But they do become motivated for that. (TLN: Absolutely no idea how to made a sentence out of this and at this point, it's a guesswork)

Come to think of it, what if the situation where I am the cook got reversed?

For the time being I better make a cooking team because at the moment there is no restaurant in the surrounding area.

“Here, the food is ready, after you finished eating go out already” (Naofumi) I distribute the meat that I grilled above the crude iron plate and the soup that have been cooked.

“As I thought this is absolutely delish.”

“Yeah! It’s really good.”

The slaves devour the food with smile on their face.

I also treat the soldiers that made the house some food as well.

“This.... I’ve never eaten such a delicious grilled meal before!?”

“Are you kidding? They made some of those at the castle and they didn’t taste good at all.”

The shield’s handmade correction is endless.

Did you guys knead any salt and spice on the meat beforehand?

The slaves devoured the food that I cooked.

Nevertheless, there is no need to eat that much.

It’ll be bad if I don’t prepare enough food after they returned from levelling.

“Now then, you lot, each and every one of you will be carrying a weapon and then you will fight.” (Naofumi) And with that declaration the slaves become scared.

Just like the old Raphtalia, the girl turned pale when received the bladed tools.

I hand the second-hand weapons that I got from the castle to them. Most of them are dagger designed for beginners.

“Prepare yourself that unless you did not fight you will feel pain on your

chest. And if you do that don't ever think of returning to your hometown.”
(Naofumi) “Gu....” (Keil)

Kiel tried to complain to me on behalf of the others.

But Raphtalia interrupt him and prevent him to say anything.

“I don't exactly need you people for anything. Only for territory development. But, because Raphtalia has been obediently following my orders you guys will become here present. So don't make a misunderstanding or anything.” (Naofumi) The slaves glared at me provokingly.

I've used to playing the role of the bad guy in this world. Besides, I'm not doing this for charity or anything. There is no need to anxiously worry about the future since I'm planning to return to my own world anyway. I need to prepare a place for Raphtalia so she can spend her time peacefully.

“Now then... Firo, I want you to pick all the monsters that you defeat into the wagon. There are a lot of use for them.” (Naofumi) “Yeess!” (Firo)

Mainly as food.

Later, just like what Ren did I should absorb those stuff into the shield.
(TLN : Probably as item instead of shield unlock) Right now there are a lot of meaning that there are still to do.

“Come on, off you go then. See ya.” (Naofumi)

I point at Firo's carriage and ordered them.

The slaves reluctantly ride the carriage. Firo started to pull the carriage and went to hunt “Mind the speed.” (Naofumi)

“ye-s!” (Firo)

The carriage made gotogoto sound as firo pulled them.

“I'll leave the house construction to you then.” (Naofumi) “U-understood.” (Soldier)

I asked the soldiers to begin construction, set the shield to start

compounding, and next is to start cooking.

It's only a little bit more until the demon egg hatched.

Before the Spirit Turtle meat ran out I need to find a way to supply food.

「で.....」

(ED: I feel this is more like an expression rather than a meaningful word) The slaves that went together with Raphtalia returned back at evening.

Everyone is exhausted. The demon that got defeated is loaded onto the chained carts. Right now we need food. immediately, they did good.

But right now, there is something that is more awful.

Guuuuuu.....o

Guuu.....o

Kyururururururu.....o

Gugyururururururu.....o

The sound sounded like roar

I wonder what would happen when they suddenly increased in level at an environment where food is scarce? I'm slightly curious.

Perhaps they won't die but they'll definitely starving. I think that while looking at Raphtalia.

The body which is undergoing rapid growth want nourishment thus they became hungry.

“You guys finally returned, did you guys fight properly?” (Naofumi)

“Erm, everyone did their best.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia answered with a smile.

I saw the slaves' faces and their expression are difficult.

I didn't ask for a Sparta kind of thing, but they seem to be unsatisfied.

“Fuee.... So tired” (Rishia)

“Oh, Rishia, how was your condition?” (Naofumi)

“It feels easier to move than before.” (Rishia)

Certainly her status is higher than before the level reset. With this battle should become a little more easier.

“Rishia-neechan. Why are you wearing the plushie.” (Slave?) “That is because Rishia is a plushie mania.” (Naofumi) “Fuee!” (Rishia)

Rishia tried to deny by shaking head, but there is no mistake about that.

“It’s really that after all.” (Kiel)

Kiel finally consented about the management.

He hates me so he can’t trust me.

“If you work it’ll be good. It’s dinner now.” (Naofumi) I put the spirit turtle stew and the steak that I have prepared beforehand on the table.

I do this because I’ve been expecting it.

I made a lot of them but they’ll definitely disappear immediately.

“””Waaaaaa”””

The slaves began to eat excitedly.

Yoshiyoshi....

“Master, Firo’s share?” (Firo)

“You have it.” (Naofumi)

I take out Firo’s part.

They are about 1.5 times of the slave’s part.

“Only this much? I want to eat more.” (Firo)

“If you want more go hunt it yourself.” (Naofumi)

“Buuuu” (Firo)

Firo sulks.

Sorry, but I’ve quite a large amount. I can’t serve only to just one person.

“””Thank you for the meal”””

What? When I was in the middle of chatting with Firo they already eat everything!?

For the time being they are satisfied.

“Alright kids, go to bed immediately for tomorrow’s preparation.”
(Naofumi) “...Ye-s.”

I crammed the slaves into one the house that the soldiers from the castle repaired for half a day, and the rest of us went into the house to sleep.

The house’s windows are still broken, it can be used to defend from the rain but the wind is still blowing in.

I wonder what I should do for tomorrow food.

“I’ll sleep at the place where everyone is.” (Raphtalia) “Got it, I’m counting on you to make them used to it even if it’s just for a little bit.”
(Naofumi) “Yes.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia leave in order to sleep with her old friend Firo was already half asleep. (I can’t remember what the sound effect meant) Rishia id reading a book that she took out of nowhere. She is a hardworking person.

I began compounding for the preparation of my next plan. While at it I went and checked the level of all slaves. It seems the average of the level that they raised is 15. All of their status rose as well. Judging from Raphtalia’s growth pattern, I want to raise the level of them even for those that are unsuitable to combat to at least 30.

Chapter 136: Midnight Snack

And a while after that...

I hear a loud knock on my room's door.

"Um..." (Child)

Rafatalia has come, along with the other female slaves.

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"Well..." (Child)

Rafatalia ignores my words, and makes a face as if she is asking for a favor.

Is she asking me to make an inference based on the situation? That's impossible for me.

"Did she wet the bed?" (Naofumi)

"You're mistaken. Please tell Naofumi-sama properly." (Rafatalia)

"Um... Well..." (Child)

Gu...

The other female slaves are looking at the floor with an embarrassed expression.

"... I got it. Most of the kids will probably ask the same thing, right? Please gather everyone and wait here." (Naofumi) "Thank you."
(Rafatalia)

I head to the kitchen outside, and begin preparations for cooking.

Really, these kids get hungry really fast.

I look through the monsters gathered while hunting, and arbitrarily stick some on skewers.

It's a pain to deal with the smaller monsters, so I just pan-fry them whole.

With all this cooking, my free time is rapidly disappearing.

The next day.

“Now then, you all even had room for a midnight snack, but I must declare something. Those who don’t work, do not eat. My ingredient stock is rapidly decreasing. To replenish it, you all must perform some hunting. Basically, if you are able to defeat monsters, I might be willing to cook them for you. You got that?” (Naofumi) (TL: Food, the best way to raise a Loli army) “Yeah!” (Kids in unison)

... They’re being surprisingly honest.

Even Kiel, who had previously shown animosity towards me is replying with enthusiasm.

I’m a bit suspicious, but as long as they’re motivated, I guess it all works out.

“I’ll make today’s dinner with what we have, but that’s your last free meal. Don’t forget that.” (Naofumi) “...Yes~” (Kids in unison)

Last night was quite hectic. No matter how much I made, they kept asking for more. What’s more, they all seemed genuinely hungry.

I get the feeling that I will be stuck in the kitchen for the rest of my life.

What am I? A mother?

I only planned to look over their growth, and eventually help them hunt. That’s all it was supposed to be, but...

“Thank you for the food!” (Kids in Unison)

“You’re welcome, now go hunt until the evening.” (Naofumi) “Got it~!” (Kids in unison)

They seem much more enthusiastic then yesterday, as they board Firo’s carriage.

... I hope they get at least 20 levels by the time they get back.

“The Hero’s cooking really is tasty. I should try my hardest as well.” (Soldier) The soldiers from the castle are also finding motivation in my cooking. Well, these people are already doing important work, so I’ll let it

slide.

I... begin preparing for dinner. Am I wasting my time here?

I use the rest of my time helping the soldiers with their work.

There's another important thing needed in ingredient procurement.

And for that, I am having the Shield make herbicide in large quantities.

If a problem occurs, then I can deal with it immediately.

And for that purpose as well, I must raise the levels of the slaves.

If I used that carelessly, a mutation might occur, and I have no idea what will happen.

For now, I should handle the seeds in the carriage with care.

"We're home!" (Kids in unison)

They're all covered in dirt, but smiling as they return to the village.

They're even more energetic before. In contrast, Rishia seems to be quite worn out.

Rafatalia and Firo don't seem tired at all, though.

"So, did you hunt successfully today?" (Naofumi) "Yeah!" (Child)

"Of course!" (Child)

The adaptability of a child is something to be feared. After two days, they are already used to it.

I get the feeling Rafatalia took quite a bit longer to adapt.

"Then, I'll cook as promised." (Naofumi)

"Hooray~!" (Kids in unison)

The children stampede towards the dinner I had prepared.

"Now then, Rafatalia." (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Rafatalia)

"After eating, there's something I have to do... You might get angry."
(Naofumi) "W-what are you planning?" (Rafatalia)

“A jungle.” (Naofumi)

It seems she understands what I was trying to say.

Rafatalia stares at me with stern eyes.

“Are you planting that?” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah, this area is filled with forests anyways, so I don’t see what difference it makes.” (Naofumi) “But still...” (Rafatalia)

“The soil around here probably needs quite a bit of work. I did ask the slave dealer for a monster that would help in tending to the fields.” (Naofumi) “... I understand. You have no intention of changing your mind.” (Rafatalia) “It helps that you’re so understanding.” (Naofumi) “If you consider efficiency, then I guess there’s no choice.” (Rafatalia) I did raise Rafatalia to value efficiency over all else...

Though she does care quite a bit about aesthetics as well.

“And I also completed quite a few tests. I learned to make many types of medicines.” (Naofumi) “Wait a minute, are you meaning to say you plan on modifying that thing even further?” (Rafatalia) “Yes, I plan to turn it into something that will bring in money quickly.” (Naofumi) Yes, my plan also puts money as a high priority. Rebuilding a village with only 8 slaves is impossible. Even if the Slave dealer manages to find another slave or two.

“I plan to modify it to make it easier to handle. I’ll also watch to make sure no problems occur. Just in case, I have prepared a stock of pesticides. I’ll keep at it until we gain a steady stream of food supplies.” (Naofumi) “Sigh... Well, be careful.” (Rafatalia)

“I know” (Naofumi)

I won’t do anything that will cause me to lose money. I only act to make a profit.

The thing I’m planning may be able to have combat uses as well.

As I’m mulling over these facts, I noticed the meal I had made had disappeared at an alarming rate.

“Thanks for the food!!” (Kids in unison)

“You’re welcome.” (Naofumi)

I can hear some lively conversations.

They’ve only been here a few days, but most of them are already used to their new lives.

I guess that because this is their home town, they are able to adjust quickly.

They’re not acting like slaves at all... But I guess that will make them mentally stronger later on.

“Now then, I have something important to tell you all. Make sure to listen well.” (Naofumi) “What~?” (Firo)

Firo and the other slaves tilt their heads in curiosity.

It’s a bit of an amusing sight.

“Everyone follow me for a bit.” (Naofumi)

I walk towards the fields. It seems everyone is actually following me.

“Here, I have a special type of seed.” (Naofumi) The slaves nod in unison.

“It was created in a faraway land, where it caused quite a bit of a problem.” (Naofumi) I think the Soldiers have heard about it before. They are whispering amongst themselves.

“But I have modified it since then. You people needed a midnight snack last night, right?” (Naofumi) “Y-yeah...” (Kiel)

Kiel is the one who responds.

“Please understand that I can’t waste all of my time cooking for you people.” (Naofumi) “But... The Hero of the Shield’s cooking is delicious.” (Kiel) “Yeah, I want to eat it every day!” (Child)

“If I am chained to the kitchen, then I can’t do my job. It’s not that I’ll never cook for you people. If you work considerably hard, I may consider it.” (Naofumi) No matter how we progress on the village’s reconstruction,

we will always be in need for food.

So I absolutely have to do this.

Those who do not work do not eat, but those who do not eat cannot work.

If they get enough food to fill their stomachs, their progress should improve.

“Now then, for the times that I’m not cooking, you’ll have to use this to sate your hunger.” (Naofumi) I drop the seed into the ground and pour some water over it.

The plant begins to grow before our eyes.

The Bioplant grows to about three meters, and begins to sprout tomato-like fruit.

“It may have other uses, but for now I will be filling the field with this seed. Your job is to manage this plant.” (Naofumi) “W-what will we have to do?” (Kiel)

“If it grows outside of its set area, you have to cut it. But for now, we haven’t decided on its bounds, so I’ll leave that decision to you.” (Naofumi) “Is that fruit... Edible?” (Kiel)

“Yeah, I think it has become the specialty of the village I got it at.” (Naofumi) At least I’ve seen it in the Castle Town being advertised as such.

“You can eat it if you get hungry. But if you see any problems occurring, make sure to report it to an adult. That’s all.” (Naofumi) I pluck one of the large fruits and hand it to Firo.

Firo starts eating it, but her expression shows that it isn’t enough to satisfy her.

Following her lead, some of the other children begin to pluck the fruit and eat it.

“Amazing...” (Child)

“Yeah.” (Child)

“At first I thought that rebuilding the village would be impossible, but if it’s this person, he may be able to do it.” (Child) Perhaps my reputation has gotten better. Or that may be my imagination.

“I told you that’s all. You are dismissed.” (Naofumi) If the cultivation of this fruit is a success, we can end our food supply problem all at once.

It can also be said that if we didn’t end this problem, then I would never be able to train these kids to be competent fighters in the time we had left.

I think it’s time for me to see how far the knowledge I brought with me from my world will be able to take me.

Now then... the moment of truth is upon us.

The Next Morning.

I give instruction to the group managing the Bioplant.

“Ow...” (Child)

The slaves are taking some damage while handling it. But that pain builds character.

I check everyone’s level.

As I thought, they are all around level 20. Rishia got to level 27.

Rafatalia’s level is unchanged. But the food shortage has been solved.

All’s well with the world.

Gu...

I hear someone’s stomach growling.

“When is breakfast?” (Child)

“Today I prepared it before-hand.” (Naofumi)

(TL: He says, today I packed bento to be more specific) I had made wooden boxes with steel reinforcement and loaded them on the carriage. By the way, the contents of them are Sandwiches containing thinly carved

grilled meat.

“We’re leaving already?” (Kiel)

Kiel says this with defiance.

He’s been making quite a few such comments lately.

Perfect. Today is the day I correct his attitude.

“You’re saying that because you don’t respect my sincerity. Just go with the flow and take a break for breakfast. Otherwise, something terrible might happen.” (Naofumi) “Hm?” (Kiel)

“Firo, go take a walk.” (Naofumi)

If you don’t eat it quickly, the wild monsters may take it away.

But Kiel has gotten stronger, he should be able to deal with monsters of this caliber.

Firo probably gets it. She won’t go to areas with too high difficulty.

With this, Kiel will be able to fight the motion-sickness that Rafatalia suffered from as well.

Just as planned.

What? If you get used to it, it’s not a problem.

Well, if you expel the food right after eating it, I guess there’s no point. If he learns to eat while riding it, it’s killing two birds with one stone.

“Naofumi-sama... You’re going too far.” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia says this while poking her head out of the carriage.

“Rishia also had to learn to get used to it.” (Naofumi) “Fue...” (Rishia)

“Even though I warned you, you’re still making that sound. Should I eat your breakfast for you?” (Naofumi) “I-I’m working on it you know...” (Rishia)

Her voice is weak.

Well, it probably won’t be fixed any time soon.

I hand over bags made of Bioplant to the slaves.

“What is this?” (Kiel)

“You’ll understand soon. Now then, have fun.” (Naofumi) I lightly hit Firo’s back, and she starts running.

“I’ll be off~!” (Firo)

“Wa!” (Child)

“Wha-!” (Child)

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...” (Child)

With a rumbling sound, the carriage disappears into the horizon.

“I guess I should begin other preparations.” (Naofumi) Now that a steady source of food has been secured, I can move on to the next stage of my plan.

“Hero of the Shield?” (Soldier)

“What is it? Are we out of seeds?” (Naofumi)

“No, there are no problems regarding that but... what about our breakfast?” (Soldier) Your breakfast?

Why is it already determined that I’m supposed to make it?

“...Yeah, I’ve prepared it.” (Naofumi)

I distribute food among the soldiers.

Chapter 137: The People of the Sea

(Note people is written here as Men and Women)

Garagaragaragara...

On that day, a carriage with a supplies from the queen arrived.

“I heard the Hero of the Shield could be found here.” (Knight) “What do you need?” (Naofumi)

The knight who came with the carriage addresses me.

I think I’ve seen this face before... I think she was practicing swordsmanship with Rafatalia.

Her appearance is... that of a standard female knight from a game. If she takes off her helmet, I think her face will rival Rafatalia’s in beauty.

Her hair is long and strawberry-blond. Most of it is stuffed into her helmet.

Her eyes are blue, like Firo’s. She looks like she would fit the role of a Wicked Queen perfectly.

She is accompanied by other knights, one of whom I recognize as part of volunteer army that helped me during the wave before the last.

“Hero of the Shield!” (Volunteer)

“You... How have you been?” (Naofumi)

“We’re working hard on rebuilding the city.” (Volunteer) “I’ll bet. But, that’s not what I’m asking. What has happened to you guys since then?” (Naofumi) “Nothing major has changed. I’ve been sent here to act as a messengers while the others here are reinforcements.” (Volunteer) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

The Queen seems to have completely grasped my train of thought. She has already sent more personnel.

“For now, it’s just me, but I have been instructed to act as the official messenger between here and the castle.” (Volunteer) “Not the Shadows?”

(Naofumi)

“Those people are to act as the unofficial messengers.” (Volunteer)
What’s the difference?... Well it doesn’t really matter.

“I’ve been asked to act as a martial arts instructor for the slaves.”
(Female Knight) “Ah, that will be helpful.” (Naofumi)

Rafatalia is mostly self-taught. It’s good to have someone with professional training experience.

“So... where are the ever-so-important slaves right now?” (Female Knight) “I sent them out to level grind. I think they’ll be around level 25 when they get back.” (Naofumi) “Fumu... Your lessons sure are fast-paced.” (Female Knight) “It’s Spartan style. Also, I plan to have around 30 more people for non-combat related purposes.” (Naofumi) “For what purpose would that be?” (Volunteer)

“This and that. Well, we also need to rebuild the buildings.” (Naofumi)
“Understood, I’ll relay that to the castle.” (Volunteer) Now then, I need to move on to the next task as well.

Recently I’ve been researching various plants. I’m trying to see why I can’t modify certain substances.

There are quite a few faults to my modification skills.

For some reason, there are some plants I can edit and some I cannot.

In that respect, the Bioplant is very easy to modify.

So I’ll see if I can make that Bioplant produce some simple medicine.

I finish readying a plot for the plant without issue.

“The Hero of the shield sure is enthusiastic.” (Kiel) Kiel, who had just returned, stumbles out of the carriage.

He has stopped complaining to me about cooking, but...

Guu...

His stomach still growls.

A few days later.

“Ahaha~!” (Child)

The slaves are having fun climbing up the Bioplant.

Their levels have all passed 30. Their appearances also changed, and they now look to be around 14-15 years old.

They only look slightly younger than Rafatalia. They have started to look an age that can actually be sent out to battle. They seem to be growing quite healthily.

Their appearance... well I would put it above village children. But there is no one here who rivals Rafatalia in looks. It just seems that they are eating proper meals.

Out of the boys, the one with the best face is probably Kiel. His face looks like a girls. He might grow into a Pretty boy one day (TL: Bishounen). Rather than saying he looks like a boy, it would be more accurate to say he looks like a boyish girl.

Not that it matters to me.

“Hey, Shield-Niichan! We’ve only been having meat and vegetables for a while. I’m tired of it.” (Kiel) (TL: I’m debating whether or not to translate Shield-Niichan as Shieldbro) “Don’t be selfish.” (Naofumi)

For some reason, he’s started to become quite impudent. It’s getting to be quite a pain to deal with.

I should try to set him straight, but he does his work fine, so there’s not much I can do.

He’s been acting quite familiar with me. He’s talking to me as a younger brother rather than a slave. He has also begin to say, ‘Thank you’ when getting food.

As long as he’s motivated...

It seems many of these children were used for physical labor before.

It may seem strange coming from me, but many consider it unethical to send child slaves into battle. They are mostly used for other purposes.

They are quite skillful at physical work.

“Hey, I’m going to go off to the ocean and catch some fish, so please cook them, Niichan.” (Kiel) “I don’t remember becoming your brother!” (Naofumi)

Kiel is definitely looking down on me.

Should I lecture him?

Oh right, Kiel seems to be shorter than the other boys.

His voice is also higher.

“I would also like some fish.” (Rishia)

Rishia and the other slaves voice out their agreement.

“Niichan, I want to eat Seafood!” (Kiel)

“Yeah!” (Child)

“Seafood!” (Child)

Damn, it seems I have mass produced Firos.

It’s a good thing the eggs haven’t hatched yet.

There’s no way I could handle a strange monster joining in here.

“Ah, I got it. Today we’ll go to the beach to catch some fish. While we’re there, Firo, go swim out and capture some aquatic monsters.” (Naofumi) “Yes~!” (Children in unison)

And so it turned out that we were headed for the sea.

Well, it has been getting quite hot lately.

Swimming around a bit won’t hurt.

These people... They lived here before, so they can swim, right?

And so, after a short walk, we reach our destination.

“Kyahaha~!” (Children)

And so the slaves enthusiastically run out towards the water carrying harpoons. They all take off their clothes and enter in their underwear...

In the middle of this, I noticed... Rafatalia and Rishia noticed as well.

“Naofumi-sama!?” (Rafatalia)

“Eh? Eh!?” (Rishia)

“Firo! Go catch Kiel!” (Naofumi)

“? I got it.” (Firo)

“Wah!? What is it!” (Kiel)

Firo drags Kiel out of the ocean.

Kiel is violently struggling under Firo’s arm.

“What is it, Shield Niichan!?” (Kiel)

“Let me say this first. I don’t really care, but there is something I must point out a large problem in the way you act.” (Naofumi) “And I’m asking what it is!” (Kiel)

The other slaves notice the commotion, and come over.

They seem to have caught on to the problem.

“Kiel-kun... are you possibly supposed to be Kiel-chan?” (Rafatalia)

“Wha?! What are you talking about? I’m a boy.” (Kiel) Kiel’s chest has a bandage wrapped around it, and he... she is wearing a loincloth below.

... For obvious reasons, Rafatalia is pointing at Kiel’s nether regions.

Recently I have been unable to read Rafatalia’s behavior.

It may be that meeting up with old friends has restored some lost parts of her personality.

“Kiel-kun... do you know the difference between a man and a woman?” (Rafatalia) “???” (Kiel)

“Um, you know... A man is someone who has...” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia begins whispering in Kiel’s ear.

“That can’t be true. If I were god, I wouldn’t do something so painstaking as to differentiate men and women like that.” (Kiel) “Then please look at the other boys No, look at Naofumi-sama. He’s a bit

different, isn't he? His chest isn't wrapped right?" (Rafatalia) "What are you talking about? That's what happens when you become an adult. I just have a bit of excess fat so my chest sticks out. When I become an adult, it will fix itself."

The BS is spilling out at quite an alarming rate.

... How the hell was Kiel raised before becoming a slave?

I have too many questions.

Or was she perhaps raised without such standards? Was she allowed to freely choose her definition for Male and Female?

Whatever the case, she was definitely raised abnormally.

Anyways, how did no one notice during the time he was a slave?

...Was this part of the Slave Dealer's schemes?

If I were the Slave Dealer, I wouldn't go to the trouble of changing a slave's world view, and would just sell her as is.

This country is quite rotten. There's probably a perverted noble who would buy her thinking she were a pretty boy.

And maybe another pervert who found Kiel's lack of gender Identity to be a turn on. All this just raises her selling price.

It seems she has already been sold a few times.

I think I heard that she had broken too many plates at her last place and had thus been returned...

Kiel also has some signs of significant physical abuse, so I guess she didn't receive any preferential treatment.

It seems that the abuse of Demi-human slaves is quite common in this country.

Rafatalia also showed such signs of abuse.

I guess this is the aftereffects of the recent war with Silt Welt.

Out of the 8 slaves one of them said that they were saved by a hero

before.

I guess even those people can't stand to see children being abused.

I see that they had left the issue to the country, and the child had eventually been resold as a slave anyways.

In the few days since she came here, I've gotten a good grasp on what personality Kiel has.

Around 6 of the new slaves still act cautiously when away from Rafatalia.

But that isn't an issue I have any influence over. I'll leave that to Rafatalia and Rishia.

At night, Rafatalia puts the other children to sleep, and sometimes sleeps next to them.

She also went through a similar experience, so she is able to understand their problems.

Even if I stay around, I don't think they will open their hearts to me.

Firo, being Firo is able to interact well with them.

She seems to be good with dealing with children in general, that bird.

This may be similar to the practice of Animal Therapy. (TL: google it) However, the children still get nauseous at the sight of her prized carriage.

"B-but father said that a man is a man if he thinks he is a man no matter what." (Kiel) So did the daughter began to imitate her father's manly attitude?

And anyways, that talk in itself is implying that you are a woman.

She was raised like someone from a story I had heard about.

(TL: I don't know the reference. Possibly Yukimura of Boku wa Tomodachi ga Tsukunai) The other female slaves laugh amongst themselves.

I've heard some women like to imagine boys who cross-dress, but what

do they think of a Girl who wants to be a man of the sea?

“This can’t be... I mean, what’s the point of separating man and woman anyways!? I don’t even know anymore!” (Kiel) Author note (TL: The Real one)

Kiel wasn’t meant to be an important character, however the personality I gave him overlapped with another male character I planned to make down the road, so I decided to give ‘him’ a little... quirk.

Chapter 138: Same Sex Only

“I don’t know the real meaning of being a man and a woman” (Kiel) She had always known that she was a man, Now she’s really confused right?

Firo? Why are you butting in

“The reason they separate man and woman, is it because they mate?”
(Firo) Kiel was confused with Firo’s answer

Read the situation... with a sweet sound reverberating in the air, Firo just defined what it is to be a man and a woman How straightforward, It looks like she understood most of what Firo was saying I look at Raphtalia direction and shook my head Well Rishia? Looked at their direction “It’s different!” she shouted.

“Why do you know so much? Bird!” (Naofumi)

“Come on! Firo knew from the start”(Firo)

Is it genetic memory?

No No... Maybe something happened with a Male Philoreal that she happened to meet in the forest.

“That certainly is suspicious” (Naofumi)

Firo shouted to complain about what I said

When you think about it, Firo lays eggs.

“Booo!!” (Firo)

This has become really annoying

Everyone Including Raphtalia, Everyone’s face has turned red Young man.. it’s as if they’ve just immersed from the sea. Is every one alright?

“I don’t like it! ... I can’t do such a thing... I will never do such a thing with Shield-niichan” (Kiel) (TLN: I think the one talking I kiel.. because you know the “niichan” thing) “Why would I do such a thing?”(Naofumi)

I want them to stop saying things like I’m raising them because of my ulterior motives Damn. This is frustrating

This topic of love-affair is really getting on my nerves I want Bitch to get captured soon to be punished and receive Divine Retribution “Stop already with this stupid topic.. at least for the time being, love is prohibited”(Naofumi) “EH?!”(Children)

The slaves were protesting

Whatever you say is useless

This is to fight the incoming wave not the declining birth-rate I’m not here to take care of all of you, there’s simply no room for baggage “Don’t think about such trivial things, do that when the world is already at peace”(Naofumi) “I don’t get it” (TLN: I don’t know who’s talking) “Why? Why is such a thing decided? Because I don’t like it. Look Raphtalia doesn’t like it either”(Naofumi) “Raphtalia?”(Naofumi)

“EH?!”(Raphtalia)

For some reason I raised my voiced to Raphtalia Ah!.. I was trying to change the topic. Seems like Raphtalia understood “Our purpose is to fight the wave. 3 ½ months from now I will take those who wishes to fight the wave with us, Ofcourse I will not force you if you don’t want to” (Naofumi) “EH?! That wave?”(Child)

“Right. I was summoned here to fight the wave that took the lives of your family. So tell me if you want to fight” (Naofumi) Just 8 people. I need more people, I want to establish several groups a guy from the battle squad that wants to volunteer would be ideal. These guys are still unsuitable for battle After hearing my words Kiel remains silent

“Because I’m a woman, am I useless?”(Kiel)

“Ha? That’s not true, look around me”(Naofumi) I’m pointing towards Raphtalia, Firo and Rishia “Come to think of it why are they all woman? Unbelievable!”(Kiel) Kiel was sharp! This is annoying.

“You.. What do you want to do? Are you joining?”(Naofumi) “Love prohibition, you just want woman to serve you” (Kiel) (TLN: “恋愛禁止って、女はべらせて何言ってた！” It was hard to understand) “Apart from me Raphtalia has no problem with another man”(Naofumi) “EH?!”

(Raphtalia)

“Yeah!”(Raphtalia)

“See Firo” (Naofumi)

“Male have no problem” (Naofumi)

“Booo!”(Firo)

“Men and Women are equal, I use whoever is efficient, so don't be mistaken” (Naofumi) “I see.. Shield-oniichan, I see Two swords!”(girl)
One of the slave girls mutters alone

Seems like she misunderstood something

“That's wrong” (Naofumi)

“What? What two sword?”(Firo)

Firo doesn't know what I'm saying. After all it's just genetic memory
“That... time when I heard that I was sold”

“To explain that.... Anyways, It's troubling that love will make you unable to fight. therefore love is prohibited”(Naofumi) The slaves were satisfied except for Kiel who nods unwillingly “I see.. I guess I need to give my best in fighting” (Kiel) “Ah! However, thinking about after the war... no, My preference may become popular, Kiel must practice peddling” (Naofumi) “What is that?”(Kiel)

“Your face looks good so I was thinking of using that. But you are timid so I guess you're unsuitable in peddling” (Naofumi) “Me? N-No way!” (Kiel)

“It's okay. Oh! It'll be fine you should always go to the streets. Humans have more nasty ways of entertainment”(Naofumi) “Shield-niichan the way you're saying that is scary”(Kiel) Was it a strange thing to say?

Anyways, If I brought Kiel in peddling I'm sure that I'll be able to sell a lot of accessories to the ladies Together with Raphtalia men and women would line up and give their money for the accessories “Ah! Kiel”(Naofumi)

“What is it?”(Kiel)

“I accept same sex relationships. So have fun with Raphtalia as much as you want”(Naofumi) It looked like I was jealous

“Such a thing, do you want Raphtalia-chan to kill me?”(Kiel) “You may unexpectedly fall and roll. Based on what I read in manga Raphtalia is the type that is likely not to refuse”(Naofumi) “What is manga?”(Kiel)

“That thing is good. Anyways, I’d like it if Raphtalia was a little rebellious” (Naofumi) Kiel began to tremble

The look from earlier

“Naofumi-sama?”(Raphtalia)

Oozing with blood thirst, Raphtalia approached me while smiling I think I might’ve touched a forbidden subject “It’s for that reason. Everyone disband, bring those seafood” (Raphtalia) “Yes!”(children)

After a while the female knight came to the beach “I heard you were playing in the beach, so it’s true”(Female Knight) “I’m just giving them a reward, these guys did their best recently”(Naofumi) “I think they’ve been rewarded plenty enough”

Certainly, but I also want to go to the beach and eat some seafood “Why don’t you have some fun as well” (Naofumi) Female Knight came to sea with a swimsuit

And began to swim together with Raphtalia

Despite being so shrewd you prepared that kind of swimsuit.... What country is this Speaking of this woman, she has strangely good relationship with Raphtalia Unrelated to the previous topic, It may be a little related Actually, to love another person is good

it will increase your worries but they will be there to accompany you “Naofumi-sama!”(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia waves her hands

“What happened? Were you drowning?”(Naofumi) “I won’t be speaking if I was drowning.. that, why are you being rude”(Raphtalia) Why is

Raphtalia being rebellious?

I also noticed Firo

What's with that expression? It's as if their doing some business
"Deceiving is useless you know"(female knight) "Ah! Yes yes!, It's a good thing to become healthy" (Raphtalia) (TLN: I have no idea what they're talking about) This could be troublesome I assume

"Shield-niichan!, I caught it!"(Kiel)

You could see the joy in her face when she caught the shellfish in the net "Yes yes"(Naofumi)

The grill is already hot. It's ready for grilling Food supply is already stable so there won't be any problems "Eat up, After eating we'll go back"(Naofumi) "Understood!"

Such a feeling today again, I'm irresponsible, I want to stop cooking for them A little bit more time, the monster eggs will hatch soon It's past noon and everyone is preparing to get back to the village I think the monster eggs are about to hatch Yesterday the Incubation period of the monster eggs in the contract is almost about done So I went to the shed to check the monster eggs' status "Shield-niichan. What are you doing?"(Kiel) "Just stockpiling food supplies, also the monster eggs are ready to hatch anytime soon"(Naofumi) "Wow!"(Kiel)

"Problem is... that Philoreal"(Naofumi)

That bird is really excellent at pulling carriages, but I feel anxious that there may become two monsters with really huge appetites
"Firo?"(Naofumi)

Firo tilted her head curiously

"It's different, this egg is not a Philoreal"(Naofumi) "Firo-chan has a younger sister and a younger brother?"(TLN: I don't know if this is Firo talking in 3rd person) "Amazing!"(Firo)

"Wow!" (TLN:Again don't know whos talking well for sure it's either Kiel or Firo) So noisy.... If you look at their appearance they're just like

middle school students, they're child-like No such thing?

"Categorically speaking, that is right"(Naofumi) "Master, will the newborn child would like to become Firo?"(Firo) It's a pain to answer Firo's question

Well whatever

"I want the monster to be able to pull a carriage, but the huge appetite is unnecessary"(Naofumi) "Hmmmmp, Perhaps. Okay"(Firo)

I faced Firo and gave such a reply

"You're not what Master wants, You're probably like Firo"(Firo) Firo's ahoge is moving towards the monster egg There's something in there

"Is Firo's family born?"(Firo)

Family!

If you think about it this Philoreal will become a follower to the Philoreal Queen "Well then what will he become? Master, I hope he becomes something amazing"(Firo) (TLN I: this is the best translation I could come up with) "Will you do that?"(Naofumi)

"Yeah"(Firo)

Firo is pouring some magic on the egg as she touches it "This egg will never be the same as Firo"(Firo) "Ah! I'm safe"(Naofumi)

But still there is a possibility that this new born will end up the same as Firo If you consider how huge Firo became, it'll surely become noisy. I guess there's no helping it Depending on the result, we may leave raising of the Philoreal to Firo "the eggs hatched"

"Pii!" (baby chick)

One animal was a Philorial chick. It was a slightly purple-ish kid.

Next were two caterpillars..... When these grow up they'll be able to pull carriages. I called them Caterpilands. I absorbed their eggshells into the shield but there was no effect.

Next there were three earthworms. They appear to be a monster called

a Dune. Can I leave the soil maintenance to these guys?

I set the basic prohibitions.....

“You.. you’re in charge of leveling this guy up”(Naofumi) “Yes!” (TLN: same problem I don’t know who answered, but probably this is Firo) the children felt like they became a parent to the pet, they were carrying it with on their shoulders as they went to the carriage The Philoreal chick went to Firo and happily sat on top of her head “Pyaaa!” the chick is singing In these past few days I was only watching if the kids were in trouble Me, who’s from another world, did I just become their foster parent?

If we lose the wave... I guess all the hard work that we invested will all go to waste “Ah, after..”(girl)

“What?” (Raptalia)

“I’ll slowly learn how to cook so that I could make food for everyone anytime. Well mainly because i’m not good with fighting” (girl) “then, I....” (girl)

the slave girl went down from the carriage

“Good for you” (Raptalia)

Certainly, the one wanting to learn how to cook was the one who requested midnight snack from Raphtalia “yea... I really like cooking.. but fighting is a little...”(girl) “is that so... then do your best”(Raptalia)

“Yeah” (girl)

The girl nodded and stood next to me

“I’m going now”(girl)

Raphtalia waved her hands

“Yeah, Be safe!”(Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia-chan, is it alright to be that carefree?”(Kiel)

“ha?”(Raphtalia)

While waving to the girl who wants to be a cook she muttered What are

you talking about?

“Hey?”

“Don’t worry”

What’s that?

“Well then, Im going”

“Yessir!”

The carriage made a clattering sound

“Now, then assist me”

“Yes”

And thus I taught the child how to cook

Though , for some reason the guy’s food was a mess It was soo bad that the food, that the shield produced is a lot tastier “Shield-niichan is really good with his hands”

“is that so?”

“Yeah, Fish demon was really good”

“Is that so?”

I said not to feel bad about it

“This delicious dish was made by the power of the shield. I just imagine the taste and then cook it”

“Yeah, Then shield-niichan will teach me how to cook that dish”

I ended up stepping on a landmine, but I still answered with a smile.

It’s good that I smiled

Speaking of the results, I ended up in the position where I was taught..
Oh well, It’s okay This child really likes cooking, I hope she becomes very good at it. She will become a big deal someday.

Chapter 139: The Shield's Brand

It's been a week since I acquired my land and began babysitting these kids.

The Soldiers have pretty much finished restoring most of the salvageable houses. I guess It's time to start on the next stage of the plan.

Following Firo's orders, the new Filo Rial is pulling the carriage back and forth.

I guess it will be nice to ride in a carriage that doesn't talk back for once...

I'm currently playing fetch with Firo in relatively good spirits. I'm doing it while the other slaves are asleep, as Firo does not care about her surroundings.

The Catipilands have also become quite large, and we are currently building a carriage for them. This monster seems to be a herbivore that enjoys gnawing on Bioplant stalks.

This kills two birds in one stone. The Slave dealer does good work, it's also quite easy to handle.

It's only fault is its speed. It can't go very fast, or far. Visiting the neighboring towns seems to be its limit.

The Dune Worms have become relatively large as well. I'm leaving the maintenance of the soil around here to them.

This monster is also quite docile. Wild Dunes seem to spend their lives peacefully underground. It is very rare for one to get into a fight.

Domestic Dune will fight if ordered, but they aren't very strong.

Well then, I think it's time to restart my peddling.

"H-how is it?" (Kiel)

I had prepared two sets of clothing for Kiel.

The first was one fit for her preferences, a manly set of armor.

The other one is a frilly one-piece.

Kiel is blushing and waiting for my appraisal.

“Perfect. Make sure you act clumsy and embarrassed while we sell things.” (Naofumi) “Shield Niichan! Why do I have to do something like this!?” (Kiel) “Of course, for the money. If we don’t have funds, we cannot restore the village.” (Naofumi) “...I-I’m embarrassed, Niichan...” (Kiel)

I plan to have Firo manage the front, while I watch over the stock.

I also plan to sell medicines made by Kiel (with Rafatalia’s help).

“Rishia, I leave the village’s management and level raising to you.” (Naofumi) “G-got it!” (Rishia)

I need to teach the slaves how to peddle.

If I don’t then raising funds will get increasingly difficult.

If I circle the country with a carriage advertising my brand, rumors should spread quickly.

That’s why I have been spending all of my free time making medicines.

By the way, due to the teachings in compounding I received before the battle with the Spirit Turtle, I can make some advanced medicines as well.

As long as I’m there, we should be able to solve most problems, including serious disease.

Though this is just my opinion.

“Then, we’re off-!” (Naofumi)

“Wai-Nii-chan! I still haven’t gotten used to vehi-” (Kiel) Ignoring Kiel, we set off.

It only took one hour to visit the neighboring villages. This is all thanks to Firo’s legs.

I see some familiar faces as I go from town to town. It’s a bit of a strange feeling.

“Saint-sama was the Hero of the shield?” (Customer) “Yeah... I thought it would be bad for business if my identity got out.” (Naofumi) “I apologize for my behavior back then.” (Customer) “Don’t let it bother you.” (Naofumi)

The bad rumors about me have already died down.

Even though I hadn’t done anything at the time, I was still being called the Devil of the Shield.

I had been faced with quite a bit of undue resentment.

But I don’t have any reason to mull over it now. As long as I get paid, I don’t mind.

I don’t put customers before everything else. Those were the words of an actor. This is reality.

“I got some land, and am training some people to combat the wave. In order to prepare for it, I am also selling medicine and arms. If you need anything, please ask. You can find me in the carriage marked with the Shield insignia.” (Naofumi) Right now, there is a Sign with a picture of a shield attached to the side of my carriage.

“It’s only been a couple of days since you defeated that monster, but the hero of the shield is already trying to help the populace. You must really care for this country’s people.” (Customer) “Yeah, but there isn’t too much I can do by myself. If you would spread the word of the Shield Brand, I would be grateful.” (Naofumi) And thus, like this, I spread the name of my peddling business.

Firo also serves as a form of advertisement, as she is a Filo Rial Queen.

But her constant chatter is annoying.

If I had someone to manage her, it would be helpful, but I don’t think there are many who would like to deal with her.

“I’ll buy some things to support the efforts of the Shield.” (Customer) “Much obliged.” (Naofumi)

And, for once, the rumors were working in my favor.

The good rumors of my carriage spread like wildfire.

Some people rush to greet us as we arrive at certain towns.

It's quite remarkable that gossip can travel faster than Firo's legs.

"S-shield Niichan... Are you sure this is alright?" (Kiel) Kiel, who is managing sales, comes up to me with an embarrassed face.

"Yeah, your business smile isn't as good as Rafatalia's, but some people might find your clumsy, awkward display to be a turn-on." (Naofumi) "Is that supposed to be a complement?" (Kiel)

Yes. Clumsy, innocent characters seem to have a healing effect on people. This holds true in any world.

Rafatalia and Firo are also doing well. It seems that I will be making quite a bit of profit from this enterprise.

Our sales are quite steady.

At this stage, we can't really spare personnel to gather herbs.

However, even the worst of ingredients can be made into medicine of 'Normal' quality with the shield.

These 'Normal' medicines can then be compounded by hand to make higher level medicines of quality greater than normal.

I can expect quite a bit in this trip.

For now, I need to prepare enough medicine for all the towns we will stop at. It's good that I prepared a lot before-hand.

We continue our peddling for the next three days before returning to the village. We occasionally buy herbs from passing merchants.

I feed these to the shield to make more medicine.

Kiel and the other slaves observed my actions and learn how to peddle, or at least that was the plan.

"My, my, if it isn't the Hero of the Shield." (Slave Dealer) When it gets dark, the Slave Dealer appears at the village.

He is accompanied by some sturdy-built adults. It's a bit of a surreal scene.

The other slaves hide in fear.

"What is it? It's rare seeing you outside of your store." (Naofumi) "How are you doing? How are the slaves?" (Slave Dealer) "We're moving ahead on schedule. Anyways, why are you here? Answer me." (Naofumi) "That's good to hear." (Slave Dealer)

So you won't answer!

Calm down... don't get swept up into his pace.

"Today, I came here to deliver the slaves ordered by the Hero of the Shield. Yes" (Slave Dealer) "Ah, so you were able to find them?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer goes into his carriage, and out come about 10 people. They are all shaking in fear.

Rafatalia looks through them for people she knows.

She talks to them in the same way that she talked to Kiel.

But...

"There are 3 children here that I don't know." (Rafatalia) "Hmm? Did I make a mistake?" (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer claps his hands, and his men move to return the 3 children to the carriage.

"You don't have to worry about it?" (Naofumi)

"And why would that be?" (Slave Dealer)

The slave dealer tilts his head.

"I don't plan to only use people from this village. As long as they don't bear any extreme hatred towards me, I will take them in." (Naofumi) (TL: Well, he literally says as long as they aren't radicals of the shield faith) I planned to hire other people as well, anyways. There's no reason to go to

the trouble of returning them.

There's no downside of having more manpower.

"You all. Just because they're not from this village, don't leave them out. If I see any bullying, then I'll sell the culprits without hesitation."

(Naofumi) "Ye~s" (Slaves)

My slaves answer as such.

Well, they may bond as fellow slaves... There shouldn't be too much of a problem.

But with increasing numbers, there may be more problems. I should be cautious.

After the slave registration process finishes, I unchain them.

"Are you alright?" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia, Firo, Rishia, Kiel and the other slaves comfort the shaking new recruits.

"... I'm fine..." (Slave)

It seems it will take a while for them to open up their hearts...

"Shield Niichan" (Kiel)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"Let's make some food and have a welcoming party. Of course, Niichan is cooking." (Kiel) Kiel answers with enthusiasm.

What do you mean, 'Of course I'm cooking'?!

"...Well, I did it for you guys too." (Naofumi)

"Y-yeah!" (Kiel)

"The party was my intention from the start. Everyone, please help out."
(Naofumi) "Yes!" (Everyone not new)

A strange sense of camaraderie has been born among the slaves.

...This may be helpful sometime later.

“For your slaves to be this motivated, you sure are good at handling them. It makes my heart race.” (Slave Dealer) “Yeah, keep thinking that.” (Naofumi)

I chuck a bag of coins at the Slave Dealer.

I don't think I will be seeing any of that money again.

“Please continue to collect some useful Demi-human slaves.” (Naofumi)
“As you command.” (Slave Dealer)

Now, excluding Rafatalia and Rishia, the village has a total of 18 slaves. Including monsters, I have amassed quite a few members.

“How about the monsters?” (Slave Dealer)

“Hmm... I will probably need more soon.” (Naofumi)

“Then, I shall bring some with me the next time I arrive. Do you have any requests” (Slave Dealer) “The same species as before will do just fine.” (Naofumi) “Understood. Now then, I must be taking my leave.” (Slave Dealer) “Yeah, just go already.” (Naofumi)

And so, I drove away the Slave Dealer and his men... or not.

“I would like to partake in the Hero's home-made meal as well. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) Yes? Your voice is too loud!

I don't think he will leave until he eats.

Dammit.

“I understand. Though I don't understand what people like about it so much. Just eat and leave.” (Naofumi) “I appreciate it. Yes.” (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer's men follow him.

... Their presence is ruining the taste.

I have to think of some countermeasures for next time, or me having to cook will become standard practice.

Chapter 140: Desertion and Discovery

Everyone's appetite had been sated, the slave merchant had also returned and night had descended.

“Hey? Are you really going to do it?” (anon slave 1)

“I-isn't it obvious” (anon slave 2)

“But....everyone was nice and the food was great?” (anon slave 1) “No, those guys are definitely trying to deceive us!” (anon slave 2) It was noisy outside.

It was dark and hard to see but, for some reason, the new slaves were running towards the fields.

“Haa....Haa” (anon slave)

There was a somewhat strained atmosphere.

Just what were they planning?

Rustling They tried to push their way through the Bioplant's field.

.....

“ “Waaaaaaahhhh!?” “ (runaway slaves)

Ah, they got caught in the defences I established.

Hearing the scream, the other slaves left the house and headed towards the fields to examine the situation.

Sigh.....For the time being, I have to go out and have a look.

“Shield-niichan. We heard a scream” (kiel)

When I exit the house, a concerned-looking Kiel rushes over to me.

It seems like Raphtalia went ahead to look at the situation.

“It's alright. There won't be any deaths. I've already prepared for the worst case scenario and only implemented some defensive measures” (naofumi) “Worst case scenario?” (kiel)

“I could bind them with the slave crest but then there's the problem of

being unable to give detailed orders. Well in short, I'm talking about desertion" (naofumi) Yes, the slave crest has the possibility of prohibiting desertion itself.

Once they leave the grounds, inducing death was even possible but, as one would expect, I paid no small amount for these guys so killing them would be bad.

Besides, I have plans to designate slaves to peddle outside the village. That's why I configured the penalties to only cause chest pains for all the slaves staying in the village at night.

“ “Waahhhh! He-help—!” ” (runaway slaves)

The monsters I used to maintain the soil, Dunes, had emerged from underground, coiled around the three slaves who tried to escape and hung them up in mid-air.

I had given instructions to the Dunes so that anyone fleeing from the established site would be apprehended.

“To abscond so suddenly, aren't these guys courageous.” (naofumi)
“Naofumi-sama!” (raphtalia)

After discovering the circumstances, Raphtalia joined us with an urgent-looking expression.

I thought this commotion of escaping would happen sometime, but it was later than I had expected.

That was because Raphtalia's old friends became attached to me for some reason or another.

Moreover, many of them had lived here to begin with.

“Now then you guys, where were you planning to go after you escaped?” (naofumi) I faced the slaves who were hanging in mid-air and inquired.

“Wh-Who's going to say anything!” (anon slave 2)

The boy who was acting as the leader, replied.

Hm.... he definitely has a lot of spirit.

It would be a great contest between Kiel and him.

“Is that so, if you don't talk then I'll let that fellow play around, but is that alright with you?” (naofumi) “Gr...” (anon slave 2 – runaway slave leader)

By the way, Dunes also have their own personality, their appearance may be of a huge earthworm but they're quite amiable and love to play.

If it's this kind of rebellious kid then I should let them play all night.

To be honest, I don't have any obligation to raise a slave who just attempts to run away. I'd like to sell them back to the slave merchant immediately but I will give them a chance.

“Look, just talk” (naofumi)

“Wh-Who's going to say anything!” (runaway slave leader) “If that's the case, I'll turn you into bait for my followers?” (naofumi) I looked at the situation and gestured indirectly to Firo. The slaves distanced themselves from Firo.

“Eh? Firo-chan also eats people?” (kiel)

“She does have quite an appetite” (naofumi)

“If you defy Shield-niichan you'll be bait? Seriously?” (kiel) The slaves gathered together and whispered.

She was just standing around in her human form but, read the mood and turn into your monster form——.

“No~!” (firo)

That Firo, she denied it!

Did she learn some culture when she came here? No way...such unnecessary knowledge.

Raphtalia whispered to the slaves quietly.

“Naofumi-sama is.....saying that kind of thing but.....” (raphtalia) “So really?” (anon slave)

“Shield-niichan is somewhat naive” (kiel)

“I can hear you. You brats!” (naofumi)

Jeez, now I can't use dignity or bullshit.

“.....” (runaway slave leader)

The leader of the captured slaves also had a doubtful face.

You should read the atmosphere.

“But the thing about becoming monster bait is real? If I order you to, then it won't mean that no one will become bait.” (naofumi) Become a Caterpiland, become a Dune, if I say be bait then you might get eaten.

When I turned my attention to the monster hut, the Caterpilands were sleeping soundly.

Will they turn into butterflies?

I cast aside these needless thoughts.

The Dunes played with the slave children.

They're huge so they're great for using as threats. If this were an 18+ game, the caterpillars and worms would be used for sexual assault.

“Now talk” (naofumi)

“Eep!” (slave leader)

“Look, if you don't talk then the Dunes might get hungry and eat you~” (naofumi) The slaves who originated from this village arbitrarily gave the Dunes names and, “They won't eat him right?” was whispered around.

I want to say that they only eat dirt but now's not the time for that.

“At the worst, another Philorial will eat you guys” (naofumi) “Eat us!?” (slave leader)

I could feel a gaze from the hut.

I shook my head with a swish.

Everyone was raised naively!

“Look, they're waiting impatiently!” (naofumi)

“Eat! Eat!” (slaves)

The chant changed the mood, but for those who didn't know what life in the village was like, it would appear to be excitement.

It would have been great if I could have used this from the beginning.

“What's your answer?” (naofumi)

“.....Fine. But you have to spare the others!” (slave leader) The runaway slaves' leader reluctantly revealed their story.

It seems to just be gossip among the slaves but in Melromarc's harbour and other various places there exists a faction that's stipulating the release of slaves.

In that faction, a plausible rumour is being spread around saying that Demi-humans can have their slave crest unconditionally removed and will be set free in foreign countries.

Are these Silt Welt's people?

No, for argument's sake, even if they resembled Silt Welt or Schild Frieden's people, It seems that recognition of the same species is strong.

If I had a slogan that said that I would unconditionally free them in another country, I would have some sort of scheme to help me make a profit.

Someone who would do that with good intentions doesn't exist.

If we could use a boat, it would be convenient as transportation.

To become the working force or a foreign county from a safe place, or something like that.

That would be a crueller treatment than just being a slaves....it's felonious.

Or it could possibly be that slave merchants circulate it to recycle business.

At the least, I saw that these guys just couldn't wait for their desired ending.

However, it's a dependable technique for business. Using a smile to deceive the slaves who turn up.

Come to think of it, the slave merchant said so before he left.

No matter what, orphans have increased due to the Spirit Turtle's influence.

There are people who become slaves prior to ending up as orphans, and it seems there are few human slaves but I heard they make humans into slaves in other countries.

It seems like the slave merchant is busy thanks to that sequence of events. He did leave pretty quickly after consuming the food I made.

“Did you guys know?” (naofumi)

“Now that you mention it, I'm starting to remember” (anon slave)

“Yeah, there was that kind of story” (anon slave)

If you knew about it then tell me earlier.....Jeez.

“Shield-niichan's place is just so comfortable that we totally forgot about it” (kiel) “Yeah!” (anon slave)

It was a good inclination but~..... somehow I feel like I'm being underrated.

“Next time you'd better tell me these things” (naofumi) “Oka~y!” (slaves)

Because I have no idea where this money-making story comes from.

Until now, we've just been revising our actions after things happen but if we can read ahead of time, then we can not only keep damages to a minimum but it would even be possible to forestall them.

Knowledge is power.

“Now then, desertion is a serious crime. However, I'm not a demon. You guys have only just come here so I'll postpone it for a short while. Think about it carefully” (naofumi) I instructed the Dunes to release the slaves, who were then taken in by Raphtalia and the others.

“Educate them properly. That's all” (naofumi)

The runaway slaves defiantly glared at me with hostility.

If it doesn't seem like they've reflected, I'll sell them when the slave merchant comes again.

I can recover my money back if I raise their levels and if they become stronger than usual with the shield's correction skill, he'll probably buy them happily.

.....Let's hope that they can get along with Raphtalia and the others until then.

“It's alright, this won't be like the other places where all you do is suffer pain, that's why we'd like you to help with our....village” (raphtalia)
“.....” (runaway slave)

The three slaves murmured to Raphtalia and the other slaves and averted their faces uncomfortably.

“It has been very painful for you, hasn't it. However.....a little bit, with just a short time it'll be fine so I'd like you to compare him with your previous masters” (raphtalia) “.....” (runaway slave)

“You know, that person is the Hero of the Shield-sama” (raphtalia)
“Eh!?” (runaway slave)

“You've heard the rumours, right? He's the one who saved this country and even become a legend in the country of the Demi-humans” (raphtalia) “Y-yeah. I heard about it. Some day..... that he's the saint-sama who will save us Demi-human slaves” (runaway slave) “Yes, and you know, that person may have a bad mouth but he has been rebuilding the village to save us slaves, and we'd like you to become a part of that power” (raphtalia) “But.....” (runaway slave)

“It's okay if you still don't believe it yet. Little by little, we'll show you proof that it's not a lie” (raphtalia) Well, for the time being I'll leave it to Raphtalia and the others.

I returned to my room and resumed my compounding studies.

I've become able to do a considerable amount of the difficult compounding. If I have all the ingredients I shouldn't fail.

I have the materials prepared by the queen so let's give it a try.

The next day.

“Is Iwatani-dono here!” (knight)

The female knight came intruding early in the morning.

“What's up? Did the Spirit Turtle appear again?” (naofumi) “Can you even handle that much excitement!” (knight)

I'm still in the middle of recuperating. This time I'll have to rely on the Seven Star Heroes.

Well.....whatever happens, I also want to be able to participate in it.

“And? You seem to have some urgent business” (naofumi) “I have a message from the queen. I was told to convey it immediately” (knight) “The contents?” (naofumi)

“It seems we've discovered a companion of the Hero of the Spear” (knight) What? Discovered a companion of Motoyasu?

From her words, it doesn't appear to be Bitch.

So it comes to either Woman 1 or Woman 2.

From this expression you can't tell who is who.

Well that's because I don't know their names.

“A corpse?” (naofumi)

“Wrong. Everything seems to be that an aristocratic father was worried about his daughter but she's fed up because she was forced to help with her mother's housework.” (knight) It's a story I've heard before.

It's about her. So now I'm supposed to use her to slay Motoyasu, huh.

And in the end, she returned home and helped with work.

Her assistance didn't seem very proactive, but that sounds like her. She would have felt it was troublesome.

“Don't you have to guard her?” (naofumi)

“It seems we've listened to her circumstances. And so. We'd like Iwatani-dono to meet with that companion and ensnare the Hero of the Spear” (knight) I see.....there's the possibility of her attempting to rejoin Motoyasu.

We'll be gambling on whether it'll go well or not, but it would be good if we could catch Motoyasu.

“Will Motoyasu's companion cooperate with that plan? She might double-cross us and pass information back to Motoyasu” (naofumi)

“We've already assigned a Shadow for surveillance. We've also received a report that she currently wants to cooperate” (knight) “Hmm.....” (naofumi)

Well, if my assumption is correct, she could discern right from wrong when she cut ties.

And now she was trying to protect her own position by plea bargaining.

“Understood. Where should I be heading?” (naofumi)

“Ah, I'll give you the map” (knight)

I received the map from the female knight and took Raphtalia and Firo with me to prepare for our departure.

“You guys, please help the newbies level up” (naofumi) “Yeah. Understood.” (kiel)

“I understand” (rishia)

Rishia stood in the front and nodded.

“Sorry, Rishia. If there's information about Itsuki then inviting you will take precedence”

“Yes. I'll be waiting” (rishia)

Recently, Rishia's level had risen up to 35.

It's almost time for a Class Up.

As that may be, I want her to Class Up together with the others so it'll

be a bit later but....for now, the capture of Motoyasu has the highest priority.

Chapter 141: To Capture the Spear Hero

“Elena! Thank god. You’re alive!” (Motoyasu)

Upon hearing of The Spear’s companion’s discovery, we head to her location only to Find Motoyasu hugging Woman 1 and shouting in a loud voice over the counter of the receptions desk of a store. It seems that Woman 1 is manning the desk. It gives off a feeling of a parent being reunited with their child.

Elena? did she have a name like that?

I don’t recall asking for her or Woman 2’s names back on Cal Mira.

“Ah, if it isn’t the Hero of the Spear.” (Woman 1) Woman 1 takes on an oppressive attitude and answers Motoyasu indifferently.

Motoyasu lets out a bewildered voice.

“W-what’s wrong?” (Motoyasu)

“Wrong? Now what could possibly be wrong?” (Woman 1) “You know, I was really worried.” (Motoyasu)

“I did nothing warranting your worry. I’m more surprised that you managed to survive.” (Woman 1) “Isn’t it obvious? There’s no way I would die with you guys there to support me.” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu answers with quite a bit of enthusiasm.

However, the aura around Woman 1 only seems to get colder.

Her gaze is apathetic. It’s as if she is staring at a pile of garbage.

“Naofumi-sama, are you not going to capture them?” (Rafatalia) “Wait, let’s observe the situation.” (Naofumi)

I think something interesting is about to happen.

And as long as Motoyasu hasn’t noticed us, we have the upper hand.

“-?” (Firo)

Firo would stand out in her monster form, so she is currently assuming her human one.

We are observing the affair from an alley outside the store.

“Let’s once again team up to save the world!” (Motoyasu) “I’m sorry. It seems I will be inheriting my father’s business. I can’t go with you any longer.” (Woman 1) Her voice is quite indifferent.

It seems she has no intention of listening to Motoyasu at all.

Motoyasu seems to understand this as well. He looks quite confused.

I bet everything had gone his way up until this point.

I envy him in that aspect.

Even though I’ve become a count and acquired some land, for some reason I’ve been stuck cooking and babysitting for my slaves.

I feel as if I’m their mother.

I can hear the soldiers calling me the Hero of the Kitchen behind my back.

(TL: He actually says this, I’m not taking it from the comments) To be more specific:

“As expected, the Hero of the Kitchen’s food really is magnificent.” (Soldier) “You’re being rude, he’s the Hero of the Shield... right?” (Other Soldier) “Ah, right... But recently, his shield has started to look like a pot lid to me...” (Soldier) “I think you need medical attention.” (Other Soldier) “Hahaha” (Soldier)

To hell with Pot Lids.

Remember this. I’ll work you especially hard when building gets under way.

... well that doesn’t really matter now.

I need to focus on Motoyasu

“Hey, really, what happened? You’re different from the usual Elena.” (Motoyasu) “Even if you ask me that... You know this is a good time. Let me say it.” (Woman 1) “What?” (Motoyasu)

“Motoyasu... No, Hero of the Spear-sama. I’m at my limit. I can no

longer work with you.” (Woman 1) “W-what are you saying?” (Motoyasu)

“At the start, you had a good reputation, and quite a bit of money. Look at you now. What do you have?” (Woman 1) “Hm? I’m still a hero...” (Motoyasu)

“Honestly, I’m tired of being your comrade. Sick of it.” (Woman 1) “W-what part of me is the problem?” (Motoyasu)

“You always try to hit on women, you don’t understand a female’s heart, and you only focus on your strength parameters.” (Woman 1) Motoyasu’s hot-blooded personality has diminished.

Has he never been dumped before?

This is bad. I’m starting to smile at his misfortune.

“Naofumi-sama. You’re smiling.” (Rafatalia)

“But... I mean look. Motoyasu’s face has turned blue.” (Naofumi) “Shouldn’t you be trying to capture them now?” (Rafatalia) “Wait a second. I want to watch for a bit more.” (Naofumi) Woman 1 has stopped hiding her thoughts and has begun talking rapidly.

“If you have enough free time to hit on me, then go to the castle and turn yourself in.” (Woman 1) “Gu...” (Motoyasu)

It seems that he does realize his own crimes. Motoyasu remains silent.

“You’re already finished. If you want me back so badly, then go get some status. Like the Hero of the Shield.” (Woman 1) Woman 1 gives a rejection reminiscent of a character archetype that I hate.

She’s speaking as if she hasn’t done anything wrong, and that everything is Motoyasu’s fault.

If the Heroine of a Gal-ge did that, the company’s building would be in flames.

But why is it?

When these words are directed at Motoyasu, I feel an extreme rush of happiness.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia is angry.

It seems I cannot observe the situation any longer.

“Then, shall we go?” (Naofumi)

I exit the alley and walk towards Motoyasu.

“W-what happened to you. I was sure you were more of an amiable sort of person.” (Motoyasu) “Even if you ask me that...” (Woman 1)

Motoyasu is too engrossed in the conversation to notice my approach.

This is my chance.

“Hey, tell me this isn’t so.” (Motoyasu)

“I’m very serious, now leave already.” (Woman 1) Woman 1 notices me getting closer.

It seems she understands the circumstances to some extent.

Please stall him for just a little bit longer...

When I wonder if my message gets across, she gives a quick wink in my direction. For some reason, it looks quite natural.

“And so, I am absolutely done with you. If you don’t give up already, I’ll report you.” (Woman 1) It seems Woman 1 truly has had it with Motoyasu.

She’s even assisting in his capture.

Well, if she doesn’t do so, she will probably be treated as a conspirator in breaking the Spirit Turtle’s seal.

For argument’s sake, it seems that the Spirit Turtle was set to awaken at some point during the wave.

But to willingly release it is still quite a crime.

I’m almost there. Just a little bit closer...

Damn... This one’s instincts are not to be underestimated.

“Na-Naofumi!?” (Motoyasu)

“Yo. You understand what me being here means, right?” (Naofumi) “... Elena, did you sell me out!?” (Motoyasu)

“You say some hurtful things. I am an ally to those with power. I was back then, and I am now.” (Woman 1) I can hear nothing but a villain.

If I were Motoyasu, I would have forgotten my crimes and stabbed her by now.

“Now, obediently get captured. The Hero of the Shield did that at well. It may be best for you to start from scratch.” (Woman 1) “E-Elena... You!” (Motoyasu)

I don't think her intentions are as bad as Bitch. But they're both still trash in my eyes.

Motoyasu doesn't intend to give up without a fight. He takes up his spear.

Do you plan on fighting in such a crowded area?

“I want to hear your story. Will you accompany me to the castle?” (Naofumi) “I'm sorry, but I won't go with you. I need to go and prove my own innocence.” (Motoyasu) “Innocence, huh? Well, I don't have the slightest intention of killing you. Right now, we're looking for a way to push back the wave, like the time we gained with the Spirit Turtle incident. As I've said before, I'm only an expert on defense. I cannot hurt you.” (Naofumi) “I'm not the culprit!” (Motoyasu)

“Listen to a person when they are talking to you.” (Naofumi) “I'm going to find my comrades, and save the World!” (Motoyasu) “And what I'm saying is... Ah, this is a pain!” (Naofumi) Anyways, the culprit always says that they're innocent.

But judging from Motoyasu's reaction, he himself believes that he is not the cause.

Which would make the culprit either Ren or Itsuki.

No, it seems all three of them were in the same place at the time.

There's no way he's not involved at all.

"Anyways, stop by the castle. If you're not the culprit, then you have no reason to refuse." (Naofumi) "I refuse!" (Motoyasu)

"You know, you did the same thing to me right? But now that our positions are switched, you act like that? Is there some sort of reason preventing you from going like there was in my case?" (Naofumi) "Nope!" (Motoyasu)

"You..." (Naofumi)

"But there's no way I can let myself get captured here!" (Motoyasu) I can't talk with this man. For now, it seems I must restrain him by force.

Can I defeat him with my stats reduced to this level?

No, Rafatalia and Firo are here. It should be fine.

From what I see, Motoyasu is alone.

"Please turn yourself in." (Rafatalia)

"Wha-?" (Motoyasu)

The ones who appeared are Rafatalia, and Firo in her monster form.

It's 3 on 1... What will Woman 1 do?

"Shall I join you?" (Woman 1)

It seems she will assist us in capturing Motoyasu.

Her level should probably be around 70-80.

Her skills should be more than enough.

"Now then. It's time for you to pay the Piper, Motoyasu." (Naofumi) (TL: Literally, Time to pay the land tax, Time to reap what you sow.) "Don't rampage too much. It will be troublesome if we break the store's merchandise." (Woman 1) As we approach, Motoyasu begins to Spin his Spear in a large circle.

「Portal Spear!」

Motoyasu's figure seems to bend in space.

What the hell!?

And in an instant, he vanishes completely.

Is it a skill? It probably teleported him to a set location.

Damn, I miscalculated.

In MMOs, Items that allowed you to teleport to a saved location or town usually existed.

And Motoyasu had found the skill to do it.

“He Ran!” (Naofumi)

Damn... It seems that capturing a hero will be more difficult than it seems.

I'll have to do something before he uses the skill, or find some place or magic that will interfere with its activation.

“H-he vanished... Where could he have gone?” (Rafatalia) “Who knows.” (Naofumi)

If it's to a set location, he's probably at the Dragon's hourglass, but if he himself can set the location, then the possibilities are endless.

How convenient. Teach it to me.

I don't know how effective it is, but a warp skill will be priceless while peddling.

I don't know if the effect is limited to me, or if I can take along comrades, but either way it seems really useful.

If I set my village as the warp point, it will make movement easier, and if any trouble arises I can be there in an instant.

I should probably ask Woman 1 if Motoyasu told her anything about it later.

“Well then, it's been quite a while.” (Naofumi)

“It sure has.” (Woman 1)

I address Woman 1. Her real name was Elena... I think.

“You’ve probably already told the people at the castle, but would you mind sharing your story with me?” (Naofumi) “I understand.” (Woman 1)

Elena takes a deep sigh, and begins speaking.

Chapter 142: The Day the Game Ended.

After returning from Cal Mira and returning to the castle, the party managed to successfully defend against the wave of another country without issue. After that...

“Will we heading back to Melromark Castle after this?” (Bitch) “No, there’s somewhere I want to stop to power up first.” (Motoyasu) “What do you mean?” (Bitch)

And like that, Motoyasu took a detour, and travelled to the town where the Spirit Turtle was resting.

“It’ll be fine if we’re over level 60, and the materials and weapons that drop off of the guy that sleeps here are amazing.” (Motoyasu) With that extremely light attitude, Motoyasu steps into the abandoned temple in the Spirit Turtle’s town. He’s being too easy-going.

Though it’s been abandoned, it is usually under surveillance by some monks.

For some reason, Motoyasu knew all of the traps and puzzles in the temple, and solved them with ease.

Elena wasn’t really watching too closely, so she isn’t knowledgeable about how he did it.

So Motoyasu solved all of the puzzles and headed towards the statue hidden under the temple, when the monks on surveillance tried to stop him.

“Oy, what do you think you’re doing!?” (Monk)

As they were holding weapons, we assumed that they weren’t simple residents of the temple.

“You’re being quite rude. The one who stands before you is none other than the Hero of the Spear, Motoyasu-sama, you know.” (Bitch) Bitch goes ahead and names us.

“Wha... The Hero of the Spear!?” (Monk)

“Sorry for the intrusion. There’s just a little event I have to go and clear, you see.” (Motoyasu) “I sure am unlucky today. To have a Hero invade this place as well...” (Monk) These words left a great impression on Elena. Invade...

So someone’s causing a commotion at somewhere other than this?

Looking back on it, it was most likely Ren or Itsuki’s party.

“Anyways, hurry and get out of here.” (Monk)

“I won’t be doing that. If I don’t defeat the boss here, then something bad will happen later.” (Motoyasu) And Motoyasu casually destroys the statue.

“H-how could you!” (Monk)

The monks are enraged.

Well, if someone claiming to be a hero intrudes on a historic place, and rudely destroys an ancient artifact then I guess anyone would be mad.

“Now then, to defeat the boss.” (Motoyasu)

...

.....

.....Nothing’s happening.

“Hmm?” (Motoyasu)

“Anyways, can you please come with us?” (Monk)

The monks try to apprehend Motoyasu and party.

“Insolent Peasants!” (Bitch)

Bitch cries out.

Motoyasu looks confused at her outburst, and restrains her. He begins to explain his intentions.

“I was under the impression that this statue was a seal, and if I didn’t hurry, something bad would...” (Motoyasu) And then the ground began to shake.

“W-what is it now!?” (Monk)

“Yeah! It’s finally showed up!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu starts running out of the Temple.

But those tremors had been the Spirit Turtle standing up from its long rest. The ground beneath us moved, and the entire mountain, town and all lifted up.

Bitch and Elena were at a loss for words.

How were they supposed to fight that monster?

“It may look like that, but it’s strength is nothing special. Just fight it like usual! Let’s go!” (Motoyasu) “Yes!” (Elena)

“Here I come!” (Woman 2)

We all began to charge the Spirit Turtle.

And that’s where everything began to fall apart.

The Spirit Turtle began summoning familiars, and killing innocent people left and right.

But ignoring that, Bitch and Motoyasu keep on running.

They eventually reach the Turtle’s head.

“Let’s go! 「Lightning Spear」” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu unleashes a strong move right off the bat.

But... The turtle lets out a grunt, and comes out of the attack with nothing but a scratch.

And what’s more, that scratch begins to heal in an instant.

“W-what the!?” (Motoyasu)

The Spirit Turtle’s familiars swarm us, and we have to drive them off.

But at this point, I don’t see any way of defeating the Turtle.

“Hey...” (Elena)

“It can’t be...” (Bitch)

“No, no, no...” (Woman 2)

Bitch, Elena and Woman 2 begin whispering amongst themselves.

They had noticed that the Spirit Turtle had begun walking without minding Motoyasu’s attacks. It didn’t even consider us as a threat.

Back when I fought it, it had been forced to stop and use it’s strongest attacks.

But these people were even troubled by the familiars.

I guess it was like stabbing a human with a toothpick. I’m surprised Rafatalia and Firo were able to wound it to that extent. (TL: Ginnoji, Push the end of it!) “O-okay! Everyone, I’m going to try and draw it’s attention, so cast support magic on me.” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu starts screaming and running at the beast. It was then that Elena made her decision. She left the party then and there.

She left without looking back, abandoning Bitch and Woman 2.

And after getting far away from the Turtle, she hid until the commotion died down. Then she returned to her parent’s home.

Her mother was quite happy that she had survived. She told her that being an adventurer was too dangerous, and that she should take over her father’s company.

Her mother decided that she would talk her father into it. That Elena’s safety was their top priority.

They used her Father’s connection to prevent her from being turned in to the country and executed. It was negotiated that instead of putting her on trial, they would use her as bait to lure Motoyasu out.

...

“If that story is true, then there are several baffling points in it.”
(Naofumi) First of all, what did he mean by, ‘If the boss isn’t defeated, something bad will happen’?

Was something worse than the Turtle itself set to happen?

Anyways, it is probably quite impossible to defeat that monster at level 60.

This seems to be quite similar to that case with the Bioplants.

Motoyasu rushed to save a starving village with Bioplant seeds, but in the end he caused nothing but grief.

Is this Motoyasu's supposed innocence?

Could Motoyasu possibly know anything about the Blue Hourglass inside of the Turtle?

I also wonder what Ren and Itsuki were doing at the scene.

All three of them have knowledge from the games of their world. For all of them to move at once, something important must be happening.

The problem is that Motoyasu didn't tell his party much information.

Both Ren and Itsuki have a habit of acting aloof. Their party members probably have very little information as well.

...There's still too little information for me to make any assumptions.

"I can't believe he actually survived fighting that Monster." (Elena)
"You know, you're saying that to the person that actually defeated it."
(Naofumi) "Ah right, so you were the one who defeated it? You really are quite something. To get to this point from the very bottom... I chose the wrong person to follow." (Elena) And Elena lets out a deep sigh.

If she was my party member, I would want to smack her.

It's surprising that I'm not mad after listening to her for so long.

"Well anyways, Motoyasu-sama has given me quite a few goods, and my level did rise thanks to him. I guess I can stand the boring task of doing my father's work for a while." (Elena) "You..." (Naofumi)

"It's gotten quite cold. I thought I would feel warmer when I met that man again..." (Elena) "Hmm~?" (Firo)

What was that?

It seems that Firo has been developing a strange speaking habit as of

late.

“And so that’s how it is. If he comes again, I’ll report him but I don’t think he will be coming again.” (Elena) “Most likely. By the way, do you have any idea where Bitch may be right now?” (Naofumi) “No idea. But people like her tend to live unnervingly long lives.” (Elena) It will be difficult to capture Motoyasu, and Bitch’s whereabouts are unknown.

And this one wants nothing to do with the spear anymore.

I can imagine the other women saying something like, ‘we were just following the Hero, we had nothing to do with it’ or something.

They’ll probably receive some punishment, but the Queen isn’t that evil.

“I understand.” (Naofumi)

“Now, you’ll have to deal with that annoying ability.” (Elena) Warping... how bothersome.

If he can warp, then there’s no point in throwing him in prison.

If this were a game, we would have to afflict him with Silence to seal it off. And if we didn’t do it continuously he would run off the second it wore off.

Judging him will be difficult.

“He occasionally used it.” (Elena)

“Do you know what sort of skill it is?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s see... He was able to use it on all members of his party at once without a problem.” (Elena) 4 people at once? It’s starting to sound like even more of a pain.

He might be able to take an entire army regiment with him.

But there’s probably a cool-down time. If we know where it sends him, then...

“Location. Did he tell you where he could go with it?” (Naofumi) “How should I know? He didn’t say that much. But we travelled by carriage

quite a bit, so it's not all powerful." (Elena) Can he warp to any town he's been to before? No, that would be cheating.

But by Elena's testimony, it seems the location isn't set. For now, I should report to the Queen.

"Thanks for your cooperation." (Naofumi)

"It's fine. It's not like... Ah, now that I think about it, you've started some sort of business, haven't you? I've heard the rumors." (Elena) "Yeah, I need to procure funding in some way." (Naofumi) "Though it's troublesome, I may start trading with you at some point." (Elena) "Well, that depends on your goods. And you really are quite lazy." (Naofumi) "I know. I just want to live the easy life." (Elena) I can't see what Motoyasu saw in this woman... It's the same with Bitch.

"He's quite an amazing person." (Rafatalia)

From Elena's conversation, Rafatalia somehow comes to this conclusion.

"Don't ever fall for someone like that, Rafatalia." (Naofumi) "I won't!" (Rafatalia)

"Firo wants to run." (Firo)

What is she saying all of a sudden?

Firo has begun acting more oblivious as of late.

I guess she is getting bored.

"Well, see you around." (Naofumi)

"Yeah, good bye." (Elena)

Elena sighs once more. She sits down at the reception desk with a bored expression.

She's really quite an easy-going person.

And so I have failed to capture Motoyasu for now.

Chapter 143: Monster Problem

As I was about to get on the carriage to return to the village, Shadow appeared.

“It’s been a while-gojaru.” (Shadow)

“Even though you say that, you’ve been constantly watching me, haven’t you?” (Naofumi) “Well, you’re not wrong-gojaru.” (Shadow)

As expected of Shadow.

“You should go to the Queen to report on your attempt to capture the Spear-gojaru.” (Shadow) “I know, but in truth, I have no idea how to stop him from escaping. Can we put a collar on him, like we did with Trash?” (Naofumi) If the collar can prevent him from speaking, we can cut off his incantations.

“That collar definitely prevents one from speaking, but its effect is not long in duration-Gojaru” (Shadow) Ah, so it had a weakness like that. Also, unless we use an invisible seal like the slave seal, he will probably be able to break it and run off.

I think Trash didn’t break his collar, because he didn’t want to anger the Queen...

“Well then, excuse me-gojaru” (Shadow)

And shadow disappeared. This is quite an urgent issue.

In the Net games that I know, there are areas and skills that prevent messaging and warping, but how about this world?

It’s not certain that he even has to chant the spell, so stopping it will be a pain in the ass.

And it’ll be troublesome if he escapes to another country.

It seems that we will have to put off his capture until the Queen comes up with something.

When I get back to the village, I see that the new slaves are slowly adjusting to their new lives. They have begun to look happier as they do

their work.

“Ah, so you’re back.” (Female Knight)

Female Knight comes over to greet us.

“I heard that you failed.” (Female Knight)

“News spreads fast... He ran away with a teleportation skill.” (Naofumi)
“Heroes sure have convenient skills. Can Iwatani-dono use it?” (Female Knight) “If I get the corresponding shield, I should be able to... but I don’t know any way of preventing it.” (Naofumi) This will be a really annoying job.

If I were being chased, I would spam that skill without remorse.

“What is Rishia doing?” (Naofumi)

If she spreads the Itsuki religion, I’ll have to have her fired.

“She’s trying her best to train the new slaves.” (Female Knight) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“By the way, will Iwatani-dono be doing restorations on the town where this area’s feudal lord used to live?” (Female Knight) “Ah, that town...” (Naofumi)

Due to the influence of the first wave, all of the towns in the entire area have turned into ghost-towns.

The place Female Knight is talking about is the adjacent village.

Its damages exceed that of this one. The stone buildings and walls have all collapsed, and the Feudal Lord’s mansion seems to have been burned down. It’s quite severe.

“The Queen asked whether or not you would be rebuilding that area.” (Female Knight) “I still need an area for people other than slaves to live. If you’re free, I won’t mind it if you start reparations on that area by yourself.” (Naofumi) “I thought you would say that, so I have already sent a request for anyone wanting to immigrate here.” (Female Knight) “Immigrate?” (Naofumi)

“Due to Iwatani-dono’s contributions, there are some who want to live on your land.” (Female Knight) “hmm...” (Naofumi)

“I’ve put together a list.” (Female Knight)

Female Knight hands over a list of all of the applicants who want to live on my land.

... There are quite a few people from Ryut village. There are also people from villages destroyed by the Spirit Turtle. There’s quite a variety.

“Well, isn’t it fine?” (Naofumi)

“I think you should at least go talk to them at some point in time.” (Female Knight) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

I idly pat the neck of the Filo Rial who was resting near me.

“Kueee...” (Filo Rial)

I’m pretty sure that adult Filo Rials are supposed to cry, “Guaaa”.

How the hell is Firo raising it? Is it because it is a vassal of a Filo Rial Queen?

Or is it just part of its personality?

As I pet the Filo Rial, I notice Firo glaring at me with jealous eyes.

“Master, why are you patting that child?” (Firo) “? I have no ulterior motives.” (Naofumi)

“Then pet Firo as well.” (Firo)

Firo approaches me menacingly.

This will be a pain to deal with...

I sigh, and begin to rub under Firo’s beak.

Her plumage is thicker than a normal Filo Rial’s.

“Oh, right.” (Naofumi)

“Hm?” (Firo)

“Why does this Filo Rial say ‘Kue’? Isn’t it supposed to be Gua?”

(Naofumi) “He was under Firo’s care, so I messed around with him for a bit.” (Firo) Messed around? Can she modify objects like me?

“... Specifically what did you do?” (Naofumi)

“Firo fed him until his stomach was full.” (Firo) I don’t care about that.

“Firo also... taught him how to swim... He is a little stronger than the other kids, and can pull the cart very well. But he gets hungry easily.”

(Firo) So is this Filo Rial a new species?

“If Master wants me to, I can mess with him some more.” (Firo) “... I’ll consider it.” (Naofumi)

So his fuel efficiency is lower than the other Filo Rials... That’ll be a problem. I wonder if Firo gets a pop up screen during modifications like I get when modifying the Bioplants.

“KUEEEEEEEeEE” (Filo Rial) (TL: The lowercase is in the original) The other Filo Rial rubs against me with his head. Firo copies him.

What was his name again?

I think the Slaves randomly picked one...

“And so you don’t confuse him with other Filo Rials, Firo made him say Kue. Now Master can tell recognize him even if he can’t hear him talk.”

(Firo) Is it a sort of signal inaudible to the human ear?

I believe my world had animals that could do that as well.

Though I’m not too knowledgeable.

“Then what is Gua supposed to mean?” (Naofumi)

“Fitoria’s underlings use that.” (Firo)

I see...

“Since I’m here, I’ll ask, but if something happens to you, will he take over as King or Queen?” (Naofumi) “Firo will be fine!” (Firo)

Firo starts pouting.

Was it that unexpected? Well, it’s concerning her death, so I guess

there's no helping it.

“Yeah, but we're talking about the worst case scenario here.” (Naofumi)
“Mu....” (Firo)

Firo's puffs up her cheeks.

“Um, you know. If Master asks him to... I think he will take over.” (Firo)
“I see.” (Naofumi)

So he will take over Firo's followers if anything happens to her.

But what I was trying to find out was something else.

I wanted to know if he would be able to change his species to Filo Rial Queen.

“KUE!? KUEEEEEEEEE!?” (Filo Rial)

The Filo Rial's feathers suddenly stand on end.

“Master, what do you think you're doing!?” (Firo) It seems his reaction speed is quite fast. I guess I should stop.

His feathers go down quickly.

“Mu...” (Firo)

Firo idly kicks the ground.

“Master, recently haven't you been being quite cruel to Firo?” (Firo) “I'm not being cruel. I just think that the 'Kue's are more cute than the you that just talks non-stop. If you started to speak in 'Kue's, then I might pamper you more.” (Naofumi) “No!” (Firo)

I don't get why she wants to talk so badly.

Anyways, it seems that only Firo's followers say Kue.

“Hey... Did I just hear some amazing information?” (Female Knight)
Female Knight starts speaking with a dumbfound expression.

“Really?” (Naofumi)

“Filo Rial are mysterious lifeforms, you know.” (Female Knight)
“They're Holy Birds, right?” (Naofumi)

“People may say that, but... I don’t think that’s true.” (Female Knight) ‘I may need to rethink these facts’, Female Knight mutters to herself.

I’ve gotten used to Firo being like this, but normal Filo Rials are usually used in the same way as horses.

“Oh, right. Returning to topic. Will you be restoring the neighboring town?” (Naofumi) “Yes, I believe it will be an important asset. You’re the count here, so oversee the work.” (Female Knight) “That sounds like a pain, but I guess I have to do it.” (Naofumi) I’ll need to oversee the restorations here as well.

... Oh right. There has been something bothering me for a while.

“Hey, Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What is it~?”(Firo)

“Do the Caterpillands have any sort of social organization like the Filo Rials?” (Naofumi) “Who knows?” (Firo)

The Caterpillands have also begun to grow in strange directions....

They are much bigger than other Caterpillands of the same level.

They’re just large bugs, but the slaves use the Three Caterpillands to manage the growth of the Bioplants.

...Wait.

One. Two. Three...

There’s one too many!

“Who is it? Who got another Caterpilland without my permission!?” (Naofumi) The slaves frantically try to hide one of the Caterpillands behind their backs. The one they hide is the biggest one of the group.

“It’s way too late to hide it!” (Naofumi)

When did this thing appear?

“Damn, he found out!” (Kiel)

“How did you think I wouldn’t find out!” (Naofumi) I can confirm it’s

status. This means that it is a monster under my control.

A girl from the new slaves spreads her body out and tries to hide the monster, but it's still clearly visible. Behind her is the Bioplant field.

I think I've seen this scene before. (TL: See Bottom) "There's nothing here! There's nothing wrong here." (Girl Slave) "It's huge! Do you think you're hiding anything!?" (Naofumi) I can see everything. What valley did this girl crawl out of?

The Caterpilland behind her back is bigger than any I've ever seen.

"Now then, explain yourselves." (Naofumi)

The slaves hang their heads.

"Please tell me in detail exactly what happened." (Naofumi) "Well, it's not like we were trying to make Shield Nii-chan angry..." (Kiel) Kiel steps in front of the Female Slave.

Et tu brute?

"How did you manage to register it as mine?" (Naofumi) "Well, it was kind of mixed it in with the new slaves that arrived." (Kiel) "So you..." (Naofumi)

"By the guy who sold them." (Kiel)

"The Slave Dealer!?" (Naofumi)

When did he have the chance to do it? I never noticed him perform the registration on it.

Was his hunger act a way to sneak this one through?

"Why would the slave dealer..." (Naofumi)

"This is the first egg we all found together!" (Kiel) "Wha?" (Naofumi)

It seems it went something like this.

When everyone had gone to level-grind, they had come across a monster nest. They then took back the egg that was there with them as a trophy.

When they brought it back, no one knew how they were going to raise

it.

“Rafatalia, did you know?” (Naofumi)

“I had no idea.” (Rafatalia)

“If we told Rafatalia-chan, we thought she would report it to you.” (Kiel)
Having a monster egg without a registered master is dangerous, so everyone was worrying about what to do. It was then that the Slave Dealer appeared.

So everyone gathered together the money they had saved through peddling with me, and begged him to register it.

And so the Slave Dealer distracted me while some of his men secretly went and registered the egg. Everyone worked together to raise it healthily, and... this was the result.

I see. I had been looking over the other Caterpillands level to make it so they didn't grow too big to handle. That's why this one, who grew freely, is so big.

It's 5 times bigger than a normal one. Its level is also quite high.

“Please don't kill it!” (Slave Girl)

“Hey, valley girl. You're being loud. Please be quiet for a second.” (Naofumi) “What do you mean by Valley, Nii-chan!?” (Kiel)

Well. These people have been doing quite a bit without my permission.

I haven't lost anything, but it will be bad if they learn to act this way in the future. The slaves around the Valley Girl-ish slave rise and protect the Caterpilland.

“You know, if you act on your own like that, I'll be troubled. If you really want to raise it, make sure you tell me first.” (Naofumi) I've already asked the Slave Dealer for more monsters anyways. I won't have to put in too much extra effort.

“And make sure you raise it properly. If I see it lose to another monster, I'll sell it on the spot.” (Naofumi) “Y-yes!” (Female Slave)

Well... Problems are popping out one after the other.

“See, I told you. Shield Nii-chan will let us keep it.” (Kiel) “But Kiel-chan, you said that Shield Nii-chan would definitely sell it. You said he was greedy with money, so he would sell it on the spot. That’s why we worked so hard to hide it...” (Female Slave) “don’t add a -chan to my name!” (Kiel)

“...” (Naofumi)

These people...

Wait, I didn’t notice it before, but he said ‘The First egg’...

“This is the only egg, right?” (Naofumi)

“Um... well...” (Kiel)

“Well?” (Naofumi)

The slaves hang their heads.

My head hurts...

I don’t know if these kids are just skilled at finding monster nests, but when I look under the floor of the house the slaves are staying in, I see rows upon rows of eggs.

“When we saved up more money, we planned to take them to the Slave selling guy...” (Kiel) “There’s a lot... If they hatch unregistered, what did you plan on doing!?” (Naofumi) That would be a calamity in itself.

Well, dealing with freshly hatched monsters wouldn’t be that much of a problem...

“Yeah, but...” (Kiel)

“Sigh... well for now, let me see what sort of eggs they are.” (Naofumi) And wait, there are wild monster eggs as well? Of course that’s the case.

I guess I can make egg-based dishes as well now. But if I say that, I think the slaves will get mad at me.

“Are they all Caterpilland eggs?” (Naofumi)

“Probably not. We got them from all sorts of places.” (Kiel) “I see.”
(Naofumi)

These people plan to trouble me in many ways. I hope these monsters don't cost me too much money to care for. I guess I can cancel my monster order to the Slave Dealer.

(Translator Note: Valley Girl is read as Taniko)

Chapter 144: Descision

I head towards the town Female Knight told me about.

It's close enough to this village to walk there.

“Ah, it's the Hero of the Shield!” (Villager)

When I head to the village, I find that construction is already underway. Many people are working on salvaging the pre-existing buildings here, and some are starting construction on new ones. Some people stop what they're doing, and come over to greet me.

I put on my best business smile to meet them. The leader of the group seems to be a youth from Ryut village.

“I've heard about your situation. Have any problems surfaced yet?” (Naofumi) “Well... There's a river and a well nearby, and food circulation is going quite smoothly. If I had to mention a problem, it would be that the management of personnel is difficult.” (Leader) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“It seems there have been some disputes over property rights here and there.” (Leader) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Well, this was a town whose buildings were all destroyed in the wave.

What's more, the town is undergoing restorations under the supervision of a Hero. Some people will probably try to arbitrarily claim some land as their own.

“Even if they used to live here, it doesn't matter. Please have anyone without the intention to cooperate leave the premise.” (Naofumi) As I declare this, some people seem to rise to object, but they quickly give up.

“Also, if you need to extend past the boundaries of the village, feel free to do so.” (Naofumi) I then begin to consider the possibility of flooding.

I will need someone to manage the roads, but I don't think there are many people knowledgeable in that field.

“Anyways, for now try to build while focusing on bringing new businesses here, and expand accordingly. Also, we will need to build some

inns.” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Leader)

No matter how reparations proceed, getting businesses will be essential. They should build while keeping this in mind.

“Next, we’ll need some sort of security force.” (Naofumi) For now, we are leaving this to the Castle’s guards, but I eventually plan to leave it to the slaves who wish to fight in the wave.

That way, it will be easier to reprimand them for excessive behavior.

“We’re getting new applicants who want to live here by the day.” (Leader) “It will be troublesome if they start gathering at my village, though.” (Naofumi) “The Female Knight that was with you spread the rumor that this village was your actual base of operations.” (Leader) That Knight does good work. I should probably ask for her name at some point in time.

I can hear hammers pounding away as people resume their work.

“Ah, aren’t you the Shield Hero kid?” (Magic Shopkeeper) “Hm?” (Naofumi)

I turn around and see the old lady from the Magic Shop coming towards me. Ah, yeah. A lot of people had come here from Ryut Village. It’s not strange that she would join them.

“Ah, you’re from the Magic Shop. The shop collapsed, right?” (Naofumi) “Well, yeah...” (Magic Shopkeeper)

“Did you come here to help with your family?” (Naofumi)

“I’m currently helping feed the workers.” (Magic Shopkeeper) “I see... By the way, how are the repairs on your store going?” (Naofumi) “I don’t know when they will be finished, but there are quite a few people in the Castle Town waiting expectantly for its reopening.” (Magic Shopkeeper) With all the damage done to it, I guess reopening will take a while.

Though the Queen is doing her best to help, the country’s manpower and resources suffered a large loss.

“If possible, I would like to set up shop here for a bit...” (Magic

Shopkeeper) “A magic shop will be an important asset. I’ll give you special permission.” (Naofumi) “I am very grateful for your words.” (Magic Shopkeeper)

“But only after we get some usable buildings completed.” (Naofumi) “I’ll wait expectantly.” (Magic Shopkeeper)

“Don’t worry. Oh, and if you have any free time, can you come to the neighboring village and teach some magic?” (Naofumi) Some slaves have begun learning from books, but there’s a limit to self-study. We also don’t know anybody’s magical affinities. It will probably best to ask an expert in the field.

Recently I have been considering constructing a school-like institution.

Right now, the slaves are learning combat from Female Knight and Rafatalia outdoors, but having a Dojo might also make things easier.

For that purpose, it is very fortunate that we have a Magic Shop close-by.

“I’ll think about it once I set up shop.” (Magic Shopkeeper) “You’re quite a resilient person. To take on more despite your current situation.”

“Even though I look like this now, I used to run the largest Magic Shop in the Castle Town, you know.” (Magic Shopkeeper) “Please invite the Apothecary as well. It’s good for business to have many different facilities.” (Naofumi) “It seems the Hero of the Shield is quite the Business Man.” (Magic Shopkeeper) “Well, I have been called greedy on numerous occasions, and I can use the reasoning of, ‘It’s for the sake of the world’ as I please.” (Naofumi) “Fufufu...” (Magic Shopkeeper)

“Hahaha...” (Naofumi)

The people around us have begun to distance themselves.

After that, I start to give orders regarding the construction.

...

One Week from that

Rishia’s level is now 40, and the other slaves will be able to class up

soon as well.

It's about time for us to go to the dragon hourglass.

Female knight already notified the Queen before-hand, so all we have to do is go there.

So I gather together the higher level slaves, and headed for the Castle Town.

"It's been a while since I last came here." (Naofumi)

We parked the Carriage at a near-by village, and entered the Castle Town by foot. This is because we will be recognized if anyone sees Firo pulling the cart.

It's been two weeks, and the Castle town is still recovering.

"Shield Nii-chan, Why are you wearing a cloak?" (Kiel)

The slave whose level is second highest to Rishia is Kiel. Her straightforward personality makes her well suited for battle.

She's started to be able to coordinate attacks with Rafatalia and Rishia. Female Knight tells me that Kiel will become an amazing fighter someday.

"If I'm found out, it will become impossible to move." (Naofumi) Hooray for the Shield! Is what people will say as they fence us in.

Though I'm a hero, I find that it's quite a pain to actually be treated as one.

"Is that so?" (Kiel)

"Firo, make sure you don't assume your monster form unless you absolutely have to." (Naofumi) "Yes~" (Firo)

Should I stop by the weapons shop on the way back?

... I don't have enough money. If I get something too expensive, and have him put it on my tab, I'll feel bad.

Though I don't think I should keep him waiting for too long.

I've been slowly saving up, but everyday expenses have been piling up...

I decide to stop on by on the way back anyways.

And so we reach to the Dragon's Hourglass.

"We've been expecting you." (Soldier)

A soldier, who looks quite talkative, comes out to greet us.

"Today, I'm here for my comrades' Class Up." (Naofumi)

"I'm aware, I received the message earlier." (Soldier)

The Ceremony starts in the same way it did with Rafatalia and Firo. I order Firo to assume her Monster form.

"U-um... What should I try and class up to?" (Rishia)

Rishia looks over at me with a troubled expression.

"You need to choose for yourself... Though there is something here that may choose for you..." (Naofumi) Firo's Ahoge shows no signs of movement.

"Firo." (Naofumi)

"Yes~?" (Firo)

"If your Ahoge starts moving, you need to get out of the building."
(Naofumi) "Eh..." (Firo)

"Do you want something like that time with Rafatalia and You to happen again?" (Naofumi) The result worked out, but it wasn't good for the individuals. In order to let them choose their own paths, I need to caution Firo.

"Yeah... I got it..." (Firo)

Okay, I got Firo's consent.

"Hey, you. Wait for a second." (Naofumi)

"What, Shield Nii-chan" (Kiel)

"I'll ask just in case, but you do know that we have come here to class up, correct?" (Naofumi) "Well, Yeah..." (Kiel)

“You told us earlier” (Slave)

The slaves all nod at me.

“And so, my belief is that you should be the one to choose your own destiny. This is something separate from preparing for the Wave.”

(Naofumi) “What do you mean, Nii-chan?” (Kiel)

“I’ll give more training to those that personally want to participate in the wave. But we also have to consider what happens after the wave is over.” (Naofumi) “...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia watches over me in silence.

That’s right, I started this village with Rafatalia in mind. But, everyone here will also have a life in this world after everything is over.

“The class you choose here may heighten your abilities, but it will also narrow the possible roles you can play in the future. Does everyone understand?” (Naofumi) The slaves nod.

I confirm this, and continue speaking.

“Your lives will take you to many places from now. You’ll experience many new situations and take on many roles. That’s why you should be the ones to choose your path here. It’s not always best to simply have someone pick the route that gets you the best stats for you.” (Naofumi) “Can that really happen?” (Slave)

I give a heavy nod.

“Rafatalia and Firo here are victims of such a phenomena.” (Naofumi) The two unenthusiastically raise their hands.

“Do you see the crest on Firo’s head? It arbitrarily decided their class-ups for them. But the class it gave them had higher stats than most normal ones.” (Naofumi) “Really!?” (Kiel)

“Yeah, but for you guys, combat abilities isn’t everything. If there’s a role you really want to do, there should be a class that allows you to specialize in it.” (Naofumi) There’s no perfect class. And among those present here, there are definitely no perfect people.

And that's why.

"Just make sure you don't regret it." (Naofumi)

The slaves whisper amongst themselves.

"I got it, Shield Nii-chan. I... Want to become as strong as I can possibly be. If such an option exists, then I don't need a choice." (Kiel) Kiel speaks with determination.

The last time she went back to train, she suffered quite heavy injuries and had to be carried back.

"I want to Class Up like Rishia Nee-chan and lead the others."

"You won't be the only one taking damage. In the worst case scenario, some may die." (Naofumi) "I know, Shield Nii-chan." (Kiel)

"You have a habit of being impulsive. If you screw up here, you may regret it." (Naofumi) "Don't worry! It'll definitely work out!" (Kiel)

Is what she said. Though her enthusiasm was unmatched, she put too much focus on a single monster, and took an unexpected attack from a blind spot.

Her comrades were also quite injured.

"Shield Nii-chan. I think this is the first time I have tasted defeat... If I don't do my best, will it turn out like that again?" (Kiel) She said afterwards. I had healed her wounds with magic and medicine, but the experience still lingered in her mind.

"Shield Nii-chan always protected me... so I never noticed. That fighting was such a scary thing." (Kiel) "... In the end, It's fine because no one died, but if anyone were to die under your watch, you'll feel a pain greater than any other." (Naofumi) "Yeah... Nii-chan, I'm sorry for looking down on you until now. I'll go tell the others." (Kiel) "...I thought it was supposed to be difficult to teach them discipline, but they went and learned it before I had even noticed." (Naofumi) And that experience gave everyone a lot to think about. It seems that Kiel cried that night.

Kiel still bears the scar of that incident, but the experience she gained

outweighs the damages.

After seeing Kiel's squad come back with injuries, the rest of the slaves have also begun to develop a fear of fighting.

They've become more diligent and have begun to develop tactics. If Rafatalia hadn't been there to rescue them, who knows what would have happened to them.

Even I understood that I was being too light on them, but it seems Rafatalia and the others were harsh on them to compensate.

Rafatalia is supporting me in many ways.

The boy next to Kiel steps forward.

"I... want to pick my own future." (Boy)

"I understand. Please split into two groups, those who want to choose, and those that don't." (Naofumi) The slaves follow my orders, and divide themselves.

"Now then, Firo. I'll have the people that don't want to choose go first, so please back off when those that do step forward." (Naofumi) "Yes." (Firo)

"Rishia, what will you do?" (Naofumi)

"I... Want to become stronger by my own hand. If it means giving up my choice, then I don't need such an option." (Rishia) I had anticipated that Rishia would pick that. She came with me for this sole purpose.

"Then it's fine. Pick a class that suits your tastes." (Naofumi) "Yes!" (Rishia)

The hourglass begins to shine, and Rishia closes her eyes.

The soldiers in the area surround the Hourglass, and liquid begin to flow into the grooves on the floor that formed a magic circle.

The Hourglass glows brighter, and the circle on the floor begins to shine with it.

Rishia's class up menu appears in front of me,

but I close it

...

“Hm?” (Firo)

Firo fidgets with her Ahoge

So it won't act up like last time.

“Okay, Rishia, it seems that there are no problems.” (Naofumi) “O-okay.” (Rishia)

Rishia begins breathing slowly, and reads through the list.

The light begins to converge on her.

“I've made my decision.” (Rishia)

Chapter 145: Report

I wanted to buy some more time to give Yoraikun a breather... But you guys are soooooo impatient..

Class up was confirmed and then Rishia was engulfed in luminescence, Status confirmed The whole status grew Higher, but not that high

“How is it? What did you possibly choose?” (Naofumi)

“As expected I am ... In the end I chose the best way to help, I considered all of them, It is different from the last time now I chose the path to become Universal” (Rishia)(TLN: Just to make it clear so nobody's confused Rishia now chose to be full time all-around back then even though she's all-around the class that she chose focuses more on close combat because itsuki is you know.. Range.. ref. Ch95) “I see” (Naofumi)

Rishia's determination took form and raised her status, Still the number weren't that really high Rishia's status is balance so if you compare it to Kiel you could say that it is inferior on some parts However, Rishia chose that personally, so I feel like when the time comes it will produce great results She is now braver than before, She now possess determination and strength I believe that Rishia's strength doesn't rely on her Lvl. And status Lvl. and status is not what makes Rishia strong I believe “I'm next” (Kiel)

Kiel touched the hourglass after Rishia

Same magic formed, and an icon appeared in front of me

“Wa?!”(Kiel)

This time Firo's ahoge disappeared , I saw Kiel's Class up got interfered (TLN: Firo's ahoge also went missing when Raphtalia Classed up... ref.ch81) Smoke screen came out and covered the area

..... Just like when Raphtalia Classed up, Kiel's status jumped up However, If you compare it to the time when Raphtalia classed up it is slightly lower “Wow!... What is this?, I can feel the power spreading all over my body”(Kiel) “What are you even trying to say?” (Naofumi)

Firo's ahoge activated with Kiel but not with Rishia

Does it only affect Demons and Demi-humans

Then the other slaves followed, but there are times when Firo's ahoge does not disappear I still don't understand the rules

"Well then, Firo why don't you wait outside"(Naofumi)

"Uhn" (Firo)

I want them to choose their own path, so I instructed Firo to go outside of the building(TLN: Apparently Firo's ahoge interfere's with the Class up making them unable to choose their own class. Remember when Firo was disappointed because she wasn't able to choose the one that spits poison so that's that) The ahoge would probably not interfere with the Class up anymore Then the Class up ended

"Well then, I have some little things to do so each and every one of you is free to do what you want. We will meet at the gates by evening"(Naofumi) "Understood Shield nii-chan"(Kiel)

I don't think that anyone will try to runaway but even if they do the slave crest is still in effect "What should I do?"(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia asked

Right, Occasionally I have arranged meetings with the Queen and exchange information In this case, I just have to send Raphtalia to the slave shop "Go to the Slave shop on my behalf, I still need to talk to the Queen"(Naofumi) "Understood"(Raphtalia)

"what about Firo?"(Firo)

"go play with the Slaves"(Naofumi)

"Yay!"(Firo)

Thus I went to meet the Queen after a long time

I headed to the Castle's direction to and speak to the Queen "Iwatani-sama, How's your Village's state of affairs?"(Queen) "Oh well, The place is still small in number but I've taken actions to increase the

population”(Naofumi) “Is it?, Stories about immigrants have already come this way”(Queen) “How’s the reconstruction going there?”(Naofumi)

“To be honest, If a war were to happen our financial state would go downhill”(Queen) The damage would be huge..

It’s because of those Heroes’ doing, I guess there’s no helping it “I spoke with Erena the companion of the Spear”(Naofumi) “Yes, I’ve heard of it, to have escape with a strange ability”(Queen) “Yeah right, It would be really hard to catch him”(Naofumi) “I’m aware of that, that’s what I would like to discuss, how can we arrest him”(Queen) A weak provocation would do the opposite effect. Still, letting him run loose would be troublesome. To wake up a demon class monster Well, Motoyasu is that kind of person, sudden change of behavior seems impossible Specially with those two, I would be in a great disadvantage if that happens as a matter of fact it would be really difficult to improve(TLN: He’s talking about Motoyasu’s companions) “Hmmm”(Naofumi)

“The problem is when we catch him, we need a place where he cannot escape. Putting a reward on his arrest is unreasonable because he might just flee to another country and defect, It might also become a trigger for war, Spreading the word that he is an impostor Hero, release an article that says that he is actually dead??? There’s also a risk that the people will make a fuss if the hero is killed.”

It’d be troublesome to get him aboard the boat with a stick or a chopstick I’d like him to participate in the wave if possible

It’s impossible, I’d like to have four times the firepower but in this situation it seems impossible The slaves also needs to be combat ready in less than 3 months “Do you have some information regarding the other heroes?”(Naofumi) “There are reports about some eyewitness”(Queen)

“For now, we only have reports about the Hero of the Sword and Hero of the Spear”(Queen) “How’s that?”(Naofumi)

“Rumors was not proven yet, we’re still gathering evidence on the said

information”(Queen) That was somehow inconvenient

“How about your daughter?”(Naofumi)

“Just the same, There are some testimonies but no concrete evidence”(Queen) She is still alive somewhere

“I also ordered shadow to search for them but the search is not going well”(Queen) “They can’t be found anywhere?”(Naofumi)

“There are many possible reasons.. one is maybe they’re stuck somewhere or two they’ve been arrested by enemy country”(Queen)

“Hmm”(Naofumi)

“There’s also a possibility of a Jamming tool”(Queen)

“Tool? Is there such a thing?”(Naofumi)

“The problem is the organization that frees the slave...

“That was a high grade slave crest so undoing it will be difficult so jamming it is the only possible way to make up for it”(Queen) It seems that way

Again this stories about an Organization that frees the slaves...

“This story is of no importance to Iwatani-sama, however the news about the Seven-star Heroes is still not within our grasp”(Queen) “but the story is that we will meet them when a much more pressing situation takes place”(Naofumi) “Right, it will take place”(Queen)

“Anything else?”(Naofumi)

“Stories about an unknown metal has been excavated on the Spirit Turtle’s cave, the city’s liven up because of those stories”(Queen) “Ho..”(Naofumi)

Such stories would definitely attract blacksmiths and merchants to come. As expected of the Turtle’s cave to give such opportunities This means, I should also go there to gather raw materials to enhance my shield Spirit turtle’s metal and Spirit Turtle’s crystal

Those kinds.

“We should raise the tax around this area, if you do that it will help raise the city’s funds, it will help rebuild the city. Also the weapon’s made from that metal seems to be of high quality”(Naofumi) “I wish I could raise the tax”(Queen)

It seems uneconomical. I guess I should go there instead, buying Raphitalia and Firo a gift seems impossible “Should I give special permission for Iwatani-sama to mine?”(Queen) “I’ll think about it”(Naofumi)

Selling the ores is likely to be profitable but on the other hand it feels like it’s such a waste “I understand, afterwards I will send you samples of the actual ore”(Queen) “Understood”(Naofumi)

Usually I would send several requests to the Old Man from the weapon shop. However I don’t have the money to make requests to him...

If it’s him he would probably do it for me on kindness alone. But especially because he is like that, I want to reward him.

“There are other problems, Lately there has been a rumor that an Alchemist Master awakened inside the Spirit Turtle “(Queen) “There are other problems, Lately there has been a rumor that an Alchemist Master awakened inside the Spirit Turtle “(Queen)(TLN: If you read the Christmas special by Yoraikun you will understand) “What is that?”(Naofumi)

Such rumors arrives at the Queen’s ears, as expected of a problem child “There is no one superior when it comes to researching demons. The problem is that person will end up deviating from the original course”(Queen) “Ho”(Naofumi)

Research investigation huh? I should also start my research with the bio plant If it all goes well, I feel like it will be really profitable Business is back on track, For the first time it is something good. It looks like it’ll be quite a challenge when I get back.

I need to gather talented people so that even if I fail I’ll be able to cope up with it “Do you have anything else?”

“Please give me the used weapons of the knights. Then, please issue me the required documents for peddling”(Naofumi) I deal with things in various ways and as for the weapon it is necessary because of the increasing number of slaves I need those documents for the Peddling team

I feel that it is necessary so that there won't be impostors “I understand. However Iwatani-sama, impersonating you seems impossible”(Queen) “What do you mean?”(Naofumi)

“Since the story about you eating the Rokoru fruit is true they would have to eat it to prove their selves”(Queen) “Indeed.. Such a thing exist”(Naofumi)

It happened once when they gave it to me and I ate it, that guy's face became pale “It's real” he made such a fuss over it.

“Nope, I still need it in case they asked for proof. If the Queen's seal is there, impersonation will be really difficult”(Naofumi) “I see, well then I shall deliver the weapons and the documents later”(Queen) Weapons huh?

I wonder if there're prototype weapons, I wonder if they will send it to my place “What's the matter?”(Queen)

“Nothing”(Naofumi)

I have little expectation on that. For some reason I could see the Queen is calculating numbers, I understand that it is really tough for her.

Are you still alright financially? she's really anxious about those numbers “Let's help out each other in the restoration”(Naofumi)

“You're right”(Queen)

There's only this much words that I could hear from the Queen “Come to think of it... Where's Trash?”(Naofumi)

“I made him watch over the border”(Queen)

“a Watchkeeper?”(Naofumi)

“Yes, No one will be stupid enough to invade if the wise and intelligent

King is in the lookout.. right?”(Queen) “Is there any effect if that ignorant and fooling King is guarding?”(Naofumi) “It’s been effective in these past several years, so there will be no problem. Moreover he’s the one who summoned all Four Heroes which the other countries failed to do”(Queen) “Right, such point of view exist”(Naofumi)

The Queen sighed really deep

“That man was really excellent till he had a child”(Queen) “I can only imagine”(Naofumi)

“Just maybe, I hope that he becomes the person he used to be. Iwatani-sama it would be good if you could meet that excellent person”(Queen) That manner of speaking is just like a person who handles Human Affairs First child huh? I wonder if that child was bitch. I now understand why Trash’s head became so messed up.

I wonder about bitch but if I were to have children they would definitely be adorable As a matter of fact I became like a mother, there are times that I want to beat those slaves And Kiel would be the first one on the list but recently Valley Child is the one I want to beat the most(TLN: Valley child is “Taniko”) “Such a thing, where would that charming person be?”(Naofumi) “Indeed, but if you look at Melty isn’t she adorable?”(Queen) “Youu”(Naofumi)

Your daughter is really cute but to make me consider a child? What a terrible parent It is a game where my parents are good at

If you think about it my parents’ expectation towards my younger brother might’ve multiplied.

If you think about parents’ expectation towards bitch, it seems Trash really loves Bitch Well it may vary

.... I ended up thinking that terrible thing as something good “Well then, I still have some things to do”(Naofumi)

“Yes, I watani-sama I sincerely wish for your Village’s restoration to finish soon”(Queen) “You don’t say”(Naofumi)(TLN: This translation seems appropriate hahaha) “Oya?!, at this rate it will definitely be a

success because your reputation is now really good(Queen) Shameless

As expected of Melromarc's fox lady

Leaving such impression after talking with the Queen, I left the castle.

Chapter 146: Beastmen

“Ah, Naofumi-sama” (Rafatalia)

I stop by the Slave Dealer’s tent, and Rafatalia greets me.

“My, My. Is it not the Hero of the Shield?” (Slave Dealer) “You. You did something unnecessary for my slaves. I am quite troubled, you know.” (Naofumi) “Now then, what could you be talking about?” (Slave Dealer) The Slave dealer forces a laugh.

If I try to push this point too hard, I will get sucked into his pace. I guess I’ll drop it.

“Anyways, I came across a large amount of monster eggs, so I would like to cancel my order.” (Naofumi) “I thought you would say that, so I took the liberty of cancelling it for you. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “You...” (Naofumi)

Calm down... Calm down...

“Would you like another Filo Rial? I don’t believe there was one in the eggs you had.” (Slave Dealer) “So you already checked them!” (Naofumi)

I’m reaching my limit here.

I hate feeling like I’m dancing on the palm of his hand.

“I think it would be more entertaining for you to find out when they hatch. Yes” (Slave Dealer) My head hurts.

This happens every time I see this person.

It’s annoying, so I’ll just finish my business here and leave.

“Then, did you find any more slaves from that village?” (Naofumi) “Well...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia’s expression becomes dark.

“I apologize, but we have yet to find any more.” (Slave Dealer) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“I even spread around the Hero of the Shield’s name, and no one came forward. I don’t think I will be able to find any more within the confines

of Melromark.” (Slave Dealer) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Though we have been able to find quite a few children, I guess not too many people survived the wave in the first place.

I have found 15 already... (TL: remember, 3 of the 18 were outsiders) “It may be beneficial to increase the search range. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “Can you do that?” (Naofumi)

“If the Hero of the Shield asks for it, I have no choice but to oblige.” (Slave Dealer) This sounds fishy. The Slave dealer extends his hand to me as if asking for money.

“After that is... Do you have any skilled Demi-Human slaves that would be of use to me?” (Naofumi) Having someone skilled at compounding, construction or black smithery may help the growth of the village.

The only one there who can make intermediate-advanced medicine is me.

There are a few that have shown interest in the subject but progress has been slow.

“Then the Tanuki girl you have with you may be considered quite skillful.” (Slave Dealer) I look at Rafatalia.

Now that I think about it, I haven’t actually taught her anything... The most I’ve had her do is tan leather.

Well, she is quite clumsy in most aspects besides fighting.

“Were you just thinking something relatively rude?” (Rafatalia) “Not really...” (Naofumi)

“Let’s see... Well, the Lemo Race is quite good with their hands. They’re also relatively docile.” (Slave Dealer) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“You’ve probably never seen one before, though. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “Are they rare?” (Naofumi)

“They’re not rare in other countries, but as they are considered Beastmen, their numbers in Melromark are few. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) I see...

Are they closer to animals than other Demi-humans? Now that I think about it, all of the Demi-humans I've seen so far have been quite humanoid.

"Do you have any here?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, you may be in luck. I have one in stock." (Slave Dealer) "Let me see." (Naofumi)

The Slave Dealer leads me into the depths of the tent.

"Here it is."

I look at the cage I have been led to.

In it is a child cowering in fear under a blanket.

It's dark, so I can't really see anything.

"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

"Present it." (Slave Dealer)

At the Slave Dealer's command, a muscular man appears, and opens the cage. He takes away its blanket.

"S-stop it!" (Lemo Kid)

"..." (Naofumi)

I look at the Lemo Child.

To describe it briefly, it looked like a mole. It's a werewolf-like fusion between a human and a mole.

It looks like the Lemo are a race of mole-people.

Its stature is quite short. Its height only comes up to my waist. Is it because it is a child?

"It is of a race who's eyes are weak to light. You may be able to use it for nighttime patrols." (Slave Dealer) "awawa...." (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Child huddles into a corner of the cage, whilst trembling.

Rafatalia has a worried expression.

“Rafatalia.” (Naofumi)

“Yes?” (Rafatalia)

“You understand that I’m no philanthropist, right?” (Naofumi) “Y-yeah, I realize that.” (Rafatalia)

Even so, it’s a race that is skilled in craftsmanship...

but...

“Hey, do a lot of people in this country persecute Demi-Human slaves?” (Naofumi) Many of the Demi-human children slaves had remnants of scars left by whips all over their bodies.

“A while ago, this country was at war with Demi-Humans, there’s no helping it. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “So people are still taking out their anger from that time on these races?” (Naofumi) “Well, it’s war. Many people lost their families to the Demi-humans, and this country’s military campaigns brought an influx of cheap Demi-Human slaves. Yes. There was no easier way for those people to get revenge on Demi-Humans as a whole.” (Slave Dealer) This country’s darkness runs deep.

I wonder what the nobles think of me, who is making a Demi-Human village.

“Though slavery is legal in this country, mistreatment of slaves is punishable by law. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “Those actions were illegal... You seem to be selling quite a few of such illegal slaves...” (Naofumi) Now that I think about it, this tent is quite well hidden, in a back alley...

“Don’t worry. I am conducting business quite legally. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) Legal...

The Slave Dealer looks proud as he says this, but something in my head is screaming bull shit.

If so, then why do you carry abused slaves in the first place...

“Well, there’s nothing I can do about it.” (Naofumi) I look at the wounds on the back of the Lemo kid.

...They look quite deep.

「Zveit Heal」(Naofumi)

I use healing magic, and the wounds slowly close.

But the wounds were quite severe. I can't heal them completely.

“Eh?” (Lemo Kid)

“Hey, you. I heard you are quite skillful.” (Naofumi) “...I don't know.”
(Lemo Kid)

The Lemo slave hides its face as it says this.

It's a better reply than claiming to do something that you can't.

“If I taught you something, could you do it?” (Naofumi) “... if you order it, I would have to do it. So... don't hit me...” (Lemo Kid) The Lemo slave sounds like it is about to cry. It curls itself into a tighter ball.

But as the rest of the cage is empty, it still stands out.

“Fufu...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia looks at me and laughs a bit. What is she on about?

“Should I prepare the slave seal?” (Slave Dealer) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

And so we apply the slave seal to the Lemo child. I am already used to the process.

“Ah, I just remembered. Hero of the Shield.” (Slave Dealer) “What? I won't cook you anything.” (Naofumi)

“That's unfortunate, but there is something I must warn you about.”
(Slave Dealer) “Hm?” (Naofumi)

“There seems to be a Mad Alchemist in this country who focuses on monster experimentation. Be careful.” (Slave Dealer) (TL: O...nii..chan... Da...ddy...) The Queen said the same thing. Is he really that dangerous?

“The Hero of the Shield's monsters all seem to grow abnormally. You may get targeted soon.” (Slave Dealer) “Yes, Yes. Got it.” (Naofumi)

I casually let it slide as I exit the Slave Dealer's tent.

“I-it's too bright...” (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Slave follows me while keeping both of its hands on its eyes.

Oh right. This race was weak to light.

Rafatalia casts some magic, and dims the light around the slave's face.

"Will this be alright?" (Rafatalia)

"Ah... Yes." (Lemo Kid)

Right, Rafatalia's best magic was Light and Darkness. She could manipulate them to create illusions.

The Class Up let her use more types of magic, but that magic seems to remain her specialty.

A mole Beastman.

Perhaps we should get some sunglasses.

What sort of environment does this race usually live in?

But sunglasses...

As I walk through town, I see a stand selling spectacles.

"Hey." (Naofumi)

"How can I help you?" (Glasses Vendor)

I address the person selling the specs.

"Do you have any glasses with darkened lenses? I'm looking for a pair."
(Naofumi) "We have some." (Glasses Vendor)

The Vendor takes out a sample and puts it on the table.

The lenses are definitely black... what are they made of? It doesn't seem to be glass... Is it some part of a monster?

It seems to be made of 'Black Fly Wings'. It's a monster I've yet to meet.

I wonder where they live.

I understand it probably isn't common. It's probably in a cave, or in the mountains or somewhere else difficult to reach by carriage.

"...That will be 80 Copper." (Glasses Vendor)

It's basic business to increase the price if someone shows interest.

"Hmm... I see. Then I guess we should give up for now." (Naofumi) I give the glasses back to the vendor and head towards another merchant's shop.

He should know my face.

However I make sure to conceal myself with the cloak.

"Do you happen to have any Black Fly Wing?" (Naofumi) "Wha?" (Merchant)

Upon hearing my voice, the merchant seems a bit startled.

Perhaps he figured out my identity. He puts on a suspicious smile.

"Ah, remember the time with the balloons?" (Naofumi) (TL: It is implied that this merchant was the first victim of the balloons Naofumi kept under his robe) "I-I won't treat you like that again!" (Merchant) "Anyways, do you have any?" (Naofumi)

"I have some. I have some, so please stop pressuring me." (Merchant) "That depends on your actions." (Naofumi)

The merchant frantically brings out the requested goods.

Black Fly Wing

Quality: Poor

"It's quality is poor. How does 10 Copper sound?" (Naofumi) "...*sigh*. I understand." (Merchant)

"But as compensation, I'll give you some publicity. Rafatalia, take the kid and get a bit away." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Rafatalia)

"Eh? Eh?" (Merchant)

Rafatalia takes the Lumo Child's hand and leads it away.

"Eh!?" (Merchant)

The Merchant raises his voice.

I take off my robe, and he makes a startled sound.

“Thanks! You’ve really helped me a lot. I’ll continue to be a regular customer.” (Naofumi) I say it in quite a monotonous voice.

But the volume of my voice, and the fact that my face was visible causes the surrounding people to stop in their tracks.

“Well then, See ya.” (Naofumi)

“W-wait!” (Merchant)

I hear the sound of people crowding his shop as I walk away.

“The Hero of the Shield is your regular!?” (Crowd) “If that man shopped here, I bet the items will bring luck! Please sell me something.” (Another Person) “U-um...” (Merchant)

The Merchant lets out a troubled voice as he deals with all the swarming customers.

Now then, I should find a safe place to put the robe back on.

(TL: If you haven’t noticed yet, Lemo is an anagram of mole. If you can think of a better anagram of it, please present it. (The Japanese is Lu-Mo, rearranged to form Mo-Lu))

Chapter 147: The Flag, again

“What do you plan on doing with that?” (Rafatalia) I meet up again with Rafatalia.

“I’m going to make some simple sunglasses.” (Naofumi) “But weren’t there some being sold back there?” (Rafatalia) Well I guess this world already has the concept. The history of sunglasses dated back quite far in my world.

I guess it’s the same for this one.

“You have to think economically in times like this.” (Naofumi) It seems that buying a pre-made pair is quite expensive.

If I just buy a cheap frame, and cut the wing to size...

“And it’s done!” (Naofumi)

I put the simple sunglasses over to the Lemo child’s face.

“Umm...” (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Child shows a troubled face upon receiving the glasses.

“Rafatalia.” (Naofumi)

“On it.” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia casts darkness magic on the Child’s face once again.

“Ah...” (Lemo Kid)

“Are you alright? It’s not too bright, is it?” (Rafatalia) “I’m fine...” (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Child replies while fidgeting with its hands.

“Then shall we go?” (Rafatalia)

“Yes.” (Lemo Kid)

To make sure it didn’t run, we hold hands with the Lemo.

Well, I guess the slave seal will prevent that anyways.

“T-thank you.” (Lemo Kid)

“Don’t mind it. Where I live, there are plenty of brats like you.”
(Naofumi) “Eh?” (Lemo Kid)

“This person here is the Hero of the Shield.” (Rafatalia) “EEEH!?” (Lemo Kid)

To only realize that now... I’m pretty sure the Slave Dealer already called me that a few times.

We continue to walk down an alley.

“Is that one of your kids, Hero of the Shield?” (???) A passerby calls out to me.

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

It’s the manager of the clothing shop.

It really has been a while since we last met. Not since I requested the clothing for Firo.

I know why, but she gives off an Otaku-like feeling.

And one that tilts in the direction of a Fujoshi.

“You have a Beastman with you this time, what have you been up to?”
(Tailor) “You didn’t hear from the old man at the weapons shop?”
(Naofumi) I take off the hood of the cloak and begin speaking.

“Ah, right. I vaguely recall hearing something about it.” (Tailor) “You really...” (Naofumi)

“I’ve been thinking about it for a while, but the Demi-Human who’s always with you really is pretty. Won’t you stop by to dress her up?”
(Tailor) “Expensive clothes are... a bit...” (Rafatalia)

Due to my influence, Rafatalia has learned to live quite economically. I think she would prefer some armor for efficiency’s sake.

“That’s such a waste. Clothing is essential if you want to woo men.”
(Tailor) “I-is that true...?” (Rafatalia)

It seems this will take a while.

I don’t care one bit about woman’s fashion, so I kinda want to leave.

“...and that’s why it’s good. Is this child a Lemo? I think I’m getting some inspiration.” (Tailor) “Wa, wa...” (Lemo Kid)

The Clothing shop manager pulls out a sketchbook and starts doodling in it.

As expected.

“Lately with the calamity, the town’s mood has gone down. No one’s buying clothing anymore.” (Tailor) She continues speaking as she draws.

“My store also sells armor, but its main purpose is clothing.” (Tailor) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“To be honest, I’ve been losing interest in making clothes lately. I haven’t been getting much inspiration lately.” (Tailor) I think that she said that the material for Firo’s clothes was very good.

“You know the girl you brought before. Making clothes for her was really fun. Could you bring her by again?” (Tailor) “That cost quite a bit...” (Naofumi)

And Firo seems to be happy with just one set.

We’re not particularly in need of it, so I see no need to buy her any new clothes.

If we had that sort of extra money lying around, I would use it on more useful things.

Anyways, Firo is usually in her Monster form, so the dress isn’t even used often.

“Hmm... The Hero of the Shield has quite a few inspirational people.” (Tailor) It seems that her Lemo Race design series is completed.

On the page are a pair of overalls, a vest, and various other designs.

My slaves’ clothes... mostly consist of second-hand armor. This gives the town an adventurer’s guild-like atmosphere.

Buying them casual clothes will cost a bit...

Some cheap clothes from the Old Man is as much as we can currently

afford.

I guess I should ask.

“I can only offer furs and some peculiar materials, but do you want to work in my village?” (Naofumi) Her expression lights up.

“Are you serious!?” (Tailor)

“Y-yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Are there more cute and interesting kids like this one?” (Tailor) “I don’t know if they’ll meet your specifications, but my village has plenty of Demi-Human slaves.”

“A-a-are there also male slaves there?”

“Of course.” (Naofumi)

“Are you sure!?” (Tailor)

She seems to be extremely excited.

I have a bad feeling about this.

“I am a warrior on a quest for new inspiration. Please allow me to trouble you for a while.” (Tailor) W-wait...

The thing that hooked her seems to be the fact that there were male slaves...

This is bad. The people from my world who were of a similar personality to her, would think of ‘that’ when they heard the words ‘Male Slaves’. (TL: Most likely BL) My decision may have been rash.

“T-then stop by to check the place out some time.” (Naofumi) “Yes! Of Course!” (Tailor)

And somehow the conversation was over.

...

After that, we parted ways with the clothing shop owner, and kept walking, when...

Kyurururururu...

A sound comes from the Lemo Slave's stomach. The child begins acting embarrassed.

"... I guess we should stop somewhere to eat." (Naofumi) "Yeah, we should" (Rafatalia)

"What does this one's race eat? Is it fine to feed it like the other Demi-Humans? Should I give it worms?"

If it's worms, then preparing food will be difficult.

I have the Dunes in the village, but those aren't food.

If necessary, I will cook them, but if I do, it will be troublesome.

Taniko would shout at me.

"Um...well..." (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Child tries to speak up.

"I went ...from home... a few times... It seems we can eat normal food."
(Lemo Kid) "I see, then should we stop by a food stall?" (Naofumi)
"Naofumi-sama won't cook?" (Rafatalia)

"We've come all the way to the Castle Town, and you still want me to cook? The smell will draw that person to us." (Naofumi) I have a classrooms-worth of hungry children here. Even if I cook on the River Bank, I think Firo will notice and bring them there.

"Isn't that fine?" (Rafatalia)

"Even if you're fine with it, I will find it a pain." (Naofumi) Recently, I've been trying to keep my cooking duty to a minimum.

There's been a slave who came to me, wanting to improve her cooking skill.

"Eh-... I wanted to eat Shield Nii-chan's cooking." (Kiel) Is what most of the kids said.

It was quite difficult to encourage her to cook again after that.

"Anyways. Today, we are eating out." (Naofumi)

“I understand...” (Rafatalia)

And so we head back towards the market.

The merchant’s shop has a long line in front of it. And the merchant is happily selling his goods for many times the normal price. I applaud his skills.

Now then, where should we eat?

As I look for restaurants, I notice the place I first took Rafatalia to eat.

“Will here be fine?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Rafatalia)

“...” (Lumo Kid)

I hold the Lumo Slaves hand as we enter the building.

“Welc...ome” (Waiter)

The person who greets us frowns upon seeing me with a cloak covering my body.

“Sir. Serving a suspicious person accompanied by a Demi-Human is a bit...” (Waiter) “... If you have such a rule, then hang it on the front door.” (Naofumi) “B-but still...” (Host)

Fumu... the host looks at the dirty Lemo Kid accompanying us, but doesn’t remark on it.

This reminds me of when I once brought Rafatalia here when she was still small. No one said anything at that time.

I guess I am being held up because Beastmen are feared more than other Demi-Humans.

There are plenty of people who wear cloaks, though many of them do so for suspicious reasons.

Most restaurants here should understand that. In my world most restaurants forbid the admittance of animals for sanitary reasons.

However in this world, Beastmen are supposed to be treated as Bonafide

human beings.

But I guess the hatred of this country is quite deeply seated. There's no choice.

I take off the cloak.

"Is this fine? There's no suspicious person anymore. Will you still deny food to a Demi-Human and a Beastman?" (Naofumi) "Ah...no... I-I understand." (Waiter)

With an amazed expression, the waiter leads us to a seat.

The Lemo slave fidgets as its eyes wander all over the room.

"This reminds me of the old Rafatalia." (Naofumi) "Please don't bring up that time." (Rafatalia)

"Do you want another Kid's set lunch?" (Naofumi)

"I don't need one!" (Rafatalia)

The Lemo slave can't seem to calm down. Its gaze begins to drift to its feet.

"Is there anything you'd like to eat?" (Naofumi)

"Well..." (Lemo Kid)

The kid looks at the menu and gives a bitter face.

"I can't read..." (Lemo Kid)

"Then should we order something for you?" (Naofumi) "Please..." (Lemo Kid)

I raise my hand and call our server.

"One Daily Special and two Kids se-" (Naofumi)

"Two Daily Specials and one Kid's set lunch." (Rafatalia) Rafatalia interrupts me before I can finish.

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama, you're mistaken. You still think I want that set, don't you?" (Rafatalia) "Even though you say that, you still kinda want it, right?"

It's something the other villagers would happily eat." (Naofumi) The last time she ate it, Rafatalia had carefully taken out and saved the flag.

"It's fine. Please don't treat me like a child." (Rafatalia) Is she at a delicate age? Even though her body has gotten big, her mind should still be a child.

"I-is that everything?" (Waiter)

"Yeah, I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

The waiter disappears into the back of the store.

I can faintly hear him saying something about the Hero of the Shield visiting.

After a while, the food arrives.

"Thank you for waiting. Here are your Daily Specials and Kid's set lunch." (Waiter) The Kid's set lunch is more flashy than usual. There are two flags in the rice.

"...It's showier than it was last time we were here." (Naofumi) They're definitely showing off.

Reputation is amazing... did the other heroes get this sort of treatment before as well?

Showing my face is inconvenient, but I guess I can get some things out of it.

"U-um..." (Lemo Kid)

I can hear the Lemo Slave swallowing its saliva.

"It's fine, you can eat." (Naofumi)

"Is it really okay?" (Lemo Kid)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"You won't drop the dish and make me eat off the floor?" (Lemo Kid) "...Where the hell did you learn that? That's a waste of food." (Naofumi) So this one's previous master made it eat off the ground.

“It’s fine, just eat however you like.” (Naofumi) It was like this with Rafatalia as well.

“You can eat when you want.” (Rafatalia)

“Y-yes...” (Lemo Kid)

Rafatalia makes this interaction much easier.

The Lemo Child timidly begins eating the Kid’s set lunch.

Its using its hands. I guess it never really learned manners.

But Manner is something you can always learn later.

...Right now the slaves take food from a single dish in the center of the table.

It’s like eating with a large family.

I think back to around the time I got here. Back then I couldn’t taste anything. I thought that as long it was cheap, any food would do.

I look out the store’s window.

The Spirit Turtle’s shell looms high over the city... There are still more battles to come.

“Thank you very much.” (Lemo Kid)

The Lemo Race slave begins stuffing its cheeks with the Kid’s set lunch in tears.

“If you think that, then eat it properly.” (Naofumi) If you leave any, I may get angry.

“But I won’t force you to eat anything your race cannot eat.” (Naofumi) I hope there isn’t too much of a difference in constitution.

“Yes” (Lemo Kid)

Like a mother, Rafatalia wipes the Lumo Child’s mouth and begins feeding it.

It’s quite a peaceful scene.

Chapter 148: Failed Creation

“Ah!”

When I was feeding the kid's lunch to the new Lemo slave, a loud voice could be heard from outside the shop.

“Big bro's eating!” (kiel)

When I looked, Kiel was pointing at me from outside the shop while she entered.

“No fair, that's sneaky! I also wanna eat” (kiel)

“You're only saying that because you see the skewer in my hand” (naofumi) I had given everyone pocket money and free time to celebrate their long-awaited Class Up.

As long as they have money, they should be able eat here.

Nevertheless, they shouldn't be asking me for skewers from the food stall after they've eaten.

“Isn't it okay~” (kiel)

“Kiel-chan, stop speaking so selfishly” (raphtalia) “Don't add 'chan' to my name!” (kiel)

It's this dialogue again. How troubling.

“Hm? Who's this kid?” (kiel)

“Eeep.....” (mole slave)

Startled, the Lemo slave curled into a ball.

It's not that he's timid but.... he's afraid of strangers.

“He's a new slave” (naofumi)

“I see, Shield-niichan may say scary things but he's rather indulgent so its alright” (kiel) “You.....” (naofumi)

To say this kind of thing about someone whilst in front of the person himself.

“What’s your name?” (kiel)

“....Imia Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz” (mole slave -> imia) Such a long name! It’s hard to remember.

“So Imia then. You a boy?” (kiel)

“No....” (imia)

Another girl. And I thought she was a boy.

It’s getting a bit much.

“You can’t get spoilt though. Me and Raphtalia-chan won’t allow it” (kiel) “O-okay” (imia)

“The place we’ll be going to is somewhere where if you work hard, you’ll be able to see your improvement, but only for the part you worked on, so let’s work hard together” (kiel) Kiel explained clumsily and smiled at Imia.

It’s a good development.

“And so, Niichan. Give me some too” (kiel)

“Nope” (naofumi)

In the end it was that. She was just making fun of me, this damn brat.

“What happened to the other guys” (naofumi)

Ever since I first gave food to Kiel to eat, everytime she finds me I end up having to feed her. Give me a break.

“They went shopping with the pocket money Niichan gave them. For souvenirs and stuff” (kiel) Really, just what am I even doing.

I should be managing my land, but instead it feels like I’ve just become the big brother who looks after everyone.

“Well, we’ll be meeting up at the castle town’s gates. Don’t be late whatsoever” (naofumi) “I already know that” (kiel)

Kiel left, as expected of someone who wasn’t usually treated. As she was going, she said this.

“Oh right, the friend Firo brought along is a bit prideful but she’s interesting!” (kiel) Melty....she’s playing around incognito again.

I wonder what’s become of the education in this country.

Imia’s also in a good mood and has become cheerful.

It’s similar to how Raphtalia was in the past.

“For the time being, let’s go to the weapon store after we finish eating” (naofumi) “Yes” (imia)

munch munch Imia frantically devoured her Kid’s Lunch.

It seems like she would get along with Firo, with the way she’s eating.

After we finished our meal at the restaurant, we made an appearance at the weapon store.

“Oh, well isn’t it the young laddie. It’s been a while” (oyaji) [T/N: He calls him An-chan which is derived from Aniki/Niichan]

“It’s been around two weeks” (naofumi)

“It’s around that long” (oyaji)

“Ah.....it’s about the shields I requested last time but....the money is still....” (naofumi) It’s very hard to say. That I don’t have money so I’ll just be copying.

“Ooh, I had also wanted to talk to you about that” (oyaji) The old man also seems to have trouble talking. The atmosphere is oppressing.

“It’s not finished yet” (oyaji)

“I see....then it’s fine” (naofumi)

“I’ll be frank. I’ve gotten the materials from the country, but they all have the characteristic of being resilient” (oyaji) “Ho.....” (naofumi)

“If I was to make them into weapons, adding enchantments or special options would be easy and because the foundation is solid, it could become a weapon just by shaving it into shape” (oyaji) Hmm....is it the manufacturing part that’s difficult.....?

I haven't really looked at the other weapon stores so I don't really understand, but this one seems to have a bit of an appeal to it.

I remember that the spears and swords were quite conspicuous.

There was a blade that looked like turtle shell. So that was shaped by shaving.

"However, I also wonder if that can even be called a weapon. There's no need for skills. In the worst case, a clumsily hammered item could still end up on the market" (oyaji) "Are you that fussed about it" (naofumi)

"Well, it would be affected by the maker's skills so I'm fine with just wondering. That can't really be said for making armour though" (oyaji) "Is that so?" (naofumi)

"Yes. Anyhow, this material seems to have bad affinity with the Air Wake feature. It has no effect" (oyaji) [T/N: Air Wake was originally translated as Air Walk in the early chapters but the pronunciation is 'ea' (air) 'ueiku' (wake)]

The Air Wake feature. If I'm not mistaken, it's supposed to make heavy armour lighter.

This is due to a special effect that the shield has. Gravity Field comes to mind.

This special effect that uses a gravitational field. It has a high probability of developing in shields in the Spirit Turtle Series and it seems to have the power to somehow cause floating objects to fall.

If that was enhanced by the shield's effect then even Firo would say it's hard to jump around.

I nod at the fact that if the Spirit Turtle materials have even just a tiny bit of this effect then it's affinity with the Air Wake feature would be bad.

"And these materials are intrinsically heavy, I can improvise something for a sword or spear if they were only being used as a blade but armour is different" (oyaji) The Spirit Turtle's shell itself can't help but to repel attacks.....however it's heavy.

“There’s the concept of making it thinner but, you know..... the fundamental defensive power would diminish” (oyaji) “I see” (naofumi)

It’s a difficult material. In my opinion it’s not perfected yet.

“I’ve made two prototypes. Have a look” (oyaji)

The old man guided me to the interior of the shop and I looked at his prototypes.

“Is this it?” (naofumi)

“Yeah” (oyaji)

“Is it alright if I hold it?” (naofumi)

“Go ahead” (oyaji)

One was an ordinary shield made from the spirit turtle’s shell, the problem was it was quite big and bulky.

I thought I’d try to carry it to test it, but it was too heavy. I should’ve had the strength to stop the spirit turtle’s foot but...was that simply the miraculous power of the shield?

It’s not that I couldn’t pick it up, but it would be hard to fight with this.

I can’t wield it.

Just putting it down caused a thud sound.

And, there was a major flaw.

It didn’t activate Weapon Copy.

In other words, this wasn’t treated as a shield. The criteria was hard to understand but, it may appear as a....wall.

However, there was a tiny reaction so I feel like it’s a delicate line.

“How is it?” (oyaji)

“Looks like it isn’t a shield” (naofumi)

“Ah, it’s a total failure” (oyaji)

“The other one?” (naofumi)

“This is it” (oyaji)

And what he gave me was a thin, semi-transparent shield made from the turtle shell. It’s appearance was really beautiful.

I try hold it for the time being. Its weight is not to the extent of being unable to hold it. It seems good to wield.

However.....huh? This one is more shield-like but there’s no reaction.

“Ah as I expected, even the young laddie thinks there’s a problem” (oyaji) “What’s the meaning of this?” (naofumi)

“For this shield, I focused on making it as light as possible. In exchange for that, there’s barely any defensive power. It’d break in one shot” (oyaji) Wow. A disposable. Or should I say, this is already.....

“Isn’t this a plate?” (naofumi)

“Even if you say that, I can’t refute it. When I first made it, I saw something similar shown in the souvenir shop and I wanted to cry” (oyaji) “It’s also heavier than it looks” (naofumi)

“That’s right, isn’t it. It’s a strong property of these materials” (oyaji) “Both extremes are too much, don’t you have any that are more of a compromise?” (naofumi) “That’s just it though. Somehow if it exceeds a certain thickness, the weight won’t change” (oyaji) “Eh?” (naofumi)

“If I made that plate just a bit thicker, its weight would have been the same. Its weight is proportional to its size. Having said that, I wanted to try making a smaller shield but then your forearm would be heavy” (oyaji) It’s hard to handle.

Do the ingredients themselves emit gravity.

“How difficult” (naofumi)

“Yeah, but my intuition is telling me I should be able to make something good. So just wait with high expectations, young laddie” (oyaji) “.....I get it. Oh right, this is about the shield but”

I explained to the old man regarding the necessary items for strengthening the Spirit Turtle materials. Perhaps there might be

something helpful.

“I see...that’s an interesting story, it might be better than making it with only those materials” (oyaji) “Actually I will receive them in segments so I can deliver some afterwards”

“Alright. I’ll also try a variety of things” (oyaji) And, while saying that, the two of us returned from the interior of the store.

Raphtalia and Imia were waiting near the entrance.

“Oh right, it looks like you brought a Beastman slave with you” (oyaji) “Yeah, it seems this kid is from a dexterous race so I bought her” (naofumi) “Oh, so she’s the one who’s going to become my apprentice”

“I haven’t thought about that yet. I’ll bring someone after I’ve gathered and raised them some more” (naofumi) “I see. I’m only waiting because it’s you” (oyaji) “It’ll be very soon. Please wait a little” (naofumi) “I’m strict though” (oyaji)

“Work them hard, but please don’t discriminate” (naofumi) “I won’t do that sort of thing” (oyaji)

It seems he wasn’t originally born in this country and I don’t want to see the old man discriminating or anything.

Therefore it was a good reply.

“It’s because beastmen are frightening as enemies but when they’re allies they’re very reliable. If it’s that kid, I’d recommend a rapier” (oyaji) “Speaking of which, have you finished the weapon meant for Rishia?” (naofumi) “Yeah, the improved weapon made with the money I received from the country. It’s finished” (oyaji) The old man took out a sword from underneath the counter.

Pekkle Rapier Quality: Good

Bestowed Effect: Agility UP Magic UP Blood Clean Grease Compared to Raphtalia’s sword, the bestowed effects are quite low.

Well, it was originally a spear so it seems to have degraded from the manufacturing.

“Then I’ll be taking it” (naofumi)

“Alright. Please come back whenever you like” (oyaji) “I’d like to come when I have money. I can’t be spoiled forever” (naofumi) “Hahaha, whenever you have that attitude it makes me want to work harder” (oyaji) The old man replied in good humour.

He can really make me relieved with his words.

“And it’s also thanks to your patronage that I can be so prosperous” (oyaji) “Ah, so that influence is showing” (naofumi)

“Of course. It’s to the extent where I’m so busy that it’s difficult” (oyaji) The equipment hanging in the store have been selling out considerably.

It feels as if the production side isn’t fast enough.

“For a while, I’ve been saved by the seclusion for my manufacturing” (oyaji) “It sounds quite envious” (naofumi)

“Come to think of it, the pharmacy has been taken away forcibly by the magic shop. Did you do something?”

“Is that so....so the magic shop succeeded then” (naofumi) That stubborn old guy has been fished out nicely.

With this, the slaves can be taught pharmaceuticals.

“I heard something I didn’t want to hear....” (oyaji) “Next is.....” (naofumi)

“Laddie. Please stop with your recruiting” (oyaji) “Hahaha” (naofumi)

“Stop hiding behind your smile” (oyaji)

I wish that the old man would also come to my land.

When I send a look saying that, he bluntly avoids my glance by turning away.

“Um... what are they talking about?” (imia)

“Shh.....They’re in the middle of an important discussion. Let’s just wait for them” (raphtalia) “R-right....” (imia)

Raphtalia and Imia had heard the chat between the old man and me.

Chapter 149: Alchemist

I finished chatting with the old man and headed down to the entrance of the castle town since it was close to the meeting time.

By the time we made our way to the entrance, Firo and the slaves had gathered.

“ “Welcome back~” “ (slaves)

“I’m back, is everyone here?” (naofumi)

I count just in case.

Yep. The whole group has gathered.

“Hey Master~” (firo)

“What’s up?” (naofumi)

Firo approached with a question.

Melty is....not here.

“What’s that yummy-looking kid next to you?” (firo) “Eep!?” (imia)

Imia let out a frightened squeak.

Firo’s humanoid form was of similar height but...to say she looks yummy, did Firo really think that she could eat her.

Nevertheless, the slaves who knew her real form took a few steps away from Firo and whispered together.

“So Firo-chan is really.....” (anon slave)

“That’s right” (anon slave)

“Is she gluttonous or....” (anon slave)

Firo looked around uneasily, did that kid even notice her own slip up.

“Wh-what? No~!” (firo)

Hm, I got to see an ostracised, flustered Firo which was rare.

“You know Firo.....this child may look a little different from us but she’s

still part-human” (raphtalia) “And of all the things to say, you had to say she was yummy-looking.....so you finally reveal your true character” (naofumi) “Fuee!?” (firo)

Firo opened her eyes wide and sniffed Imia’s scent.

“No~! Don’t avoid Firo!” (firo)

I can easily picture the motion of Firo, in her monster form, attacking Imia like an owl would eat a mouse.

This is probably what everyone here is imagining.

“I won’t eat you! I won’t eat you so don’t be afraid!” (firo) Firo tried frantically to persuade her but Imia’s fear didn’t go away.

Imia clung to me with extreme fright.

It’s good that she was attached to me but.....what’s with this interaction.

“Master, help me!” (firo)

“Even if you say that.....It’s good as a threat so won’t you become an embodiment of fear?” (naofumi) “NOOOOooooo!” (firo)

Ah, she’s so loud.

“I’m joking. Imia, you don’t have to be so afraid of her. Firo is a nice kid who likes playing with children. She might look like a little girl now but her true form is.....”

.....She’s definitely not a normal Philorial.....how should I describe it?

“H-her true form?” (imia)

Imia asked, frightened more than before.

“Naofumi-sama, if you just stop there, her fear will escalate” (raphtalia) “Nooo!” (firo)

Firo let out an even louder cry.

“My bad. I was thinking of how best to explain it.....er, this guy is something known as a holy bird in this country so it’s alright” (naofumi)

Imia looked towards Firo while trembling anxiously.

Firo smiled sweetly.

However, that just seemed to backfire and Imia hid behind my back.

“Master~!” (firo)

“There’s no other way to raise her confidence but to show sincerity.
Work hard” (naofumi) “Aww.... I get it” (firo)

Somehow this incident became quite complicated. It seems that Firo is reluctant to be rejected by her friends.

Even though it was due to her own carelessness.....

“From now on don’t go recklessly saying that someone looks delicious”
(naofumi) “Yeah....” (firo)

Firo learnt something today. Or I should say, just the fact that she’s choosing friendship over her appetite means she’s grown a bit.

“And, we went off topic. Didn’t you guys hear about this from Kiel?”
(naofumi) “I thought it’d surprise them so I kept silent” (kiel) Jeez.....that Kiel.

“Well, we’ll do a self introduction” (naofumi)

I shifted the frightened Imia out of hiding.

“This child will be coming home with us from now on. Come on, introduce yourself” (naofumi) Imia’s demeanour was a mix of shyness, fear and embarrassment but she squeezed out a few words while constantly looking up and down.

“I’m Imia Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz. Please treat me well” (imia) “Such a long name!” “ (slaves)

Ah, of course everyone thought that. Raphtalia and Kiel didn’t react so I had thought it was normal.

“Then again, you are a girl. Nice to meet you Imia-chan” (anon slave)
“Right....” (imia)

Good. It seems she’s quick to open her heart.

“We’ll be returning to the village now. You guys haven’t forgotten anything, right?” (naofumi) “All good” (anon slave)

“Yes” (anon slave)

“Yeah” (anon slave)

After I checked everyone, we walked to the carriage.

And then, Firo changed into her monster form in order to pull the carriage.

“Wah!” (imia)

Imia let out her voice in surprise.

“Th-this is?” (imia)

“That’s right. This is Firo’s monster form. It’s hard to explain, right” (naofumi) “Yeah....” (imia)

Firo turned towards Imia and smiled. Imia timidly stretched out her hand.

“And just like that her mouth will open and.....SNAP!” (anon slave) One of the slaves tried to intimidate Imia.

Imia anxiously retracted her arm in a hurry.

“Aww~....” (firo)

A very dissatisfied Firo glared at the slave who had been doing the teasing.

Well, she was the one that had been made fun of.....

Firo is, how should I say it, usually the one causing problems so this is a little unusual.

Well, she is an omnivore so she can’t help eating everything.

This wasn’t the case when Firo was a child but now that she’s grown she seems like she will eat anything or was it just my imagination?

.... Ah, is it because I used her to threaten people.

“For now, we’ll get on the carriage and take it easy” (naofumi) “If you

get motion sickness, say so properly okay” (raphtalia) “Ok” (anon slave)

There was no need to hurry so we’ll go at a reasonable speed.

I ensured all the slaves had boarded and then instructed Firo to depart.

“Ah, Master” (firo)

“What is it?” (naofumi)

“Melly-chan will be coming to play sometime in the near future” (firo)

“I see” (naofumi)

So Melty will be coming to the village, just the thought of that loud, chatty girl coming makes my head hurt.

Well, she’ll be quiet when playing with Firo so it’s fine.

The next day.

After one night of camping, we arrived at the village. We changed the pace a little because last time Firo only slept when we arrived.

“Ah, Shield-niichan. Welcome back” (taniko)

Taniko came to greet us. How rare.

That she would approach me even though we’re often conflicting when it comes to monsters.

“Niichan, some outsider came and was being very insistent, which was troubling. Please help!” (taniko) “Huh?” (naofumi)

Taniko knocked on the door of the building the soldiers were lodging at and called for the female knight.

The female knight also seems a bit troubled.

“Just wait, you can keep a lookout without being so impatient” (female knight) “But she seemed like she would run away quite a few times!” (taniko) “It is indeed dangerous but, we haven’t got an arrest warrant yet. We can’t arrest her unreasonably and we ought to listen to the lord’s opinion” (female knight) “What’s the matter?” (naofumi)

“An unpleasant, a little eccentric visitor came. She wanted a meeting

with Iwatani-dono post-haste” (female knight) “Sigh.....just who was she?” (naofumi)

“An alchemist who caused lots of problems in Faubley” (female knight)
[T/N: Pronounced Fo-burei. Seems to be a town/place? I’m accepting alternate name suggestions]

.....Come again?

The one whom the queen and the slave merchant had warned me about has already come to my village?

“She looked at the monsters that Iwatani-dono looks after many times, and by all means wanted to examine——” (female knight) “Oh~.....So this is the rumoured holy bird” (???)

Really, before I knew it, an unknown woman came and probed Firo’s body thoroughly.

“Master~!” (firo)

Firo let out a shriek.

“Oh, so she understands human language, this child seems to be of the legendary Philorial Queen species variant that I heard about” (???) Her hair colour was platinum blonde, she had long hair and tanned skin. She seems human based on her appearance.

She seems to be in her mid-twenties.

What stood out stood out, what didn’t didn’t, a standard expression from my world would be that she gave the impression of a sultry young lady in a white coat.

“Her plumage is thick. I wonder how her internal organs are?” (???) A fanatical alchemist? forcibly opened Firo’s mouth and grasped her tongue. Firo resisted but she was dealt with it easily, the Herculean Firo was repressed as easily as taking candy from a baby. [T/N: Naofumi is not sure if she is an alchemist, hence the question mark]

And she even put her head inside her mouth.....

“Unh!” (firo)

A struggling Firo suddenly spit the alchemist? out.

“It’s no good if she struggles. I suppose it can’t be helped” (???) Just before she fell, she pulled a syringe out of nowhere and threw it at Firo.

Firo wasn’t able to avoid it and with a pop the needle stuck in her mouth.

What a feat.

“Funya.....” (firo)

Firo collapsed with a thud.

“I-I can’t summon any strength.....” (firo)

“H-hey.....” (naofumi)

“Just wait a minute. I’m currently in the middle of an examination” (???)
“No, if you do these kinds of thing at your convenience, I, the owner will be troubled” (naofumi) “Oh dear.....” (???)

The alchemist? changed her interest after hearing my words.

“Might you be the Hero of the Shield-sama?” (???)

“T-that’s right but.... you are?” (naofumi)

“Me? I am Ratotil Anthreya. My friends call me Rato” (??? → rato) [T/N: Pronounced Ratotiru Ansureia. Any other name suggestions?]

“I-I see. My name is Naofumi Iwatani, Naofumi is my first name” (naofumi) “So it’s Naofumi-san. Nice to meet you” (rato)

Rato replied, pinning the limp Firo with her gaze.

“And so, will you let me examine this child?” (rato) She took the opportunity to request my permission.

Judging from her behaviour, she probably wouldn’t understand if I said no.

But Firo’s ecology was still full of mysteries.

“Ma-master! No~!” (firo)

Hmm..... I feel like if I accept it then the enigma that was Firo could be

solved but I also feel that it would heavily burden Firo.

“Wow, she took down that Firo-chan so easily” (anon slave) “Isn’t it amazing. If it had worked properly, the drug I used should have caused her to lose consciousness and yet she’s still aware and able to talk” (rato) “So you used that kind of drug” (naofumi)

“It couldn’t be helped. If she continued to struggle, it would have done more harm than good” (rato) “Sigh.... first of all, I’ll have to refuse” (naofumi) “Oh, too bad” (rato)

“Ungh....” (firo)

Firo recovered and slowly got to her feet.

“My my, it seems that if I don’t use a stronger drug it will be impossible to examine her” (rato) “Noo!” (firo)

Firo ran away.

She won’t be returning for a while.

“So you’re the one who wanted a meeting with me” (naofumi) “That’s right” (rato)

“What did you want?” (naofumi)

“To be able to have a look at a variety of things. For example, a certain village’s plant or the monsters in this village” (rato) “Sigh...” (naofumi)

“You see, this really attracted my attention. I’d really like to fiddle around with some of them” (rato) “To let you fiddle around, you say.....” (naofumi)

Just what did this fellow intend to do?

It looks like she even knows the origin of the Bioplant, so it should probably be fine to just let her do some research.

Was she an alchemist? At the least, she can be called a specialist. She might be pretty smart.

To be honest, I wasn’t very good at studying so I’m aware that I’m not good with this type.

Even if that's the case, I couldn't just let it go.

"I also heard rumours about you. That you're an alchemist who caused a lot of problems in Faubley" (naofumi) "Problems? That's not right. They're just saying that because they're too incompetent to understand my research. And so they fabricated some lies and exaggerated some mistakes to turn it into something big" (rato) "Yeah yeah" (naofumi)

She said this like some mad scientist character. There's no merit in looking after someone who'd follow that role too well.

Well, she took down Firo easily enough so that ability might deserve some appreciation.

She might have some war potential.

"Those guys, they called my monster research 'an act that would even scare the gods' and banished me of all things. And by gods, they were referring to the Four Sage Heroes and the Seven Star Heroes, I think?" (rato) "And so, did you come to approve of the current Four Sage Heroes yourself?" (naofumi) "No. Their cries about the heroes were making me sick. They're nothing but a hindrance!" (rato) "...Who do you think you're talking about. Why did you come here then" (naofumi) "I came to examine the monster that was the Spirit Turtle. Incidentally, I also took the opportunity to visit this place" (rato) "Go off to Melromarc's castle" (naofumi)

"That's good too. My interest has already moved on" (rato) Rato stuck out her hand enthusiastically, intending to grasp mine.

I replied while avoiding that hand.

"Don't touch me. I hate women like you" (naofumi)

"I see, then I won't touch you so let me play with the monsters" (rato) "You can't!" (taniko)

Taniko rejected her arbitrarily.

If it concerns monsters then she'll charge unexpectedly, this kid.

"Wait, wait.....First I want to hear your objective" (naofumi) It might be

good to recruit her depending on the situation.

She is a monster specialist. There'll be many uses for her.

I might be expecting too much of her but she might be able to take care of the modifying of the Bioplant and monsters in my place.

Well, that also depends on her motive.

If she's thinking stupid things such as seeking revenge on the country or trying to destroy the world, I'll drive her out without hesitation.

"My aim? It's to create powerful monsters of course" (alchemist)

Chapter 150: Favorable Discrimination

“I see...” (Naofumi)

Making a strong monster.

Quite a simple and childish desire.

This world has a game-like modification system, so I can see where she is finding her enjoyment.

But I must admit that it is quite rude to experiment on living organisms.

“For that goal, I travelled the land and studied various monsters. I have learned and assimilated various sciences and magics. But those people... They said something about going against god’s creations and creating works of evil. They tried to kill my creations, it was quite troublesome.”

(Rat) “So... to summarize, you’re learning how to strengthen monsters through alchemy. Can I think of you as a sort of monster tamer?”

(Naofumi) “Well... Close enough.” (Rat)

I expected her to deny it, but she seems to be fine with being referred to as such.

At first, I thought she was crazy, but it seems that she is just earnestly focused on a goal.

Is she the type of person that gets overly enthusiastic when it comes to research?

“Can I ask a simple question? Oh, Female knight, please listen as well.”
(Naofumi) “Me too?” (Female Knight)

Female Knight, who had drawn her sword ready to attack, looks confused.

Firo had recovered from the medicine and ran away. Rafatalia is also waiting with sword drawn.

As a matter of fact, Firo is the strongest one among us.

Because Rat was able to take her out without a problem, it’s no mystery why everyone is wary.

Because of the Shield and my poison resistance, my guard isn't too high. Perhaps I should be more careful next time.

"There's one thing that has been bothering me for a while." (Naofumi)
"What is it?" (Rat)

"Well... Strong Monsters... Are you able to take my already special monsters, and increase their powers even further? For example, could you fuse a Caterpilland and a Dune?" (Naofumi) "It's outlawed by some sections of the Church. They only allow for the pure breeding of monsters." (Rat) "Then, Rat, your research is..." (Naofumi)

"Yes, some may consider it illegal." (Rat)

...In many games I've played, the fusion of monsters happens on a daily basis.

Are the monster users of this world just plain breeders? Instead of aiming to make strong monsters, they just try to increase their numbers for labor purposes.

...wait, by her phrasing, does that mean that you can crossbreed monsters?

"Is it possible to get an egg with the properties of multiple monsters?" (Naofumi) "Of course it is possible. It's like with Demi-Humans. If a Fox and Zveil Demi-Human have kids, it will be a mixed breed. Monsters within similar categories can breed to make children sharing the attributes of both monsters. My research happens to deal with..." (Rat)
"No, I don't really care about that." (Naofumi)

I had never thought about what happens when different races of Demi-Humans mix.

But, I have heard that it is possible for a human and a Demi-Human to have kids.

So that logic also applies to monsters?

... How the hell does the ecology of this world function?

"So basically, what you are trying to accomplish is?" (Naofumi) "I want

to research what makes monsters strong, make new types of powerful life-forms, and add to your fighting force.” (Rat) Rat is extending her hand towards me. For some reason, Taniko’s eyes are sparkling as well.

Taniko always loved monsters. Does she approve of Rat’s research?

“Let her join.” (Taniko)

“Who decided that monsters had to be evil entities that threatened mankind? I want to correct that attitude. Certainly, we can kill monsters and increase our own powers, but then doesn’t that make monsters killing humans for power the exact same thing?” (Rat) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Murder, killing other humans, will also give you EXP, but it is not practiced because it goes against moral standards.” (Rat) Hmm... I see.

It’s quite a black world here, isn’t it.

“Everyone in this world was made equally, so why are monsters the evil ones? That’s because they are weak.” (Rat) Well she may be a bit eccentric, but at least she speaks with conviction.

But, there is a high possibility that she is only saying things that will further her cause.

“Look at Filo Rials, they’re way too famous. Their Queens feast on the flesh of Dragons. They’re called the holy messengers of God even though they’re monsters like all the rest. I want to make a monster that gets a public reputation as good as that. A monster that will be able to help people, and be helped by them.” (Rat) I can’t deny it. Firo did eat a bit of dragon meat, though it was rotting.

I don’t think an average Filo Rial can get that strong... But I guess that their legends earn them quite a bit of respect.

Perhaps the legends are of monsters like Fitoria.

That one is somehow even stronger than Firo.

“It’s not like I don’t see where you’re coming from.” (Naofumi) I’ve played plenty of games which involved rearing monsters to be strong.

All this person is doing is taking something that would be the common

sense of another world, and trying to apply it to this one.

Though she may be lying.

“So you wish to study the monsters of this village to aid your research?”
(Naofumi) “Yes.” (Rat)

“I hate liars more than all else. If you want to do such work in this village, then to prevent lies I will have to make you one of my slaves. Will you do it even with those conditions?” (Naofumi) “Sure. If that’s all I have to do, then I’ll happily throw away my human dignity.” (Rat) She accepted it way too readily.

And... She worded it in quite badly.

It’s not like I make my slaves sacrifice their dignity or anything “If that’s what I must do to advance my research, then I won’t mind.” (Rat)
“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

If I let her stay, then my monsters may be able to get stronger.

It’s not a bad prospect.

If I place a slave seal on her, then I can act quickly if problems begin to surface down the road.

“I work my monsters hard, you know. Like slaves. You’ll be treated no different.” (Naofumi) “There are Human and Demi-Human slaves as well. I see no need to give them preferential treatment out of pity.” (Rat) Mu... Preferential treatment is also technically discrimination.

Overseas, I believe that woman began objecting to receiving such treatment, calling it discrimination as well.

Some Japanese trains even have Women-only railcars as well. Quite a few people of all genders protest against them. (TL: Instituted quite recently-in the last 15 years-to prevent grope and molestation, they still exist during late night hours.) It might be close to that.

“I don’t like it when people protect one life-form. Filo Rials have more intelligence than other monsters, but why does that mean they have to make a law that prevents the consumption of them? And yet when a

dragon appears it is immediately ordered to be slain?” (Rat) “...”
(Naofumi)

“I won’t tell you not to use monsters. In fact, I support you. I hate people only thinking of monsters as something to be destroyed. Monsters are alive as well, and they can help combat the wave. By my theory, monsters are not born of the wave. They can make for strong weapons. Just like the heroes. Whether for good or bad, I hate discrimination. Everyone in this world can be helpful to everything else in it.” (Rat) Taniko is now glaring at Rat with inflated cheeks.

I don’t know what part of Rat’s ideology ticked her off, though.

“I understand your objective. You want to make my monsters an effective fighting force for the upcoming waves.” (Naofumi) “Yeah! But that damn Seven Star Hero! I was almost cut down for Heresy!” (Rat) “Well then hypothetically...” (Naofumi)

I hand a Bioplant seed to Rat.

“This seed is definitely a plant, but if modified incorrectly it will become a monster. If handled properly, however, it can make abundant food, and medicine. What does this tell you?” (Naofumi) “What are you talking about? That has nothing to do with my research. Anyways, hand it over. I tried working with seeds before, but they quickly deteriorated when I tried to work with them.” (Rat) Fumu... It seems this one can help in my objectives as well.

She might become trouble later on, but as long as I have the reins called the slave seal, I can control her to some extent.

“I’ll allow it. If you will become my slave, then the village will assist in your research.” (Naofumi) “Understood. If the Hero of the Shield can only trust slaves, then this is the easiest way to gain your trust.” (Rat) I exchange a handshake with Rat.

“I’ll count on you from now on. To gain your trust, I will become a slave. In exchange, you will permit and assist in the conducting of my research.” (Rat) “I don’t allow deceit. As long as you acknowledge that, then I have no problems with you staying here.” (Naofumi) And so the Alchemist Rat

began to live in my village.

“Can I start with modifying that Filo Rial? I’d like to begin by adding another eye on its stomach for increased perception, and perhaps several tentacles to its back for increased movement and tactile manipulation.”

(Rat) “NO!” (Firo)

I hear Firo’s voice shouting from a distance. It seems that there are now more people in this village that she won’t get along with.

“The individual is against it, so you should give it up.” (Naofumi) “Well that’s unfortunate.” (Rat)

“Why did you drug my Filo Rial in the first place?” (Naofumi) “You don’t know? Filo Rials can be surprisingly vicious monsters. If I don’t immobilize it first, then I can’t examine it.” (Rat) Is that how it is? Well I guess it is crazy to suddenly try and examine a wild animal without sedating it first. It might start attacking, or run away.

“Fortunately, your Filo Rial is in quite good shape. She has an annoyingly high amount of energy.” (Rat) Exactly.

From birth, Firo has had way too much energy.

I don’t think she’s ever been sick.

Perhaps I can also leave veterinary work to her.

Anyways, this is a person I don’t really understand. Her ideologies contain multiple contradictions.

Discrimination is bad, but turning monsters into weapons is Okay. She wants to modify monsters to be stronger. Does she like monsters or hate them?

Anyways. It seems that my own research will be getting easier from now on.

Chapter 151: Camping Plant

“It’s going quite well.” (Naofumi)

“Right. For me to make this much progress in just 2 days, could I possibly be a genius?” (Rat) “Naofumi-sama...” (Rafatalia)

It’s been two days since then. Rafatalia is facing me with a serious face.

I think I overdid it as well.

I had tried to modify the Bioplant with Rat’s help. Because of this, quite a few people are watching our work.

Having a specialist really helps.

Rat has already been registered as one of my slaves. I have set the crest to punish her if she tries to lie to me.

The punishment has been set to the highest level. Based on the severity of her actions, she may die.

I can’t be negligent. Though for now, she seems to be satisfied while being immersed in research.

The real work starts from here on out.

First, I modified a Bioplant seed to be more like the original monstrous variety in order to grant it sentience, and registered it as a monster under my control. I handed it over to Rat for research purposes.

Rat takes out some complex machinery and begins to perform further modifications on the plant.

There was the danger that it may have been able to break the seal, as Firo did, but this time it was a success.

As we plant the seed, the Bioplant begins to come to life and move as commanded.

The Bioplant we tried to make today was one that would be able to act as a house.

We’ll be getting more slaves soon, so it would be useful if we could

speed up the building process.

Which is why we began working on this interesting project.

The experiment was a success. As long as we issued the order, the Bioplant would take the shape of a house.

The new creation was dubbed, 'Camping Plant'.

Rat went off and arbitrarily named it on her own. I don't really care so I'll leave the name as is.

Flowers bloom to form an effective roof, and as long as we give a specific layout, the plant can take on the form of any building.

The flowers absorb light during the day, and can emit magic light at night if needed.

The slaves had high adaptability, so they readily moved into the dangerous-looking house.

I planned to use them for temporary lodging, but Kiel enthusiastically claimed the house as her own, so I guess it is what it is.

Are you sure you want the house of your dreams to be one built so easily?

A strength of these houses is that they can be easily cleared with herbicide and rebuilt if they got in the way.

This makes them exceedingly easy to manage.

And... Rafatalia is currently questioning me on the influx of green houses in the village.

"I'm sorry." (Naofumi)

"About what?" (Rafatalia)

"The village you lived in now looks like the dwelling of an evil sorcerer." (Naofumi) "Well... there's nothing we can do about that... I understand. I just thought that you were trusting Rat too easily." (Rafatalia) "I think she's the one trusting me way too easily." (Naofumi)

She had been staring at me intently while I modified the plant.

I thought that our methods of modification were the same, but it seems that she has taken a great interest in my general modification method. I think she called it ground-breaking or something.

(TL: as in how he can change entire attributes without taking the steps leading up to that into account) Even if you say it's ground-breaking, it's the Shield's capabilities so I can't really help her on that.

It seems I can only make general modifications, so I have to leave the finer details to Rat.

The next thing to work on is a plant to produce medicine.

It seems that this will be quite difficult.

Up 'til now I have made no progress in this field.

By the way, the prototype house we made was carnivorous.

I continually cautioned Rat not to enter it, but Firo and Taniko suddenly rushed in only to get eaten. Rafatalia and the rest had to cut it open and rescue them.

The villagers have been eyeing me with strange looks since then.

I also had Rat check the identity of the Monster eggs we had collected.

Additionally she checked the growth of the monsters I had under my watch. I explained my Monster User Shield's 'Growth Correction' ability, and she began examining the Legendary Shield with zeal.

It seems that the Monster User seal had awakened, but I didn't get any extra growth enhancements from it.

I was hoping for something that would raise my monster's intelligence.

"I had heard that the Hero of the Shield's monsters had abnormal strength. So this was the cause?" (Rat) "Probably. And I'm quite sure the other heroes should be able to unlock these abilities as well." (Naofumi) It's not like I had this function from the beginning. The others should be able to unlock a Slave Series and Monster Use Series as well.

It's even more likely that they will be able to get weapons that allow

modification of plants like the Bioplant.

However plants like this are hard to come across.

I've only ever seen them in the Bioplant's origin town, and this one.

"I won't claim to be an expert, but I've never heard of such abilities coming from the other heroes." (Rat) "I see." (Naofumi)

To put it bluntly, we don't get along.

However from what I've heard, the Seven Star Heroes are supposed to be good people.

It seems that modifying monsters goes against the Church. Such straight-laced heroes probably wouldn't delve into such subjects.

I don't really want to trouble Rat further, and I honestly don't care so I won't ask what sort of people they are.

... If you look at this village objectively, how many laws are we breaking?

Now then, our food supply has become quite steady. The taste is also guaranteed, and it seems that Rat will be able to produce some variation in the fruits.

I'm leaving the training of the monsters to the slaves, and my peddling enterprise will soon be able to start in earnest.

The slaves have all passed level 30, so our fighting prowess isn't a problem either.

In just a few days, we've made quite some progress.

"I was able to create a research lab so easily. This seed really is miraculous." (Rat) Rat's lab... it is a large building made of Camping Plant.

She had brought lab equipment with her from the start, so it seems that the lab is now usable.

From the building, I can hear the screams of a monster. It's reminding me of a few Science Fiction stories.

At that moment, I had a few doubts about letting her set up shop here.

By the way, Taniko and Rat have become rivals in their treatment of monsters.

Taniko believed that monsters should get strong through battle and experience, while Rat opted for strengthening them through modification. Their opinions often clashed.

Due to their differing ideals, they often argued. It appears that they hate each other.

However, Taniko's education is severely lacking so most of the time it seems that Rat is just toying with her.

"Then I shall work on the Bioplants until I get bored. After that, do you agree to assist me in my goals?" (Rat) "Yeah, I also hold an interest in Monster Modification." (Naofumi) If we have monsters that can stand on equal footing with those brought by the wave, then fighting will get a lot easier.

I need to scrape a fighting force together no matter what, so modification may prove to be a useful asset.

I learned from that incident with the Spirit Turtle that having more comrades is always useful.

If they're strong then even more so.

It seems there was a Balloon egg mixed in with the rest.

No... It wasn't an egg. It seems that a hibernating Balloon had been mistaken as an egg and carried off.

According to Rat, Balloons usually fly. They break off from a larger being called Balloon Legios, and can henceforth freely float in the sky.

If you see a strangely colored object in the sky, it is probably a Balloon Legios.

Though Balloon Legion rarely come to the ground, the numerous Balloons born from come down quite often.

They become completely independent after separating from the Legios.

After the Balloon awakened, I quickly had a monster seal placed on it, and it is now my subordinate.

As the Balloon levelled up, it got bigger as if it were being inflated. I tied it to the carriage and attached a banner onto it.

With this, it is connected to the carriage and will receive a portion of the EXP gained by Firo, who is pulling it.

The banner on it read 'Hero of the Shield's Peddling'

Its monster name appears to be Ad Balloon.

What sort of bad joke is this?

It seems that Ad Balloon had previously been cared for by a human.

I'm a bit afraid of a large floating balloon-shaped monster, but... (TL: Balloon is usually in English, in this line it is said in Japanese.) Taniko readily mounted the Balloon and rode it into the sky with both arms outstretched. Seriously, what Valley did she crawl out of?

It's really slow, but I guess I can assign it to guard duty.

I hold Balloons in high esteem.

I haven't forgot my debt to them from when I first fought Motoyasu.

"You are hereby deemed Test Subject #1." (Rat)

"Garu!" (Ad Balloon)

"Quiet." (Naofumi)

Perhaps due to the Shield's influence, this monster seems to possess a higher level of intelligence than other Balloons "... Now then, I will be leaving for peddling." (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Rafatalia)

"Then I will be continuing with my research. If you need me, you can find me in my lab, Count." (Rat) Count... That's right, I got a title.

I had completely forgotten.

“Hmm? I had heard that you were a Count. Am I wrong?” (Rat)

“No, you’re correct.” (Naofumi)

“Anyways, if you have any business, please stop over.” (Rat)

“Yes, Yes. Oh, and remember that just because I’m not here doesn’t mean you can cause trouble.” (Naofumi) “I know. I won’t do something that foolish.” (Rat)

“I wonder.” (Naofumi)

I think about how to produce a medicine generating Bioplant as I call Firo over. I get on the Carriage and set out for the neighboring village.

Chapter 152: Business

In the Neighboring town, a magic, medicine, and clothing shop have now been built.

They're still working from temporary stands, but business has already started.

"Ah, Hero-sama. welcome." (Magic Shopkeeper)

The Magic Shop's owner greets me

The building she is working out of obviously isn't as good as her previous shop, but I have been giving her some preferential treatment.

I have high hopes for this town even though we have just started reconstruction efforts on it.

"How are you faring?" (Naofumi)

"I'm getting by. I think I will reopen the store in the Castle Town as well." (Magic Shopkeeper) "So this will just be a branch location?" (Naofumi) "Yeah. I'll work here until that store opens and I'll occasionally be teaching magic there..... It seems you're doing something interesting there as well, right?" (Magic Shopkeeper) The Magic shopkeeper seems to have noticed the sudden change in my village.

This kind of progress is certainly in itself worthy of being called magic.

"..... Hmph" (Naofumi)

I think I can probably smell the Medicine-shop.

Sometimes my gaze turns toward the village.

"We can research advanced medicine now that the Medicine-shop has begun taking care of it. I am looking forward to the results and would like to thank you for helping me since my schedule has become rather tight" (Naofumi) ".....I see" (Medicine Shopkeeper)

"Now..... Where is the clothing shop?" (Naofumi)

"I wonder if I've made a mistake. I was under the impression I would be

living in the Hero's village." (Tailor) Fumu.... I give the various monster materials I had gathered to the Tailor.

I had told her that I would give her various interesting materials.

I think I can leave the sizing of the materials up to her.

"There has also been a lot of reconstruction happening here" (Naofumi)
Unlike my village, this one has a lot of manpower, so I see lots of progress every day.

There seems to be a plan to re-built the Feudal lord's house.

Currently the foundations have been erected, and they plan for it to be finished in two weeks.

"Sorry for many thing" (Naofumi)

"No problem. Most of the people here had a lot of free time on their hands anyways."(Leader) "I see" (Naofumi)

"Instead of hating you, everyone is looking forward to your cooking. Is it really as tasty as they say? I too would like to partake in it at least once."(Leader) ...I would occasionally come over and cook food to support their efforts, but has that become their motivation?

The shield really does prepare good food.

"Well good. Also, I won't be cooking again until I return from peddling." (Naofumi) "Okay, I'll pass on the message."(Leader)

"yes yes" (Naofumi)

I shake his hand, and set out to start peddling in the next town.

I am accompanied by Rafatalia, Firo and two other people.

There is a need for me to increase my combat forces and I'm not sure if Rat will be able to produce results in the given time.

On the second day of Peddling

I arrived in a big town.

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

There is a commotion going on involving a squadron of Guards I should probably ignore it, but.....

“Why are these people getting off Scot Free, while I have to be taken into custody?!” (a familiar voice) when approaching i stop the carriage because the voice I heard sounded very familiar.

I can't see through the crowd, so I ask someone nearby.

“What's happening?” (Naofumi)

“It seems that the Hero of the Sword helped capture a thief, but now he is being arrested.” (Crowd Person) ...It's a story I have heard somewhere before.

“Hm? Aren't you the Hero of the Shield?” (Crowd Person) So I have been noticed. Well, my carriage does stand out quite a bit, and Firo is in her monster form, so this much is to be expected.

The crowd are breaking and ringleader comes into view.

There, I see a familiar group of thieves with smiling faces, and Ren being held down by some guards.

...I kinda understand the situation.

Capturing thieves. Something similar happened to me before.

There's no choice. I make my way through the crowd.

“Yo.” (Naofumi)

Surprising them would be dangerous, so I call out from a distance.

“It's Naofumi isn't it?” (Ren)

“Been a while.” (Naofumi)

Ren looks happy upon seeing me. He waves his hand at me.

But the person I was talking to was not Ren, but the leader of the thieves.

As soon as the thieves see me, they begin to look pale.

Well... they've already gone through this twice. This will be the third.

These people, They should really learn to live honestly, maybe become mercenaries or something.

“You people really don’t learn, do you. Did you really think that framing the person that apprehended you would really get you off so easily?”

(Naofumi) “S-shut up!” (Thief)

There’s something I would like to test.

They may be a little afraid of me, but I have something that gives them nightmares.

“Firo”(Naofumi)

“Yes?”(Firo)

Firo come up by jumping over the crowd.

The bandit’s face became paler.

“Enjoy your meal.” (Naofumi)

“Yup” (Firo)

It seems she will eat anything that is not a child.

The thieves desperately face the guards and begin to beg to them.

“We are the culprits, Please Help!” (Bandits)

They confessed... Is Firo really that scary?

Well Rat did tell me that Filo Rials are supposedly very vicious, and this happens to be a Queen.

“No, these people aren’t thieves. The Hero of the Sword is mistaken.”

(Naofumi) It seems the guards have yet to discover their hideout.

These people have a bit of skill, and they’re good at saving up money.

I think I’ll make them a source of income again.

“Naofumi! You too!?” (Ren)

“I’m not saying you’re at fault. Just be quiet for a second. I have an idea.” (Naofumi) “We’ll talk! We’ll talk, so just keep that man’s bird away from us!” (Bandits) “Hey, master. Firo feels that she is being hated, but

did Firo do something wrong?” (Firo) “I think that the fact that you’ll eat anything other than a child is fundamentally wrong.” (Naofumi) “Mu...” (Firo)

I can hear the crowd whispering.

“That Holy Bird eats people?” (Crowd)

“Nah, I hear the Hero of the Shield is quite skilled at deceit.” (Crowd) “Really? As I thought. I once saw the Holy Bird playing peacefully with children in the Castle Town.” (Crowd) That’s good, Firo. You haven’t become a public symbol of fear.

It’s up to her whether she gets treated as a human or a monster.

“That’s how it is. Those people once tried the same stunt with me when I had a notoriously bad reputation. Please make sure to wring them dry.” (Naofumi) “W-what?” (Guards)

The guards are taken aback.

“These people’s bounties, will you give them to me?” (Naofumi) “Y-yes, but we haven’t caught their leader.” (Guard) “Hey, where’s your base.” (Naofumi)

“Yes! Please bring out a map!” (Bandit)

They’re being quite cooperative.

“Firo and Rafatalia, go catch the guys hiding there.” (Naofumi) “Yup!” (Firo)

“Understood.” (Rafatalia)

I pass the map to Rafatalia and Fiol, and they set off.

“The rest of you, keep peddling” (Naofumi)

“Yes” (anon slaves)

I walk through the crowd towards my carriage.

“The Hero of the Shield handled the situation.” (Crowd) “Amazing. He got the bandits to confess by himself.” (Crowd) “He must be really strong.” (Crowd)

“Yeah.” (Crowd)

For the love of...

Even if they speak the truth, I don't really want unnecessary abilities tacked onto my reputation.

“well, hasn't it been a long time, Ren” (Naofumi) “ah, ah.....” (Ren)

Ren slowly distances himself from me, while looking vigilant.

“wait wait, Ignoring that, I don't have any intention to catch you. I just want to hear your story” (Naofumi) “I see... Everyone I've met so far has been suspicious of me. I've even had random people throw stones at me.” (Ren) Ren answer defiantly.

I think it's fine if it's only at that level.

In my case, I was literally treated as the devil The cause of all that was Trash, Bitch and the Three Hero Church.

“For now, should we go to the tavern and talk?” (Naofumi) I take Ren to the tavern. I notice some people from the crowd follow us there, but I don't really care.

I sat at the bar counter, and order a drink.

Along with my drink, I am also given a real Lucor fruit.

The boss of the tavern looks at me with eyes full of expectation.

There's no choice. I eat the fruit whole.

“The Real one!” (Boss)

“Unbelievable” (some guys)

My identity has been confirmed by all.

It's quite a strange identification test.

“It seems you've been through a lot.” (Naofumi)

I talk to Ren without any ulterior motives.

It seems that he's been alone and being chased without knowing the exact reason why.

When I was alone, before I met Rafatalia and Firo, the only thing I could think of was revenge.

“Yeah... the guild said they were no longer accepting Heroes, I wasn’t able to slay monsters freely anymore, and I couldn’t claim bounties. Then, to top it all off, this had to happen!” (Ren) Self-proclaimed cool Ren began to angrily complain.

But it’s not like I don’t see where he’s coming from.

“So I began selling monster drops and began to live day by day... It got really annoying. Everyone I meet seems to turn on me. Why do I even have to defend this crappy world?” (Ren) “That’s just how humans are. When I was called the Devil of the Shield, I was treated the same way. No, I was treated worse than you, you know.” (Naofumi) “I-I see...” (Ren)

“First, let me ask. Were you involved in Spirit Turtle incident?” (Naofumi) Now that I think about it, his party members are nowhere to be seen.

Did they run away on him?

Well, I think they’ll do just fine without him though. If he’s been cut off, he can’t really complain.

“No... that’s...” (Ren)

Ren suddenly begins stumbling over his words.

“So you’re going to avoid the topic?” (Naofumi)

“No, it’s not...” (Ren)

As usually this guy.

His insociability is getting on my nerves.

I have some grudges against this person, but he has done me enough favors to balance it out.

“I am still thankful for that time during the failed attempt to kill Melty. I’ll listen to what you have to say, just as you did for me. I always make sure to return a favor.” (Naofumi) “.....” (Ren)

“Ren If you don’t say it, your position will become worse. You’ll become the next Demon of the Shield.” (Naofumi) “.... I understand. I’ll tell you my story.” (Ren) Ren sighs, and begins to speak.

Chapter 153: Even Though You Already Understand...

Ren and his comrades successfully cleared the Wave of another country, and then headed to the town the Spirit Turtle was sleeping in to search for greater strength.

He's exactly the same as Motoyasu, or so I want to retort.

According to Ren, the Spirit Turtle was going to be the mastermind behind an even greater calamity, so it was best to kill him off early.

"In the near future, a plague would have struck that land. The people would fall one after the other... And the cause of that would be the Spirit Turtle. He would manipulate their corpses and create an undead army with his powers of mind control." (Rem) Apparently, in the games Ren played, if he didn't act fast a large calamity would befall this land. This event was big enough in scale to cause the fall of nations and the formation of several counter-measure organizations.

That's why Ren's main goal was the prevention of this disaster.

The boss was supposed to be beatable at level 60. Since Ren was over 80, he thought it wouldn't be difficult.

...It's the same as with Motoyasu.

"Can I ask something?" (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Ren)

I interrupt Ren.

"In your Net Game, were you able to visit that area before? Or was it a new area that became unlocked with the event?" (Naofumi) "Let's see. I think it happened in Update: Episode 7, The Assault of the Spirit Turtle. Before that, it was a normal town and hunting ground. But after the update, you needed permission to enter the area. I read it on the internet." (Ren) ...Update: Episode 7?

The blue hourglass in the turtle read 7, but... it's a coincidence, right?

“Please continue.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah.” (Ren)

The reason he acted without the country’s consent was that in the game he played, the Turtle’s mind control was affecting the actions of the leaders of countries as well.

It seems that it was being treated as a sort of quest.

And that’s why negotiations were pointless.

My head hurts. If you were under the assumption that the country’s leader was being brainwashed, why the hell didn’t you actually go check?

Like Motoyasu, Ren infiltrated a temple slightly outside of the village.

“Um, Ren-sama, are you sure we should be doing this?” (Ren Party)
“What are you talking about. The monster sleeping here has already infiltrated the upper echelon of government. Sitting around and waiting for negotiations to finish is pointless.” (Ren) “Oy, you people! Name yourselves!” (Monk)

As he was about to destroy the Buddhist statue that would awaken the turtle, a group of monks surrounded him.

Because they had appeared in the basement of an abandoned temple, Ren was able to conclude that they were under the Turtle’s influence. He hurries to destroy the statue.

“Please stall them. For the people who still have their sanity, we must press onwards!” (Ren) “Yes!” (Ren Party Plural)

Ren’s comrades assist in the destruction of the statue.

“H-how could you... That was a priceless historic...” (Monk) The monks shout out. They raise their weapons.

I thought he had done the same as Motoyasu, but it seems all he did was destroy a priceless artifact.

Well... It was probably a memento of the past Four Heroes or Seven Star Heroes.

I don't really know this world's history, so I can't say what would be valuable or not.

“Mu.. That Sword... Could you be the Hero of the Sword!?” (Monk) “If you already know, then I guess there's no harm in telling you. I'm the Hero of the Sword, and I have come to vanquish the darkness that sleeps beneath these lands.” (Ren) As they were saying that, the ground begins to rumble beneath them.

“Okay! The Spirit Turtle has shown itself. Let's go!” (Ren) Ren carefully knocks the monks out and runs in the direction of the rumbling sound.

“It's big... Can we really fight something that large!?” (Ren Party) “We can win! We have become strong!” (Ren)

With confidence, Ren rushes towards the Turtle.

While closing in, he thought he saw someone use a skill on the head, but he just assumed it was one of the adventurers fighting it.

Thinking that this world's adventurers wouldn't be enough, Ren raises his sword towards the Turtle.

「Handlet Sword!」 (Ren)

It's a skill that takes a while to activate. He stacks on another attack.

「Thunder Blade! 」 (Ren)

But the Spirit Turtle is largely unaffected.

What happened afterwards was just like with Motoyasu, so I'll abridge it.

Ren feels something is off, but he keeps fighting.

Without giving up, he fights for the people in danger of the beast.

“UUUOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

And when he was aware of his situation, The Spirit Turtle was already walking away without paying him any mind. Ren was surrounded by corpses... the bodies of his comrades.

They were cruelly mangled bodies. Destroyed so badly even Ren couldn't

identify them.

The only thing he could understand was that his party members were all dead.

“W-what the hell is this... It’s a lie... All of them were over level 80, yet...” (Ren) Ren’s brain could not comprehend the events that had just happened.

And Ren’s mind shut down for a period of time. He prayed for the slight chance that, like a game, he would be able to revive them.

But no gods would hear his wish, and Ren understood that from the beginning.

After that, Ren rushed through the swarm of Spirit Turtle Familiars, and tried to save as many people as he could, but he eventually lost consciousness.

When he regained consciousness, the Spirit Turtle’s reign of terror had already ended.

...

“I lost because they were weak... And because they were weak they died. If only we had worked together more, then winning would have been easy.” (Ren) He’s in complete denial.

... There’s no helping him. His companions must be turning in their graves.

“I’m not at fault. They were weaker than I had ever imagined. I’m not wrong. I’m not!” (Ren) And he’s running from his own crimes.

I don’t even need to pity this one.

However a kind word isn’t what he needs right now.

“You are wrong. Don’t think this will always be a game. What you did was clearly rash, and even your comrades saw that.” (Naofumi) “What!?” (Ren)

Ren looks at me angrily.

“If that’s all you can say about the people who trusted in you and followed you to the end... then you don’t only fail as a Hero. You fail as a Human Being” (Naofumi) If you went to me for warm words, then you’re very mistaken.

Saying that you’re not at fault.

This one... Just as I thought, the only think he ever did was act as a selfish guild leader.

He fought an enemy out of his league, and as a result his party was annihilated. And in the end, he blamed them for being too weak. His conduct is just as Rafatalia said.

“This world is not a game. If you keep believeing that, then more people will suffer.” (Naofumi) “S-shut up!” (Ren)

“No matter how much you scream, no matter how much you regret, until the wave is over we will never be able to go back home. We were summoned selfishly by the stuck-up leaders of this world, and given the pretentious title of Hero. In most worlds, that would be considered kidnapping. But if we want to do anything. If we want to change anything. Then the only thing that we can do is fight.”

“Ku....!” (Ren)

“A while ago, you told me, ‘If things get bad, you run away? You really are the worst.’ And look at you now. Are you aiming to become the worst of the worst?” (Naofumi) Well, right now I’m just taking out my anger on him.

For him to continue to fight even after seeing the monster was too strong for their party... I would first test its attack power, and then create a plan from there. But this person can only fight as if this were a game.

He didn’t do any investigation beforehand, and placed his trust into the knowledge he heard on the internet. It’s as if he was following a walkthrough.

He’s a coward. Has he even tried to discover anything on his own?

“Your game is over. Your game information is useless now.” (Naofumi)
“You’re wrong! I’m... I’m not at fault!” (Ren)

“I’m not wrong. You told Rafatalia that you ‘Wouldn’t forgive her’. Well, now I’m going to tell you that I will never forgive you for your actions. You’re now a splendid murderer.” (Naofumi) “Quiet...Shut up... Please, don’t say any more...” (Ren)

Ren has begun shaking over my continuous accusations.

When a lot of people died in the plague-stricken village, he had acknowledged that he was in the wrong. He even went there to apologize.

Inside, he already knows the truth. But that truth is something that he doesn’t want to accept. He is unable to accept it.

Even though he already understands...

“I understand that you did not cause any of this on purpose. However, you are still alive. If you’re still alive, then isn’t there something you have to do first?” (Naofumi) “Shut up!” (Ren)

“I’ll keep talking until you listen. You already get it, don’t you? Don’t you know what you have to do right now?” (Naofumi)
“QUUUUIEEEEETTT!” (Ren)

Ren unsheathes his Sword

I hold up my Shield.

I feel a light tap on it.

...Hm?

“Take this!” (Ren)

Ren tries to slash at my face.

I... don’t even try to defend myself

Bang... I hear the sound of metal colliding near my ear.

Ren starts to laugh. However, his eyes widen as if he has seen something unbelievable.

“H-how did you...” (Ren)

“That sword you have equipped right now. It looks to be made from Spirit Turtle materials, but isn't it a bit too weak?” (Naofumi) I took Ren's attack head on.

Of course, my defense is being greatly bolstered by the shield on my arm.

But if Rafatalia had attacked me like that, I wouldn't have escaped unharmed.

“You thought you could take on the Spirit Turtle with that? Are you stupid?” (Naofumi) It's crazy to think someone could win at level 60 in the first place.

No... perhaps if you properly strengthened all your equipment and status... and you ignored all of the casualties around you, focusing only on victory... The Spirit Turtle's attacks are slow, so it might be possible.

Of course, that only applies if you can take out the Head and Heart at the same time.

And from what I've seen, Ren has only been using the reinforcement methods from his own game.

“You didn't listen to Shadow at all, did you. Your weakness is because of-” (Naofumi) “Those were lies! There's no way the Shield can be that strong! It's a Cheat, a Hack! Don't monopolize it!” (Ren) I don't want to hear that from you!

Is what I want to retort, however there's a time and place for everything.

“Improve your swordsmanship. Your weakness is-” (Naofumi) “Che!” (ren) (TL: Tongue clicking sound)

Ren raises his sword High above his head.

「Flashing Sword!」 (Ren)

The sword glows brightly and clouds my vision.

“You... !” (Naofumi)

He tries to slash at me a few more times, but to no effect...

“UWWAAAAAAAAA!” (Ren)

He screams out, and I can hear him running away. By the time my vision started to return, he was already gone.

“M-mah eyes...” (Drunk)

The people in the tavern are rubbing their eyes.

“Don’t worry, it was just bright. There should be no negative effects. Stay still for a while. It’s dangerous if you can’t see anything.” (Naofumi)
On my word, everyone calms down. I wait for my eyesight to go back to normal.

They’re nothing but trouble, you know. These Heroes.

And Ren is only on that level? I thought Ren was supposed to be the strongest, but...

I can’t count on them at all.

Rafatalia would wipe the floor with him.

If he was actually trying to get strong, then he would at least be able to hurt me.

But for now, he is just focused on denying his crimes.

He can’t even doubt the knowledge he brought from another world.

And even after his comrades dies... I can’t accept the current Ren.

I could end his suffering now, but...

I’ll put that train of thought on hold.

It’s not something to be decided so easily.

And I think it will be fun to watch him suffer more.

Understand my pain, you bastard.

No matter what I did, I was considered evil. Now taste that living hell

some more.

Heaven doesn't open in just a few weeks.

Chapter 154: Independent Nature

I return to the village and relate Ren's story to Female Knight.

"Fumu... It seems the Hero of the Sword is quite the spoiled brat."
(Female Knight) Female Knight speaks whilst cricking her fingers.

It's not like I can't understand Ren's feelings, but he truly is a wimp.

"Relying only on otherworldly knowledge to rashly rush into battle... There should be a limit to being naïve." (Female Knight) "Well, that pretty much sums it up." (Naofumi)

"If you happen to catch him, turn him over to me. I'll personally make sure to re-educate him." (Female Knight) "...He may have just overestimated himself." (Naofumi)

"What are you saying. It's a knight's common sense to fight a battle even if victory is uncertain." (Female Knight) Well, that does seem to be logical.

Teaming up on a weaker individual may seem like bullying.

In Net games, it's common sense, but if practiced in the real world there would be a problem.

You can't just wait until a stronger enemy appears, and then run away because you don't think you can win.

That would really cause a lot of problems.

This country may be at peace, but small skirmishes and monster infestations keep the knights vigilant.

Female Knight participated on the front lines of some of the fights against the Spirit Turtle, so she is qualified to say this.

She's quite strong. Her stats aren't as developed as Rafatalia, but she makes up for it with skill.

"Anyways, I'll report this matter to the Queen. I'll be out for a bit, so is there anything else you'd like from her?" (Female Knight) "Let's see... what should we do about Rat?" (Naofumi)

She's the person I have to be most wary of right now.

She's trying to make a larger fighting force, and I've given her a bit of time.

"As you've requested, the Shadows are watching her movements, but she's been surprisingly obedient." (Female Knight) "Is there any indication that she is acting secretly?" (Naofumi) "None." (Female Knight)

Mu... I was prepared to act in case she did something, but it seems that isn't necessary.

I thought she may have been a spy, but it seems that isn't the case.

"Well occasionally, she... Gets into argument with the girl who tends to the Caterpillands, but that matter seems trivial." (Female Knight) "She does that even when I'm here." (Naofumi)

"It seems the subject of their disputes is a clashing of opinions."
(Naofumi) Their arguments always seem to be about the same things.

Taniko believes in the natural power of the monsters to level up, adapt and get stronger, while Rat opts for the use of surgery and other methods to forcibly increase stats.

And every time, Taniko brings up Firo, who got strong on her own.

And then Rat suggests a surgery to raise Firo's intelligence, angering Taniko further.

The arguments then seem to go around in circles, but it seems that each side now has a firm grasp of the other's ideologies.

On some rare occasions, they would agree on a matter, and have a happy talk over it.

... I wonder how Rat's modifications are going.

"Well, I guess I should stop by." (Naofumi)

"What should we do?" (Rafatalia)

"I'm thinking of sending the slaves to peddle independently, so go teach

anyone who wants to learn the skills needed in peddling.” (Naofumi) “I understand.” (Rafatalia)

“What about Firo?” (Firo)

“I’m going to Rat’s place. Do you want to come with me?” (Naofumi)
“NO!” (Firo)

Rafatalia goes and starts ordering around the villagers. Firo ran off at an alarming rate.

Well, I guess her dislike is understandable.

Rat did give off a really bad first impression to her...

“Umm...” (Imya)

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

Imya fidgets as she comes over to talk to me.

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I started learning how to make clothes from the strange person... here is my first product.” (Imya) The item she handed over was a pair of gloves.

The material is monster skin. The size is just right for my hands.

“Hero-sama, this is so you don’t get hurt when experimenting with medicine so...” (Imya) “Yeah, Thank You. You’re quite considerate.” (Naofumi)

They’re well made.

It seems the Lemo really are a dexterous race.

“Have you gotten used to the village?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, Yes.” (Imya)

“If anything is troubling you, make sure to report it.” (Naofumi) “Yes...” (Imya)

“... Did something happen?” (Naofumi)

Imya begins looking at the ground as she speaks.

“Can I dig a hole here?” (Imya)

“... If that will make your working environment more enjoyable, then feel free.” (Naofumi) “Thank you very much.” (Imya)

She does look like a mole.

I guess she felt uncomfortable in the Camping Plant houses.

“You can order around the Dunes. Make it any size you want. However, make sure to think about where you dig.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Imya)

She’s a nice, obedient child.

The exact opposite of Kiel.

“Achoo” (Kiel) (TL: It is Japanese superstition that you will feel a chill if someone talks about you behind your back.) I hear Kiel sneeze from a bit away. I guess coincidences are scary.

And anyways, I went off to visit Rat’s lab.

It’s quite spacious, and has two floors. There is something like a sports playing field inside it as well.

... Exactly how far can these Camping Plants expand?

“Well, if it isn’t the Count. What’s up?” (Rat)

“I’ve come to check your progress.” (Naofumi)

I find Rat in the farthest room from the entrance, staring at a monster inside of a large test tube.

Somehow, the amount of test tubes she has been steadily increasing. Inside of them, various things are floating. In one of them floats a Bioplant stalk.

“Ah, about that. The Bioplant Research... hasn’t really bared any fruit.” (Rat) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“I think you’ll have to wait a few days before you see any results. It seems it will be difficult to try to make it produce medicine.” (Rat) “It was something that I wasn’t able to do myself. I’ll wait patiently.” (Naofumi) “I don’t think it’s impossible. I’ll work on it.” (Rat) “I’ll wait expectantly.”

(Naofumi)

Rat taps on the test tube glass, teasing the monster within it.

I can't see the monster's form clearly, but it seems to be smiling in Rat's direction.

"What is that?" (Naofumi)

"Oh, this child?" (Rat)

As she speaks, her eyes wander around the room.

"There are kids that can't do anything no matter how hard they try."

(Rat) "Wha?" (Naofumi)

"I told you about this one before, right? The one the Hero tried to kill..."

(Rat) "It survived?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, at least a portion of its body did... For now it can only live inside this test tube, but at least it won't die soon."

Rat speaks with a pained expression.

And the monster in the vial extend something towards Rat as if to console her.

"This one was able to understand human language well... It always worked hard to be strong." (Rat) "You can understand it?" (Naofumi)

"For my thesis, I tried to see if monsters were able to think on the same level as humans." (Rat) "hmm..." (Naofumi)

"Monsters want to become strong too. And not just to survive, they want to be recognized as well. This child has an especially strong desire to do so." (Rat) I see.

I didn't want to be called weak, but I climbed all the way here.

"I can understand this one's thoughts quite well. No matter how hard it tried, this one never got any stronger. Can you guess this child's level?"

(Rat) "... Around 40." (Naofumi)

"Correct, but... this one would always work itself to the ground, and I would have to heal it back up." (Rat) So it's a monster she likes

personally.

Is this person's passion for modification... based on that monster?

"Ah, don't misunderstand. I had always loved Modification from the start." (Rat) "Is that so..." (Naofumi)

I'm not getting that impression...

"No matter how much I research, there are still more mysteries. I've already stepped into the abyss of science, and I don't think I will be coming out." (Rat) "Hm..." (Naofumi)

"When I introduced myself, I told you my ideals. But I won't work on an unwilling subject." (Rat) "I wonder..." (Naofumi)

I get the feeling that she is the type of person who would secretly conduct research and take action on her own accord.

I'm not buying it.

"I told you no!" (Taniko)

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

With a shaking voice, Taniko runs in and blocks the door from an approaching Caterpilland.

"What are you doing?" (Naofumi)

"This Caterpilland suddenly decided to visit that old lady!" (Taniko) "... Wha?" (Naofumi)

I look towards Rat, and see her walking towards the Caterpilland.

As Rat approaches it, the monster calms down.

"The monster the count raises are quite honest... This one has a good head, and a high level of ambition." (Rat) "Mu... I said no!" (Taniko)

"Please let this child act as it wishes." (Rat)

"Wrong things are wrong!" (Taniko)

What are these two even trying to compete in?

I can kinda see what this argument is about.

No, I can just get the just of what's happening.

That Caterpilland is getting close to Rat, and Taniko is unhappy with this.

"You know, the reason I do this sort of research, the reason I spent my childhood learning about the sciences and the reason I devoted my life to this work. It was so that I could give power to the children like these that came to me of their own accord. I like people to hold high expectations of me." (Rat) As if I would accept such game-like logic.

... is what I think, but if there's a real-life example before my eyes, I guess I have to accept it.

"Well, Dragons and Filo Rials seem to hate me though. Most monsters seem to stay away from me. But this one seems to be okay. It may be because of the Count's influence." (Rat) Is that how it is?

Is this the shield's influence, or did these monsters just coincidentally turn out like this?

I think this is the Caterpilland that Kiel and friends found, so there may be other factors.

"This child chose its own path by itself." (Rat)

"But...u..." (Taniko)

"Even though I say that, I don't have the funds or materials to carry out the procedures yet, so I'll put that matter on hold. Please go back home." (Rat) Rat orders the Caterpilland to return.

And the Caterpilland is reluctantly dragged back to the stable by Taniko.

I think that Caterpilland was the one who dragged Kiel back when she got injured.

Because of its actions, we were able to avert a crisis.

It was supposed to be a slow monster, and yet...

"From what I see, if it grow naturally, it will soon hit its limit... That

child still wants to become much stronger.” (Rat) “I understand.”
(Naofumi)

I should respect the monster’s right of choice as well... Though that Caterpilland seems to hate me specifically.

So it wants to become strong. Monsters have that desire as well.

Firo was born a strong monster, so she never had to worry about that.

“What do you do for your research, specifically?” (Naofumi) “Let’s see... there are plenty of ways to carry it out...” (Rat) “Such as?” (Naofumi)

“Monsters that can carry passengers. I tried to modify one act as a ship and swim across the ocean. When this plan got out, I was once again tried for Heresy, though.” (Rat) “In that instance, couldn’t you just get an aquatic monster to pull a boat for you?” (Naofumi) “But haven’t you always dreamed of riding a monster?” (Rat)?

In old RPGs, you would sometimes be able to ride on a dragon’s back and travel, but... this is a bit different.

“Can’t you just ride a flying dragon?” (Naofumi)

(TL: Flying Dragon is a race of dragons, not simply a dragon that flies)
“I hate Dragons!” (Rat)

Mu... I don’t understand this person’s logic.

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

“Isn’t that just your personal preference?” (Naofumi)

“Flying Dragons cannot carry heavy loads.” (Rat)

“Then you could find a bigger dragon...” (Naofumi)

“I will work on anything other than dragons. I’ll make a new race to replace them.” (Rat) She was just advocating Monster right of choice, but this is the result?

Did something happen to her involving dragons?

No... Did her modifications take her down this route?

“Next, I’ll make an Armor-type monster.” (Rat)

“Oh?” (Naofumi)

I heard something intriguing.

I think the shield will prevent me from wearing it, but if Rafatalia or Firo were to equip it it may heavily bolster their defense.

“Taking from the concept the Hero’s weapons share of a weapon that grows over time... However, I’m not getting anywhere. It’s quite difficult.” (Rat) If she succeeds, we may be able to mass-produce heroes... but it seems the research is at a standstill.

The imitation I saw before took up a ridiculously large amount of Mana.

If making a hero’s Weapon was that easy, then they wouldn’t have gone to the trouble of using that..

“I have some leads, though. There are some monsters that take on the shape of weapons. I thought I could use the Blood Sucking Demon Swords as reference... but that monster’s sanity is quite low. It’s hard to control.” (Rat) “That seems to be an interesting idea, but it sounds expensive.”

(Naofumi) “You’re right. That’s why I still have a long way to go. For now, I am looking for insight in modifying the Bioplant.” (Rat) It seems that in order for Rat to complete her research, she will need more time and money.

But I don’t think I can really help with it.

“Anyways, if there’s someone you want me to cut up and modify, give me a call♪” (Rat) “Yes. Yes.” (Naofumi)

So there hasn’t been any progress. But Rat’s skills are growing.

The skills of the one who grants power to monsters, the Mad Alchemist.

Chapter 155: Zeltbur

As I leave Rat's lab, I notice the Slave Dealer's carriage parked nearby.

"If it isn't the Hero of the Shield!" (Slave Dealer) I've been seeing him a lot lately.

But I've given him the important duty of finding this village's former villagers, so I guess there's no helping it.

I don't really like dealing with him, though.

"Did you find more slaves or something?" (Naofumi) "No! I haven't done anything of the sort. Yes." (Slave Dealer) "Why are you here!? Go home!" (Naofumi)

Should I throw salt at him?

If he says that he came here to eat, then I'll smack him.

By the way, salt isn't particularly valuable here, as we're right next to the ocean.

"Can I not stop by without a reason? Your treatment makes my heart race." (Slave Dealer) "You seem to have the intention of making me into your chef." (Naofumi) "Ah, by the way that was a joke. Yes." (Slave Dealer) "Are you picking a fight?" (Naofumi)

"No, no. I came here to ask something of the hero of the Shield." (Slave Dealer) "... Ask something?" (Naofumi)

The Slave dealer is raising his voice. He's trying to make it out as a big deal.

I bet he's up to no good again.

"I need you to go to Zeltbur to buy slaves." (Slave Dealer) "Buy slaves..." (Naofumi)

"My relative has voiced a desire to sell some of his finest slaves to you." (Slave Dealer) "At a discount, right?" (Naofumi)

"He's offering you the best of the best." (Slave Dealer) "That sounds

expensive.” (Naofumi)

It’s not like I’m interested in purchasing expensive slaves.

My main priority is to gather Rafatalia’s friends.

From what I’ve seen so far, this village’s villagers are going for quite cheap.

As they’re children, their base levels were quite low. And in terms of stats, they were well below those desired for manual labor.

“We will make sure that they are within a price range even you can afford.” (Slave Dealer) “Well, I do have some spare change...” (Naofumi)

I’m earning a bit from selling the Bioplant fruit, and monster materials that Kiel and the others are collecting while hunting. Right now, the village has little financial difficulty.

It’s almost time for me to stop by the Old Man to stock up on weapons.

The village has also improved greatly over time.

I think things will work out even if I’m absent for a bit.

Even if I stop cooking for a while...

... the only reason I have to cook now is because everyone makes a commotion if I don’t.

“How long will the trip take?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s see... Normally, a boat would be fastest, but on your prized Filo Rial’s legs it should be around 3 days.” (Slave Dealer) 3 Days, even on Firo. It must be quite far.

Well, it’s another country so I guess that goes without saying.

I think I heard the other heroes say that the weapons from Zeltbur were quite potent, or something.

So those guys have been there already.

Is that why their levels were so high?

They had obtained excellent weapons?

There are plenty of weapons in their possession that I know nothing about.

Like the Flashing sword, the Thunder Shooter, and the Portal Spear I have no idea what weapons would give those skills.

This is one thing I have to ask next I see them.

Though I don't think they'll tell me.

"How long by boat?" (Naofumi)

"4 days." (Slave Dealer)

"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

I glance at the villagers.

Everyone is earnestly working towards reconstruction.

Imya is working with the Dunes to dig a hole.

Because she is a mole, it looks quite fitting.

Rafatalia is lecturing on peddling, and Firo is taking a nap.

Rishia and Kiel are learning swordsmanship from Female Knight.

Other slaves who have decided to fight are getting drilled from the soldiers.

I guess I can leave the village be for a week.

"Then I guess we should go." (Naofumi)

"I thought you would say as such." (Slave Dealer) "Rafatalia, Firo, Everyone Else, please gather here for a second." (Naofumi) I call everybody here.

"I'll be away for around one week. The people accompanying me will be Rafatalia, Firo and..." (Naofumi) Who should O take?

I think Itsuki had been witnessed in that area.

... Should I take Rishia?

"Rishia, want to come?" (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Rishia)

“Kiel, please take care of Rishia’s duties while she’s away.” (Naofumi)

“Understood, Nii-chan.” (Kiel)

“Don’t get too carried away.” (Naofumi)

“I-I got it.” (Kiel)

Rishia and Kiel have different ways of working. Of the two, Rishia is more skilled at raising her level.

She’s a bit more like a leader. I guess a Jack of All Trades is good at covering for the faults of a team.

People like Firo just take out enemies with powerful attacks, so nothing can really be learned from them.

The one truly teaching the slaves to fight is Rishia.

I’m a bit nervous leaving that spot to Kiel.

She can be quite rash at times.

“If anything happens, go to the medicine shop in the neighboring village. Otherwise, get the people who specialize in healing magic to help.” (Naofumi) The Magic Shopkeeper came here and told people what their magic specialties were, so now quite a few people have started to learn basic spells.

I think nothing will happen in just a week...

“And... you.” (Naofumi)

I stare at Taniko and think.

“Don’t fight too much with Rat over monsters.” (Naofumi) “The old lady is doing mean things to them.” (Taniko) This girl likes monsters way too much.

How exactly was she raised?

I should ask her sometime.

“Ah, right. Kiel, try hunting with Rat at some point in time.” (Naofumi)

“Hm? Sure, but why?” (Kiel)

“That women incapacitated Firo in an instant. She should have quite some skill, and she is quite knowledgeable on monsters.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Kiel)

“Should I report to the Queen that Iwatani is going to Zeltbur?” (Female Knight) Female Knight speaks up.

“It’s not like I’ll be causing any problems.” (Naofumi) “Understood. I’m sure the Queen will permit it. We aren’t on bad terms with that country.” (Female Knight) “Oh, and keep up surveillance on Rat.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Female Knight)

“... Is there anything I’m forgetting? No? Then let’s go.” (Naofumi) And that’s how, following the Slave Dealer’s words, we set off for Zeltbur.

By the way, two of the Slave Dealer’s men had hooked up his carriage to ours when we weren’t looking.

“Wow, it sure is fast.” (Slave Dealer)

“Well, yeah...” (Naofumi)

“And I also feel a little Sick. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) Though he is smiling, his face is pale. Is that really something to laugh about?

The men that came with the Slave dealer are already vomiting.

If you aren’t used to it, it is near impossible to ride Firo’s carriage for long periods of time. We aren’t travelling on paved roads, so the carriages are swaying.

I wonder just how fast Firo is running anyways.

It’s definitely fast, but...

“Ahahahahahahahahahah... This is fun!” (Firo)

Firo is laughing dangerously.

I hope we haven’t been jinxed.

Is running her instinct?

And in Three days, we crossed the border without any harm and headed into Zeltbur.

“It’s quite a busy place.” (Naofumi)

Business is thriving here much more so than in Melromark’s Castle Town. It is also much more crowded My face isn’t widely known here, so no one says anything to me.

“What sort of country is Zeltbur? I just realized I know absolutely nothing about it.” (Naofumi) “Then let me explain.” (Slave Dealer)

The Slave dealer begins speaking with enthusiasm.

“Zeltbur, the country of mercenaries. Just as its name implies, this country is populated largely by mercenary organizations.” (Slave Dealer) “Well, that sound self-evident.” (Naofumi)

“Do you know about Swords for Hire? There people make money by selling their strength to others. The adventurer’s guild has deep ties to this country. This makes industries such as Weapon Shops and Medicine Shops prosper as well. It’s a country in which an unbelievable amount of money circulates.” (Slave Dealer) “It sure does seem lively.” (Naofumi)

I peer outside of the carriage.

You can feel some energy from the Castle Town’s residents, but the feeling here is overpowering.

Whether it be the shopping district or the slums, the people here seem to move with more energy than those in Melromark.

“By the way, this country has no monarchy. It is ruled by a council of merchants.” (Slave Dealer)”

“Hmm...” (Naofumi)

So it’s like a Republic.

Well I guess a country of Mercenaries wouldn’t care for monarchy. All that matters is ability.

“This country also has a dark history involving constant warfare, so you

should caution yourself.” (Slave Dealer) “I know.” (Naofumi)

“My clan has set up a base here. We are partaking in quite a profit.”
(Slave Dealer) “... As I thought.” (Naofumi)

How should I say this, yesterday I had a nightmare.

I was surrounded by thousands of people that looked exactly like the Slave Dealer. They tried to sell me things.

“And the most famous attraction of the Country is its Coliseum.” (Slave Dealer) “Coliseum?” (Naofumi)

A fighting arena. (TL: Coliseum is said in english) Brawlers fight against one another, and people place bets.

“It’s this country’s trademark. Perhaps the Hero will want to visit as well.” (Slave Dealer) “I’ll consider it. Now where are we headed?”
(Naofumi) “Get off the main road, and go down that back alley.” (Slave Dealer) “Got it. Firo.” (Naofumi)

We follow the Slave Dealer’s instruction and head down a back alley.
And then...

From somewhere, a rope is thrown at Firo’s neck.

“Hehehe, that’s quite a rare monster you got there!” (???) Some Delinquent-esque men appear.

These people don’t know about Firo?

Well, I guess my wanted posters were only spread in Melromark, so they wouldn’t know.

Anyways, these people remind me of someone.

But their fate has already been sealed.

“Ya!” (Firo)

“GUHAAAAAAA!?” (Delinquent-esque Male)

The person who threw the rope carelessly approaches Firo, only to get kicked.

... This sure is a barbaric country.

“W-what’s with this one! Quiet down! GUHA!?” (Delinquent-esque Male) “It’s a wild one! Quick, Tye it up... NUGUGUUUUAAAA!?” (Delinquent-esque Male 2) And Firo bites down on Idiot number 1’s head. (TL: She doesn’t eat it, just bites it like Sadaharu) He thrashes around for a while, but finally gives up.

“I-it’s a monster!!!!” (Delinquent-esque Male) “Please save me!” (Delinquent-esque Male)

Firo drops the Delinquent, and then takes the rope off of her neck.

“I’d prefer them a bit more salty. Also, they don’t look too healthy.” (Firo) “...” (Delinquent-esque males.)

Firo really looks like she will eat them.

I hope she doesn’t start maturing in a strange direction.

“Firo, remember that Humans are not food.” (Rafatalia) “Hm?” (Firo)

Though she’s like this, she’s still a Filo Rial. Her base mental Capabilities are not that high.

It’s a pain. I would have preferred it if her intelligence was even lower.

“Firo, when it comes to people, Children are tastier. They’re softer.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, what are you teaching her!?” (Rafatalia) In games and novels, monsters often use that line. I’ll try using it here.

But Firo shakes her head violently.

“No!” (Firo)

“Firo learns faster if you bring up children.” (Naofumi) “I’m not sure if she even learned anything or not...” (Rafatalia) “Anyways, Firo. It’s better if you don’t act like you eat people, unless we’re threatening them.” (Naofumi) “Yeah. I thought I could get them to run away.” (Firo) So she understood what she was doing.

She’s picking up things surprisingly well.

It’s a pain if she gets too smart, but I guess she’s doing well.

“What was that about being salty?” (Naofumi)

“That’s what I felt when I licked him.” (Firo)

... Let’s pray she hasn’t gotten a taste for humans.

We stop the Carriage at the Slave Dealer’s acquaintance’s house.

“Rishia, what will you do from here?” (Naofumi) “I want to search for Itsuki-sama.” (Rishia)

Rishia had been silent in thought for much of the journey. So this is the conclusion she has come to.

I already knew, but Rishia is still chasing after Itsuki.

The other heroes have had some of their comrades captured or killed. But there is no information on Itsuki.

From the beginning, there had been little information circulating about him anyways.

He tried to act like a hero and work under the radar.

“I understand. When night falls, we’ll meet up back at this carriage. Until then, you are free to act on your own.” (Naofumi) “G-got it.” (Rishia)

“What about Firo?” (Firo)

“I’m a little worried about Rishia travelling alone, so please follow her.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Firo)

I leave bodyguard duties to Firo, who is not in her human form.

Rishia has gotten strong, so I don’t really have to worry, but the chances of her getting wrapped up in something strange is not zero.

It doesn’t seem that this country keeps good public order.

“Also, Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Rishia)

“Take off the costume.” (Naofumi)

“I-I know!” (Rishia)

Though she says that, it seems she had forgotten about it up until that point.

I want to believe that she had simply forgot about it, and hadn't intended on walking through town dressed like that.

Chapter 156: Fulfilled Dream

After parting with Rishia and Firo, Raphtalia and I head to the Slave Dealer.

At the end of the back alley we see a big coliseum.

In front of this stone dome-like building are sturdy men keeping watch.

Looking at the people standing in line, it seems to be quite popular.

"This way, please." [Slave Dealer]

Walking to the back door, the Slave Dealer lightly greets the men keeping watch.

The men clear the way and let us pass.

"This is just a coliseum on the surface. In the basement, we deal with slaves behind the scenes. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"Ho~..." [Naofumi]

"Well, in this country, most coliseums are like this. Depending on the Union, the traded goods differ. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"And what about your place?" [Naofumi]

"Needless to say, I'm mainly practicing slave trade." [Slave Dealer]

Unrelated to Humans and Demi-Humans...

After walking a bit, we get to a staircase and go down.

We can hear the cheers from above echoing.

The coliseum seems to be quite popular.

"Above us are mercenaries and slaves..... we also have monsters in the coliseum. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"You handle quite a lot." [Naofumi]

"Because of that, I've turned down all the other fights down on that day. There will also be an eating contest. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"I want to let Firo participate." [Naofumi]

It's worth it just to see how far that monster's appetite can go.

Free food and prize money.

Well... I wonder if there's a penalty for losing.

"That would be interesting to see. Maybe it can somehow be done. Yes."
[Slave Dealer]

The Slave Dealer gives a strange signal to a bulky man with his fingers.
I'll just take you by your word then.

"It would also be good for the Hero of the Shield to enter the drinking contest, otherwise some would suspect that you are a fake." [Slave Dealer]

"To become famous here is one thing but....." [Naofumi]

By eating the Rukoru Fruit raw I should be able to win... but the moment I eat it people around me get nauseated. I don't want to eat in that situation.

Also, I'm not sure to what extent I can handle alcohol.

The Hero of the Shield gets poisoned to death because of drinking too much wouldn't be funny even as a joke.

First of all, I don't really drink that much, so it shouldn't happen.

"And? Are we still not there yet?" [Naofumi]

"We should be almost there." [Slave Dealer]

Saying this while leaving the staircase to a stone corridor, numerous cages become visible.

There are more cages than in the tent of the Slave Dealer. Inside the cages are Human and Demi-Human slaves milling about aimlessly.

Inside this prison, there is a small room visible. There, a tough-looking guy and merchant are waiting.

"Oh... Melromarks-" [Slave Merchant]

"U-Uncle..." [Slave Dealer]

I doubt my eyes. This person... is happily hugging the Slave Dealer in a

family reunion.

While the Slave Dealer is a strange gentleman wearing a messy tailcoat and over-sized sunglasses, the Slave Merchant has the same build with almost the same face. The only differences are the tailcoat and the glasses.

"Naofumi-sama, are my eyes fooling me?" [Raphtalia]

"What a coincidence, mine are too." [Naofumi]

Family business is one thing, but what's up with them being this similar?

Dangerous. I almost wanted to see how it would be like to have the whole family gathered together. It would be like some sort of twisted dream come true.

An anime I watched had a similar family business of sisters managing treatment facilities, it was...

Anyway, if they wore the same clothes, you wouldn't be able to tell them apart.

"While we're at it, I would like to introduce the Hero to my uncle. Yes."
[Slave Dealer]

"Well, if this isn't the Hero of the Shield. What a strange expression and eyes... I'm about to fall in love. Yes." [Slave Merchant]

"Stop it." [Naofumi]

Ugh. I'm really getting goose bumps. I want to get away from here as soon as possible.

However, to go back just like that would piss me off, so I try to keep patient and stop my feet from retreating.

"Your voice seems to be the kind that's good at handling slaves... I'm thrilled. Would you like to marry my daughter?" [Slave Merchant]

I try to imagine a woman that looks like the Slave Dealer.

"Give me a break..." [Naofumi]

"Right! Did you call Naofumi-sama just to say such stupid things?! "
[Raphtalia]

Raphtalia responds angrily.

Ah, she's looking for comrades from her village. It's understandable why she is so angry.

Please get more heated up so that he stops his idiotic jokes.

"Hahaha, that was a joke!" [Slave Merchant]

"Uncle is bad with people." [Slave Dealer]

"Not as bad as you." [Slave Merchant]

The two of them laugh.

Creepy...

"Back to the story." [Naofumi]

"Oh, right. What kind of goods did the Hero of the Shield want to be offered?" [Slave Dealer]

"What, straight to the point? I wanted to deepen the friendship between me and the Hero a bit more. Yes." [Slave Merchant]

"That depends on Uncle. Yes" [Slave Dealer]

Yes yes yes yes... How long will this question and answer play go on?

It's getting really troublesome. Is it okay to leave?

"Fumu... since you told me that he is the kind of person you'd fall in love with, I wondered what he was like. Now I understand." [Slave Merchant]

"How could I be so charming?!" [Naofumi]

After all, I don't understand the Slave Dealer's sense.

The reason for that is, no matter what I do, he always talks positively about it.

But, on the other hand, I always have to worry about what he does behind my back.

"Fufufu... no matter where you go, you have this sinister air around you. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"Am I something like the incarnation of evil?" [Naofumi]

"No no, it's your quality as a slave user. It appeals to our eyes (lit. foresight)." [Slave Merchant]

"This person, instead of forcing his slaves to work under penalty of death, has the kind of charisma that makes his slaves fight to the death for him." [Slave Dealer]

Big bro~ food~.

Master~ food~.

Hero of the Shield~ food~.

Why did I suddenly think about feeding those guys?

Is this what you call charisma?

...You lose the moment you begin to mind it.

"Fumu, if it comes to this person here, let's pretend that that story never happened." [Slave Dealer]

"What?" [Naofumi]

"No no, don't mind it. Yes." [Slave Dealer]

"Did something happen? Yes." [Slave Merchant]

"Actually--" [Slave Dealer]

Both slave traders start to whisper.

Huh? Which one did we come here with again?

"Shiruru..."(guess that's a whisper sound)

I couldn't even understand a bit.

What are they talking about?

"I see, of course you would refuse at such a time. Yes." [Slave Merchant]

"What are you talking about?" [Naofumi]

"How about trying it?" [Slave Merchant]

"Like that, it will be quite convincing." [Slave Dealer]

"Listen." [Naofumi]

The slave traders begin to laugh while looking at me. Stop it.

"Well with that, let us head this way please." [Slave Merchant]

The Slave Merchant of this country starts to guide us.

We follow him just like that.

What the heck did they talk about?!

"This way please." [Slave Merchant]

So, while being guided, we look at the cages and prisons from before.

It looks like in this prison, there is a female Demi-Human sitting in a moldy corner.

She has brown skin and quite a good face.

Her body is quite big.

With a large chest, you could call her an incredibly beautiful woman... right?

Her face also has quite a good complexion.

But, even saying this, she is not a slave that I am looking for.

"I'm not interested in slaves for sexual use." [Naofumi]

"No no, even among the different Demi-Human species, this one is quite good at battles." [Slave Merchant]

"Is it?" [Naofumi]

Somehow, he begins to wave his hands with a business smile on his face.

I somehow get a chill.

That slave...

She has the type of face that makes me want to involuntarily hit it.

No, with this one, there would be a lot of problems.

"It's probably too expensive. I don't need it." [Naofumi]

The slave makes a sullen expression after my reply.

"No no, I'll make you quite a cheap offer." [Slave Merchant]

"Even so..." [Naofumi]

Somehow, I don't like it. Or, to put it in a better way, I don't want to make her my slave.

Even as a slave, if I'm caught up in anything again later, her resemblance to Bitch is too high.

"Do you want to take a look at the next slave?" [Slave Merchant]

"Ah yes, my bad, but I have to refuse this one." [Naofumi]

"Why!" [Slave]

The slave yells.

Did that hurt her pride?

I don't understand the disgraceful behavior of this sex slave.

"You're just not a slave to my taste. That's all." [Naofumi]

"Pedophile!" [Slave]

Shout as much as you want , however, while I'm at it...

I glare at the Slave Merchant.

He quickly evades my line of sight.

"Pedophile... It's almost as if she knew about me ahead of time, right?"
[Naofumi]

After my reply, the Slave Merchant just keeps his mouth tightly closed.

As I thought, there has to be a reason behind it.

Even so, looking at me objectively, all the slaves I bought are children, and most of them are female.

Although it's just a coincidence, it's starting to trouble me recently.

"Uhm, Naofumi-sama? What country's language did she use there?"
[Raphtalia]

"You don't know? [Naofumi]

"Yes." [Raphtalia]

I almost forgot that the shield has a translation function.

Since it seems that this world has multiple languages, it's quite useful that the shield seems to translate all of them.

As I heard the word in Melromark's spoken language... it seems like it's a word spoken in countries with many humans.

Could it be...

"Well, you don't have to concern yourself with it." [Naofumi]

"Why! Why would you reject me?!" [Slave]

Like that, we continue to follow the Slave Merchant while ignoring that self-proclaimed slave.

Chapter 157: Purchase

“Next is this one.” (Slave Merchant)

I look into the next cage, and see another healthy-looking Demi-Human slave.

But it’s a child... a girl.

The child is giving off a suspicious smile and waving her hand at me.

“Ah. Rejected.” (Naofumi)

“Why!?” (Child)

Of course, she objects.

Even though she looks healthy, that doesn’t really matter to me.

Most of the slaves I bought were malnourished, and had dead eyes.

Even Kiel wouldn’t stop shaking unless Rafatalia was nearby.

Someone who’s never been bought. I can’t call this dreaming adventurer a slave.

And I reject every slave that I am led to, and they object to my rejection.

This continues for a while.

I already understand these people’s objectives.

I glare at the Slave Dealer. Both of them. They are both sweating heavily.

“Yo.” (Naofumi)

“It’s unfortunate that there is nothing here to the Hero of the Shield’s liking. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “Sigh... There’s no choice. I didn’t want to have to use this, but...” (Naofumi) I go towards the Child slave I was shown before.

“Oy, what are you planning. This is the Hero of the Shield’s orders. Resist and your country will be ruined.” (Naofumi) I call out in a Yakuza-like voice.

I don't think I've had to use it recently. The last time I had to was with the accessory merchant.

"Hiii... P-papa said... Become the Shield Hero's bride, but the Hero only trusts slaves, so to get closer to you I went to a good merchant, and..." (Kid Slave) In response to my stare, the child slave answers in fear.

But as she is a small child, there's no helping it.

"... And you're okay with that?" (Naofumi)

"Eh?" (Kid Slave)

"Even though it's for your family, do you really want to become the bride of someone you don't even know? (Naofumi) She's even smaller than Rafatalia when I met her.

It feels unpleasant that someone wanted to use a kid this small to gain status.

"Anyways, just go home and tell them you were seen through. And if they aren't satisfied, tell them that the Hero of the Shield only takes on people who actually need help." (Naofumi) It seems that quite a few slaves are here for that purpose.

The Slave Dealers are sweating profusely.

"And that's how it is. I don't want any of your merchandise." (Naofumi) It seems this was supposed to be a sort of marriage interview.

These people were only slaves in name, and were truly the children of nobles who wanted to get closer to me.

"I believe that my name holds some level of power. Should I write a letter of complaint directed at your enterprise?" (Naofumi) "I understand. Yes. I think the other side will back off. Yes." (Slave Merchant) "As expected of the Hero of the Shield. You were able to see through the fake slaves in an instant. My heart is racing." (Slave Dealer) "Stay Away!" (Naofumi)

It was blatantly obvious that they weren't slaves.

Put in more effort if you want to conceal them.

“How deplorable...” (Rafatalia)

Even Rafatalia is fed up.

“Don’t think it’s that easy to seduce Naofumi-sama... If he was that easy, then I wouldn’t be having so much trouble.” (Rafatalia) Hm? What is she saying?

“Do you have anyone else? If you brought me here for nothing, I will get mad.” (Naofumi) “Of course we have more. That is our main business you know.” (Slave Merchant) “... Don’t try to fool me again.” (Naofumi)

That’s why I don’t like involving myself with these people.

“Does the Hero of the Shield have any specifications?” (Slave Merchant) “Right now I am looking for slaves that can do skilled work. Also anyone who was from Rafatalia’s village.” (Naofumi) I have already gathered several skilled individuals, but I need more people.

We now have a medicine and clothing store, so perhaps I can get some people to learn those trades.

Imya is doing well, and I’d like a few more people like her.

“I see, then please step over here.” (Slave Merchant) “No lies, okay?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, I know.” (Slave Dealer)

“Are you Rafatalia? Would that make your village that one that got hit in the first wave?” (Slave Merchant) “Yes. It may be a difficult request, but do you have anyone?” (Rafatalia) “I have already heard from my nephew and prepared some. Please wait a second.” (Slave Merchant) The Slave Dealers bring out... some from a familiar race.

“So there are Lemos here as well.” (Naofumi)

“We have everything to fit your needs.” (Slave Merchant) So these are skilled slaves... There seems to be octopus Demi-Human among them.

“These individual is from the Opuscot Race. They are an aquatic race of Beastmen.” (Slave Merchant) “They look like monsters.” (Naofumi)

“It pains me to hear you say that. We also have Kafe Race slaves Prepared.” (Slave Merchant) This one looks like a dolphin... Albeit a bipedal dolphin.

There sure are quite a few types of Demi-Humans.

In such a war-stricken country they have collected a wide variety of slaves.

“My village is right next to the sea, so there shouldn’t be a problem.” (Naofumi) “Then I will prepare some for you. Would you prefer to have children?” (Slave Merchant) “I don’t have such a preference. As long as they can do work, there isn’t a problem.” (Naofumi) Ah, right.

“There are a lot of Lemos here. Please sort them out.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Slave Merchant)

I look at the large group of Lemos.

“Does anyone here know a child called Imya?” (Naofumi) It would be best if they had someone familiar to help them get used to the village.

So I’ll try to find people who know Imya.

“Tis a common name. Just from that, we cannot be sure.” (Lemo Slave) ... I guess it is a common name.

What was her full name again?

Lu... I can’t remember.

I guess I should give up. I thought it was a good idea, but...

“Imya Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz-chan, Naofumi-sama.” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia casually says Imya’s real name.

Just how good is her memory?

Rafatalia may be more high-spec than I thought.

Though she is turning into a militaristic character as of late.

“Quariz’s Imya!?” (Lemo Slave)

“Do you know her?” (Naofumi)

“There are quite a few people here from the same village.” (Lemo Slave)
“Then I’ll take those people.” (Naofumi)

“I understand. Yes.” (Slave Merchant)

“Oi, just who are you?” (Lemo Slave)

“Can’t you tell? I’m a simple slave user.” (Naofumi) I don’t want to cause a commotion here.

It would be a pain, so I won’t say anything.

“So you’re hiding it...” (Rafatalia)

“Is Imya healthy?” (Lemo Slave)

“Yes, she is working hard in our village.” (Rafatalia) She answered honestly.

I hope this doesn’t cause any problems.

“I see. I can’t wait to meet her again.” (Lemo Slave) For her long name to come in handy here, I guess I should pay more attention to the small details.

After that, Rafatalia was able to find 3 of her fellow villagers.

The first one was an Orca-like Beastman.

Her name was apparently Sadina.

I believe I heard her name when Rafatalia was talking to Kiel.

I can’t really read her expression... her figure is large in all directions.

She’s not fat, she’s just giant. Apparently she is average sized for her race.

Somehow, I can imagine her standing out in that village.

“Sadina-nee-chan was a fisherman.” (Rafatalia)

“Nice to meet you, I’m surprised that Rafatalia got so big.” (Sadina)

“I’ve heard about you... but why have you become a slave?” (Naofumi)

“Well... I could have escaped into the sea alone, but... I got captured when I tried to protect the children.” (Sadina) So she’s similar to Firo.

Anyways, can she be classified as human?

Beastmen display their race traits more readily than other Demi-Humans.

“Did you stand out in the village?” (Naofumi)

All of the villagers I’ve seen so far have been Demi-Humans. No Beastmen so far.

And most were of dog or cat-like races.

Now that I think of it, I haven’t seen any other Tanukis like Rafatalia yet.

“Like Rafatalia’s parents, I was a wanderer who only stopped by occasionally.” (Sadina) “I see.” (Naofumi)

So it was a village kind to strangers.

It seems the previous feudal lord was supposed to be quite wise.

And as such the entire region fell to ruin upon his absence.

“Well... I guess that’s that...” (Naofumi)

My wallet is crying. It will be difficult to purchase anything else.

“Thank you very much.” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia lowers her head towards me.

“Don’t worry about it. You’ve performed duties worthy of this sort of reward.” (Naofumi) “Truly, thanks...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia firmly grasps my hand in tears.

I owe her much more than just this.

“Then I guess it’s time to go home.” (Naofumi)

“Please wait a second.” (Slave Merchant)

The Slave Dealer of this country stops me.

“What? Is there anything else?” (Naofumi)

“Before you embark on the journey back, there is a slave you must see.”

(Slave Merchant) "I don't want to see any more marriage candidates. I know it's your job, but please leave it at that." (Naofumi) "No, not that... It's today's main attraction." (Slave Merchant) "You do know my financial state, right?" (Naofumi) "It's an amazing slave child, I think you will be able to put it to great use, so I'll make it cheap." (Slave Merchant) Cheap...

I don't know whether the slave will be helpful or not, though.

I guess looking won't hurt.

I'll have to Weapon Copy the Old Man's new shield instead of buying it at this rate.

"I understand." (Naofumi)

I follow the Slave Dealers further while being followed closely by my new slaves.

TL: Opuscot is an anagram of Octopus. The Japanese is Kato, a anagram of Tako, the japanese word for octopus. I don't know what Kafe is an anagram of, so I left it the same as the original.

Chapter 158: Medicine of the Sacred Tree

Slave Dealer: “Here we are.”

I was shown a group of slaves who were kept away due to illness.

They were kept in poor conditions similar to those in the Tent at Melromark.

Since there was no sign of their health being taken care of, their mental health also suffered.

Naofumi: “Wait for just a moment.”

I gesture to a sick slave and approach the cell.

Even though the slave hesitates, as I take out medicine from the shield, it is snatched instantly.

There wouldn't be much loss, since the medicine is cheap.

Naofumi: “Open your mouth.”

The medicine given to the first slave starts affecting the surrounding slaves due to the effect: [Range Expansion (small)].

While the medicine was cheap, it was still able to heal the slaves since their illnesses were only superficial.

Slave 1: “....”

Slave 2: “No way, it's a miracle!”

The medicine's effect seems to have worked, as the slaves skin color gradually returns.

Slave Dealer: “As expected of Hero of the Shield... giving strength to sick slaves at a bargain price instead of paying more for healthy ones!”

A voice of admiration was let out by the Slave Dealer.

Naofumi: “I had no intention of looking after slaves that can't be healed, since I am no saint. Show me around quickly.”

I told the Slave Dealer, while giving out medicine as needed.

Slave Dealer: "As expected, you are truly a god of Demi-Humans."

Naofumi: "So noisy."

For the sake of my mental health, I gave medicine to whoever needed it, even in this world that thrives on commercialism.

Slave Dealer: "I think you understand."

Even if I understand, even if I lose profit!

Naofumi: "It still feels unpleasant."

The Slave Dealer begins skipping along.

How irritating!

However, at that moment... I was about to meet certain slaves.

It was a fateful encounter, different than the one with Raphtalia.

Slave Dealer: "Here they are."

Within the cell was a pair of Demi-Human siblings.

The boy seemed to be around 12 years old and appears to be healthy.

On the other hand, the girl is lying down in the opposite direction.

It was difficult to see in the cell. The floor was covered in straw and had one blanket.

The girl seems to be in a bad state.

Brother: "Keho... Keho..." (Yoraikun: Coughing sound)

I took a glance at the boy whose hair color entered my sight.

His hair was black and white and with just a glance, I could grasp that he was of a higher quality than the other slaves.

While his pupils were blue... a portion of his iris had vertical stripes which made me think of a cat's.

The whites of his eyes gave off an intimidating look and his savage facial expression spoke of his wild nature.

His ears were thick and roundish for a cat, and his tail had impressive

black and white stripes.

Naofumi: "Seems expensive for a child."

Slave Dealer: "As expected of a hero, who takes immediately considers price even during first impressions."

Rafatalia was cheap in my opinion. Well, it's better to calculate price before performance.

Naofumi: "Doesn't he seem unique?"

Slave Dealer: "In a way. Yes."

Naofumi: "Compared to other Demi-Human slaves, there's something different about him."

Slave Dealer: "Yes, this is a famous species called the Hakuko."

Naofumi: "The Hakuko..."

Is it a white tiger subspecies?

The white tiger was a powerful animal in my world with enormous physical strength.

Slave Dealer: "The name was said to be given by the Four Heroes of ancient times."

Hakuko... why was it named in a provincial accent?

From Calmira Island, I learned that all of the past heroes had horrible naming sense.

Well, Firo isn't a name that I could be proud of either. Firo... Firorial...

Naofumi: "It passes. How much will it cost?"

Slave Dealer: "Would you like to see its stats?"

Naofumi: "I don't think he's that strong, but can his level and statistics be seen?"

According to the document given to me, the brother's level is surprisingly high.

However, his appearance is fairly young for a level 32.

If he was a member of my village, he would be fairly tall by level 30.

Naofumi: "His level is higher than expected, but are there any racial or individual differences for this kid?"

Slave Dealer: "The reason he is still a child at this level is because his race is special. Level 60 is his race's max limit and they can class up starting at level 50."

Naofumi: "So when he becomes an adult, he will get stronger?"

Slave Dealer: "That's correct."

Does this kid belong to a powerful race?

Although class ups are usually only possible at level 40 for even someone like Firo, what will happen when this guy classes up?

This kid sparks my interest.

By the way, the younger sister is level 1.

Slave Dealer: "The Hakoku are famous for acting against the plans of a hero called the Sage King of Melromarc in the past."

The example is wasted because that is a person I hold in low regard. Still, maybe he became foolish because of his power...

Raphtalia: "Even if he's called the Sage King..."

Naofumi: "Even if that guy wasn't there, Melromarc wouldn't be affected at all."

Slave Dealer: "Well whatever, even if you don't respect the Sage King, the Hakoku is a race that is counted among the Five Fingers of this world, a difficult feat indeed."

It any case, it would be a waste to miss this opportunity of greatly increasing my war potential. If I run into an opponent with tricky defense, the Hakoku's power may be a necessary weapon in my arsenal. That's assuming of course that they truly have that much potential power.

The Slave Dealer whispered into Naofumi ear so that the siblings wouldn't hear.

Slave Dealer: “Although the elder brother is healthy, the younger sister suffers from a hereditary illness. She cannot see, she cannot walk, and she has a short life expectancy. However, the elder brother still cherishes the younger sister.”

Even if he becomes a slave, he will still try to protect his sickly younger sister like some sort of hero.

Even if he was the bad guy in a manga, he would still be a popular character even if he’s not the main character.

Furthermore, he also has the power of the Hakoku race. I’m a little interested in this fellow.

Naofumi: “Hmm.”

Slave Dealer: “I have a plan. You can separate the siblings while the elder brother works for you. After the younger sister dies, we can make the elder brother believe that she is hospitalized in a clinic by imitating her voice. I’ve heard that you have a monster that is good at mimicking voices, yes?”

Was the vocal mimicry in one of my monster that good?

Although I am always peddling or fighting like the other heroes... Firo could have become a hit singer.

When she’s in a good mood, Firo sing the song that the bard had just sung if we were at a bar.

Slave Dealer: “The brother will continue to fight thinking that his sister is alive, and will keep fighting until he dies.”

An evil mob-boss-like proposal was made.

It would end up being an endless betrayal flag.

That’s right. Then is saving both of the siblings how to reach the good ending?

Even if it was a joke, there’s no need to become an enemy of the state.

Naofumi: “That is why a Slave Dealer like you can only amount to this

much. Let me show you how it's done."

I gestured to the Slave Dealer to open the cell.

Brother: "What are you planning!"

Naofumi: "Whatever, just be quiet for now."

I enter the cell while approaching the younger sister who lying down in the back.

Brother: "Stop! Don't you lay a hand on Atlas!"

Atlas... That's a new name... In my world, it had many meanings such as a game or map.

Was it ever a girl's name?

The elder brother kept getting in the way, so I took out and showed him some medicine.

Naofumi: "I'm only going to give her medicine. Have you seen this kind of medicine before?"

The medicine was made using the Shield. I'm not actually able to make it myself yet.

It was a skill that came from the Sacred Tree Shield of the Spirit turtle... Making it was possible because of a recipe called Medicine of Miracles.

----- Sacred
Tree Shield of the Spirit turtle O/40 C

Ability Unsealed

Equipment Bonus: Recipe: Medicine of Miracles.

Unique Effect: Divine Protection of the Sacred tree

Proficiency O

----- The effects
of the shield were still unknown, but it seems to have something to do with a plant.

The medicine can only be made once for now. Some ointment, magic

water, soul healing water and a few others ingredients were mixed together into a supernatant fluid with the toxic parts being filtered by exquisite distribution... in other words... it's sap from the Sacred Tree.

Tons of medicine had been used up in the process of creating the Medicine of Miracles. Preparing it involved a great deal of trial and error.

Trying to make it would be considered reckless by any drug store. It is so difficult to make that I could barely make one, even with the power of the shield.

It is an extremely valuable medicine and it goes by the name... Yggdrasil.

Speaking of the Yggdrasil medicine, it's the same medicine that that cheerful Old Hag took saying that it wasn't strong enough.

In the case of a game, there would be of the Mega Elixir class.

Just how much money did that Old Hag think was spent for her to drink such valuable medicine?

For an adventurer that was retired in the countryside, the son must have been pretty foolish to spend that much money. Does he even care?

Well, in any case, the medicine is an extremely powerful one that cures most illnesses.

Naofumi: "I am going to be the owner of both of you. This medicine is a powerful medicine that will heal your sister. You can repay me the cost of this medicine with your life."

The pharmacist told me that it had an unbelievable price according to market value.

However, when it comes down to life that cannot be saved without it, people would do anything to get it.

Its powerful effect has many people asking for it. Although it would end up being bought for an incredibly high price, its power of practically giving life to the dying makes it much more important to keep rather than sell. It's better to keep a strong ally alive than it is to make money,

which can be done at any time.

Brother: "... It's not a lie?"

Naofumi: "Can't you tell by its smell?"

The elder brother took a sniff of the medicinal smell.

He soon raised his face and cried!

Brother: "It's Yggdrasil medicine!"

Naofumi: "Correct"

Is he a dog or something? Does this place really have such excellent races?

Brother: "It still doesn't mean that there isn't poison in it!"

Naofumi: "How can you be alive while suspecting all medicine? Do you suspect that all the medicine given to your sister has been poisoned too?"

Brother: "..."

Naofumi: "I may not be trusted and I don't need to give the medicine to your sister, but isn't she in pain? Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

Brother: "..."

The elder brother groans regretfully.

Atlas: "Is someone here?"

The girl slowly turned her head while coughing.

They said that she couldn't see. She can only determine where we are by our voices.

Atlas: "I think... although his voice seems powerful and forceful... it is actually very gentle. Elder brother... how do you see it?"

Brother: "Ah... come on... how can that be..."

Atlas: "Even though such great power is felt..."

Slowly, the girl turns herself towards me.

The elder brother reluctantly guides her hand to approach me.

I approached the girl called Atlas.

How terrible. Her entire body is covered in bandages so that I couldn't even see her real face.

Her skin was also covered with festering sores, so much so that it's a wonder she's even alive...

Although her ears and tail were probably of the same race as her elder brother, it was difficult to say for sure.

Atlas: "You came for business..."

Naofumi: "You somewhat understand."

Atlas: "Yes... you want me to act as a hostage for my elder brother..."

To understand this much... and yet... her tone was of one who has given up.

Atlas: "Owner of the gentle voice... would you please tell me your name?"

Naofumi: "Naofumi."

Atlas: "Naofumi."

Her pronunciation was excellent, as she was the first one to say my name correctly.

Atlas: "Naofumi... if you can... please cherish my elder brother."

Brother: "Atlas! What are you trying to say!?"

Probably, she knew about her situation but wanted to ask for just this one small request.

Naofumi: "Unfortunately, I have no intention of listening to that request..."

Atlas: "Is that so..."

Naofumi: "...since I'm going to be taking care of you as well. I'm sure you know what this medicine is."

Atlas: "Ah... this is..."

Although she tried to say more, Atlas just nodded to my words while drinking the Yggdrasil medicine given to her.

The elder brother clenched his fist, but was stopped by Atlas without being able to complain.

Atlas: “Ku ... N ...”

Atlas drank the medicine obediently.

A strange and exceedingly expansive light from the medicine effect was emitted.

Is it because of the Sacred Tree Shield of the Spirit Turtle? It's obvious that the Shield clearly affects the power of medicine. It would not be funny if its effects have risen even further.

Atlas: “Fu~u... Fu~u...”

The medicine was effective and her breathing has become quiet.

Atlas: “W... hat? My body feels much lighter.”

Brother: “Atlas...”

Atlas: “The back of my body feels warm and my skin is itchy.”

Naofumi: “The medicine is effective, but since it takes time to fully work, you'll need to sleep obediently”

Atlas: “Yes... but... I'm not used to this... Thank you...”

I stood up and left the cell.

Naofumi: “Now then what is your name?”

The elder brother hides his face while staring at me.

Naofumi: “I see... Atlas? What a bad place this is to sleep...”

Brother: “It's Fohl!”

Naofumi: “I see... well, now you're my slave. As you can see, the medicine has worked..”

Fohl: “...Fine. It seems the medicine was real. I'll work off the cost of it.”

Fohl answers reluctantly.

Even after I helped him this is what I get.

It seems that Fohl is a considerable siscon.

Naofumi: "So you admit that it worked?"

Fouru: "Maybe... but I'll never hand over my younger sister to... you."

Raphtalia: "What is that? It seems that the younger sister liking Naofumi has sparked his jealousy."

Fohl: "What! No! It's different! For this woman to say such a rude thing!"

Fohl bellowed and pointed at Rafatalia.

It's normal for this kid to not know his place. When he arrives at my village, I will give him proper Spartan training. I am looking forward to his growth.

The Yggdrasil medicine is the medicine that cured that grandma. If it can heal that old lady, it should be able to cure this younger sister. If the younger sister can be cured, my military power will be greatly increased. You could even say that the price of the medicine was worth it.

Raphtalia: "It's okay, Naofumi is not a bad person."

Raphtalia shows a small smile to Fohl.

Naofumi: "I'll perform the slave registration later."

Slave Dealer: "As you request."

In this way, I opted for the siblings purchase.

Chapter 159: Perfect Hidden Justice

I apply my blood to the slave sealing ink and leave the rest to the slave dealers.

“Don’t register something else with it like last time.” (Naofumi) “I already understand.” (Slave Dealer)

I’ll file a complaint if I get another random slave mixed in.

“Now then, while the registration happens, you will have free time, so why not check the Coliseum upstairs? Yes.” (Slave Merchant) “Fine.” (Naofumi)

On the Slave Merchant’s orders, the Slave Dealer begins to lead me towards the Coliseum.

And, with nothing else to do, we follow him.

According to the Slave Dealer, today they are holding free matches.

Anyone can enter if they want money.

The spectators bet on who will win, and many will lose all of their money.

We get out of the dungeon area, and begin climbing some stairs.

“The crowd is quite large.” (Naofumi)

The matches have yet to start, and the reception desk is quite lively.

The atmosphere is like that of a baseball stadium.

“For my uncle’s work, I will be drawing in customers. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “This place seems to have a lot of money circulating around.” (Naofumi) “Hero-sama should participate as well.” (Slave Dealer) “And why would I do that?” (Naofumi)

I can only defend, so how the hell am I supposed to win?

“There are also team games. I’m sure you will be a popular competitor.” (Slave Dealer) “I’ll consider it based on the rewards.” (Naofumi)

I might be able to make a bit of money here...

If Rafatalia and Firo fight with me, I don't see how we would could lose.

"Another Coliseum we manage has special events for monsters. Yes. Perhaps you may be interested in entering your Filo Rial there." (Slave Dealer) If Taniko or Rat heard of that, they'd throw a fit. They're both against the exploitation of monsters.

Having Firo fight for money doesn't sound bad though.

"I'll consider it." (Naofumi)

"I'll wait for a favorable response. Yes." (Slave Dealer) The Slave Dealer leads us to some spectator seats reserved for him.

The seats are right above the Competitor waiting room. We can see the entire stadium from here.

Hmm... There are quite a few people with evil eyes. Quite a few of them look very muscular.

... And there I witnessed something I hadn't been expecting.

"I-Itsuki!?" (Naofumi)

Mixed in with the other contestants is, without a doubt, Itsuki.

I get up and head down towards the field.

"Is something wrong? Yes." (Slave Dealer)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

I tell the Slave Dealer that I saw the Hero of the Bow among the contestants.

"Here, anyone can enter the games, so it's not odd for a hero to participate. Yes." (Slave Dealer) "Don't they have to register themselves?" (Naofumi)

"Participants can register under any name they wish." (Slave Dealer) "What is he registered as?" (Naofumi)

I read out the number printed on Itsuki's chest.

"Um..." (Slave Dealer)

The Slave Dealer receives a list from a muscular man with a sack over his head.

“That number, 982.. That person seems to be registered under 『Perfect Hidden Justice』.” (Slave Dealer) I thought I would fall over.

So jokes really can make people fall over.

Perfect Hidden Justice!? What sort of bad joke is that?

Not even someone with Chuunibyou would use that one.

(TL: The imagination begins to explosively develop in the eighth grade.) Doesn't he feel embarrassed? Even I'm feeling embarrassed here.

“Can you arrange to talk with him?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, my authority will allow it.” (Slave Dealer)

The Slave merchant gives orders to his subordinates, and we are led to the contestant waiting room.

“Oy. Been a while.” (Naofumi)

I call out to Itsuki.

I could have called Rishia, but I wouldn't be able to talk to him after the game started.

I'll find her later.

“I... right... everyone...” (Itsuki)

“Oy.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, everyone's looking at me... yes. Everyone... looks at me...” (Itsuki)

“Listen when someone's talking to you!” (Naofumi)

Itsuki continues to mumble something to himself. I can't really tell what he's saying.

I hear a gong-like sound from the center of the Coliseum.

“I'm... a Hero of Justice!” (Itsuki)

My words don't even register to him. Itsuki follows the other competitors and leaves the room.

“The hell is up with him?” (Naofumi)

It’s as if he didn’t even notice me.

“Well... I looked into that competitor, but he seems to visit a coliseum every day. Yes.” (Slave Dealer) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. He has made himself known in this country as a mysterious archer. He has been recorded to become ecstatic when he hears applause.” (Slave Dealer) “...Did something happen?” (Naofumi)

His desire for praise had always been strong, but now he sounds like a mental patient.

What could have drawn him down to that level?

I can kinda imagine what his experience with the Turtle must have been like.

“Shadow.” (Naofumi)

Let’s see if she’s here.

(TL: This is gender-neutral in Japanese, but it seems public consensus is that Shadow is female.) “What is it-gojaru?” (Shadow)

... She really appeared.

“The ride on the Hero of the Shield’s carriage was terrible-gojaru.” (Shadow) If I worry about it I won’t get anywhere. I won’t confront her on the matter.

“Why were you unable to locate Itsuki when he’s in such plain sight?” (Naofumi) “The Hero of the Bow has a habit of concealing himself, so there was little information on his appearance and location being circulated-gojaru.” (Shadow) Well, that’s true. The Heroes have changeable weapons, and common faces. If they change to a common weapon, then they are unidentifiable from the rest.

Though he still uses a bow, I guess he is smart enough not to change it in battle.

“Do you think you can capture him here?” (Naofumi)

“The Queen has given an order to keep tabs on him, but to wait until an order is given. That Hero is good at running and hiding-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Well, that’s true... can you continue following him?” (Naofumi) “I’ll do that-gojaru. However our personnel has decreased from that time with the Spirit Turtle. I cannot call for reinforcements.” (Shadow) “Understood. Ah, right.” (Naofumi)

I turn to Rafatalia

“Rafatalia, should we report this to Rishia?” (Naofumi) “No! Absolutely not. If Rishia sees the Hero of the Bow acting like that, she’ll develop a mental trauma.” (Rafatalia) “I... see...” (Naofumi)

He seems to have become mentally crippled, fighting in the coliseum only for praise.

If Rishia met Itsuki like that, there’s no telling what will happen.

There’s a possibility she will continue trying to talk to him and... Perhaps snap and stab him?

(TL: He really says, and I don’t know what will result) I can only see bad endings to that scenario.

And where are his comrades?

“Anyways, I’ll start my investigation-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Ah, if you find anything out, please report it to me.” (Naofumi) “Understood-gojaru.” (Shadow)

“Now then what should we do about Rishia?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll meet up with her, and keep her away, so please... keep it a secret.” (Rafatalia) “Understood, leave it to you.” (Naofumi)

I use the slave system to track down Rishia. It gives me a general idea of her location.

I can’t use it to find people who aren’t in my party, and I can’t use it to find people who are too far away.

“It seems she’s in the Plaza south of here. I’ll leave it to you, Rafatalia.” (Naofumi) “Understood. I’ll definitely keep her away.” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia runs off.

Those two do get along quite well.

“Anyways... I wonder what happened to him.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, about that-gojaru. We have some witness testimonies from the soldiers from the Spirit Turtle Village.” (Shadow) “You should have brought that up sooner.” (Naofumi)

“Even though I say that, it’s information you probably already inferred. Apparently the order in which the seal statues were destroyed was first, the Hero of the Bow; second, the Hero of the Spear; third, The Hero of the Sword-gojaru.” (Shadow) “I see...” (Naofumi)

Ren’s story did give off the feeling that the turtle awakened almost immediately after he destroyed the statue.

“The Hero of the Bow was the first one to cause a commotion, and all of his companions were with him, or so it was recorded-gojaru.” (Shadow) “What do you mean?” (Naofumi)

“...The Hero of the Bow destroyed a statue half a day before the other two. After that, taking advantage of the commotion, numerous treasure hunters began plundering the nearby ruins causing mass confusion. The Hero of the Spear used the chaos to enter a temple and break a statue, and almost immediately following him the Hero of the Sword destroyed one as well-gojaru.” (Shadow) “So Itsuki and friends were apprehended after they first broke a statue, and had this action recorded by the area’s soldiers?” (Naofumi) “And after a while, the Spirit Turtle awakened just as the Hero of the Bow testified-gojaru. In a panic, the guards released him so he could go fight it-gojaru.” (Shadow) And after that he went missing.

Something must have caused the time lag in the Spirit Turtle’s awakening.

That kid is a mass of half-assed justice.

What could have caused him to have to break laws with his Justice?

So the reason Ren and Elena were able to enter so easily was because of the Chaos caused by Itsuki's group.

The game starts, and I watch Itsuki fight.

I thought that a long range weapon would make the match unfair, but the playing field was a narrow maze where one would be unable to build up distance. He was at a disadvantage.

But Itsuki is easily able to win.

So he's at least stronger than the average fighter.

But his eyes look strange. Whenever the crowd gets louder, he raises both of his arms in the air and shouts out.

Is that really Itsuki?

The Itsuki I know is just a bit more mature. He was a relatively docile hypocrite.

I haven't talked to him yet, so the cause is still a mystery.

Though I'm not sure if he'll actually say anything.

I guess I should at least try.

Chapter 160: Return to the Village

After Itsuki's game ended, the coliseum continued to host other events but I didn't feel like watching.

"I heard that the weapon shops here had a wide variety. I'm going to go check them out." (Naofumi) "Should I show you around? Yes." (Slave Dealer)

"Yeah... I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

It's quite a bustling city. I think that it will be easy to get lost.

"Then, you there, please lead him around." (Slave Dealer) A large muscular man raises his hand to announce his presence.

I follow him and arrive at the biggest market area in the city.

It reminds me of a mall from the other world.

"Well, well. If it isn't the Hero of the Shield." (Accessory Merchant) "I don't know you." (Naofumi)

The Accessory merchant beckons to me from a nearby store. I act oblivious.

"This is one of the stores I manage. I'd definitely like to show off some of my wares." (Accessory Merchant) So it's his own store.

I can see some rubys on sale.

If I keep ignoring him here, I may come to regret it later.

I take a deep sigh and enter the store.

"You have quite a big store here." (Naofumi)

"Yes, is there anything you are particularly looking for?" (Accessory Merchant) "I'm looking for weapons and armor." (Naofumi)

"Then you will want the second floor. Are you certain you have no interest in the accessories on the first floor?" (Accessory Merchant) I scan the store's interior. Sparkling gems are displayed in multiple cases and hung all over the walls. It's too bright.

“I’m not interested.” (Naofumi)

“By the way, is Hero-sama still using the techniques I taught you? You can’t make good equipment if you let your skills dull.” (Accessory Merchant) “I use them occasionally.” (Naofumi)

I’ve made some accessories for the slaves out of monster materials.

Most of them now wear items made of monster bone.

The bone makes for quite potent accessories, giving numerous bonus effects. They also deteriorate slowly. The downside is that they don’t grant much stat boosts.

“Here, though it may look rough.” (Naofumi)

I hand over an accessory I had randomly made in my free time.

“Wow! A bone accessory!?” (Accessory Merchant)

“... Is something wrong?” (Naofumi)

“What are you saying... The materials used to make it may be cheap, but the bonuses it grants will make it sell high among adventurers.” (Accessory Merchant) “It’s definitely cheap, but I’ve been practicing my design skills.” (Naofumi) “Obviously! By the way, is it true that you’ve recently acquired a large amount of land?” (Accessory Merchant) “... If you want to set up a store there, then just go over.” (Naofumi) “I still have contracts here, you know!” (Accessory merchant) The accessory merchant’s eyes shine with an evil light as he says this.

I hesitate before proceeding. Anyone would.

“Anyways, if you come over, make sure not to interfere with reconstruction. ” (Naofumi) “I know... Fufufu...” (Accessory Merchant)

Why is it that all the merchants I meet seem evil?

“How goes the selling of the Miraka accessories?” (Naofumi) “They’re quite popular. After all, a great calamity did just occur... Even average civilians have begun training to protect themselves.” (Accessory Merchant) So his profit has increased.

“Well, I’m going off to check the weapon selection.” (Naofumi) “I look forwards to our next meeting.” (Accessory Merchant) “Yes, Yes.” (Naofumi)

It enervates me dealing with this type of merchant.

I think as I proceed to the second floor.

Weapons are displayed everywhere like in an exhibition.

There are also various articles of clothing.

...hmm. There are some familiar weapons, such as the Meteor Iron Sword and the Meteor Iron Lance. They’re on sale for a bargain price.

Oh? There’s also Spirit Turtle armor here.

The variety here isn’t much different from Melromark.

And the price is exponentially higher.

Well I guess the price of imports are higher than they are in their original country.

... I look around for shields, but I don’t see many that I haven’t seen at the Old Man’s shop.

Well, there are a few unfamiliar shields. I guess I’ll try touching one.

“Ah, can I try equipping this shield for a second?” (Naofumi) “Go ahead.” (Store Clerk)

With the clerk’s consent, I lift up the unfamiliar shield. Weapon Copy activates.

Spike Shield, Frisbee Shield, Jewel Shield, Platinum Shield.

I copy all of the weapons unfamiliar to me.

I wonder how powerful these new additions are.

I haven’t really been fighting as of late... My stats are still effected by the curse.

I remember the Old Man saying that Spirit Turtle Materials were hard to work with, but that seems to be true.

In this large store, I don't see any weapons made of the material.

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

I notice an item marked as 'Not for Sale'.

It's a single edged sword... With a glance, I can tell it is made for Spirit Turtle parts.

I try to appraise it.

Spirit Turtle Sword.

Quality ...

It's no good. My appraisal level isn't high enough to get any info.

But I can see that it is quite skillfully made... It's even being kept from sale.

Perhaps it shall be put up for auction in the near future.

So there really are skilled craftsmen in this world. However as I have no money, it doesn't really concern me.

I'll tell the Old Man about it later.

And so I stayed a little longer, then left

"You're already back?" (Rishia)

As I return, I see Rishia waiting at our meeting spot with a depressed expression.

"I need to get the slaves I bought to the village. I don't have any money for an inn for them all." (Naofumi) I could just leave them at the Slave Merchant's place and pick them up later, or I could send them back with Firo, but... I don't want to risk Rishia finding Itsuki so it's probably best to leave early.

Rafatalia is comforting Rishia while sweating profusely.

"Hey hey hey, why is Rafatalia Oneechan..." (Firo) "Quiet, bird."
(Naofumi)

Firo stares at Rafatalia and enters Inquisition Mode, but I use her slave

seal to stop her.

“Mu....” (Firo)

Firo tries to raise a complaint, but I keep her quiet.

If things go wrong here, Rishia will develop a mental trauma.

Her mental breakdown flag has been raised for a while, but I don't want it to go off now.

After Itsuki... is able to collect himself some more, I can let Rishia deal with him.

I'm a little hesitant letting them meet. For moral reasons.

Rishia seems to hold a fantasy-like image of Itsuki.

I think their personalities will prevent them from making up.

That won't help Rishia's motivation at all.

But I guess I'll at least ask.

“Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Rishia)

“You want to become strong so that Itsuki recognizes you, correct?”
(Naofumi) “Yes.” (Rishia)

“Then you'll still work to become stronger from here on out?”
(Naofumi) “Yes. I still have a long way to go. I want to get strong enough to fight alongside Itsuki-sama.” (Rishia) And that's why I can't let them meet now.

For Itsuki's sake and for Rishia's sake.

Though I only really care about the latter.

If they meet now, both of them will only suffer.

And so we all keep silent and turn our backs to Rishia.

We load the new slaves onto the carriage, and prepare set off.

There are now three carriages connected to Firo.

And she is having more fun than ever.

The Slave Dealer apparently has business in Zeltburg, so he stayed behind.

There's no need for us to return together. He seems to have taken a strange liking to me, but I don't really enjoy his company.

I look at the slaves on the carriage I'm in. It's quite cramped.

We've split them between the carriages to make the trip easier, but Sadina is too big... just her alone takes up much of the carriage's space.

"Hey, you're too big. Could you possibly get there alone by sea?"
(Naofumi) "Naofumi-sama!?" (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia seems mad.

Her reaction is justified, however Sadina really is in the way.

She's too big to fit in a carriage. I could send her by foot, but would she be able to keep up with Firo's legs?

That's not possible.

Is having her go by sea that cruel?

"That sounds good!" (Sadina)

And Sadina happily accepts my proposal.

I was half-joking, you know.

"Really?" (Naofumi)

"It's much easier than walking on land, and if I use underwater currents, it will also be faster." (Sadina) "Will you be able to deal with sea monsters on your own?" (Naofumi) "Don't underestimate me." (Sadina)

I think her level was... in the 40s.

Even with a discount, she was quite expensive.

"Understood, then I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi) "Yes. I can't wait to see everyone." (Sadina)

She says as she jumps into a river by herself.

Zeltburg is close to the ocean, she'll probably make it just fine.

"Sadina Neechan is really strong, you know." (Rafatalia) Rafatalia seems proud of the village slaves we found this time.

It doesn't seem Sadina had as many signs of abuse as the others.

"Oneechan helped protect us." (Rafatalia)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

Is it because she was older?

Her stats aren't particularly high, but I guess she is skillful.

The village's children probably relied on her quite a bit.

"...I see." (Fohl)

Fohl watches Sadina as she disappears into the water.

Can he sense her will?

He places a jug of water next to Atlas, who is lying on the floor.

"Thank you, Ani-sama." (Atlas)

"Don't worry about it. Is your health getting any better?" (Fohl) "Yes... Most of the pain is gone." (Atlas)

"That's good." (Fohl)

"Naofumi-sama... when will we leave?" (Atlas)

(TL: Note, everyone pronounces Naofumi's name phonetically, but Atlas says it with the Kanji) Atlas directs a question towards me.

She can't see, so I'm a little concerned.

"Yeah, we'll depart soon." (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Atlas)

"I think it's best if you took some more medicine." (Naofumi) I change my shield to the Sacred Tree Shield, and hand all of the Yggdrasil medicine I have left to Atlas.

Perhaps it will improve her condition further.

“Thank you...” (Atlas)

“Don’t worry about it.” (Naofumi)

I direct a condescending glare at Fohl.

“Gununu...” (Fohl) (TL: Grumbling sound)

He seems conflicted.

Well, I’ll have him work hard to pay off the medicine costs.

It was expensive, so he better be prepared for hell.

“Naofumi-sama...” (Atlas)

Atlas grasps my hand.

“Please get along with my brother.” (Atlas)

“We’re not fighting! Right?” (Fohl)

Fohl approaches me amiably and puts his arm around my shoulders.

What’s with his feigned friendliness?

If you think we’re friends, you’re wrong.

“You too, Onii-sama. Get along with this nice person.” (Atlas) “I-I know!” (Fohl)

“That’s good.” (Atlas)

Atlas seems tired.

Even though the medicine is working, she’s still sick.

“I’m getting a little tired.” (Atlas)

“Then rest. Our village is a bit far... And our carriage’s bird is a terrible driver. It’s best to rest now.” (Naofumi) “Your carriage’s bird? She must be... that person with a strong aura like Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) Atlas points in Firo’s direction.

Though she’s blind, it seems she can sense some things.

“What’s up master?” (Firo)

“Ah, our new slave, Atlas, is blind, but she could tell that you were

strong.” (Naofumi) “Ehehe, Firo has been praised.” (Firo)

“That person... is very energetic and... has a lot of innocence. I can tell that she has been raised by Naofumi-sama’s kindness.” (Atlas) “Yeah!” (Firo)

Firo puffs up her chest and answers.

Kindness? When have I ever been kind to anyone? What is this person saying?

I’ll ignore it.

“Anyways, we have a sick patient here, so sudden accelerations are banned.” (Naofumi) “Yes~” (Firo)

“And Atlas, if you’re sleepy then go to sleep. Let Fohl endure the ride by himself.” (Naofumi) “...ah.” (Atlas)

Fohl glares at me with rebellious eyes. It’s of no concern to me.

The coupling of the carriages is complete. We leave Zeltburg in the darkness of the night.

Chapter 161: Princess Visit

With Firo advancing at a slow pace, we needed 4 days to reach the village.

We turned the monsters in our path into food and our carriage journey advanced with no problems.

All the slaves who ate my food for the first time had the same reaction. Was it really that delicious?

By the way, Fohl became sulky whereas Atla praised it greatly.

The third night of our trip.

“Naofumi-sama.....um.....my apologies but could you please change my bandages?” (atla) “I’ll do that kind of thing!” (fohl)

“Well, I should apply a salve for skin disease while I’m at it.” (naofumi)
“Damn...” (fohl)

The medicine seemed to be working and Atla’s skin improved but she complained about itching so I took off her bandages.

“...Huh? It seems that the skin that had looked like it was burned has now healed.” (naofumi) “Y-yeah.” (fohl)

Fohl stared at his little sister with astonishment.

Was this really such a surprising situation? Well it was a marvellous recovery though.

And so I removed the bandages covering her face and checked.

“Well.....” (raphtalia)

When Raphtalia looked at her condition, her voice slipped out without thinking. It’s unusual for Raphtalia to expose such behaviour because she always maintains her silence when it’s quiet. It isn’t really that surprising though.

The brother’s face looked conceited but even though I had been prepared for it, when I looked at the little sister, I was also surprised.

Despite being a slave, her hair was glossy and her skin was smooth and pale.

I wonder how old she is....her brother looked about 12 or 13, so she should be younger than that.....

Her eyes were out of focus and her pupils were dilated. I knew that if a blind person had their eyes open, their eyes would be like this.

That slave merchant said such unorthodox things but isn't he selling slaves of this class for a different reason?

Well, I should be saying this after the skin disease has recovered completely.

"I feel so refreshed. Naofumi-sama, thank you very much.....for applying the salve for me." (atla) "Mm...." (naofumi)

I'm lost for words. Raphtalia and Firo can be considered to be beautiful without being biased but Atla is a beauty of a different class.

She has a young appearance and yet, it could be said that she was as delicate as a doll.

"Ooh....Atla has become so pretty." (fohl)

Are you the father of a bride the night before her wedding or something!

"It looks like the progression is going well. The salve isn't really necessary any more." (naofumi) "Is that so?" (atla)

The blind Atla touched her face with her hand.

"It's not rough any more." (atla)

"So it seems." (naofumi)

"It's all thanks to Naofumi-sama. Thank you very much." (atla) Atla made a quick bow of her head.

"Don't worry about it." (naofumi)

Another slave peeked at us from a crack in the carriage. I could hear a small voice exclaiming something about a beauty.

She hasn't been completely cured yet, but she should be soon. As expected of the Yggdrassil medicine, the results are extraordinary.

"And there you have it, Fohl. You understand, right" (naofumi)
".....Yeah" (Fohl)

Fohl came to his senses with my words and nodded with vexation.

I've healed his frail little sister to this extent. I will have him work wholeheartedly.

"Naofumi-sama." (atla)

"What is it?" (naofumi)

"Please tell us.....what will be awaiting us in the village that we're heading to? Raphtalia-san, please teach us as well." (atla) When we journey in the carriage, I usually process monster parts, compound medicine and also study magic, but I wasn't doing those things right now.

Well, it's fine.

"The hell-like days of me working everyone hard are——" (naofumi)
"Naofumi-sama!" (raphtalia)

Raphtalia was rather loud.

I was only going to scare them a little.

Raphtalia hates these kinds of pranks, doesn't she.

Well, I have the feeling that I may have been the cause of that.

"Tsk! Let's see....." (naofumi)

Raphtalia and I told Atla about the other villagers and what would happen in the future.

It may have been trivial, but when I thought about how healthy this frail girl had become, I thought it was good that I had learnt to compound medicine.

"We've just returned~" (naofumi)

The slaves undertook Firo's right of passage when she decided to play

around just before we reached the village and by the time we arrived, they were completely exhausted.

“Ah, welcome back~ I arrived earlier.” (sadina)

.....How did Sadina arrive ahead of us?

Honestly, it's quite unexpected. She couldn't have been faster than Firo.

“You were quick.” (naofumi)

“Hmph.....If Firo was being serious she would have arrived earlier!”
(firo) “What are you being so competitive for.” (naofumi)

Firo glared at Sadina provokingly while muttering.

Is it her pride as a mount?

Such unnecessary..... Sadina's not even a steed.

Besides, Firo had been giving a ride to lots of sick and inexperienced slaves.

It would have been troubling if she had made a serious effort.

“Brother, are you alright?” (atla)

“Y-yeah....I'm fin—*ugh*” (fohl)

Unexpectedly, Atla appears to be good with motion sickness.

Well, I'll have to reprimand Firo later, for playing around when we've got sick people on board.

“So this is....Naofumi-sama's village” (atla)

Despite being unable to see, Atla surveyed the village.

“Can you see?” (naofumi)

“No, but the aura....” (atla)

Speaking of which, she's been saying that sort of thing for a while.

It's amazing that she doesn't seem to be inconvenienced even though she's blind.

I mean, aura.....

“It’s good that you’ve returned. I also have a mountain of things to report that I’m starting to get impatient.” (female knight) The female knight was there but Melty had also come along.

Melty was almost angry enough for steam to come out of her head.

So she’s becoming hysterical again.

“Why did you leave even though Firo told you I would be coming over to Naofumi-sama’s place soon!” (Melty) “Ah, now that you mention it, there was something like that.” (naofumi) She was completely infuriated.

Which reminds me, Melty was going to come and play.

“When I came to the village, Naofumi had already left and Firo wasn’t here either, so there was no reason for me to even be here!” (melty) “My bad, my bad. So, when are you leaving?” (naofumi)

“Asking me when I’m going home after I’ve been waiting for so long, isn’t there a limit to your insolence?” (melty) “But you’re the princess.” (naofumi)

“So what about me being a princess!” (melty)

What is with the next queen of a human nation coming to visit a Demi-human village?

“I have proper orders from mother.” (melty)

“Ah, so it’s like that.” (naofumi)

It seems the queen was still plotting to set me up with Melty.

Well in her position, it would be best to win over the Hero of the Shield.

“So, how long are you staying?” (naofumi)

“A long time! I was dispatched by mother to help out with Naofumi’s land management. To go learn to manage a village or town for the sake of the future....I’ve been forced to do such a troublesome job.” (melty) “Your parents are strange. In the head.” (naofumi)

Both her father and her mother were.

She’s superior to her elder sister at her age but learning land

management at this age is a lot of work.

What's worse is that she might not have my obligation to push the demi-humans to grow rapidly.

"Shut up! I already know that." (melty)

"All right, you go and play with Firo." (naofumi)

"Why! Didn't you hear what I said?" (melty)

I did hear it but....fair enough.

Melty seems like she'll kick up a fuss again if I talk so let's take some countermeasures against her.

"Hey Firo, go and play with Melty-chan." (naofumi)

"Oka~y." (firo)

"Wai..Firo-cha——I haven't....talking with Naofumi——" (melty) And so, Melty struggled while being dragged away by Firo.

With this, it should be quiet.

As expected, Firo is the best when it comes to Melty.

"How about treating Princess Melty a little kinder, Iwatani-dono?" (female knight) "Our relationship is just like that. She's strong-willed." (naofumi) "Is that so? She was really disappointed when she heard that Iwatani-dono wasn't here though." (female knight) "That's because Firo wasn't here. They're good friends." (naofumi) "I don't really think so but.... I suppose it depends on Princess Melty's tenacity from here on." (female knight) "What are you talking about?" (naofumi)

"Never mind. More importantly, I have some information to report." (female knight) "Did that woman and the brat finally cause a problem?" (naofumi) By that I mean Rato and Taniko.

Whenever I leave the village for a prolonged period of time, I expect something to happen.

"No, they're quite docile." (female knight)

"Is that so?" (naofumi)

“They seem to be joyfully playing with the monsters.” (female knight)
“Get to work!” (naofumi)

This passiveness is wrong!

Why the hell are they playing around!?

Jeez.... they haven't caused any problems but it's practically the same as doing nothing.

“So? What's the problem?” (naofumi)

“Ah, it kind of concerns that woman but, come to the warehouse for a bit.” (female knight) “What's there?” (naofumi)

“Just come.” (female knight)

“Ah, just wait a moment.” (naofumi)

After I watch the slaves dismount from the carriage, I call the village slaves over.

And then I beckoned to Imia when she emerged from a hole. Is that a burrow?

“Imia, I've brought along some of your colleagues.” (naofumi) “Eh? Ah, Uncle!” (imia)

“Oh, it's really Imia. You've grown.” (lemo slave)

Imia and another Lemo reunited with pleasure.

“Thank you very much, Hero of the Shield-sama!” (imia)

“Eh? He was the Hero of the Shield!?” (lemo slave)

Come to think of it, I hadn't told them.

Imia's family bowed their heads deeply.

Their mood turned into admiration. There were also those who didn't care though.

“I'd like you guys to learn a variety of detailed-oriented tasks. Can I ask that?” (naofumi) “We owe you a debt of gratitude even if it costs us our lives.” (lemo slave) “.....Is your home town in Silt Welt?” (naofumi)

“No? It’s not but.....the legend of the Hero of the Shield-sama is very well known and we’ve heard the rumours. Moreover, you’ve also let us meet with Imia again.”

“I don’t know if it will be pleasant, but I wanted to let you to live in even a bit of comfort. Because of that, I’d like you to hang in there.” (naofumi)
“Okay!” (Iemo slave)

And thus I ensured to a certain extent that I had some adept subordinates.

I’ll think about what they should learn later.

“Now then, all you new slaves introduce yourselves make some friends so that you can get accustomed to the village.” (naofumi) Everyone started introducing themselves noisily. The village has become quite lively.

“Um, where shall we be residing?” (octopus slave)

One of the aquatic slaves inquired.

Indeed, it would appear to be hard for them to live in a normal village? or the camping plant houses. [T/N: Naofumi is rather dubious about calling this a normal village hence the question mark]

“You guys can live near the sea along with Sadina.” (naofumi) “Ah, okay.....” (octopus slave)

The dolphin and octopus-like Beastmen nodded obediently.

Ah, they’re probably surprised to know that I’m the hero of the shield.

“You guys seem pretty dexterous. You’ll also be allocated work soon, but I’d like you guys to level up enough to protect yourselves.” (naofumi) “I understand.” (octopus)

The octopus-like Beastman assented with a wave of his hand and walked towards the ocean with his many legs.

The dolphin.....I hadn’t really been looking but if I compared his height with Sadina’s then he’s rather small. And round.

Was it an issue of age? It was like Raphtalia when she was little.

I feel like I shouldn't ask his gender. It'd be bad if he turned out to be a girl when I thought he was a boy.

The high female ratio is troubling, it'd be better if I didn't know. There's no need to go and ask.

"Fohl and Atla are....." (naofumi)

Those siblings were....Fohl was carrying Atla on his back and doing self-introductions with Kiel and them.

Fohl had a greatly displeased look on his face but Atla was happily chatting with her new friends in a gesture of friendship.

.....How far did Firo and Melty go?

What do I do if they don't introduce themselves here?

"I've kept you waiting." (naofumi)

"Ah, but I've become motivated from watching Iwatani-dono's actions, go figure." (female knight) "Is that so?" (naofumi)

"It is. Everyone's desire for improvement has been circulating." (female knight) "So it's that sort of thing....." (naofumi)

I came with efficiency in mind though.....

"It's rare for someone to do that subconsciously. Iwatani-dono really is a Hero." (female knight) "Nothing will happen even if you praise me. Besides, I'm doing things for myself. Those guys are just putting themselves to work at their own pleasure." (naofumi) "Fufu....and that's why your dearest Raphtalia has been boasting."

"Huh?"

I don't understand what she's saying at all.

Has Raphtalia been telling stories?

"And, what did you have to report?" (naofumi)

"I said so before but please come to the warehouse, Rato is also waiting

there.” (female knight) “Huh?” (naofumi)

Why is Rato also there?

For now I continue to follow the Female knight.

Chapter 162: Filo Rials and Dragons

Following the Female Knight, I leave the slaves to themselves and proceed towards the Village Storehouse.

And there I find Rat with her arms crossed and an unpleasant expression on her face. Contrastingly, Taniko's eyes are sparkling. They are both waiting for me.

"What have you called me for?" (Naofumi)

"First, look inside the storehouse." (Female Knight) I slowly open the door and peer inside.

Inside is... various armors and materials. There are also monster eggs.

Hm? There wasn't supposed to be anything in here.

"Did you use my money to buy these things?" (Naofumi) "No, these were sent in a parcel addressed to you." (Female Knight) "What?" (Naofumi)

Inside the storehouse, I see an open wooden box.

The words, 'To the Hero of the Shield, please give these gifts to the slaves blessed with misfortune' are scribbled on the side in terrible handwriting.

"...?" (Naofumi)

"They seem to be some sort of donation. There are some strong armors mixed in with the ones sent and some of the herbs, jewels and lumbers sent are quite rare." (Female Knight) "The reason that Rat and Taniko are here is for the eggs, right... Who is it? Who sent them?" (Naofumi) "... I got them from the Queen when I went to give my report. They were left anonymously, but are probably from Siltwelt or Shieldfrieden. Based on the handwriting and ink used, this is the most likely case." (Female Knight) "Is it fine for me to take them?" (Naofumi)

"All of the items sent are impossible to trace. Even the armor's inscriptions have been destroyed. Even if we find the sender, it will be impossible to confirm it." (Female Knight) This is that, isn't it. Some high

up person sent it to get in my favor.

It doesn't matter who sent it. Just the fact that I received a gift shows that their country gave favor to the hero.

A long time ago, a certain god of manga's irritated editor got tired of the god's son's mischievous pranks and finally threw him into the pond in the yard.

After that, the editor honestly stated that he did it, and it became something he could brag about.

The truth is uncertain, but there is a high probability that something like that did happen.

(TL: Research leads me nowhere on that one.)

It doesn't matter who gave the gift. Now anyone can brag and call themselves a benefactor of the Hero of the Shield.

"They really sent over some troublesome things." (Female Knight)
"Yeah, and what are those eggs?" (Naofumi)

"They're a wide variety from common Usapills to rare seasonal monsters." (Female Knight) So the contents have already been inspected.

But Rat is acting strange. She's really mad.

"And the problem is that one. The huge egg in the back." (Female Knight) There is an exceptionally large egg in the back corner of the storehouse.

What could it be? Could it be on a monster on the same level as the Spirit Turtle?

"So what is it?" (Naofumi)

"It's a flying dragon egg. It's supposedly a kind, reliable, expensive species." (Female Knight) Yeah, they really did send something troublesome over.

Though I don't know why, Rat hates dragons.

"For a dragon to live in this village... How wonderful!" (Taniko) Taniko

seems very excited.

What's with her? Is she the opposite of Rat?

"What should we do? The sender is unknown, but should we try to find them and return these?" (Female Knight) "Even if you say that... I never thought we would be so troubled over a gift." (Naofumi) I'm somehow troubled by the fact that someone sent me expensive goods. Someone may try to take advantage over me with them later.

But is returning them seems impossible, I can only accept them.

If something bad comes of it, we just need to be ready for it.

If the package truly is from Siltwelt, then it is most likely an earnest donation to the Hero of the Shield.

"For now, let's accept them. If someone comes to claim them later, then ignore them. By the way, will we be able to place a monster seal on the Flying Dragon?" (Naofumi) "We'll need a higher level of seal for it. But the sender kindly sent the tools necessary for the ritual with the eggs, so... If the Count wishes for it, then I can place a seal on all of these monsters." (Rat) "Hey, why do you hate Dragons so much?" (Naofumi)

"Ah, I haven't told you yet." (Rat)

Rat angrily glares at Taniko and begins speaking.

"High level dragons, you know. Once they go into heat, they lose all self-control." (Rat) "Wait, what?" (Naofumi)

"You don't know? Most dragons begin to corrupt the land they live in. Their homes are always quite dangerous." (Rat) "Is that how it is?" (Naofumi)

The only dragon I know of is... the dragon that Ren defeated.

There the dragon's curse caused a plague.

It definitely was a contaminated area.

"Dragons, you know. When they lose their self-control, they will try to violate monsters of different species. That's why in the land that dragons

live, many dragon-like monsters come into being.” (Rat) “This is quite a dangerous topic.” (Naofumi)

Many fantasy games have half-dragon races, but is this the cause?

“Well, they do take the courtesy of setting up a territory and never leaving it, but the reason that I hate them is because they can easily screw up the ecosystem. By the way, Flying Dragons are a mix between a Dragon and some other weak monster.” (Rat) Fumu... so that’s how it is.

“The biggest problem is the purebred dragons. They really have absolutely no distinction, and will even violate human women.” (Rat) It seems like quite a troublesome species.

Hm? Taniko is glaring at us.

“They do have dignity!” (Taniko)

Why are you angry? She’s acting like someone directly related to the topic.

Whenever monsters come up, this girl starts yelling.

She takes turns with Rat managing the various monsters.

“There’s already a race of Dragon Demi-Humans. The Dragonewts.” (Taniko) I think I’ve heard something about Dragon Demi-humans before.

“Of course, even if Dragons don’t go into heat, that race will continue to exist, and they’re quite a docile people. But the only ones who can withstand a Dragon’s lust are the Filo Rials.” (Rat) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, the Filo rials often have Turf wars with the dragons.” (Rat) ... Firo pops up in my mind.

That gluttonous demon bird doesn’t seem like such a high-class race to me.

“And because that egg holds a Dragon, will you hate it?” (Naofumi)
“Yeah, kinda. I believe the Monster seal has an option that controls sexual lust, so make sure to check that box. Or else this area’s monster

population will be corrupted.” (Rat) What is this feeling?

In the hunting games I’ve played before, I’ve had to hunt dragon couples before. From the amount of children they had, I’ve always wondered why they didn’t just go and wipe out humanity already.

“The Dragon Emperor-sama won’t allow such behavior!” (Taniko)
Taniko calls out.

That’s quite a powerful-sounding name.

Why is she that knowledgeable on monster matters?

Is that just how she was raised? I don’t care enough to ask.

“Yes, yes. The legendary King of Dragons. I believe he was at war with the Filo Rial Queen.” (Rat) “There’s a legend like that?” (Naofumi)

“It’s only a legend. Both of their existences are subject to doubt.” (Rat)
... Well, I’ve met one of them before.

But an argument will break out if I bring it up here.

Anyways, I assume the story is something along the lines of the Legendary Dragon King threatening the lives of many civilians and the Holy Filo Rial Queen driving him out.

Or something about how both sides were continuously at war with one another.

“But... If they have such reproductive capability, why have I never met a live one?” (Naofumi) “They usually live in very remote areas. Has the Count ever ventured that far?” (Rat) I’ve only ever used the merchant roads for peddling... I’ve barely ever entered caves or mountains.

So that’s why...

“So that’s why.” (Naofumi)

“They pretty much keep to their territory. If you don’t try to expand a settlement into said territory, you probably won’t meet one.” (Rat) “I see. Anyways, I have a policy of using what I can, so I’ll keep and raise the dragon.” (Naofumi) “Make sure to be strict with it. I don’t want to become

part of a Dragon's Harem." (Rat) "Yes, yes." (Naofumi)

As long as it has a monster seal, I should be able to manage. If anything bad happens, I can feed it to fire.

As if she can read my mind, Taniko's glare intensifies.

"Don't fall for a newly hatched dragon." (Rat)

"I-I won't fall for anyone!" (Taniko)

(TL: The actual text is don't open your legs to, but let's preserve the innocent children) Does she know what she's saying?

"Please stop your vulgar conversation." (Naofumi)

Rat lets out a sigh.

Female Knight... Is staring at us with an amazed expression.

"Training a flying dragon is difficult. People who accomplish it are called Dragon Knights." (Rat) "Ah, I remember seeing some when we were fighting the Spirit Turtle." (Naofumi) They didn't really help out, though.

Most of them fell to the ground screaming after taking attacks from the Spirit Turtle's familiars.

"There's a danger of falling off. And the dragons themselves are not particularly strong." (Rat) "I see, well raising it shouldn't be all that difficult." (Naofumi) "I don't know what will happen if the Count raises it. It might turn out like your Filo Rial." (Rat) "Mu... You're right. I'll be careful." (Naofumi)

And so it was decided that we were going to keep the Flying Dragon Egg.

But it seems it will take a while to hatch. I have to personally bind it to my blood.

Rat goes back to her lab with a disappointed expression.

The Bioplant research has continued, and it seems that Rat has finally completed a prototype that can grow medicinal herbs. However right now it can only produce herbs that can be found anywhere on the side of the

road. But still, the research has progressed.

...

“Why do I have to carry around the egg!” (Naofumi)

For some reason, I have been tasked with keeping the Flying Dragon egg warm.

As soon as she saw me, Kiel burst into laughter.

“If you don’t do this, you won’t be able to imprint yourself as the parent. If you don’t start out with this, it may ignore your commands later!” (Rat)
Rat seems fed up.

Are Flying Dragons really this troublesome to deal with? I regret my decision to raise it already.

“Is that how it is?” (Naofumi)

“Yes! I happen to be an expert on the subject, so trust me.” (Rat) “I’m having a hard time believing because you’re the one saying it...”
(Naofumi) “What was that?” (Rat)

“Understood. I didn’t say anything.” (Naofumi)

This is a pain.

“AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Naofumi, what are you doing?” (Melly)
Melly appears, riding Firo. She points her finger at me and starts laughing.

“Shut it, second princess!” (Naofumi)

“You promised not to call me, ‘Second Princess’, remember!?” (Melly)
“Then don’t laugh, idiot!” (Naofumi) (TL: Yes, he says Baka) “Idiot!? Who are you calling an idiot!?” (Melly)

Ah, it seems that playing with Firo has caused her to forget her original objective.

“Um... You look... peculiar... Naofumi-sama.” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia is trying to choose her words. I don’t need her sympathy.

“Damn.. Just go off peddling already! This time, Me, Rafatalia and Firo will have to go alone.” (Naofumi) I can’t be seen like this by all of the villagers. I’ll have to send them out.

“You’re running away from the issue~!” (Melty)

“Shut it.” (Naofumi)

Melty is being overly obnoxious.

“Well, you’ll have to keep this up for two to three days. After that, it should hatch.” (Rat) “Dammit all.” (Naofumi)

“If you need anything done in the adjacent village, leave it to me. Otherwise you’re going to slip out of this duty and head over, right?” (Melty) “...!” (Naofumi)

Melty hit the mark right on.

For now... should I hide with it in the carriage?

“Master, are you carrying an egg?” (Firo)

“Yeah. I apparently have to do this because it’s a dragon.” (Naofumi)
“Hmm... Can Firo warm it?” (Firo)

Right, Firo is a bird so her body is quite warm.

Should I leave it with Firo?

“No.” (Rat)

“No!” (Firo)

As soon as she hears Rat’s warning, Firo runs off.

Does she really hate her that much?

“As I said before, Filo Rials and Dragons don’t get along. You can’t let her warm it.” (Rat) “... I see...” (Naofumi)

I thought I could push my troubles onto her...

Could I give it to Rafatalia?

“It’s your dragon, right? You can’t give it to someone else.” (Rat)
“Damn!” (Naofumi)

How is she able to read my thoughts?

There's no helping it. I'll hide in the carriage and go on a little trip.

And like that, I go peddling to run away from my troubles.

I am wearing a cloak to hide the embarrassing egg on my back.

"It's been a while since we went out peddling with just the three of us."

(Rafatalia) "Now that I think about it, you're right." (Naofumi) The last time I went peddling with just Rafatalia and Firo was a long time ago.

Now we're always surrounded by Kiel and the other villagers. Before the matter with the Spirit Turtle, we were always running around by ourselves.

"A flying dragon. I wonder what sort of child it will grow up to be."

(Rafatalia) "No idea." (Naofumi)

"Will Firo still be pulling the carriage?" (Firo)

"Of course." (Naofumi)

It seems Firo holds a strange sense of Pride. But I don't think a Flying Dragon can pull a carriage in the first place.

"Firo will always be Master's legs!" (Firo)

"I wonder." (Naofumi)

The ability to fly will be quite advantageous. If he turns out to be more efficient than the ground-bound Firo, then I'll use him instead.

However a Flying Dragon has very limited carrying capacity.

Only one person can ride it at a time. I'll only use it if I have to go in a hurry by myself.

Or so Rat told me.

"Mu..." (Firo)

"Firo, make sure to look ahead as you walk." (Rafatalia) "But Master said..." (Firo)

"It's alright. If Firo works hard, Naofumi-sama will learn to rely on you

more.” (Rafatalia) “... Really?” (Firo)

“I wonder.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, please be quiet for a second.” (Rafatalia) I guess there’s a limit to teasing Firo.

Perhaps this Dragon will be able to bring out Firo’s competitive side. She’s getting a little too conceited over her leg power.

“Firo will work hard!” (Firo)

“Yes, let’s work hard together.” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

“Now then, I guess I should get to making some medicine to sell.”
(Naofumi) I also need to think of what jobs to give the slaves later on.
And... the first day of peddling went by with no problems.

Chapter 163: Witch

That night, I heard a voice when I retired to bed.

“Kukuku....’twas that woman and pack-bird’s fault that I was repressed, but when the perfect host for mine spirit comes, it will be..... fun” (???)
[T/N: ‘Pack animal’ but with the character for animal replaced with bird, therefore Pack bird. Also, they’re using somewhat archaic pronouns hence the shakespearean-ness]

What? This voice.....I’ve heard it before, but I can’t remember.

“The wrath of thou who burned me was exquisite....no, that’s wrong. Together with me and mine power, thy strength was raised. However, it’s insufficient, I’m unsatisfied.” (???) This is....who? Who’s voice is this?

“I will be the ones to kill thee. I will have thee take responsibility for killing me, by compensating with thy body” (???) I felt extremely unpleasant sweat flow from my paralysed body.

“I look forward to coming out.”

That was the kind of nightmare I saw that night.

I had the feeling that I knew who the owner of the voice was.

But this was lost as a part of the dream.

“I wonder how long left until the egg hatches.” (naofumi) “Yeah.”
(raptalia)

“Firo also wants to incubate the egg.” (firo)

“You were told that you couldn’t though.” (naofumi) That was the sort of conversation we had while on our peddling trip.

And just like that, we arrived in a large town. We’ve come here many times to sell our goods so I recognise the faces of the townspeople, to a certain extent.

After most of our stock was sold, I stared out of the carriage wondering what to do in the future, when I recognised a familiar-looking figure walking away.

“Firo, stop.” (naofumi)

“What’s the matter, master?” (firo)

I stopped the carriage, covered myself with a robe to hide the egg and then approached the figure.

He stood in the shade of a building and seemed to be looking out onto the main street. Raphtalia also realised who it was and stopped her query mid-way.

“That’s right. Raphtalia.” (naofumi)

“What is it?” (raphtalia)

“I forgot about it last time but you can use concealing magic, right.” (naofumi) “Yes. I learnt how to cast it so that everyone else will have difficulty sensing us.” (raphtalia) Raphtalia was taught magic in the castle and therefore knew more advanced concealing magic.

Recently, she also studied this magic, saying that she was trying to think up a countermeasure against Motoyasu and Ren.

If Portal Spear was used then it would be over, but it seems like we can do something about the Flash Sword.

“Then please do so.” (naofumi)

“I understand.” (raphtalia)

We hid in an alley and Raphtalia grasped Firo and my hands while concentrating.

<As one worthy of the origin of power, I am commanding. I’ve reread and understand the principles, clad us in a coating of illusion> “Al Hide Mirage”

Raphtalia’s magic wrapped around us gently.

“It should be fine now.” (raphtalia)

“Ah, this is helpful.” (naofumi)

We tailed our target with our hands linked.

Somehow it seemed like he was tailing someone as well.

No, more accurately, he was waiting for the right timing to talk to them.

“What should I do.....I just hope it doesn’t end up like with Erena.”
(motoyasu) Did he not even realise that we were behind him, filled with anticipation all by himself.

Just what was he so anxious about, that idiot.

And, as I was thinking that, I followed the idiot’s gaze.

And then the idiot’s face changed colour.

At first I thought the magic had released and we had been discovered, but I was wrong.

When I saw who the gaze was resting on, I was also speechless.

Somehow Bitch had brought along Woman 2.....and was talking to Ren for some reason.

What were they saying?

I ignored Idiot Motoyasu and approached Bitch. Or I should say, I advanced in order to arrest her. Motoyasu and Ren will run away so I can’t catch them, but Bitch is different.

It seems something interesting will be awaiting if I arrest her, and I don’t have the option not to.

I sent Raphtalia a glance.

Raphtalia nodded. I’m not sure if Firo understood the situation or not but she followed silently.

A sound reached my ears. It was a pretty loud voice.

“I’m not the Hero of the Spear’s weapon. The first time we met, I believed Ren-sama was also a hero who would save the world.” (bitch)
Bitch is saying some terrible things.

I have a strong impulse to jump out and bash her face in.

”Besides.... Spear forces us into unreasonable relationships, just like

Shield. Needless to say, I.... searched for Ren-sama with my new-found freedom.” (bitch) She’s saying some really infuriating lines. And this outburst of emotions after so long.

You, I thought you were together with Motoyasu for a good many months.

I promptly look towards Motoyasu.

“Gununu....” (motoyasu) [T/N: Sound of outrage]

Wow, he’s peeping with such a prominent face.

“But I think the queen said that you’ve always had problems....” (ren) As expected, Ren also felt the need to be cautious.

Well, she has to struggle that much at least.

“Ren-sama doesn’t know Mama’s true colours. Mama’s the woman known as Melromarc’s vixen. She invented a ploy to produce large profits by humiliating me. This gave credit to that demon, Shield, and Spear was also part of it too.” (bitch) “I-is that so....” (ren)

What will you do? Will you raise your voice and object?

Or rather, say something with credibility.

Although I’ve also put my faith in her before, these are Bitch’s words so they’re definitely lies.

It would be better if you believed someone who has been antagonized by Bitch.

Like Melty, or the current Motoyasu.

Then, Bitch embraced Ren and stroked his hair.

“Ren-sama.....losing your comrades must have been very heart-breaking.....it’s okay to cry now. It’s alright. The whole world may be calling you a criminal but I believe. I believe that Ren-sama has been fighting for the sake of the world.” (bitch) She’s pretty good at sucking up to weakened guys.

Raphtalia looked at Bitch with an incredibly doubtful face.

It's similar to what she said to me.

Or should I say it's a complete rip-off?

Right, in a bit.....just a little bit longer and I'll grab Bitch's shoulder.

"Wait!" (motoyasu)

Motoyasu rushed over at this point.

He looks as though he saw something really despicable.

Was this really the rumoured ladykiller.

No, no.....

"Well if isn't it the Spear." (bitch)

Bitch flicked her hair back with an incredibly obnoxious face and deliberately gave Motoyasu a dirty look.

For some reason, my trauma was evoked and I felt pissed off.

Bitch, you won't be laughing for much longer.

"That's my line! What the hell are you doing! Sucking up to Ren, I've been searching for you!" (motoyasu) "Ahaha, charging in recklessly, I'm not an idiot. Ren-sama, please listen." (bitch) Bitch clung to Ren and declared this while crying fake tears.

"When we got into a pinch, that Spear focused the enemy's attention towards us. He said he would defeat the enemy, but he just used us as a shield. We fled because we were scared but when we did, he chased after us obstinately, saying that he won't forgive us for deserting in the face of an enemy." (bitch) "Lies!" (motoyasu)

I started to get a headache.

Bitch was following her usual pattern..... I should probably hurry and arrest that Bitch.

Speaking of which, I recognise Motoyasu's current expression.

Obviously. It's the me from that day!

Bitch.....You're repeating the same things as before.

Sinking your fangs into three heroes.....you're a bitch who has transcended beyond a bitch, I'm renaming you Witch.

It even has the double meaning of being a sorceress.

I should just kill her and say she tried to resist.

Yeah, let's do that. I can't think of anything else.

"So you were trying that kind of thing, huh. You're as bad, or even worse than Naofumi. Betraying people's trust, you're a disgrace." (ren) "Ren, Whore has been telling lies! Please believe me." (motoyasu) "Who's going to believe that!" (ren)

"That's right! Forcing us into a relationship every night..... and if not, you would threaten to kill Papa!" (bitch) "Stop lying! I.... really did worry!" (motoyasu)

I'd like to see more of Motoyasu's misfortune, but I can't stand it any more.

Filled with murderous intent, I firmly grasped Witch's shoulder with my hand.

"Eh?" (bitch)

Raphtalia snapped her fingers and released her spell.

"How dare you spew out such lies, Witch." (naofumi) "Shield!" (bitch)

Witch's eyebrows sprung up high. She looked as if she came across someone detestable.

But I feel the same way.

"Sorry but I'm going to have you come back to the castle. I'll arrest you, dead or alive." (naofumi)

Chapter 164: Negligence

The first one to react to my words was Ren.

“Keep your hands off of Mein!” (Ren)

Ren brandishes his sword.

It lets out sparks as it collides with my arm.

Of course, I don’t take any damage. It’s not like he learned the other reinforcement methods in this short amount of time.

At this level, I don’t even need to use my shield.

“You know. If you call her that, her punishment will only increase.”
(Naofumi) “Shut it. Get away from Mein!” (Ren)

Witch is also struggling. It’s become difficult to hold her with one hand.

「Meteor Sword!」 (Ren)

Oh, a skill might be able to inflict some damage on me. I’m holding a relatively rare egg right now.

It will be a waste if it breaks, so I back off.

In exchange, Rafatalia and Firo step forward.

Even Motoyasu takes up a fighting stance.

We’re all prepared to capture Ren, Bitch and Woman 2.

“Ren, it’s better if you don’t trust that witch. She’s exactly as the Queen described.” (Naofumi) She can put false crimes on people without remorse, and she loves watching others struggle.

Ren will probably be tricked and discarded sometime soon as well.

Just like Motoyasu.

“Look closely at Motoyasu’s face. Doesn’t he look pitiable? Is this the face of a person who would do such things?” (Naofumi) “No, I heard Motoyasu was also coerced by the Queen! The Queen is the ringleader behind all of this.” (Ren) “And isn’t that single woman the only one

telling you that?” (Naofumi) “Even so, I must fight for the people who believe in me!” (Ren) “Calm down. Think Logically. The normal you would have figured it out by now.” (Naofumi) “Shut up!” (Ren)

Ah... this is impossible. He seriously believes he is in the right.

I can't really blame him here.

In my case, I had the slight feeling that something was off, but I never realized I had been deceived until the end.

And the current Ren is mentally unstable. He sides with Witch, who offered him plenty of soft words.

... Should I kill her?

I should have enough power now. Unlike before.

Wait, a Shadow should be somewhere around here.

If the Shadow utilizes the slave crest, I won't have to fight Ren.

Perhaps I will be able to teach him proper reinforcement techniques and add him to my fighting force.

... Though earning his trust won't be that easy.

As if responding to my thoughts, Bitch's slave crest begins to glow.

“Ku.... Ren-sama! We should retreat for now.” (Bitch)

“Understood! 「Flashing Sword!」” (Ren)

On Witch's words, Ren unleashes a skill.

And as before, his sword starts glowing.

“Damn! Rafatalia, Firo!” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

Right after I gave my warning, the sword releases a blinding light.

As if that will work forever!

“I, who has understood the origin of power commands you. I shall once

again read forth the truth. Bind this foul light that clouds us from knowledge!" (Rafatalia) 「Al Anti-Shining!」 (Rafatalia)

Our eyes that were under the influence of Ren's flashing sword start to clear up.

And Firo jumps into the air in preparation for a kick. But she is too late. Ren picks up Bitch and Woman 2, and brandishes his sword once more.

「Transfer Sword!」 (Ren)

Just like when Motoyasu disappeared, Ren's image starts to fade.

And so does Witch's.

"Witch, it seems you were able to escape this time. But remember this: I'll chase you to the depths of hell. All you have to do is wait in a corner, cowering in fear." (Naofumi) "Hmph!" (Bitch)

I hear witch snorting at my proclamation before she completely disappears.

This skill truly is annoying.

I need to find some way to seal it.

"Dammit! She got away again! That damn Witch, I'll definitely slaughter her later!" (Naofumi) "Naofumi-sama, please calm down." (Rafatalia)

"Aren't you frustrated? Has she begun corrupting you as well!?" (Naofumi) I'm madder then I've ever been in a long time.

What should I take my anger out on?

It's immature, but I start to get angry at Rafatalia.

"... Naofumi-sama, your words are enough to keep me by your side." (Rafatalia) "I see..." (Naofumi)

If Rafatalia is okay with this, then I guess I should endure my rage for a little longer.

But I won't forget this, Witch.

This rage greater than I can handle. Someday it will be embedded into your chest with a ten inch rusty nail.

As I slowly stomach my rage, Shadow appears.

“...She has escaped out of my range-gojaru. I can only send out fatal punishment, but I cannot track her.” (Shadow) I don’t think killing her would be that bad, but Shadow also has orders. We can’t kill her without due process...

And I kinda want her to suffer 100x more. Am I a bad person?

“So it seems.” (Naofumi)

“I never thought the former princess would be able to seduce the Hero of the Sword so easily-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Just when I was looking for them, they suddenly appeared. Perhaps my luck is better than I thought.” (Naofumi) “I see-gojaru... anyways I’m off to give a report to the Queen-gojaru. By the way, what should we do with the Hero of the Spear-gojaru?” (Shadow) “...If we try something, won’t he just run away?” (Naofumi) If he has such a convenient skill, I don’t think we can apprehend him.

I can’t even begin to think of how convenient it would have been for me if I had it when I was on the lam.

“I don’t think it seems that way-gojaru.” (Shadow)

Motoyasu has dropped his stance and is staring at the ground sighing.

So his heart has already given up.

“What’s up? Won’t you run?” (Naofumi)

“It’s fine... I wanted to find everyone. I believed in them, but this is all I get... The townsfolk all treat me coldly... I’m tired...” (Motoyasu) His eyes look cloudy. If he were a magical girl, this is where he would turn into a witch.

(TL: Madoka reference... Yes, I watched it. Didn’t enjoy it) “So will you take him in?” (Naofumi)

“I don’t think he will be punished that badly-gojaru. The world still

needs him to fight in the wave-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Yeah, that’s true... We can’t really give him overly cruel penalties, and we can’t kill him...” (Naofumi) If killing was all we had to do, then Rafatalia and Firo would be able to do it in one blow.

But then we wouldn’t have to capture him.

“For now, Motoyasu, you’re under arrest.” (Naofumi)

“... Yes, yes I understand. Take me wherever you will. Kill me if you want...” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu seems to have given up all hope

But after what just happened it can’t be helped.

“Everyone asks me to save them, and if I make the slightest mistake they throw stones at me... The Bitch and Elena that I believed with all of my heart turned out to be bad people... I don’t even care anymore...”

(Motoyasu) He had believed in his comrades, and had thus tried to search the globe for them, but those very comrades abandoned him.

There must be a reason it turned out like this. I’m not at fault. He must be thinking things like that.

And the sun is already setting.

“Should I take him to the castle now?” (Naofumi)

“It seems to be an urgent matter, so I’ll leave it to you, Iwatani-dono-gojaru.” (Shadow) “Got it. Oy, Motoyasu.” (Naofumi)

“It’s fine. Just say I caused this disaster already... Will that satisfy you?” (Motoyasu) What the hell are you giving in to. You’re definitely a cause of this disaster.

Why are you acting like it’s someone else’s problem?

“... Can you use that Warp skill to go to the castle?” (Naofumi) “That’s not its current registered destination, so it’s impossible.” (Motoyasu) “So it’s no use here. What material did you absorb to get that spear?” (Naofumi) Learning that skill will make transportation convenient.

It can be used for peddling, level grinding and many more.

I should probably have the ability to learn it.

“... It’s the Dragon Hourglass’s sand.” (Motoyasu)

“When were you able to take it-gojaru!?” (Shadow)

So that’s what it is. Isn’t that kinda illegal?

Ren and Itsuki probably already absorbed some as well.

Why didn’t I try it yet?

“I didn’t steal anything. The sisters gave it to me when I asked.”

(Motoyasu) Shadow glares at him.

“N-now that I think about it, there were some reports of that happening when the Three Hero church was in control... gojaru.” (Shadow) “Say that ahead of time!” (Naofumi)

Now that I think about it, there are a mountain of materials I have yet to try. I haven’t been feeding the shield much lately.

The Yggdrasil medicine was too valuable so I didn’t feed it to the Shield.

I should start testing more things.

“What sort of skill is it?” (Naofumi)

“It lets you teleport to a preset location...” (Motoyasu) “Are there any conditions?” (Naofumi)

“No idea... In my game you could use it in any area that didn’t prevent skills.” (Motoyasu) I still have no idea how to prevent it.

Though there may have been areas that limited it while in the game, I have no idea if this world has such places.

Can you set to anywhere you’ve been before?

“What can you set the destination as?” (Naofumi)

“You can set up to Three locations. If you try to set another, the oldest one will be forgotten. The most people you can take with you is 6.” (Motoyasu.) He’s being strangely compliant... Anyways, the castle is quite a distance away. If we can’t warp there directly, I guess we’ll have to stay

the night in this town.

“Then we’ll find a place to stay the night here.” (Naofumi)

“Understood.” (Motoyasu)

“Understood-gojaru. I will depart to relay the situation to the Queen-gojaru.” (Shadow) “How do you contact the Queen anyways?” (Naofumi)

“Secret-gojaru. I’ll only tell you that I can’t carry anyone with me-gojaru.” (Shadow) Shadow disappears as she says this.

Her response somehow annoys me.

Firo begins poking the depressed Motoyasu.

Even after he saw what that women did to me, he’s still this depressed?

Perhaps he is finally feeling the fatigue of the lifestyle he has been living until now.

I don’t really care, and I kinda like seeing his depressed face, but I notice Rafatalia glaring at me.

“Naofumi-sama? What’s wrong? (Rafatalia)

“Nothing really. Let’s go find an inn.” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Rafatalia)

And that’s how we dragged Motoyasu with us, and found an Inn to stay at.

Chapter 165: Another Awakening

The inn we stayed at didn't include food, so we all, Motoyasu included, went off to the bar.

As soon as we step in, Motoyasu rushes over to the counter and orders some alcohol. And he hangs his head while downing it at an alarming rate.

He really has nothing but women on his head, this one. When he loses them, this is the inevitable result.

Some people who don't realize his identity try to converse with him, but he brushes them aside.

"Ara, do you want to have a drink with this Onee-san?" (Older Woman)
"... I'm sorry. I kinda want to drink alone now. Please don't mind me."
(Motoyasu) He even brushes away the females.

This may be more serious than I thought.

Bitch was always like that. Did you really believe in her that much?

The rest of us order dinner.

Though I don't really think that a bar should have good food, after asking around, I found that this bar had the best taste in town.

The servings are also quite large and the price isn't that high.

And after having her fill of good food, the Human-form Firo begins to sing along with the bar's bard.

The egg on my back is a nuisance. I try to stay inconspicuous.

"Young girl, let's sing another one!" (Bard)

"Sure, let's go~!" (Firo)

Firo starts singing with an unnerving amount of energy. Her voice is quite good.

She gets carried away and begins singing a strange tune. It sounds like an Anime song.

It might be my imagination... but the people in front of the stage seem to have a strange look in their eyes.

“... Naofumi-sama, I’ve heard that there is a type of monster that uses its singing voice to lead ships astray at sea.” (Rafatalia) “What a coincidence, I was thinking of that monster as well.” (Naofumi) The people listening to the song seem to be mesmerized, as if they were being bewitched by the Sirens.

After Firo finally finishes her song, the establishment is shaken by an explosive cheer from the crowd.

Quite a few people call for an encore, but it seems Firo got bored. She shouts, ‘No!’ and gets off the stage.

She’s become quite popular, and some people are handing her bouquets of flowers.

Someone also hands her a vegetable that looks like a carrot. Firo stares at it and licks her lips. After seeing this, numerous people begin giving her food.

I don’t know if she’s lost her mind, but Firo, carrying a mountain of gifts, goes over and sits down next to Motoyasu.

“What’s wrong? You’re not energetic like usual. What happened?” (Firo)
“...” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu directs an annoyed glance at Firo.

He’s even acting this way towards his beloved human-form Firo. This truly is serious.

“Are you hungry? If you’re hungry, you won’t feel good. Do you want me to sing a song to give you energy?” (Firo) Firo makes her way back to the stage, and starts singing again.

It’s quite an upbeat song. Almost as if...

“Firo knows quite a few songs. I never knew.” (Naofumi) “Well we did travel around a lot. She loves to sing, you know.” (Rafatalia) Firo stares out Motoyasu as she sings. She also begins dancing.

Just looking at her seems to give me energy. It sounds like a song from that one anime with a transforming plane. (TL: According to the comments, this is a Macross reference. I'm off to go watch it.) The song ends, and Firo goes back to Motoyasu's side.

"Please, just ignore me." (Motoyasu)

"Ye~s" (Firo)

Is what she says. She starts rummaging through the various items she received.

"Eat this. It always gives me energy." (Firo)

Motoyasu finally takes the food and flowers presented to him.

Firo is acting out of pure curiosity right now.

Her interest was probably peaked upon seeing the usually-energetic Motoyasu acting this down.

Wha?

"U, UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?"

(Motoyasu) Motoyasu lets out a cry and suddenly clings to Firo.

"NYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!?" (Firo)

And Firo lets out a surprised cry that doesn't lose to his.

And she begins twisting her body to get out of Motoyasu's grasp, but Motoyasu uses all of his power to prevent her escape.

"U...uuuuuuuu..." (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu seriously starts crying.

"Master! Save me!" (Firo)

Firo is also crying as she looks at me for help.

... Is he an idiot?

"What the hell are you doing?" (Naofumi)

I approach the two to save Firo, but Motoyasu suddenly presses his head into Firo's chest and sobs harder.

Since Witch was no good, he turned to Firo?

No... Motoyasu has been showing interest in Firo for a long time.

“Return to your original form. Motoyasu will probably let go.”

(Naofumi) “G-got it!” (Firo)

Motoyasu should have a trauma for Firo’s original form.

He never approaches her when she looks like that.

Firo transforms as per my request.

The people in the bar begin screaming in surprise but I ignore it.

However.

“Super... Firo-chan’s smell... Sniff...Sniff...” (Motoyasu) ... Motoyasu continues to hold onto monster-form Firo, and takes in her scent.

How indecent!

“He’s not letting go! He’s not letting go, master!” (Firo) He’s not even backing off from Monster-form Firo!?

How could this be! Wait, I can imagine his reasons.

“He’s like this because you offered kind words to him when he was depressed! Take responsibility, and look after him.” (Naofumi) “Wait a second. Using that logic, Naofumi-sama has to look after me!” (Rafatalia) “What are you talking about, Rafatalia!?” (Naofumi) Rafatalia seems to be caught up in the chaos as well.

“No!” (Firo)

“Firo-tan Firo-tan...” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu begins nestling his face in Firo’s plumage.

Firo tries to use her superhuman strength to lift him off, but Motoyasu grips her with his entire body, and he isn’t moving.

When she tries to get him off, her feathers come with him. The pain prevents her from going all out.

Firo is one who hates pain.

“Save me!” (Firo)

Firo is pleading at me for help with teary eyes. What should I do.

“Fine... Motoyasu.” (Naofumi)

This is no good. He can't hear me. He can't even hear Firo.

Motoyasu has finally broken.

Or perhaps... he has awakened to a new fetish.

He's even accepting Monster-form Firo. Has he become a Masochist?

“Master!” (Firo)

I'm supposed to take Motoyasu to the castle, but will it be possible like this?

“If you don't like it, just tell him and dump him.” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Firo)

Firo walks out of the bar with Motoyasu still clinging to her.

“Eh...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia lets out a confused voice.

“Anyways... We'll have to have to put turning Motoyasu in on hold. If he doesn't suffer some more, I won't be satisfied.” (Naofumi) “I think he has transcended the state of suffering and reached some form of enlightenment...” (Rafatalia) “If we get Firo to act like an evil woman, he'll probably snap out of it. Get her to tell him that she only approached him for food.” (Naofumi) “I see...” (Rafatalia)

“It'll probably work... Probably.” (Naofumi)

I have a bad premonition about this. But if I don't do this, we'll never get rid of him.

It's fine. It's Motoyasu. He should be back to skirt-chasing in no time.

And so we spent a peaceful night, and morning came.

By the way, it seems Firo finally managed to dump Motoyasu. Down a cliff.

The amount of feathers on her body has decreased.

“Now then, since we’re putting turning Motoyasu in on hold, should we wait for Shadow to return, then head back to the village?” (Naofumi) I planned to stay away until the egg hatched, but it should hatch any minute now.

It moves occasionally. It should hatch soon.

“We should do that.” (Rafatalia)

“Master, Firo want’s to leave soon...” (Firo)

Firo looks at me with fearful eyes.

She has developed yet another trauma. She hated the man from the beginning anyways.

Why did she approach him even though she hated him?

“Why did you try to cheer him on?” (Naofumi)

“Because he didn’t have any energy. He seemed like the village children when we first met them.” (Firo) But the medicine was too potent for Motoyasu.

He’s going to become annoying.

“Next time you see him, tell him the lines I taught you in advance.” (Naofumi) “Yes~” (Firo)

“Well then, let’s get breakfast and prepare to depart.” (Naofumi) I open the door to the room.

“Good Morning, dear father-in-law.” (Motoyasu)

I slam the door... Was that Motoyasu?

I must be going crazy. Let me recollect myself.

“What was that...” (Naofumi)

“Did something happen?” (Rafatalia)

“Well...” (Naofumi)

What was Father-in-Law supposed to mean? Why was Motoyasu on

standby in front of the door?

I just got up, my mind isn't working properly yet.

Explaining is a pain. I step aside and offer the door handle to Rafatalia.

Rafatalia tilts her head to the side and opens it.

“Why is the Tanuki-pig in Firo-tan's room!?” (Motoyasu) ...

“Fuge!?” (Motoyasu)

A vein pops up on Rafatalia's forehead. While smiling, she whacks his head and slams the door.

Tanuki-pig... I'm hearing some amazing things so early in the morning.

What is he doing?

“Well...” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia looks just as confused as me.

“I understand the situation. What should we do...?” (Rafatalia) “And from when was he standing in front of the door?” (Naofumi) “I heard a banging sound quite a while ago, but he couldn't have been there for that long...” (Rafatalia) “I heard it too. I thought it was an adventurer wandering around, but was that Motoyasu?” (Naofumi) He seems too energetic for having been pushed off a cliff.

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

“No!” (Firo)

“If you don't clearly tell him, he'll never leave you alone, that man.” (Naofumi) “Uu.....” (Firo)

Firo opens the door while frowning.

“Oh, Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu jumps at Firo, but Rafatalia halts him with an iron claw to the face.

“Unhand me, Tanuki-pig! I must embrace my beloved Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu) “...” (Rafatalia)

She's smiling, but she's letting out a dark aura.

What is Motoyasu doing?

"Um, I only approached you for food. Don't misunderstand my intentions." (Firo) "Love is something that stems from misunderstandings, dear Firo-tan. It's fine, I'll accept your selfishness as well." (Motoyasu)

"No!" (Firo)

She's shivering. This is no good.

I try to comprehend the current situation, and Motoyasu turns to me with serious eyes.

"Dear Father-in-Law. Please leave your daughter to me." (Motoyasu)
"Who are you calling Father-in-Law!?" (Naofumi)

I don't remember becoming the father of this gluttonous devil-bird.

I may have raised her, but I don't remember making her my daughter.

"Father-in-Law. I was saved by your daughter, and have realized my true feelings for her. I'll definitely make her happy. Please leave your daughter to me!" (Motoyasu) "And I'm saying I'm not this girl's father!" (Naofumi)
"You can't say that! A father shouldn't think that way about his daughter, Father-in-Law!" (Motoyasu) "Are you even listening to me? She isn't my daughter!" (Naofumi) "That sort of relationship between father and daughter is immoral, Father-in-Law!" (Motoyasu) "Just be quiet already!" (Naofumi)

Rafatalia drives Motoyasu out and slams the door again.

This is exponentially more serious than I had previously thought.

If I deal with this poorly he might end up with irreparable mental damage.

"Step down, Tanuki-Pig! Release Firo-tan and Father-in-Law!"
(Motoyasu) Motoyasu bangs on the room's door.

My head is hurting a lot...

I could never reason with him before, but his brain was never this

messed up.

He's become a complete stalker now.

The reason for this is... probably because Firo treated him nicely.

If you corner humans, they may develop unimaginable levels of devotion to their goals.

My and Ren's cases prove that.

Though I don't get what part of yesterday's events led to... this. But it seems that Motoyasu views Firo as his savior.

Motoyasu seems to be the type that gets obsessed easily.

From Motoyasu's reaction, is he the type of person who keeps trying until his target develops feelings for him?

... I really REALLY don't want to involve myself in this. This is a major waste of time.

"You're being too loud!" (Adventurer)

A female adventurer staying in the same inn begin to complain.

"You pigs are the ones who are being loud! Quit your squealing!" (Motoyasu) "P-pigs!? What is this man saying!?" (Adventurer)

... The skirt-chasing Motoyasu is now verbally abusing women.

What sort of woman could it be? I slowly stick my head into the doorway.

The woman Motoyasu is quarrelling with is quite a beauty.

I think it's the Onee-san that approached him earlier.

I can't understand what drove him this far.

What the hell is going through his head...

What do Rafatalia and that Woman look like to him?

"What should we do? We won't be able to leave like this." (Rafatalia)
"Firo, take responsibility and marr-" (Naofumi)

“No!” (Firo)

Really, what should we do? It doesn't seem Motoyasu will leave us alone any time soon.

“Let's leave through the window. We can explain our situation to the inn manager and run.” (Rafatalia) “U-understood.” (Naofumi)

Is Motoyasu truly an idiot?

What could have led to this? I can't even imagine it.

Why do we have to run from him?

Shouldn't it be the reverse?

And so we left the Inn.

Afterwards, while we were travelling, Firo randomly began running off to kick things.

I can imagine what she's kicking.

To withstand Firo's kicks, he must have quite a bit of stamina.

Or perhaps Firo's trauma prevents her from finding the strength to kick with all her might.

Recently I've been seeing Witch's wanted poster hanging around.

She is to be captured on sight.

The problem is that she's travelling with Ren.

And we began our escape from the clutches of the Broken Motoyasu.

Chapter 166: Hatching

We frantically drive the carriage to get away from the broken Motoyasu, and head for our village.

Paki... paki.

I hear some sounds from my back. It seems the egg is about to hatch.

I take it off of my back and examine it.

“Is the egg ready to hatch?” (Rafatalia)

“It seems that’s the case.” (Naofumi)

The carriage is shaking. Firo is running with all of her might.

Well, something terrible did happen to her...

This egg is much bigger than Firo’s. It’s not big enough that I’d have to carry it under my arm, but it’s about as big as an ostrich’s.

Cracks begin to spread across the surface of the egg, and from it a small dragon begins to emerge.

“What do dragons even eat?” (Naofumi)

“I think it’s probably meat.” (Rafatalia)

“Did we have any meat?” (Naofumi)

We should have some extra smoked fish and jerky in the store house, so we should be fine...

“I’ll ask Rat later.” (Naofumi)

“Let’s do that.” (Rafatalia)

Even if she hates it, she will probably talk.

Taniko has been getting annoying lately.

“KYUAAAA!” (Dragon)

The dragon’s head is fully out of the shell. It lets out a cry.

“Did it hatch?” (Firo)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

How nostalgic. Firo was also born like this... no she was much more energetic than this.

The dragon chick is about the size of my head. Much bigger than Firo was.

“Doesn’t it look a little strange?” (Naofumi)

Its body is charcoal colored with a metallic gloss. On its back are wings way too small for the body.

Its tail is quite thick.

It has two horns, and it hasn’t grown any scales yet.

I try to lift it up and find it to be quite warm.

“KYUA!” (Dragon)

It starts blinking and rests its gaze on me.

“KYUAA!” (Dragon)

It raises one of its arms as if to greet me, and lets out a sound.

“What should we name it?” (Rafatalia)

“What would be good? Let’s ask the villagers.” (Naofumi) “Fine, let’s decide one together.” (Rafatalia)

“Then should Firo rush to the village?” (Firo)

“We’re already quite close. There’s no need to rush.” (Naofumi) It would be troublesome if it died on the ride right after we got it.

Ah, right.

I should feed the egg shell to the shield.

I touch the shell to the shield.

... bang!

What? The shield lets out some sparks.

... series is currently locked.

Lock?

Now that I think about it... I raised my level quite a bit, but I haven't unlocked any dragon-based shields.

The Zombie Dragon didn't give me such a shield, and I haven't met any other dragons.

I don't know the reason, but my shield has yet to unlock any dragon shields.

The closest thing I have at the moment is the Wrath Shield.

Should I take Rafatalia and Firo to the mountains later?

I don't know how well I will be able to fight under this curse.

However there are many things I need to test out.

Ah, I forgot because of that incident with Motoyasu, but I have to go to the Castle Town soon.

I need to get some Dragon Hourglass sand to unlock the Warp Skill, and get some weapons from the Old Man.

"Fufu... It looks cute. It reminds me of when Firo was little." (Rafatalia)
Rafatalia gently pokes the baby dragon.

The dragon grabs hold of Rafatalia's finger and lightly gnaws on it.

This is supposed to be an incarnation of carnal lust?

I better raise it carefully.

We arrive at the village, and I park the carriage next to Rat's research lab.

Rafatalia goes off to talk to the other villagers, and Firo goes off to find Melty in the neighboring town.

And I walk into the Laboratory.

"Yo." (Naofumi)

"Hm? It seems the dragon has finally hatched." (Rat) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

I lift the Dragon up and show it to Rat.

“Well then, let me give it a medical examination.” (Rat) Rat carefully examines the chick, and does some light palpations on it.

“Okay, there are no problems to report. It is a male.” (Rat) “That’s good.” (Naofumi)

There should be no problems if he gets the ability to turn human like Firo. No, the ability to turn human is a problem in itself.

“What should I feed him? Is it meat?” (Naofumi)

“Though it has carnivorous tendencies, it is an omnivore. You can feed it whatever you want.” (Rat) As Rat begins speaking, the Dragon chick jumps out of her arms and starts climbing up my leg. What is he doing?

“Is there anything particular I have to watch out for?” (Naofumi) “Don’t feed it after midnight. Bad things will happen.” (Rat) What sort of Demon is that? (TL: Gremlins reference.) Is it that one? The one you can’t splash water on?

“By the way, that was a joke. Well just be careful what you feed it. It might end up chasing you to make you cook more.” (Rat) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“I recommend taking it hunting soon. The appetite of a growing dragon is not something to be trifled with. You better get it out of the way quickly.” (Rat) “... Is that something I should worry over?” (Naofumi) “Yeah, but Count, most of the kids in your village won’t lose out appetite-wise even to a hungry dragon.” (Rat) Rat begins talking in a haughty tone. She seems to have arbitrarily come to her own conclusion.

“What species is this dragon?” (Naofumi)

“It’s part of the Wyr race. It’s a race with exceptionally high loyalty. It seems to be a mix of a pure-blood Wyr and a Tyrera.” (Rat) (TL: ウィル the common romanization of Wyrms without an m. Perhaps It is supposed to be something else.) “Tyrera?” (Naofumi)

“It’s a monster that looks like a giant lizard. They don’t fly but make for good vehicles. Though they aren’t exactly common.” (Rat) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I've never heard of or seen one.

"It's not a monster native to Melromark, so you probably haven't seen one. I don't think anyone even keeps one in this area." (Rat) "Is that how it is?" (Naofumi)

"It's much more common in Faubrey, Shildfrieden and Silt Welt. Its natural habitat is quite limited." (Rat) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

"Your area of operation is quite small, you know, Count." (Rat) "I'm well aware." (Naofumi)

Don't stress over things that don't concern you.

When the other three heroes were sent to other countries, I had to remain here.

I never received any international missions.

If I can make a profit overseas, I should probably consider it but now is not the time for that.

But I don't think I will be freed of my work here soon... Perhaps I should let the slaves branch out my company.

I'll ask the Queen about it later.

"So you were over here." (Female Knight)

Female Knight arrives at the Lab with Taniko.

"What's up? Did something happen?" (Naofumi)

"Well-" (Female Knight)

"Is this the Dragon child that came from the egg?" (Taniko) Taniko interrupts Female Knight and stares intently at the baby dragon.

"Kyua!" (Dragon)

The dragon seems to give off a smile. It doesn't seem to be afraid of strangers.

"For now, you can go play with the chick. I have some business to speak of with Naofumi-dono." (Female Knight) "Ye~s!" (Taniko)

“Why do you listen to her words, but not mine!?” (Naofumi) I’m technically your master, you know!

... Well, she’ll be taking a burden off my hands for a while.

I hand the dragon chick over to Taniko and face Female Knight.

“And? What happened?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, it seems that the country has sent over a military instructor for you.” (Female Knight) “Military Instructor?” (Naofumi)

“You know the definition, right?” (Female Knight) “Well, yeah... someone who teaches how to fight, right? I thought you were already teaching the villagers.” (Naofumi) “You’re not wrong. But the person sent is a specialist in the field.” (Female Knight) Female Knight seems to want to drag me over to him quickly. She starts explaining the situation.

“It’s a practitioner of a legendary style, Hengen Musou. That person volunteered to lend Iwatani-dono their power.” (Female Knight) (TL: Hengen Musou literally means Unparalleled Transformation) “Hengen Musou? What is that? What sort of style?” (Naofumi) It sounds like something someone with Chuunibyou would think of.

“It’s a legendary style that is said to have never lost on the battlefield I heard tales of it while growing up. The last remaining practitioner said that the style was no longer needed in this world, and planned to take it to the grave with them. But after being helped by Iwatani-dono, that person has decided to pass on the legend for the sake of the world.” (Female Knight) “Hmm... Is it strong?” (Naofumi)

“Of course. The style has left its mark on the histories of countries around the globe. Just like the Four Summoned and Seven Star heroes.” (Female Knight) “It’s that famous? It must be an interesting style.” (Naofumi) “However half a century ago, internal discord caused the death of a majority of its practitioners. Those left all swore to never pass it on. And this is the last practitioner left alive.” (Female Knight) Really, what sort of style is it? I imagine it coming from a land plagued by bandits.

Something like that one godly martial arts style. (TL: Fist of the North

Star) “That person is a famous individual who participated in Melromark’s previous major war.” (Female Knight) “Who?” (Naofumi)

“They said they were on friendly terms with you, but...” (Female Knight) Who is it? Did I know such a person?

“If you can’t remember, I think it’s best if you met them. I want to undertake that person’s lessons as soon as possible.” (Female Knight) By Female Knight’s behavior, a really amazing person must have come.

Female Knight grabs my arm and begins pulling me away.

“I’m off. Is there anything you need to report?” (Naofumi) “Could you come to see my progress on the Bioplant later? I think you will have to preform a modification on it.” (Rat) “Understood.” (Naofumi)

“KYUA!” (Dragon)

“You should... go feed him something. I’m going to take him leveling soon.” (Naofumi) Taniko, who is cuddling with the baby dragon, nods at my orders.

I guess she’ll listen to my words this time around.

She does not protest against the slaying of innocent wild monsters.

Her philosophy is closest to Survival of the Fittest.

What exactly is she trying to accomplish?

“Your name is now Gaelion.” (Taniko)

“Don’t go arbitrarily naming it.” (Naofumi)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

The Dragon chick cries out. Was that a yes, or a no?

By the way, the villagers had also been trying to think of a name for the baby.

However after hearing that Taniko already gave it one, they lost interest.

Chapter 167: Peerless Transformation

“Oh! A child with this talent is found only once every 100 years”(Battle Instructor) “Fuuueeeeeeeeeee!?”(Rishia)

So I went to meet the Battle Instructor. I placed my hands in front of my face and looked down because of what I saw(TL: naofumi is doing a facepalm) My head hurts

Why is this old hag rubbing Rishia's body?

What an extravagant equipment she's wearing(TL: the sentence refers to the “musuko” or son but it doesn't make any sense so I just referred to the old hag... correct me if im wrong) The old hag is wearing a Chinese-style dougi, So she is the Battle Instructor of the Peerless Transformation Style huh?(TL: Dougi is a martial arts uniform and Peerless Transformation Style if you translate it. But it is read as “Hengen Musou Ryuu” but whichever you prefer) “Oh my, Saint-sama it's been a long time” (Battle Instructor) “I've heard about you, but you are the Battle Instructor right?”(Naofumi) “Yes Indeed” (Battle Instructor)

I shouldn't have asked, but I didn't want to admit it

I mean I somehow understood it

But inside my head I instinctively refuse to believe it I think I've heard a similar voice back in Cal Mira Island, I also remember ignoring that voice “Saint-sama saved many lives, so I rushed over to help save the world”(Battle Instructor) “Ah.....alright, I understand, but why are you keeping Rishia in this place?”(Naofumi) “Don't you understand Saint-sama? Extraordinary talent is sleeping within this person. Her great qualities are suitable to be the next successor” (Battle Instructor) “Fueeeeeeee?! Naofumi-san please help me”(Rishia)

Recently, Her favorite word seems to have been running out in a full throttle Was it really that unpleasant?

If I remember correctly, Rishia's been focusing on training and is now around Lvl. 65

Her status isn't very high

Also her general status is inferior to Kiel who's only Lvl. 55

Her highest is only half as much

And if you compare it to Raphtalia.....It's too terrible to look at However, the level up speed is rather high

Still In this world the slave training level up speed is different from each individual To think that Rishia is some sort of a genius

"I'm curious what Lvl. you are being the Battle Instructor, If I'm not mistaken I remember them saying that your age is the same as your level"(Naofumi) "Oh that... Brings back old memories... It's Lvl. 100 with further training I was able to push it through its limits"(Battle Instructor) 100! The limit in this world is Lvl. 100?

"Is that so, The Lvl. limit is 100"(Naofumi)

"I thought it was, but the limit of the Hakuko kind that is one of your slaves Iwatani-dono is 120. It is said that they are the strongest kind"(Female Knight) "According to the legend the Hakuko kind is believed to exceed the normal class up"(Female Knight)(TL: I think she was referring to second Class up or not but whatever) Female knight compliments Rishia

To have someone who is knowledgeable sure is convenient I don't know anything about this world, and the slaves can't provide any useful information either Only various knights and nobles can.

"What about the Four Saint Heroes?"(Naofumi)

"There seems to be no limit"(Female Knight)

I see..... So the Heroes can exceed the Lvl. 100 limit, and the Hakuko kind is up to 120

However, there seems to be a method to break through the class up limit according to the legends, but that method is still unknown up to this day.

"That reminds me, where is Raphtalia?"(Naofumi)

“She’s over there”(Rishia)

Raphtalia is sitting down , she looks completely exhausted What’s the matter? I can pretty much guess what happened “Are you alright?”(Naofumi)

“Yes..... That old woman groped my entire body without my permission, she said that it was some form of tradition”(Raphtalia) “It’s because you seemed strong”(Naofumi)

In Lvl. she is above Raphtalia

But I don’t know in status

“Earlier when I tried to move, nothing is happening it was as if my movement has been suppressed. No matter how much strength I use I still can’t move”(Raphtalia) “That’s amazing”(Naofumi)

Was that a joint lock technique of some sort?

It’s a shame that I don’t know something like that

Back in my own world this will be a typical otaku thing , since grappling anime is the one that is watched the most(TL: Baki the grappler reference) Well, to hold down Raphtalia just like that the one who cut the head of the Spirit Turtle together with Firo, She must be a considerably strong person “I understand what Saint-sama is thinking, It is true that magic and status is the key to winning the battle. However, the true strength can only be measured by experience”(Battle Instructor)
“Well”(Naofumi)

If a person cannot handle his strength properly then you might say that it is useless in battle I of all people knows it very well

Even high Lvl. ones can be a bunch of weak people in a party True strength cannot be based with status

“So, What weapon are you using ?”(Naofumi)

Before I used a hoe to fight(TL: not a person but an object) But it dismisses whenever I set it as a weapon

“There is no specific weapon with Hengen Musou Style”(Battle

Instructor) “What?”(Naofumi)

“Hengen Musou Style is an all-around combat art which utilizes a wide variety of weapons to fight different kinds of enemies”(Battle Instructor)
Then even a hoe is considered weapon too

It is a technique that does not specifically choose a weapon “How about testing Saint-sama’s strength with mine?”(Battle instructor) “Well my body is still recovering because of the curse”(Naofumi) “Then will Saint-sama escape when a sudden occurrence were to happen because he is not ready?”(Battle Instructor) “No.... Well you could say that I have reliable companions to fight with although the only thing that I could do is to defend”(Naofumi) “Well then as a handicap I’ll only use a wooden stick to hit you. A single blow should be okay right? Saint-sama try to endure the attack.”(Battle Instructor) The Old hag broke a branch of the bioplant and took a stance against me It was almost a personal thing

I consider my abilities to be weak, of all the people that I’ve encountered Motoyasu is the strongest so far.

Well, when Motoyasu and I fought he was in offense and I am on defense which will obviously only lead to a stalemate He was a knight who pursues, except he was just a thief who robs the masses I’ll use the Soul-eater shield this time because it has the highest defense The spirit-turtle series is not that strong yet because the materials for enhancing is not enough “Well then, I’ll start”(Battle Instructor)

The Old hag jumped in front of me in an instant

However, this speed is something that I can deal with

I was able to react and put the shield where the wooden stick is coming from With this I can lower the Old hag’s attack power

“As expected of Saint-sama, You got accustomed to my movements in an instant, but how about this?”(Battle Instructor) In spite of being just a stick a shock ran through the shield “!?”(Naofumi)

The shock transferred to my hand and then my body

Now it’s reaching my abdomen

“Gufuuu”(Naofumi)

It's a strike to the stomach which made me lose my strength What now?

“One technique of the Hengen Musou Style is used beat people with high defense such as yourself Saint-sama”(Battle Instructor) My consciousness fading away but I endured it and started chanting recovery magic “Tzuvaito Heal!”(Naofumi)

This power is the kind of skill that can carry damage in proportion to the defense of the object that it is to be touched by the stick (TL: so it was like a defense cancellation technique.. just assuming things here) It's the kind of power that will be really fatal for me To think that Eagle Piercing Shot could possibly exist somewhere “However, a reversal technique also exist”(Battle Instructor) “There is?”(Naofumi)

“Ofcouse, and by all mean I would like you to master those techniques”(Battle Instructor) “..... understood”(Naofumi)

I understand that it is a powerful technique

She is an excellent Battle Instructor and she's not an enemy that I can possibly defeat There's no reason for me to refuse and it'll be troublesome not to cooperate Rather it'll be a great asset if it was taught to the slaves “So what should I do?”(Naofumi)

“Since Saint-sama already has fighting experience I only need to explain the theory behind it. All you have to do is asses your opponent internal spirit and inject your own magic power to cause a disturbance and make your opponent's magic power run wild”

“huh?”(Naofumi)

The image of a marble inside a vase that's shaking floats in my head That kind of logic is not probably wrong

If you shake the vase very violently sooner or later it'll break because the inside is hollow To receive such an attack will definitely break me from the inside “to reverse the technique you just have to redirect the power outside of your body before it begins to get out of control”(Battle

Instructor) “I see”(Naofumi)

In other words I just need to let it go outside before the power begins to act violently.

If you compare it to ceramics it already has a hole so do I just have to push it forward?

Such things only happen in manga... Things became like such a fantasy I can even summon a barrier from the shield

“I understand the theory but it seems really hard to do “(Naofumi) Even though I have an idea on how it works I still don’t know how to do it This Old hag really is amazing

“I understand, I now appoint you as the Battle Instructor of this village”(Naofumi) “Thank you very much ... then I’ll be in charge with this child and this girl who seems to be your right hand Saint-sama”(Battle Instructor) “Okay”(Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama!”(Raphtalia)

“Naofumi-san!” (Rishia)

Rishia and Raphtalia are protesting

“Do you not like it? But this person is really strong”(Naofumi) “You’re right”(Raphtalia)

“Do you want to be stronger? Then endure it, training by yourself will just get you nowhere”(Naofumi) It’s an opportunity to learn something

Because you are already close to reaching Lvl. 100, learning martial arts will make you even stronger Raphtalia and Rishia both wants to become stronger

And I don’t have a reason to hate that

“Starting today things are about to get tough”(Battle Instructor) “U-understood!”(Raphtalia)

“Fuuueeee!?”(Rishia)

Rishia is now Lvl. 75 after coming to that place... but originally she is

just Lvl. 65

Chapter 168: Alps

“It seems... that an amazing granny has arrived.” (Fohl) Fohl arrives carrying Atlas on his back.

He’s acting as if he is uninvolved.

Rafatalia and the others have a level cap of 100, but these two can reach 120.

It’s true that having technique can balance out having low stats, but having high stats never hurts.

“What are you talking about? You’re taking her lessons as well.”
(Naofumi) “Ge...” (Fohl)

Fohl has recently been preoccupied with tending to Atlas, and he’s been ignoring my orders.

I don’t know why, but he is behaving quite rebelliously towards me like Kiel when she first got here.

I was able to tame Kiel with food, but it seems that won’t work on this one.

The younger sister Atlas’s condition has improved quite a bit, and it seems a full recovery may be possible.

“Naofumi-sama, it’s been a while.” (Atlas)

“It’s only been two and a half days, you know.” (Naofumi) “And still we meet here and now. Naofumi-sama suddenly left, so I was feeling... anxious.” (Atlas) Ah, so she was afraid that her medicine supply had disappeared.

If I don’t feed it to her personally, the effect decreases.

“Nununu...” (Fohl)

Fohl begins staring at me menacingly.

What’s he so bitter about?

“HM? Oy, little girl over there.” (Granny)

The Old Woman approaches Atlas.

She looks over her body.

Please choose one student at a time, or I will be understaffed.

“Laddy, why are you carrying that girl around?” (Granny) She begins questioning Fohl.

And in response Fohl shifts his glare to her.

Isn't it obvious that Atlas is sick?

From my point of view, it looks as if the granny is bullying the two siblings.

I'm quite skeptical when it comes to the elderly.

This trauma was probably brought about by Trash.

“Atlas can neither see nor walk!” (Fohl)

“Really? I don't sense that sort of aura from her. Can you have her stand up for a second?” (Granny) “D-don't screw with me. Atlas can't st-” (Fohl) “Dear brother, let me try it.” (Atlas)

“... I got it.” (Fohl)

Fohl slowly lowers Atlas, and grasps her arms to steady her.

Well... I don't think anything will come of this.

This may be a world of magic, but there are some wounds that won't heal so easily.

“Naofumi-sama, if I may ask for your assistance.” (Atlas) “Ah, got it.” (Naofumi)

She won't be able to stand anyways. Someone with as weak a constitution as her won't recover this fast.

... The Yggdrasil medicine can't be that effective...

This old woman's standing right in front of us.

Perhaps the medicine will work.

“Hup...” (Atlas)

Atlas uses me and Fohl’s hands, and manages to stand.

“Wow... Is this what it means to stand on one’s own feet?” (Atlas) “Ah... Atlas is... Atlas is standing!” (Fohl)

What sort of girl from the Alps are you? (TL: Heidi reference) ... If I never asked Fohl for his name, I would have given him the nickname ‘Alps’ here.

And I would have stuck to it to the end. Like with Taniko.

Now that I whink about it, I don’t know Taniko’s real name. But I have no real intention to learn it, and I don’t really care.

Atlas slowly starts walking while teetering from side to side. She smiles.

“Thank you, Naofumi-sama, Onii-sama.” (Atlas) “... Atlas, you’ve become healthy...” (Fohl)

“Yes, Onii-sama.” (Atlas)

Her condition was horrible, but she has recovered to this extent.

That medicine really is miraculous.

It worked for the Old Woman and now Atlas.

“And so Naofumi-sama... what should we do from now?” (Atlas) “Let’s see. I plan to have your brother fight for me. He’s been leveling up with the others, right?” (Naofumi) “Yes, Onii-sama has been diligently leveling with the others.” (Atlas) “So what do you want to do?” (Naofumi)

Even if she can walk, I don’t think I can count on her for hard labor.

Atlas is also a Hakuko, so she can reach level 120.

“I also wish to learn how to fight.” (Atlas) “Atlas! You don’t have to do that!” (Fohl)

Fohl of the Alps shouts out.

But of course he will prevent his sick sister from participating in battle.

“No... I’ve wished this since I was small. If I was ever able to walk, then

I wouldn't want to be the one who just got protected all the time. I want to protect you too." (Atlas) "B-but..." (Fohl)

Atlas's strong will seems to have gotten through to Alps.

... If I keep thinking of him as Alps, I may end up saying it out loud and getting whacked.

I'll stick with Fohl for now.

Taniko? No idea.

"And so, Naofumi-sama, please let me fight as well... Please let me level up with everyone." (Atlas) "Understood. So Fohl, what will you do?"

(Naofumi) "I'll fight! Protecting Atlas is my duty." (Fohl) "No, I wasn't asking about that..."

I explained the powers granted unto me by my shield's growth correction abilities.

"And so if you want to truly become stronger, it will probably be best to reset your level. What will you do?" (Naofumi) "T-that's..." (Fohl)

"With the Growth Corrections, Atlas may surpass you some day." (Naofumi) My words seem to have affected him.

"I want to win against Onii-sama." (Atlas)

"Nu..." (Fohl)

Fohl hesitates and stares at Atlas's face.

I guess it will be painful for him if his precious sister gets beat up on the battlefield. He seems to have come to a decision.

"... I got it. I'll reset." (Fohl)

"You seem to be discussing something interesting." (Sadina) Sadina suddenly appears.

"I wonder if I should do it as well." (Sadina) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

I was going to the Dragon Hourglass anyways, so I don't mind.

"We'll be leaving immediately. Military Instructor, please help Rafatalia

and Rishia.” (Naofumi) “I understand.” (Granny)

Sadina is large, so we’ll have to couple a cart to the carriage... Oh, right.

“Are the Lemos here?” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Lemo)

The Lemos gather.

“Are you people raising your levels as well?” (Naofumi) “Yes, most of us were already over level 30 when we got here.” (Imya’s Uncle) Imya’s uncle begins explanations.

“I see, then anyone here who wants to learn blacksmithing, come with me.” (Naofumi) “Blacksmithery? Then I’ll go.” (Imya’s Uncle) Imya’s Uncle raises his hand.

What?

“I’ve already put the basics to heart.” (Imya’s Uncle) “I see, then come along.” (Naofumi)

“Understood.” (Imya’s Uncle)

“While we’re gone, everyone can dig burrows for themselves. Does anyone specialize in that field?” (Naofumi) “Everyone is quite skilled in that aspect.” (Imya’s Uncle) “Got it.” (Naofumi)

It seems that at least that area will finish without a hitch.

“Where is Imya, anyways?” (Naofumi)

“Imya is currently at the clothing maker’s place to learn how to make clothing. Is that alright with you?” (Imya’s Uncle) “I have no issues. Tell her that she can learn freely.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Imya’s Uncle)

Imya’s developed an interest in making clothes.

If I leave it to the Tailor, it should be fine.

It seems that the people of my village will finally be able to wear decent clothes soon.

“Oy, why are you wearing a loincloth?” (Naofumi) Sadina appears

wearing a loincloth. She's also wearing a vest, but that doesn't make her appearance any less strange.

She's also given one to Kiel, and she walks around in it.

It's aesthetically terrible. It's up to Imya to prevent this town from turning into one of loincloths.

"Personal tastes." (Sadina)

Sadina offers a brief reply.

"I'm home~. Melty-chan was busy so she rejected me." (Firo) Firo comes back from the neighboring village at the right time. I call her over.

"Then what shall I do?" (Atlas)

Atlas, who we are leaving behind calls out.

It's good that she's motivated to work.

Fohl is coming to the Castle Town with us to reset his level, but Atlas was level 1 from the beginning.

"Military Advisor, what do you think of this girl? Can we send her off to level in this state?" (Naofumi) "... Her battle senses are of genius levels. She has learned to sense presence even without my teachings. It will be fine to throw her into battle now." (Granny) "Quit spouting crap! Treat her more carefully!" (Fohl) Fohl snapped.

Whenever I meet him he seems angry.

... Though I'm not one to speak.

"What's wrong?" (Firo)

"Firo-san, it seems that Onii-sama does not wish to send me into battle." (Atlas) "Hm... is Atlas-chan strong?" (Firo)

"No idea." (Atlas)

"Try Punching Firo." (Firo)

Firo tries to act as Atlas's senior and presents herself for Atlas's attack.

"Eh? Ah... Sure." (Atlas)

Atlas closes her fist, and hits it against Firo's chest.

It lets out quite a nice sound.

The next moment leaves me speechless.

"AKYAAAAAAAAAAAA!" (Firo)

Firo does a somersault and falls flat on the ground.

"I-it's the real deal. Atlas-chan's punch really hurt. Master, please heal me..." (Firo) With teary eyes, Firo stares at me.

Is she acting? That was a terrible performance.

"I just slightly disrupted the flow of the massive power within Firo... did it hurt that much?" (Atlas) "Yeah..." (Firo)

"I'm sorry." (Atlas)

"No, I'm fine. It doesn't hurt anymore." (Firo) "Stop it with the jokes, monster girl! Stop trying to send my sister into battle!" (Fohl) "Atlas-chan, punch him." (Firo)

"Ah, yes." (Atlas)

On Firo's order Atlas smacks her fist into her brother's chest.

Fohl makes no attempt to block, and takes the attack head on.

"KAHA..." (Fohl)

He lets out a loud sound and falls to his knees.

He seems to be tearing up.

"I-I didn't feel... anything so... Please stay... home." (Fohl) "You're obviously pushing it..." (Naofumi)

This is actually quite amazing.

How did she manage to inflict damage on Fohl and Firo?

Is she able to sense something else because she can't see?

She's... stronger than her brother.

If she grows from here, she may turn out to be amazing. As expected of

the Hakuko race.

This was an unexpected development in a good way.

The Old Woman should get to work on her immediately.

“Well, just go level in a way that doesn’t put yourself in too much danger. We’re off to go Level Reset.” (Naofumi) “Ye~s.” (Atlas)

“I-I still don’t approve of you making Atlas fight. (Fohl) “Onii-sama, no matter what you say, I want to fight. Please follow Naofumi-sama’s directions.” (Atlas) “B-but...” (Fohl)

“Firo, grab Fohl. We’re going.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

Firo grabs the resisting Fohl. The other slaves prepare for the harsh trip.

“Level up the dragon chick with you. Now then, we’re off.” (Naofumi)
“See you soon, Naofumi-sama.” (Rafatalia)

“Yeah, I’ll be back soon.” (Naofumi)

Rafatalia’s always seems to be seeing me off, but I’ve never had the opportunity of seeing her off.

But there’s no need for me to mull over it.

And so I took the slaves that wanted to level reset, and those that wanted to learn from the old man to the Castle Town.

Chapter 169: Weapon Shop Owner and Apprentice

“Yaaahhhhhh!” (firo)

“Firo-taaa—.....” (motoyasu)

I saw Motoyasu off with a sigh as he flew off into space for the third time today.

He'll probably arrive ahead of us with his transfer skill, but she did well.

“As I thought, being with the Hero of the Shield-sama is entertaining~” (sadina) Sadina cackled with laughter at the sight of Motoyasu flying into space.

I feel like she was always laughing, but was that just my imagination?

Even Fohl screamed in the beginning. [T/N: When he first saw Motoyasu go flying]

I also saw the other guys drawing away but Sadina was the only one who laughed so readily.

Was she someone who laughs easily? How should I say it, I think it's too much.

Oh well, one way or another, the castle came into view.

Fohl looked to be suffering from very bad motion sickness but we were nearly at our destination.

Returning with the transfer skill.....I didn't register my land or anything, so for the time being it's not an option.

Well, I have various things to do in the castle so it's fine.

Before we enter the castle town, I stop the carriage at the village nearby, like always.

“Heh, are we walking from here?” (sadina)

“Firo and I are famous, we stand out whenever we enter the castle town.” (naofumi) “Hmm. Well then, wouldn’t it’d be better for Fohl-kun to conceal himself as well, for the same reason?” (sadina) “Why?” (naofumi)

“Melromarc has been in a feud with Silt Welt for a long time, you know? And the Hakuko species is renown because of it.” (sadina) Mmm....there’s some truth in that. His appearance may be noteworthy.

“My kind is not seen very often but it’s fine since we’re not well-known.” (sadina) “I see.” (naofumi)

It seems kind of stupid. We might stand out for a different reason, but let’s just go as eccentric adventurers.

It seems that the Lemo slave was fine for the same reason.

We were just going to leave him at the old man’s place. It was Imia’s uncle.

Was his a docile species?

Come to think of it, I haven’t been fighting at all lately.

I’m afraid my senses seem to be dulling.

I should also do some training exercises with the Battle Instructor.

Firo kept a restless lookout of our surroundings as she walked behind me.

Did she really hate Motoyasu that much.

If she hated him, she shouldn’t have given him such kind words.

I really didn’t want to tell her, but she should be more secretive about this fear.

What will you do when Motoyasu proceeds to the village?

We entered the castle town as I thought that.

It would probably be good to ask the queen to prepare for the Level Reset first.

Or, should I turn the slave over to the old man before that?

Well, we pass the old man's shop on the way to the castle so the delegation is probably better.

"Oh, Laddie." (oyaji)

When we entered the weapon shop, the old man was standing at the counter as usual.

The shop seems to have settled down and stabilised. Well, I had confidence in the old man's business.

"How is it? Is there any progress?" (naofumi)

"Not at all. The ore from the spirit turtle also has the characteristic of being tough." (oyaji) "Hmm.." (naofumi)

"That part is very challenging right now but I'm researching everything I can." (oyaji) "I see. Which reminds me, in Zeltbur I—" (naofumi)

I told the old man about the Spirit Turtle Sword I saw in Zeltbur. In any case, I could tell that it was a sword made by a skilled craftsman at a single glance.

"If you say so, it must have been quite a sword...I can probably tell who made it or how they made it just by looking at it but..." (oyaji) "I'd need to bring it here? Forgive me but such an expensive weapon is beyond me." (naofumi) If I sell the weapons made by the old man, I could probably get a bit of money but that would be like putting the cart before the horse.

...Speaking of which, I also have the option of selling the rare or unique weapons gained from the drops. Since they're unusual, I should be able to get a good price for them.

I'll think about it.

"Oh right, I thought about who I should make your apprentice and brought the slave." (naofumi) "Who is it?" (oyaji)

I pointed to Imia's uncle among the slaves I brought.

"For a while now, I feel like I know you, but is that just my

imagination?” (oyaji) The old man inquired while pointing at Imia’s uncle.

“Why it’s been a long time. It looks like you’ve graduated properly from the Master’s place.” (imia’s uncle) “As I thought!” (oyaji)

“You’re acquaintances?” (naofumi)

“Yeah.” (oyaji)

“From the past.” (imia’s uncle)

It seems that Imia’s uncle and the old man from the weapon shop were fellow disciples under the same craftsman when they were younger.

“Even if I say that....I dropped out in the middle. There were a lot of troubles at home and we had to raise Imia and the other children.” (imia’s uncle) “The management was completely screwed up back then.” (oyaji) “Despite being craftsmen?” (naofumi)

It was a somewhat ridiculous story.

“Whenever there was a huge discussion, it’d be about women. My master was obsessed with love.” (imia’s uncle) It seems like the master was similar to Motoyasu. In my head, the old man’s master turned into Motoyasu.

Although, the Motoyasu I know has already turned into a Firo maniac.

What kind of life did Imia’s uncle go through? Imia also became a slave, I really don’t know any details.

A wave similar to Raphtalia’s....was considered strange. Since it was huge.

“Speaking of which, how did you and Imia become slaves?” (naofumi) “We were forced into slavery after being caught by slave hunters. During that time, quite a lot of corpses appeared and the village was also ruined. The only survivors are the ones with the Hero of the Shield-sama.” (imia’s uncle) I see, there was also that kind of pattern. Raphtalia also experienced something similar.

“The orphaned Imia seems so happy now. I feel that I also want to lend

my strength to the Hero of the Shield-sama” (imia’s uncle) The circumstances behind the slavery were things such as being sold by parents, having no relatives or slave hunting.

Sadina’s reason was the same, being caught by slave hunters.

Then what about Fohl?

“What about you?” (naofumi)

“I couldn’t pay for Atla’s medical fees and we were also burdened with debt.” (fohl) “.....so it seems I’ll receive a bill.” (naofumi)

Should I sell him depending on the amount of money?

No, there’s also the medicine costs. This guy owes me quite a debt.

“As far as I know, it disappeared when we were presented to you.” (fohl)
“I see, that’s good.” (naofumi)

Those slave dealers. So that part was given as a service.

“Originally I worked and fought.....the debt was gone, otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to buy medicine.” (fohl) “I see....” (naofumi)

“Atla should’ve been able to have a more normal life. At the very least, she shouldn’t have had to suffer from her illness.” (fohl) “What kind of background did you have?” (naofumi)

“Who knows....? I only know that grandfather was amazing. My parents were lost in the war when we were young, but I think they were also pretty influential. There were a lot of people who helped around.” (fohl)
“What about servants to put on your clothes?” (naofumi)

“We didn’t have those kinds of guys. But since we couldn’t pay, our household belongings were distributed and we parted.” (fohl) Ruined by medical fees, huh.....

To have loyal subordinates and stuff, what kind of noble were you?

“Where did you live?” (naofumi)

“Why do I have to tell you that much?” (fohl)

“Well, that’s true.” (naofumi)

Worrying about the background of this hero-ish guy, my mind was dwelling on something inconsequential.

“Well since you’re already acquainted, it simplifies things.” (naofumi)
“Well, that’s true but....I never thought the smithing place I would be employed at would be yours.” (imia’s uncle) “I was also surprised. I’m taking in an apprentice due to Laddie’s request but, well, you’re a fine partner so isn’t it good.” (oyaji) “How nostalgic. It brings back the past.” (imia’s uncle)

“Including lodging fees, how much should I pay?” (naofumi) “It includes boarding, right? If I can work him hard then I don’t need it.” (oyaji) “I’m grateful for your generosity.” (naofumi)

“Hey....stop saying stuff like working me to death.” (imia’s uncle) He’s become sturdier than normal Demi-humans due to there being some correction.

Will the old man also be Spartan when teaching?

How should I say it, pipes or cigars would probably suit Imia’s uncle but he doesn’t smoke.

He wears overalls and looks like a hillbilly.

Well, whatever.

“I’ll have you work to a similar standard as we did in the past.” (oyaji)
“That would kill me.” (imia’s uncle)

“Ha ha ha, it’s not as bad as you think.” (oyaji)

And with that, they started work as the old man chatted with Imia’s uncle.

It looks like it will be fine if it’s like this.

“Well we’ve got some errands to do.” (naofumi)

“Alright, I’ll beat the shop’s business into this guy.” (oyaji) “I want you to teach me how to beat the techniques into this guy, so won’t you come to my land?” (naofumi) Depending on whether his skills rival the old man or if they’re just at the level of a salesperson, we’ll be able to have

weapons and armour made for the village.

“I haven’t really thought about it. For now, I have to see how capable he is.” (oyaji) “I haven’t done much. Only as far as continuing to do a bit of metal-work.” (imia’s uncle) “A modest attitude. I’ll have you show me how well you swing your hammer.” (oyaji) “Look forward to it.” (imia’s uncle)

It feels like a reunion between long-term friends. It’s not bad.

“Well then, I’ll come again if anything happens. If you need me, just contact the village or the castle.” (naofumi) “I know, Laddie.” (oyaji)

“I’ll work hard to learn the work, Hero of the Shield-sama.” (imia’s uncle) And like this, we left the weapon store behind.

Chapter 170: Trash and Hakuko

“Wow..... it's been a long time since I came here. The castle town has greatly changed.” (Sadina) “You have visited this place before?” (Naofumi)

“Oh yes, once during Melromarc's National Day.” (Sadina) Sadina answers me while looking at the mountain of the Spirit Turtle.

Reconstruction is progressing further than before. The impression of ruin has weakened considerably.

That said..... what about the shell of the Spirit Turtle? Hmmm, it's good to see that the trees are being cut and the reclamation is advancing.

As the saying goes, human beings are strong.

We are working hard trying to overcome the disaster.

“Where do you want to go now?” (TL: Not sure who says this line) “I'll go to the castle at once. Since we came suddenly, the preparations for the level reset have not been done.” (Naofumi) I do not think there is no possibility that Shadow's information network or the female knight sent ahead information about my coming, but I will meet Queen for the time being.

Unlike a class up, a reset can't be done normally.

“It's the castle! I've seen it, but I have never entered before.” (Anon Slave 1) “Yes. Me too.” (Anon Slave 2)

“That should be about right.” (Naofumi)

Demi-Humans and Beastmen are not welcome in the castle of a country which practices human supremacy.

“It is not that good of a place.” (Kiel)

“I guess.” (Naofumi)

I said while heading towards the castle.

.....Firo is still looking around the area restlessly.

“If Motoyasu is here, we will know. You're too cautious.” (Naofumi) Firo knows, that's why Firo's still like this!” (Firo)

Being overtly cautious has its weaknesses too.

But even if I startle her, it would have the opposite effect.

In addition, I don't think Motoyasu would come to the castle town because of the warrant for his arrest.

When you're a known face in this town, it's impossible to hide.

He does not have the skills to hide like Rafatalia, and he is dependent on crystals for magic.

Until he finally acquires the skills to hide, based on his past behavior, he will continue to foolishly come directly charging at Firo.

“Well, don't worry about it.” (Naofumi)

“Muuu.....” (Firo)

We pass by the castle gates while chatting.

The gatekeeper lets me through after I have taken my robe off to show my face, though there is a subtle change in his face when he sees Sadina.

Is that bitter face made for Sadina, who is obviously a Beastman?

Ah, back when I was summoned as a hero at the victory party after the first wave was over..... weren't there considerably few demi-humans there?

The demi-humans have a low status in this country.

I have realized it a few times before.

The strong sense of discrimination is so deeply-rooted that even the Queen admitted to it.

“By the way, where is the Queen?” (Naofumi)

Are you playing a staring game with the documents in your office?

I ask about the Queen's whereabouts to a servant. It looks like she's in

the middle of conducting official business, but that seems like a stalling tactic because she knew I was coming.

Will she come if I wait?

Oh, I'll just rest here in the castle's garden.

“Wait here.” (Naofumi)

“Hmmm.....” (Fohl)

Fohl is wriggling uncomfortably in his robe.

Do you want to take it off here?” (Naofumi)

“Can I? Well then.” (Fohl)

Fohl takes off his robe.

Garangaran..... (TL: clanging sound)

I hear a sound of something falling behind me.

Turning around, I see Trash with his mouth hanging wide open while staring foolishly at me.

“And.....”

I wonder, is Trash is still being forced to be the Naked King?

Moreover, there's a signboard attached to him that says “Do one lap around the castle as punishment. Do not get help no matter what!” signed with the Queen's name.

What is with this guy?

“Finally the Shield has revealed his true colors!” (Trash) He declares loudly while pointing his finger at me.

“Come on everyone! It's time to erase the Devil of the Shield from this world! (Trash) He comes running at me with the sign. While the soldiers standing around are dumbfounded, I am standing in front of Trash.

And Trash is immediately suppressed.

“Let go of me! Shield, he is the Devil, and he even brought a Hakuko[4] into the castle! Kill him!”

.....I hear some amazing threats from Trash about the Hakuko species.

Some famous lines come out.

Well, I have fun seeing Trash being overpowered.

“Why are you making a racket now?” (Queen)

The Queen comes out while holding her head.

“Oh my wife! The Devil of the Shield is showing his true nature and has brought a Hakuko into the castle.” (Trash) (TL: Hakuko means White Tiger) “Is that so?” (Queen)

“Is that so, that's all you have to say!? Those aren't the words I expected to hear!” (Trash) “The world is in crisis now. Dealing with the Wave is more important than dwelling on bad history. It is the law of nature for the Hakuko to be with the Shield, the God to the Demi-Humans. How could that make you angry?” (Queen) The Queen does not mince her words.

It makes me think that regardless of whether or not you are being brainwashed, I feel uplifted here.

Though I do not have..... a shield with such an effect.

Yeah, I definitely don't.

“Guh..... even though you are my wife, I will not allow you to defend a Hakuko!” (Trash) “I do not need your forgiveness. I cannot permit you to continue looking at the world with such clouded eyes forever. Take him away.” (Queen) Let go of me! Vulture, do not let that vulture take advantage-J-JYHAAAAaaaAaaaaAAAAaaa!” (Trash) (TL: He actually says the word eagle here) Trash is then taken somewhere else.

That guy is noisy everywhere.

“Was that..... because of me?” (Fohl)

“Don't worry. That guy's just crazy.” (Naofumi)

Fohl comes to me and asks while there is tension hanging in the air.

“Is that so?” (Fohl)

“The law..... I seem to have a mysterious relationship with the law of cause and effect.” (Naofumi) I mutter while the Queen looks at Fohl.

“What is it?” (Fohl)

“You..... perhaps the name of your grandfather is Tai Ran=Ga=Feon?” (Queen) “Ah..... that's right. However, what of it? What did my grandfather do?” (Fohl) On hearing that, the Queen nods as she is convinced.

“By all means, please follow the Shield Hero. Your late grandfather would have been pleased.” (Queen) “I don't know!” (Fohl)

Phew..... Whenever I'm in the neighborhood, Fohl becomes rebellious. Now he won't obey me.

“How do you know my grandfather?” (Fohl)

“That person who was making those noises awhile ago was an enemy of your grandfather.” (Queen) “I see, what did you say.....?” (Fohl)

I am also surprised. How could you say that with such ease? Well, I will never forgive such selfishness.

“The thing about your grandfather, did you know?” (Queen) “I didn't know at all. My parents never told me.” (Fohl) “Is that so..... it was rude of me to say that. I ask that you do not mind.” (Queen) “.....”

Fohl has a subtle face. Are you anxious because you are in a position your parents never told you about?

No, it is pretentious of me. I am going to take care of my own roots.

“Iwatani-sama, are you facing any problems? How are you holding up?” (Queen) “Well, I'm well.” (Naofumi)

“And your territory? Anything that happens reaches my ear.” (Queen) “Both areas are having difficulty dealing with your daughter.” (Naofumi) “In the end, is Melty useful.” (Queen)

“Well..... I cannot leave the management of the town to her.” (Naofumi) Though it looks like due to the brat, the people of the town appear to have not faced many problems.

I cannot say anything more because she has only just taken over the management for a few days.

“Can't you do anything about Bitch, your other daughter? Or rather, I feel like murdering her the next time we meet.” (Naofumi) The thought of capitalizing on her information bounty fills me with a sweet feeling.

"We must take into account..... the possibility of that child crossing over the border together with Ren-sama and that other woman from the Spear Hero's party.” (Queen) “When putting together Motoyasu's and Elena's stories, certainly there are other countries they could flee to.”

All in all, I would not be surprised if Bitch attempts to pass through the border's barrier. However, if I were to guess methods she may use to break through it.....

Perhaps going over a mountain?

That Bitch? She would never go through such an undignified method to enter another counter.

Smuggling? Or hiding in a cargo hold? Neither options would be acceptable for her.

“Can't you just smoke her out with the slave's crest?” (Naofumi) “It's not possible. There is something interfering.....” (Queen) Mu.....

“Can I kill her?” (Naofumi)

“If possible, don't.....” (Queen)

“Is it necessary to keep that girl alive and arrest her? Don't tell me it's because of the need to keep what she did hidden.”

"More or less. To put it specifically, it's a means to avoid a war.” (Queen) “Say what?” (Naofumi)

“It is that that child hates from the bottom of her heart. As she escapes without its writhing, and refusing it, and entreating, and being heated, and waving the eyes.” (Queen) (ED: Help...T_T) “Hō.....” (Naofumi)

“It's.....” (Queen)

“Oh, I thought of something better.” (Queen)

By all means, I would really like to enjoy the pleasant surprise of witnessing that moment while not knowing her fate beforehand.

It seems I can have more fun mentally by making a Daruma doll. Even if the Daruma Doll wears out, in this world, it can be cured so long as there is money due to the miracles of the recovery magic or alchemy.

“Is that so? Then this time, please tell me everything.” (Naofumi) “Oh, it is better that you do not know everything by all means.” (Queen) “But as punishment, for the sake of education, an iron brand should be firmly thrust in her.” (Naofumi) “Does that sound good to you?” (Queen)

“.....how is that good? (Fohl)

Fohl squirms uncomfortably as though he is being branded. Because Rafatalia is not around, there is no helping it.

And soon, it would be Rafatalia's turn to be squirm too.

I feel like I've become some stand-up comedian. (TL: I think he's making a joke here about plunging/thrusting the branding iron and putting Fohl in an uncomfortable/unpleasant situation) I mean, I do not believe it's normal for a Hero to be pleased with holding a branding iron like me.

I do not think I want to change myself, but let's decide to hide the feeling inside a little bit more.

However, the opponent is Bitch. Considering all that has happened in the past, my thoughts should be justifiable.

“The woman that you hate, what kind of terrible person is she?” (Fohl) “Well, to give you an example, she's the type of person who would use your sister's body to commit various crimes, and once her use runs out, your crying sister would then be tossed away with a kick even as she laughs loudly. (Naofumi) The victims are mainly Motoyasu and me.

I'm sure the number of victims will grow until she is caught in the future, though.

“What did you say!?” (Fohl)

Fohl is enraged.

Even if you're that angry, you don't have to grab me.

“That is something absolutely unforgivable! I will kill you before I allow such a thing to happen!” (Fohl) “Hey, it's me. We're discussing what Bitch would do, not me.” (Naofumi) Why must you must treat Atlas in such a way?

Even though I'm considering selling you if you are worthless.

“It's the same thing.” (Fohl)

Yikes, my mind was read?

Still, I do not laugh aloud.

“May I continue speaking?” (Queen)

“Ah.” (Naofumi)

“It's about the permission for the level reset this time.” (Queen) “Did you already hear about it?” (Naofumi)

“It was within the reach of my ear. I have already made preparations for you to visit the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era at any time. Please also go receive the sand at the same time.” (Queen) “It would be convenient if the Warp skill could be used for travel.” (Naofumi) “By all means, please come to the castle at any time. That way, I can report any developments to Iwatani-sama as soon as they occur.” (Queen) Ah, I must go and meet the Old Man, and I paid a visit to the castle for the time being, so there shouldn't be a problem.

“Based on the stories I heard from Motoyasu, 6 people seems to be the limit. You should find out what further conditions there are in order to catch the other Heroes.” (Queen) “I understand. I think I will attend to your request for their capture as soon as the conditions are met. Moving on, there is the issue about the Spear Hero.” (Naofumi) “That.....” (Firo)

Firo leans back with a wince and hides under my robe.

I do not encourage it because it is unpleasant under there.

“It should be possible for a slave, but the slave crest does not have an effect on a Hero.” (Queen) “So it seems..... Looks like I'll have to persuade them once I catch them.” (Naofumi) “Thank you. We will also investigate anything that has to do with the Sword Hero.” (Queen) Because it has something to do with Bitch, there is an unpleasant feeling that's attached to it.

That woman..... What on earth happened to make her grow up into such a character? Though I didn't want to know about it for obvious reasons, I wonder how she turned out that way.

“Hey, do you know why Bitch became like that? A genius at lying, spitting insults, and manipulating people.” (Naofumi) “She inherited a few qualities from Trash and me. Perhaps the reason is because Trash spoiled her while she was growing up.” (Queen) Is it the fault of Trash?

I mean, you should have been aware of her bad personality.

Oh, I'm also aware that I have a bad personality.

“As for that person, his daughter remained the apple of his eye even though she hurt others, and in the end they both became fools.” (Queen) The Queen speaks with distant eyes.

This not the time for you to start reminiscing.

“Many times have I tried to fix her bad personality. I even let her study abroad in a school in Foburei to learn cultures. But the result was.....” (TL: Foburei is the most powerful country. The hero summons was originally supposed to be performed here) School of the Bitch.

I really don't want to see it in my life.

“By the way, it was at the school in Foburei that that child graduated from her virgin status.” (Queen) “The Bitch's past is not something I give a damn about!” (Naofumi) It really did not matter.

Chapter 171: Portal Shield

“I get that Witch grew up spoiled, but what about Melty?” (Naofumi)
“That child was brought up with an exclusive teacher. So as much as possible, she was not too influenced by that person.” (Queen) And that’s why Melty is respectable, compared to her sister.

Just compared to her sister though.

Because if I had to say, Melty’s emotionalness stands out.

She was angry even when we first met, and was also in hysterics recently.

“Ah, right, Iwatani-sama has somehow changed how he calls her, so I made the name change official.” (Queen) “You did well to distinguish it, despite the two names being mostly the same.” (Naofumi) “I also heard of it through Shadow’s report.” (Queen) “Did you hear about the source of the name?” (Naofumi) “Iwatani-sama’s world plays a factor. I dare say.... it’s probably a play on the words succubus or satan...sorceress or something, right?” (Queen) [T/N: In Japanese, the three words share the character 魔 (魔性 devilishness, 悪魔 demon, 魔女 witch)]

“Mn, correct.” (Naofumi)

However, what is with you coming up with those words to be associated with your own daughter?

Well, that’s the impression you get when talking about Witch though.

“Also, I am entrusting this to Melty but what will you do about the tax rate in your land?” (Queen) Tax rate, huh.

When I think about it, the nobles originally only had to deal with the land management and doing nothing was a virtue, right?

Well, I don’t know if that’s even the case in this alternate world.

“Having high tax rates while we’re still reconstructing is a bit.....” (Naofumi) It’s because it’s this kind of occasion that the populace’s power is swayed.

I feel that demanding taxes while they're still unable to live as they please will cause everything to fail.

I understand that the Japan I lived in also had such a sore point.

Even though we're in hard times, it'll accelerate if taxes are raised. The recession, that is.

If you look at history and stuff, taxes must be lowered during a recession.

Having said that, as long as we are spirited, we can still expect revenue somehow.

...Well, I don't know much about it.

"For now, we should lower those things that will affect the reconstruction and livelihood and raise the prices of luxury goods and such...." (Naofumi) "I'll have Iwatani-sama's show us your abilities."

"I hope you don't expect too much." (Naofumi)

How should I say it, I'm not that exceptional.

One way or another, it's just using the power of the Shield.

Come to think of it, it's almost time for the Bioplants to produce medical herbs so I'll be able to manufacture medicine soon.

My purchasing has also been enhanced, and my property investments are somehow quite substantial.

One way or another, I'll be able to sell medicine.

"I heard from the reports that you made a rather interesting building. Something about a plant that simply becomes a building?" (Queen) So you're indirectly asking about Rato.

Just like I'm being cautious, even the country wants to be careful.

"Right, I created it with that Alchemist who was causing all that trouble in Forburei." (Naofumi) I hand a Camping Plant Seed to the Queen.

"This is a prototype for now." (Naofumi)

“Will you be using this for business as well?” (Queen) “There’s the issue of it going rampant so I think it’s dangerous for it to be distributed too much.” (Naofumi) For now, there aren’t any problems but I don’t know when something will happen.

The problem is that that danger is capable of reviving, especially with strange crossbreeding.

When I was doing management tasks, a lot of places were lost because of the waves so at most I was going to use them as a demonstration.” (Naofumi) [T/N: Talking about the village being destroyed and camping plant was a trial modification.]

My place is the result of displaying this technique, and originally I had the intention of emphasising the selling of medicine.

“Then how about selling to nobles? Hypothetically speaking, if you cast magic to prevent crossbreeding then it might be good value to sell them as disposable products.” (Queen) “That’s also an option but...” (Naofumi)

It’s not like I can’t do it by fiddling with the plant modification. It’ll work if I change the fertility value to the lowest setting.

It might be good if it’s those nobles.

“I haven’t recieved any complaints but is it alright?” (Naofumi) “The ones who’ll have complaints about the Hero of the Shield-sama’s work are the current authorities.”

“That’s what I’m worried about though....” (Naofumi)

Either way, land management is difficult. I’m under the pretense of teaching Melty but it seems like I’m being taught instead.

It’s agony to yield to that short-tempered Melty.

“Come to think of it, how are the country’s nobles? Giving me, the Hero of the Shield, such hospitality is essentially just due to the Queen’s own judgement, right?” (Naofumi) “For the time being, there’s no problems. Instead it’s so calm that it’s ominous.” (Queen) “It seems like something will happen?” (Naofumi)

“...Yes. Regrettably it’s at a state that I can’t reach with my power.”
(Queen) I don’t have any conclusive evidence but I have a hunch. My hunches are usually right when it comes to things like this though.

Originally I’m like that too, managing a Demihuman village in a human dominated country, but the Queen, who embraces the Hero of the Shield worshipped by the Demihumans, is the Queen.

“This concerns that trouble-making Alchemist but, it seems she’s adapting to Iwatani-sama’s place from what I can see from the reports.”
(Queen) “Yeah, it’s surprising how fast it was. What really happened in Forburei?” (Naofumi) “It’s as she said. Somehow it seems that Forburei’s Seven Star Heroes exiled her due to a conflict over her research and techniques. I suspect it’s that, rather than a religious issue.” (Queen) One way or another, that guy has her own techniques. So she was exiled because of them.

I don’t know what she was researching in Forburei though....

Somehow, the atmosphere reeks of ‘Japan and a certain country competing with their car import businesses’. It resembles being chased out by political power.

Well, Forburei will probably reveal new weapons eventually.

If it makes the waves and living easier then it’s good though. I won’t be depending on it either. I still need Rato’s support.

“So this is how the reports are, huh.” (Naofumi)

“That is the case, we’ll be awaiting your next visit.” (Queen) With her head lowered, the Queen started to take her leave.

“That’s right, there’s ore excavated from the spirit turtle in the castle warehouse so go ahead and take some whenever you like.” (Queen) “Ah, please turn those materials over to my regular weapon shop.” (Naofumi) “Alright.” (Queen)

Because I want to become Oyaji’s power somehow. I want to give him priority.

With that feeling, the conversation ended and we went to the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era for Fohl and Sadina's Level Reset.

At the same time, I recieved some of the sand from the Hourglass of the Dragon's Era. I let the shield absorb it.

The Dragon's Era Sand Shield was unlocked.

Dragon's Era Sand Shield 0/60 C

Ability Sealed...Equipment Bonus, Skill [Portal Shield]

Proficiency 0

I had a look at the sudden pop-up...there were no special skills attached. Its ability wasn't very high either.

"Portal Shield!" (Naofumi)

With a Pop, an icon appeared in my field of vision.

Transfer <-

Transfer Memory

Where was the initial transfer location?

I identify the transfer.

Melromarc Summon Space.

Ah, it's that room I first appeared in. It's unlikely to be anywhere else.

I should try jumping as a test.

When I do, I become aware of the range.

I can also designate comrades that can be transfered. It seems that i can also jump unintentionally.

Moreover it's pretty vast. So there's no need to be touching or anything.

They also have it as an emergency escape skill.

"Then I'm going to use the transfer skill to experiment." (Naofumi)

"Okay!" (Firo)

"Oh, it looks quite fun." (Sadina)

“You’re going to do it?” (Fohl)

Fohl startled and grasped onto Sadina. Sadina also embraced Fohl.

Firo was....

“That’s right Firo. Distance yourself a little more please.” (Naofumi)

“Hm? Understood~” (Firo)

The human-shaped Firo trotted away from me.

It should be something like this.

I become aware of the transfer.

When I do, the scenery changes, and I jumped to the damp and humid, earth-smelling altar.

Speaking of which, this is that kind of place.

There’s no one around and there’s no ceremony being held so it’s natural.

“You really jumped. How interesting~” (Sadina)

Sadina cackled with laughter. Say, you’re always laughing.

Fohl blinked with surprise.

Firo... separated from me and yet she was standing close by.

It’s sure is a convenient skill...

What was the cooldown time like?

“Portal Shield!” (Naofumi)

Reuse time, a countdown time of 1 hour appeared.

It’s longer than I expected.

Well, if it was short then it could be utilised in battle.

“Now then, let’s return.” (Naofumi)

Just like this, we finished experimenting and returned to the village.

By the way, it seems like the possible transfer point memory of the Portal Shield is fundamentally impossible inside caves and buildings. The

summoning space was the initial point and that's why there's that sort of treatment.

And so, if I can't transfer to places that can't be registered, then it's practical to jump to somewhere different.

Moreover, there's actually no need to shout, just moving my mouth lets me jump.

I covered my mouth with my own hand and just by saying 'Portal Shield', an icon appeared.

Furthermore, starting with my party members, I have the option of selecting allies in my surroundings to transfer with.

That is to say, it can still be used even if an ally is caught by the enemy.

Furthermore, a hostile opponent can't be transported.

In short, monsters, the heroes and Witch aren't allies so I can't forcibly take them with me.

That's a nuisance...

Ah, that's right. Speaking of limits, it seems like the carriage is too big and is impossible to transport.

That's why the other heroes didn't use carriages.

Chapter 172: Discipline

“We didn’t see Motoyasu on our way home.” (naofumi) “Firo doesn’t want to see him.” (firo)

I had thought to try to persuade Motoyasu if we encountered him but we didn’t meet.

Was the kick so bad that he died?

It would be bad if he fell just like that.

But I can’t imagine that stalker just dropping dead so easily....

“Come to think of it, you guys reset your levels but you’re moving unexpectedly normally. Was a stretcher not necessary or something?” (naofumi) “I’m not that fragile!” (fohl)

“It’s quite heavy but not to the extent of being unable to move~” (sadina) “What kind of people are you guys.” (naofumi)

Wondering if they were really alright, she tried poking Fohl in the arm.
.....Firo did.

“~~~!” (fohl)

He really seems determined.

I don’t know if he understood that I was letting him try, but Fohl endured.

“Ahaha~ It’s ticklish.” (sadina)

Fohl seemed fine compared to Sadina.

So were they fine if they had trained their body?

Level raising was a completely different category. Compared to training one’s body, that was.

Unlike simply receiving divine protection from stats, if one trains, they should have no problems with most negative conditions.

Or perhaps I should say that these two had been doing such self-

training.

Raphtalia also did something similar, but the lost stats from the Level Reset was compensated for by strengthening with training so there was no loss. [T/N: Naofumi only got the growth correction after Raphtalia was ~Lv25 and he's talking about that part not being boosted by the correction – Raphtalia rejected the reset so no extra bonus.]

In short, the ones who needed stretchers were those who specialised in magic or had been power-lelling and were now bedridden.

The method of employing a young noble or adventurer and only raising one's level.

You'd expect a certain extent of effectiveness and the guys from my village also raised their levels in a similar manner so it's not a bad technique.

The problem is that there's no choice but to improve with self-disciplining or something like the Old Hag's training after reaching the Level Cap.

It seems like there's no level restriction for the Heroes but it's probably still better for me to also do the training.

This is a world where Levels and Statuses are natural so I should train every day and repeat magic to improve the merit of the level cap.

In that case, it could be thought that one can be strong if one trains from young like Fohl and Sadina.

I don't know how it is in reality and I'm not going to be staying in this world so I'll train until we suppress the waves.

Anyway, I wonder what would happen to the levels or stats after I return to my original world.

The shield as well.

No matter what I do, this shield can only be disguised with the book shield at best, so if it remains attached even in my original world then it would already be in the region of a cursed item.

When I become a full-fledged member of society, always walking with a strange book would simply get me laughed at.

This kind of thinking is dangerous. I haven't even returned yet so there's no point in me having such expectations.

Even if the shield remains attached, I should think about it when the time comes.

"You guys, I'll have you level up as soon as we return." (naofumi) "Yes, Yes~" (sadina)

"I know that." (fohl)

I conveyed as such to Sadina and Fohl and we had a favourable return from our trip.

It has been just over a day since we departed.

I could see the village.

"Welcome home....Naofumi-sama." (raphtalia)

A somewhat tired Raphtalia came to greet us.

"You seem tired." (naofumi)

"That old lady has been training me vigourously." (raphtalia) "I see..." (naofumi)

Rishia collapsed face down on the floor as if she was dead.

When I drew near and checked her state, I heard a moan.

It appears that she's not dead, but she was worn-out.

"Now then, break time is over, we're leaving now!" (granny) "Fueee...." (rishia)

"W-well then, we'll be leaving for a little bit." (raphtalia) "Where to?" (naofumi)

"We'll be heading to the mountains for some training in a moment." (granny) "Ah...is that so." (naofumi)

Upon saying that, Raphtalia and the others followed the old hag on a

trip.

Where did they go?

Before I realised, it became like a Shounen manga.

In the end, that kind of training is needed when learning martial arts.

Raphtalia who had received growth correction from the shield suffered such fatigue from leveling and self-training. It's as the old or rather, the battle instructor had said.

"Welcome home Naofumi-sama, Brother." (atla)

"Why did you call him first? Atla." (fohl)

"That cannot be helped." (atla)

What can't be helped?

Well, it's probably that I'm the master of these slaves.

"I've already reached Level 15." (atla)

"I see." (naofumi)

"S-so fast." (fohl)

Is it really fast? Rishia reached Level 20 in half a day though. Rather, isn't this on the slower side?

This probably differs between individuals.

If I had to say, it would be that Rishia's levelling was on the fast side.

"I understand Atla's growth. How is the baby Dragon?"

"Kyaaaaa!" (taniko)

Some creature was giving Taniko a ride and was running around noisily, raising a cloud of dust.

Based on it's size, it was as large as an average wild boar....compared to Firo, but she was already that size at two days old.

"Gaerion-chan has come." (atla)

Without turning around, Atla revealed the creature behind the dust

cloud.

Nothing about Taniko riding on his back?

“Atla-chan! And....” (taniko)

Taniko saw me and glared.

“Hey....Why do you hate me so much?” (naofumi)

“...Because you’re a hero.” (taniko)

“Huh?” (naofumi)

“Nothing.” (taniko)

Somehow Taniko seems to regard me as an enemy.

Despite being such a monster-lover, she doesn’t really hate levelling up....

When she came to this village among the slaves, her initial level was 10.

.....She was a complicated person.

The dust cloud cleared and I could see the baby dragon’s figure.

....His whole body was a ball with some dragon parts attached.

He absorbed all sorts of things... He looked like that Poyo but with bat wings and a lizard’s tail. [T/N: Poyo is an orange, round cat and main character of the series Poyopoyo Kansatsu Nikki.]

What is this?

Firo also had a figure similar to this before.

There’s no way he’ll become huge just like this, right?

“Kyuaa!” (gaerion)

A smile surfaced on Gaerion’s face, he dropped Taniko off and leapt at me.

As if I’ll let you.

I prepared my shield to obstruct him.

However.

He clung firmly to the shield, then climbed over it and onto my back.

He's simply huge so it's heavy.

"Let go! Don't stick to me!" (naofumi)

"Kyuaa!" (gaerion)

He stuck out his tongue and licked my cheek.

He's become unusually attached just two days after his birth.

Well, he probably thinks of me as his parent.

"Hey, Stop it." (naofumi)

"Kyuaa!" (gaerion)

Gaerion ignored my edict and licked me, but he seemed to understand my dislike and ceased to just clinging to me.

Hm...he's more lovable than I thought.

Firo's also quite cute when she doesn't talk though.

"Hmph..." (firo)

Firo let out a frustrated voice.

And then she stood in front of me...

"What is it?" (naofumi)

She licked me with her tongue.

Ugh... disgusting.

"Bird, what's with you all of a sudden." (naofumi) "That position of Master's is Firo's~!" (firo)

"As if I know! You've never had that kind of behaviour." (naofumi) "But that way of playing is Firo's!" (firo)

"I don't know." (naofumi)

"Hmph~!" (firo)

Firo ran away angrily.

Jeez, what was she so dissatisfied about.

Speaking of which, she also became sullen when I played with the new Philorial.

Was it jealousy?

I heard before that when keeping a dog, it might show hostility if there was an increase in new pets or children.

It's a bit extreme, treating a Philorial like a dog, but was it something similar?

Or it could be Firo's own personality.

I'll ask Rato about it next time.

"Kyua?" (gaerion)

He inclined his head...but it was part of his body so his whole body moved.

Taniko stroked Gaerion's head as he gazed after Firo's retreating figure with wonder.

"Hey, go play with him." (naofumi)

"Kyuaa!" (gaerion)

When I passed him to Taniko, she extended her hand to me as if wanting to play again.

If Firo had this kind of animalistic charm, she would also seem cute.

"I seems he's grown quite big." (naofumi)

"Yeah." (taniko)

"This isn't the end of his growth, right." (naofumi) "He's still a baby though?" (taniko)

Taniko replied while cuddling Gaerion.

Why are you so well-informed.

Ah, maybe she heard from Rato.

“But weren’t you on his back?” (naofumi)

“...That monster lady said it would discipline him properly.” (taniko) “I see....” (naofumi)

Is it training for being a mount or something? Firo did that kind of thing sufficiently. [T/N: And therefore didn’t need training.]

As to be expected, dragons have their differences in regards to this.

“It seems like Gaerion-chan also loves Naofumi-sama.” (atla) Atla said charmingly.

“By the way, what is going to happen to Brother and Sadina-san now?” (atla) “Let’s see. Firo just left so I can’t really use her right now...” (naofumi) Well, she was convenient as transport though.

“Did you need something?” (firo)

Firo appeared from somewhere after I said her name.

“Ah, I wanted to have you help Fohl level up. You aren’t tired?” (naofumi) “I’m fine?” (firo)

“I see, then can I count on you?” (naofumi)

“Ok.” (firo)

“Is it alright if I join you?” (atla)

Atla inquired of Firo. Firo responded with a nod.

“It’s okay.” (firo)

“Kyua!” (gaerion)

Gaerion also raised his paw as if announcing his participation. [T/N: What do you call a dragon’s arm?]

“No~!” (firo)

Sticking her tongue out provokingly, Firo rejected Gaerion’s company.

“Then head to somewhere with appropriate monsters with the carriage....” (naofumi) “Ah, I’ll be levelling in the ocean so don’t worry about me.” (sadina) Sadina held her harpoon and informed me.

Well, there's no problem if she levels in her own domain.

"Are you okay at Level 1? If you need companions, I'll send some with you." (naofumi) "It's fine, it's fine. I'm already used to fighting like this." (sadina) Sadina said I was worrying too much of all things and headed to the ocean.

She made me sound like I was her guardian.

I don't have much material from sea monsters so it would help if Sadina brought some back.

One way or another, she seems like she wants to raise her stats simply.

Then those who want to quickly raise their levels will..." (naofumi) Firo hates Gaerion with prejudice.

It seems like she would cause an uproar if I said I was going to help with Gaerion's upbringing.

It's none of my business but she can't complain if I continue as I have been doing.

And one way or another, Firo's reliable when it comes to combat....

"Firo will help Atla and Fohl with their level raising, Gaerion and you and—" (naofumi) After I pointed to Taniko, I called Kiel over and instructed them to take the Caterpiland with them.

I actually wanted them to ride the Philorial but it was rejected.

It seems that it's true that Dragons and Philorials don't get along.

I feel like Philorials are more peaceful and weak but....how is it in the wild?

"Naofumi-sama, with that deployment, I would be better off with Gaerion-chan." (atla) "Is that so?" (naofumi)

"Really?" (firo)

"Yes. Because I will grow together with Gaerion-chan." (atla) "Hey, Atla! I—" (fohl)

They did have the same levels...If that's the case, it can't be helped.

Besides, Firo's spartan course is difficult, which is perfect for Fohl.

"Then Firo." (naofumi)

"Wha~t?" (firo)

"Go train Fohl spartanly at the highest difficulty you can manage and raise his level rapidly." (naofumi) "Ok!" (firo)

"Of all things, what are you talking ab—" (fohl) Fohl idiotically clung to Firo's back as he rode her.

"We'll be going now Master~!" (firo)

"Ah, off you go." (naofumi)

"Wh-what's with this guy's feathers! Don't fall out! Don't fall out! Ah, Atlaaaaaaa—" (fohl) Firo ran around noisily.

Firo's feathers were also mysterious. They could hold onto riders and made a strange song. [T/N: like how grasshoppers make music]

And just like that, I could no longer hear Fohl's voice.

"We'll be taking our leave now." (atla)

"Work hard." (naofumi)

"Won't Naofumi-sama join us?" (atla)

"If I go then Firo will..you know." (naofumi)

I pointed to Gaerion and explained my reasoning.

"That is troubling. However, I want to be able to Level up together with Naofumi-sama soon." (atla) "That's true. I haven't been suppressing any monsters lately so it should be fine when I feel like going." (naofumi) "It's a promise." (atla)

"I know. You're also quite a strange fellow." (naofumi) In this village, it's rare that someone would want to fight monsters and level up together with me.

However if you think about fighting in the waves, it's important know how to cooperate with me, as I can only defend.

Actually, right now only Raphtalia and Firo have experience fighting with me, but following the plan to a certain extent would mean I should have to participate in battles too.

All the same, if we went out to fight the waves together without being able to cooperate, there would have been no meaning in creating this village. [T/N: Naofumi created the village to form a private army to fight the waves but if they don't cooperate, it's the same as fighting with the random soldiers.]

“Come back before nightfall.” (naofumi)

“I got it, big bro.” (kiel)

And just like this I saw the levelling party off and resumed work in the village.

Chapter 173: A Shield to Protect the Shield

A few days passed. The days passed way too peacefully.

The only problems I have to attend to are the maintenance of the neighboring village and Rat's Bioplant modifications.

And Melty is helping out a lot with the village.

But this seems to be largely due to her subordinates, who are well versed in politics.

There is no tax as of now, but we will have to levy one in the near future.

For now the villagers must focus on restoration.

And, without saying, the villagers happily agreed to that matter.

Melty sometimes acts older than her age, but other times acts like a brat.

But after that assassination attempt I guess this village is one of the few places she can be at ease.

The Queen? I don't consider her an enemy, but she's not a person I should trust so easily.

The accessory merchant somehow opened a shop without me even noticing.

Because the shield is supposed to be the guardian of Demi-Humans, the bars are usually filled with Demi-Human adventurers.

We're relying on soldiers for security now, but after reconstruction finishes, I guess I can pass the task on to anyone with free time.

There are still too few slaves to start a village.

Should I go to the Slave Dealer again?

By the way, on the day he got back, Fohl was dragged off by Firo, and forcefully had his level raised to 18.

When he got back, he collapsed. To gain so many levels in an hour may

have been too much for his body to handle.

“I’m leveling up quite fast.” (Fohl)

“It’s probably due to Firo. She can run at an amazing speed taking down all monsters on the way.” (Naofumi) “Y-you’re mistaken... The Usapills just gave much more experience than usual.” (Fohl) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, I don’t know why, but the numbers were definitely higher than when I had to fight them a long time ago.” (Fohl) Fumu... It’s possible that Hero companions get more experience than other adventurers.

Why wasn’t I told this earlier?

Would anyone even notice unless they reset their level?

No, the other heroes may have been able to figure it out from other adventurers... but I’m not really in a situation where I can converse with them normally.

The slaves in my possession saw such EXP from the beginning, so they couldn’t find anything off.

I’ll ask Sadina about it later.

“I’m home~!” (Sadina)

Sadina appears carrying a large quantity of fish.

The villagers surround me in high tensions, as if to demand that I cook for them.

Since things have been going well as of late, I guess I’ll do it.

“The Hero of the Shield’s power is amazing. I get more EXP and my stats rise higher.” (Sadina) “So that really was the case.” (Naofumi)

I guess the EXP bonus is a default setting of being a Hero.

It’s not specific to the shield. Otherwise Rishia would have noticed.

And so night fell.

“I’m back!” (Kiel)

“I have returned.” (Atlas)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Kiel’s party returns from hunting.

The party consists of Kiel, Atlas, Taniko and Gaelion.

It seems that Kiel is the main fighting force.

When Fohl isn’t frantically leveling with Firo, he also joins them.

But with this team, I see the balance of powers shifting away from Kiel soon.

“You took a while today.” (Naofumi)

“It took a while to feed Gaelion-chan.” (Taniko) So they fed him before they got back.

Gaelion’s neck is growing longer, while the rest of his body remains the same.

His evolution is heading in an ominous direction...

“I made dinner, so eat it and sleep.” (Naofumi) “Niichan’s home-made?” (Kiel)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Hooray!” (Kiel)

Kiel seems happy.

Again, I question whether my food really is that tasty.

The shield’s effects are in place, but I wonder about my actual cooking skill. It’s probably raised as well with all the experience I’m getting.

“The food Naofumi makes is superb.” (Atlas)

“... yeah.” (Taniko)

Even Taniko nods. The Shield is amazing.

Anyways, I take out food for Kiel’s party and return to my house.

Wait. Where is Rafatalia?

... Ah right.

Rafatalia and Rishia are off doing training with the Granny in the mountains.

Firo went off to sleep with Melty.

It's been a while since I've found myself Alone.

I guess I should put more work into making sellable medicine.

I need to teach some Lemos as well.

Kon. Kon. I hear a knock on the door.

Who could it be? It's the middle of the night.

I open the door.

... No one's there.

Was it my imagination?

I close it and return to my work.

... There's another knock.

I once again open it to find the doorway empty.

Is someone trying to play a prank?

And so... Kon. Kon.

"Who is it! Who's trying to incur my wrath!?" (Naofumi) "Eh? Wrath... is it?" (Atlas)

Atlas stares at me with a blank expression.

"You're not the one trying to annoy me, right?" (Naofumi) "This is the first time I knocked..." (Atlas)

"What are you doing here at this hour?" (Naofumi) "That is... um... Can I sleep with you?" (Atlas)

"Don't you share a house with your brother?" (Naofumi) If I handle this poorly, I think Fohl will get annoying.

I'd like to avoid trouble.

“Onii-sama is currently out cold. So until I fall asleep, can you please keep me company?” (Atlas) Out cold... was it blunt force trauma?

No, I don't think this pure girl would do such a thing.

I'm fine with talking with her, but sleeping together is a bit...

I find it hard to sleep around Rafatalia. My eyes sometimes fly open in the middle of the night.

Though Rafatalia herself seems to sleep just fine.

It might be due to my own Trauma, but I get a bad feeling whenever I'm sleeping in the same room as a woman.

I want to decline if possible.

“Rejected.” (Naofumi)

“Then I shall sleep in front of Naofumi-sama's house.” (Atlas) “Why?” (Naofumi)

What's she up to?

She's acting strange.

“There's no choice. You can sleep in Rafatalia's bed.” (Naofumi)
“Understood.” (Atlas)

Rafatalia is out, so we have an extra bed. I let her inside.

... I'm a little worried about Fohl's situation.

When Atlas falls asleep, I'll go check it out.

I lead Atlas to Rafatalia's bed, and tuck her in.

“Is Naofumi-sama not going to sleep?” (Atlas)

“Yeah, I have to work on making medicine.” (Naofumi) Medicine always sells well. If I leave all the work to the shield, the production speed is too slow.

I'll have to earnestly teach some villagers medicine making soon as well.

This village needs a set, steady source of income in order to expand.

I've begun selling some to the Apothecary in the neighboring village, but my stocks are limited.

Though Rat's bioplants have started being able to produce herbs, producing the medicine itself seems impossible. I could sell the herbs whole, but that severely drops the price. I also don't want to risk anything, so I want the plants to be processed beforehand. I have high poison resistance.

With the shield, I can judge whether or not a plant is poisonous, and I can handle them regardless.

"Naofumi-sama sure is a busy one." (Atlas)

"I'm only doing it for the money." (Naofumi)

"But... Because of your hard work I can now walk." (Atlas) "..."
(Naofumi)

I was only calculating loss and gain. Don't mistake it for good will.

But Atlas seems to have found confirmation of her statement in my silence.

Keeping up with this girl is... difficult.

Like Rafatalia, she isn't pushing any ideals onto me, but is treating all of my actions as positive.

If I told her to do something now, I'm pretty sure she would do it without question. How scary.

Though she's just a kid.

This is bad... Isn't it dangerous to be alone at night with that sort of person?

A shiver goes down my spine.

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"W-what is it?" (Naofumi)

"Rafatalia told me that because you couldn't fight, she became your sword." (Atlas) "Pretty much." (Naofumi)

The only thing I can do is protect.

This is the Shield's ability. One that hasn't changed since I got to this world.

The only exception is Counter effects, and the Wrath Shield.

The Frisbee shield was a shield that let me throw Frisbee-like projectiles.

Now I can finally attack! I got really excited, and tried to throw one at a monster but as expected it fell onto the ground upon impact without dealing damage.

Now it's completely become a toy to play with Firo and the other monsters.

After it's been caught it disappears and returns to my hand.

"Rafatalia is working hard for my sake. I depend on her a lot."
(Naofumi) To fight the Wave. To save the world. Rafatalia really is working hard.

When I look at her, I feel motivated as well.

Rafatalia is the person I trust the most in this world.

(TL: Taken out of context, this sounds...)

Everyone else seems to have hidden intentions.

(TL: No, dat girl has plenty of hidden intentions) "Because I am the Hero of the Shield, The only thing this world lets me do is defend."
(Naofumi) "... I know. When I look at this village, I see that everyone is being protected under Naofumi-sama's wings." (Atlas) "Wings..."
(Naofumi)

So I'm like a mother bird, protecting the chicks under its wings.

And that would make this my nest.

"If all you do is protect, everyone will someday leave your nest." (Atlas)
"Anyone that wants to leave can leave, and still I will protect this village."
(Naofumi) This is Rafatalia's homeland.

As long as I restore this land, she will be able to live on when I'm gone.

Even if I return to my world, she has people like Sadina and Kiel.

Firo has Melty, and Atlas has Fohl. This village won't fall so easily. And the inhabitants here should be able to take care of whoever tries to attack, be it a country or an army.

"But then... Who will protect Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas) "Wha?" (Naofumi)

What are you saying? Why must I be protected?

Why would she direct that at me?

What point is there in protecting the Shield Hero?

"After coming to this village, I have heard all about Naofumi-sama's exploits. You... did amazing work. No matter what adversity you faced, you overcame it and persevered." (Atlas) "Y-yeah... I see. I did receive a promotion too." (Naofumi) "However, who is going to protect you, Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas) "... It's not like I'm not protected." (Naofumi)

Rafatalia, Firo, Melty and even the Queen. If I ever get in trouble, I think that they would try to save me.

"This is what I think. If Rafatalia is Naofumi-sama's sword, then perhaps I could become Naofumi-sama's shield." (Atlas) "Shield.. That's not as easy as it sounds, you know." (Naofumi) It doesn't feel good to become someone else's shield.

And I see no need for protection.

I've gone through painful experiences, but if I mulled over them I would never be able to achieve victory, and I would just sink further into depression.

Becoming my Shield is quite a goal.

It's probably because from the moment she was born, she had to be protected by other.

She wants to be the one to protect someone.

If my right arm is Rafatalia, then she wants to become the left.

However... I get an uneasy feeling when she says this.

“That sort of thing is something you should say after you get strong.”
(Naofumi) “Yes. I swear it to you that I will get strong.” (Atlas) “Good luck.” (Naofumi)

Atlas’s breathing calms down. She starts to fall asleep.

She sure has developed a strange goal...

If Fohl heard about it, he would probably get quite angry.

I carry Atlas and head over to her and Fohl’s house.

... He’s really sleeping.

“...Oy.” (Naofumi)

“ZZZ...” (Fohl)

“ZZZ? This isn’t a manga! Get up!” (Naofumi)

“Wha!?” (Fohl)

After putting Atlas in her bed, I wake Fohl up and take him outside to talk.

“Look after your sister properly. She came and said she wanted to sleep with me.” (Naofumi) “W-what!? Then... Atlas has already been...” (Fohl)
He glares at me as if I had insulted his ancestors. His slave crest begins to glow.

“Who would do anything to that brat?” (Naofumi) “Are you saying my Atlas has no charm as a woman!?” (Fohl) “For the love of... This is a pain! I really just have no interest in that!” (Naofumi) “Liar!” (Fohl)

These siblings really are troublesome.

Though I say that...

To want to become my shield... what a strange child.

Chapter 174: Melty's Job

The next morning.

“Come to think of it, the messenger knight isn't here.” (naofumi) I didn't see the female messenger knight. Where did she go?

Raphtalia, Rishia and some of the slaves were taken to a training camp by the Granny.

Gaerion was playing with Atla and Taniko..... [T/N: Which is better Gaelion or Gaerion?]

Growl.....

Gaerion complained of hunger.

His consumption of the Bioplant's fruit was so fast, its production couldn't keep up.

“Then you guys go hunting again today.” (naofumi)

“Oka~y.” (taniko)

“Kyua!” (gaerion)

“We'll be going.” (atla)

“Atla! I'm going too.” (fohl)

Fohl joined the Party again today.

Well, isn't it fine.

“I won't let any enemies come near Atla!” (fohl)

“It's alright, Brother. And besides, Gaerion-chan will protect me.” (atla)

“Alright shmalright! As if I'm gonna entrust Atla to this monster.” (fohl)

“Kyua!” (gaerion)

“You're not a monster, Gaerion!” (taniko)

And so they left, with such a hubbub.

I'm glad that they seem to be having fun.

“Well I guess I'll also go hunting in the ocean~ I wanted to raise my

level anyway.” (sadina) Sadina said that naturally, and headed to the ocean.

Now then, I should also go do some land management.

The villagers had my instructions, and it became relatively deserted in the daytime.

And when the peddling group leaves, the personnel will decrease.

I taught a simple medicine recipe to the Lemo slaves, the other dexterous slaves and also those with an interest in making medicine.

Just after noon, I announced that the food made by the slaves learning to cook was ready, and we had lunch.

Somehow it was a peaceful day.

I felt uneasy about what Rato could be doing, but she should’ve been looking after the monsters in the monster hut.

“Count.” (rato)

Rato made an appearance as we were eating lunch.

“The Count is also letting the monsters Class Up, right.” (rato) “Yeah.” (naofumi)

“I’ll pick out some of the monsters to Class Up soon, so would you be able to take care of it?” (rato) “Got it.” (naofumi)

That reminds me, monsters can Class Up as well.

“The Caterpilland?” (naofumi)

“That’s just it. If I research on the Caterpilland, it won’t get much stronger even with a Class Up. It grew up but its abilities aren’t that high, despite this being the Count’s place.” (rato) Hm.....

Speaking of which, she said that before when wondering whether to modify it.

Including that aspect, it’s a rather weak species.

“Nevertheless, isn’t it better than to not do it?” (naofumi) “That’s true.”

(rato)

After we finished talking about the monsters' Class Up and so forth, I made an appearance in the town.

The shops' products have improved, it seemed to have expanded favourably. The problem would be the formation of factions, but the Accessory Merchant seemed to have them all under his thumb and there weren't any big movements.

I made an appearance at Melty's estate.

....Melty was there struggling with a stack of official documents just like the Queen had been.

No way.....she dealt with them promptly, just like her mother.

That Melty did.

That Melty did. [T/N: Repeated for emphasis. Not a typo.]

"Firo-chan Charm." (melty)

"Yeah." (firo)

She struck a pose at Firo to relieve some of the stress from her work.

At first glance, she looked like an idiot.

"You guys....." (naofumi)

Every one of them were idiots.

But I won't say that.

Yeah. I've heard before that intelligent kids have some sort of strange habit.

I'm sure this is something like that.

Look, Melty's a bird enthusiast, so she probably has that kind of fetish too.

"Huh? Well isn't it Naofumi. What do you want?" (melty) "I came to see how the state of affairs are." (naofumi) "We're doing well." (melty)

Melty took a break and rode on Firo's back while massaging her

shoulders.

Why did she ride her.

Was she pretending to ride on a horse or something?

I really don't understand the relationship between these two.

"The people in the castle are working hard and the people in the Commerce Guilds are also putting in effort for Naofumi's sake. I guess the problem is the matter of the Demi-human adventurers not understanding the whole situation." (melty) "I see, sorry about all this. By the way, the knight who usually passes on messages hasn't been seen.....and I also don't know the whereabouts of a number of the soldiers." (naofumi) "Huh? You didn't hear? We received a leave of absence saying that she and a number of soldiers were accompanying the Battle Instructor and were secluding themselves in the mountain." (melty) I almost fell over.

What was that.

She did say she wanted to be taught, but she was going so far as to take a vacation for it!?

How motivated was she.

"Well, Naofumi's obtained the warping skill so moving has gotten easier, right? We only need to receive messages from the castle now so the priority dropped." (melty) "So it's that kind of thing.....I've never tried using her to send instructions to the castle though." (naofumi) "It's just that Naofumi didn't use her. We relied on her when Shadow had other official instructions. Really....." (melty) The documents in the seat Melty was sitting at.... there was some sort of cross written on it.

Should I write on it as a prank? I drew the design of a paper aeroplane.

"Which reminds me, was it a rule of the town? I'm sure it was written down somewhere." (naofumi) "Yes, this region is under the protection of the Hero of the Shield but nevertheless, the Demi-humans have been trying to discriminate against the humans." (melty) "That's troubling." (naofumi)

Discrimination is forbidden, the Hero of the Shield treats Demi-humans and humans alike; I had rules written down for everything.

It's not like I didn't understand.

But there were fools who felt like they could do whatever they liked here, just because I was the God of Demi-humans.

Of course, I won't tolerate that sort of thing.

I won't forgive anyone discriminating without a proper reason.

Just for the record, if they do have a reason, I may forgive them to a certain extent.

Otherwise I wouldn't be able to discriminate against the other heroes, right?

"Ah, so lucky. Naofumi's slaves are patrolling around so we're managing without problems but when the town grows further, there might be some commotions we can't ignore." (melty) ".....It should be similar to what happens in the castle town." (naofumi) "That's true. We have to be tolerant to a certain extent, but I wonder if the people from Silt Welt and Schild Frieden know that." (melty) Melty took a deep sigh.

That this child has to be burdened with middle management, being a queen is hard work.

"I'll be honest. We kept it from Naofumi, but there are many abandoned Demi-human children, it's troubling." (melty) ".....huh?" (naofumi)

"Naofumi only made the Demi-humans he chose into his slaves, right? However, there's no end to the people abandoning their children near this town and village, wanting them to become Naofumi's subordinates without knowing that." (melty) "What are you doing about it?" (naofumi)

"For now, we're deporting them back to what we think is their own country, judging by their language and species. It's not like we can't discern their species and we're also receiving the deportation costs from the other party. But we don't know how serious they are." (melty) "So the Demi-human countries have really become active." (naofumi) "Now, can

you warn them in some public place? Its troubling.” (melty) “Is that so.....I understand.” (naofumi)

Not directly interfering with me was something they said when they were peeved.

I wonder if there's any way to handle this problem.

Of course, it's not that I can't pick up the abandoned children and turn them into slaves.

But if I do, it's likely there will be more children being abandoned.

I understand that, so I can't do it.

“It's true that we profit from the money left by the Demi-human adventurers, but regulating them is hard....and besides, humans come too.” (melty) One way or another, there's an emphasis on Demi-humans.

Come to think of it, if you look at the streets, there are many Demi-humans.

“If Firo-chan wasn't here for the disturbance before, it would have been dangerous.” (melty) “I see, I've been helped in many ways.” (naofumi)

“If you think that, won't you warn them? At least by the end of today.” (melty) “I understand.” (naofumi)

I brought Melty with me and headed to the town square.

I stood on the platform established in the square and vocalised loudly.

“Er....everyone who put in effort for the sake of the town's development, and all the adventurers who are utilising the town, I have some things I want you all to hear.” (naofumi) After I checked that everyone had gathered, I started talking.

I didn't have a memo but it was a simple task to say all the lines I had memorised earlier.

“Lately, some people have the misconception that we are a privileged class and have been causing some disturbances. That's why I'm giving this warning. In this town there are no social statuses between races.”

(naofumi) A third of the demi-humans started to make noise.

“I’m not really saying to forget the past and make friends. However, whether it’s this town or the village, our purpose is the reconstruction. My goal is not to create a town in Melromarc that will provide Demi-humans with hospitality, but I want no more than to have a government like what the previous head who lived here created. Please don’t forget this.” (naofumi) As far as it goes, I heard that what the previous head wanted to do was to spread the awareness that Demi-humans and humans were equal living beings, in both hospitality and discrimination.

I also joined that cause.

“In the same way, my raising of slaves is a not a charitable enterprise, but for the sake of increasing the war potential during the waves. Please bear in mind that I don’t have the intention of raising any abandoned children.” (naofumi) This was a problem I had to bring up in public.

It’s not something that can be forgotten.

Jeez..... did they really think they could ask anything of God.

Whether it was Silt Welt or Schild Frieden.

They’re nations which I may visit eventually, but I hope that they’re the kind of nation that doesn’t like to be influenced if possible.

That is, when these problems occur.

I finished the announcement with no problems, and returned to the village.

After that was the trivial addition of Melty coming to blame me for a delay in her work, which was actually by caused her playing around with a paper aeroplane. She had Firo teach her how to make one and had used the paper on her desk – the document with a cross that I had drawn on as a prank. [T/N: This sentence was combined with the one before it as a massively long sentence in the raws and I had so much trouble figuring out how to word it/split it up.]

Come to think of it, I’ve made paper aeroplanes with the children

before.

Although they didn't fly very well because we used the leaves of the Bioplant instead of paper.

I was told that that paper had the plans for the town written on it.

Indeed, you're still a child..

When I said that, Melty's face turned red, she became hysterical and left, together with Firo.

Chapter 175: Ding Dong Ditch

『Damn... This body's will is stronger than I thought. But given time...』

I think I've heard this voice before.

The voice seems to be in pain.

『Kukuku, luckily there are two parts of me close by. If only I could obtain one...』

This seems to be quite a Chuu2 situation.

Mostly the atmosphere.

『What is this feeling? ... Is this Windea's presence? She survived! But...』

It's been six days since Rafatalia left for the mountains.

That morning.

“Sigh...” (Naofumi)

It happened again.

Atlas has recently been sneaking into my bed.

Firo also occasionally sleeps here, so I just assumed it was her and went back to sleep.

Whenever this happens, I go and get Fohl, but his situation is also gradually changing.

On morning of the second day.

Fohl was deceived.

In her bed, Atlas had left a dummy.

The next day he was suddenly overcome with sleepiness.

I believe that Atlas put something into his meal.

The dealer of this drug was Gaelion.

Recently he has learned how to use Sleep Breath.

And then the next day... He was physically put to sleep.

He's already losing to the girl.

I wonder what will happen today.

"Naofumi-sama! I have returned!" (Rafatalia) With a bang the door opens and Rafatalia enters.

She looked like she was looking forward to meeting me, but as soon as she steps in her face changes.

"Recently she's been sneaking in here. Is there anything you can do about it?" (Naofumi) "Um... To clarify, nothing has happened yet, right?" (Rafatalia) "What was supposed to happen?" (Naofumi) I truly am troubled by her sneaking into my bed.

Both Firo and Atlas don't listen when I tell them to stop.

Perhaps the indecency of the situation is angering the pure Rafatalia.

Does she think I'm the sort of man who would do such a thing?

"Sigh... That's right. Naofumi-sama is just that sort of person."
(Rafatalia) "Please go get Fohl. I'm more worried about him right now."
(Naofumi) "Yes." (Rafatalia)

Today he was imprisoned by being wrapped in a mattress. (TL: Think Erio from Denpa Onna) Unable to move, he was left lying face down in his house the entire time.

"Naofumi-sama? Why don't you just deny her?" (Rafatalia) "I definitely drove her out yesterday. And so she slept outside. The day before, I used the slave seal, but she ignored the punishment and came in anyways."
(Naofumi) "Is she some sort of Demon!?" (Rafatalia) When I tried to drive her out, she slept outside. And her previous illness gave even more pain than the Slave Seal, so she was already used to it. She was able to sleep through the punishment.

Fohl is quite angry.

What exactly do you expect me to do?

Fohl himself was forcibly put to sleep twice already.

“That’s right. Naofumi-sama is just that sort of person.” (Rafatalia)
“Why did you repeat it? What are you trying to say?” (Naofumi) “...
What’s wrong Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas)

Atlas slowly gets up and innocently asks this.

We’re worrying over you, you know.

“... You don’t get it?” (Rafatalia)

“I’m just sharing my sleeping spot with him. Is it that bad of a thing?”
(Atlas) “To be honest, it’s troubling me. Isn’t the seal giving you pain as well?” (Naofumi) “The warmth my heart receives outweighs the pain. Why can I not sleep with you?” (Atlas) “Your brother will get noisy.” (Naofumi) “Atlas! Why do you have to go to someone like that’s house!?” (Fohl) “See what I said.” (Naofumi)

“Don’t mind my brother. I only yearn for Naofumi-sama’s attention.”
(Atlas) “What are you saying!?” (Fohl)

Atlas has raised quite a commotion...

What could have possible done this to her? There’s one possibility.

“Rafatalia, and also Fohl.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Rafatalia)

“What!” (Fohl)

“This might be a side effect of the Yggdrasil medicine.” (Naofumi)
“Ha?” (Both)

Right. If that’s the case then everything makes sense.

Many excellent medicines have troublesome side-effects. Perhaps it increases the psychological dependence of the person taking it.

That’s the only possibility I can think of.

“Look at the Military Instructor. She’s affectionately calling me Saint-sama. The Yggdrasil medicine might have a love potion like effect.”
(Naofumi) So the high class medicine has a single defect. Yeah.

And the effect of the medicine on Atlas was greater than it was on the

Granny.

But I can't increase the slave seal effects on her. She may die.

"Anyways, until the effects dissipate, we must be vigilant." (Naofumi)
"T-that's right!" (Rafatalia)

"Hah!?" (Fohl)

Rafatalia agrees with my hypothesis, but Fohl seems surprised.

"Are you unsatisfied with something?" (Naofumi) "N-no! That must be it! It has to be a side-effect! It was a medicine strong enough to give Atlas a full recovery. It must have a strong side-effect!" (Fohl) "You're wrong, Naofumi-sama! I yearn for Naofumi-sama from the bottom of my heart!" (Atlas) "Now then, Atlas let's level up a lot today!" (Fohl) "Ah, Naofumi-samaaaaaaaa!" (Atlas)

Fohl grabs Atlas and leaves the premises.

This is the opposite pattern from before.

It's a bit refreshing.

Despite how they act, they're still siblings.

"Now then, Rafatalia. Did you finish your mountain training?"
(Naofumi) "No... We decided to switch locations, so I stopped by..."
(Rafatalia) "Saint-sama, has my disciple Rafatalia stopped by here?"
(Granny) I hear the Old Woman's voice from outside.

Disciple...

"I see..." (Naofumi)

"It seems... I must return to the mountains now." (Rafatalia) Hengen Musou, was it?

It seems the training is tough.

Perhaps I will have to undertake it later.

Well I probably have to.

If I take on an attack that ignores defense, I'll probably die.

Yes. I'll find some free time and train on my own.

"... Boy, do you wish for greater power?" (Granny?) Outside, I see the Old Woman trying to recruit Fohl.

... Female Knight is staring at him with jealous eyes from afar.

She took a vacation to go with the old woman, but she has yet to be taught?

"I-I have a duty to look after my little sister!" (Fohl) "I won't accept it if you escape with such a lukewarm reason. For the Saint-sama, you must attain even greater strength!" (Granny) "A-Atlas! I-I am! I aaaaammmmm!" (Fohl)

Was Fohl's fate decided from the beginning?

... This is no good.

If Fohl isn't here, how am I supposed to prevent Atlas from coming to my bed.

Hm? Atlas is waving her hands at me.

"Now there's nothing stopping me from sleeping with you." (Naofumi's mind) Is what she must be thinking.

I must take drastic measures.

"For now, let me take some measures. Naofumi-sama doesn't have to worry!" (Rafatalia) "Ah, understood. I'll rely on you." (Naofumi) "Yes. I definitely won't let Naofumi-sama make any mistakes." (Rafatalia) If I leave it to Rafatalia it should be okay.

And what do you mean by make any mistakes?

And after breakfast, Rafatalia and the others once again set off.

And they took Fohl with them.

Kon, Kon.

Again. Recently I've been having my house Ding-Dong-Dashed quite a bit.

They're probably delighted over seeing me come out and find no one there.

That's why, after the slaves gathered at breakfast, I accessed the slave seal options and checked a box.

"Recently, someone has been doing pranks on my house. Does anyone have anything to say about this?" (Naofumi) ... Nobody stepped forward.

And none of their slave seals activated.

So it wasn't a slave?

Then...

I stared at the soldiers, and other shopkeepers who have come to the village.

They all shook their heads.

... Who could it be?

I confirm it.

I open the door, and of course no one is there.

This happens on an average of three times a day.

I could get someone to watch the door, but then they probably won't pull any pranks.

But I can't really leave this matter alone.

Kon, Kon.

By the way, yesterday I waited in front of the door and opened it the second it was knocked.

It was Kiel.

And like Atlas, she claimed it was the first time that she knocked.

She asked what the orders were for today, and she was with a large group of slaves so she probably wasn't the culprit.

And today, Kiel and the others have left to go peddling.

The only slaves in the village at the moment are those that are good with their hands, and I have already told them not to come to my house this morning.

So this time it must be the culprit.

I won't let them away today.

「Shield Prison!」 (Naofumi)

I capture whoever's on the other side of the door.

I open the door.

The Shield Prison is shaking, it looks like I caught something.

“What's wrong, Count?” (Rat)

“Rat, what are you doing here at this time?” (Naofumi) “I took a walk for a change of pace. More importantly, what are you trying to do?” (Rat)

“Recently someone's been knocking my door and running. I told you at breakfast, right?” (Naofumi) “Ah, right. So that's the culprit?” (Rat)

“Most likely.” (Naofumi)

“I wonder what sort of person it is.” (Rat) Shield Prison's effects wear off, and disappear.

“KYUAAAAAAAA!?” (Gaelion)

...

Me and Rat stare at him with the same fed up expression.

Yeah, if it wasn't a slave, I should have suspected the monsters. But I didn't think there was a monster who would actually attempt to Ding-Dong-Dash.

Gaelion tries to escape by flying into the sky.

I open the monster seal and activate a punishment.

“KYUAAAA!?” (Gaelion)

Gaelion falls to the ground and begins thrashing about.

Including his tail, the dragon's full height is now two meters.

He definitely looks like a dragon.

But his tail is too thick.

His eyes are big, and he gives off the impression of an innocent child.
He's also a bit fat.

His current level is 35.

His growth has begun to slow down. He didn't grow as big as I thought he would.

Taniko hears Gaelion cry out, and comes running.

"Gaelion, what's wrong!?" (Taniko)

"He's the culprit. I caught him red-handed." (Naofumi) "Eh?" (Taniko)

Taniko seems to be deliberating whether or not to defend Gaelion. She looks at me.

"Don't defend him. If someone does something wrong, they will be punished." (Naofumi) "Understood... bad Gaelion. You can't pull pranks. Bad!" (Taniko) "Kyuaa..." (Gaelion)

"What's happening, Master?" (Firo)

Firo hears the commotion and comes over.

Wasn't she playing with Melty?

"Ah, you made him mad!" (Firo)

Firo taunts Gaelion and tries to rile him up.

"Gaelion made Master mad. That's why master belongs on only Firo's back." (Firo) "KYAUUUUUUUUU!" (Gaelion) (TL: His cry actually changes) Gaelion begins to get angry.

I turn on Firo's punishment as well.

"AKYAAAAAA! W-why?" (Firo)

"Don't laugh at someone else's mistakes." (Naofumi) "B-but Master laughs at others..." (Firo)

...Now that you mention it, she's right.

I deactivate the monster seal.

I understand Rafatalia's feelings now.

Though I don't plan on reforming myself.

"Why are you admitting defeat here!?" (Rat) "I laugh at others mistakes, so I don't have a right to caution others on it." (Naofumi) "You know..." (Rat)

Rat puts her hand on her head. She seems amazed.

I laugh at Witch and Trash's failures. I laugh at the other heroes situations.

I can't be persuading others not to do as such.

Though I don't plan on reforming myself.

"Just because you think he's your rival, you can't go around saying things like that." (Rat) "Bu..." (Firo)

"If you get me angry, you know what happens, right?" (Rat) "No!" (Firo)

What's with this farce? Though this may be good therapy for Firo.

"Why would you do such a prank?" (Taniko) Taniko pats Gaelion's face. Gaelion calls out softly.

"It's because he wanted to play with you, he says." (Taniko) "Ha?" (Naofumi)

"You never play with him. You only play with that bird." (Taniko) "Mu...!" (Firo)

Firo and Taniko glare at each other.

When Gaelion is concerned, it seems Firo gets serious.

It's not like I particularly play with Firo, anyways.

"Wait, wait... so if I don't play with him, he'll keep doing this?" (Naofumi) "KYUA!" (Gaelion)

He nods.

I can't be bothered to look after him.

I look at Rat.

"Skinship is important. For both of them." (Rat) Is that so? Well that seems like a pain.

"Then, Firo and Gaelion. I'll play with you guys every day on rotation. However if you bother the other person, your turn will be skipped."
(Naofumi) "Mu...!" (Firo)

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

They glare at each other and make sounds of complaint.

"Then I won't play with either of you." (Naofumi) "I-I got it." (Firo)

"KYUA KYUA." (Gaelion)

Both sides give in and nod.

"Then today, we'll start with Gaelion." (Naofumi) "KYUA!" (Gaelion)

"Eh...!" (Firo)

"Half the day has already passed. Tomorrow, you will get a longer turn, so endure it. Aren't you supposed to be the older one here?" (Naofumi)
"Mu... I got it. Then." (Firo)

Reluctantly, Firo invites Taniko to go level.

Atlas also goes with them.

"Oh right, Count. I thought I should teach you how to make use of a dragon." (Rat) "What?" (Naofumi)

"Dragon body fluids are high class medicinal ingredients." (Rat) "I see..." (Naofumi)

"His saliva and breath might make for good materials." (Rat) Oh right, Atlas was able to make a sleeping drug with Gaelion's breath.

In order to put her brother to sleep.

I wonder how he fell for that so easily.

"Similarly, some parts of Filo Rials can be turned into medicine, but...

That child is extraordinary. I recommend getting closer to her and exploiting that later.”(Rat) “Oy, do you really love monsters?” (Naofumi) Firo’s saliva?

Motoyasu is the only one who would want something like that.

Maybe I’ll consider it.

“Now then, Gaelion. What should we play?” (Naofumi) “KYUA!”
(Gaelion)

His tail wags like a dogs. He seems happy.

I guess I’ll play with the Frisbee Shield.

I change my shield into a Frisbee and throw it.

Gaelion majestically chases it while flapping his wings.

The disc flies quite far.

He catches the thrown Frisbee, it disappears and returns to my hand.

Gaelion seems overjoyed. He flies straight at me and begins licking my face.

It’s nice how pure he is. Unlike that talking bird.

And after playing with Gaelion for a while, I went back to my work.

Chapter 176: Wimp

“And so Rafatalia’s proposed Atlas countermeasure is you?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, I am also quite troubled.” (Sadina)

Sadina answers while pouring herself a glass of sake in my room.

Why was she even chosen?

“Well, just leave it to this Onee-san.” (Sadina)

“That’s just making me more anxious.” (Naofumi)

Sadina had a fast growth rate, and she is already level 35.

She hunts alone.

I wonder how strong the sea monsters she fights are.

Should I send the other slaves ocean monster hunting? I could build boats, and...

“And, what exactly should I do? Should I act like I’m having a good time with Naofumi-chan in front of Atlas-chan?” (Sadina) “That sounds idiotic. What do you mean by, ‘a good time’.” (Naofumi) She’s avoiding directly saying anything indecent, but Sadina is slowly taking off her loincloth.

Who wants to have a good time with you!? Please limit your jokes.

Rafatalia, your choice of personnel is wrong.

“If it’s with Naofumi-chan, I think I can have a good time.” (Sadina)

“Listen to people when they’re talking to you.” (Naofumi) “Hm? What sort of good time did you have in mind? I wanted to invite you to drink sake with me.” (Sadina) “Sigh...” (Naofumi)

My head hurts. And I haven’t even drunken anything.

So she was adjusting the cloth as not to spill anything on it.

I’m supposed to be past an age where I get flustered by something like that.

“Anyways, stop calling me Naofumi-chan.” (Naofumi)

“Isn’t it fine?” (Sadina)

“No, it’s not. That’s why I’m telling you.” (Naofumi) Why am I spending my night under the same roof as this one? Dealing with people like this tires me out.

This is all Atlas’s fault.

“Don’t be so stiff. Gaelion-chan is also helping keep watch.” (Sadina)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Just in case, we also have Gaelion standing on watch.

He’s too big to fit through the door.

But we somehow managed to squeeze him in.

Gaelion has curled up in a corner of the room.

He occasionally wanders around looking at the objects in my room with curiosity.

“Sleeping with Gaelion-chan feels quite high-class.” (Sadina) “That’s all you’re thinking of?” (Naofumi)

This person... I’m not going to become her toy.

“Do you have any intention of answering Atlas-chan’s feeling?” (Sadina) “Feelings? That person is a child. Rafatalia is the same. My relationship with them is like father and child.” (Naofumi) They didn’t have anyone to look out for them, and suddenly I took up that role for them.

Even if they may mistake that emotion for love, it’s more like the love they will have for their family.

And as an elder, I cannot approach them based on those vague emotions.

That’s something that comes after they mature mentally.

And even if they mature, we are in a situation where anyone could die in battle at any moment.

I only bought Rafatalia because she was the same Gender as Witch. I don’t have the right to be like that with her.

The same goes for Atlas.

“I’m a coward, you know. I’m building a place that may take them to their deaths here.” (Naofumi) “And that’s Naofumi-chan’s reason?” (Sadina)

Sadina stares at me with serious eyes.

“Naofumi-chan sure does treasure everyone.” (Sadina) “Did you hear what I just said? I’m nothing but a coward.” (Naofumi) “I’ll leave it at that. But if you get really close to Rafatalia-chan, you better be prepared for stuff like that.” (Sadina) “What are you even talking about?” (Naofumi)

I think the Sake is getting to her.

After talking for a while, she lies on the bed, and turns her back to the door.

“Um.” (Atlas)

What the hell are you doing? Before I can say that, Atlas quickly opens the door and enters the room.

“Oh my, Naofumi-chan is quite bold~.” (Sadina)

“Who is being b-!?” (Naofumi)

She lifts up the covers and pulls me in, interrupting my sentence.

What is this? W-wait!

“Ara, Atlas-chan? Naofumi-chan is currently doing something fun with this Onee-chan, so please come back later.” (Sadina) Don’t screw with me.

I don’t want to get into a situation that could cause such misunderstandings.

Her large body is trying to crush me.

But, don’t forget that I am the Hero of the Shield.

Something of this weight feels like nothing.

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

For some reason, even Gaelion climbs into the bed.

“I really don’t get that feeling...” (Atlas)

“Ara? You saw through it. Oh well. ‘Twas a Failure.” (Sadina) “What do you mean failure!?” (Naofumi)

Was this Sadina’s supposed Atlas Countermeasure?

She can’t see, so if she doesn’t feel that sort of presence, Atlas won’t be fooled.

And even if it succeeded, my standings in the village would be crushed. Everyone would look at me like a pervert.

What sort of situation would have me in this position with Sadina.

“Quit it!” (Naofumi)

“Then onto stage 2. Gaelion-chan.” (Sadina)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

“Go try to have a fun time with Atlas.” (Sadina)

“That’s definitely impossible. Give it up.” (Naofumi) Stage 2...!?

Are these people even serious?

“Naofumi-sama and Sadina-san sure get along well.” (Atlas) Atlas ignores us and enters the house.

Don’t enter my house without permission!

“Now then, Atlas-chan. You understand why I’m here, right?” (Sadina)
“...Yes.” (Atlas)

“You’re quick minded. Atlas-chan is quite a good girl, but please leave these sorts of things for when you become an adult.” (Sadina) “I can’t.” (Atlas)

“T-this Onee-san doesn’t like kids who don’t listen.” (Sadina) “I yearn for Naofumi-sama. I just want to get a little closer to him.” (Atlas)
“Arara... This is quite serious.” (Sadina)

Sadina seems to have given up.

So Rafatalia's countermeasures only go this far.

"Naofumi-chan, won't you have a fun time with Atlas-chan?" (Sadina)
"Hell no!" (Naofumi)

"Then there's no helping it." (Sadina)

Sadina puts her hand on Atlas's shoulder.

"Atlas-chan, Naofumi-chan is a wimp, so he can't bring himself to devour women." (Sadina) "Wimp? Oy!" (Naofumi)

Somehow the situation has headed in this direction!

"It's alright. Naofumi-sama is someone who does things when the time is right." (Atlas) Atlas seems to have developed a strange trust in me!

This is a pain! I want to run away.

Does this girl even know what she's saying?

"Your resolve is unwavering. Atlas-chan, me and Naofumi-chan are concerned about your age." (Sadina) "My... age?" (Atlas)

"Yeah, Atlas-chan is still a child. You've just gotten over your illness, so please grow up healthily. And if you still love Naofumi-chan at that point... Naofumi-chan will consider it as well." (Sadina) "I see..." (Atlas)

Atlas seems troubled. She tilts her head as she answers.

Nice follow-up.

Because she's a child, tell her 'After you grow up, we'll get married.'

Since I was raised in Otaku culture, I know the phrase works.

It will bring some problems down the road, but I don't plan to stay in this world for too long. So I don't have to deal with it.

Yeah, let's go with this.

...Wait. Isn't this the train of thought of a wimp?

Let's not think too hard about it.

“It’s still too early for you.” (Sadina)

“But I heard that he sleeps with Rafatalia-chan.” (Atlas) “Not that ‘sleep with’. We just sleep in the same house. The only one who sometimes climbs into my bed is Firo.” (Naofumi) “Then, without any deeper meaning, please let me sleep in the same bed as you.” (Atlas) It was no good. Words aren’t getting through.

No it seems that they are, but her will is unchanged.

“And this is a place where I may die tomorrow. If I have to wait to adulthood, it may be too late.” (Atlas) ...So she realized it.

In this world, you don’t know when and where you might die.

And the people of my village are eventually going to combat the wave.

It goes without saying that the people here may die.

But this is a child whose illness could have taken her at any time.

She must live treasuring every day.

“I can’t live relying on my brother forever. I want to properly marry someone.” (Atlas) “... And that someone is Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

“Yes, I can’t consider anyone other than Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “Then it would be best for you to understand his feelings more.” (Sadina)

“Naofumi-sama’s feelings?” (Atlas)

“Right. Naofumi-chan is considering Atlas-chan and everyone else. It’s not like he has no special feelings for you, but there is something more important than that. Do you understand?” (Sadina) “... Yes.” (Atlas)

Atlas answers after a long silence.

Sadina is quite good with words.

Is she just good with dealing with children?

I should caution myself not to get swept up into her pace.

“From Naofumi-chan’s point of view, Atlas-chan is a precious villager. Everyone in this village is like family to him. Even his closest Rafatalia understands this.” (Sadina) Though I believe that Rafatalia is quite

diligent, and uninterested in love.

But if I bring that up here, I will get into trouble, so I'll keep quiet.

"So don't try to be selfish or Naofumi-chan will get mad. Please wait for the right opportunity to get him." (Sadina) "I understand." (Atlas)

Sadina points at me... For some reason her index finger and middle finger are curled with her thumb in-between them.

In my world, that sign is quite dangerous.

I wonder what it means in this one.

It seems Sadina is using it in the way I know.

"Then I'll sleep in his room waiting for the opportunity." (Atlas)
"Nothing Changed!" (Naofumi)

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

What am I supposed to do.

"There's no helping it. This Onee-chan will sleep with you. Don't go crawling into Naofumi-chan's bed." (Sadina) "Got it." (Atlas)

For now... Does she understand?

I don't feel any safer.

Atlas lies down on Rafatalia's bed.

"Sadina-san, before we sleep can you tell me a story?" (Atlas) "Let's see, then will one about the ocean be fine?" (Sadina) Sadina soothes Atlas and begins speaking.

She's a strange person, but she seems to be nice.

She's trusted by the villagers, though I don't get what they see in her. She's become about as trusted as me.

They rely on her more than Rafatalia.

She also seems to be good with children. If she doesn't mess around, there are a few jobs I want her to do.

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion was listening to Sadina's story, but he soon got bored and began snooping around the room.

He sticks his head into the sack I keep the materials used to make new clothes and weapons.

"Hey, don't tamper with that." (Naofumi)

Gaelion is quite a curious one. He's also easy to deal with. Firo was also like this once.

Is what... I thought.

But I never thought this would be the trigger for that big incident.

Chapter 177: Level Drain

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

The sack collapses and the contents fall out.

Recently Gaelion has acquired some bad habits.

Last time it was the Ding-Dong-Dash, this time it's the sack rummaging.

I scold him every single time but he still doesn't stop.

Just when I thought Atlas became more obedient, this time it's Gaelion.

Also, Firo does the same thing. Even now.

By the way, Firo while searching the garbage would refer to them as treasures.

After all, she is a bird. Gaelion is no different.

Ah, I'm sure the dumpster diving would also turn into a territorial dispute.

“Ah Jeez..... think about the cleaning I'd need to do.” (Naofumi) Rolling out from the sack are demon bones, ores and the Zombie Dragon's core which was previously attached to the Barbarian's Armor.

The core of Zombie Dragon continues to roll.

Gaelion sees the Zombie Dragon's core, chases it with his eyes and starts playing with it.

His reaction is like a cat's.

This reminds me, Gaelion and Firo both like shiny things.

Didn't Firo's eyes shine brightly the same way when she saw the Zombie Dragon's core for the first time. It's the same habit they both shared. (TL: referring to the time Firo ate the Zombie Dragon's heart in Chapter 44) “KYUAA!?” (Gaelion)

Though I am slightly calmed down by this happy state, I have no wish for such mood.

Let's end this quickly with a swift scolding.

Paku!

Gaelion grips the core of the Zombie Dragon with his jaws.

"Hey. That thing isn't yours. Return it quickly." (Naofumi) But I might as well have been talking to the wind, Gaelion pays no attention to me.

The Zombie Dragon's core is deep within his mouth..... Honestly.

Gokkun.

He swallows it.

"Hey! Spit it out!" (Naofumi)

I grab Gaelion by the scruff and shake him.

Huh, didn't the monster seal have a punishment for that?

I tried activating the system at the same time.

"KYU!?" (Gaelion)

Gaelion convulses and writhes with his eyes wide open.

"KYU..... GYA..... KYUUU....." (Gaelion)

Gaelion breaks out into cold sweats with his eyes tightly shut and moans as if enduring something.

The sound of something creaking can be heard from Gaelion's whole body.

"O-oi." (Naofumi)

"What's going on?" (Sadina)

"There's a terrible ominous feeling overflowing from Gaelion-chan, is he all right?" (Atlas) An ominous feeling?

Before I could ask, I see with my own eyes a darkish purple light being emitted from Gaelion's body..... and the magical power is unleashed.

This color, I recognized it.

When I equipped the Wrath Shield, Firo was also enveloped by the same

aura.

“GYAOOOOOOOO!” (Gaelion)

With bloodshot eyes, Gaelion roars towards the ceiling.

A breath of magic is unleashed from Gaelion’s mouth and the ceiling is blown away in an instant.

“GYA!” (Gaelion)

Flap..... the sound from his wings reverberates as they begin to expand, Gaelion leaps high into the air.

Great! I’ll just open the monster seal and activate the punishment.

Opening the monster seal!

But the view for my status window is warped, the monster seal could not be activated.

“GYAOOOOOOOO!” (Gaelion)

As I was thinking of calling out to Gaelion with a loud voice, he begins to fly towards somewhere else.

“W-what?” (Naofumi)

“What just occurred?” (Sadina)

“Gaelion ate the Zombie Dragon’s core which was used in my armor. Then that happened.” (Naofumi) “Something..... wrapped around Gaelion-chan.....and then—” (Atlas) We exit the building and look at the direction Gaelion flew in.

“What is it?” (Rat)

The slaves who remained in the village begin to appear when they heard the commotion.

“What? Did something happen?” (Taniko)

Together, Rat and Taniko look in the same direction towards me.

“To tell you the truth-” (Naofumi)

I explained how Gaelion ate the Zombie Dragon’s core.

“The core of a Zombie Dragon..... the Count sure has strange things.”
(Rat) “Do you have any ideas?” (Naofumi)

“I’m not that knowledgeable about dragons. Dragons are a species whose ecology is shrouded in mystery. Though I’ve heard the cores found in other dragons are highly desired..... but to make him lose control like this.....” (Rat) “We must chase after him.” (Taniko)

Says Taniko impatiently. Oh yeah, it’s her precious dragon.

The core of the Zombie Dragon is important for my armor and in the worse case, I’ll get it back even if I have to fight Gaelion for it.

“I understand. We have no choice but to call Firo and leave.”

It doesn’t mean we couldn’t just chase after him. But it will be much quicker with Firo.

I haven’t even ridden him yet but I have to take him down, what kind of dragon is he.

“We need horses to go to the next town.....” (Naofumi) Riding on horses prepared by the soldiers, we are off to find Firo.

Halfway to next town, we meet several soldiers on horses riding in from the opposite direction.

“Ah, Shield Hero! We were just on our way to fetch you.” (Soldier)
“What is it? I also have an errand to attend to.” (Naofumi) “Princess Melty urgently summons the Shield Hero. It seems something grave has happened to the Shield Hero’s holy bird.” (Soldier) “What!?” (Naofumi)

While being guided by the soldiers, we head towards the clinic built in town.

Upon entering the clinic, Melty comes rushing with a face that’s about to break into tears.

“You know..... Firo-chan started suffering suddenly. Naofumi. Help Firo-chan!” (Melty) “Suddenly telling me to be a doctor..... I do not understand because I’m not a treatment master. But if there’s something I can do, I will do it.” (Naofumi) “Absolutely!” (Melty)

That being said, if it's a really dangerous disease, there's no choice but to rely on the Yggdrasil medicine.

The problem is, there's only one left in stock, but if it's for Firo, then it's worth using.

I'm reminded of how deeply attached I am to Firo, I will spare no expense.

"Anyway, let me have a look." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Melty)

I enter into the medical examination room accompanied by Melty and the Treatment Master.

There Firo lies wearily in her monster form.

"Uhh..... uhhh....." (Firo)

Around the abdomen, her body was being eroded like when I changed into the Wrath Shield.

Actually, it's worse. It would be better to say that the damage has greatly increased.

Though the erosion is being resisted by the shiny crown of feathers on Firo's head, you can feel that the erosion is winning.

"What's going on here? Can this even be cured by the Yggdrasil medicine?" (Naofumi) "It is unknown. But because the magical connotation is so strong, I don't expect the Yggdrasil medicine to have any effect." (Treatment Master) The bewildered Treatment Master answers my questions.

I check the status of Firo using the status window.

I can determine simple matters such as whether Firo is being invaded by poison or paralysis.

"Oh, Master....." (Firo)

Firo reaches out to me while groaning painfully.

I touch Firo gently on the cheek.

She wasn't in her human form but still, when stroking her cheek, even though she groans painfully, Firo lets out a comfortable smile and closes her eyes.

Then I continue with the status verification.

Firo's status screen flickers many times like in a sandstorm.

No matter how you consider it, it is unusual.

I also notice a big problem while I'm there.

Firo's level is lower than the number I know.

Level down? What is going on?

Multiple possibilities are surfacing.

The problem is its only circumstantial evidence for now so I can't be certain.

".....Bring in Rat from the village." (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Melly)

After a while, not only Rat, but even Atlas, Taniko and Sadina come in together.

"Firo-chan!? What happened?" (Taniko)

The worried Taniko runs up to Firo.

Usually, you are prejudiced against Firo whose relationship with Gaelion is bad, but now you're saying you are worried.

Is it natural because you like monsters?

"Rat, what you think?" (Naofumi)

"If I was to take a haphazard guess, I'd say she's being eroded by a curse, don't you think? Will you let me have a look?" (Rat) Rat reads the diagnostic notes that the Treatment Master made, then she begins to medically examines Firo's body.

"If you can look at the status, you can see the level going down little by little." (Naofumi) "Level down? Isn't that the equivalent of a high-ranked

curse? So far I've never seen anything as terrible as this." (Rat) "I'm willing to bet this has a connection with Gaelion losing control and running off at the same time. What do you think?" (Naofumi) "I think there's no doubt. But..... is there a matching contact point between Gaelion and Firo?" (Rat) "There is, if you assume the core of the Zombie Dragon as the cause." (Naofumi) "What?" (Rat)

"During the encounter with the Zombie Dragon, Firo ate his core. The one I received was only a small fragment." (Naofumi) In fact, the reason why Firo managed to defeat the Zombie Dragon was at the decisive moment when Firo ate his core. When we assume that both events are connected, we become more convinced.

"Indeed, it is reasonable to consider something is influencing Firo who ate the core and Gaelion who is currently running out of control." (Rat) "I suppose." (Naofumi)

"Then confirm it with Gaelion. I feel like it's not yet settled with that alone somehow." (Rat) I verify Gaelion's status.

As expected, just like Firo's status window, a sandstorm happens, and there are a lot of things which could not be read.

However.....

"His level has skyrocketed." (Naofumi)

It is visibly increasing.

Gaelion's level which is 35 has become 45.

.....It's exceeded the class up limit.

"Umm..... I feel an ominous force is flowing out from Firo-chan." (Atlas) "It is plain to see." (Naofumi)

"No, I don't mean that." (Atlas)

Atlas points her finger at something.

Although there's suppose to be nothing there.

"Atlas-chan is a child who can see things that are not visible to the

naked eye, she might know where the force is moving towards.” (Rat)

“Hmm.....” (Naofumi)

There is enough possibility.

She has a surprisingly useful ability.

The problem is the supposed destination in which Firo’s force is flowing towards.

It’s the same direction that Gaelion flew in.

“Is it possible for the core in Firo to be vomited out?” (Naofumi) “It’s impossible. When I incidentally used my magical power of perception, I can see the core circulating throughout her whole body.” (Atlas) I verified the status of Firo

To recall Rafatalia and the others to chase after it..... at the speed it is decreasing, we don’t even have two days.

Firo is fast becoming level 1 no matter what I think.

No, it’s still better if it becomes 1 and stops. At the worst, she may die.

“Also, I can see some additional force leaking out from Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “What?” (Naofumi)

I check my own status screen.

Apparently, it’s unnoticeable.

“That— it’s from around the area where the left arm is now.” (Atlas) It’s the place where I have my shield attached.

It comes from the shield..... I had let the shield absorbed half of the core fragment. (TL: Referring to the events in Chapter 44) Does that mean the shield’s ability is decreasing?

I check the list again for confirmation but there is no abnormality for now.

Rather, my heart seems to be feeling refreshed.

What was I supposed to be angry about again?

.....I sense danger.

“For now locate where the Battle Instructor is having the training camp and give instructions to come back. We are chasing after Gaelion immediately!”

Otherwise there wouldn't be enough time.

Atlas steps forward full of determination.

“Naofumi-sama, there is something I would like to try out for a bit on Firo.” (Atlas) “What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I would like to suppress the leakage of Firo's force even by a little.” (Atlas) Atlas goes to the side of the laying Firo and puts a hand on her chest, then she affixes both hands lightly.

“Mm..... ah.....” (Firo)

Firo moans painfully while opening her eyes and slowly gets up.

“It became a little bit lighter.” (Firo)

“Firo!” (Melty)

Melty runs up to Firo.

“I think we've gained some extra time.” (Atlas)

“Well then..... A carriage.....” (Naofumi)

Shit. There are no guys who can run as fast as a vehicle.

Filo Rial is out peddling.

Do I have to rent a Filo Rial in town?

“Th pursuit of Gaelion will be me, Sadina and....Tani... No, you and Rat will——” (Naofumi) “The one who will draw Master's carriage is..... Firo.” (Firo) Firo declares with a strong will in her eyes while being supported by Atlas.

“Firo-chan is no good! You have to stay still.” (Melty) “Yes. You rest quietly in bed.” (Naofumi)

However, Firo shakes her head to refuse.

“No—..... Firo is absolutely going together with.” (Firo) There is none of the usual vigor. But she takes a step forward and insists to follow at any costs.

.....If she was made to stay here, she will certainly come chasing.

No matter what, she is very stubborn.

“Well, if anything happens, I’ll leave you in a clinic. And then, I’ll get another guy to pull the carriage.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama!?” (Atlas)

“Atlas, you’ll also be there to suppress it, right?” (Naofumi) “Ye-Yes!” (Atlas)

“Good.” (Naofumi)

“I will go too!” (Melly)

Melly declares even though she is on the verge of breaking out into tears.

Ah, her best friend is in a pinch. She insists on coming by any means necessary just like Firo.

I ignore the declaration of the princess.

“Do not act rashly. You are a princess.” (Naofumi) “Being a princess comes second, Firo-chan is my friend!” (Melly) “I see.” (Naofumi)

.....Before was Firo throwing a tantrum about wanting to protect Melty.
[T/N: Corrected by Kookie]

Firo has a good friend indeed.

“We are setting off to chase after Gaelion. Soldiers of the castle must hurry and notify Rafatalia and the others.” (Naofumi) ““Yes!”” (Everyone)

Thus we let the stubborn Firo overdo herself and left on a carriage.

Chapter 178: Grasping Forces

It's been four hours since we departed

Firo's status decrease is being suppressed by Atla

Firo's Lvl. points are declining steadily

The Lvl. down speed have decreased but it's still a severe situation "Atla, Do you know where the power is going?" (Naofumi) "Yes, Firo tells me which direction it's heading" (Atla) "Okay" (Naofumi)

"Haaaa.... Haaaa...." (Firo)

"Firo-chan?" (Atla)

Atlas is riding Firo's back and I entrusted driving the carriage to Melty Rat and Taniko puts the situation in order, Sadina is watching the back Firo is getting considerably exhausted

It'll be dangerous if we don't make it there fast

Motoyasu's beloved Firo is in a great pinch

Where and what is that fellow doing at such a time

Raising a flag is now impossible

That guy isn't even around when you needed him

"Where on earth did he intend to fly?" (Naofumi)

"I can sense that he is somewhere over there" (Atla) It's still midnight. The sun will rise eventually, but it's still far.

"Worst case scenario, we have to get rid of Gaelion, Do you understand?" (Naofumi) I told Taniko directly. Taniko was the closest one to him. Even though Gaelion is mine, I think that I have to say it ".....uhhnn" (Taniko)

"It is strangely logical, I thought that you'd refuse it more" (Naofumi) "it's not like we're giving up just yet" (Taniko)

"Well, I know" (Naofumi)

“I understand that it is a bad decision to make. However, I refuse to consider not doing something about it” (Taniko) “Is that so... then I will get rid of any hesitation” (Naofumi) “I get it! It’s our last resort! But we absolutely have to help Gaelion” (Taniko) I’m trying to be as casual as I can be about this matter I understand that Gaelion is what’s tormenting Firo Gaelion is a huge asset for us, Ofcourse, getting rid of him is going to be our last option. I want to avoid that as much as possible “I hate the Hero” (Taniko)

Taniko sheds tears and she kept on crying all the while “I’m used to being hated”(Naofumi)

“It’s not you” (Taniko)

I can somehow sympathize with Taniko, It is something unlikely a Hero would do but not me.

but the one she is thinking of.... is it Itsuki? Saving people half-way, the barbaric Justice.

But this feeling is something different

Who exactly have I become?

Where would such a thing fly anyways?

“Rat.. Where do you think did Gaelion go to?” (Naofumi) “If I were to predict it, I think it would probably be the East of Melromarc”(Rat) “East huh?” (Naofumi)

If I remember correctly east of Melromarc is where we fought the rotting dragon.... Ah right “It’s the area where we faced the rotting dragon” (Naofumi) “I see.. It is merely going back to his own territory, right?”(Rat) “I think so too” (Naofumi)

“What should this Onee-san do?(Sadina)

While I was talking with Rat, Sadina answers from the back. I still can’t come up with a solution, there’s also a probability of encountering monsters at this hour.

Actually, there are several monsters that are following from behind But

Sadina is intercepting them with magic and harpoons The front is being manage by Atla, Firo and Melty. But Firo can't fight because she is already struggling on pulling the carriage It's unreasonable to force yourself

I also used Meteor shield to protect Atla and Firo at the bare minimum "I'm thinking of a way to return Gaelion back to his sense. You should be more vigilant of your surroundings" (Naofumi) "Y-yes...."(Sadina)

"If you have other ideas to help Gaelion then spit it out. And make it faster" (Naofumi) "..... Then maybe"(Rat)

"Can't we just pin him down and take it out of his mouth by hands? But we need to use a tool that he cannot bite through" (Rat) "It'll be alright. My defensive power is no joke"(Naofumi) "Well, we don't have to worry about the Count" (Rat) "Rat, can you suppress Gaelion using your drug?"(Naofumi) "Do you even need to ask me that?" (Rat)

Rats shows me a syringe with the drug in it

"This drug is quite strong. It is strong enough that even a dragon cannot move for a while"(Rat) "I see, then I'm counting on you" (Naofumi)

Raphtalia is not here, but the Lvl. around here is not very high Gaelion's Lvl. is increasing little by little and status is getting really high because of the shield's correction Draining Firo's status indicates his status

It's like fighting a dragon-shaped Firo

I think I'll be fine but the other slaves will be in trouble if they were to receive an attack If a god exist, it seems he wants to see me suffer

"First, let's have a meeting. Rat, It'll be good if you weaken him even if it's just a little" (Naofumi) "Okay. Will do"(Rat)

"Sadina I will approach Gaelion and you will be on guard with enemies getting near us" (Naofumi) ".... And me?"(Taniko)

Taniko is shaking while asking

"Can you fight?" (Naofumi)

"errr... If I do Gaelin will be badly injured and it'll be

dangerous”(Taniko) This strong sense of responsibility

“What can you do?” (Naofumi)

I don’t know how Taniko fights as well

Back then I saw her holding a stick but what is she doing now these days?

“I’m good with magic attacks, among everyone else this is something that I can take pride in”(Taniko) “Hooo... What kind of magic?” (Naofumi)

“I don’t really understand. But as for the woman who’s teaching me magic, she said that the magic that I’m use is different” (Taniko) The magic shop owner taught the slaves various kinds of magic. I did ask her to do that but what kind of magic did she teach Taniko?

“I don’t understand. You, what kind of magic are you using if you don’t understand what you are using?” (Naofumi) “I’m using the one that I learned from my father”(Taniko) I have a feeling that it is some kind of a unique magic I don’t understand even a little of it. Maybe I’ll understand it better if we go into battle I don’t have to the power to understand the slaves’ ability In MMO there’s a function that lets you monitor the guild member’s current status when you are raising them In Raids and Castle wars monitoring your allies will be your lifeline. In MMO I can choose my allies by considering their job and Lvl.

But I can’t evaluate them if I don’t see how they fight, Failure will occur again and again if the party is not organized There’s also a means where they could learn by letting them experience it first hand Pairing them with people they know to teach them the strategy is a sure fire way of doing it This is the evil truth because rules don’t apply with it This is the very reason that I feel like this is still a game “If I pair you with Atla, can you cooperate with her?” (Naofumi) “Uh yeah” (Taniko)

“What about Melty?” (Naofumi)

“That girl? What kind of magic is she using?” (Taniko) “Isn’t it water? I think that’s what it is” (Naofumi) I think Sadina is really suitable with

Melty's strongest magic. Afterall Sadina is an Aquatic type of Beastman and has a high perception with magic that is close to her habitat "How about you Sadina?" (Naofumi)

"Well, I can do both melee and magic"(Sadina)

Then Rat is the one who understands Demon ecology and Gaelion's abnormal condition "Well then, I'll be the vanguard and those who are good with magic will be at the rear and Sadina..."(Naofumi) Atla can't fight because she's suppressing Firo's curse.

I need more assistance given the situation

"Sadina, Please attack from the rear with your harpoon" (Naofumi)

"Yes.. Yes.."(Sadina)

"Understood"(Melty)

"Uh yeah"(Taniko)

"We don't have any choice but to go by this strategy" (Naofumi) I just noticed, but this party has a high number of females in it Although I'm not bothered with Raphtalia, Firo and Occasionally with Rishia. I think that this is a kind of party that Motoyasu would make I should treat Fohl more kindly. He may be a SisCon but I'd like a male companion.

"Count, Are you thinking of something strange"(Rat) How do you know that I'm thinking about something like that? Do the people in this world also have sixth sense?

Or is that what you would call a Woman's Intuition? Just kidding.

Furthermore, Several hours have passed and we've arrived at the east village. The sun also began to rise.

The means of transportation through Firo is really fast but Gaelion's flying speed is something else The mountains in the Eastern Village is covered in clouds... It's really dark(TLN: just to clear he meant that the mountain side is covered in clouds.. not the entire eastern part...) "Oh... It's Saint-sama"(Villager)

"It is the Shield Hero-sama"(Village)

The villagers spotted us and approached us... For some reason Taniko covered her whole body with a sheet of cloth “This morning a Villager heard a cry from dragon that came from the mountains”(Villager) “It’s is true that there is a dragon that escape and ran over here, we are here because we are chasing after it” (Naofumi) “”Uwaaa!””(Villagers)

I didn’t say that it came from our village because our reputation would be affected But the villagers who can somehow understand what’s happening fell silent “Just...”(Naofumi)

I looked at Atla and Firo’s situation

They seemed really tired

I was able to pinpoint the location where Gaelion ran away “We haven’t taken any rest since yesterday, go and take some rest for a while” (Naofumi) “...but”(Melly)

“if you are not in your best condition, we may not be able to win. Overdoing it is unacceptable so please agree and wait a little bit” (Naofumi) “U-understood”(Melly)

I registered the Village into the portal shield and it would be better If I leave a message to the Village(TLN: He’s referring to the leaving a message to the demi-human village) “Alright, It’s best if we could return to the village when something bad were to happen. Portal Shield!” (Naofumi) Ofcourse, I memorized the location and went back to the Village to check if Raphtalia and the others have returned ... I can warp 7 people including me

It says 6 people but I’m not included in it

In short I can warp 7 people including me

I suck at explaining things

Let’s just say 7 people in total

Or is it based on 3 people + my Lv / 20 kind of condition?

Firo and Atla is leaning against the wall and is resting alternately I reconfirmed her status

Firo's Lvl. is still decreasing little by little. This is dangerous "Please rest more until it's time" (Naofumi)

"Understood"(Melty)

"Please understand that I can't make medicine strong enough to suppress it" (Naofumi) "uhnn"(Firo)

"Firo-chan...here's some water"(Melty)

"Thank you Mel"(Firo)

I asked if they've seen Raphtalia but the results are not good I explained our escape with the portal shield and the cooldown I hope that Raphtalia gets back soon so we can start immediately Time is the problem

Judging from Firo's condition she won't even last for half a day I can't do anything but pray that Raphtalia and the others gets back from their training soon "I guess it's impossible afterall" (Naofumi)

The cooldown has finished but Raphtalia isn't back yet We don't have a choice but to stop Gaelion with this people We just have to prepare for the worst

"Atla and Firo please rest in the village"(Naofumi) "Please Master"(Firo)

"We don't have to travel long distance anymore. Travelling is just a stone's throw from here. Don't overdo it" (Naofumi) "But.... I want to go"(Firo)

"Stop it.. If you force yourself, you would only be too much of a burden. You can barely move yourself, you're already at your limit" (Naofumi) "no... no"(Firo)

"I said Atla and Firo" (Naofumi)

"I understand. Firo, Let's just leave it to Naofumi-sama"(Atla) "But Firo..."(Firo)

"Naofumi-sama is saying that taking Firo along is too much of a load to take. But even if he doesn't say so I will still stop you"(Atla) Firo reluctantly nodded in Atla's every word

Atla who has some trouble speaking because of her illness and Firo having the same situation because of the curse. This approach may become effective “How about you Melty?” (Naofumi)

“If it’s for Firo I would do anything”(Melty)

“Don’t force yourself. Because you’re the next queen.” (Naofumi) “I understand but this is something more important than being a Queen”(Melty) Can’t be helped they are close friends after all

After I leave and return to my own world Firo would probably stay with Melty “Firo!, Please wait a moment”(Melty)

“Mel....”(Firo)

“Please rest quietly in bed”(Melty)

“uhnn”(Firo)

I held Firo’s face and then she cried because of the feeling of helplessness This is the first time that I did such a thing

This is too much to bear

“It’s time to leave. Portal Shield” (Naofumi)

Then we came back to the east village and have begun to walk towards the mountain filled with dark clouds.

Chapter 179: A Mass of Klesha

“It should be somewhere around here.” (Naofumi) I climb the mountain, only to find that the ecosystem here is just as messed up as ever.

The soil is polluted, and it feels like the flow of magic here is abnormal.

I never thought that I’d have to return here someday.

Taniko stares back at the village with angry eyes. What exactly is she mad about?

Last time, Firo was able to send all of the monsters we encountered flying, but this time is different.

We wasted time fighting the battles.

Though having Sadina, Rat, Taniko and Melty here sped things up.

“I lead the flow of the power of the land, and give it the power of incarnation. Earth Pulse, become my power.『Dark Firebolt』!” (Taniko)
Taniko’s magic summons black flames that burn the monsters.

The incantation seems to be fundamentally different from the magic I know of.

“Her magic seems to concentrate the surrounding energy and release it.” (Melty) “It really is a strange magic.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah... I’ve only learned the basics, but this is a magic that borrows powers from the surroundings.” (Taniko) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Father could use much more powerful magic.” (Taniko) Taniko continues casting her strange spells. I wonder what sort of mage her father was.

Rat looks at the magic and cocks her head.

“That magic is...” (Rat)

“You know it?” (Naofumi)

“It doesn’t seem to be a power of human or demi-human origin.” (Rat)

But Taniko is a demi-human, right?

She has dog-ish ears and everything.

I never asked her exactly what race she was, because I wasn't interested, though.

"Could she have received special protection from something?" (Rat) (TL: as in Divine protection, divine gifts.) "By the way, what sort of magic can you use?" (Naofumi) "Recovery Magic." (Rat)

"Ah, I see. I'll leave support to you." (Naofumi) "That's what I planned on doing anyways." (Rat) Sadina eliminates the remaining monsters in silence.

"It's not widely known, but it isn't an extinct form of magic. Perhaps I should teach her some advanced spells." (Sadina) Sadina spins her harpoon and begins to cast magic on the monsters that begin appearing in great numbers. She pulls out a canteen of water and holds it out.

"I, Sadina, Draw out the power of Water to do my bidding. Dragon Pulse, eliminate my enemies. 「Saint Aquabolt」!" (Sadina) Using a similar chant as Taniko, Sadina unleashes a shining mass of water.

Everyone there is taken aback.

"By the way, I can also use the main varieties of magic as well." (Sadina) "I who has understood the origin of power command you. Once again be read and come forth. Pierce all with spheres of water, 「Faust Aquashot」!" (Sadina) She takes out another monster with a magic I am familiar with.

It seems Sadina is needlessly skillful.

It's not like she was hiding anything, I just don't know too much about her in general.

"Understand? Magic that takes from one's surroundings has power proportional to the surrounding environment. Make sure to prepare things to aid you beforehand." (Sadina) Sadina hands the canteen to Taniko.

“This flask contains holy water, so it works well on the monsters of this land. But if you use it too much, the effectiveness drops so be careful.”
(Sadina) “G-got it.” (Taniko)

“If you’re really in a tight situation, you can try borrowing power from the sky. It’s hard to control, though.” (Sadina) “Amazing, you can use the same magic as father.” (Taniko) “Only a little. I usually use magic that changes the flow of energy in my own body.” (Sadina) “What sort of magic is that?” (Naofumi)

That sounds convenient, of course it’s not like I’ll be able to learn it.

“Humans and Demi-Humans need special blessings to learn it, so it’s rare. Perhaps Naofumi-chan will be able to use it.” (Sadina) “What do you mean?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, but with Firo-chan here, that might be difficult.” (Sadina) I can’t learn it if I’m with Firo?

I’m getting more and more curious as to what sort of magic it is.

“... Are you possibly referring to that?” (Rat) Rat seems to have figured something out. She addresses Sadina.

“One of the extinct magics. Currently only known and passed down by high class monsters, Dragon Pulse Order?” (Rat) “Correct. I was once taught it a long time ago.” (Sadina) “T-that’s kinda amazing.” (Melly)

Melly seems to have never heard of it before.

“Ah, Melty-chan might have the aptitude for Choral Magic.” (Sadina)
“Eh!?” (Melly)

Choral Magic? What’s that?

Is it similar to ritual magic?

In the magic books I’ve read, was that magic there? I think I’ve heard about it before, but I can’t remember where.

“Impossible, Impossible, not happening.” (Melly) “It’s fine. Melty-chan. Even your hair color signifies that you have the talent. Trust me.”
(Sadina) Melty is frantically denying it.

Ah, I think Choral Magic was that thing Bitch was doing. Casting several magics at once.

“Anyways, you have the Talent, Melty-chan. Work hard.” (Sadina)
“Uuu....” (Melty)

Even so, Melty’s level isn’t that high. I don’t think you should expect that much from her.

“I’ll teach you when you’re ready. Shall I lecture on magic as we head there?” (Sadina) This has somehow begun to feel like a Picnic. You know, Firo’s life is on the line here...

Anyways, we talk as we climb up the mountain. We arrive at the area that the Dragon Zombie had previously lain. It’s been 3 hours since we set out.

There isn’t a single blade of grass growing in the area.

Even now, this land is heavily polluted...

“Where could Gaelion be?” (Naofumi)

“... I think that way.” (Taniko)

Taniko points further up the mountain.

What?

As if answering her statement, black fog begins rising from that area.

“My, my... That seems quite ominous.” (Rat)

“But we have to go.” (Taniko)

Taniko begins to lead the party.

“You know the way?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah... This way.” (Taniko)

Taniko seems familiar with the area as she leads the party.

“I see, so that’s it.” (Sadina)

“What? What happened?” (Naofumi)

Sadina seems to have figured something out. If you don't explain it, I won't get it.

"Naofumi-chan, are you the type of person that digs up people's pasts? Shall I tell you this Onee-san's past?" (Sadina) "Don't care!" (Naofumi)

She seems to be dodging the subject.

Past? Did Taniko live here before?

Was she part of a reclusive village of Demi-humans that lived with the dragon... This area's population died out from plague. Perhaps she had tried to escape it and gotten sold off.

And the magic was passed down through that village.

Was it something like that?

...

"There!" (Taniko)

Two hours later, Taniko suddenly jumps and begins pointing. Of course, we had to fight a lot of monsters on the way. Firo's remaining time is running out, yet we were wasting time on the way here.

Gaelion is lying down in front of a cave.

Is he asleep? He's not moving at all.

We remain hidden as we approach him.

If we can get close enough, I can seal him with Shield Prison. After that, we can prepare magics and release them the moment the prison vanishes to weaken him. And then Rat can use her drug.

After that, I'll just need to get Gaelion to spit up the core.

But that's just the best case scenario.

Shield Prison's range is 5 meters. We are 20 meters from Gaelion.

I analyze him. His level is 55. He's stolen more than 20 levels from Firo.

"GYAOOO!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion suddenly opens his eyes and rushes into the cave.

“Damn!” (Naofumi)

A failure.

But now we can trap him in the cave.

We carefully peer into the cave.

Gaelion seems to be scampering around the cave, frantically looking for something.

“What is he doing?” (Naofumi)

“I think he is looking for his treasure... The villagers took it already.”
(Taniko) “Dragons have a habit of collecting things. I think the soul in the core Gaelion ate had some lingering affections for his treasure.” (Rat)
I see, so Dragons are that sort of lifeform.

“...” (Taniko)

Taniko quietly murmurs something.

But I have no time to hear her out.

“Okay, let’s go.” (Naofumi)

“Gaelion!” (Taniko)

And we approach the target.

“GYAOOOOOOO!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion shouts out.

Thump!

The Shield pulses in response to the yell.

W-what is this!?

When Gaelion shouted out earlier, nothing like this happened.

“This seems to be dangerous. We should create a bit more distance.”
(Rat) “Gaelion! Come here! Please!” (Taniko)

But the shield continues to pulsate.

A visible black aura emanates from it and begins enveloping Gaelion.

And Gaelion even begins sucking up the pollution from the surrounding land.

Gaelion's body gradually increases in size.

"I'm getting a very bad feeling, but Rat, do you know anything?"
(Naofumi) "How should I know? Isn't it your shield's fault?" (Rat)
"Probably... I think I absorbed some things like Firo did." (Naofumi) "Hey, Naofumi. Why do you look a little happy?" (Melly) "Ha?" (Naofumi)

Well, this did give off a bit of a 'Boss Battle' vibe.

... But I'm getting a very ominous feeling. Something must be wrong with me.

"Naofumi, You got power from the Zombie Dragon's core, right?"
(Melly) "Yeah, the shield I used to defeat the Spirit Turtle, the Wrath Shield used the core's power." (Naofumi) "Didn't that shield appear whenever you got mad at Sister and Father?" (Melly) "Sister? Ah... Why was I angry at her again?" (Naofumi) "THAAAAT'S IT!" (Melly and Sadina)

Melly and Sadina point their finger at me and shout out.

"Naofumi, that thing sucked up your hatred for Sister, among other things!" (Melly) "W-what!?" (Naofumi)

Damn. I can't remember anything.

I get the feeling that it's something I'm better off forgetting. The world around me seems off.

Now that I think about it... Sadina is quite a beauty as well.

Why didn't I notice it before?

"Naofumi, your eyes are creepy. Go back to your normal self." (Melly)
"Even if you tell me that~" (Naofumi)

Rafatalia. When I think of her, my heart beats faster.

Firo is in trouble. Even when shes a bird, she's quite cute. In her human form, I might fall for her like Motoyasu.

Melty looks like a standard Tsundere, which is quite nice as well.

Atlas is also a blind cute girl. I can imagine her growing up to be a beauty. Fohl's Sis-con is understandable.

Fufufu. If this was an Eroge, it would be NTR.

... This is really bad! I don't know what's bad, though.

What's this about NTR? Useless!

Is the me without Hate, Resentment, and Killing intent just a mass of Klesha?

I must retrieve my negativity fast, or things will get dangerous.

In numerous ways.

Chapter 180: Good Luck

I check the Wrath Shield.

... You have not cleared the conditions to unlock this shield.

I can't check its status!

And Gaelion's status is so corrupted that I can't make any sense of it.

"For now, the only thing we can do is defeat him!" (Naofumi) "Defeating it is... correct, right?" (Taniko)

Gaelion was able to slip past us and get out of the cave.

His size is now greater than 20 meters, He looks like an authentic dragon.

His eyes are shrouded in darkness. I can't read his expression.

I can't find any part of this being similar to the Gaelion we know.

"**GURUUUUUUUUUUUUUU.....**" (Gaelion?)

(TL: Note, this sound is written in alphanumeric) "Ah... Yes. I'm fine. How have you been?" (Taniko) Everyone snaps their heads towards Taniko... She's also at a loss for words. She's one of the lower level slaves, who has yet to Class-Up.

Gaelion takes in a large amount of air.

He's, going to unleash a Breath Attack.

「Meteor Shield!」 (Naofumi)

I deploy Meteor Shield, and prepare for the impact. The others get behind me.

"I'm going to borrow the holy water for a second." (Sadina) Sadina takes her holy water back from Taniko and begins to chant.

"I, Sadina, Draw out the power of Water to do my bidding. Dragon Pulse, Protect My Body. 「Saint Aqua Shield!」" (Sadina) Sadina's magic envelops the party.

I wonder what's its effect.

"Naofumi-chan, I made preparations in case his flames are able to inflict curses." (Sadina) "Thanks." (Naofumi)

As long as I can withstand his blasts, we can stand a chance. It's not like it's as strong as the Spirit Turtle.

A Pitch Black Flame comes from Gaelion's mouth, and flies towards us. It immediately dissolves the Meteor Shield on impact.

W-what!? That shield was able to withstand being trampled by the Spirit Turtle, yet it was destroyed in an instant!

The Flame continues to fly right at me. I deploy E Float Shield as well, and block it.

My body feels like it's melting as my shield takes on the attack.

Just considering output, the attack rivals the Spirit Turtle's lightning!

"Saint Aqua Shield was dispelled... What a powerful breath and curse." (Sadina) I quickly cast recovery magic and stare at Gaelion.

This is... without a doubt the flames of the Dark Curse Burning S.

Perhaps what I was doing was merely an imitation of Gaelion's power... This is a monster with the power of the Wrath Shield.

It even sucked up Firo's level and status, making it a tougher opponent than the Spirit Turtle.

Retreating is always an option.

But if I run here, then I can't consider myself a Hero.

Hm? Did I just think something stupid? Something feels off.

"Rat, if we weaken it, can you get the core from its stomach?" (Naofumi) "... By getting eaten?" (Rat)

"Possibly, but it might be quicker to cut its stomach open." (Naofumi) "After we're done, we'll heal it, right?" (Rat) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

Hopefully that's enough to solve the situation. Taniko is desperately

calling out to the Dragon, but it seems to have no effect. If this were an Anime... There would always be a slight effect.

“Then this Onee-san has to work hard.” (Sadina) Sadina spins her harpoon as she steps forwards.

“Can you do it?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll try.” (Sadina)

Sadina points the harpoon at the sky and begins chanting.

“I who has understood the origin of power command you. Once again be read and come forth. Rain down Spears of Lightning, 「Dreifach Thunderbolt!」” (Sadina) Upon Sadina’s chant, the clouds in the sky begin to grow dark, and lightning flashes between them. The clouds gather around Sadina’s outstretched Harpoon.

Dreifach... It’s a level above Zveit. For the Level 35 Sadina to be able to cast that is quite a feat. Could she possibly be very strong?

Her previous level had capped at 40, but I wonder what level her strength was on.

“It’s a bit dangerous, so step back.” (Sadina) Sadina leans forward, and begins rushing towards Gaelion.

She’s fast. Though slower than Rafatalia, she’s running at a speed unbecoming of her level.

「Thunder Impaler!」 (Sadina)

With a loud sound, Sadina kicks off the ground, and throws her harpoon at Gaelion’s abdomen. The Moment the Harpoon leaves her hands, lightning comes out of it, blinding the dragon and preventing it from dodging.

And immediately following, the harpoon pierces Gaelion’s chest...

Or it should have.

Gakin!

A sound like the one that occurs when something hits my shield rings

out, and the harpoon sticks in Gaelion's skin for a moment, before being shot back in the direction it came from.

"Ara... It seems Onee-san's signature move didn't work." (Sadina) Sadina lands, and catches the harpoon while stepping backwards. She then rejoins us.

"... So we're in a lot of trouble unless Rafatalia gets back." (Naofumi) The Blinded Gaelion puts its hands over its eyes and lets out a moan.

We can see if other magics work... But the outcome doesn't look good.

But we can't just sit back and do nothing here. Our time is limited.

"Count, can't you do anything?" (Rat)

"Even if you say that..." (Naofumi)

It's sucked away my offensive abilities...

Hm? Sucking away abilities?

It at least seems to have the powers of the Wrath Shield.

What will happen if I try to strengthen that shield?

"I'm going to try to strengthen the shield that seems to be his source of power." (Naofumi) "ARE YOU AN IDIOT!?" (Rat and Melty)

Rat and Melty call out.

"Wait, Wait. Listen to what I'm saying. Strengthening occasionally fails. What do you think would happen if I purposely made it fail?" (Naofumi)

"Is that how it works?" (Melty)

"Yeah, I think that Dragon is getting defensive abilities from my shield, blocking all attacks... Perhaps I can destroy his defenses." (Naofumi) "Got it." (Rat)

Gaelion lets go of his eyes, and begins searching for us.

It's only a matter of time until we're found.

"Let's retreat for now, and fight it again later." (Naofumi) "It will definitely stay within its territory." (Rat) "Probably." (Naofumi)

I activate the Portal Shield...

... It's not letting me select a destination.

Eh? Could it be that the abnormal flow of magic in the area is blocking the skill!?

"I can't teleport. We'll have to make a run for it." (Naofumi) "I don't think it'll let us." (Sadina)

Sadina points upwards.

Gaelion is floating directly above us. We've already been found.

If we wanted to run away here, we would need Firo. Without her, it's impossible.

"GYAoooooooooooooooooooo ! " (Gaelion?)

He swoops down, and tries to slash at us with his massive claws.

I step forward and take the attack.

A great pain runs through my body.

It's not as severe as with the Breath, but it's still quite painful.

I had quickly deployed the meteor shield, but it's only a matter of time before he breaks through.

The claws are followed up by his tail, and then his fangs.

All of them send great pain.

"Count! 「Zveit Heal!」 「Faust Guard!」" (Rat)

Rat casts Support Magic. That saved me. I didn't have the flexibility to cast it on my own.

"Then, Melty-chan. Try casting Choral Magic." (Sadina) "Eh... But..." (Melty)

"You too. Help Melty-chan. Your Unique Magic should be more effective than the Standard Magic Systems here." (Sadina) Sadina also issues orders to Taniko.

"Y-yeah." (Taniko)

“I’ll take the front. Melty-chan, work on tuning and synthesis, you need to focus on support. Let’s go.” (Sadina) I see Sadina and the others preparing their magics, and open up the Wrath Shield Strengthening window.

I have more than enough materials.

Wrath Shield +7 → +8. Do you want to carry out this reinforcement?

I select 「Yes」.

Warning, if this reinforcement fails, the reinforcement will fall to 0-I ignore the message, and select 「Yes」 again.

You have successfully Reinforced your Wrath Shield to +8.

Damn! Why did it have to succeed here!?

Beep...

I timidly look up at Gaelion.

Yeah, his scales begin to shine for a moment. In an MMO, when you enhance a weapon, it usually glows for an instant like that.

Why must I be so unlucky.

“U-um, Count? He... Seems to be getting stronger.” (Rat) “Ah, the strengthening succeeded.” (Naofumi) (TL: Tehe) “Are you an idiot!?” (Rat)

“Yeah, I’m sorry.” (Naofumi)

“You’re acting like it’s a trivial matter. Count, there’s definitely something wrong with you.” (Rat) “I’m well aware. If we don’t beat Gaelion soon, I don’t know what will happen to me.” (Naofumi) I immediately prepare to strengthen again.

I once again select 「Yes」.

You have successfully Reinforced your Wrath Shield to +9.

...

Shit.

Gaelion’s attacks begin to succeed in piercing my defense.

The pain is getting too great for me to handle.

Blood starts erupting from parts of my body.

“Count!?” (Rat)

Is this shield... trying to kill me!?

If the next one succeeds, we’re screwed!

We’ll get devoured.

I button mash 「Yes」.

Do you want to carry out—

You have successfully Reinforced your—

Gaelion’s tail attack is coming right at us.

Yeah, Gaelion shines for a moment. If this hits me, will I start seeing stars?

Gaelion’s mouth is wide open. At this rate, we’ll get eaten.

I continue the button mashing!

You have Failed in Reinforcing your Wrath Shield to +11!

A breaking sound occurs and the Wrath Shield Reinforcement fails.

Gaelion’s scales darken, and his attacks get visibly weaker.

As he was positioned to eat me, he picks me up in his teeth and tries to bite down on me, to no avail.

“Get off!” (Naofumi)

I grab his fangs and wrench them open with all my strength. I fall to the ground.

Good, this finally seems like a battle we can fight.

Chapter 181: Choral Magic

“Count, are you alright?” (rato)

“Do I look like I’m alright?” (naofumi)

My whole body ached....

Damn, it only succeeded at a time like this.

My luck is too extreme. This is harassment.

I’m not one of those inherently unlucky protagonists who appear in Light Novels. [T/N: But you are actually...]

“Zweite Heal” (naofumi)

I cast recovery magic along with Rato.

As expected of a fantasy world, my wounds healed before my eyes and the pain faded.

The injury I suffered was big, but the enemy had also been weakened.

Our average level was still low. I wanted to lower another rank.

“Okay, next is to lower the Rarity!” (naofumi)

Should I attempt SR -> SR+?

I ignore the warning message and spam the button.

But for some reason, I had a bad sense of foreboding.

“H-he’s growing into a somewhat vicious figure again.” (rato?)

“Dammnnnnn!” (naofumi)

When my luck is bad, everything escalates. What was with this chain of successes!

I didn’t see how many times it succeeded. If this was the Soul Eater Shield, it’d probably have been so much easier!

I was blown away when I saw the letters LR.

Not again! This probably had a success rate lower than +11 or thereabouts!

Behind me were my allies, I couldn't avoid it any further and took the attack as it was.

“Ugh!” (naofumi)

With his Rarity upgraded, Gaerion hit me with all his strength.

That hurt....I want to go home.

His offensive power rose to an impossible level just from absorbing Firo's abilities, but now even his Rarity has risen. How far will my misfortune go.

It's because lately everything has been progressing smoothly. It might be the backlash from that.

Will there be another situation similar to before?

No kidding. I need to hurry up and fail the Rarity enhancement so that Gaerion will weaken.

Enhancement to AF failed!

In an instant, the rank fell to C and Gaerion visibly weakened.

The lustre of his scales disappeared and his physical strength also dropped. At this rate, we should be able to break through his defence if we persevere.

“I'm done. How about you guys?” (naofumi)

<Earth of the Curse, flow of that cursed dragon pulse, for the sake of spitting out the congested blood, let us....> When I looked, Melty, Sadina and Taniko was chanting magic, their voices merging together.

I saw glittering, firefly-like lights gathering in our surroundings.

“GURUUUUUU....” (gaerion)

Gaerion inhaled deeply in order to use his Breath, as if trying to stop us.

I went out front and held out my shield in order to protect Melty's group.

Gaerion leapt up high, faced this way and opened him mouth.

It's coming!

“Meteor Shield! Air Strike Shield!” (naofumi)

I used the shield projected by Air Strike Shield as a foothold and protected Melty's group from the Breath.

Gu.... My whole body was roasted and I was scorched by the flames.

I was already weakened from the curse, the cursed flames added to it and caused me pain.

Gaerion leaned forward in pursuit and thrust out with his claw. At this rate, he'll probably snap at us.

<Oh Dragon Pulse. Please grant our wishes. I, who is worthy of the origin of strength, implore you. I've read and understood the truth once again, grant us the power to overcome this evil!> The light intensified, and I understood that the three had turned their attention this way.

It's hard because the defence role has to wait for this.

...The me who is protecting everyone is cool; large-scale magic is the best!

Those thoughts passed through my mind for a moment.

It was thanks to the stress you'd expect from the pain caused by the flames, but it was more or less normal.

“It might be surprising at first, but compose yourself. It'll definitely be fine, believe in big sis! Now, Melty-chan!” (sadina) “Choral Magic!” (melty)

“Deep Sea!” (sadina)

“”Zee Vier!”” (all) [T/N: ゼー・ヴィレ... it's slightly different to how it's pronounced but oh well]

Was it just my imagination that it felt like each one of them cast a different magic?

Water suddenly appeared from the midst of Melty's group and surrounded us. It was as if we were in a giant water tank.

I can't breathe....

Splash Gaerion painfully tried to escape from the water tank by swimming.

"Naofumi-chan, are you alright?" (sadina)

I held my breath to prevent it leaking out but Sadina just came walking naturally and talked normally.

"It doesn't have any effect on enemies and those you don't acknowledge so it's fine" (sadina) [T/N: Talking about the breathing underwater thing...]

"Eh? Ah..." (naofumi)

Just like in an anime or manga, I could move underwater and breathe normally.

I thought so before, but magic is really amazing.

If you think about it, we've been following the law of nature until now, or I should say, our battles have been rather simple.

I've been summoning my shields, we used concealing magic and Firo attacked with her claws.

We each had our own magic which would have made it more flashy~
...what flashiness. There was no need to excessively worry about outward appearances.

What's important was the practicality and efficiency.

It looked like that has been absorbed substantially.

Let's be a little more conscious. Otherwise my brain will turn crazy.

"Haa....Haa....no more." (melty)

"Yeah..." (taniko)

Melty and Taniko sat down tiredly and breathed heavily. I took out Mana Potions from the shield and passed the potions to the two of them.

"Well, that's right.... then big sis shall do her best." (sadina) With a

pop, Sadina rose to the surface of the magical water tank and swam to the escaping Gaerion.

She was very fast.

Well, it was expected from one who had been levelling up in the ocean.

Wasn't she fairly strong in water?

"As expected from the Ruka species, you're like a fish in water when it's your own field." (rato) [T/N: Oh how punny...]

"Sadina's species?" (naofumi)

"Yes, they're famous for being the strongest in the Aquatic species and a rare species. It's been said that even Hakuko would flee when opposing them in the sea." (rato) Amazing. So she's the strongest in the right conditions. Well, orca was written as the tiger of fish. [T/N: Orca = 鯨. 魚 = fish, 虎 = tiger]

Gaerion tried to spit flames but before his eyes, Sadina leapt out onto the water's surface, encased in water.

That form was a dragon made from water.

"Enraged Dragon's Twin Blades!" (sadina) [T/N: 激龍双刃?]

With a splash, Gaerion fell into the water tank again.

He looked to have received damage and blood trickled from his abdomen.

"Gaerion....." (taniko)

Taniko murmured quietly and stood up.

"Gaerion!" (taniko)

"One more time! Reverse Prong Attack!" (sadina) [T/N: 逆叉撃 ?]

The water current Sadina was clad in, formed a tail and hit Gaerion in the stomach.

"...so tough." (sadina)

The tired Sadina descended and took some quick breaths. Gaerion spit

out black flames in the water.

The encasing water was eroded by Gaerion's black flames and disappeared.

"Ah....this is tough." (sadina)

Sadina's fatal technique only did this much. What a tough opponent.

The Wrath Shield's enhancements couldn't lower any more than this and it would be difficult for Melty and Taniko to fight.

.....What should we do.

We could retreat to safety for a moment. We should be able to beat an enemy of this level if Raphtalia was here.

However, if we took too long, Firo would be in danger.

If we fell back now, we'd veer off in a bad direction...

The options remaining are.... there's Rato.

If we use the drug or anaesthetic that stopped Firo before, we might be able to win.

"Rato, can you shoot your medicine?" (naofumi)

"Understood. I'll have a try." (rato)

Rato threw the syringe at Gaerion with a dark ability.

It hit the area Sadina had injured and seemed to have stuck.

However, Gaerion's movements showed no sign of stopping.

"GYAOOOOOOO!" (gaerion)

Gaerion recovered from the shock received by Sadina's attack and cried out.

Then, he glared at us in irritation.

"Gaerion!" (taniko)

Taniko called out many times.

"Please! Come back!" (taniko)

“Hey! Wait!” (naofumi)

Taniko shook me off and ran in front of Gaerion.

It’s not that I don’t understand your feelings but think about the situation.

“GURUUUU.....” (gaerion)

“Gaerion....” (taniko)

With both arms spread out, Taniko glared as she couldn’t go any further.

“Hey! I’m begging you, return to normal!” (taniko) Taniko’s words resounded in the vicinity.

However, I felt that it didn’t enter Gaerion’s ears.

I quickly started running, and tried to head to the front in order to help Taniko.

However, Gaerion opened his mouth wide and snapped at Taniko before I could do so.

“Air Str——” (naofumi)

I immediately called up the Air Strike Shield.

But, before that—

“.....Father! Stop it already!” (taniko)

Taniko raised her voice and shouted.

Chapter 182: Wrath Dragon

“G U R U !?”(Gaelion)

That way of speaking stopped Gaelion’s movements Oh! Did the parent-child love move his heart?

Is that it?

“Father?”(Taniko)

“Eh?”(Naofumi)

“I had my hunch, I knew it I was right”(Rat)

Rat is muttering something, looks like she’s convinced “Uhhh, My father... My father is the dragon that occupies this area”(Taniko) Taniko nods and then talked to Gaelion

“It’s true. There are stories about children who grew up in the wilderness and those stories usually include demons, monsters and dragons” (Rat) What the? That’s a typical wolf boy phrase(TLN: I think he’s referring to a player) Eh? Is Taniko really raised by a dragon?

No matter how I look her, Taniko is definitely something related to a dog, there’s not even a single hint of her being a dragon In the first place the rotten dragon is..... Impossible. In this case, did the dragon become her parent while it’s alive?

Then, is that the special way of chanting magic something she learned from the dragon?

Why does Sadina know how to use that magic?

Sadina looks this way

“SE..CRE..T”(Sadina)

She’s annoying

I’ll hear about it later

“Stop it already.... Father. Soon, this place will become nothing. I understand your hate for that hero who took away everything from you.

However, troubling other won't change anything in this word.. So please stop it!"

"G U"(Gaelion)

Gaelion is groaning it seems like Taniko's words are affecting him I covered my ears with both of my hands; I don't want to hear it "When will this stop? I know that the hero that took away my happiness, Father's happiness cannot be forgiven. But the shield hero is different. Everybody from the village is kind and gentle. They were different from the people of this country who beat and whipped me if I did something wrong. They were different from the people in the village who laughed while taking away father's treasures"

Taniko is crying from remembering all the things that happened while trying to persuade Gaelion I simply covered my ears not wanting to hear their conversation Don't tell me, when a dragon raises an adopted child.... It violates one's process of maturity, Am I being influenced by games too much?

"Please... Please return that child's body back That child I'll raise it. . . . that child's name is Gaelion, the same as yours, I promise that your name will still live with him . . . and also please return Firo's strength back to her. Father, you don't belong here anymore"

"G Y A O O O O O O!"(Wrath dragon)

And then something began to move inside his head intensely And. . . .

"Gyaa ... Gyaaa"

"Gyu aaaa"

Something that looks like a newborn Gaelion came out from the dragon's mouth The experience level and growth element has been sucked along with him, Seems like that prevents the dragon from rampaging And then... ... The figure of the dragon that we fought earlier became covered in black and started dissolving while glaring at us After that I turn my gaze towards Taniko

"Father.. I will do anything... I will stop you"(Taniko) When taniko came

back to her senses Melty and Sadina took a huge breath “Sadina oneechan, Let’s stop father” (Taniko)

“Understood”(Sadina)

“I have no choice but to do it” (Taniko)

The 3 of them gathered and started chanting choral magic That was really fast, Taniko’s chant seems like it’s affecting him I don’t think so, and then the small Gaelion flapped its wings and flew to the 3 of them chanting the magic Then I directed my focus at the black dyed dragon that ’s melting

“GYAOOOOOOOO ! “(Wrath dragon)

This is Taniko’s father. . . . the one that I fought before. Back then he didn’t even fangs and horns. Now he looks a lot more dangerous than before “Count, Is your wound alright?”(Rat)

“How does it look?”(Naofumi)

It’s the Dark Curse Burning’s flame. Well. . .the flame is getting weak, so you cannot consider it as a fatal injury Though it felt like receiving a curse combined with another curse for additional damage “My curse resistance decreased but there’s holy water so we don’t have to worry about that and somehow chant that they’re doing affects it” (Naofumi) I move closely to protect Taniko and the others

Gaelion leaped towards us, and I held my ground

“It’s dangerous, get back”

『This is perilous (Gaelion)

“wha. . “

Gaelion spoke

However, why is his voice so low?

『Don’t lose your composure, we’ll be exposed by wyndia』 (Gaelion)

“You. . . “(Naofumi)

So he’s the father version of Gaelion.

It's not the child version of Gaerion who is doing the possessing.

『My daughter's growth has been a good one. Hero of the Shield, there is one thing that I'd like to teach you. Did you even notice? 』(Gaelion) “If I know what you're talking about then you wouldn't have teach me. So no, I don't know what you're talking about” (Naofumi) I glared at Gaelion with hostility

It's a different name, or should I say that I understand what his status have become Wrath Dragon

The name of the black dragon slowly disappeared within my sight 『It is the corruption within me ate all your hatred away. All of the hate that it gathered took form and thus what's making me lose control. Hurry, kill me before I start rampaging again』(Gaelion)(TLN: although they were referring to killing the wrath dragon.. I think he's talking to them via the little Gaelion) “ Don't you understand? I cannot attack you” (Naofumi) Originally, I could attack enemies because of the Wrath shield. However, I can't do it if I can't summon the shield (TLN: he can't use it because his hate is being sucked by the dragon making him unable to summon the curse shield series) 『Be at ease, I will cooperate with you and release the attack. Hold your ground and endure it 』(Gaelion) “Yes yes, That is something that I always do”(Naofumi) 『I see that's the case. Inside the shield、resides the memories of the past events though it's too much..... I'm entrusting it to you』(Gaelion)(TLN: this is how I understand this line.. if you have a better one please tell me thnx :Dそうだったな。盾の中で、汝の記憶とこれまでの出来事を追体験していた我からしたら余計な事か.....まかせたぞ) Seriously, I can't shake this feeling off. I'm feeling a bit uneasy about this Gaelion joined the party to speed up the chanting The Wrath Dragon released its attack. The attack power of each attack kept on increasing; it was definitely getting stronger I'm starting to feel pain and numbness, It was a similar pain that I felt back then with the curse of Blutopfer. I can't hold out much longer. This will make me go crazy However, I was able to push him back even though he's attacking me relentlessly He bites with his full strength; He's attacking above me attempting to pin me down I'm using meteor shield and shield prison each time he attacks, I also use air

strike shield to avoid and stop his attacks 『The Cursed Earth that bring hatred but gives the thought of a clear stream washing all the grudges away. Dragon Pulse the power that comes from the desire to save the world. I wish for a miracle』(Gaelion) 『 I Gaelion order the heavens, order the earth, and remove the laws and ties, in attempt to discharge the sea. My power, to feel once again the controlled power that's flowing within』 (Gaelion) The shield translates it all so I understand what Gaelion was chanting. The shield was making a relentless noise; I displayed the translation within my sight. Does Sadina notice? I faced toward Gaelion 『『Erase Aqua Splash ! 』』

『『Water Dragon Destruction Wave ! 』』

The magic that the three of them chanted is finished, then magic power overflow around Gaelion “Eh !?” (Melty)

Taniko's raising her voice and surprised Melty who's sitting down because of fatigue Sadina with a harpoon on one hand started to run Gaelion gathered the magic power and turned it into a ball “Naofumi-chan and Rato-san, Support!”(Sadina)

“Ah!”(Naofumi)

“Tsuveit Aura” (Naofumi)

“Fast Power! Fast Magic!”(Rat)

I covered Magic support and Rat covered Physical Attack Speed “Lets go!. Gaelion-chan”(Sadina)

“Gyauuuuuuuuuuuuuu”

Gaelion cries out

Gaelion took a deep breath and blew the magic ball Afterwards a huge amount of water gushed out from the ball, and then we attacked him Sadina entered the gushing water, swam and raised a tornado.

These guys' attacks are a lot flashier than Raphtalia and Firo. Could it be possible that she is stronger than those two?

But if you think about it Sadina's status isn't really that high Is this

somehow because of the correction?

You can't say that it is strong just because it's flashy. . . . Its bothering me If it's the old me, surely I would complain

It should be from a robot that transforms using electromagnetic waves to combine and then attacks the enemy with a fatal technique, Sadina runs through the Wrath Dragon while turning.

Gaelion took a hit and the mass of water disappeared at the same time
“H-how is that. . . ! ?”(Sadina)

Sadina lands beside the Wrath Dragon shoulder. Of course, I checked the Wrath Dragon's health The dragon has a hole in his abdomen but still walked slowly towards even though he's stumbling and when he got near me he roared.

If felt like victory have smiled upon us

“GYAOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO ! ”(Wrath Dragon)

“He has an amazing vitality. . . Onee-san don't overdo yourself”(Taniko)
『I underestimated the emotions of thou, I never expected that after they had been eaten by me, I would have have such specs』(Gaelion) All of the members have reached their limits

Is it only me and Rato the only ones that can move?

“Rato, Can you do something about this?”

“”It's uh..... I only have a medicine that boosts defense at most.”

“Give it to me”

“Alright. . . Alright”

Rato tossed the medicine into the bucket with hot water without any hesitation It exploded with a bang, when it dissolved it created a strange smell; which smelled in various ways.

“It was quite expensive . . . but we have to do something before we die here”(Rato) “Give it up. . . I'll lure him, let's retreat”(Naofumi) It will end like this after all

“I will keep him here, you guys escape first I will follow you afterwards”
(Naofumi) I don’t like self-sacrifice. I mean, I don’t want to do such a thing
Though I receive damage from it, it’ll be fine as long as I can avoid it
We should escape first and kill it later. We should prepare when
Raphtalia is already here What about Firo? Is she okay? She can’t die. . .
She’s too cute to die . . . something’s strange

I’m absolutely feeling strange somewhere

Do I always have this kind of character?

“ . . . It’s time.”

I heard footsteps and a voice that I’m familiar with When I looked back
somehow, Raphtalia and Atla riding Firo just arrived at the right time
“Raphtalia onee-chan. . . Please”(Firo)

“Leave it to me”(Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia-san please Naofumi-sama and the others”(Atla) Are the
preparations for combat done beforehand? Raphtalia’s sword is shining
brightly As soon as the Wrath dragon saw Raphtalia, the dragon’s mouth
expanded and become frightened and turned away attempting to fly into
the sky Why is that? That composure that you’re showing, are you not
affected? Raphtalia is scary “I won’t let you escape”(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia used Firo as a stepping stone, leaps and slash the Wrath
Dragon “GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA ! ”(Wrath
Dragon) I raised a big voice. Raphtalia slashed the dragon, it created a
wind pressure and the dragon was cut in half. The 2 halves fell to the
ground “Father..... I’m sorry. I won’t look back any more.”(Taniko) 『.....』

I stared at Taniko’s back who put both hands together and shed tears
for Gaelion.

Chapter 183: Strange

Rafatalia lands, and swings her sword to get the liquids off of it. She looks towards us.

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

Wow. When I look at Rafatalia’s face, I see sparkles for some reason.

It’s a face I see every day, but somehow staring at it makes my heart race.

She’s truly a beauty. She has a fluffy tail and ears, but her body is quite slender.

She doesn’t have most of the traits associated with Tanukis.

“Um...” (Naofumi)

I raise my voice to try and thank her, but speaking is difficult.

Something’s strange. I could talk to her normally before, but now I can’t even look her in the eye.

“Amazing...” (Taniko)

“Rafatalia-chan. You’ve gotten really strong.” (Sadina) “No, it was almost dead when it came into contact with my blade.” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia gestures towards the Wrath Dragon’s corpse.

“I believe that it was Rafatalia-san who saved you when the shield was going to control you, was it not, Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas) “Yes, it was, but...” (Naofumi)

“It seems that Rafatalia-chan was the bane of this one throughout its existence.” (Sadina) “Firo, are you alright?” (Melly)

“Yeah. I was in pain, but now I’m fine.” (Firo) Firo, with Atlas on her back, goes off and embraces Melty.

“Rafatalia-san returned right after Naofumi-sama left. After explaining the situation, we quickly set out.” (Atlas) “Firo seemed to be doing bad, so we intended to leave her, but she wouldn’t let us.” (Rafatalia) Rafatalia

pat's Firo's head with a troubled expression.

I'm surprised they could get through these mountains in that short amount of time.

But Firo, without any carriage attached is unparalleled in speed.

"Firo was worried we wouldn't make it." (Firo) "But it all worked out. Atlas-san, I am grateful to you as well." (Rafatalia) "All of this was for Naofumi-sama." (Atlas) Good. With this, the incident is resolved, I guess. I'll have to talk to Gaelion later.

"KYUA?" (Gaelion)

Gaelion pounces on Taniko, and starts licking her face.

Did he return to normal? Or is he just acting?

"Gaelion, are you better?" (Taniko)

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

"Give back the things you took from Firo!" (Firo) "KYUA!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion and Firo are glaring at each other again. I shift my gaze to the Wrath Dragon.

"Your stats are probably over there." (Naofumi) "Is that small dragon really Gaelion?" (Rafatalia) "Yeah. He pushed himself too hard, and ended up small." (Taniko) "Give me back my EXP!" (Firo)

Firo starts shouting at the Wrath Dragon Corpse.

She's an idiot, but she's cute.

But Rafatalia is better.

... Damn,

I've been holding hands with this girl and sleeping next to her.

"U-um..." (Naofumi)

I try to talk to Rafatalia without sounding suspicious.

And she returns a few words.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama...?” (Rafatalia)

Rafatalia stares at me and tilts her head. She’s too bright for me to look at.

My heart is going to jump out of my chest.

“Um, you are Naofumi-sama, right?” (Rafatalia) “Y-yeah.” (Naofumi)

“But You’re a little strange.” (Rafatalia)

“What’s strange?” (Naofumi)

“Your eyes are... strange. Also, the atmosphere around you is different.” (Rafatalia) “Really?” (Naofumi)

This is a girl who’s close to me. A girl who’s travelled and fought next to me.

Alright, I’ll use a cliché romantic line when we get back to the village.

...? What? I feel really bad for some reason.

I’m forgetting something.

No, Rafatalia has been working really hard as of late.

I should praise her for that first.

“You saved us. Thank you. We were in quite a bit of trouble. This is all thanks to Rafatalia.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama!?” (Rafatalia)

“If you’d oblige, perhaps we can talk a little later.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, you’re definitely acting weird. Your eyes are strange and you’ve never shown such a disgusting smile before. Your way of speaking has also completely changed. Did something happen to you while I was away?” (Rafatalia) “Ah, Naofumi-sama has had various things sucked out of him by that corpse lying over there, and he became strange. He fought okay, but he’s become somewhat creepy.” (Melly) Melty gives a strange explanation.

“Melly, were you a girl who said such rude things?” (Naofumi) I pinch Melty’s cheeks, and take on a smug attitude.

I always wanted to do something like this.

“Something’s definitely wrong with this scene!” (Melty & Rafatalia)
Rafatalia and Melty both point and shout at me.

What are they on about?

“I’m concerned about my relationship with Melty from here on -”
(Naofumi) “Please shut up for a second!” (Melty)

I don’t know why, but Melty backs off with a red face. Rafatalia and the others begin talking amongst themselves.

The beauties Rafatalia, Melty and Atlas are huddled together. What a perfect scene.

“What can we do to make Naofumi-sama turn back?” (Rafatalia) “I’ll follow Naofumi-sama no matter what.” (Atlas) “What are you saying. There’s no way that creepy man over there is the Naofumi-sama we know.” (Melty) “The foundation is the same. This Naofumi-sama will be able to find happiness easier. Rafatalia-san, please accept this Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “Never!” (Rafatalia)

She plainly rejects Atlas’s words, and looks over at Sadina and Rat.

Yeah, Rafatalia’s beauty is a level above the others.

I think I will find happiness just looking at her.

But I feel... Strange for some reason. However, I feel really good today, so I’ll let it slide.

“Can either of you revert Naofumi-sama?” (Rafatalia) “This Onee-san has no idea.” (Sadina)

“How about chucking him into that decomposing mass of Dragon over there?” (Rat) Both Rat and Sadina point at the Dragon corpse.

After hearing this, Rafatalia starts to approach me.

As I stare at her in admiration, she suddenly grasps both of my shoulders.

My heart skips a beat as I stare into her eyes.

And...

“W-wait! What are you people doing!?” (Naofumi) Rafatalia and Melty, also Rat and Sadina all lift me up and throw me at the Dragon Corpse.

“I apologize, Naofumi-sama, but... Please return to normal.” (Rafatalia)
“If Naofumi-chan gets sucked into the dragon, then we’ll have a problem. Rafatalia-chan, good luck.” (Sadina) “Eh!?” (Everyone)

Think before you throw!

What are these girls trying to accomplish? They keep calling me creepy. How rude!

“Master, what are you doing? Let Firo join.” (Firo) And Firo nestles next to me in the dead dragon.

At that moment.

“Rafatalia! You are my...!” (Naofumi)

With a loud sound, the shield starts sucking something in.

At the same time, something appears to be flowing into Firo.

...Was I forgetting something?

That was something that I should never have forgotten. My grudge towards Witch and the people of this world.

And if I made a wrong turn at the beginning, would I have turned out that creepy?

Blood rushes to my head. Why did I try to hit on the diligent Rafatalia?

I even looked at Melty and Atlas with lecherous Eyes. Am I supposed to be Motoyasu!?

“Fumu... I’ve caused you some trouble.” (Naofumi) Dammit. I still have my memories of a few moments ago.

Just thinking about it makes me angry.

I was acting like a dog in heat.

But at the end, what was I trying to say?

... I forgot.

It's a thing of the past.

Anyways, it seems that being angry has become my default personality.

... At least it's better than that previous state.

I think I should stop thinking about it.

"Ah, your eyes are back to normal." (Rafatalia) "Naofumi-chan is more likeable when he's irritated." (Sadina) "Ha? What are you trying to say?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, this Naofumi is the best one." (Melly) It seems everyone can distinguish that my personality is back.

"Rafatalia, you were a big help. We'll be returning to the village from now, but what will you do?" (Naofumi) "I'll accompany you to the village, but I still have training after that." (Rafatalia) "I see. I apologize for interrupting your training." (Naofumi) "No, it was an emergency, so there's no helping it." (Rafatalia) I turn my gaze back to Gaelion.

"KYUA? (Gaelion)

"Explain yourself." (Naofumi)

I think that he was speaking before.

Though he was only whispering to me.

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

He jumps at me and starts fooling around.

I stare at him with serious eyes, but his behavior doesn't change.

Has he completely returned to normal?

"Ah! Firo is the one who will play with master!" (Firo) "You're making too much of a fuss! We're returning now. By the Way, Firo. How is your condition?" (Naofumi) "My body is better, but... I didn't get everything back from Gaelion." (Firo) I look at her status.

Firo's level is... 41. It's dropped quite a bit.

And in contrast, even after separating from the Wrath Dragon, Gaelion's level is 60.

Their levels have pretty much flipped.

“Give them back!” (Firo)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

And the two glare at each other again.

“KYUA! KYUA KYUA!” (Gaelion)

“Gaelion is saying, ‘I don’t know anything about that, but the Hero of the Shield’s favorite is Gaelion.’” (Taniko) “Mu...!” (Firo)

Gaelion got a preemptive strike. He used his short tail to whip Firo’s cheek. He laughs.

“Give them Back Give them Back Give them Back!” (Firo) (TL: Ora Ora Ora) “KYUA KYUA KYUA!” (Gaelion) (TL: Muda Muda Muda) The two are now exchanging blows.

Even though Gaelion was the cause of all of this, he doesn’t seem to be repenting. He’s even going as far as to feign ignorance.

That’s one of my least favorite actions. I guess I should have him make reparations now.

“Okay, now then Gaelion. Please return it to Firo. If you become Firo’s dinner, perhaps she will get some of it back.” (Naofumi) I quickly grab Gaelion, and move him towards Firo’s mouth.

“KYUAAAA...!?” (Gaelion)

“NOOOOOO!” (Taniko)

Taniko prevents it.

“Mu...! Master, what were you trying to feed me!?” (Firo) “You’re a glutton, aren’t you? Dragon meat might bring you good luck.” (Naofumi) “I don’t want to eat dragon anymore!” (Firo) Ah, so she’s developed a hatred of the Dragon meat that caused this.

I hope she keeps a balanced diet.

“Don’t be such a picky eater.” (Naofumi)

“No!” (Firo)

“Naofumi-sama... Please don’t give Firo any strange eating habits.”

(Rafatalia) “It’s a sort of punishment. Just let Firo accept her role as a symbol of fear already.” (Naofumi) “No!” (Firo)

“Stop doing strange things to Firo!” (Melly) This time, Melty steps up to defend Firo.

And she starts glaring at Taniko.

“That child was the cause of this turmoil. Please dispose of him.”

(Melly) “He’s already better!” (Taniko)

Whatever. This is becoming a pain.

Chapter 184: Purification

“Time to go home!” (Naofumi)

“As I thought, tagging along with you sure gets interesting.” (Sadina)

“Sadina, stop laughing and use some purification magic already!”

(Naofumi) Being cursed still hurts you know!

Be at least a little bit considerate.

“Can’t be helped.” (Sadina)

And so, Sadina uses holy water and casts magic on me. It seems like special magic, the fact that it’s effective on this curse is amazing.

“Ah, Naofumi. Would you hand me a magic potion? I'm running on empty here.” (Sadina) “So what? We don’t plan to fight anymore.”

(Naofumi) “Ahh, it’s really troubling for me though. Please!” (Sadina) She goes on and on, but I ignore her and walk away.

“Firo, we’re leaving.” (Naofumi)

“Kay.” (Firo)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Once again, Gaelion clings to my leg.

“It’s hard to walk. Move!” (Naofumi)

“Kyuaaaa!” (Gaelion)

Suddenly, Gaelion's body starts shining, and he returns to his original size.

Even larger than before actually, probably up to 40 meters.

He takes flight with me on his back, grasping Taniko, Sadina, and Rat around his tail and his hands.

“Ah, AHHHHH-!” (Firo)

Firo lets out a cry filled with fear.

“Naofumi?!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia is taken aback. Even I have no words for this!

Gaelion can transform?

“Kyuaa.” (Gaelion)

Gaelion shifts everyone onto his back and provokes Firo.

“Mu?!” (Firo)

“Kyuaa.” (Gaelion)

His flight-path takes us descending down the mountain.

“Raphtalia! Hurry up! Master belongs only on my back!” (Firo) Firo, refusing to be defeated, takes off running.

Even without a cart, her speed is no match for Gaelion.

Though he's my slave, even when I order him to let us down, he won't listen.

I can't activate the slave crest either, or we'd fall.

“Jeez. This kid is too out of control, huh.” (Rat) “Rat, were you aware that dragons grow up like this?” (Naofumi) “I've seen it often in my research, but I don't know if the possible variations are to the same extent as that of the Filorials. Kids around the Count always seem to grow in interesting ways.” (Rat) “That's not the problem...” (Naofumi)

From the sky, I look down. I notice that the air of pollution was dissipating.

“Did the Count notice too? I wanted to inspect the surroundings influenced by the berserked Gaelion, but I guess there's no chance of that now.” (Rat) I see. With this, the land also returns to its peaceful state.

I wonder if I could use Portal Shield.

Let's test it.

“Portal Shield!” (Naofumi)

Alright. Looks like there's no problem there. Just to be on the safe side, I'll fly in and check the situation with the village.

Are we out of Raphtalia's range? I'll need to think about how to fly in here later.

"Ah... Naofumi. I'm begging you, would you give me a magic potion?" (Sadina) "Why should I?" (Naofumi)

I turn to Sadina, and Rat, Taniko, and I are all at a loss for words.

"Please?" (Sadina)

Sadina... was pleading, no longer as a giant, but in the form of a human. Huh?

"Who are you?" (Naofumi)

"That's why I've been asking for a magic potion, else I can't keep up my appearance. Even alcohol will do." (Sadina) She has long black hair, and skin and a face that would rival even Raphtalia.

A beautiful traditional Japanese-style woman.

It was so surprising to see such a beauty ask me a favor.

"Can't be helped, eh?" (Naofumi)

I throw her a potion.

"I guess I should have realized something was up when Gaelion brought you too." (Naofumi) There's no way he could have flown with a four-meter giant on his back.

"Don't drink it now. We'll crash." (Naofumi) "Naofumi, you're not surprised?" (Sadina) "I am." (Naofumi)

"Don't cry for me." (Sadina)

"Who would." (Naofumia)

"Do the Ruka have this ability?" (Rat)

"I'm not Ruka." (Sadina)

Sadina answers Rat's question.

"Are you something else?" (Rat)

These two are about the same age, figures their personalities would clash.

Well, Sadina looks a little older though.

Whatever.

“I’m from the Sakamata race. Ruka is close, but they’re different.”

(Sadina) “How are they different?” (Rat)

“Can’t you tell just by looking?” (Sadina) Well, if she can transform, she could have been anything.

“Not at all. It looks like you can transform with magic somehow. I mean, we’re riding a living example right now.” (Rat) “Well, it’s too bad that you can’t tell the difference. That’s all you get, I don’t have much of a migratory diet.” (Sadina) By the way, I’ve read that Orcas are split into three types back in my own world. It feels just like I had seen it, but I think I remember something about their genes differing as little as between an average dog and a wolf. [1]

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

“Gaelion, grow up to be handsome... Become a fine dragon like my father.” (Taniko) “Kyua!” (Gaelion)

“That father of yours is feigning innocence.” (Naofumi) “What are you talking about? Father... is dead.” (Taniko) Taniko interrupts me and refuses listen to anything else I have to say.

Before returning to our village, I land by the eastern village.

The Eastern villagers are content with the mountain's return to normalcy.

'As expected of the Shield Hero!' Trying to flatter me, but I won't be fooled.

To be blunt, from what Taniko and Gaelion said, I think they got what they deserved.

My inner evaluation of the eastern village's people dropped quite a bit.

They can just go to hell.

“Master rides only on my back!” (Firo)

“Kyuaaaa.” (Gaelion)

Once everyone reassembles at the village, Firo and Gaelion’s bout continues.

Gaelion had transformed back into his small form.

“Yes, yes. That’s enough.” (Naofumi)

“No, it’s not!” (Firo)

Firo is still fixated on being my only mount.

“Ha... For now, I’ll play with you from today onward Firo, so chill out.” (Naofumi) “Yaaay! But master...” (Firo)

“If you dwell on it any more, I won’t play with you.” (Naofumi) “No!” (Firo)

“Kyua...” (Gaelion)

“You’re the one who caused all this, so you’ll be disciplined for a while. If you have time, I’ll let you play with Firo, so be obedient.” (Naofumi) Gaelion trots over to Taniko to cry.

“Kyuaaaaaa.” (Gaelion)

“Why are you covering for that bird, why do you pick on Gaelion?” (Taniko) “You don’t understand? It’s punishment.” (Naofumi) “Uu...” (Taniko)

Teary-eyed Gaelion glances over to me.

It’s like a child faking tears to get what it wants.

“No way.” (Naofumi)

“Kyuaaaa...” (Gaelion)

Gaelion begins to cry earnestly.

“Yaaa-y! Serves you right!” (Firo)

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

After warning Firo, she turns her glance away and starts singing.

I swear, she’s still a child. I wonder if she's aware of the trouble she caused.

“Then I’ll heading back.” (Raphtalia)

“Ah, you saved us.” (Naofumi)

“No problem. If anything, I apologize for being late.” (Raphtalia) “It couldn’t be helped. I can't even imagine what we would have done without you.” (Naofumi) With that, I express my thanks to Raphtalia, and see her off.

That reminds me, Rishia took a liking to the old hag, didn't she?

In my head, Rishia turns into a muscle freak.

“What you're thinking is probably wrong, you know.” (Raphtalia) “You know me so well.” (Naofumi)

“Well, we’ve been together for a long time now.” (Raphtalia) It’s that thing where we understand each other by breathing the same air, huh.

“I see. Then, I'll make sure nothing like this ever happens again. Next time, report to me where you'll be training.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Raphtalia)

“Your level... hasn’t risen all that much.” (Naofumi) It looks like there's more to her training than fighting fierce monsters.

Is there some sort of standard for survival when training in the mountains?

Now that I think about it, I need the old hag to teach me too.

“Ah... If there's time, your training will begin after ours ends.” (Raphtalia) “Somehow, I feel commonplace.” (Naofumi) “You're the type of person that learns through actual fighting experience, so she was saying something about your qualities already showing results.” (Raphtalia) “What?” (Naofumi)

“No offence, but you can’t afford a haphazard defense. You can't counter forever either, but if you remember the basis for parrying, it’ll be enough to apply it later... I don’t really understand though.” (Raphtalia) “I don’t really get it either.” (Naofumi) Well, I heard that I should remember the technique to draw out the destructive power within...

Thinking back, though Atlas is blind, she could see the flow of ki.

If I ask her, she’d probably agree be my practice partner.

I’ll go ask her after we're done here.

After finishing our talk, Raphtalia leaves the village, albeit a little reluctantly.

I look forward to her returning after her training is over.

*

Translator Note:

[1] By Sachi he means Orca, not Sachihoko and he's referring to Orca's having three types: Resident, Transient, and Offshore:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killer_whale#Types. One of them is migratory in relation to previous lines.

Chapter 185: Nickname

--That night--

At home, Sadina's drunk and Atlas is lounging in Raphtalia's bed like she owns it. Meanwhile, I brought Firo along for a little job.

Firo: "Hehe-Master is petting me!"

Firo clings to me in her human form happily.

Naofumi: "You get the plan, right Firo?"

Firo: "Yup. If Atlas tries to get into master's bed, I drive her out."

Naofumi: "That's right. If you mess up, I'm driving you out too."

Firo: "Okay, got it!"

If I have to sleep with someone, I'd rather it be with someone without ulterior motives.

After all, Firo went through a lot. So I'll indulge her a bit.

I need to get her level back up, so it's better to keep her motivation factor up.

Atlas: "Ah, Naofumi. Why are you being so mean?"

Atlas asks, vexed.

Do you really want to sleep with me that much? I feel sick.

Atlas: "Firo gets to sleep with Naofumi. I'm... so envious."

Naofumi: "Sleep with you say... You're too much..."

I'm not Motoyasu, you know.

If he were in my situation now, he's probably do something criminal to Firo.

That guy didn't even show up when during Firo's crisis, how worthless is he?

Next time I see him, I'll let him have it.

I gently brush Firo, while she leans against me satisfied. Someone knocks on the door.

Naofumi: "What is it?"

???: "Please excuse me, Shield Hero."

Then, as if he owns the place, Gaelion bursts in.

I'm surprised to see Rat accompanying him.

Taniko isn't with them? What happened?

Naofumi: "Hey. Your daughter isn't here."

I don't know if she's his actual child or adopted, but the all-important Taniko isn't here.

Gaelion: "I made sure she was asleep before I left."

Rat: "I was doing research in my lab when he asked me to come along. He has something he wants us both to hear... I was surprised."

Looks like it.

Gaelion just suddenly started using human language, and now he's asking for things.

Gaelion: "You're Sadina, right? When I saw your transformation, I was honestly surprised."

Sadina: "You're surprised? I'm surprised about you."

Atlas also weighs in.

Gaelion: "Atlas, you've always known, haven't you?"

Atlas: "Yes. I knew it from the beginning. There was someone else inside you."

Naofumi: "Why didn't you say anything?"

Atlas: "I didn't realize it right away, but ever since that ominous spirit left Gaelion, he changed."

Naofumi: "I see..."

This isn't a time where you should keep something like that to yourself.

Atlas: "You laid dormant in Gaelion, so there was no need to call you out."

Gaelion: "Fumu... as expected of the Hakuko, to grasp my situation so easily."

Firo: "Muu..."

Firo glares at Gaelion.

Gaelion: "The next Filorial Queen, hmm? This whole predicament happened because you ate part of my core. Fool."

Firo: "Give me back my experience!"

Gaelion: "Fumu... It belongs to me now... Is what I'd like to say, but since it's mixed in with mine, you have to deal with getting it back gradually."

Just as I was wondering what Gaelion meant, he takes in a deep breath.

He spits out a large candy-ball looking mass.

Gaelion: "If you lick that, you'll get a little bit of your experience back. So be silent."

Firo: "Bu..."

Firo protests while staring at the spitty mass in her hands.

I guess getting her experience back wont be so simple.

Naofumi: "So, what business do you have with me? Was everything up to now all an act?"

Gaelion: "There's a lot to talk about. The owner of this body, for one, is the Gaelion you know. One day, when he reaches adulthood, our minds will fuse."

Naofumi: "Against your will?"

Gaelion: "Most likely. The owner of this body also wants it to happen. Ever since you warmed his egg up yourself, Shield Hero."

Naofumi: "I see."

I recall I had a strange dream last night. I don't remember the details, but I remember hearing this guy's voice.

Gaelion: "In the first place, even though our minds have been fusing little by little, the moment when we ate the core, your rage occupied both of ours and wreaked havoc."

Naofumi: "Then the reason why he flew in that direction was..."

Gaelion: "According to my memory, he would have flown further. Over there, the polluted land's energy was being absorbed; else he would have stored up enough power to wreak havoc at who you wanted to kill the most." (Gaelion) Naofumi: "Who I wanted to kill?"

Gaelion: "The person you hate more than anything... if I say it like that, is it easier to understand?"

So it's like that, huh.

He was planning to raise hell after finding Bitch and Scum.

Though indirectly, my rage would have brought upon the downfall of the country.

It was a really bad situation in a lot of ways.

Gaelion: "Thus, I can keep this appearance, but not for too long. That's why I'll explain it to you simply."

Hmm... To summarize, Gaelion can hold a deeper conscious for short periods of time, in contrast to the child-like Gaelion. He made the judgment that now was a better time to talk than ever.

Naofumi: "Wait a second. Are dead dragons even capable of passing on their consciousness?"

Gaelion: "Just a part. Our kind are sort of like immortal beings."

Rat: "Immortal... A pure-bred dragon!? The kind that marks territory around mountain recesses?"

Rat, as if she saw something horrible, asks Gaelion. She really hates

dragons, huh.

Gaelion: "How should I put this, I am that pure-bred."

Rat: "What are the chances... Shouldn't the Sword Hero have killed you?"

That would make him around level 40 when he lost.

Even so, that Gaelion shouldn't have been able to find a way to get stronger mid-battle.

Which means, originally Gaelion was pretty weak.

Gaelion: "It can't be helped. I am the weakest fragment left of the Dragon Emperor."

Naofumi: "What?"

Dragon Emperor... the weakest of the four heavenly kings.

It's a famous phrase that I tend to remember.

I don't think anyone would listen to what I'm saying, but...

For the weakest dragon to be boasting is pretty lame.

Naofumi: "Fragment of the Dragon Emperor?"

Gaelion: "It looks like you don't know about the ecology of dragons. Let me explain from there. Wait, maybe it would just be faster to ask that shrine maiden over there?"

Murmurs Gaelion while pointing at Sadina.

Naofumi: "Shrine Maiden?"

Rat: "As far as I can tell, it's someone who's received divine protection from the Dragon Emperor. Correct?"

Sadina: "Yuuuup. I'm a Shrine Maiden. That's why I'm able to use Dragon Pulse~"

Answers Sadina while playing with her hands, all curled up. It doesn't feel like she's motivated at all.

Rat: "That's also something that I've heard. A long time ago, the Filorial

Queen had forced the Dragon Emperor to scatter.”

Naofumi: “I see...”

So it’s basically an already extinct being then.

It seems like it was because they were on bad relations with the Filorial back then.

Gaelion: “But speaking of the dragon’s existence, in the first place, they were the only pure-bred existence on earth; everything else originated from a hybrid or cross-breed. Dragon Emperor was more of a label that us pure-bred dragons used for ourselves. Since we were able to breed with any living thing, our offspring increased. And then once extinction came, we sought whatever way we could to survive.”

Naofumi: “What a stubborn being. Like a cockroach.”

Rat: “That is why you didn't die while all scattered about. It could be that Gaelion-chan is the successor of a part of that Dragon Emperor from the past.”

Gaelion: “Fumu... For the most part, you’re correct. It’s because I've confirmed personally how weak I am that, to not get snatched away by the remainders of the Emperor, I lived near humans.”

Since he was secluded from his allies for being too weak, he was in always hibernating like a bear. The more I hear about it, the more pitiful I think this dragon is.

After talking like he was all that, now this? It’s the worst.

Sadina: “What I say from now is pretty important. The pure-bred fought among themselves, and the winner had the power to control its fragments. Like that, they gathered for several hundred years in hopes for revival.”

Naofumi: “Come to think of it... I’ve heard often about the hero of legend who defeated the revived Dragon Emperor.”

Sadina: “...The battle of the struggling fragments turned into a death match of the same race. It came to a point where the next generation

would lose its ability to breed.”

Naofumi: “If you don’t want to be aimed at, isn't it OK to just hand over the fragment?”

Gaelion: “It’s because I can’t do that; that's why I ran away. As expected, no other Dragon Fragments would do anything reckless like settling near humans. If the fragments gathered, they’d just be torn apart again.” (Gaelion) *?[1]

Pitiful.

Hasn't the Dragon Emperor itself already lost?

Sadina: “That’s all the information I've got.”

Gaelion: “So then, let me supplement. I am but a single fragment of that Dragon Emperor; that’s why I can exist right now. Originally, I was going to look for a different retainer, but in that situation, I didn't have control over my common sense.”

Basically what everyone’s trying to say is, Gaelion living on was nothing but the matters of the previous era.

That’s why the remaining Dragon Fragments didn't realize it.

So, that Fragment’s magical power reorganized into the flesh of the Zombie Dragon that Firo and I defeated, even though it should have been sealed.

As a result, the fragment my shield absorbed transferred over to the egg. A perfect revival with all fragments gathered... is what should have happened if the rage sleeping in my shield didn't take over.

How pitiful.

I should look down on this guy.

Gaelion: “Well, I am fine. Good job saving Windia. You have my thanks for her growing up into a fine girl.”

Naofumi: “Windia?”

For the most part, I didn't have enough evidence to pick out someone.

Gaelion: “Mu? You surely aren't planning to tell me you were planning to raise her without even knowing her name?”

Naofumi: “It’s that Monster-loving idiot slave, right? So she had a name like that.”

Rat: “Hold on, could it be that you don’t know the names of the children in our village, Count?”

Naofumi: “There are ones I know, but a lot I don’t.”

I can only remember Atlas... Kiel, and Foulu thanks to Raphtalia.

Aside from those, I’m pretty unclear. I can find some way around using their names, anyways.

Now that I mention it, there are a lot of guys I don’t know.

Even the Female Knight I talk to a lot... I don’t know her name either.

Rat: “Count, what do you usually call Windia?”

Naofumi: “Probably just Taniko.”

Rat: “Why!?”

Sadina: “A great nickname isn't it? Or would fatty be better? OR MAY-BE Mistress?”

Sadina asks me in a really irritating pose.

If she turned into her human form, this would turn into a brawl.

Naofumi: “I remember people calling her name out, and other people calling out to her. But I've never called her by her name myself.”

Rat: “Ah...That’s true, isn't it. Most of the time you usually just refer to people with 'You' or 'Over there'.”

Sadina: “Hey Naofumi-chan, have you ever called anyone by name? Tell me.”

Naofumi: “Head chef, Imia’s Uncle, Old Hag, and there are many others.”

Sadina: “Wow... this is pretty serious. Naofumi-chan isn't fussing over it

so it's fine, but you shouldn't call people by those names."

Naofumi: "Isn't Old Hag fine?"

Sadina: "I don't know who you're talking about."

Naofumi: "Battle Adviser."

Sadina: "Oh... she's definitely an old lady."

Atlas: "Naofumi-sama, what do you call my brother and I?"

Naofumi: "Atlas is Atlas. I've started calling Fohl, Alps."

Rat: "Like I was saying before, why!? I don't understand your naming scheme, Count."

Sadina: "That's certainly true."

I'm just basing it from anime in my world. If you want reasoning, go ask another hero.

Even so, there's no way of telling if the other heroes had seen the same anime.

Firo: "What about Firo?"

Naofumi: "Do you want to hear?"

Firo: "Yeah..."

Naofumi: "By the way Gaelion, you're Ding Dong Dash."

Gaelion: "It's longer than my real name! I don't understand its origin."

Ding Dong Dash protests while amazed.

I wonder which Ding Dong Dash was the one who actually Ding Dong Dashed.

Hmm, this name is hard to use.

Naofumi: "Well that's all well and good. I'll ask once, but... that kid is your child?"

Ding Dong Dash: "That would be correct."

Naofumi: "Then you kidnapped her with the intentions of violating her,

huh? You're deplorable."

It's not strange that Taniko is in blind acceptance of Dragons. Since she was young, she was intended to marry into Dragon nobility. Even if Gaelion didn't feel like it, he could still have his way.

This type has his own intentions, and will stick it out until the end to fulfill his desires.

Gaelion: "How dare you speak like that!? I'll kill you! Since Windia was small-!"

*

Translator Note:

[1] I'm not really sure who's speaking here, but I want to say Gaelion. Actual line doesn't state "I" explicitly.

Chapter 186: A Dragon's Rage

Apparently, a group of Demi-Human Merchants were attacked while passing through Gaelion's mountain range.

Of course, Gaelion was not going to let the culprits go Scot free.

But before he could do anything, a female Demi-Human came running to his cave with a baby in her hands. She collapsed at the entrance.

"Fumu, what are you doing in front of my cave. Depending on your answer..." (Gaelion) The woman's vision was getting hazy. She could not see who she was addressing, but still she smiled and held the baby up with the last of her strength.

"Thank god. There was someone here... we were attacked in these mountains, and I somehow made it here... I beg of you, please, at the very least, save this child..." (Female Demi-Human) "Nu..." (Gaelion)

"This is a harsh country for Demi-Humans. I understand that I am asking for a lot, but... I beg of you."

And with shaking hands, the woman tries to hand the child over. Her eyesight is slowly leaving her.

She doesn't realize that the one she is talking to isn't even human.

"... I understand. I shalt care for thy child with my life." (Gaelion) Gaelion listens to the woman's last wish. He picks up the child in his massive claws.

"Thank... You. That child's name is... Wyn... Dia..."

After saying this, the woman stops moving.

The only thing sustaining her lifeforce was her desire to protect the baby.

"Fuhihi... So she ran all the way to this place." (Bandit) The bandits that had attacked her earlier arrived.

They were fools who simply gave chase without seeing where they were going.

There was supposed to be a famous story circulating in this region.

One of an Evil Dragon that made its home on these lands.

“A promise is a promise. I guess I have no choice.” (Gaelion) “He? What!?” (Bandit)

Before the Bandits can say any more, Gaelion releases a Breath Attack.

And the thieves are immediately reduced to rotting ashes.

“Now then. Protecting my land takes most of my effort... What should I do with this?” (Gaelion) Like this, Gaelion started raising the baby.

With the help of the other monsters inhabiting the area, he looked after Wyndea, while protecting his land. (TL: There is a side note that these monsters are Gaelion’s lovers) And because of that, Wyndea... This is a pain. Taniko learned to treat monsters as family.

It appears that Gaelion had many children.

And having a Demi-Human among them didn’t hurt.

The story after that went into Gaelion’s child-care journal, so I’ll omit that.

Anyways, Gaelion awkwardly brought up Taniko.

He learned to treat her with love, but a dragon raising a Demi-Human is still difficult.

Melromark had always had a tradition of Human Absolutism, and Gaelion somehow wanted to give Taniko human happiness.

But because of that...

—

On that Day, Gaelion left Taniko in the care of the other monsters, and went on a walk.

“The Dragon plaguing this land is you, right!?” (Ren)

A person wielding what appeared to be a magic sword, and his companions, appeared.

Occasionally, some humans attack Gaelion's lair in search of his treasure.

Though he understood human language, there was no real reason for Gaelion to converse with these thieves.

"GYAoooooooooooo!" (Gaelion)

With the cry of a beast, Gaelion attacks these humans.

But his opponents were too strong.

The Humans had somehow obtained an anti-dragon sword, and every hit from it put Gaelion in great pain.

Gaelion realized it.

That this was one of the summoned humans. The Hero of the Sword.

The fight itself took around 30 minutes.

The sword's properties put Gaelion at a disadvantage, so he wanted to retreat.

But in his cave was Taniko, and the monsters caring for her.

If he ran here...

The monsters would probably be fine. They were inhabitants of this mountain, and had the ability to run.

But Taniko was different.

If this cowardly fragment of the Dragon Emperor were to run here, then she would probably confront the Hero... and perish.

He thought back to what his crime was. It was his very existence.

Just by protecting his territory, he attracted greedy humans vying for his treasure.

Gaelion felt great resentment.

In the last moments of his life... Gaelion stared at the Hero of the Sword's face.

Those weren't the eyes of one who was prepared to die fighting.

He was killing him as if it were simply a job.

While Gaelion was fighting with his life on the line, this man was simply doing a job.

The irrationality made him think he was going insane.

Taniko's troubled, crying face.

Taniko's slightly lonely face when he went out.

Taniko's happy face when he returned home.

He could no longer see any of them.

The Dragon Emperor fragments are immortal.

But when will he revive? There's no guarantee he will ever see Taniko again.

If someone were to extract his core and use it, then revival would be impossible.

And with those thoughts of anger and despair, Gaelion died.

Luckily, his core was not taken.

From within the core of his lifeless body, he quietly waited for his resurrection.

He waited, and waited. Even when his body started to rot.

Gaelion wished. If only someone came by to help take on his soul.

But that wish never came true. His friends at the cave had probably been exterminated by now.

Eventually, he stopped thinking entirely, and his core's instincts took over.

He could no longer hear rhyme or reason.

His body began moving against his will.

Gaelion could no longer perceive the outside world or speak.

And all that surrounded him was tainted earth.

Taniko and the others were most likely dead.

When he finally regained his senses, he witnessed a Filo Rial eating his core. It was the end.

-He no longer cared for reputation or pride.

Just one hit was enough. He just wanted to give that Sword Hero some form of retribution.

“But the one I found was the hero of the Shield. I watched and waited for my opportunity from inside your shield.” (Gaelion) “And I conveniently obtained a Dragon’s egg, so you tried to shift your conscious to it?” (Naofumi) “Pretty much. But I never expected to find Wyndea alive here. My luck was good.” (Gaelion) Gaelion turns to Firo.

It was a long story, so Atlas is sound asleep.

If someone tells a story while you’re lying down, you will tend to fall asleep.

“As expected of a Filo Rial’s body. You were able to contain my power and keep control of your body. You’re quite a troublesome one, you know.” (Gaelion) “Hmph-!” (Firo)

Firo shows open hostility towards Gaelion.

“And? How did Taniko get to this village? I just bought her from the Slave Dealer, so I have no idea.” (Naofumi) “I can guess. After the Hero of the Sword killed me, the villagers probably came to my cave for my treasure. They slaughtered all the monsters there and sold Wyndea along with the eggs there. She does have a good face.” (Gaelion) Ah, Dragon eggs are quite valuable, so they were probably sold off.

I was suspicious of how the villagers in the area were so wealthy.

They were pretty much getting their just deserts.

But that’s just from a dragon’s point of view.

Honestly, humanity is a race that only sees things one-sidedly, and commits crimes without remorse based on this arbitrary judgment.

I learned that myself here.

Monster hunting can be considered merciless slaughter from the monster's point of view.

"You won't get my sympathy." (Naofumi)

"I know. How long do you think I hath inhabited thy shield? This world is based on Survival of the Fittest, and I think I'm resigning. I can't forgive the one who killed me without any thought and left my body to rot, but I've already delivered retribution on many souls." (Gaelion) There were many casualties at the plagued village.

I guess that was his retribution.

"I was simply waiting for mine own revival. And now I hath been given a body here." (Gaelion) "Yes, yes. If you don't intend to serve me, then you can take Taniko and leave. Otherwise, I don't mind forgiving you for the trouble you caused us." (Naofumi) "I never said I didn't wish to serve thee. This body's owner seems to have taken a liking to thee." (Gaelion) "Master is Firo's!" (Firo)

"Quiet, future Queen! He who wins out is the winner! This time, I shalt obtain this hero's favor, is what this body's owner says." (Gaelion) "Mu...!" (Firo)

"My Favor..." (Naofumi)

My pets appear to be fighting over me.

If they get to be too much of a pain, should I kick them out?

But Firo is currently here as an Atlas countermeasure, so I can't really kick her out.

"So, in the end, what do you want to do?" (Naofumi)

"I wish to gather the Fragments and obtain the strength of the true Dragon Emperor." (Gaelion) "Rejected. That sounds troublesome. Do that by yourself. I have no obligation to do that." (Naofumi) "Wa, you rejected him quite bluntly, Naofumi-chan." (Sadina) "The Count's decision making ability is amazing. He can say that even when he's offering you so

much information about Dragons.” (Rat) “Information? Think you can write a paper on it?” (Naofumi) “I don’t think anyone will believe it. We can’t really write this guy up as a credible source.” (Rat) Gaelion finally recovers from my sudden rejection. He starts speaking.

“Can you not at least hear me out?” (Gaelion)

“Rejected.” (Naofumi)

“Then I’ll just talk, and you can choose whether or not to listen. I wish to become strong. My vessel also wishes for this. We’ll probably get much stronger than I was in life.” (Gaelion) “Then isn’t that fine? Why must you search for the Dragon Emperor Fragments?” (Naofumi) “The waves of calamity are causing the fragments to gather.” (Gaelion) “Hmm... As summoned enemies?” (Naofumi)

“No, as the world’s...” (Gaelion)

“What’s wrong?” (Naofumi)

“This is all the information I have on the fragments. All I know is that they are gathering to prepare for a large event.” (Gaelion) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“If I win fights against those other fragments, then I can gain more and more of the Emperor’s power. And here I swear, that I will use that power for your sake.” (Gaelion) “Of course you will. If you weren’t going to lend me your power, I wouldn’t let you get power in the first place.” (Naofumi) “Mu... Just listen to me. If you assist me in becoming stronger, then I shall grant upon you the knowledge of the Dragon Emperor.” (Gaelion) “I don’t really need the knowledge of the people you beat...” (Naofumi) I don’t think this deal seems very credible.

“Even if it’s forgotten knowledge on how to break the Lv 100 cap?” (Gaelion)

Chapter 187: Release

“Wouldn’t the ability to break through the level 100 cap be of appeal to you?” (Gaelion) Damn... I really hate it when people tempt me like this.

Even so, this guy... made such an uproar just a few hours ago, and is asking me to lend him help.

If the situation had gotten any worse, I, along with the three other heroes would have just been killed off and re-summoned. That’s what this world’s people are like.

In the first place, with what previously was my most combat capable party member, Firo, halved in level, do you really think I’d take you on?

My concessions are at stake here, so I’m listening.

If this is just a promise to make up for what he did, I’ll drive him out and dispose of him properly.

If anything, I want him to actually act like he understands.

Honestly, it’s true that the conditions for exchange he’s speaking are exactly what I want.

But, my instincts are telling me to refuse.

In the first place, he’s still not reflecting on the time he fought with Firo at all.

It’s that habit, the one where you make up whatever reason to get what you want. Have the Dragon Emperor’s fragments not had proper manners from the very beginning?

“You know, why have you just been treating me however you please? Do you really understand?” (Naofumi) “.....Ahh.” (Gaelion)

As expected of the Dragon Emperor, quick to understand.

Well, maybe it’s because of how his feelings were synchronized with mine for a little while.

“I’m sorry. If you can overlook what happened, I’ll help you as much as

I can.” (Gaelion) “Alright. Let’s hear what you have to say.” (Naofumi) Jeez, you should have just said that from the start.

“Huh? Count, is that all you wanted him to say?” (Rat) “Naofumi-chan, you just wanted to be apologized to, huh.” (Sadina) “Shut up.” (Naofumi)

Ignoring Rat and Sadina, I look over at Gaelion.

“I can inform you about the truth behind the wave, the reality behind the legend, and all other knowledge accumulated by the Dragon Emperor.” (Gaelion) “If that’s all you’ve got, I could just ask the Firoial Queen.” (Naofumi) “The Firoial Queen, you say? Why don’t you take a look at the next Queen herself.” (Gaelion) “Ah...” (Naofumi)

I take a look at Firo, and it looks like she’s playing with her ahoge.

What is she doing?

Well, Firo’s an idiot after all.

The actual Queen might just be the same.

“Hmm~?” (Firo)

“It’s no good.” (Naofumi)

Firo’s wiggles her ahoge.

What’s up with that reaction?

“Well you see, I can hear Fitoria’s forgotten voice.” (Firo) “Is that an antenna, or what?” (Naofumi)

The reason they fought with dragons was probably some silly reason like who would get the rights to be the hero’s mount.

In any case, is she even capable of talking with that to Fitoria through that idiotic ahoge of hers?

It’s probably something like telepathy.

I swear, the fact that anything’s possible in this world makes me feel sick.

“Well you see~, Firoria is saying that since she was little, she hasn’t

understood much about the past.” (Firo) “....What do you think?”
(Gaelion)

“Yeah...” (Naofumi)

That’s really fascinating, but Fitoria... you shouldn’t be so honest.

Firo and Gaelion start glaring at each other.

“Shouldn’t we be on better terms by now? The Shield Hero’s Shield will end up getting bottlenecked at this rate.” (Gaelion) “Huh?” (Naofumi)

What? Could it be that the dragon series shield being locked is Fitoria’s doing?

In exchange for unlocking Firolial Series, the Dragon Series was sealed?

That huge bird... trying to pass off as royalty only to do something petty like this.

This would probably limit my ability quite a bit.

Just doing whatever she wants. Damn that bird.

“Most of my power comes from that core of mine, you know.” (Gaelion)

“Ah, that makes sense.” (Naofumi)

With your level too low, you had no choice but to transform.

Is the dragon’s core the same level of importance as Fitoria’s ahoge?

If this was a game or something, it’d feel like you could only opt for one.

I’ve been thinking recently, but I really want to know if I’ve been living in reality, or just some game.

“If you’re going to take me on now, do it. Even Firo knows you’re the weakest of the dragon fragments. Ahahaha.” (Firo) “Gununu....” (Gaelion)

I don’t understand the point of pets.

Somehow I can see things from an even lower perspective.

“Look. Take out your shield.” (Gaelion)

“Ha... If you say so.” (Naofumi)

Gaelion transfers some sort of energy into my shield.

It was as though the shield sparked for a second.

A part of the core was absorbed.

Dragon Leather Shield's conditions have been met. Dragon Leather Shield has been unlocked.

Dragon Scale Shield's conditions have been met. Dragon Scale Shield has been unlocked.

Dragon Meat Shield's conditions have been met. Dragon Meat Shield has been unlocked.

Dragon Familiar Shield's conditions have been met. Dragon Familiar Shield has been locked.

"Gu... This is it. Damn." (Naofumi)

"Even then it's better than nothing, right?" (Gaelion) "Mu...!" (Firo)

Firo and her ahoge look mortified.

Well, at least the stats make it worth it. As expected of the Dragon Series, huh.

And the stats scaling is pretty good.

The condition for unlocking is to be level 50.

Fitoria really screwed me over.

Oh? The Dragon Familiar Shield has Growth Correction Up for Dragons.

In other words, if I gathered the other fragments, we could raise Gaelion's stats even further.

"After Class Up, I can do some support techniques. I'm also willing to teach you the Dragon Pulse." (Gaelion) Let's try looking at the ups and downs.

With Class Up, we'll get stat correction...that ahoge had that kind of power huh.

I kind of understood but, the Dragon and Firolial's attributes are pretty different. Something like darkness and light.

"I can also handle the corruption of your cursed shield. I should be able increase its performance and duration too." (Gaelion) Help with the Wrath Shield... Firo did it too, but Gaelion will join in, huh.

If that happens, it might be easier to handle.

"I understand. I'll help. In any case, we were planning on raising Gaelion as a dragon from the beginning." (Naofumi) It's better if I set it straight now.

It's Taniko and the rest of the village's job to take care of the dragon, not mine.

"Also." (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Gaelion)

"I've already been using your core in my armor. Compensate for its loss." (Naofumi) [1]

"Ha... It can't be helped." (Gaelion)

He handed me a red ball just the time he gave Firo a candy ball.

"That ball is a part of my strength, and will borrow power from your armor. I'll be able to strengthen yours further if you get more fragments too." (Gaelion) "I see..." (Naofumi)

This armor just became a lot more useful.

Firo's ahoge is showing some sort of strange response.

"What is it, Firo?" (Naofumi)

"Firo doesn't know. But it's trying to do something." (Firo) "Wait, what do you mean by that?" (Naofumi)

"It's working together with my core to strengthen your armor further. I handed you a clone of mine, or so to speak." (Gaelion) "Does this mean he'll be strengthened by both?" (Rat) "Ah, if I recall right, Rat was studying weapons and the like used by monsters. In a way, it's close to

what monsters use for protection, huh?” (Naofumi) “It looks like you’re getting the idea. Fumu... now that I think about it, you know about monster modification, right?” (Gaelion) “...What is it?” (Rato)

Rat hates dragons, doesn’t she?

Although it seems to be because they supposedly have no honor.

It’s just because he mated with too many monsters in the past, huh?

The fact that dragons are beings with no honor isn’t something that’s been proven.

“Don’t lay a hand on Rat.” (Naofumi)

“I wouldn’t do such a thing. But, if she wanted to, I wouldn’t mind playing with her for a bit. Claiming this place as my territory and mating with the monsters in the area doesn’t sound too bad.” (Gaelion) “No way!” (Rat)

“Don’t say that. I’m greedy for strength, enough to take down that Firolial Queen.” (Gaelion) “No... you’re filth.” (Rat)

“Fufu, I wonder how long you’ll last with that mentality. Is this the extent of your motivation for research?” (Gaelion) Rat glares at Gaelion with a somewhat bitter face.

What is up with this eroge-like development?

All of a sudden, I feel like driving out Gaelion now.

“If your daughter had heard this, she’d cry you know.” (Naofumi)
“Gumu...” (Gaelion)

Taniko’s completely against messing with monsters in research.

If her parent Gaelion is all for it, all her efforts are for nothing.

“The times are changing... is another way to put it.” (Gaelion) “What do you mean?” (Naofumi)

“I’ve forgotten the true meaning behind the wave itself. But, there is one thing I do remember.” (Gaelion) “What is it? Speak.” (Naofumi)

“Well you see... Every time a wave takes place, monsters around the

world get stronger.” (Gaelion) “What?” (Naofumi)

Stronger... somehow, what he said has a bad ring to it.

In other words, it’s similar to online games from my world where the strength of monsters would scale with the player population?

“Come to think of it, how do wild monsters Class Up?” (Naofumi) “Wild monsters work on a different system from humans. They get power from the earth itself, which is where humans also get experience from. Hence why there’s a level cap.” (Gaelion) I’ve been told something I hadn’t known before.

“In the first place, is that knowledge a fragment like you should have?” (Naofumi) “From the beginning, I’ve been a wild dragon.” (Gaelion) “Well that’s only natural.” (Naofumi)

“Of course. Like wild monsters, we also work on a different system.” (Gaelion) “How the hell do you know that!” (Naofumi)

“I heard it from an offspring of mine.” (Gaelion)

“...I see.” (Naofumi)

As a parent, Gaelion really doesn’t care about anyone aside from Taniko.

Was the fact we worked on different systems supposed to be common sense?

Although, in Japan there’s no way I’d be able to talk with wild animals like this in the first place.

“I understand what you’re saying. Well, it’s not that I won’t consider it, but...if we get attacked by some dragon because of you, get out of here.” (Naofumi) “If it ever came down to that, I would fight. I need to protect what’s here, after all.” (Gaelion) “You should probably tell that to the Queen.” (Naofumi) If the waves were to continue on like this, and the people of this world didn’t find a solution, they would die sooner or later.

Just like an RPG, the monsters around the devil king are stronger, while the beginner area is a lot weaker.

“Well then, I’m tired and going to sleep soon. Would that be all?”
(Gaelion) “Well, I guess so. I guess next we’ll need to discipline your body’s actual owner, huh?” (Naofumi) “He’s reflecting plenty enough. Probably because of how he went against orders.” (Gaelion) “I see. If he shows results, I’ll believe that. Ding Dong Dash.” (Naofumi) “Gumu... Ha.... I understand. It can’t be helped.” (Gaelion) Like this, the conversation was over and I retired for the day.

Of course, Gaelion and Rat left.

For some reason, Sadina is sleeping in the same room though.

Firo is sticking to me without a shred of dignity.

Something will probably come out of this.

*

Translator Note:

[1] Naofumi tells Gaelion that he has been using the dragon core for his armor and to give it back. Gaelion gives him the candy-like thing as a replacement for it. Gaelion had eaten the core used in the armor earlier after all, which is what led to the mess with the Wrath Dragon.

Chapter 188: Salute

It's been 3 days since I've started giving Firo preferential treatment over Gaelion.

In my free time, I've started training with Atlas.

"Training with Naofumi-sama. How delightful." (Atlas) "Atlas, I believe you were able to read the flow of energy or something, right?" (Naofumi) "Yes." (Atlas)

"Can you perform attacks that can breach my defenses, and damage me from the inside?" (Naofumi) "Um... something like this?" (Atlas)

Atlas makes a gesture as if she's grabbing something out of the air, and then pushes her hand at me.

At that moment, I suddenly feel a sense of pain in my stomach.

This technique is the same one that granny used.

"Y-yeah... That one." (Naofumi)

It's good that I didn't have a powerful shield equipped.

I have the feeling that if I equipped one of my heavily strengthened shields, then I would have fallen to the ground with that attack.

But for her to be able to execute it simply after hearing the granny's explanation, Atlas truly is a genius.

"I thought I would try training to be able to control my energy to withstand attacks like that." (Naofumi) "As expected of Naofumi-sama. You're always trying to get stronger. Please allow me to assist you." (Atlas) "I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

And like that, I began sparring with Atlas.

Because of this, Atlas is too tired at night to force herself into my bed.

I've been able to understand the general concept through my sparrings, but applying it is difficult.

I've been able to use support magic to drive away the forces acting

within my body, but something is different.

But I guess it's best to learn little by little.

“Master~! Let's play~!” (Firo)

Firo occasionally comes over while we're training.

I wonder what happened to Melty.

So I occasionally spar with Firo as well. I also just play with her normally.

“Kyua...” (Gaelion)

I can see Gaelion watching us from the shadows in envy, but I ignore him.

“Don't bully him too much.” (Gaelion)

The older Gaelion speaks out in protest.

“Bu...! Go Back!” (Firo)

Firo truly seems to hate Gaelion.

“Now then, Gaelion. Where shall we go today?” (Taniko) “Gya... Gyau!” (Gaelion)

“Gaelion?” (Taniko)

Taniko is getting suspicious of Gaelion's behavior.

Why must he hide his revival?

Even if he's trying to fit into human society, I'm sure Taniko would be delighted if she knew.

Also, Kogaelion's cry is Kyua. (Ko means child)

What the hell is Gyau supposed to mean?

Adult Gaelion stares at me for help with eyes like a calf that's about to be sold. I won't get involved.

Gaelion gets dragged off by Taniko.

He should be able to get through this with his own strength.

And so, 3 ordinary days passed.

“Firo is going to go level with Melty.” (Firo)

As I was walking around town with Firo, she suddenly blurts this out.

“... Are you sure you don’t want me to go with you?” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Firo)

Her answer is very energetic.

Since reconstruction has been going smoothly, I thought I would go level myself, but...

But with an answer that energetic, I can’t really force myself into their group.

Oh? Melty looks troubled.

“Um, Firo-chan. I don’t have that much free time.” (Melty) “Eh? But Mel-chan, you said that you felt weak and wanted to raise your level.” (Firo) “I didn’t mean right now.” (Melty)

“But Melty-chan, the villagers told me that people that put things off to tomorrow, never really do it tomorrow.” (Firo) “I have something else that I have to do.” (Melty) “Eh... But Mel-chan, they also said that if you don’t mix in fun with work, then you’ll never get anywhere.” (Firo) Firo enters inquisition mode again.

In this mode, she seems to lose the ability to read the situation, and just continuously asks questions.

But if I don’t do anything here, Firo’s level will remain low.

If I tell her to go level alone, will she get mad?

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What~?” (Firo)

“go level alone.” (Naofumi)

“No!” (Firo)

As I thought.

I look towards Melty's subordinates.

I signal for them to open up a space in Melty's schedule later.

It seems they were worried about Melty's low level as well.

She hasn't been neglecting her magical studies, so her abilities go beyond her level, but it's probably better for one who is going to lead a country to have a higher level.

And there's also the problem of having a child do strenuous labor for a long period of time.

Melty also needs time to play.

Firo is more than qualified to be her bodyguard.

"There's no helping it... Future Queen, Melty. You must go on a journey to find yourself with that bird as your companion!" (Naofumi) "Na-Naofumi? What are you talking about?" (Melty)

"And so, Firo. Go level up with Melty." (Naofumi)

"Hooray!" (Firo)

"Wait, Naofumi! Don't go deciding these things on your own!" (Melty)
"It's fine, Melty." (Naofumi)

"What is!?" (Melty)

"This isn't just my own judgment. Your subordinates have already given me permission. Even Shadow will guard you from the shadows."
(Naofumi) "That's even worse!" (Melty)

"After that, we'll have to decide whether or not to apply the slave seal on you for the stat boosts. That Queen will probably grant permission."
(Naofumi) That Queen seems to want Melty to become my wife, so she'll probably do anything to get her closer to me.

I'll ask for the individual's opinion here.

"Never!" (Melty)

"I see. Then we won't. Firo, while you're away, what will we do for Atlas countermeasures?" (Naofumi) "Hm... I'll ask a reliable person." (Firo)

Who?

Since it's Firo, will she bring in her subordinate Filo Rial?

"I have no intentions of sleeping next to a Filo Rial." (Naofumi) "Then I'll ask Imya-chan." (Firo)

"How will that help?" (Naofumi)

I don't think Imya can stop Atlas.

It seems that she's gotten skillful enough for the Tailor to begin passing on her personal secret techniques.

Will she make Atlas a wedding dress? I don't know how she would accomplish that with nothing but monster skins, but that sounds like it will sell well.

"Then Firo will bring in someone stronger than Atlas-chan." (Firo)
"Who?" (Naofumi)

"Hm..." (Firo)

This isn't going to work. It doesn't look like she's even thinking about it.

"I think that person will be able to stop Atlas-chan." (Firo) "And I'm asking who." (Naofumi)

"Well, then, we're off, Master~." (Firo)

"Wait, Firo-chan! I never said I was goin-" (Melly) Before Melty can protest, Firo grabs the clothing on the back of her neck and tosses her onto her back.

And as soon as Melty lands, Firo runs off while flapping her wings.

"Naofumiiiiiii. Remember thiiiiisss!" (Melly)

"I expect great growth from you, Future Queen, Melty." (Naofumi) (TL: As in Stats) Going with the flow, I salute her. She seems angry, and tries to throw something at me. It appears to be a piece of scrap paper.

But as she's on the back of a running Firo, the item that she throws doesn't reach me. It just gets carried off by the wind.

She starts screaming hysterically.

But despite all of this, it's not like I hate her.

"Now then." (Naofumi)

I hold a meeting with Melty's subordinates about the management of the village.

The area's development is proceeding faster than expected.

This is in part due to the usage of the Camping Plant, which I lent to some of the stores.

This interesting plant will probably bring in a lot of customers.

—

"And... The help Firo hired was you?" (Naofumi)

When night comes, I once again hold my head in my hands.

Was that bird even thinking at all?

"That's right. This Onee-san really is troubled." (Sadina) Rafatalia had already asked her, so why is Firo requesting her as well?

This is double booking.

Sadina is happily drinking sake as she sits on the floor of my house.

"Anyways... you have Rafatalia, and you have Firo. Why does everyone rely on you?" (Naofumi) "No idea. This Onee-san also finds it amazing~." (Sadina) She's being annoying.

I activate her slave seal for a second.

"Ahn. Naofumi-chan, how stimulating. Ahn!" (Sadina) ... As the pain sets in, Sadina releases a disturbing voice.

If someone were to hear her, they would definitely misunderstand the situation.

So she isn't someone the slave seal will work on so easily. I'm seriously considering kicking her out.

But if I did that, I might damage the relationship I have with the slaves.

For some reason, they seem to put a strange amount of trust in this person.

And I have no idea what Rafatalia will say to me if I do.

“Sigh...” (Naofumi)

“Do you really hate Atlas coming into your bed that much?” (Sadina)

“Yeah. It’s just as I said before.” (Naofumi)

“... Everyone really is having it tough.” (Sadina)

“With what?” (Naofumi)

“Everyone really likes Naofumi-chan, but Naofumi-chan has no intentions of responding to them.” (Sadina) “Their feelings are more like those they would have for a parent. You can’t call that love. I don’t want to be responsible for something like that, so I try to keep my distance. It seems Rafatalia also seems to get angry when such matters come up, and Firo... I’m not even sure if she understands what Love is.” (Naofumi) “I can understand what Naofumi-chan is saying. I think it’s best if you don’t discuss these sorts of things with Rafatalia-chan.” (Sadina) “You’re saying it as if it’s fine to discuss it with everyone else, though.” (Naofumi) If Rafatalia harbored those kinds of feelings towards me, would Sadina tell me to take responsibility?

Her phrasing makes it sound like Rafatalia is keeping something from me.

Well, we’ve known each other for quite a while, so Sadina might be mistaking our relationship.

“... I’m grateful that you’ve been protecting Rafatalia all this time. When the first wave hit, I wasn’t able to help her. I couldn’t protect her.” (Sadina) Protect? What sort of relationship did they have?

Or is she regretting that she was unable to protect the other villagers?

Her sense of duty is quite strong.

“Now then... This Onee-san will offer Naofumi-chan a special idea.” (Sadina) “What?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-chan, don’t you have quite a convenient shield? When you sleep, can’t you just move to a different town? I don’t think Atlas-chan will pursue you that far.” (Sadina) “But my money is...” (Naofumi)

The lodging fee will be quite a bit. The daily amount isn’t much, but if I want to stay every night, the amounts will add up.

I can camp out in a camping plant and the wild monsters probably won’t be able to damage me, but I don’t think I will be able to sleep.

Perhaps I can sleep for free at Melromark Castle.

But Trash is over there, and I think I’ll get dragged into something troublesome.

“Then should this Onee-san show you her secret base?” (Sadina) “Secret base?” (Naofumi)

Chapter 189: Secret Base

“I see... So this is your secret base.” (Naofumi)

After that, Sadina dragged me towards the ocean.

She told me to get on her back, and started swimming.

Riding Sadina, it took around 30 minutes to get there.

I saw an island in the distance. It was too dark for me to see clearly, but the island didn't look particularly big.

It looked kinda like a crescent island I've seen in postcards.

I don't really see any monsters.

I'm not Motoyasu, but I can say that it's quite a romantic island.

After we reach the island, Sadina goes onto a hill and lights a torch. She leads me to a cave-like area.

The structure is man-made, and even has windows.

“This place is regularly maintained, so it should be able to stand against storms.” (Sadina) “If we come all the way here, I guess even Atlas won't follow me.” (Naofumi) “Pretty much.” (Sadina)

If she decides to cross the ocean, or gets a boat, then there truly is nothing I can do to stop her.

... The fact that it actually seems likely scares me.

“You should be able to get back using your shield. How does the place seem?” (Sadina) “If I'm only using it to sleep, then this will suffice.” (Naofumi) The location isn't bad. The only problem is that it will be a pain to bring over my medicine compounding equipment.

The island is very quiet, and perfect for work.

Perhaps Rat can move her laboratory over here.

“And so, Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

Sadina goes deeper in the cave and brings out a large barrel.

It most likely contains alcohol.

“Where did you get that from?” (Naofumi)

“I salvaged it from a shipwreck. It’s matured to a perfect age now.”
(Sadina) Ah, I see. For some reason, that barrel looks like illegal goods to me.

I mean, it is being hidden away in such a reclusive place.

“Why don’t you have a little drinking contest with me?” (Sadina) “Why would I do that?” (Naofumi)

“Oneesan wants to get Naofumi-chan drunk so he will spill out his true feelings.” (Sadina) “Did you think I would permit it if you just asked honestly? Anyways, I can’t even get drunk.” (Naofumi) “This is the last time you’ll be saying something like that~” (Sadina) Sadina enthusiastically cracks open the barrel. She dips a cup in and starts drinking.

I guess I’ll keep her company. I think I can sleep peacefully here.

“You said this was from a shipwreck, right?” (Naofumi) “Yeah.”
(Sadina)

“Can you just take goods like that in this country?” (Naofumi) “No problem~, This wasn’t within this country’s salvageable range.” (Sadina) “Salvage range?” (Naofumi)

“There are laws that mandate the acquisition of goods from the ocean, but they aren’t very definite. This barrel was picked up in international waters, so it’s not subject to law.” (Sadina) It’s not like anyone’s going to ask for its origin anyways, so as long as we keep quiet, it’s probably okay.

“With water magic, one can gain the ability to breath underwater for a while, but that doesn’t mean they can match aquatic races. Melromark is a country of human absolutism, so even if they build salvage ships, most of the deeper areas of the ocean are untouched.” (Sadina) “I see...”
(Naofumi)

“Fishermen will actively attack aquatic Demi-humans and Beastmen,

and the reverse is also common.” (Sadina) The oceans here seem to be quite dangerous.

“Recently, the waves have gotten stronger and the currents faster as well.” (Sadina) So the Wave is also effecting the normal waves.

I get the feeling that the ship captain said that on the way to Cal Mira.

“If I find time, do you want me to go treasure hunting? Though if I don’t raise my level a bit, it will be kinda dangerous.” (Sadina) “Well, your level has risen quite a bit... If you think you can do it, I’ll leave it to you.” (Naofumi) Treasure from the sea will definitely sell for a bit.

Sadina pulls out an ocean map with one hand, while she continues drinking with the other.

“U... Naofumi-chan is a strong drinker~.” (Sadina)

While we were in the middle of the second barrel, Sadina starts swaying a bit.

“Oh? You even have Lucor fruits here.” (Naofumi)

I was curious, so I walked past the drunk Sadina and look further into the cave.

I snack on some of the fruits before returning.

Apparently, because of its ridiculously high alcohol concentration, it almost never spoils.

These ones seem to be a bit old. The taste is deeper than usual.

Mass producing these and selling them is possible, but it’s probably best not to introduce alcohol to the slaves. I can imagine quite a few of them being bad drunks.

“Uu....” (Sadina)

Seeing me eating the Lucor Fruit, Sadina opens the window and begins throwing up into the sea.

“You really are strong. Oneesan is surprised. Hic.” (Sadina) “Yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

“...Naofumi-chan. Will you not become my groom?” (Sadina) “Don’t. Want. To.” (Naofumi)

“Ara. Oneesan said that she would marry someone who could drink more than her. I don’t think I’ll find someone better than Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) “Why should I marry you?” (Naofumi)

“How cruel~. Well, that’s part of Naofumi-chan’s charms.” (Sadina) And while we continued talking about it...

“...Samaaaa...” (???)

“Was that my imagination, or did you just hear a very ominous sound?” (Naofumi) “What a coincidence. I also heard Atlas-chan’s voice. Hic.” (Sadina) I look towards the beach.

... Atlas is approaching, riding a transformed Gaelion.

“Gaelion! Go Home!” (Naofumi)

There is still around 100 meters before they reach shore.

At this range, Atlas shouldn’t do anything stupid here.

“Kyua!?” (Gaelion)

It seems it’s child Gaelion this time.

I had never even considered the possibility of her using Gaelion to follow.

Atlas isn’t exactly stupid. She’s using all of her resources.

I guess I’ll have to deal with Gaelion later.

... With him here, no matter where I go, I will be followed.

What other options do I have left now?

“Ah, Gaelion-chan. Why are you turning around!? Naofumi-sama is right in front of us.” (Atlas) “KYUAAA!” (Gaelion)

“Then you’ve forced me to take drastic measures.” (Atlas) “Kyua!? KYUAAAAAAAAA!” (Gaelion)

“Even if it hurts, I’m going to do my best and jump off!”

He probably thought that getting any closer would only anger me.

Gaelion frantically tries to contain Atlas, and flies back along the route from which he came.

It seems that our aerial offensive power has greatly increased.

“... We were immediately found out.” (Naofumi)

“Wow~... That child’s the real deal.” (Sadina)

“What should we do?” (Naofumi)

“Adult Gaelion will probably refuse her, and it seems child Gaelion has found out that you dislike him coming here, so it will probably work out fine.” (Sadina) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

“But it’s good that you didn’t choose to sleep in another town.” (Sadina)
“... She would have come on the Filo Rial or another monster.” (Naofumi)
“Probably.” (Sadina)

After a while, Gaelion comes flying back.

This time, it’s the adult one.

“... That girl doth not know when to give up. Perhaps you may say that she’s simply strong willed.” (Gaelion) “I’ve caused you some trouble.” (Naofumi)

“No problem. Also... Oh? Is that Wine? Won’t you offer some to me?” (Gaelion) “Isn’t your body that of a child? Will you be fine?” (Naofumi)
“Yes, yes~ Naofumi-chan is too strong of a drinker, and Oneesan is in trouble. Gaelion-chan please drink as well.” (Sadina) Ignoring my words, Sadina hands Gaelion some sake.

“Yes, the taste of this one isn’t bad.” (Gaelion)

“What did you want to talk about? Speak before you get too intoxicated.” (Naofumi) “I’d never challenge the Lucor eating Naofumi to a drinking contest. I wanted to speak concerning the class up.” (Gaelion)
“Ah, there was that.” (Naofumi)

The monsters we keep around here are getting to be around that level.

After hunting for a while, a ★ appeared next to Gaelion's level value. It seems that the experience he stole from Firo let him level up past the preclass-up limit, but after a while, his level stopped growing.

"How about you, Sadina?" (Naofumi)

"Let's see, Oneesan will be able to class up in a little bit." (Sadina) It seems this one is hiding quite a bit of information. Or she just won't say anything until you ask.

Let me try asking.

"Did you ever Level Reset before? Besides when you did it with me?" (Naofumi) "Ah? You could tell~?" (Sadina)

That was a bluff, but she happily responds.

I had found a few things strange about her.

"I was able to get all the way to 75 before, but then I reset. The reason is a secret. I think it was around when Rafatalia-chan was born... My age was around that of a child I think." (Sadina) "I see, so does that mean you were a criminal?" (Naofumi) (TL: Remember that Level Reset was initially a punishment.) "Depending on the perspective you look at it from, I may have been a criminal." (Sadina) She starts laughing out loud. What happened to her in the past?

"Exactly how old are you anyways?" (Naofumi)

"To ask a woman for her age is quite rude, you know. By the way, I'm 23." (Sadina) Her eyes twinkle as she says this.

And... she's much younger than I thought. I estimated her to be in her 30s.

Rafatalia's true age is quite young, so when she was born, Sadina would be around 13.

"At that time, I was an Ocean Shrine Maiden." (Sadina) "So you were fired, and had your level reset?" (Naofumi) "Well, that's pretty much how it went." (Sadina)

Again, what exactly did she do?

Digging up people's pasts is a pain, and generally unproductive so I don't do it, but a former criminal...

"What~?" (Sadina)

"What did you do?" (Naofumi)

"I just went against my faith. It's not like I killed someone or something. I won't tell you more than that." (Sadina) She answers seriously for once. I get the feeling that this is a secret she will take to the grave.

My mind wanders towards Rafatalia.

Like Rafatalia's parents, she used to be a wanderer I think.

Did she know Rafatalia's parents for a long time?

... Rafatalia sometimes treats her as if she were her mother... Or is that just my imagination?

It seems she has no intention of saying more, so asking won't do anything.

"And? Gaelion, what is this about the Class Up?" (Naofumi) "You have the protection of the Filo Rial Queen, correct?" (Gaelion) "Yeah, Firo's Ahoge is a sort of protection I guess." (Naofumi) It seems that Filo Rials possess a wide variety of powers.

Or at least that's what I believe.

"I don't really know how it works, but the Ahoge sometimes interferes with Class Ups." (Naofumi) Sometimes regardless of the individual's will.

"That power interferes with the land the Class up takes place on, and magnifies its effects." (Gaelion) Power of the land...?

I believe he said that also influences experience and Status magic.

"A Class up is the enhancement of an individual's power. Of course the Hero's protection also amplifies power, but I am referring to something different." (Gaelion) "What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"Most likely, the Filo Rial's protection will not work on people who can use the Dragon Pulse Order and other monsters. The reason for this

should be obvious.” (Gaelion) “Mu...” (Naofumi)

So Neither Taniko or Sadina can use the special Ahoge-enhanced Class up.

They’ll only be able to depend on their selves for strength.

“I was worried about it, and thus I came here. You said that there were currently 2 who could Class Up, right?” (Gaelion) “I think so.” (Naofumi)

“Including me, that’s 3. I may be able to give protection on the same level as the Filo Rial one. If you want to Class Up other Monsters, then bring them along.” (Gaelion) “Is your protection different from the Filo Rial one?” (Naofumi) “Yeah... I forgot the reason. If you want to conduct a special Class Up, then... Ah, this is annoying.” (Gaelion) So he lost the knowledge on how to do it.

“I think doing it before I class up myself is dangerous.” (Gaelion) There’s also a possibility he can’t even do it.

“Sadina, do you know anything about this?” (Naofumi) “Nope~. Though when I did it, I did get the Water Dragon Emperor’s power to do a special Class Up.” (Sadina) “This one is probably incomparable to the other one.” (Gaelion) Says Gaelion.

So Sadina’s conducted a special Class Up before.

“Understood. I’ll have a monster that understands human speech ask them before they class up.” (Naofumi) If they truly wish to become stronger, then we can use Gaelion’s protection.

The monsters going to Rat for strength will most likely consider it.

“I guess I’ll take Firo and Gaelion along when next we decide to go Class Up.” (Naofumi) Atlas... Still has a while to go. The Hakuko have a higher class up level then the rest.

But Sadina and Taniko, also some of the other slaves are almost ready.

“_

“And so-” (Naofumi)

I explain what Gaelion told me to the monsters over Level 40.

I have absolutely no idea whether or not monsters can understand human speech, but giving an explanation is better than not.

I feel like an idiot right now.

“Even so, if you still want to, come with me. Today, we’ll go to the castle to Class Up.” (Naofumi) ... The monsters here don’t even move.

So they really can’t understand human words.

“Everyone who wishes to get stronger, step forward.” (Naofumi) “Kyu-!”

“Domomo...”

“Pyon!”

“Garu!”

A majority of the monsters come towards me.

Wow... They actually understood me.

Even the Usapill steps forwards.

By the way, this villages Usapill has grown quite big. Big enough to ride it.

(TL: See manga for size comparison)

And all of these monsters are striving for strength.

“Sigh... I got it. Then we’ll wait for Gaelion to class up before we go. You’ll have to stay that way for a while.” (Naofumi) The monsters listen to my command and return to the monster stable.

My head hurts.

And so after speaking with the monsters, I took Sadina, Taniko and Gaelion to go class up at the castle.

I don’t think I even have to talk about the Class up ceremony at this point.

In the middle of Gaelion’s Class Up, he began chanting magic, and the ceremony suddenly sped up and came to a close.

When I checked his Status, I found it had rose just as much as Firo's when she classed up.

Sadina's stat increase is also considerable.

Is it because she's the Oneesan that everyone relies on? She doesn't seem to be that strong on land.,, "Did you learn anything regarding providing providence during Class Up?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, Father's power came through Gaelion, and gave us power, right?" (Taniko) "No, your father is alive clinging to that dragon there." (Naofumi) "What are you talking about? If you don't stop, I will get angry." (Taniko) Taniko believes wholeheartedly that her father Gaelion is dead.

That very individual seems to be looking away and making a whistling sound.

What's with this scene?

...Who was it? They called me a Boomerang or something.

Anyways, like that we were able to obtain the Dragon's protection for Class Ups.

Chapter 190: Formal Request

I visit the Old Man's shop when we went to Class Up but a "shop closed" sign was hung up and it was unattended. When I ask the neighbouring store, it seems the old man's weapons had sold so well that production couldn't keep up, and he's gone out to gather ores.

I wonder how much of the prosperity is due to Imya's uncle.

Originally the shop was already famous in the Castle Town but its reputation has increased lately.

Although I am the reason for that, Old Man himself was quite skillful and recently his ability has been improving even further.

Was Imya's uncle a surprisingly skillful craftsman?

Or is the growth due to their rivalry? (TL: Between the Old Man and Imya's uncle) I don't know.

The next place I would stop by is the Slave Trader's place, but he is also absent.

Was he still in Zeltbur? (TL: Zeltbur, the country of mercenaries. refer to Chapter 155) Reconstruction is progressing, but to me Castle Town feels deserted. (TL: Naofumi is feeling lonely) How should I say it, none of my acquaintances are here.

In the first place, most of the people I know are in my territory.

Because of that, I return to the village quickly.

"Oh?" (Naofumi)

When I arrived at the village, I see some familiar faces.

The fearful girl who always seems misfortunate, and the strong woman who's dressed in simple armor.

"Ah, Iwatani-dono, we're back." (Female Knight)

"We've just returned." (Rishia)

Rishia and the Female Knight greet me.

“Oh, have you finished your training?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, I was told by the Instructor that because the training has ended I’m allowed to go back before them.” (Female Knight) “Yes, me too. I was taught various things. (Rishia)

“I see, you did go so far as to take a vacation for this apprenticeship. So how did it go? Were there any results?” (Naofumi) “Well, the Instructor was so impressed by my enthusiasm that she taught me the Peerless Transformation Style.” (Female Knight) (TL: The Peerless Transformation Style: also known as the Hengen Musou Ryuu) “Enthusiasm..... right.” (Naofumi)

So they followed the Instructor to the end.

There was a character in a game I knew who demanded an apprenticeship and didn’t move from the entrance of the master’s house.

If the character wasn’t accepted, then the story didn’t advance.

I remember that they were the one with the highest potential within the three disciples but the character had a strong habit, such a thing didn’t matter here. (TL: The game he’s referring to here is a Super Nintendo game that only aired in Japan called Live-A-Live.

http://fantasyanime.com/legacy2/screenshots/large/live_monk_11.png
Thanks to reader Beefy for the info and pic.)

“That being said, I was only taught sword techniques. She told me to keep training like I did before.” (Female Knight) “I had everything beaten into me.....” (Rishia)

So the Female Knight was only taught sword techniques, and Rishia was taught everything.

And that’s why they both came back from training at the same time.

The old hag had said before that there was no specific weapon for the Hengen Musou Style. (TL: Refer to Chapter 167) And yet the Female Knight only learnt about swords, wasn’t she taught properly?

“What is it, Iwatani-dono?” (Female Knight)

“Is it really all right? Saying you’ve been taught sufficiently, I’m afraid you seem like the underdog.” (Naofumi) “Hmph..... Who do you think I am? I followed the Instructor to the point where Rishia-dono and Rafatalia collapsed from exhaustion.” (Female Knight) “The Instructor also gave her permission for an official apprenticeship enthusiastically. The instructor even cut into her own break to teach her sword techniques.” (Rishia) (Editor’s note: she taught her only focusing on sword techniques and it couldn’t be helped if it cut into her break) “It is a style where the basics of body movement, magic, and spiritual flow are more important than technique. It was very hard to get the hang of it.” (Female Knight) So..... in other words, it’s a Style in which weapons are just decorations.

There are parts that I don’t understand understand too well.

“When Rafatalia-san’s training ends, it seems she will also teach the village.” (Rishia) “Is there a reason why you guys secluded yourselves in the mountain?” (Naofumi) “It seems that it’s the basics of body building. To experience the elements of the mountains, feel the flow of the earth, to strive for....” (Female Knight) “Do you even understand what that means?” (Naofumi)

I don’t get any of it. Is it because I’m from a different world?

I am able to use magic, but I don’t understand it at all.

“Isn’t it obvious.” (Rishia)

Says Rishia with a blank expression.

Has it already become commonplace.....

Is this girl getting conceited with her powers?

I wonder if I will be defeated in the next battle with a single blow.

There was such development in a manga that I read once.

.....I’d hate it. Something like that.

“By the way, judging from what you just said, Rafatalia is still continuing her training.” (Naofumi) “Yes, there are still a lot of things

Rafatalia-san needs to learn because she is Naofumi-san's right-hand man." (Rishia) "I see....." (Naofumi)

I had a lot of problems that were solved because Rafatalia was there. Actually, Fohl is the odd one out.

I feel like there are many slaves who she has been looking after.

"What are Iwatani-dono's plans after this?" (Female Knight) "Oh? I think I will go level up with those who just had a Class Up." (Naofumi) Indeed, I'm a little worried that I haven't been levelling up at all lately.

I was optimistic and thought it's fine even after Rafatalia returned and she could raise her level together with Firo, but the person in question has yet to return.

I'm thinking of officially gathering some people and making a party with the purpose of raising my level.

I feel bad for Firo but I plan on having Gaelion be our transport.

"Then I shall come with you. Of course, Rishia as well." (Female Knight) "That sounds good. I would like to see the Peerless Transformation Style." (Naofumi) Let's see, there's me, Atlas, Gaelion, Taniko, Rishia and the Female Knight.

It's a simple, well-balanced party.

If we were in an RPG, it would be a safe formation that wouldn't lose to most of the enemies.

Of course I know that it's only applicable in an adventure game and may not be true in reality.

"What are you going to do, Sadina?" (Naofumi)

In the worst case scenario, I could have the Female Knight be the caretaker.

I feel she has already adapted to the village but as far as it goes, the Female Knight is not one of my subordinates.

In terms of priority, Sadina is higher.

“I’ll be levelling in the sea~” (Sadina)

“Oh, I see.” (Naofumi)

Well, having Sadina level up in her natural battlefield is what’s best for her.

If I’m lucky then she might pick up some things and I also want materials from the sea.

“Next is..... Atlas—” (Naofumi)

“Yes. What is it?” (Atlas)

Atlas comes when I call.

Though she was a sickly character in the beginning, she has now completely adapted.

“I’m going to do some levelling so help out.” (Naofumi)

“Okay. I’m looking forward to going along with Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“I’ll be counting on you.” (Naofumi)

“Then let’s go, Lord Iwatani,” (Female Knight)

“Ah, yes of course.” (Naofumi)

As far as it goes, the Female Knight is able to practice with Rafatalia so it looks like she has some skill.

Well, it’s not like she had been fighting seriously with Rafatalia so her stats are lower.

I’ve also thought this before.

“Gaelion.” (Naofumi)

“Kyuaaaa!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion makes a happy sound when I call him.

I wonder if he was waiting for his turn. He is unusually excited.

I think it’s child Gaelion based on his voice.

If anything, I have a better relationship with father Gaelion.

“Well Gaelion, we’re going to go level up is pulling the carriage or flying better?” (Naofumi) “Kyu.....” (Gaelion)

Gaelion’s Child Mode.

Tilting his head, he decides to make a cunning pose.

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion raises his wings in the air. Oh, you want to fly in the sky.

Going by carriage would be more comfortable, but it’s fine.

We can return with my shield and it’s not like we’re going peddling so it’s just right.

“Kyuaaaa!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion enthusiastically transformes into a four-meter dragon.

“Where are we going?” (Taniko)

Taniko asks while climbing on Gaelion’s back.

It seems she’s feeling at home here.

What happened to the Caterpilland she first rode on?

No, that guy is often with Taniko too.

“I wonder where is good.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, right. Iwatani-dono, since you’re just going to level up, can you carry out a request from the Castle while you’re at it? I will help too.” (Female Knight) “What’s it about?” (Naofumi)

“It seems that some bandits have built their stronghold in the mountains recently.” (Female Knight) “I see..... Bandit subjugation.” (Naofumi)

“Why are you laughing so gleefully? This is the first time I see you smiling like that, Iwatani-dono.” (Female Knight) The Female Knight answered ominously. Did I make such an expression?

It’s probably the remnants of those guys. [T/N: This is the 4th time he’s seeing those bandits...]

When I think about it, it has been awhile, so it's a good time to harvest the crops. (TL: Refer to the events in chapter 152) Those guys must have saved up quite a lot. I'm the perfect person to deprive them of it.

If it's an official request, I can also get a reward so it's like killing two birds with one stone.

"Can you pinpoint the place?" (Naofumi)

"Yes..... for the time being. The problem is the leader keeps escaping."
(Female Knight) "The leader?" (Naofumi)

I have a feeling there was a similar guy last time, and the time before that.

Both times we raided their hideout where he was resting and arrested him.

"Based on the testimony of one of the caught thieves, it seems that person has recently become the boss of all the bandits in the vicinity but he's created quite an army." (Female Knight) "He has an army but he's still running away?" (Naofumi)

"That's just it. I'm not sure but apparently he's a considerably suspicious boss who rarely makes an appearance and yet he has the tenability to crush brave adventurers one at a time or something."
(Female Knight) "He doesn't really seem to portray that though....."
(Naofumi) Can that really be considered a boss?

It can be said that the guy is a tactician, but he can be considered petty as well.

He's the troublesome type of enemy.

"It seems that the strategy is for the thieves to create a disturbance based on the leader's orders, and the boss isolates and hunts the people who run." (Female Knight) I don't get what you're trying to say....why did they have such a troublesome way of fighting?

He's a guy with no distinct objective.

"With that ability, it seems we can't arrest the boss even if we catch his

subordinates.” (Female Knight) This is a troublesome opponent for sure.

It’s a situation where as long as the leader survives, the lower ranks can be replaced as much as he likes.

He does such intricate things so he probably has more than one hideout.

That being said, bandit subjugation is profitable.

It’s regrettable that Firo is absent. She’s very useful as a threat.

Oh, how about I let Gaelion play that role.

I’ll have to make sure Taniko stays silent.

“Well then, we’ll go around the area where the bandits appear and hunt down some monsters.” (Naofumi) “Roger that.” (Rishia)

“Understood.” (Taniko)

“Okay.” (Female Knight)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

That said, we rode Gaelion and set off for some levelling and bandit hunting.

Chapter 191: Late Bloomer

"Your movement has improved beyond recognition from before" (Naofumi) Possibly the fruit of the Old Lady's training, Rishia took the initiative and is defeating the monsters. Weapons are a throwing knife attached to a short sword and a whip. While throwing the knife, the whip entangles the opponent, and as the knife lands, the opponent is drawn in and skewered by the short sword. Peerless Transformation style, Binding Thrust is what the attack seems to be called.

Though the name being too simple could come off as chuunibyo, but everything else I value highly. Not only that, it is a fast technique. As expected of the Old Lady's said favorite area of expertise.

Peerless Transformation, as expected from such an exaggerated name, seems painful just from seeing it. Mixing that technique with defence piercing seems formidable. If I recall correctly, I heard Rishia was taught everything from the style. Then that means she could fight with weapons besides the current ones I suppose.

On a side note, Rishia's current level is 70. Her strength that did not match her status honestly surprised me quite a bit. How should I put it, "Who is this girl?", is how it is.

Just guessing, but if Itsuki saw the current Rishia it feels like he'd say "Please come back." Well, Itsuki is doing a perfect hide in Zeltbur with a broken mind though. Just stay like this in perfect hide until the world becomes peaceful.

"Is that so? Though I can't really tell the difference myself..." (Rishia) By the way, Rishia is currently wearing the Firo costume. Quickly taking out the outfit after returning was surprising.

I guess spiritual support was needed. Even when stronger, the base does not change it seems.

Maybe if Itsuki put on the Firo costume he could return to normal. No no....

"I've thought this from a long time ago, but why does Rishia-oneesan have the same form as Firo-chan?" (Taniko) Taniko asked as she tilted her head. Well, the appearance of efficiency and practicality are very different after all. Explaining is such a pain. Let's pretend I didn't hear.

"Is that so?" (Atla)

It appears Atla has only just now realized. -Thinking back, Atla's eyes cannot see so it's not like she should've known. As expected, ki does not seem to leave the costume. Though it'd be a little unpleasant if it did leak.

"It's just, I can see a stream of power coming from Naofumi-sama flowing around Rishia-san" (Atla) "Ah, that so?" (Naofumi)

"Firo-chan and everyone from the village have the same power flowing, but that power is strong" (Atla) Ha...Atla's perception ability is also considerable. While feeling such admiration, female knight defeats monsters with her sword.

Over here too, though not as much as Rishia, has considerable skill. After is the extent Atla will come along, and decide how far to get. Well, I tag along with her training so I know in general.

"Please look okay, Naofumi-sama" (Atla)

"Aa" (Naofumi)

Atla received the wild boar monster, Razorback's charge head-on with her empty hand and stopped it. Only one finger is on the tip of the Razorback's nose. The Razorback put forth all its efforts to move, but could not even take one step. What? It seems she has mysterious superhuman strength.

"I'm sorry" (Atla)

Tsun. Atla faced the Razorback's forehead, jumped, and poked it. From just that...the Razorback revealed its eye whites and foamed at its mouth as it fell over. Is it dead?

...I've experienced a new thing. It's almost like an assassination technique or something. Why is it scarier than defeating it normally I

wonder.

"I did it!" (Atla)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

Geniuses are amazing huh. Even far stronger than Rishia and female knight it appears. Rather, even barehanded. Thinking carefully, she wasn't given a weapon. No, she was given a sword at first, seems she didn't use it.

The average level of monsters is...approximately 40 huh. This'll be smooth sailing. //面子?

"Kyua!" (Gaelion)

Just like how Firo does it, Gaelion came and threw a live Razorbaby, a miniature Razorback, into his mouth and chewed. There's blood at the edge of his mouth-.... Yeah. They're both carnivores, but Firo might be better. That side's a bird so there's no blood. I don't know about times when using the claws to tear apart and stuff cheeks with flesh.

"Somehow-...I'm kinda plain?" (Taniko)

After using magic in battle earlier, Taniko was feeling down. The mysterious style, Peerless Transformation style and the genius Hakuko tribe's Atla. Certainly against weak monsters it feels like power is lacking, but I think Taniko is also suitable. Like magic, or maybe Gaelion.

"Don't mind it. I'm pretty much just watching." (Naofumi) The need for me to tank was not necessary, becoming reversed. Was there meaning in coming? For now I just use Hate Reaction to lure monsters, while focusing on strengthening.

Before long we flew deep into the mountains and a monster part dragon came out. Ah, dragons inhabited remote regions if I recall correctly. Because of Fitoria, the dragon series could not be released even if raw materials were put in. Well it'll grow along with Gaelion so I guess it wasn't pointless.

As expected my turn came, pinning down the monster. And in that

opening, one of the others attacked it. After, the weakened monsters are each exterminated.

I turn to look at Gaelion during that time. Taniko was there so he stayed hidden but I needed to talk to the father side. If the Dragon Emperor were to appear here it'd probably be difficult too.

"Oh yeah, Iwatani-dono..." (Female Knight)

Looking for a chance, female knight asked me a question.

"What?" (Naofumi)

"I heard you've attached weird nicknames to us in your head" (Female Knight) "Oh. That talk huh, let's see, I just call fellows by their image if they don't say their name in front of me." (Naofumi) "...Is that so?" (Female Knight)

Taniko looks at me with doubting eyes.

"Mu, by that logic, I haven't said my name. How on Earth am I being called?" (Female Knight) "Female knight" (Naofumi)

"That is not my name but my official position" (Female Knight) "But there aren't many female knights in Melromark, and there is only you in my territory so isn't it fine" (Naofumi) "Honestly...you're just like they say, Iwatani-dono" (Female Knight) The amazed female knight stopped speaking. If you want to be called by another name then name yourself. What are you trying to do.

"What about me?" (Taniko)

"Taniko" (Naofumi)

"Why!? You know my name don't you?" (Taniko)

"Windia wasn't it? It's troublesome so isn't it fine?" (Naofumi) "No good! Not good!" (Taniko)

Sadina said not to say it in front of the person but, whatever.

"It's better than Ping Pong Dash though" (Naofumi)

"Is, Is that about Gaelion!?" (Taniko)

The noisy gya-gya-Taniko is ignored, and I talked to Atla at the perfect spot.

"Atla knows about this matter right" (Naofumi)

"Yes...I also want a nickname" (Atla)

...Is she a pervert? Thinking about it would be fine, but I feel no need so let's stop. Well if speaking of necessity comes up, nicknames would be unnecessary.

"It's not really long enough to need a nickname right. I remember it anyways" (Naofumi) Raphtalia...I don't really wanna call her by nickname. I wonder why. Firo is short so there's no problem. Originally the name Firo itself is something like a nickname for Firo Rial.

"But, I think receiving a wonderful name from Naofumi-sama would be nice" (Atla) "Ye-ah...your brother would come any number of times though" (Naofumi) Alps was at first, Sis-con, like an Ateuma so Ateuma. Recently, he's matched Rishia in plainness position, so something new might come.

"I see...big brother, is jealous. Envious" (Atla)

"By the way, Rishia. You are Itsuki groupie." (Naofumi)

"Fueee! I didn't say anything!" (Rishia)

"Besides fueee right" (Naofumi)

"Fueee..." (Rishia)

I'm already exhausted. While conversing about such things, I talk to Gaelion as Taniko's eyes are stolen. It seems from their presences that the dragons inhabiting this area no longer hold fragments. Though thinking it troublesome, on the other hand it is for Gaelion's stages of growth so it is just fine.

So, everyone has raised their level, but there is one who grew the most surprising amount. The moment when 70 rose to 71, every status remarkably grew approximately thirty percent.

Name is Rishia=Aiuiredd.

Is it the result of training?

No, I'm sure physical training and magic statuses were treated separately, so it should not have risen this rapidly. She leveled up to 72 that day, yet certainly it increased approximately thirty percent.

I calculated after I had her remove the Firo costume, her status has come up to half of Raphtalia's status that I last saw. Before the difference was one third so I am just speculating, but at this rate of growth Raphtalia would be overtaken by level 75. Speaking of, the Old Lady did mention before....

"This child is a talent found once every hundred years-!" (Old Lady) Said something like that. Did the Old Lady foresee this? Rapid growth from level 70, I'd think even for late blooming great talents there is a limit.

By the way, Rishia was tossed away by Itsuki, becoming my subordinate at 68.

Anyways, from now on I must observe Rishia I guess.

Chapter 192: A Masked Man

"And so, since our levels have increased too, I think it's time to hunt bandits. We can resume levelling again after taking the treasure."

(Naofumi) "Wait a moment! What are you planning with the stolen goods!?" (Female Knight) The next morning. We, who rested with the camping plants, set up preparations at a mountain near the highway that the bandits had settled down at. By the way, female knight's tsukkomi was ignored. The bandits treasures are mine.

"About the bandits, at most 40 should be the limit"

If there is no credibility, Class Up can't be done. So the bandits levels aren't that high. Of course, some wanderers could have Classed Up in Zeltbur or something, but even now I have not encountered any. You'd probably need achievements in the Colosseum I guess. However it's hard to say if someone who earned income at the Colosseum would become a bandit. Well it has nothing to do with me though.

"For now, team up in twos and search for the base. There is not enough information on the boss." (Naofumi) Inquiring bandits about information with threats is needed or we will get nowhere. Many bandits must be captured from the outset.

"Hmm, Rishia and Atla, Female Knight and Taniko, team up and search" (Naofumi) "Reason?"

"None in particular. If unpleasant then split up how you like" (Naofumi) "Why is Gaelion with you" (Taniko)

"Since we're aiming for the boss, we'll have Gaelion scout and I will be a decoy with my high defensive power" (Naofumi) "Ah, so it's like that" (Taniko)

"If your end finds them, fire illumination magic. I will quickly rush over on Gaelion" (Naofumi) "Don't make Gaelion do dangerous things" (Taniko) "Of course he'll be flying in the sky, Gaelion's mission will be to gather the members" (Naofumi) "Kyua!" (Gaelion)

"I see, I got it. Then let's go" (Taniko)

Female knight patted Taniko who came to an understanding on the back to start walking.

"Atla, your perception ability is high so I'll be depending on you" (Naofumi) "Please leave it to me" (Atla)

"Then, see you later" (Rishia)

Rishia is also settled huh, she and Atla started searching together.

"Well then..." (Naofumi)

Gaelion and I also began searching for the bandits hideout.

"Fumu...human hands have entered this mountain" (Gaelion) "Because the highway is nearby, is there anywhere peculiar?" (Naofumi)

"Some...like, a naturally formed cave, or was something like a fortress made?" (Gaelion) "It'll vary between bandits. This time I think it'll be a cave." (Naofumi) "Then it'll be hard. This area has an extraordinary amount of caves." (Gaelion) "I see" (Naofumi)

Somehow chances to talk with Gaelion are increasing. I can talk with him normally, so even though he's a pitiable dragon I might be relying on him. Or rather, besides Fuol he's a rare male after all. Honestly, the conversations are comfortable.

"Then I will go higher to look for figures of people" (Gaelion) "I'll leave it to you" (Naofumi)

"Aa" (Gaelion)

With a basaa-Gaelion flapped his wings and flew off. Well, I shouldn't be injured even from a bandit surprise attack, so this mission will go smoothly. With a walking mood, I strolled the mountain road alone.

There suddenly--

"Assassin Sword!"

"Guha-!" (Naofumi)

Suddenly I hear a voice and at the same time with a gusa-I felt a

stabbing pain from behind. Well, it's about to the extent of "That really hurt", still though-.... Blood is coming out. My armor let out a sound like it was breaking.

Penetrating my defense, what the heck! If it was any of the other guys wouldn't they die?

"That hurt! What are you doing so suddenly!" (Naofumi) With a bun-I turned around with my shield and received the idiot's thrust coming from behind. I confirm the identity of the one thrusting at me with a ba-sound.

"It's a fair and square match...!"

"Wha-"

Being aware myself that someone unbelievable appeared, I became speechless. Their face was hidden by a suspicious skull mask, but from the figure, voice, and stance, the masked man's identity rose to the surface.

Amagi Ren, the Hero of the Sword took a stance while wielding a pitch black, sinister-looking sword.

"Chi-!"

Maybe it's my imagination his equipment appears much cheaper than before, his eyes that were visible through the mask's cracks looked strangely sulky. No, it's being said by me but, it's not to that level. Maybe he's worn out emotionally, his pupils look empty.

"Re, Ren!?" (Naofumi)

"...Hide...Sword" (Ren)

With a yura-sound Ren's figure disappeared like a heat haze. What? Did I see a weird phantom made by illusion magic or something? Anyway, using a skill like hide is exceptionally suspicious. Thus I also entered a battle state.

In the first place, while saying it's a fair and square match, then suddenly attacking from behind or using a skill that erases your presence, what kind of nerves do you have? Do you intend to say it is fair from a

game system perspective? Nevertheless, his voice was strangely lacking strength. Oh well, let's focus on the opponent for now.

"Hate Reaction!" (Naofumi)

A skill that lures monsters. Actually it has one other hidden effect that was confirmed on Cal Mira Island. It can drag out the real form and reveal opponents lightly concealed by magic and skills. It was when Raphtalia released Phantom Sword, and I used Hate Reaction. Raphtalia's state of concealment was cancelled. Therefore detection can be used in cases of concealment.

Trying to circle around to my rear again or something, Ren was moving to my left rear. It was a bit of an idiotic scene but, conversely felt annoying. If you're going to use a skill like that then retreat for a moment.

"Ku..." (Ren)

"You're...Ren right" (Naofumi)

"..."

It would've been fine if it was an illusion but-...I did not expect him to be lurking around here. Could it be Witch is the bandit chief?

...Amazingly suitable.

She's princess caliber isn't she. If I had to say one or the other then she'd be better suited to be a pirate or bandit.

"Rakshasa Meteor Sword!" (Ren)

With the motion of Meteor Sword, Ren swung his sword at me. Using Meteor Sword, the black fragments of his sword scattered like meteorites, then faced and headed towards me.

"Chain Bind! Chain Needle!" (Ren) //thanks

Gu...I was poised with my shield, but a slow pain spreading. In that interval, Ren used consecutive skills.

"The punishment I have decided for the foolish sinner goes by the name of execution by decapitation. With no time to cry, simply feel despair

from the separation of your head and body!"

"Guillotine!" (Ren)

Suddenly chains came from the ground and bound my body, moreover, the thorns on the chains pierced into my skin. And then an enormous bladed execution tool appeared above me. This attack...the atmosphere feels like a similar type to the Shield of Anger's Iron Maiden I think.

Ku...No way I'm going to receive and bear it.

"Don't mess with meeeeeeeeeeee!" (Naofumi)

The chains were torn off, the falling blade restrained with my hand. That hurt. Blood is coming out.

However, it appears to have not been an unendurable attack. Gu...but my SP is completely depleted.

"Ren...that's enough!" (Naofumi)

Should I switch to Wrath Shield too? I simply open the menu and go to the refining screen.

For actual combat, +4 and a rarity of R should be enough. Blutopfer should also not be needed, Iron Maiden will finish this. Refining failed consecutive times with a bokinbokin sound. Don't mess around!

"Gyaooooooooooooo!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion sensed the strange situation and came after a bit. Good, just like that go pin Ren down!

"Transfer Sword!" (Ren)

"Ah, you!" (Naofumi)

Faster than I could grab him, Ren had disappeared with his transfer skill.

Wh, What was that?

Was it a monster or human that pretended to be Ren? No, it would have to be a considerable monster if it could penetrate my defense. Other than that, something like the Old Lady's attacks that ignore defense or an

attack proportionate to defensive power would be needed or it wouldn't work.

The Assassin Sword skill was released right behind me. It's fine to presume from its skill, name, and concealed state that it's a certain kill attack from stealth and hiding. Furthermore...it somehow smells of the Wrath Series, with that sinister looking sword.

Out of nowhere, that attack from behind...is he a PK that often appears in net games or something. Identifying Ren, now that I know the bandit boss is not a resident of this world, this matter has completely become PK...Player Killer. Well he did say he had a background with suspicious games like VRMMO.

To begin with, having experienced serious things to that extent, you still feel like it's a game huh. If it wasn't me it'd go beyond instant death, wouldn't they be split in two? Really, I feel like vomiting.

"Are you ok?" (Gaelion)

"Aa...but" (Naofumi)

"I understand, I also saw it" (Gaelion)

Gaelion gave off bloodthirst. It was the arch-enemy that destroyed the lifestyle with Taniko, his own life, and his wife after all.

"What's with this mountain"

For the time being, I cast recovery magic to heal the wounds I received. Aah, incidentally because of Blutopfer's curse, that Guillotine attack skill really hurt.

Not only that, the recovery is slow....

Meeting up with Taniko, with the holy water's Ability Restoration magic taught by Sadina, I was narrowly able to have a complete recovery.

Bandit searching lasted only 30 minutes. I became extremely uneasy about the future of the mission this time.

Chapter 193: The 7 Deadly Sins

We found and searched the bandit's hideout, but Ren was nowhere to be found.

He will probably take up a cowardly tactic such as dividing us and picking us off one at a time.

“Now then... What should we do?” (Naofumi)

“I never thought the Hero of the Sword would be the boss...” (Female Knight) “I wish it weren't so. He should have Witch backing him right now.” (Naofumi) “The former princess... There's been an order issued to arrest her, but how long will she continue this idiotic cycle.” (Female Knight) We didn't find any signs of Witch in the hideout either.

She may be waiting to ambush us somewhere.

“Hey, you.” (Naofumi)

I approach the bandit that seems to be managing the place.

It's quite a familiar face.

One that I've seen quite recently... Wait, isn't he the one who was apprehended by Ren, and embezzled by me?

Why is he in a place like this?

“Oy... Didn't you get captured?” (Naofumi)

These are the thieves that I always threaten with Firo.

It seems they've been left to manage this hideout.

They had an arrogant atmosphere around them, but as soon as they see me, they start shaking in their boots.

“Ah, this time we don't have Firo with us.” (Naofumi) “S-shut up! I don't care about that!” (Bandit)

“Instead, we have...” (Naofumi)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

And Gaelion steps forward in a fighting stance.

“Your opponent is this guy.” (Naofumi)

“Wha!? He seems even more menacing than that man-eating bird!”
(Bandit) “I’ll leave that to your imagination.” (Naofumi)

Well Dragons give off more of a man-eating vibe than Filo Rials.

I guess my arsenal is improving. The Bandits’ faces are blue.

I think I can easily draw out some info on Ren.

“Ha. Ha. Ha. Now then, Gaelion.” (Naofumi)

“Kyua?” (Gaelion)

“Dinner is ser-” (Naofumi)

“We surrender!” (Bandit)

The bandit surrenders immediately.

Some of the people around him also have looks of resignation. The people who don’t know me are whispering among themselves.

“Hm? If you want to fight then come at me.” (Naofumi) I provoke them.

And some of the bandits lift their weapons and rush at me while yelling.

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

“Earth Break!” (Taniko)

“Tei!” (Atlas)

“What is your relation with these bandits, Iwatani-dono?” (Female Knight) “These people’s movements are too poor.” (Rishia) We have quite a few people with us, so it was extremely easy.

“W-what are these people!? Are they monsters!?” (Bandit) “T-that’s right. This one is a monster stronger than that oppressive leader.”

(Bandit) “Flattery will get you nowhere, now pay up.” (Naofumi) “Ku...”
(Bandit)

“Anyways, why are you still running rampant after getting captured?”
(Naofumi) It’s weird that they got out so quickly.

They should be in this country's equivalent of a prison.

"... The carriage we were transported in was attacked by robbers, and we escaped." (Bandit) "I see..." (Naofumi)

What a messy reason.

So the carriage was attacked... That sounds really cliché.

This country's security is surprisingly unreliable.

"With the help of the leader." (Bandit)

"Reeeeeeeen!" (Naofumi)

I unintentionally shout out.

So that idiot saved the bandits.

He released the bandits he apprehended himself.

"How long ago was that?" (Naofumi)

"Um... Around 2 weeks ago." (Bandit)

That means... Right after Witch invited him, he made a Bandit Organization.

That was around the time when Gaelion was born I think.

I met Witch when I was still carrying his egg.

"I see, then Ren... wait. Did your leader have a gaudy redheaded woman with him?" (Naofumi) "Woman? The Leader was always alone." (Bandit)

Well, he did always act alone.

In a Net Game, he would be a so-called Solo Player.

It doesn't appear that these Bandits are covering for her.

They really don't know. They really haven't seen her.

So Witch isn't with Ren?

Now that I think about it, Ren's equipment was quite rusted.

Assaulting adventurers seems to be quite profitable. But he hasn't been able to sell and live off these and profits.

Is he earning money for the Witch?

Yeah, the treasures that the thieves have saved up is quite large.

Could the hidden leader have already been cast away?

... There are a lot of possibilities, but I can't jump to any conclusions now.

He had a sword that seemed to be from the Curse Series.

From its skills and power, it's definitely related.

But I don't know what sort of curse it is.

Wrath... I think the series relates to the Seven Deadly Sins.

The skill he used was... Guillotine I think.

Like Blutofer, it summoned a torture or execution device. It had similarities, but the skill was clearly a different one.

If it's a sin besides Wrath, it probably summons a different weapon.

I think the Sins were...

-Pride Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony, Lust.

I think.

For me, my hatred towards Witch, Trash and the people of this world awakened Wrath.

I don't think Ren... awakened Sloth or Lust.

But all the others seem plausible.

I don't think I will be able to identify it.

"Anyways, why did no one notice that the Bandit Leader was the Hero of the Sword?" (Naofumi) "Most likely, no one would believe someone if they said it. The fact would merely remain as a rumor." (Bandit) He did hide his face with a mask. If I didn't see his Sword, I might not have recognized him myself.

If they haven't heard his voice before, they wouldn't have been able to identify him...

If he was so easily recognizable, he would have been captured as soon as he was found out as the cause of the Spirit Turtle Incident.

If everyone could recognize a hero, there would be a problem.

Is that why he began wearing a mask and acting as an adventurer?

Also, the lower soldiers of this country probably don't know the whole truth.

The Queen and other country leaders agreed to make Melromark the only country without restrictions on the Heroes' movements, in order to gather them in one place.

It seems that that this method successfully drew in Ren and Motoyasu. Hidden Justice is acting as a mercenary in Zeltburg.

However... The residents of this world believe rumors very easily.

They try to act on their own sense of justice, and cause trouble for those who are said to be evil.

But in this vast world, it is difficult to tell what is justice and what is vice.

Some may arbitrarily believe that the cause of their misfortunes are the heroes.

(TL: Thanks Obama)

But a ridiculous claim such as The Hero of the Sword being the Bandit Boss would never spread very far.

"Did none of the bandits here recognize the Hero of the Sword's voice?" (Naofumi) "He threatened to kill me if I told anyone else. He told me not to start a commotion." (Bandit) Ah, so Ren also has a habit of concealing himself.

And that's the reason for his mask.

"Honestly, I'm relieved. I can finally stop working here." (Bandit) "I see." (Naofumi)

What exactly is Ren doing?

I think as I tie up the bandits and collect the spoils.

“I guess I should report to the Queen later.” (Female Knight) “Go do so. I think I have sufficient Authority to take these thieves’ belongings, and no matter what you report, it is of no concern to me.” (Naofumi) “Sigh...” (Female Knight)

Female Knight’s personality is troublesome.

Why must I make a compromise here?

These bandits have tried to swindle me and call me a fake. They’re a perfect example of the corruption that plagues this world.

“Really... Are all of the Heroes like this?” (Female Knight) “No Idea, but don’t compare me with that guy.” (Naofumi) “I am under the impression that Iwatani-dono is the most wicked of them all.” (Female Knight) “I’m more earnest than those guys that just do whatever they want.” (Naofumi) They’re always just living in a game. When things look bad for them, they’ll follow whoever offers them sweet words.

On the other hand, I distrust whoever tries to be kind to me.

Those people are the most suspicious.

It’s no concern to me whether or not they can get back up after their footholds are crushed.

“This world revolves on money.” (Naofumi) (TL: Unlock the Shield of Greed) “Sigh...” (Female Knight)

The Female Knight sighs deeply.

What is everyone else doing, anyways?

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

“Gaelion! You can’t play with that!” (Taniko)

Child Gaelion is diving into the hoard of treasure.

Dragons are a race that loves treasure.

He seems delighted. Taniko is trying to calm him down.

Rishia is looking around with a very troubled expression. Atlas is facing me with a flirtatious pose.

“As expected of Naofumi-sama. Your ability to instantly annihilate the bandits is amazing.” (Atlas) “Really?” (Naofumi)

I left it to Atlas and the others, and didn't really do anything, though...

Though I am treating them as a harvestable crop.

How should we bring these back? The current Gaelion will probably happily carry them.

“And so, Taniko. You were listening, right?” (Naofumi) “... What of it?” (Taniko)

“Ha?” (Naofumi)

Taniko's father's enemy is hiding in the area, but she seems calm.

“The one who killed my father is definitely the Hero of the Sword. But I am not the type of person who would enthusiastically vie for revenge.”

(Taniko) “I see. I thought it would motivate you.” (Naofumi) “... No.” (Taniko)

Taniko tilts her head sideways.

“After being killed by the Sword Hero, Father never came home... So I don't want to fight him. I don't want to see him, and I want him to die in a ditch somewhere. But I have decided that I won't involve myself with him.” (Taniko) “...I see...” (Naofumi)

Her resolve is good. This is the first time I respect Taniko.

I always hold grudges. I want to see the people I hate suffer.

When I act as such, Rafatalia and the others get angry, but that's just my personality.

I know I'll have to get over it sooner or later if I want to be happy.

I somehow feel like I've lost.

“ ... ”

Gaelion quietly stares at Taniko.

“So, what does Iwatani-dono plan to do? I think that reporting to the country is the best option.” (Female Knight) “Let’s see... It is quite a pain, but if we let the Hero of the Sword do as he pleases, it will most likely affect my social status.” (Naofumi) I don’t want people coming to the conclusion that all the summoned heroes are villains.

I’ve finally gotten a force to oppose the wave. I don’t need this sort of trouble now.

... Yeah, the Hero of the Sword is a problem that we have to deal with.

I never thought he would commit crimes of his own accord.

He needs to feel the pressure of being pursued.

Like what I had to face during the time with that Second Princess assassination attempt.

He helped me during that pope incident, so I thought I would leave him be for now, but I never forget.

“In the end, my workload will just increase after this, right?” (Naofumi)
“R-right. The 7 star heroes will probably send you requests after this.” (Female Knight) “Then we better take care of this while we can.” (Naofumi) If it’s something I’ll have to do eventually, then there’s no helping it.

I’ll have to enhance the Wrath Shield.

Recently I’ve been having nothing but failures. My ingredients aren’t going to hold up.

“Atlas, can you sense Ren’s location?” (Naofumi)

She can sense something outside of human perception. She should be able to find him.

My Hate Reaction has a cooldown time, so I can’t use it consecutively. Its range is large, but I don’t think I’ll be able to approach Ren so easily.

“Yes, I think I can, but... He has a teleporting power similar to Naofumi-

sama, right?" (Atlas) "... yeah." (Naofumi)

That's right.

Even if Atlas manages to find him, if he finds himself at a disadvantage, then he'll run away.

To capture him, we'll have to take him out in one blow.

He's a hero that has something like the Curse Series. This will be difficult.

"GYAU!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion runs at me and puts me on his back.

He puts his head near my ear.

"I have an idea. Will you not leave it to me?" (Gaelion) He speaks in a small voice so Taniko doesn't hear.

"Do you have a reason?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, I have a desire to broil his entrails, so I would like to have a rematch with him." (Gaelion) "Understood." (Naofumi)

And in whispers, we discuss a plan.

"I'm putting Gaelion in charge of drawing him out. Everyone else is on standby until he gives the signal." (Naofumi) "What are you deciding by yourself!?" (Taniko)

Taniko raises an objection. Well, it's her beloved dragon. I guess she doesn't want him to face the same fate as her father.

Rishia... is as nervous as always.

It's as if she hasn't grown at all.

"Can we leave it to you?" (Female Knight)

Female Knight looks troubled.

"GYAU!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion makes a confident pose.

However, Gaelion.

Remember this. Child Gaelion says Kyua.

“Rishia, go with Taniko and keep watch outside.” (Naofumi) “Listen to me!” (Taniko)

“Gaelion says he wants to do it.” (Naofumi)

“GYAU!” (Gaelion)

“Gaelion can’t do it!” (Taniko)

“GYAUGYAU!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion makes several gestures in protest.

If only he would speak...

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

He returns his mind to the child one.

This one gestures as well.

It seems both dragons want to duke it out with the Sword.

“Mu... I don’t care anymore!” (Taniko)

Taniko pouts and walks off.

Rishia rushes after her.

“Now then, Wyndia is away.” (Gaelion)

“It Spoke-!?” (Female Knight)

Female Knight jumps back in surprise.

Ah, she didn’t know.

I never told anyone, so the people who know that he can speak are quite few.

“Let me introduce myself once more. My name is Gaelion. I am the Dragon Emperor Fragment that acted as Wyndia’s father.” (Gaelion)
Female Knight points at Gaelion.

“I have a grudge against the Sword Hero, so I want to be the one to lure

him out. Also, I have an idea.” (Gaelion) “What sort of idea?” (Naofumi)

“I haven’t tested if it was possible yet... and the time between shots is quite long, but...” (Gaelion) Gaelion begins explaining his idea to us.

“I see... That might work well. I’ll leave it to you.” (Naofumi) “Much appreciated.” (Gaelion)

“Somehow... I was surprised with Firo-dono, but it seems that strange monsters do gather around you, Iwatani-dono.” (Female Knight) Female knight scratches her head as she speaks.

Why does she seem so amazed?

With that attitude, you won’t survive in that village.

Everyone there grows quite weirdly.

“Fufufu... I’ll let that brat taste the true terror of the reincarnated me.” (Gaelion) “Watch out for his surprise attacks from his concealed state.” (Naofumi) “Who the hell do you think I am? I’ll never let such low class attacks effect me.” (Gaelion) His concealment skill isn’t that high in level.

My Hate Reaction is unable to lift the current Rafatalia’s invisibility magic.

Gaelion’ll probably notice him.

Though I didn’t notice him, and took a critical to the back.

Without the Shield’s protection, I am but an ordinary person.

I don’t know exactly how it works, but I’m merely using its power.

I can’t call this power my own.

The only thing I can really brag about since coming to this world is my knowledge of the language.

But that’s common sense to a large part of the population, so it’s nothing special.

To draw the Hero of the sword out, Gaelion became the bait.

Chapter 194: Dragon Sanctuary

“The problem is...” (Naofumi)

“What is it, Iwatani-dono?” (Female Knight)

“Will Ren go out of his way to target a lone dragon chick?” (Naofumi)

“Isn’t that the entire basis on which this plan is relying?” (Female Knight) But he seems like the type of person to immediately pick a fight if he knows it’s an opponent he can beat.

Gaelion looks like a child. He’ll probably attack.

As long as Gaelion senses Ren, things will probably go fine.

As long as he pretends not to notice, he can launch a surprise attack.

If that sword is of the curse series, then the sin that would make him attack the lone Gaelion would probably be...

Gluttony... Ren may attack him to sate his desire for EXP.

He seems to like to have a high level, and Solo Players like him generally have such tendencies.

If those feelings of desire were to reach their peak, then he would definitely attack any lone enemy.

Another possibility is Greed... The fact that he’s become a bandit leader, and is collecting treasure may come from his desire for wealth.

I want to say that I have a monopoly on Greed, but I never unlocked that series.

It may be that each weapon has a different curse it can unlock.

Last is perhaps pride.

People who believe that level is everything, and look down on those of low level are common in Net Games.

Perhaps his lone wolf-like attitude is actually a form of conceit.

No, that’s probably Itsuki.

There's also a possibility it's of the older variant.

The 7 deadly sins have changed over the years. There were original 8.

Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Dejection, Wrath, Sloth, Ostentation, and Pride.

(TL: Ostentation is pretty much showing off. This list is from Evagrius Ponticus' Logismoi (A.D. 4th Century). The version listed in the bible is once again a different one (Proverbs 6:16-19).) Envy wasn't present, and Dejection and Ostentation were in its place.

Eventually, Dejection was fused with Sloth, and Ostentation with Pride. Additionally, Envy was tacked on.

If it's the old version, then Ostentation, devoting yourself to showing off your possessions to others, is possible.

In Online Games, strength is merely an illusion, but an individual's attachment to such strength may be considered as such.

Of course, one can also gain true experiences and strengths through games as well.

In my former world, it was possible to find work with online connections. I had an online friend who asked me whether I wanted to work for them when I graduated college.

I had met him before in real life as well.

I'm not sure his true intentions, but he said something like, 'Your upfront personality and Guild master Charisma are wanted in this company.'

Now that I think about it, perhaps he was merely praising me to make me work harder down the line.

But from Ren's personality and relationships (lack thereof), it doesn't seem likely that he's had such an experience.

I can imagine him being a lone player going around and showing off the rare items he got off of a boss.

It's not like he was the strongest, so having him brag over every little

thing would just get annoying. As I guild master, that's my opinion.

But there are plenty who find joy in doing as such, and that's one of the very reasons for the profitability of the Net Game Industry.

Perhaps Ostentation is the one that fits Ren best. But Itsuki fits it as well.

The activation requirements for the Curse Series are still a mystery.

Perhaps it's an explosion of emotions equivalent to the destruction of one's heart?

But... If I don't discover the specific triggers, I may be in trouble.

Greed is especially dangerous.

This is something I can understand well.

I have learned to control my Wrath, and I have companions to help me.

But Greed would make one covet wealth, right?

When I think of the pile of treasure behind me, a dark desire stirs in my heart.

And an unquenchable desire at that.

... I get the feeling that if I keep thinking about it, my mind will get corroded, so I switch my train of thought.

Anyways, the Curses that Ren is likely to have are Gluttony, Greed, Pride, and Ostentation.

Based on this, he will probably attack the lone Gaelion, as all of these sins deal with the gathering of EXP.

The problem is that he assaulted me, the Hero of the Shield.

Even if he beats me, I don't think he'll get much EXP.

And there are way too many risks involved in killing humans in this country.

"Ah, that's right." (Naofumi)

I approach the bandits we tied up.

“When your leader fought, did anyone die?” (Naofumi)

“No, there were no deaths. He knocked them unconscious without dealing the finishing blow, and left them in the middle of a field after stripping them of their equipment.” (Bandit) “I see...” (Naofumi)

So he still has the conscience not to commit murder. Even though he tried to assassinate me from behind.

Perhaps he was thinking rationally, and first tried to weaken me, the one with the strongest defense.

From that train of thought, Gluttony is out.

The other possibilities are...

“Iwatani-dono!” (Female Knight)

My thoughts are interrupted as Female Knight calls out to me.

“What’s up?” (Naofumi)

“That!” (Female Knight)

Female Knight points outside the cave to the spout of fire streaming above the forest.

“So you found him?” (Naofumi)

That’s probably Gaelion’s signal.

I thought this would take a few days, but it seems Ren’s still close by.

... Transfer Sword has probably finished cooling down.

Even with the Curse Series eroding his mind, he’s thinking quite well.

He hasn’t lost his rationality.

“The problem is... we can’t help until the preparations are done.”
(Naofumi) “Yeah.” (Female Knight)

The idea Gaelion suggested required some time to set up.

If we approach before that, then Ren will simply run away.

No.

“Hey, can you use any concealment magic?” (Naofumi)

“I’m not Raphtalia. I never learned how to do it.” (Female Knight) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I thought we could Use Ren’s strategy and sneak up on him to unleash a powerful attack while he was distracted with Gaelion.

I never thought Raphtalia’s absence would be this irritating.

Taniko is skilled at some magics, but I don’t think she has any concealment magics.

... Wait, we have Rishia.

She’s a jack of all trades. She may have something.

“Rishia!” (Naofumi)

I exit the cave, and approach Taniko and Rishia. Both of them look troubled.

“W-what is it?” (Rishia)

“Can you use any concealment magics?” (Naofumi)

“I know some low level ones...” (Rishia)

“What sort of effects do they have?” (Naofumi)

“Um, the range is me, and one other person. The time limit is one minute.” (Rishia) That’s surprisingly low.

Even when she just knew the basics, Raphtalia was able to hide for quite some time.

“So it’s a different magic from Raphtalia?” (Naofumi) “Raphtalia-san’s magic affinity is different, so...” (Rishia) It seems that Tanukis specialize in light and dark magic.

Even though it’s a low rank, I guess it’s amazing that Rishia even knows it.

On top of Hengen Musou, she can use almost all types of magic.

I guess it’s fine.

“Then Me and Rishia will approach Ren and Gaelion to observe the situation. If the plan succeeds, I’ll call you so be prepared to come over.”
(Naofumi) “Understood.” (Female Knight)

“Will Gaelion be alright?” (Taniko)

Taniko looks worried.

“Yeah, he’ll be fine.” (Naofumi)

Though he lost once, the current Gaelion is several times stronger than the other one, at least according to the older one.

I don’t think he’ll lose too easily.

It will be troublesome if Taniko rushes over in worry.

“Then, let’s go Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Rishia)

“Be prepared to come to our aide.” (Naofumi)

“I shall also assist.” (Atlas)

“Got it.” (Naofumi)

I leave Atlas, Female Knight and Taniko, and depart with Rishia to observe Gaelion’s battle.

We reach what I think is just beyond the edge of Ren’s perception.

Keeping as low a profile as possible, we watch from the trees.

“GYAUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!” (Gaelion)

“Tei! Derya!” (Ren) (TL: Sound of putting effort into swinging a bladed object) Ren and Gaelion are locked in a bout of fierce combat.

Gaelion is in his giant form. He avoids Ren’s attacks as he fires his breath. He’s putting up a good fight.

Ren is moving at quite a fast pace. His style probably relies mostly on speed.

Since I’m in charge of defense, I also focus on speed, and physical ability is a must. But people don’t seem to understand this.

Ah, I started complaining.

Well, if they can get past the shield, then there's no real point.

Anyways, if we get any closer, Ren will probably notice us.

「Hide... Sword!」 (Ren)

Ren instantly disappears.

“Fool... Did you think such weak abilities would make me lose track of thee!?” (Gaelion) Gaelion shouts out as he swings his tail at the area to his right which appeared to be empty space.

If I strain my eyes, I can see dust clouds rising as he steps.

There is also a trail of broken grass. Even from here, I can get an idea of his location.

It seems that Gaelion can sense him fully.

“Fueee... Gaelion-chan is speaking.” (Rishia)

“Ah, so Rishia didn't know either.” (Naofumi)

I didn't really tell anybody. And of course I keep it hidden in front of Taniko.

Raphtalia probably doesn't know for the same reasons. I wonder how surprised she'll be.

「Flashing Sword!」 (Ren)

“That again!? You really don't learn!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion uses his claws to hide his face as Ren uses his skill.

The area is illuminated for a moment.

“You keep using small, superficial skills... What are you trying to accomplish?” (Gaelion) 「... Rakshasa Meteor Sword!」 (Ren)

Gaelion twists his body to avoid the black projectiles coming out of the sword.

He's putting up a really good fight.

Will he just win like this?

No, Ren will run when he is at a disadvantage. There must be a reason why he hasn't run yet.

"There!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion unleashes his breath attack on Ren.

At that point, I clench my fist, thinking it was Gaelion's victory.

But I was naïve.

Ren knocks away the Breath with his hand.

So an attack of that caliber isn't going to do it.

Should I really be doing nothing and watching?

If I get closer, I'll get in Gaelion's way, and I may miss a chance.

Thinking back, it was quite good luck to have encountered him so quickly anyways.

If we let this opportunity get away, Ren probably won't approach us carelessly again.

『I, Gaelion now order the heavens and the earth. Cut and fasten the knot of reason- 』 (Gaelion) While battling, Gaelion continuously chants magic incantations.

『The Creation of my territory, the reason of my existence-』 (Gaelion) It seems he's building up quite a spell.

Ren seems oblivious to this, as he continues to unleash his skills.

The previous Ren would have noticed by now... So the Curse Series does deplete one's wisdom.

If he were a simple wild dragon with no fragment, I guess Gaelion would have fallen by now.

I don't know what sort of expression he has under his mask, but I think Ren's getting impatient.

Using his game knowledge, he must be thinking something like, 'This

species of dragon shouldn't be anywhere near this tough.'

Even so...

"... Hey, Rishia." (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Rishia)

"When you look at the Hero of the Sword's stance, does anything come to mind?" (Naofumi) "Let's see... Is it some sort of style? His footwork is strange." (Rishia) Is it something from Kendo? He's using a shuffling movement, and I think I can see the Jodan Stance.

(TL: one of the stances of Kendo, I'm not really that familiar. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C5%8Ddan-no-kamae>) But am I imagining it? Something's strange.

Recently, I've been sparring with Atlas and the castle soldiers so I can tell.

In a real battle, Kendo isn't all that useful.

Of course, I can't really tell you its shortcomings, but Ren's swordsmanship and footwork seems a bit awkward.

He probably learned a bit of Kendo, and mixed in his own style.

Based on his age, he probably didn't get that far in it, and he spent a lot of time on VRMMOs, so he probably didn't devote too much time on it.

And so, after seeing masters such as Granny and Female Knight, his style seems a bit sloppy.

I look at Ren's movements.

His strokes are full of confidence, but he isn't putting his back into it, and he's swinging his blade quite recklessly.

He's relying on the abilities of the sword, and not displaying much of his own skill...

"Um, Female Knight-san can fight with much more elegance." (Rishia) (TL: Nicknames are spreading) "Right." (Naofumi)

Female Knight's straightforward personality can be seen in her blade,

and she has no wasted movement.

I've seen her and Raphtalia cross blades before during training, so Ren's swordsmanship looks childish.

Gaelion seems to have gotten a sense for it, and none of Ren's attacks are hitting.

But I guess there's no helping it.

Even if he's a hero here, he was originally a civilian from peaceful Japan.

In this uncivilized world, Ren would have his share of troubles.

『And here, I proclaim the creation of my sanctuary. The dominion of a Dragon.』 (Gaelion) “It seems it will be over soon. Rishia, let's get closer.” (Naofumi) “Ah, yes!” (Rishia)

“I, who has understood the source of power commands. Let the truth once again be read forth and manifested. Hide our form from the world.” (Rishia) 「Faust Hiding!」 (Rishia)

The magic calls forth a rain of leaves that wash over us, and cause us to become invisible.

The time limit was one minute, right?

We start running forward as soon as the magic finishes.

... As we're running, I can see that we occasionally become semi-visible.

It seems that the quality is lower in comparison to Raphtalia's.

“Mu!?” (Ren)

Damn. Ren noticed us.

「Transfer-」 (Ren)

“Too Late! 「Dragon Sanctuary!」” (Gaelion)

With Gaelion's magic, a barrier like field is deployed around the area.

What is it specifically? I think as I look at it. Suddenly, I feel a light jolt on my skin. I get the feeling that something intangible just passed

through my body.

「- Sword!」 (Ren)

Ren shouts out.

However...

“What!?” (Ren)

Ren’s words are colored with surprise.

Gaelion had used his experiences ‘til now... As a Wrath Dragon and an Emperor. He managed to make a skill that blocked off the use of teleportation.

“The game of tag ends here, Ren.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 195: Greed

"Ku..." (Ren)

Ren let out a vexed sound.

Looks like it turned out well. The thing Gaelion planned with us was stopping the transfer skill. Referencing from when we did not run from Gaelion's former territory before, it seems Gaelion researched and was able to produce the magic. Normally it awakens the magic element from the vicinity, a power within the extent of power enhancing Dragon Pulse magic, but this time a large amount of magic element was activated to interfere and obstruct or so I heard.

Supposedly, specific attributes of normal human magic could be sealed if this magic was figured out. For example, the fighting power of Melty and Sadina would greatly diminish if water was sealed.

"Okay! Rishia! Fire a signalling magic!" (Naofumi)

"Y, Yes!" (Rishia)

My order was followed. The effects of concealment magic wore off on Rishia as a magic aria set in. Immediately after, magic flew upwards. Okay, everyone should gather within a few minutes. Until then it'll be fine if pursuit is maintained so there is no escape.

"..." (Ren)

Ren understood he could not escape, readying his sword. I'll acknowledge you for not losing your fighting spirit in this situation.

"Finally time to pay the piper huh. Ren." (Naofumi) "Piper? That's my line" (Ren)

Running from reality as usual it appears huh.

"A guy who can't do anything without numbers looking at me. Even being accompanied by a dragon...let me judge personally" (Ren) "...Do you understand your own standing?" (Naofumi) I can't even say I'm surprised. Is the equation "dragon=evil" or something? Pride's Curse...?

"A coward who challenges me to a match with two, I won't lose to you!"
(Ren) "Is concealing yourself against an opponent who has no attack power, even using a certain kill attack from behind not considered cowardly?" (Naofumi) "Not being able to sense it is the fault" (Ren)

"So you say" (Naofumi)

As I thought, it's "my rules" full throttle.

His speech and conduct are somehow strange too, I wonder if his inner thoughts are coming to the surface. Almost like, or rather just like those who often appear claiming to be strongest in net games.

By Ren's terms, not having companions is bad, though it's fine to say dim things, in the end returning inflammatory words with inflammatory words will become a pissing contest. Frankly, I want to say his defeat was because of a lack of useful pawns, but he's not someone who'll listen.

"Here I come!" (Ren)

"Listen to me--" (Naofumi)

Ren started running faster than I could give caution. Then facing me with his sword he--or not, his target became Rishia as he ran.

Oi....

There's definitely something strange about the current Ren. Inconsistency or how should I put it, lacking direction.

"Fue!?" (Rishia)

Rishia raised her voice as the attack suddenly changed direction. This guy, aiming at the weakest looking person in this situation.... It's the basics of tactics but targeting the weakest first, where did fair and square go. Nevertheless, you've made a big mistake. Rishia is now....

"Deryaaaaaaaaaaa!" (Ren)

Ren brandished towards Rishia, letting out an enthusiastic shout at the same time. But Rishia promptly leaned over as if breaking her stance, threw a rope-attached throwing knife at a nearby tree, and quickly took distance with a su-. While in the motion of taking distance, four iron

skewer-like things were thrown towards Ren.

"That surprised me" (Rishia)

"Rather I'm the one surprised" (Naofumi)

What was with that quick evasion. It pretty much took only an instant. Isn't it only this fellow who fights like from another world? No, it can be seen so it's not like it can't be defended against.

Where did she even get those iron skewers? Is it a hidden weapon of the Peerless Transformation style or something?

"Ku..." (Ren)

The skewers did not stick, but Ren let out a troubled voice since it did not go as he'd thought.

"It's troublesome if you forget about me" (Gaelion) Gaelion threatened while flapping his wings with a basaa-. Oh yeah. It's three versus one, not like I don't feel unfair at all but it's a habit. Well, originally I can't fight alone after all.

"However, to only possess strength of this extent...the disappointment is tremendous" (Gaelion) "I didn't see anything like damage being inflicted" (Naofumi) "Of course I held back. Although, I shall not deny I lack the strength to defeat him." (Gaelion) "Is that so" (Naofumi)

The more hands, the easier it gets I guess.

"Oi. Witch isn't coming?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Ren)

Ren's face distorted at my question and I sense the swelling presence of an ominous aura emanating from his sword.

"It appears you chose the wrong words. His power has increased" (Gaelion) Mu...questioning him poorly backfired. In which case, getting information will be difficult. I wanted to at least know where that fellow was at though.

"Well then I'll have you let me get serious. Hero of the Shield. Take out

the abominable Cursed Shield" (Gaelion) "No" (Naofumi)

With the Wrath Shield at it's initial state from failed enhancements, the effects of the curse just makes it an item that puts my self in danger. Of course, it wouldn't be to that extent if I use the certain kill Blutofer, but I've been told that I could even die if I use it again while cursed. It's not that I don't have a technique using Iron Maiden to submerge, but I could probably win without it.

"It's okay. I have secret measures. Moreover...there is no need to drag it on" (Gaelion) "Really-?" (Naofumi)

It's pretty suspicious to me. Ma, it should be fine just quickly changing shields if the corrosion gets out of hand.

I put my hand on my shield and change to the Wrath Shield. As expected, my vision becomes black with a bashi-.

...I still have my reason.

Hateful emotions are surging upwards, but still within bearable range.

Hm? 3:00 appears in my field of vision and decreases to 2:59.

"Gyaooooooooooooooooooooooo!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion's body is swelling with a black shine. A sinister jet-black aura, overflowing sentiments of rage. An appearance like a Wrath Dragon. Materialized there was Gaelion as a Great Dragon.

"Fumu...my power is swelling" (Gaelion)

Letting out a dark flame, Gaelion spoke. A-...probably, this number is the transformation time. Since with Firo it lasted five minutes, the time is lower. Well, it probably also depends on how much ability Gaelion possesses.

Even so, Gaelion...what a villain-like appearance. It's starting to feel like I've become the boss-like character. The truth is that the Hero of the Sword is the bandit chief though.

"Lowly demon that takes the pretense of a hero. I shall pass you judgement!" (Ren) Not giving up, Ren roars. Aren't you not looking at

reality? If the opponent you've had a hard fight with until now powered up, no matter what you consider you can't win right.

"Awaken! My power! In battles I get stronger!" (Ren) Oww! So painful! Chills ran down my back.

Stop going so far with your chuunibyou! This is settled.

Because what Ren awakened without killing was his chuunibyou.

There are those guys who suddenly, after cruelly committing atrocities until then, become enlightened and stop killing in anime right. I wonder if this is like that.

"How foolish...I will let you witness the difference in our powers" (Gaelion) Oi...Gaelion, that line is for the losing side. Why are we only acting and speaking like the villainy role.

As the time fell to 2:30, Gaelion inhaled a large amount of air. This appearance...I guess there are Wrath Dragons too. The inhaled air was probably for a Breath. Because of the time limit, it seems to be a powerful Breath.

"Take this!" (Gaelion)

While flapping his wings, Gaelion let out a breath toward the ground.

Oi! I'm here too! It was a jet-black flame. No mistake, it is the flame of Dark Curse Burning S.

"Instant - Dragonslaying!" (Ren)

Ren cut the flame, slashing at Gaelion. A fighting spirit in the form of a dragon flew up. I think I'll simply commend being able to cut through the flame.

Well, it is of no concern to me.

"Tsuveit - Aura" (Naofumi)

I chant support magic for Gaelion.

"...Fumu. How lukewarm" (Gaelion)

Maybe my support magic had an effect, Gaelion caught Ren's attack

with one hand. The dragon made from fighting spirit was grabbed by the neck and crushed.

"Oh yes, you may not know it, but now I shall allow you to witness a dragon's...Dragon Emperor's serious Breath"

"I, Dragon Emperor Gaelion command the heavens, command the Earth, cut off reason, connect. My power. Manifest a strength to destroy the foolish one before me!" (Gaelion) I saw the development of countless magic formations overlapping in front of Gaelion. Even though you had such a thing, why was it not used until now. I hate stinginess you know.

No, could it not be used? He's a Great Dragon right now as well, so that possibility is high.

"Fuee...somehow it feels dangeroussss" (Rishia)

"I suppose so. Let's run" (Naofumi)

We quickly escaped.

"Like I'll let youuuuuuuu!" (Ren)

Ren is boldly attacking Gaelion. Energetically. I myself wish to pass on attacking in such a situation. Such work is for Heroes.

"I will become stronger than anyone. Yes...my desire has no limit...I will awaken to even more power in this place and defeat you, my desire has no limit! Feeding off of desire, I will become the strongest. Awaken power, triumph, prepare equipment, collect gold, increase power, become the strongest of all, everything wishes for me!" (Ren) Is his head okay? This guy.

How many times are you gonna say the same thing. Desire, desire, annoying.

Awakening powers? You've already awakened as the Hero of the Shield.... Do you become that ridiculous if the curse erodes far enough? There's only a painful guy left now.

...Somehow, I've distinguished what curse Ren committed.

--Greed.

But I wonder why. It feels like a very pitiable small greed. It's hard to call that greed.

Greed is so to say, a bottomless desire right. To want anything and everything, desire with no bounds.

In Ren's case, it can be summarized by his wanting to become strong. Of course I'm not saying that is not a desire. But, guys truly driven by desire are more unsightly, coveting anything and everything.

After all, to be involved with just power...ah, I see, I understand why.

If I had to say, the process was the objective.

Desire is obtaining something because you want it. This has been obtained, but you also want that other one. That kind of feeling.

But in Ren's case, becoming strong is his intent, the reason he wants to become strong is not to attain something else. The result and process are reversed.

I understand all the more because I've had a similar experience. Previously, when I was peddling...I should have been earning gold to get equipment, but my objective became earning gold, something like that. Would the Curse Series lend power even to this degree.

That would also become the reason why it can't beat my rage. No matter how much you increase the power of the Curse, with that greed, you cannot beat my rage. That is a transient greed.

"I am the strongest hero who will save the worlddddddd! Obediently admit your defeat!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" (Ren)

Chapter 196: Ideals and Reality

"...Foolishness" (Gaelion)

Gaelion gazed at Ren with scornful eyes. I'm sure I have those same eyes right now, probably.

"Foolish one who acts superior. It is the way of the world for the strongest to be overtaken. The knowledge of the Dragon Emperor who was once the strongest speaks of such. Know that being the strongest is but a tower built from sand" (Gaelion) The time left is 1:30.

"Let that one be carved! Flames of purgatory! Prominence - Dark Nova!" (Gaelion) With a ka-, Gaelion unleashed a Breath with the might of a sea of flames towards Ren.

"Instant - Dragonslayer! Chain - Bind! Change Chain!" (Ren) Ren boldly fired consecutive skills, but--.

"Useless! Foolish Hero of the Sword!" (Gaelion)

All of Ren's attacks were erased by the might of Breath.

"Not yet! It's not over yet!" (Ren)

Ren's sword changed once again. Grow Up huh? Certainly, there was the thing with my shield of anger changing into the Wrath Shield. There is no doubt this looks just like that. In that case, the chances of Ren's sword becoming stronger are high.

"That's right. I've discovered a new technique! Rakshasa - Meteor Sword" (Ren) You just used that earlier!

Speaking as if you've just discovered a technique you've been using until now. Even by manga principles, that does not apply to techniques you've already put to use once. What is this. Really.

"For this sinner the punishment I have chosen is crushing by God's name! Using what is mine, have this one receive God's attack!"

"Goldaufstand!" (Ren) //thanks

Ren raised his sword to the heavens and out of nowhere, gold and silver

treasures gathered, forming a human shape in the air. Profoundly ominous, it was a gold statue made with extremely bad taste. The statue changed it's shape and descended towards Gaelion.

What happened to Rakshasa - Meteor Sword. No matter how you look aren't you using a different technique. The means are gradually becoming foul. Are you going to say this is the Greed of wanting to win.

That's...probably, a skill equal to Blutofer huh. The compensation is the caster's possessions huh. Ah, so that's why Ren's equipment is so poor?

"Take this" (Ren)

"I can't even say I'm shocked. Decide your aim" (Gaelion) "E!?" (Naofumi)

"Fueeeeeee!?" (Rishia)

Gaelion flaps his wings with a basa-, scoops up Rishia and I with both arms, and flies away. The distasteful gold statue summoned by Ren descended with the shape of a gigantic hand, but we had already escaped out of it's range. Only one minute was remaining by the way. Getting quite irritated, I'm at my limit.

"Oi. Hurry and finish it" (Naofumi)

"Fueeee" (Rishia)

"Fumu, the conclusion has already been reached" (Gaelion) "What?" (Naofumi)

"Did you think I was only breathing flames?" (Gaelion) While I was wondering what he was saying, the sky was dyed red. What, a sphere that looked like meteorite magic fell from the sky in a second.

"Ku..." (Ren)

The statue Ren made instantly fell apart.

"Well then, Hero of the Shield. You surely understand what you must do" (Gaelion) "Indeed" (Naofumi)

Though there isn't much time left, it's not that I won't do it. Gaelion

even left the best part. Letting me deal the finishing blow.

Kukuku, how long I have been eagerly waiting for this moment.

"Shield Prison!" (Naofumi)

The shield's cage appeared towards Ren who was trying to escape. Oh, Shield Prison's range is longer than before. Is it an effect of the Wrath Shield?

A gan gan sound came from inside. Ma, the Ren now will take a couple seconds to destroy it. Just that much time is plenty.

"Change Shield (Attack) !" (Naofumi)

Let's change to the Spike Shield. With a bashin-, damage was inflicted on Ren.

"Well then" (Naofumi)

Letting loose Iron Maiden would be fine, but.... The sun created by Gaelion had already fell towards Ren in an instant.

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa--" (Ren)

The shield's prison was destroyed, Ren's scream and a flash like the sun enveloped the area.

The flash seemed to go on for eternity. It actually lasted probably 5 seconds.

"The short time it lasts relative to it's cost is a demerit" (Gaelion) We landed on the burnt ground. Ah, the Wrath Shield has been changed to another shield for a while now. I am not dumb enough to maintain the transformation with less than thirty seconds. With that said, Gaelion returned to the size of four meters.

"Wouldn't there not be a trace remaining?" (Naofumi) "I had no intention of holding back. If he is to die from this, then that is merely the extent of his existence" (Gaelion) "Fueee...the Hero of the Sword has been killed" (Rishia) Hmm. Nothing to do with me.

"Guha..." (Ren)

Turning to face the voice, aside from being burned black Ren was physically fine, while his mask fell after being charred and broken.

"Tough, huh-" (Naofumi)

Quite sturdy, this guy. Was it the influence of the Curse Series? Just vanish without leaving a trace after receiving such a flashy attack. Good grief....

"Well then, Gaelion" (Naofumi)

"Umu" (Gaelion)

Gaelion gently stepped on the fallen Ren, opened his mouth widely towards the head, prepared his fangs and--.

"What are you doing!"

Female knight shouted as she approached.

"What, you say, just giving Ren the finishing blow?" (Naofumi) "If the hero can be captured then capture him!" (Female Knight) "He might run away though" (Naofumi)

"Was that not why all paths of escape were made invalid!" (Female Knight) "Ha! I accepted the request to subjugate the bandit boss, not to capture the Hero of the Sword" (Naofumi) "What you are saying is sophism!" (Female Knight)

Female knight glares sternly at Gaelion with a ki-. Gaelion did not care and was about to bite.

"Stop!"

This time it was Taniko who came and raised her voice at Gaelion.

"That's not good Gaelion! Certainly that person is my father's enemy but, you can't do such a thing!" (Taniko) "What are you saying! That guy is an evil to this world! More people will meet disaster if he's not killed!" (Naofumi) I shouted, and Taniko just shook her head objecting with a bunbun sound.

"If we kill this person, next time it might be us who are killed. I don't

want something like that!" (Taniko) "No problem! Even if this guy is killed there will be those who rejoice but none who would mourn!" (Naofumi) "That's not possible!" (Taniko)

Good grief, Taniko's righteousness is depressing. How much do you think I've wanted to make this guy drink boiling water.

"Wyndia-san, that is mistaken" (Atla)

"Eh?" (Taniko)

"If you show hostility once, you can no longer withdraw" (Atla) "Why is that!" (Taniko)

"If you have sympathy now, the debt will someday fall on Naofumi-sama" (Atla) Atla spoke with an unusually strong tone. Come to think of it, Atla is from the Hakuko...they were a war-minded species if I recall. Also taking from what I've heard Fohl say, the chances that they have the mindset of a military family is high. Either way, more than Taniko's idealistic words, I feel more familiarity with Atlas' views.

"I will answer contrarily. Even if this person is not harmed now, the hatred will not cease" (Atla) "Atla, what are you saying!" (Female Knight)

"Then I wish to inquire, why is there a grudge between this person and Naofumi-sama?" (Atla) "Hah...?" (Female Knight)

"Unfortunately, I do not wish to understand all of Naofumi-sama's thoughts. However, the gentle Naofumi-sama has been made to go this far. I think they are quite an evil person. And if this person is a hindrance to Naofumi-sama, I would gladly dirty my hands" (Atla) "You...that idea is dangerous!" (Female Knight)

"Please say anything you wish. However, I will continue to stay by Naofumi-sama's side no matter what" (Atla) Atla and Female Knight started glaring at each other. Though I say that, Atla can't see.

"Fuee...let's stop this..." (Rishia)

Rishia was just getting flustered and wandering around with oro oro uru uru sounds. Things like idealism and realism, either way is fine.

Right now, I want to kill Ren.

"Gaelion! Give the finishing blow!" (Naofumi)

And, as I was giving the order, Gaelion who changed to young dragon mode flew towards me.

"Why did you return. Quickly kill him!" (Naofumi)

Because Taniko was here, he whispered near my ear while acting playfully.

"I also had that intention. I recalled something" (Gaelion) "What?" (Naofumi)

"Carelessly killing a hero must not be done. The Seven Stars are still fine, but something unthinkable will happen if it is one of the four saints...supposedly. That much is firmly engraved on the few fragments as something that must be prevented" (Gaelion) "Don't lose your nerves from the kid's words! This good-for-nothing dragon!" (Naofumi)

Chapter 197: Flash

"If you won't do it then I will--" (Naofumi)

"No, I shall do it. Though I hold no grudge" (Atla)

Atla went forward saying that. Hou, I must raise my evaluation of Atla.

"Enough of that!" (Female Knight)

"You're in the way! Move! Shield Prison!" (Naofumi)

Because Female Knight was being annoying, this should silence her.

"Hmph!" (Female Knight)

Female Knight easily destroyed the Prison with a bakin-and got out. Oi. To destroy the prison in one blow when Ren needed a few seconds, just what kind of specs is Peerless Transformation style hiding.

"If Iwatani-dono has that intention, I also have my own thoughts" (Female Knight)

Female Knight drew her sword and took a stance toward me.

"...Having me as your opponent, I'm guessing you do know the significance of that?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, Iwatani-dono, can I have you obediently withdraw your weapon? I also want to avoid having you as an opponent if possible" (Female Knight)

"You have the prospect of winning?" (Naofumi)

"I wouldn't do this if not. Moreover I have no path of retreat" (Female Knight)

Honestly, this fellow doesn't know her own place. I've seen Female Knight's strength from the fights up until now. From what I saw, her status and fighting ability greatly fall short of both Raphtalia and Rishia. Yet still wanting to fight me, even foolishness should have limits.

"I've said this before. If the Hero of the Sword is captured, I said I'd personally educate him" (Female Knight)

"Like I'd know" (Naofumi)

"...That's fine. I'll have you be my opponent seriously" (Female Knight)

"Fuee!? Naofumi-san. Please put down your weapon here!" (Rishia)

Rishia says toward me while being oro oro-flustered.

"Even you are going to speak nonsense" (Naofumi)

"This person received the secret sword arts of the Peerless Transformation style in just a few days you know!? She is a very tough opponent for the Naofumi-san who's hung on with self-study!" (Rishia)

"Like I'd know!" (Naofumi)

I thrust Rishia away and confront Female Knight. Hmm, no matter what attacks this fellow tries, if we get within skill range or Atla reaches Ren, it'll be checkmate.

"Well then, I will accept this one versus two" (Female Knight)

Female Knight thrust her thin sword in front of me. The weapon did not appear to be that good. She'll stand in my way even then huh. Chivalry is a troublesome thing. I thought chivalry in reality was something filled with pride and ego.

"Go, Atla!" (Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Atla)

Though she could not see, Atla nimbly ran towards Female Knight with a sutatata-. I followed after her.

"Here I go! Please go to sleep for a while" (Atla)

"Hmm...as expected of the Hakuko, so agile. However, Peerless Transformation sword technique...Four Cross!" (Female Knight)

"Kya!?" (Atla)

Female Knight parried Atla's certain kill thrust attack and slashed. It looks like two crosses engraved on top of each other, a magic sword technique. There appears to be a combined X and + attached to Atla.

"Let me say instead. For the time being, please sleep. Be at ease, the wound inflicted is not that strong" (Female Knight)

"Such...Naofumi-sama, I'm terribly sorry..." (Atla)

Atla was blown away, not moving as if she'd lost consciousness. It's probably fine to see this as having an additional effect. In the first place, there was too much difference between Atla and Female Knight's foundations, level, and experience.

"That's the so-called Peerless Transformation style's spirit?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, I'll have her sleep for a bit" (Female Knight)

She readied the tip of her sword. Female Knight stood in my way. Ku...to think there'd be a hindrance here.

"Next is Iwatani-dono" (Female Knight)

"You, think you can deal damage to me?" (Naofumi)

"Of course I think so, rather there is a perfect technique for Iwatani-dono" (Female Knight)

The technique the Old Lady used on me I guess. However, countermeasures for that technique have already been completed.

"If you can then try!" (Naofumi)

"Then here I go! It'll hurt a bit, but I must have Iwatani-dono hear what I say" (Female Knight)

Female Knight headed towards my chest. Fast! But, not faster than I can prepare defences. I parried Female Knight's first attack and took distance.

"As expected. It requires considerable capability to avoid this thrust" (Female Knight)

"So you say" (Naofumi)

"Then I'll have the next go" (Female Knight)

With her hand in front of her sword, Female Knight runs towards me preparing to lunge.

"Peerless Transformation sword technique! Multilayer Crumble Attack!"
(Female Knight) //thanks to kookie's edit

Female Knight's attack appeared to have the tip of her lunging sword multiply numerous times. It seems as hard to avoid as expected. Let's block it. The thrusts were repelled away one by one--. Gu....

"With the basics, I am aiming for various places that have a high chance of effectiveness. It's not good to forget" (Female Knight)

That fellow came and used internal attacks on my spirit flow whenever I blocked. You...thanks to the training with Atla it's not like I don't have a counter technique, but I can't defend against so many attacks. Isn't she stronger than expected.

Moreover, if I purposely give an opening to avoid the attack, I will likely be stabbed. Female Knight's barrage will end eventually. It was a good attack. And sharp.

I certainly thought she was capable but for it to reach this extent. As I thought, with just light sparring with Atla, it's too difficult in an actual fight? I'll be quickly caught up to even if I'm able to get past.

Alright, though there isn't much time left, I'll switch to the Wrath Shield. With Dark Curse Burning S's power, I'll create flames at the points of attack. If my desire for vengeance burns stronger, the power should increase. Yes, immediately after deciding so, Female Knight opened her mouth.

"To begin with. Just how much resentment does Iwatani-dono hold towards the Hero of the Sword?" (Female Knight)

"Resentment? That's, any amount will come out!" (Naofumi)

First is when he did not cover for me when Witch deceived me. He only watched as Raphtalia was about to be taken away right? I was suddenly hit with an instant kill skill from behind. Starting with Motoyasu, Ren also said "annoying" while using the transfer skill to escape. After that, after that....

...Huh? Less than I thought.

Yeah. That's right. Thinking carefully, I don't have much resentment towards Ren. Exactly what is this?

He tried to help when I was suspected of trying to assassinate Melty. There was something wrong with that proposition so I did not negotiate, escaped, and only promptly attacked. Though it was Ren's mistake in Gaelion's case, I stuck my head in when actually, I had little relation to it. When Witch was spreading salt on my wounds with deceptive rumours too...he was just a spectator so the involvement is small. Rather, a complaint was raised when there was unfairness in my duel.

I just paid him back for using the certain kill skill from my back too...I enjoyed his miserable state to my heart's content. From Witch's sweet whispers, falling for her temptation is the crime. After was a situation where he'd be killed to spit out Witch's whereabouts. Thinking about that, there was no need to go as far as killing I guess?

That is to say, I have a preconception of resentment towards the heroes?

I see, I've also been corroded by the Wrath Shield. It is annoying but, I must reconsider a bit. Like Ren's weird speech and conduct, I've also been affected by my anger huh. Thinking about it, Raphtalia has not been nearby like up until now, so I've been absorbing anger like the time with the Wrath Dragon. Gaelion is suppressing it for the time being, but our time spent together is too short compared to Raphtalia and Firo.

Perpetrator of the Spirit Turtle issue...is said but, in reality the Spirit Turtle still would've revived someday. Whether or not diplomacy could do anything, with this guy's reasoning it seemed impossible. The authority of the heroes too, the world leaders seeing that the Spirit Turtle's brainwashing did not affect them is fine. Melromark is a good example.

After all heroes have the aspect of being pieces in religious and international diplomacy. Running away or dying poorly could trigger war, is what the Queen and the leaders of other countries have said. That's why I was able to survive in Melromark.

If running away is no longer an option...this is also a means.

"Won't you reconsider? If possible I want to have Iwatani-dono's name

in history as an upstanding hero. For Raphtalia's sake as well" (Female Knight)

She hits where it hurts. However, this woman, she did nothing when I was suffering right. ...Come to think of it, I don't remember seeing her until the Queen arrived. Was she an imperial guard or something?

Well, thinking back on it, my grudge's basis is on Trash, Witch, and Motoyasu. Even that Motoyasu fell into sorrow, to the point that I don't wish to meet if possible, since it disturbed my mind. Only Trash and Witch remain...my own grudge with Ren is not to the point of killing.

"This concerns a prediction of the conclusion of this world. At the time of the waves, there is a theory that the killing of heroes will promote the end. For that reason, do not kill him so easily" (Female Knight)

Gaelion also said something similar. I don't know what is being promoted, but the question I've had since the start about what the waves are still remains.

Frankly, the incident with the Spirit Turtle was just the heroes' self-destructing as they pleased. If asked, I do not hold a grudge against Ren because of the Spirit Turtle incident. Well I heard the scope of damage was considerable, but whoever dies does not particularly concern me.

I can't say it out loud, but honestly I dislike the bunch from this world. Of course there are exceptions, but it's impossible for me to come to like those who badmouthed me as a devil and what not. Because of that, when a just cause is found, "kill kill", and a clamour is made. Like that, my hate for this world's lot won't change.

The inhabitants of this world are to judge the three heroes regarding the Spirit Turtle, not me...how should I put it, it's that. There is war in a foreign country, several hundred casualties occur, or similar...no skin off my nose or rather, somebody else's problem or something. Of course, I am involved since I fought the Spirit Turtle, but not to the extent of being angry for them.

Rather, the matter with the Spirit Turtle could be said to have improved my standing in many ways. I have no intention to give gratitude, but I do

not hold much of a grudge towards Ren himself. Ren's pretending not to see too, that applies to this world's bunch as a whole. Towards Ren who came this far full of holes with a boko boko-, the sour feeling from the preemptive attack are settling down.

But, the sentiment can't be forgiven.

Left practically naked after being treated like a criminal for a nonexistent crime, called weak, small fry, disgusting, Trash, my feelings as I was thrown alone into a strange other world, no one could understand.

No, I won't stand being understood.

There is no way this fellow could comprehend a rage able to make food lose flavor.

This woman is proudly enumerating these just arguments, yet she did nothing when I was truly in trouble. Coming after all that and acting like a good person...just who are you trying to be. You have no right to preach. I won't stand it.

It's the same with the Queen. When I was truly troubled, the one who put all else aside and became my ally, was only Raphtalia alone. What is this hypocrite who was not there at that time prattling on about.

But, Raphtalia who scolded my laughing at the misfortune of the other heroes, what would she think if she knew I had a hand in killing a hero? I wonder...I have a very bad feeling.

Or rather, saying "kill kill" repeatedly has made it hard to retreat. Thinking calmly, rather than hurting my reputation by untactfully killing a hero, making use of the situation would be better. Of course, because I may be punished if I overlook a criminal, for now capturing him would be the best course of action. Even if he's executed, my legitimacy will be damaged if the proper legal process is not used.

Alright, now to let Female Knight save face and while pretending to give up during discussions, I'll get advantageous bargaining chips to--

"U...uooooo"

I shifted my attention to the voice just as Ren was getting up.

"I...won't lose. I, to acquire the strength, to be the strongest, will take everything, take, this!" (Ren)

Ren's sword...the ominous one-handed sword transformed into a large, dusky great sword.

"Wha, what!?" (Naofumi)

Not only that, a black aura has been strongly gushing out for some time now.

"Fuee!?" (Rishia)

"Wh, What's this!?" (Taniko)

With a ba-, Gaelion grabbed my shoulder and whispered near my ear.

"This is bad. I sense a power stronger than even before. I dare say I cannot offer opposition" (Gaelion)

"Shit! It came to such a situation because we were doing something like chatting leisurely!" (Naofumi)

Should retreat be considered?

"Rishia! Taniko! Wake Atla up!" (Naofumi)

"...Iwatani-dono" (Female Knight)

"What!?" (Naofumi)

"I will take responsibility for this. In exchange, if I bring down the Hero of the Sword alone, could you entrust the dealings with the Hero of the Sword to me?" (Female Knight)

"You still say that even after causing this situation!?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, I must not stray from my own path you see. But if it is still too much to stop, people can be gathered to kill the hero. If it becomes like that, the Queen can make a decision" (Female Knight)

"Do you think you can win against that?" (Naofumi)

"I don't know! However, I do not have any swords so simply bent after

deciding once!" (Female Knight)

It's fine if we directly bring Ren down while Female Knight is getting taken out. If comrades are taken out, even Raphtalia should compromise. It is not blind slaughter. Female Knight should know he's stubborn. I think Raphtalia understands too.

Besides, the plan was to settle by discussion anyways, it's all good. If it's genuinely dangerous, it'll probably be fine to sell a favor and owe a debt. Time to wait for a chance.

"...I guess so" (Naofumi)

"Is it fine to take that as affirmation?" (Female Knight)

"Aa, if you can bring Ren down alone that is" (Naofumi)

"You've promised" (Female Knight)

"I keep promises. Both good and bad. I'll lend a hand if it gets dangerous" (Naofumi)

"I understand. That's fine" (Female Knight)

While there was deception, I hate wasting promises. Well, I think I'll deceive you as many times as needed about making the promise though. Now then, let's watch Female Knight's fight.

"Try not to die" (Naofumi)

"Ha? A, aa-...n!? Iwatani-dono, can't possibly...!" (Female Knight)

"I don't know" (Naofumi)

Female Knight's face became incredibly amazed. You may think you've just been had, but it has only been deception since the middle. Hm, with this there'll probably be a misunderstanding if you use your head. Though nothing was actually used.

"Honestly! Then, let us name ourselves, Hero of the Sword. My name is Eclair=Siaette! To reform your spoiled nature as ordered by the Queen, I shall wield my sword!" (Female Knight)

She had that kind of name huh. I don't understand why she did not put

on airs and give her name. You'll just be called by a weird name if you don't name yourself. I wonder if Raphtalia knows? I suppose she thinks I've already heard from Raphtalia.

Oh well.

In any case, the battle between Female Knight and the curse corroded Ren is beginning.

Chapter 198: Purpose

Well then, let's bear witness to this public execution. How good of a fight Female Knight can put up against Ren corroded by the curse. For now let's try analyzing.

Of course, I have taken shelter. What is happening with the current Ren's status I wonder?

From Greed, the sword transformed. Looking carefully, there are various ornaments on the sword. On the sword guard is a dog-like being...a fox? In addition, something pig-like is on the handle. But...Ren's manner of speaking became strange after the transformation. Obtain everything and consume, huh.

Presuming from this, changing to consume, the possibility that he has also awakened Gluttony exists. There is a chance that the curse increases if one is easily defeated. I must be cautious if a chance to fight Itsuki comes.

Motoyasu? I don't want to get near that guy. It has been peaceful lately because he has not appeared. At that time, he will probably be chasing Firo.

...An intensely pointless thought. Let's concentrate in front of me now.

"I, will become the strongest! I'm growing even in this instant, gaining strength eternally from the future, watch me defeat someone like you and consume the EXP!" (Ren)

Raising the great sword overhead, Ren broke into a run. His movements have gotten quite fast yet not stiff. Just like Gaelion said, that he's stronger than before can be seen. In these circumstances, I probably can't use Portal Shield because of the effect of Gaelion's magic. For now, let's retreat and gather more people.

"Rishia, Gaelion, Taniko. Bring Atla. We're backing off further" (Naofumi)

I carried the fainted Atla like a princess in my arms.

"Bu, but..."

"As it is, that fellow will also have difficulty fighting right?" (Naofumi)

I used a random excuse, but if the plan is to use support magic, a little more distance won't matter.

"Deryaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" (Ren)

Ren began recklessly swinging the great sword. Not even a drop of style. By leaning backward or forward, Female Knight continued to dodge. It's hard to make a prediction similar to children's swordplay, like "how dare you see through my attack".

"I understand"

Taniko and Rishia nodded and backed away as directed. Gaelion may have sensed my intent as he kept alert with his wings spread and ready to escape at any time.

"Ku...hit! My attacks should have become able to blow anything away!" (Ren)

"Like you'll hit. Though the sword contains power, swordsmanship with no depth is like having no intent to hit" (Female Knight)

I don't know Female Knight's status, but it might be unexpectedly high. She is dodging with no wasted movements.

"Why is it, why can't I hit!?" (Ren)

"...Why, is Iwatani-dono the Hero of the Shield? In my eyes, it'd be better if Iwatani-dono was given a sword" (Female Knight)

"Shut uppppppppppppppppp!" (Ren)

If it was Raphtalia or Firo, how would they deal with it I wonder? Maybe instead of avoiding with paper-thin margins, dodge simply with speed? Let's ask their fellow student Rishia.

"Hey Rishia. What's your impression?" (Naofumi)

"Fuee? Um let's see. The Hero of the Sword's attacks are all dull. I think anyone with battle experience would be able to avoid it" (Rishia)

"Hoh-..." (Naofumi)

Well, I guess so. It does have speed, but even I'd probably be able to dodge it. He is swinging his sword that simply. Basically, he is only using vertical and horizontal slashes. They sometimes bend to a right angle, but it's completely obvious. My eyes are good from training with the troops so I know. Atla's good too.

The genius Atla's attacks have an instinctual depth, so even I have difficulty avoiding them. Rather Atla is the one who becomes stronger every time she fights. I have not seen anyone visibly grow stronger in the middle of a fight like Atla. In the way not relating to status.

Earlier, she probably lost to Female Knight due to lack of Class Up and level. Thinking about it, it's not likely a knight-like person would be below level 40. Atla has not gotten a Class Up yet, and has only fought monsters up until now. She's fought with me, but it'd be more correct to call that training.

Compared to that, Ren's current attacks amount to child's play. Rather wasn't he stronger when there was depth, before he was corroded by the curse? He's only gotten stronger status-wise right? I thought it meant something else.

"Well then, is your seriousness only to that extent? Then I will have my turn" (Female Knight)

"Ku...not yet! I will win one-sidedly!" (Ren)

What a line. Offense is everything, huh? Ah--oh yeah, the shield class died out in Ren's VRMMO games if I recall. Because of that, is he saying something like defeat before allowing counterattack? I think there was something about evasion as the premise...it's somehow suspicious.

Since the antiquity of net games, the meaning of defensive classes have affected many. Recently I've thought Motoyasu, Ren, and Itsuki as novices to anti-personel combat. Of course, the games are probably exactly as they describe. But it is different in this world. I am saying this with conviction.

"Take this!" (Ren)

Ren recklessly swung his sword downwards in a big manner. In the moment the tip of his sword hit the ground. Tremors were felt as cracks spread on the ground. O-, an attack able to open up the ground. High attack power.

...It's a match for Gaelion's showy magic if judging by appearance.

"An opening!" (Female Knight)

Female Knight struck at Ren's shoulder. Raising a thunk sound, the attack resounded fruitlessly.

"Kkukkuku...the sword I am currently using has the effect of Self-Recovery(Large). There is no meaning to your meager attacks. Obediently admit your defeat" (Ren)

Ren laughed evilly. His eyes are shining. Ah, he's laughing since he's figured that Female Knight can't deal a decisive blow.

Why was it explained? Well even my armor has a Self-Recovery effect.

"Fumu...you are soft compared to Iwatani-dono, but instant recovery huh. How troublesome" (Female Knight)

Female Knight muttered while looking at the tip of the sword.

"Obediently accept your defeat and become EXP! Instant - Meteor Sword!" (Ren)

That again! Maybe because it's great sword, the scope of flying black meteors is bigger now. In the midst of all that, Female Knight...becomes a blur while avoiding.

"Th, that's one of Peerless Transformation style's evasive techniques, Heat Haze!" (Rishia)

...Yeah. Female Knight's chuunibyou percentage is no different. And Rishia, stop with explanation character. Even if you say that, "What!? That's!", is all we'll really get. Also, it'll feel like we're weak if you say that from the backline so stop.

"There's still more! Chain Bind!" (Ren)

"Hmph!" (Female Knight)

The chains summoned by Ren flew towards Female Knight, but she swung her sword and destroyed them.

"What!?" (Ren)

"As expected...if a point is used, even firm chains can easily be broken...simple compared to Iwatani-dono's prison" (Female Knight)

You dare say so even when you destroyed it so quickly.

"There's still more! Try receiving my certain kill skill! Hide Sword!"
(Ren)

Ren's form vanished to darkness with a yuraa-. You...your attacks are getting repetitive. What happened to Handlet Sword and Thunder Sword? If you had countless methods of attack, even Female Knight would lose without tactics.

"How lukewarm. Even when Raphtalia becomes invisible, her ki cannot be tracked" (Female Knight)

Female Knight swung her sword with a supan-. With just that, Ren's concealment skill was erased, revealing him. Is Ki...possibly that power flowing out from Ren?

...Oi. Somehow, I've started to understand ki or whatever.

Wh, what is this? I'm getting stronger by watching others fighting! Do you think I'd say that, idiot.

...Have I gotten strange from being poked by Atla and Female Knight too much? I've become unable to understand myself.

In any case, immediately seems unreasonable, but with training I can probably get countermeasures for defense penetrating attacks. What's essential is creating a flow from the magical power within the body. Not softly and not shittily. It's fine to just place the flow of magical power before an opponent's attack grows violent. Making a soft portion would be the method for beginners. That Old Lady, trying to tell me something so

hard to understand....

It's likely that the Peerless Transformation style uses this power to attack and sense. While Female Knight has been dodging, she probably does not use ki for defense. That might be why the Old Lady couldn't teach me.

Speaking of things I get now, the flow of my ki is strange because of my extreme defensive power. This is like saying please aim here. Ki, can also be called the flow of magical power.

I see, I understand a bit of what it means to be called strong now. Three more times. I'll understand if I receive that attack two, three more times...I think.

I say, this'll be useful in the future if grasped. The extent of Female Knight's talent is unknown, but though just the sword, it was learned in two weeks, could the village guys learn with a month? No, seriously trying to learn the Peerless Transformation style, even Rishia touted as a hundred years' rare talent is taking a month. Even Raphtalia who has been pursuing knowledge since very early on, has still not completely learned it.

I got a late start from half doubting. Offense being essential to martial arts, I thought it was unrelated my defense-focused self. There seems to be merit in learning this. Since such a rule like "heroes should not learn martial arts", does not exist.

Anyways, not matter how you look at it, the best plan is to have the fellows with high status learn this style. Not only martial arts like Female Knight and Rishia, I'll take them in if they are useful. Let's enquire Rishia or someone after getting back to the village.

Incidentally besides me, there is another fellow with a strange flow of ki here.

Hero of the Sword, Ren.

It might be the influence of the Curse Series, it is clearly different. If Motoyasu and Itsuki were also different, then it would be that heroes

possess a special factor.

Hm? Rishia is...very difficult. So I say, but there is no flow of ki. No, not that there's none but...thin. What's going on?

But the Old Lady happily called her a rare talent, so why? There is too little to compare with. Let's confirm back in the village.

"That attack is for when the opponent can't be sensed. Hiding is futile" (Female Knight)

While I was thinking hurriedly, Female Knight turned her sword towards the detected Ren. She's putting up an unexpectedly good fight. Though she doesn't have a decisive attack.

"Well then, let's have you receive from me as well" (Female Knight)

Female Knight stooped low and dashed, aiming a thrust towards Ren. Ren that guy too, thinking defense is unnecessary...no, he quickly jumped far backwards.

"Futile" (Female Knight)

Faster than the retreating Ren, Female Knight came to Ren's chest.

"Four Cross!" (Female Knight)

The attack that knocked Atla out was used on Ren.

"Fu..."

Female Knight's attack landed on Ren. It somehow looks like some kind of light passed through Ren's body. But the wound healed as damage was dealt, Ren stood up as if nothing happened and smiled.

"To hit me with an attack, you are pretty good. I'll be your opponent a bit seriously" (Ren)

...What's he saying? That Ren, even though he's had a hard time despite fighting with his all, is he acting?

By no means, how many times were you defeated. Running away after not defeating me with a certain kill skill, and completely losing to Gaelion. Then standing up with the Curse Series, you're receiving attacks

again. Rather, is Ren not affected by the Curse Series' curse? He's just moving around like normal.

Chuunibyou is also a power or something? "The curse doesn't affect me, the curse itself is my power", is what he'll probably say so I won't delve.

"You jest, to hold back against your opponent in actual combat, there is a limit to discourtesy. Don't try to act composed, fool! Iwatani-dono came seriously to kill! Receiving my thought out certain kill attack, he just had a slightly pained face! How many years do you think it took to think that up!" (Female Knight)

Oi, isn't that a complaint towards me?

Anyways, Female Knight can see right through Ren. He has speed, but everything's seen if he's just fast. Like that, there's no meaning in speed.

However, Female Knight also has a problem with offensive ability. The defense penetration attack like with me, cannot be used unless there is an extremely high defensive power. She's excelled at swordsmanship since the beginning, but it's difficult with a curse corroded hero as the opponent.

Moreover, there is something unnatural about that skill that seems anti-Hero of the Shield. I don't know where the Peerless Transformation style was born, but if it was Melromark, the technique might have been created for anti-Hero of the Shield purposes. It might have another side. Let's seriously think up countermeasures.

It's a relief I can come up with countermeasures because I've understood the general idea of ki. Couldn't this be used for something besides defense penetration?

"My attacks consume everything. Yes, even your EXP!" (Ren)

"No matter how strong your attacks, there's no point if you can't hit!" (Female Knight)

But the battle has stagnated. Ren who can't hit and Female Knight whose attacks don't work. Female Knight is disadvantaged if the fight is dragged out. Because even if he can't hit, it's not like he doesn't have

power. With this match as it is, Ren's prospects of victory are high.

Well, even if Ren is temporarily defeated, he might just awaken a curse and rise back up. If that were to happen, the only choice this time would be to dispose him. If it gets that far there's no turning back. Even then this guy....

"Now then Hero of the Sword. What is your purpose? By the way, Iwatani-dono seems to want to return to his former world it seems?"
(Female Knight)

"Annoying! Don't compare Ren to me for every little thing!" (Naofumi)
My scream did not reach. Oh? Ren is a bit flustered.

"I..." (Ren)

"Purpose. What are you seeking strength for!" (Female Knight)

Oi oi. Even if you ask that kind of question, there'll just be an idiotic reply. Ren's eyes are weird too, that's no longer thinking about anything.

"I can't stand not being the strongest! I will become the strongest in the whole world, all of time, all of space! That is my Greed, I will consume all EXP with my gluttony!" (Ren)

A pitch black aura spouted from Ren as he declared. Seems like a useful ki.

"That's why, you too, become EXP for me to become strong!"

"For this foolish sinner, the punishment I have chosen is consumption by God's name! I offer the power of my acquired lands to shred that one with decay, and consume!"

"Schtarkfuaafar!" (Ren) //シュタルクファアファル

Ren clenched his fist in a grandiose manner, and a firefly-like glow leaked from his entire body, disappearing into the ground. With a go go go-, the area started trembling, splitting the earth beneath Female Knight. Oh, a derivation of the attack that caused cracks on the ground earlier? The aria was similar to Blutopfer's. With a jyaki-, fangs grew from the fissure and tried to consume Female Knight.

"That attack has too many openings! Iwatani-dono would come to hit!"
(Female Knight)

"Like I said, annoying! Don't bring up comparisons!" (Naofumi)

Ren's attack was avoided by the way.

...Somehow, it's just like Blutopfer. Ah, but it seems to differ a bit.

With a doba-, some gray object came from the ground and gave off a stench. Like the disgusting gold statue used earlier, even I'd find getting hit by that to be severe.

That's in short, if Blutopfer too is avoided, the compensation alone has to be paid. It's indirect truth but, I won't even think about missing, considering my situation. Yeah. The next time I need to use it, I need to make sure it hits with certainty. Let's engrave into my soul that there was the Queen's help with the Pope, and the Spirit Turtle was just pointlessly huge that I was able to hit.

"Fu, Fueee...what is that!?" (Rishia)

"I wonder. But it seems dangerous to touch it" (Naofumi)

For now, it's probably still okay since there's distance, but the ground is dissolving into mud. Stuff like mushrooms or mold began growing around the affected area, giving off a dreadful stench. That decayed land, sea of rot...formed into a fly monster-like organism.

It's a parade of curse skills. Female Knight seems to be the only target. Before long, the fly monster headed incessantly towards Female Knight.

"Decide your aim. And the attack's readiness is lacking. The similar attack used by Iwatani-dono was more brutally powerful. I...thought that attack was coming, you could say I was disappointed" (Female Knight)

Female Knight quickly, regarding the fly monster...unexpectedly climbed over it from the front and stood before Ren. The fly monster who lost it's direction soon crumbled and disappeared almost tragically. Ah-...hasn't it become awfully polluted around here? No matter how, he'll cause damage to people huh.

"Oi" (Gaelion)

Gaelion whispered close to my ear.

"You have a face like it's none of your business, but your curse's flames also polluted the earth" (Gaelion)

I don't know. That's something time can solve.

"Well then, I will inquire once again. After becoming the strongest, what do you desire?" (Female Knight)

"After...becoming the strongest, you say...!?" (Ren)

"That's right. You were aiming to be the strongest right? What will you do with that power?" (Female Knight)

"Gu..." (Ren)

He's stuck on his words. Ah, as I thought it's like that. I've thought about why Ren's greed is weak. I also thought before that the process and purpose were reversed. But, beyond that...Ren has no greed.

That might also be the reason I didn't awaken Greed. I want to greedily earn gold. But in the end, this world's money is just a necessity for me to survive the waves, nothing else interests me. Since I'll be returning anyways, before I go I'll just give it to Raphtalia as recompensation for everything up until now. Of course I've thought about living in luxury for a bit, but I'd just end up spending it on equipment and investing in facilities.

Gluttony is the same. His wanting to become strong derived it's awakening, but either way, there is nothing after consuming opponents as EXP. He'll become satisfied after becoming the strongest. It's a gluttony to the degree of being satisfied once the stomach is full. A hunger without bound, his Gluttony did not come from a hunger that cannot be satisfied.

My curse is anger. The rage dwelling in my body feels like it'll drive me crazy from irrationality. With Witch at the top of the list, it directs itself towards this entire world.

Of course, I expect this rage will disappear once I return to my world

but...I think there'll probably still be unreasonable anger in the real world. I must bear it no matter what. Having to constantly suppress endless rage or futilely trying to become the strongest, which one is the greater burden on the body I wonder.

"I, I'm...once I'm the strongest...I, I'll save the world!" (Ren)

"Don't speak of things given by other people here!" (Female Knight)

Female Knight cut down Ren's reply with a zuba-.

"If you don't want to admit it that much, I'll personally tell you" (Female Knight)

"What!?" (Ren)

That Ren, his eyes are earnestly swimming around.

"You don't want to become strong. You just want to take back what's been lost!" (Female Knight)

"U..." (Ren)

"You foolishly pushed forward without thinking, wanting to regain everything, your lost comrades, people, and trust, desiring to become the strongest is just wanting visible power!" (Female Knight)

"Sh, Shut up!" (Ren)

"That kind of thing, even god, or rather god-like hero, cannot make it happen. Is becoming the strongest what you must do right now!?"
(Female Knight)

"Shut uppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppp!" (Ren)

Ren brandished his sword toward Female Knight in a big manner. It seems to be barely dodgeable, but if I don't do anything I can't give a debt.

...It can't be helped. I'll lend my strength. From such contriving, I started running, getting within skill range.

"Air Strike Shield, Second Shield!" (Naofumi)

Letting out a baki baki sound, my attack is stopped. Female Knight is glaring at me, but I don't care. Is it like throwing cold water into a duel?

But, in doing this, Female Knight's grip on Ren is getting loose. Even if you complain, do you really think you could win against that Ren? Stirring it up like that, now I can butt in when Ren is being preached to as well. It's a little small-minded, but it'll eventually just end up like this later if you think about it.

"A hindrance has come. But I'll continue speaking. You actually understand it. If you have the time to rot here, prepare yourself to live while carrying the burden of your crimes, atone by fighting for those who've fallen!" (Female Knight)

"Sh, Shut uppppppppppppppppppppppppppppp!" (Ren)

Ren does not stop even with that, turning his sword to Female Knight.

"I will wield my sword in place of those who died while believing you until the end!" (Female Knight)

Female Knight lifted her sword to her chest and used a technique.

"Peerless Transformation sword technique! Multilayer Crumble Attack!"
(Female Knight)

The barrage Female Knight had used on me was now pouring towards Ren. Receiving that many defense penetrating attacks is not something that can be accumulated. The chill going down my spine tells the story.

"Gaha!" (Ren)

"Hero of the Sword, you are weak. For that reason, become stronger by accepting your weakness. People lost won't come back. But, it's fine if you atone for your sins from here on. I'll also lend as much strength as I can"

(Female Knight)

Informed Female Knight as she returned her sword to it's sheath.

She tried to look cool, but it appears not much damage was actually dealt. Though rotten he's still a hero, he has two types of the Curse Series too. It was probably a considerably close fight even for Female Knight. For argument's sake, wouldn't she have been split in half if she'd received even one of Ren's attacks?

Also, you're trying to look cool, but if the people, King, or Queen want the death penalty then there's no meaning. Atoning for your sins is good and all, but your life might be taken for recompensation. Well I'm fine with that though.

"U...guha..." (Ren)

Immediately afterwards, Ren swoons and collapses. Ooh, he collapsed like in anime.

"Don't try to run from the sins you've committed. I'll stand in your way every time you try to run away" (Female Knight)

"U..." (Ren)

In his collapsed state, tears shed from Ren's eyes. Is he unconscious? Other than that, he did not even twitch. Then, the great sword returned to normal. The ominous look is also gone.

"Did you take care of him?" (Naofumi)

"Don't say it like I finished him off!" (Female Knight)

Female Knight glared at me. Therefore I said it.

"To strike at the mind, you're pretty skilled" (Naofumi)

"What an unpleasant way to put it..." (Female Knight)

He actually wasn't defeated physically, after all.

"Iwatani-dono has not run away from his own crimes" (Female Knight)

"Are you praising me?" (Naofumi)

"No! Without running, you continue to knowingly add to your crimes. Even more than the Hero of the Sword, a difficult nature" (Female Knight)

"I don't know" (Naofumi)

Female Knight let out a wholehearted sigh.

"Why someone like this is saving everybody...Iwatani-dono is the biggest enigma to me, I've no confidence you can be rehabilitated" (Female Knight)

"Rehabilitate? For what?" (Naofumi)

"...I can completely understand Raphtalia's hardships. Sorry Raphtalia, your request doesn't seem possible to fulfill..." (Female Knight)

Raphtalia, what did you request from this straight lace? Well whatever. Probably nothing good would come even if I asked.

"Well then, since it seems Ren has been defeated, I'll uphold the promise. His management will be left to you" (Naofumi)

"What do you mean promise. You just set me up!" (Female Knight)

"Hahaha" (Naofumi)

"Don't laugh!" (Female Knight)

Meanwhile, Atla finally regained consciousness. Honestly, what an unreliable fellow. Saying you want to become my shield is just a dream within a dream.

"Fuee...what are we doing from here?" (Rishia)

Rishia asked while looking at the rotten sea that was once burnt ground.

"Of course, we're escaping" (Naofumi)

"Iwatani-dono!" (Female Knight)

"What do you want me to do? The one who did this is that Hero of the Sword over there. You are Ren's patron right. Take responsibility!" (Naofumi)

"Muu...is it like that? Haa...I'll report to the Queen and request a purification of this land" (Female Knight)

Female Knight said while greatly troubled.

"I'll leave it to you" (Naofumi)

"Why do you sound so self-important, Iwatani-dono!" (Female Knight)

"Because you are the one responsible. Pressing responsibility is fun after all. Let's complain to Ren too when he wakes up" (Naofumi)

Commonly referred to as middle management. After this, Female Knight will probably start a lifestyle like stress was opening a hole in her stomach.

"Can you not get carried away with rubbing salt in open wounds!"
(Female Knight)

And while exchanging complaints and idle chatter, we teleported to the village with the fainted Ren. I don't know if I'll take Ren to the castle after this, but that's out of the question when Ren's consciousness has not returned.

Chapter 199: The Morning of the Shield Hero

I have to get up early in the mornings.

I wake up much earlier than the slaves.

Of course, this is only when I don't stay up too late into the night.

Occasionally I stay up making medicine or completing other miscellaneous tasks.

Yesterday, we dragged Ren to the village. I was tired from battle, so I slept early.

I look in the bed next to mine, and see Sadina sleeping peacefully with Atlas.

"Uu... Sadina-san. You're being too forceful..." (Atlas)

"St...op~..." (Sadina)

What exactly are these two dreaming about?

Are they training in their dreams as well? What sort of Manga is this?

"Kyua... Kyua..." (Gaelion)

Just in case, child mode Gaelion is on standby in my bed. If Atlas tries to crawl into the bed, he has to drive her out.

Now then.

I crawl out of bed and leave the room.

I randomly do some stretches, and quietly walk through the village, listening to the soft sound of the waves.

I'm heading towards the Camping Plant house Ren is currently staying in.

Ah, by the way, Gaelion's Dargon Sanctuary has already been set up.

When I asked him what the maintenance cost was, he said something like once it had been activated once, the spell permanently made an anti-

teleportation area until he dispelled it.

But as soon as the magic was activated, the Filo Rial ran away at an alarming pace.

It seems he has a bad affinity with it.

He will no longer enter the village, so we had to make another stable for him outside. But this is just a temporary measure. I don't know what to do later.

Perhaps I should teleport to the castle and report to the Queen.

But before that, there is something I must do.

The house Ren is in is used by Female Knight.

I reach a wall of the room Ren is in.

In order to stop Ren from escaping, many knights and slaves are stationed within the house. I can't go through the front door.

「... Emergency Exit」 (Naofumi)

I whisper these words to the Camping Plant while infusing my voice with magic.

And in response to this, a door appears on the wall.

The plants have been altered to take certain commands from me, and I can create a passageway anywhere.

Only me and Rat know of it. It's a secret function.

“Good.” (Naofumi)

I infiltrate Ren's room, and confirm that he's asleep.

And then proceed to whisper in his ear.

“Among the Heroes, you are the weakest. You are nothing but a king of Thieves. All of this is your fault.” (Naofumi) “u...uu...” (Ren)

Whap!

From behind, a fan like thing made from folding numerous Bioplant leaves comes in contact with my head.

It doesn't hurt at all.

I turn around and find Female Knight staring at me angrily with her arms crossed.

“What do you think you're doing, Iwatani-dono!?” (Female Knight)

“Don't shout. You'll wake up Ren.” (Naofumi)

I just wanted to give him a few nightmares.

Now then, to whisper more...

“The ghosts of those killed by the Spirit Turtle are...” (Naofumi) “Won't you stop!?” (Female Knight)

“Where did you come from, anyways? This is Ren's room, right?”

(Naofumi) “That's what I should be saying.” (Female Knight)

“Well, the Camping Plant was an innovation made by me and Rat. What about you?” (Naofumi) In order to prevent his escape, the room should be locked.

Why is she in here?

Could they have possibly slept together?

No, that wouldn't happen with these two.

“It's too late to act once something happens. I was resting in the closet.” (Female Knight) “You sure like to sleep in strange places.” (Naofumi) Like that blue cat thing.

The closet is the only difference.

“You're... wrong. Oh, Raphtalia. I am unable to contain Naofumi-dono. Please come home soon.” (Female Knight) Female Knight complains as she drives me out of the room.

“Ah, so you fell for Ren.” (Naofumi)

Though not as handsome as Motoyasu, he is a pretty boy.

I don't know Female Knight's actual age, but she seems young. Around my age, perhaps?

“There’s a limit to fooling around. I have no time to spend on something like love. And also, I declare that this boy is not my type!” (Female Knight) “What a coincidence. He’s not my type either.” (Naofumi) “Iwatani-dono enjoys getting people mad. I heard as such from Raphtalia. You really are quite a villain.” (Female Knight) “Yeah, that’s right.” (Naofumi)

“Sigh... why must all the heroes be like this...” (Female Knight) Female Knight’s sigh is quite heavy.

What could be troubling her so much? No, I know the answer.

Will she complain to Raphtalia about me?

I can’t even count the misdeeds I’ve committed since I got here.

Quite a few nobles of this country have become my prey.

I sold second rate gems at a high price, and used cheap medicine to give pricey medical treatments using my shield’s enhancements.

I guess I can’t help it if Raphtalia comes to be skeptical of me for it.

She’ll probably believe it if this diligent knight calls me a villain.

“Oh yeah, you’re quite strong.” (Naofumi)

“I was able to see the flow of magic from the beginning. But neither you nor the military instructor would train me. But still, I desperately tried, and finally got the instructor to train me. Even though she taught me techniques, those were only the basics. Most of my techniques were ones I made on my own.” (Female Knight) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“The move I used was one I just finished recently. I wasn’t sure if it would work.” (Female Knight) Is she similar to Atlas?

Energy and Magic.

She can see the flow of the power known as magic, and can utilize it.

Though there’s probably some differences.

Atlas reads the flow of Chi and Female Knight, the flow of magic.

Currently, the only one I understand is the latter.

When I returned, I asked the villagers, but besides me and Ren, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference in their magical flows.

Though Rishia's flow is notably smaller than that of the others.

One thing that I did learn was that the flow of magic was something used in these people's everyday lives.

Like how we don't realize that our muscles are moving and that our blood is moving, magic flows within the body without their conscious input.

"Raphtalia has a technique where she fires the energy released by a defeated enemy and converts it into an attack, right? That's an improved version of my technique." (Female Knight) Ah, that's right.

Rafatalia called it something like Ying Yang Blade.

I thought it was a strange technique. So this person taught it to her I guess she's also a genius. And she isn't neglecting hard work. Even though her status is low, she manages to hold her ground all the same.

I guess I should ask.

"Hey, do you want to obtain strength by becoming a slave?" (Naofumi) "The prospect does seem fascinating, but my status prevents me from doing so." (Female Knight) "I see... By the way, why was someone as diligent as you not there when I was summoned?" (Naofumi) "Let me first apologize. I'm sorry. The knights were unable to right the wrongs of this country because of my incompetence." (Female Knight) Female Knight gives a deep apology before she continues.

"This may sound like an excuse, but when Iwatani-dono had been summoned and was being treated as a prisoner... I was in a jail cell in the castle." (Female Knight) "Hm? So you were a criminal?" (Naofumi)

"If that were the case, I would never be chosen to become a knight. Though my status has fallen." (Female Knight) Well, a criminal wouldn't be able to become a knight anyways.

But why was this straight-laced person being imprisoned?

Perhaps it was her straight-lacedness that put her in prison.

This country is full of trash, so I guess there's no helping it.

"Perhaps my heritage was a contributing factor, but the actions I took by myself were judged as crimes by the country." (Female Knight) "What is your heritage?" (Naofumi)

"This territory." (Female Knight)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"I'm the daughter of the person who used to be the lord of this land. Though I say that, I was away at the castle for a long time training to be a knight. I never spent much time here, so my memories of the place are vague." (Female Knight) "Ah... I see." (Naofumi)

So that's why she could talk to Raphtalia so easily.

They got close to each other through common heritage.

Her face made me think she was from some noble family, but I never thought it was here.

"My father fought on the front lines during the first wave in order to let the people flee... and perished." (Female Knight) "I see." (Naofumi)

"Before he died, my father told me to, 'Live nobly without any regrets'." (Female Knight) The Queen, then Raphtalia and Sadina all praised the lord. He must have been a good person.

I think Raphtalia said he was a kind man who treated Demi-Humans well.

And this is his daughter.

I took over his role and am now a Count.

Perhaps the reason the Queen pushed a title onto me was to make me follow in his footsteps.

"Later, I and many others were stationed in this land, but... Adventurers, and a portion of the Knights and Solders began hunting Demi-Humans." (Female Knight) "Ah, so this is where the villagers got dragged in."

(Naofumi) “Yes. I objected to these people, and was imprisoned for standing up for the Demi-humans who were supposed to be living peacefully on that land.” (Female Knight) “...” (Naofumi)

“Of course, I consider the slave system to be a necessary evil in this world. But for people who were being devastated by the wave, people who, until that day were citizens we were supposed to protect, What meaning is there for knights to assault them!? Just because father died, the world will treat them as such?” (Female Knight) Yeah, this country truly is rotten.

Other people who thought the same as Female Knight were incarcerated as well.

Many of the knights helping out in the neighboring village are the ones who were imprisoned with Female Knight.

“Eventually, I was proclaimed innocent by the Queen and released. This was around the time Iwatani-dono was at Cal Mira Island.” (Female Knight) “I’m surprised you avoided execution.” (Naofumi)

“It was quite close.” (Female Knight)

“Really?”v(Naofumi)

“Fufu. I was accused of having Demi-Human blood, and being a brainwashed follower of the Devil of the Shield. I was told that I was not a suitable individual for knighthood.” (Female Knight) “How the hell was I supposed to brainwash someone imprisoned before I was even summoned...?” (Naofumi) Were they planning to execute her and all of those in support of Demi-Humans along with me when they caught me?

The Three Hero Church did hold resentment towards Demi-Humans so perhaps that would have happened if we lost.

Trash seems to have a deep-seeded hatred as well, so that’s a likely possibility.

“Got it. I get that now and before, you lived as your father told you and became a straight-laced person. Now what you have to do is become a little more underhanded.” (Naofumi) “Rejected!” (Female Knight)

What she wanted to say was that she was in prison so she couldn't defend me, right?

If she were there, then if she raised an objection, Trash and Witch... would have imprisoned her anyways.

Either way, she would have gone to jail... how absurd.

This is a rotten society that punishes honest people.

I won't say the people who weren't there are in the wrong.

I consider Female Knight to be my ally.

Even though she tried to fight me yesterday, I'm the one who started it.

"And so? You said Raphtalia left something to you, right? What was it?"
(Naofumi) "...Ah." (Female Knight)

Female Knight stares at the horizon.

There's nothing there, you know.

"To summarize, she told me to stop you if you did something bad. She told me a lot of other things too." (Female Knight) "That does sound like something Raphtalia would do." (Naofumi) Raphtalia complains whenever I do something unbefitting of a Hero.

Inversely, Atlas agrees to whatever I do, and it's hard to contain her.

I can't control myself well, so it's difficult for me to deal with that type of person.

She seems to see an illusion that everything that I do is just.

Because of that, Raphtalia's orders were correct.

If Raphtalia were there, she would have taken similar actions as Female Knight.

"Today I'm going to the castle. What will you do?" (Naofumi) "That depends on the Hero of the Sword's behavior. After I question him... I'm tired. I'll just continue keeping watch over him." (Female Knight)
"Gaelion has set up a barrier, but if he escapes beyond its bounds there's nothing you can do so be careful." (Naofumi) "It didn't look like he

intended on running. If he runs, I intend to take full responsibility for it.”
(Female Knight) After returning to the village, Ren regained consciousness.

But his expression was dark. He said he would take any punishment thrown at him, and he sat down and waited patiently.

He regained consciousness quite late at night.

We were all quite sleepy, so we let him sleep.

“Should I wake him and ask for his story?” (Naofumi)

“Stop it. Just let him rest peacefully for now.” (Female Knight) “... Then I guess I’ll wait. It’s no fun interrogating a sleepy person anyways.”
(Naofumi) I guess I’m being too harsh.

If I do any more, Female Knight will tattle to Raphtalia.

Though I think it’s already too late for me to worry about that.

After that, I stopped by the monster stables. I distribute food to the monsters, and let them run around for a bit.

I played with them using the Frisbee shield, branches and balls. We also played something similar to tag.

Some of the slaves who also woke up early joined the game.

It’s only the people who aren’t out peddling.

Dunes are domestic monsters, so they always participate.

They get along well with the Lemo slaves.

“Wan Wan! Shield Niichan! More!” (Kiel)

Kiel comes to me holding a branch in her mouth.

...Yes, this one’s definitely a dog in every definition of the word.

When I returned to the village, the first thing that surprised me...

Was Kiel’s dog form.

She looks exactly like a puppy. As for breed, she looks like a Siberian Husky.

(Google image search Siberian Husky Puppy. You won't regret it.)
"Niichan, welcome home!" (Kiel)

When I got back, I was greeted by a loincloth-clad puppy walking on two legs. I thought I was going crazy.

"You..." (Naofumi)

"Hehe, cool, isn't it? Sadina-nee-chan taught me." (Kiel) Kiel seems very proud... but the other villagers have complicated expressions.

It is quite amazing. She looks like an animal you would keep for a pet.
She isn't menacing at all.

"Kiel-chan looked like she had the talent, so I taught her~" (Sadina)
"Talent..." (Naofumi)

Oh right. Sadina keeps up that form through transformation as well.

"Wa... Kiel-kun has become cute." (Rishia)

Rishia picks Kiel up and starts petting her.

I can understand her feelings.

I also have the sudden urge to pet her.

"So? Are there more people who can take up a beast form in the village? Is it even useful?" (Naofumi) "It depends on the race, but the ability generally increases stats. Like me." (Sadina) "I see..." (Naofumi)

"There's also a matter of talent, so most people in this village probably can't do it." (Sadina) "I see. How about Raphtalia?" (Naofumi)

"I don't think Raphtalia-chan can." (Sadina)

I'm slightly happy that Raphtalia won't transform like this.

For some reason, I imagine Shigaraki. (TL: Standard Tanuki Statue. Google it) I don't really want to ruin my mind's image of Raphtalia.

If she were here, perhaps she would think the same.

"Niichan, are you thinking of something strange right now?" (Kiel) Kiel asks with a curious expression. No idea.

“Well, is it really something that great?” (Atlas)

“Yes, Kiel-kun looks cute.” (Rishia)

Atlas is tilting her head.

She can’t even see the change, so her response is understandable.

“Don’t call me cute! Aren’t I cool?” (Kiel)

“Not with that appearance.” (Naofumi)

After I say this, Kiel looks crestfallen. Her head droops.

“This can’t be... I thought I had finally become cool...” (Kiel) “Even your normal form is better in that aspect.” (Naofumi) Her face is quite girlish though, so she still falls into the cute category.

Watching us, Sadina starts laughing to herself.

Don’t depress the girl any further.

“By the way, Fohl-chan also has the talent.” (Sadina) “What... was that?” (Atlas)

Atlas is at a loss for words.

What? What exactly could be pulling on her heartstrings to this extent?

“Onii-sama just got a wonderful nickname from Naofumi-sama, and on top of that he learns to take on a cute form. He must be aiming for Naofumi-sama’s heart. I’m envious. I’m jealous.” (Atlas) ... This is no good.

Chapter 200: Repent

After I thought the time was right, I went off and made breakfast.

Some slaves had already begun preparing it, so I worked with them to cook.

After that, we distribute food to the villagers.

By the way, the second thing that surprised me was that the amount of child slaves increased.

While I was away, it seems the Slave Dealer stopped by and dropped them off.

He left the materials needed to engrave the slave seal with Kiel and the others.

The village has reached a point where the slaves will train the new slaves without my direct involvement.

Apparently, I'm too soft, so the actual manager is Raphtalia, and to some extent, Kiel and the other slaves I brought over first.

The fact that I'm the leader hasn't changed, but most of the training and tasks are done by the slaves themselves, so I don't have to do much.

Perhaps because of this, the new slaves are too afraid to approach me.

That's good. In a few days, they'll get used to me, but it feels good when someone actually listens to my orders.

"Now then, the people in the castle should be awake. I'm going out for a bit. Anyone who wants to go to the castle, follow me." (Naofumi) "Ah, Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

Atlas raises her hand.

Ah, that's right. It's around the time when Atlas should be able to Class-Up.

But she's only around level 50 now. It will take a while for her to reach 60.

“What is it? I’ll be back really soon.” (Naofumi) “Is that so?” (Atlas)

“Yeah, and Firo isn’t here, so I’m not taking anyone to Class-Up.”
(Naofumi) “I see... That’s unfortunate.” (Atlas)

It seems that Atlas wants to stick to me...

I’m fine with some forms of friendship, but having her climb into my bed is a bit much.

I’ve compromised and said she can sleep close to me.

For some reason... Her appearance hasn’t changed with her level.

I wonder when she’ll grow up.

From what I’ve seen, Firo and Gaelion haven’t had to drive her out of my bed yet.

She sleeps peacefully with Sadina.

After that, I step out of Gaelion’s territory and activate the Portal Shield.

... The Queen was out.

It seems that she left to resolve local affairs, and she’ll be back tomorrow.

But she has received Female Knight’s report, and has left behind some orders.

The Hero of the Sword’s punishment is currently on hold. We are to look after him until then.

There’s nothing I can really do about it. This country is full of trash.

Next is... This may be serious. The Shadow who was watching over Itsuki issued a troubling report.

They had lost sight of him.

I have a bad feeling about this... What should I do?

Right after we capture Ren, Itsuki disappears.

Problems pop up one after the other.

After that, I stopped by the Slave Dealer to hand over money, but I'll omit that.

My money is beginning to pile up, but we are still short-handed.

Perhaps I should buy any Demi-Human slaves as long as they're cheap.

At the Weapon shop... Imya's uncle was tending the store.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield." (Imya's Uncle)

"Yo. How've you been?" (Naofumi)

"Oh, that man's been in a good mood. He's working hard." (Imya's Uncle) "How about you?" (Naofumi)

"I've been able to get back the skills I had before, and have begun working to improve my skills." (Imya's Uncle) "The store is currently open, right?" (Naofumi)

The store's been exceptionally prosperous lately, and all of the shelves are currently empty.

"No matter how much stuff we make, it keeps disappearing. I've put a portion of my profits towards the villager's equipment fees." (Imya's Uncle) "That'll really help. Imya and you, and the rest of the skillful slaves. I'm causing a lot of trouble for you all." (Naofumi) "What are you saying? You gave me a job I enjoy. I should be thanking you. I'm having fun experimenting with the overflowing materials from that mountain." (Imya's Uncle) So he's making Spirit Turtle-based equipment.

I guess I should wait expectantly.

"Ah, right. Could you ask the old man to use this in the armor I ordered?" (Naofumi) I take out the core I got from Gaelion and hand it to Imya's uncle.

"What's this?" (Imya's Uncle)

"The core of a formerly rotting dragon." (Naofumi) "I see, so this is it! It's quite a pretty, red stone. It's different from anything I've seen in the marketplace." (Imya's Uncle) As expected of a skillful race. He could see the difference in a second.

“I planned to have that integrated in my new armor. I stopped by to see if it was possible.” (Naofumi) “Understood. Even if it seems impossible, I’ll work to make it possible.” (Imya’s Uncle) “... I’ll leave it to you.” (Naofumi)

It seems that the Old Man’s shop has gotten livelier.

After that, I return to the village.

Thank god for the Portal Shield. Movement has become ridiculously easy.

“And that’s how it is. Before we receive further orders, you’ll be on house arrest in this village.” (Naofumi) I tell Ren as such.

Female Knight is also in the room, watching us with her arms crossed.

Between me and Ren, I wonder who she is watching.

“... I see.” (Ren)

Ren listens to me expressionlessly.

“For now, I’ll have you tell me Witch’s location.” (Naofumi) “... I apologize. I don’t know.” (Ren)

“Cut the crap. Weren’t you a bandit under Witch’s orders?” (Naofumi) “You’re wrong. The one who made me a bandit... was none other than myself.” (Ren) Ren starts speaking.

Apparently, the day Ren joined Witch, she said there was a person she had to meet. The two proceeded to a certain village.

It was quite close to where they teleported.

And there, Ren was introduced to a man.

He got the feeling they had met somewhere before, but he couldn’t remember where.

That man drew out a sword, and offered to spar with Ren.

“I see, so you want to train with me.” (Ren)

Ren lightly exchanged blows with the man for a while... and then the

man began exchanging words with Witch.

“Honestly... Expectation--. With this--” (Man)

“So— is what it’ll be...” (Witch)

“But, won’t that--” (Man)

“Right-- Stubborn, and hard-- advantage of.” (Witch) The two stared at him, making him feel nervous. But the Witch he trusted in was smiling, so he thought nothing of it.

“Now then, Ren-sama. You’re tired, right? Let’s go rest at the inn.” (Witch) And Witch dragged Ren off to an expensive looking inn.

“Truly, we look forward to travelling with Ren-sama.” (Witch) “Yeah! Ren-sama is much better than the Spear Hero.” (Woman 2 I think) “I-I see. I’ll also work hard to save the world for you all.” (Ren) Ren strengthened his resolve for the people who believed in him.

Sick of the people of this world turning on him, he clung to whoever said they trusted him...

The next morning... all his possessions were gone. Besides his sword, they had taken everything.

In their place was a single letter.

“This is that letter.” (Ren)

He was keeping it on him?

Ren hands that letter over to me.

It looks like it’s been crushed before, but it’s still barely legible.

“Let’s see... 『After much deliberation, we found that we would be unable to use you, so we took the liberty of taking everything we could use from you. I’m grateful you helped me escape from the Shield and the Spear, but neither your personality nor looks are of my preference. Let’s see... If you defeat the Shield, then perhaps I will show you some affection. But if it’s you it will probably be impossible. Ohohoho』.” (Naofumi reading Witch’s letter) (TL: Can Ren even read?) Annoying!

... Witch! She really deserves no salvation!

And to give up on Ren in only one day, that woman really works fast.

Could she have been aiming at Ren's equipment and loot from the beginning?

"That's when my head started to become a little strange... My field of vision turned pitch black, and I unlocked the Curse Series." (Ren) The person he decided to trust turned on him immediately. I can understand his feelings.

If Raphtalia betrayed me right after I decided to trust her, then my Wrath Shield would have unlocked much sooner.

"After that... I fell. I left the inn, looking for money to replace what was lost... Just as it was taken, I wanted to take but I wanted to hide so I wore a mask..." (Ren) He assaulted the bandit's carriage, made them his subordinates, and built his Bandit troupe.

His story was very straightforward.

"Naofumi... I'm truly sorry for not believing in you. This may be asking for too much, but will you not forgive me for the things I've done to you?" (Ren) "I have no intentions of forgetting." (Naofumi)

"I see... Then If I cannot be forgiven for the sins I've piled up, I will lend you power to make up for them. Please remember those words." (Ren) Ren faces me and earnestly lowers his head.

... It seems he's really repenting.

The fact that I even considered forgiving him at that moment must be due to my weakness.

I have no idea whether I'll ever forgive this world's people.

And I plan to continue teasing him. I should at least have the right to do that.

"I never thought Witch was that low of a person. I had my doubts, but... She seemed to offer true kindness so I believed in her. It truly was a foolish move that shouldn't be forgiven. That might have been out last

chance to capture that woman...! No, I can't let that be the last one!"
(Ren) "Well, she does have a needlessly good face, and she can tell lies without care. That woman." (Naofumi) "Badmouthing the former princess? Well it's not like I don't see where you're coming from..."
(Female Knight) Female Knight scratches her head and murmurs to herself.

But where exactly could that woman have gone?

From Ren's story, she definitely has a conspirator.

Someone we might have seen before... Someone connected to Ren.

Who could it have been?

I have no idea.

For now, let's put Witch's letter aside and worry about Itsuki.

After coming to me, Motoyasu and Ren, there's a high possibility she'll go to Itsuki.

I don't know what she'll do, but it definitely won't be anything good.

She never brings anything but trouble.

"Next is... Ah, right." (Naofumi)

I guess I should teach Ren how to get stronger.

He's repenting, and it doesn't sound bad to make him an ally.

Personally, I think he should suffer a bit more, but if Ren, the Hero of the Sword, were to grasp all the strengthening methods, and if he were to move at my command then he will have much more uses than leaving him be.

But I guess that depends on Female Knight.

"I'll be having you do training to polish your body." (Female Knight)
"Even when I might be executed?" (Ren)

"What of it? I want you to polish your heart along with it." (Female Knight)
"...Understood." (Ren)

Ren follows Female Knight's words.

I'm starting to see Female Knight as a muscle head. I wonder why.

"What is it?" (Female Knight)

"Nothing..." (Naofumi)

"It's fine if we move as long as we're within Gaelion's magic, right?"
(Female Knight) "Yeah..." (Naofumi)

"You said that you would give your strength to Iwatani-dono. I will trust those words. Don't let down my expectations!" (Female Knight) "Y-yes!"
(Ren)

Ren immediately submits to Female Knight.

I guess it works out for me just fine.

"Ren, if I gave you freedom of movement, what would you do?"
(Naofumi) "... I'd help the people I caused trouble for." (Ren) "I see. Then what will you do about money? The guild won't pay you, right?"
(Naofumi) "About that. There's something I want you to look at." (Ren)
Ren beckons me closer. I wonder what it is.

"Naofumi, please give me a copper coin." (Ren)

"Hm? That sounds like a pain, but I can lend you one." (Naofumi) "I can't give it back." (Ren)

"Ha? Why not?" (Naofumi)

"It's fine, just hand one over. I'll trade it for drops." (Ren) Ren pulls some fur out of his sword and tosses it over.

Its quality is poor...

But there's no helping it. It's worth more than one copper. I hand over one copper coin to Ren.

And... The second it comes into contact with Ren's finger, the copper begins to turn black and erode away. It crumbles to dust, and gets swept away by the wind.

"What!?" (Naofumi)

“... It’s apparently the compensation for using my Curse Skill.” (Ran)
My Blutopfer deals great damage to me and decreases my stats.

Ren’s skill’s compensation... is like this because it is Greed?

I guess the inability to hold anything precious can be considered a curse.

I guess Ren won’t be able to hold money for a while.

“All the drops also become of poor quality. I think it also decreases luck.” (Ren) “How long does it last... Wait, didn’t you use another one as well?” (Naofumi) “... When I used that one, my level fell from 95 to 85... I don’t know if there are any other repercussions as well.” (Ren) Oy, the price was quite high.

Though mine is as well.

But from the extent of its effects, the side effects shouldn’t last as long as Blutopfer’s.

“You seem to have a lot of problems. So what will you do?” (Naofumi)
“Honestly, I wish to assist you as thanks for returning me to normal. This world isn’t a game. I need to make sure I don’t become conceited again. If I make a mistake, I want you to tell me. I’ve decided to believe Naofumi’s words.” (Ren) “I see...” (Naofumi)

... What’s with this sudden change?

His face shows some resolve, but his obedience is quite suspicious.

I should handle this with caution.

“I won’t run from my crimes anymore. If I am to be executed for my crimes relating to the Spirit Turtle, then I will gladly present my neck. But, I am to be forgiven, then Welt, Bakter, Terishia, Fauly, I will fight to achieve the peaceful world my four comrades wished for. That’s all I want now.” (Ren) Ren says, as he begins to do pushups.

Chapter 201: Trash and Atlas

“Firo-chan’s back!” (Atlas)

Atlas says as she comes into the house.

I wonder if she managed to get back the levels she lost.

With just a little more, Atlas will be able to Class Up. The two are actually quite close in level now.

“Her timing is quite good.” (Naofumi)

I leave Female Knight and Ren to their training, and go out to meet Firo.

『I, who has understood the source of power command. Let the truth once more be read forth. Wash away the origin of my hatred!』

「Dreifach Aquablast」

As I exit the building, I hear magic being chanted.

On reflex, I tense my body and prepare my shield... Like a baseball, I return the magic by batting it with my shield.

“Wa!”

The caster of the magic just barely manages to avoid it by a paper-thin margin.

Of course, I could identify the caster by voice from the beginning.

She’s more talented than her sister.

“What are you trying to do!?” (Melty)

“That’s my line, Melty.” (Naofumi)

“Can you not even think of a reason as to why you were being targeted?” (Melty) “Nope. Especially not from you.” (Naofumi)

“What was that!?” (Melty)

Firo coming home obviously means that Melty came back as well.

What level has Melty become?

She was 18 before, I think.

That magic from before was quite potent. I'd say her level has at least doubled.

"Master, I'm home~!" (Firo)

"Yeah, welcome back." (Naofumi)

Firo is approaching me with a posture suggesting that she wants me to pat her head. I reluctantly pat it.

She just returned, but her feathers are strangely tidy.

Did Melty groom her?

She feels softer than when I pat her before.

Yeah, I guess I should groom her if I ever feel like it.

"Nope, you say!? You made Firo drag me off to a distant remote location to level without asking for my input." (Melty) "That is, well... It's fine isn't it?" (Naofumi) "I'm angry because it isn't fine!" (Melty)

As always, she's quite worked up.

If she toned down a bit, she might make a nice conversation partner.

Though I get the feeling that all of this might be my fault.

"Firo, how high did your level climb?" (Naofumi) "Um, Firo got to 63 and Melty got to 40." (Firo) "I see. That's higher than I expected." (Naofumi) "I came back because I thought we could Class Up Melty-chan." (Firo) "I see. I see." (Naofumi)

"... I smell Gaelion's scent from Master. You haven't been sleeping with him, right? I also have the feeling that Firo's territory has turned into Gaelion's!" (Firo) Ah, her intuition is sharp.

And I don't remember this ever being your territory...

Both Firo and Gaelion go around arbitrarily turning my land into their territories.

But I guess complaining to my pets won't get me anywhere.

“Yes, we slept. I’m not sure about territory, but I had him erect an anti-teleportation field.” (Naofumi) “Bu-!” (Firo)

She starts rubbing her head on me and clinging onto me with her wings.

It’s a bit annoying.

“I’m never giving master over to Gaelion!” (Firo) “Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

This is a pain.

Oh? I just got an idea.

“We’re going to Class Up soon, so go do some intense training with Atlas. If you do so, I won’t sleep with Gaelion.” (Naofumi) “Sure! Atlas-cha~n!” (Firo)

Firo sure is energetic. She left Melty and ran off at an alarming rate.

All of my annoyances have disappeared. It’s finally quiet.

“...” (Melty)

Melty makes eye contact with me, and she stares silently.

“Hmph!” (Melty)

Melty stomps off. Some soldiers accompany her.

The future queen is quite an unpleasant person.

After that, I went to make medicine with Rat. Recently, I’ve been having her teach me some alchemy.

After the sun starts to set, I take a break.

If Atlas were here, I’d train with her. As she’s gone, I asked Rishia and Female Knight to help me.

After dinner, I returned to making medicine.

This has become my basic schedule in the village.

Ren trains with Female Knight deep into the night.

The next morning, Firo and Atlas returned.

That was quick.

“Firo-chan is cruel. I wanted to spar with Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “But Atlas-chan. You will Class Up soon, right?” (Firo) “Are you sure you don’t want to get to the level cap?” (Naofumi) “Hm... It seems that Atlas-chan will be fine. Fitoria says that.” (Firo) “Why?” (Naofumi)

“Because Master is here, she says.” (Firo)

Does she know the necessary conditions?

I can ask her, but I’ll have to use Firo as a medium, so that sounds annoying.

“Then I guess we should depart for Atlas and Melty’s Class Up soon.” (Naofumi) With these two, I think just taking Firo will be fine.

“Then I’ll go get Melty-chan.” (Firo)

“Go get her.” (Naofumi)

In around 5 minutes, Firo comes back with Melty. She’s still pouting.

Perhaps I should leave Atlas to Firo next time too.

I think as I activate the Portal shield to take us to the castle.

“Now then...” (Naofumi)

“Amazing. We really warped to the Castle in an instant.” (Melty) Melty looks around the castle’s courtyard in amazement.

It truly is a convenient skill. I knew that from the beginning.

Motoyasu said in his game it could only transport 6 people, but I should test that theory.

I haven’t really played with this skill too much. The cool down time is a bit long.

“So this is Melty-chan’s castle.” (Atlas)

“Not mine, but my mother’s.” (Melty)

Is the conversation they were having when...

“The Shield brought a Hakuko again!” (Trash)

Trash comes running at us again.

“F-father!? What the hell are you wearing!?” (Melty) This time... for some reason he’s wearing what seems to be a bunny suit.

Is it Usapill based?

What sort of punishment is this?

I nod at Melty’s embarrassment.

“Eh?” (Atlas)

Atlas turns her head towards Trash as she lets out a sound.

“Eh...” (Trash)

Trash’s steps slow and he comes to a stop...

What? He has a very strange expression as she stands still.

He seems to be crying. But he’s also smiling. It’s quite a complex face.

“Onii-sama?” (Atlas)

“What are you saying?” (Naofumi)

How could she mistake Trash for Fohl?

They might be annoying in similar ways, but they are fundamentally different.

Mostly in age and stature... But Atlas can’t see that.

“...” (Trash)

Trash seems to have come out of a trance. He turns around and starts walking off unsteadily.

“Oy.” (Naofumi)

Trash doesn’t seem to hear me.

What could have happened to him?

“Ah, Mother!” (Melty)

A few minutes later, the Queen makes her appearance.

I told her of how Trash caused a commotion as soon as we got here, but left when he saw Atlas's face.

"I see... Such a thing happened." (Queen)

"Do you have any idea why? That's the first time I've seen Trash like that." (Naofumi) "Atlas-san, was it? Please let me see your face for a second." (Queen) "Yes?" (Atlas)

Atlas steps forwards, and turns her face to the Queen.

"...I see. So that's why." (Queen)

"Did you figure something out?" (Naofumi)

"Explaining will take a while, but is that fine?" (Queen) "Let's see... That sounds annoying, but seeing Trash like that made me curious." (Naofumi) "I'll omit what I can. Don't worry." (Queen)

The Queen stares at Atlas as she begins speaking.

"The Hero of the Cane, Luge Lancarose had a younger sister who was unable to see. Their ages were quite separated." (Queen) She isn't going to call him Trash. I guess that's fine.

So he had a little sister?

"There were a few complications with Luge's birth, but that isn't very important so I will omit it." (Queen) "Are you sure it's not important?" (Naofumi)

"Then shall I tell you? Luge's real name was Luge Lances Faubley. He was the third legitimate heir to the throne of Faubley." (Queen) "Faubley is the strongest country in this world, right? So he was that country's prince?" (Naofumi) "At first, but then an incident came that robbed him of that privilege. That incident involved the killing of his parents and many others close to him by the Hakuko." (Queen) So his life's been a soap opera, that Trash.

Is that why he hates Atlas and Fohl of the Hakuko race so much?

"Luckily, Luge and his sister were not there at the time, but the country of Faubley did nothing in retaliation against Silt Welt for political

reasons. Because of that, Luge began to despise both Faubley and Silt Welt. He moved to my country which discriminated against Demi-Humans and changed his own name.” (Queen) And thus began Trash’s fight.

“Luge hid the fact that he was of Royal Blood, and rushed onto the frontlines of the wars Melromark waged. Along the way, he was selected to be the master of the Seven Star Cane, and he began to spread his name as a Hero.” (Queen) What a smooth rise to fame. I’m jealous.

But... the Queen takes on a somewhat troubled face.

“At that time, I was still young. That man’s resourcefulness and strength won my heart.” (Queen) “I don’t need your love story. Please continue.” (Naofumi) “But while Luge ventured off, he had left behind his sightless sister. Soon, he received word that... She had disappeared with nothing left behind but a pool of blood. That the Hakukos had killed her. Luge’s desire for revenge strengthened. After many years of war, He challenged and defeated the Hakuko king of Silt Welt.” (Queen) “... And? How is that related to this?” (Naofumi) I do have a hunch.

Probably...

“Yes, Iwatani-sama. As you thought, Atlas-san’s face looks exactly like that of Luge’s younger sister. She looks like an exact replica of Lucia.” (Queen)

Chapter 202: Amnesty

“So it’s really that.” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Queen)

From here onwards is just conjecture, but a few thoughts come to mind.

There is the possibility of the beloved little sister of Trash being treated as a plaything by the Hakuko from Silt Welt, getting raped and becoming pregnant with Fohl and Atla.

But why that wasn’t brought up in discussion and various other questions arise.

However, from Fohl and Atla’s descriptions of their past, they hadn’t been treated badly.

Then, had the little sister and her Hakuko partner actually been in love just like in a soap opera?

I didn’t really know the particulars.

But Atla’s confusing Trash with Fohl could be said to have been her sensing their blood ties.

Just that, they said that they had simply been rich but....

“Fohl and Alta are half human?” (Naofumi)

“Who knows.... I was really little after all...If you want to know the details, you will have to ask Brother.” (Atla) “I see.” (Naofumi)

I’ll ask Fohl when he returns.

In short, Trash became docile because he realised everything after seeing Alta’s face.

Or perhaps he perceived it as the return of his dearly beloved little sister .

“His first name and surname were taken from my father. Our country has the tradition of having the husband’s name decided by the wife.” (Queen) “Hmmm....” (Naofumi)

Trash used to be so famous but has now become like that.

It was said that he had children and then went bad....

“Then mother, does that mean that Atla-chan and I are related?”

(Melly) “That seems to be the case...he may feel at ease because she’s the spitting image of his sister.” (Queen) “No way.” (Naofumi)

That’s right. Their connection was too much.

Atla must have been sensing her own blood.

Well, it may be better if the fact that the relatives of the King of the anti-demihuman Melromarc were Demihumans was concealed.

Anyway, to reveal it now would just incur meaningless mayhem.

“I understand the story. By the way, we captured the Hero of the Sword but I wanted to ask what we should do.” (Naofumi) “That’s right.... The public rumours have been settling down lately so I’m worried about the punishment.” (Queen) “According to the legends or something, we can’t kill him during the waves, right?” (Female Knight) The Female knight spoke. What does that mean, I wonder.

“Such a prediction has been written down.” (Queen)

“The Pope tried to kill me with all his strength before though....” (Naofumi) “Do you really think that those who have faith in their own convenient beliefs will trust that sort of legend?” (Queen) It is pretty persuasive.

Nonetheless, it can be said that it is a plausible view.

Seeing as even Gaelion says so, it might actually be reliable.

“What happened to make them settle down?” (Naofumi)

“From the start, the country in which the Spirit Turtle had been dormant had a few diplomatic issues.” (Queen) Ah, come to think of it, Ren mentioned that in his story.

That there’s no point in relying on the country, and that they’ve been brainwashed by the Spirit Turtle or something.

“The Seven Star Heroes, who were famous because of the seal, were originally from our country, they had to surrender, requests came despite not having an Hourglass of the Dragon’s Era, the legend of the Four Saint Heroes originated from our country and such.... it was a country full of troubling problems.” (Queen) Every country has its troubles.

And because that country had a catastrophe....in the end there were still benefits...huh.

“It started in our country and caused a lot of damage in the neighbouring countries but in relation to the damage from the waves, we have started to acknowledge that the rumour about the masses also being concerned with the Four Saint Heroes is a lie. At present, we head to the frontlines beforehand to curb the damage, we can even say that there will be hindrances in the end and we may be stigmatised.” (Queen) “That’s a favourable explanation.” (Naofumi)

“The Heroes’ legends are mostly spoken of with benevolence, the legends of the heroes exist in many countries...depending on the country, they could be deified, with bad deeds being blamed on an imposter.” (Queen) Speaking of which, even in my world, the great men of the past were really....actually, I haven’t heard much about them.

Research would reveal that there were countless examples of being unexpectedly useless or lacking common sense.

Not to mention that compared to my world, news in this world was at least 1~2 steps behind so the heroes’ actual situations were unexpectedly unknown.

“And besides....with respect to the waves, there is information about the unnecessary influence of the heroes and the damage this time being witnessed, and the necessity of the heroes being reviewed and invites being planned.” (Queen) “If a hero was killed with that kind of motive....you could probably hide it, but what would happen?” (Naofumi) “We would investigate their survival using the equipment used during the summoning. Although we’ve already handed it back to Foburei....” (Queen) “....Sigh.” (Naofumi)

We couldn't execute him.

Moreover, even if we confined him, we would still have to call him out when the waves occur.

In actuality, the most we could confine him for was about two months.

Killing him during the next wave is an option but intentional killing may lead to war and it also seems risky to kill him while there are still waves.

"From the reports, I've heard that he's become obedient." (Queen)
"Yeah. Your subordinate, the Female Knight, is looking after him."
(Naofumi) "That person, I see. She desired to be employed in Iwatani-sama's land. She also had some skill with swords and was familiar with the land so I encouraged her, but some problematic actions stand out."
(Queen) "Indeed." (Naofumi)

"If Iwatani-sama wishes, shall I demote her? She is excellent as war power so it will be more secure if she serves in the castle." (Queen) "... She's Ren's reins. I'd like her to remain close by to deal with Ren."
(Naofumi) "I understand. That person's father was a very excellent person but his daughter has a few unique set of values. I wanted her to observe Naofumi's land management and have more flexible thinking like her father, but it seems that's not going very well." (Queen) She's a stubborn person indeed.

The cause of that is the will of her excellent father though.

In which case, the Female Knight may have a different idea about what flexible thinking means.

"If it's for the sake of the people, I wanted her to know the resolution of staining her own hand but..." (Queen) "Well, the current her has the distorted hope for both herself and her opponents to be honourable."

As a person, it's fine if that's the case, but it would be hard to get a promotion.

And also, I can't leave the land to her.

Having too much of a shitty character will produce conflict and being so self-righteous means that people won't approach her.

A similar character would be Itsuki. If I think about it, our ideals have some similarities.

If I had to say though, Itsuki is more extreme and self-centred.

Well, he doesn't seem to have the sense of duty I, who has a mass of self-righteousness, have.

"And so, what's happening with Ren?" (Naofumi)

"I heard that the Hero of the Sword-sama is being cooperative." (Queen)
"You're not going to assign any punishment?" (Naofumi)

"It would be different if we were in peace, but right now we cannot predict the future. Therefore, fighting for the world is punishment enough for all the Heroes....is that not so?" (Queen) "I'm not bad though...." (Naofumi)

"If you have feelings of guilt personally then <special> amnesty can be granted though there will be an increase of surveillance. At this rate, winning over allies is the best plan, don't you think?" (Queen) My not being killed when I was falsely accused as a criminal was also due to this same reason, but those guys in the past probably had this kind of feeling.

Who knows, but I'm reluctant to consent.

"The world causes such pressure. This year, there was famine all over the world and we suffered a decline due to monsters. An omen of war could also be seen, and the loss of war power due to the waves so far, the damage caused by the Spirit Turtle... we couldn't impede criminals if we wanted war power for the waves. And above all, the waves will probably come many times. We want to have strong war power if we can, that is our motive." (Queen) "...I got it. I'll tell Ren." (Naofumi)

"If I think about Iwatani-sama's feelings, I would like to assign a suitable punishment but... for requiring you to have patience, many apologies." (Queen) "No problem. It's true that it's reassuring if the heroes are our allies and I can also be at ease. Also, have you found

Itsuki?” (Naofumi) “No... his whereabouts are unknown. We’ve also appealed to Zeltbur but finding him is hard.” (Queen) I don’t know where he disappeared to but he probably has the Warping Skill as well.

As I expected, it’s impossible for Shadow to follow his warping.

Huh? If I think carefully, didn’t the Shadow surveying me lose sight of me many times for the same reason?

Well, it’s not like anything bad happened so there’s no problem.

“Even so, your daughter is really evil.” (Naofumi)

“Really...it’s already like the findings....no, never mind.” (Queen) Due to indulgence, was having a bad child rather tough?

“Ah, also.” (Queen)

When the Queen raised her hand, Shadow appeared and handed me several jewel-like stones..

“These are?” (Naofumi)

“Dragon cores. Perhaps there may be a fragment of the Dragon Emperor in there. (Queen) “I understand. Thanks.” (Naofumi)

Were they a treasure of the castle or something added to a famous weapon?

Their assistance helps a lot.

I think this is to compensate for Ren not being punished due to political reasons though.

“We’re going to go Class Up. See you.” (Naofumi)

“It’s been an enlightening talk, I also thank you.” (Queen) Then we went to the Hourglass of the Dragon’s Era and completed the Class Ups.

Ah, Melty finished the ceremony at a frightening speed. The feather reacted before there was any contact.

Was it alright even though she wasn’t a companion of mine?

But when I was sensing the flow of magic, I felt something escaping

from my shield.

...It awakened some unpleasant ability.

Alta was also able to be influenced by Firo's ahoge.

When I asked Fitoria, using Firo as a proxy, she said that the divine protection of the dragon fragment was also engaged so it was hard for her to engage or something....

With this, our war power rose.

"Now then Firo." (Naofumi)

"Wha~t?" (Firo)

"Take the Future Queen Melty and Atla to—" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi....If you don't stop it, I'll get mad." (Melty)

"Yeah, yeah, aren't you always mad....I get it so stop with the magic."
(Naofumi) Well, we have some flexibility this time so I'll let her go.

"Then take Atla and go level up." (Naofumi)

"Ok!" (Firo)

"No way! Naofumi-sama!" (Atla)

Firo carried Atla on her shoulders and ran.

"Naofumi-samaaaaa—" (Atla)

With this, it will be quiet.

Now I have to return to the village and discuss Ren's treatment.

From tomorrow, it'll be unnecessary to start the Female Knight's boot camp.

When it became night, due to weariness or something, I came to be annoyed that Ren slept with a refreshing face, and so I whispered insinuations in his ear.

Chapter 203: The Flow of Magic

Firo and Atla came back the next morning. The noise settled down, people with a level of 66 stuck in my chest as an auspicious number.

"Now then Atla, focus on the attack I've requested, and use it nimbly for me to see" (Naofumi)

"Do you mean like this?" (Atla)

I received Atla's thrust, applying Peerless Transformation style's concept of ki to herself. It let out a good sound, bashin-.

The foreign substance coming into my body...the magic power, I release outside after attaching my own magic power. In the midst of receiving the attack many times, I became able to receive mostly no damage.

Do I not have a way to use the flow of magic power well? I tried experimenting with attack methods, but it seems my lack of offensive power is guaranteed as it did not turn out well.

...The chances that I can use anything but attacks are high. Perhaps it is because of my element as the Hero of the Shield, or maybe it is the nature of magic power.

And so I experiment even while not in battle status. While making lunch, I tried to cut using magic power on my hand holding the knife.

"Wa!"

The slave in charge of cooking raised their voice while watching me cook. Well I guess so. Even the chopping board's been cut. On a mail order tv program somewhere.

"Amazing..."

"As I expected" (Naofumi)

My shield is getting in the way. This. However...this, the cost is intense. A sizeable amount of magic power was taken from just cutting.

Female Knight and Rishia are using this on a regular basis? There are quite a few differences when used for defense.

...This, can't it be applied effectively to skills?

"Today's food made by shield-niichan is even tastier-!" (Kiel)

"Yeah! Delicious! It suddenly got even better!"

I'll resume experiments after lunch, the problem is fuel efficiency.
What can be done to improve usage cost efficiency?

"Niichan, you listening?" (Kiel)

"Hm? Yea, I'm listening. My skill improved right" (Naofumi)

"Working at Niichan's place is the best! Wan wan!" (Kiel)

The excited Kiel became a dog. Her tail going wag wag. That happy huh. You loincloth wearing dog. If I make the food well this'll be said, so it's fine if I pretend to hear.

After eating lunch, while trying to include magic power with skills through trial and error, I use Air Strike Shield. Looking carefully, I observed that some parts of Air Strike Shield's flow of magic power have a weak spots. That Female Knight destroyed Shield Prison so extremely easily, isn't it because she hit these weak spots?

"Atla" (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Atla)

"Try breaking the magic shield I summoned" (Naofumi)

"Okay" (Atla)

When I gave the order, as I thought, Atla hit the weak spots of the flow of magic power. Letting out a bakin sound, the shield was easily destroyed. Just as I thought. In other words....

Concentrating the magic power in my body.

"Air Strike Shield!" (Naofumi)

I cast. But...it didn't go that well. Or this method rather, it's not much different from casting magic.

"The Hero of the Shield worthy of the origin of power commands.

Decipher truth once more, protect that one!"

"Fast Guard!" (Naofumi)

I fired again to see magic power expenditure.

...The magic power diminished is even more than I predicted.

At least it succeeded.

Effects are...I check my status to confirm. The improvement is visibly better than the usual Fast Guard.

Then why doesn't it work as a skill? I think there is a chance that the concept of SP differs from magic power. What exactly SP represented as a number, I couldn't figure out even after thinking.

Soul point? Or is it stamina point? Only SP is written in English so I have no idea.

Is this what's called ki? Probably not. Having confirmed with the slaves' statuses, I'm well aware that none of the others have an entry named SP. There is probably no mistaking that this is a characteristic of heroes.

I have a feeling this will be even harder to learn than magic. But if I can understand this sensation called SP, if I become able to add magic power to them, I feel like skills can be further strengthened. As it is now, not only does the prison not work on Female Knight and Atla, it feels like I've reached the limit of just defending with the shield's defensive power. For now I'll just be happy that I can use magic to improve power.

Oh yeah...the cooking I made while practicing it during the day was highly praised, I tried applying magic to the compounding process and made medicine. Ingredients are inferior herbs made from the bioplant.

The Heal Pill has been completed!

Heal Pill Quality somewhat bad->high quality

Kuh...I put a bit too much magic power into it. But, if magic power is put into its production, even the quality of inferior materials clearly improves. Magic is sometimes conferred when you enchant but, as expected it's handled with a different system. I anticipate my hero

characteristics will have an improved effect if I add magic power to my shield. The reason I can't reach the skill level of pharmacists may be...and so I show my face in the neighboring town.

Then I went to peek at the pharmacist's magic power used when compounding. Rather than bestowing magic power, I feel a thin magic power streaming out from the pharmacist's body to help with the compounding.

As I thought! This can be adapted to item production too! A large difference in skill will probably appear between I who is clearly aware when compounding and the pharmacist who is not.

I want to teach the pharmacist. But, will the pharmacist become able to manipulate magic power? Even I had to be poked a lot by Atla and told the general idea by Female Knight and the combat instructor before I became aware. Probably, the bunch of this world can use magic power subconsciously to do things. In which case, what factors into having talent? Mastering this power would become awakening to talent.

...No, the battle instructor called Rishia a rare talent. I thought Rishia's flow of magic power looked strangely low when I saw it. So it likely can't be judged by that alone. There'll be no end if we bring up exceptions, but that isn't everything. I think I'll gather a bit more research.

Imia who is studying at the dress shop is...what? She is zealously packing in magic power as she sews. Won't her magic power run out like that? However, Imia is sewing clothes as if there was no bottom to her magic power.

Concentration ability...?

I can't really get a grasp on the essence of this magic power. Racial ability correction? If I think the cost is low, and there only appears to be a lot coming out, I can nod. I understand now why clothes made by Imia is strangely good.

The skill to make a high-quality dress from a monster's hide, I've certainly gotten a look at it. Guess I'll bring refreshments or something after. The gloves she made looked so easy to use even I was surprised. The

size is also perfect. Though I'm a connoisseur, the imperfections were intentional.

Well then, the neighboring town's reconstruction has been mostly completed. I don't see anything inconvenient. It is also thanks to Melty and her subordinates. Under my umbrella of power, demi-humans who worshipped the shield could not behave arrogantly. I'm giving speeches at fixed intervals, and patrolling when free.

"Ah, Master" (Firo)

Firo came with Melty on her back.

"What are you doing?"

"Studying and patrolling" (Naofumi)

"Wow-, you properly do stuff that needs to be done huh, Naofumi" (Melty)

Incidentally Firo's magic power appears like a giant clump. But I don't see the ahoge's reception. Atla has spoken as if she could see it.

"So you say, but it was you who said it'd somehow or other be bad if not managed right, Melty" (Naofumi)

"I guess" (Melty)

"You're not going on a levelling trip?" (Naofumi)

"I'm not going!" (Melty)

"Why? You're the next queen, having a high level shouldn't be a disadvantage" (Naofumi)

Though rotten, she's a magician type. My place only has Taniko and the matchless people with magic specialties. The slaves learning at the magic shop can remember magic, but demi-humans scarcely possess straight natures, they all seem plain or rather many are the physical strengthening type. Of course, there are some who can use attack magic, but those who specialize in it are rare.

...Thinking about it really, really carefully, both Taniko and Gaelion's

flow of magic power was low. I can't figure out what factors are involved with the essence of magic power. I won't know even if I confirm with help, after all the shield works differently right?

"My natural role is as the rear command! Being able to defend myself is good but, why would the ruler of a whole country be standing on the front lines! (Melty)

"Certainly. But in my world, there were moving tales of splendid kings who fought on the front lines for their people?" (Naofumi)

"...There's that but still" (Melty)

Melty is honest if it involves the country huh. I wonder what is so hard to stomach.

"But I don't want to increase levels so simply by just riding on Firo-chan. I, in my own way, want to become able to fight" (Melty)

Ohh...as expected her thinking is fundamentally different from her older sister. Your older sister just levelled to increase status, leaving everything to Motoyasu. Thinking like that, it certainly differs from EXP, I can understand the feeling of wanting experience. While we were talking about such things, Gaelion in baby mode descended with a basa-.

"As I thought, you were here" (Gaelion)

Has whispering near my ear become your hobby? Oh yeah, the core stones I got from the Queen turned out to mostly be failures, but it seems to be a useful item for the Dragon Emperor to Status Up. That's why Gaelion has gotten a bit stronger than before. Moreover one was a Dragon Emperor fragment mixed in, Gaelion quickly ate it.

The knowledge that was obtained then...useless information about how heroes fought the waves many times. No, not that it wasn't necessary, but just how much tangible information can you not remember. Though it's helpful to have two people added as options for Class Up assistance.

"What?" (Naofumi)

"Have you forgotten? I had a promise to teach you the Dragon Pulse

method" (Gaelion)

"...That's right" (Naofumi)

"Master, what are you talking to Gaelion about?" (Firo)

"About being taught magic" (Naofumi)

"If it's magic, Firo can-" (Firo)

"You are bad at teaching right" (Naofumi)

Let's see--. With the power from the bottom of my body--gyuu-and let it in baa-I think, what you want to be, you become. I haven't forgotten what she said. Firo speaks with nuance so it's difficult for her to teach someone.

"Also, it seems to be useful magic special to dragons so it's impossible" (Naofumi)

Seems you can't use it if you don't have the Dragon Emperor's divine protection. It is probably necessary to receive Gaelion's divine protection.

"Aa, the ones Wyndia-chan uses? Naofumi can use it?" (Melty)

"Who knows" (Naofumi)

"By the way, I suggest you give up on attacks. It is absolutely impossible" (Gaelion)

Gu...why can't I use attacks with this either. Thinking conversely, I'll become able to use restoration but still....

Probably stuff like the holy water's power increase huh. It'll be convenient if I can use it but still.

"Boo-!" (Firo)

Firo regrettably showed her displeasure with an uuh-.

"..."

And then Firo's feathers suddenly stood up while trembling. What? Did she sense a weird presence?

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"Hm-?" (Firo)

I shake my head thinking Firo absent-minded.

"What is it?" (Firo)

"No, I thought you sensed something" (Naofumi)

"Firo doesn't know" (Firo)

What is it with this bird.

"Well then, I'll be walking back to the village so I'll have Gaelion teach me" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi, can you talk with dragons?" (Melly)

It was broadcast pretty obviously, but Melty doesn't know either. Huh? Was she not there that time when Gaelion talked?

...He hasn't talked. No, he's been talking, just with only whispering near my ears.

"The information hasn't reached you? This guy can speak with human words" (Naofumi)

"Gyau-?" (Gaelion)

Showing this off, Gaelion winked many times in a cutesy manner. What are you trying to do.

"Oi..." (Naofumi)

"As I thought it's a false rumor. Naofumi too, stop saying irresponsible things!" (Melly)

"Mel-chan. Gaelion talks you know?" (Firo)

"I suppose. He can speak with monsters' language right. Come, let's go back to work Firo-chan" (Melly)

"Eh-?" (Firo)

With a ponpon-, directions were given for Firo to move, Firo repeated what she said many times as she walked.

"And? Specifically, it's no good if I don't study it right?" (Naofumi)

"About right. But, the divine protection itself is easily attained. Stay still for a bit" (Gaelion)

While mounting on my shoulders, Gaelion began muttering with a butsubutsu.

"I, Gaelion, command the heavens, command the earth, cut off reason, connect--" (Gaelion)

This phrase again huh, let's look at Gaelion's magic power when he's chanting the Dragon Pulse technique.

"Here I request of the earth to grant power through a new blessing--" (Gaelion)

I see magic power flowing from the ground into Gaelion's core. There seem to be differences from the magic I normally use as expected. If I'm not mistaken, it is something like changing into the embodiment of taking power from other mediums.

That's why the efficacy of mediums will weaken if its power is borrowed repeatedly....

I can see the nearby magic power shining fluffily, a bit fairytale-like. This, if I couldn't see magic power I wouldn't have known about it.

Does Atla see this kind of world? I feel like magic power and ki are a bit different.

"For the blessed one, the Dragon Pulse's divine protection..."

"Dragon - Breath Seal!" (Gaelion)

The magic loosed by Gaelion flared and poured onto me. And then, a soft light was absorbed into my shield.

"The divine protection itself has been set up successfully with this. After this, if you study the manipulation of magic power and method of drawing power you should become able to use it" (Gaelion)

"Ohh-..." (Naofumi)

"However, as far as I can see from your qualities, you only have

restoration and support type I believe. I recommend creating a defensive membrane with water for training" (Gaelion)

"Fumu...I got it. Then come at night, I'll train at that time" (Naofumi)

"Met and understood" (Gaelion)

Gaelion rapidly spread his wings and took off. With this I've also become able to use magic like Taniko and Sadina huh....

Gaelion took power from the earth right.

Essentially extending my magic power like when enchanting, I tried forcibly extracting power from the ground. Mu...difficult to grasp. Even if you can grab sand barehanded, it mostly ends up spilling out, is what the situation is like. Furthermore this method feels somehow different. When Gaelion did it, the earth naturally released its power on its own.

I haven't learned the aria or anything so it's not like I should be able to use it. After that I groaned as I continued practicing to include magic power with my magic and skills.

Chapter 204: Dragon Pulse

Evening.

While drinking magic water, I continue my researching by compounding medicine. If this influences everything, then I might be able to assist with the weapon shop Old Man's efforts. At least, I can put magic power into the raw materials, even if I only help with the purification of metals, a something good might come out.

"I made you wait" (Gaelion)

"Mu-! Don't come!" (Firo)

Firo is being competitive again. Gaelion brought Atla with him. Sadina is already drinking sake in my room. This fellow can also use Dragon Pulse so techniques will be learned.

"I have come to sleep in the same room today too" (Atla)

"Ah I see. You came without learning your lesson" (Firo)

Though Firo was entirely causing the disturbance, well done. Incidentally, Ren was running laps around the village throughout today too. Well done. He also helped with the village's routine tasks, consisting mainly of manual or physical labor. Though Taniko has not realized how hard she is to deal with, her high-handed character is improving, and she appears to be opening her heart a little to the villagers. Though I don't really care.

"So, Gaelion. Do you remember any magic besides the ones you use?" (Naofumi) "There are several conditions, but there is nothing I cannot remember" (Gaelion) "Conditions?" (Naofumi)

"First, one who has received the divine protection of Firo Rials is improper" (Gaelion) The Class Up correction thing. In other words, I can assume Raphtalia can't do it. Similarly, Atla too? Or rather, the magic Firo Rials use seems to be of the same system as the magic we use after all.

"How about monsters?" (Naofumi)

"With the exception of a small fraction, they have the same system of magic organisation as Firo Rials" (Gaelion) "Ohh-" (Naofumi)

As I thought, dragon exclusive magic was something like that.

"Sadina has used both types of magic. In which case, if the Firo Rials' divine protection is not received during Class Up, you'll be able to use it?" (Naofumi) "Let's see--is it like that?" (Sadina)

"No, I think it'd be considerably difficult. That aquatic beastman is heresy" (Gaelion) "Is that so?" (Naofumi)

While grinning, Sadina displays her laidbackness by releasing her clenched fist gesturing gu-pa-.

"Human, you can do anything if you persist-" (Sadina)

"That'd be good if so" (Naofumi)

It's troublesome because this fellow makes everything out to be simple. How should I put it, it seems simple when looking, but do it in practice and the endless difficulties are easily performed or something...that kind of idea.

"Well then" (Gaelion)

Gaelion pointed at the water in the jug.

"The training to draw out the power of that water is beginning, I'll show an example" (Gaelion) Saying so, Gaelion held his hand over the water jug.

"I guide the power of this water, and desire embodiment. Earth vein. Give me power"

"Aqua Seal!" (Gaelion)

The power transferred from the water jug to Gaelion, becoming an embodiment of magic. If I'm not mistaken, this magic created a magic water membrane. It can be used to weaken the effects of fire attribute magics. It's probably useful when you want to go into fire. For practical uses, it seems like it could be used in place of air-conditioning when it's hot.

"I'm guessing there's no magic book or anything" (Naofumi)

"I suppose. This magic is completely different from the process of how you and others materialize magic from your own power. You use power borrowed from other mediums after all" (Gaelion) "Before, you didn't embody power from yourself?" (Naofumi)

If I remember correctly, it was Dark Nova - Prominence?

"I don't recommend drawing power from yourself" (Gaelion)

"Why?" (Naofumi)

"Anyway, because it is me, you will end up taking out all of your own power if not moderated. At that time, I give guidance to the power in the Breath organ with me" (Gaelion) So it's impossible if it's not Gaelion or something like that? In games there'd be an energy bar, though it seems you can attack life force.

"Though you may be from another world, you are still classified as a human so the Dragon Pulse will not work that well" (Gaelion) "I see" (Naofumi)

"Also, conducting your own magic power to use Dragon Pulse techniques has bad efficiency. Using magic attained the usual way is probably best" (Gaelion) ...I somehow understand. Dragon Pulse that is invoked by power borrowed from outside, and magic that materializes as power is drawn out from within. This is probably a big difference. There isn't much meaning in taking the roundabout way and drawing out your own power with Dragon Pulse. Do they have the same roots? But, it feels like something is different....

"On a related note--Dragon Pulse has little magic power consumption" (Sadina) "That I know" (Naofumi)

"Yes, because you are receiving borrowed power, so of course it's cheap" (Sadina) I see. It appears in manga, an impression like borrowing power from the spirits of the deceased. In other words, it would be like a magic user and a spirit user by RPG classifications.

"Can it be used without cost?" (Naofumi)

"If you use the same medium too much, the borrowed amount will decrease. Incidentally, it will take some time to recover" (Gaelion) "Is that so" (Naofumi)

"Also...it is possible to draw power from the precious metals of gems. They have lots of power" (Gaelion) "Hm? Is it different from magic power?" (Naofumi)

"I'm guessing you mean in gem processing. Strictly speaking they differ. That is a technique that pours magic power into gems to release the power inside it. Dragon Pulse contrarily extracts from it" (Gaelion) "Opposite vector huh...this certainly seems difficult to learn. From there, about two hours were spent practicing Dragon Pulse while being taught by Gaelion and Sadina."

"Like I said don't put in magic power! I know just by seeing the weird magic power in the water" (Gaelion) "You can see it?" (Naofumi)

"The water is quivering isn't it. Not only that, you can tell by a glance from the weird shining!" (Gaelion) "Please hold on, Naofumi-sama" (Atla)

Atla is cheering me on. I know already so you hurry and go to sleep.

"Naofumi-chan. It's not good if you release magic power like when you use magic-. Rather, with the feeling of being empty, with the image of receiving power from the water" (Sadina) "That's what's difficult" (Naofumi)

This is difficult because there is nuance, nothing more. Let's see, not by pulling out with magic power, but by receiving power from the water....

And, with even a slight response the water gave power. Ora! I consciously tried sending power.

"Like I said don't put in magic power!" (Gaelion)

Ah enough! So troublesome-! I feel like I understand why Taniko can only use Dragon Pulse now. Sadina who can use both is an abnormality. There is a genius here too. I'm not a genius but the hard-working type.

And, when I was suffering as two hours passed by. Just somehow or

another I grasped the trick. Thanks to becoming able to see the flow of magic power, I learned by watching the flow when Gaelion and Sadina chanted and became able to do it.

It feels like requesting earnestly. At the same time make a cavity in your magic power. After, you gently touch the water with magic power like reaching out your hand. Through my magic power, the water's clean flow is conveyed to me.

"That's right. That is good. I'm surprised you progressed faster than I anticipated" (Gaelion) "That's true-" (Sadina)

"What do I do after?" (Naofumi)

"The aria will appear in your head. Construct it" (Gaelion)

"Okay?" (Naofumi)

I comprehend up to what was said.

What!?

In my head...something like a puzzle is rising to the surface. A really fluffily indistinct enumeration was joined together like a puzzle. I understand that the magic invoked changes depending on this combination.

"Let me see" (Naofumi)

As I am, I cannot complete many shapes. I try to combine to consciously form the shape of Aqua Seal. However, the parts disappear while I am trying trial and error....

"It failed. Try it once more" (Gaelion)

Hey hey. Taniko and Gaelion are always doing this in actual combat? This is getting more more abnormal. Is there a need to memorize, it's become a staircase of problems. Though I say that, being made light of for not doing it is also objected.

I draw power from the water once more. I assembled the puzzle gently floating upward as quickly as possible. The construction shape is different from last time!

Now is probably not the best time to nitpick. But, the necessary parts are lacking. I can quickly assemble another one from memory.

"I guide the power of this water, and desire embodiment. Earth vein. Give me power..." (Naofumi) With its completion, words unintentionally leaked out simultaneously. No, rather should I say I ended up reading it? It's somehow troublesome with all these differences between magics, like ease of use.

"Aqua Seal!" (Naofumi)

A target icon appeared so I designated myself. With a bashin-, it was confirmed that the magic was invoked.

"Fumu, you grasped it surprisingly fast. I suppose it's as expected of a hero" (Gaelion) "That's true-. Naofumi-chan is a genius" (Sadina)

"Don't mess around. I didn't think it'd be this hard" (Naofumi) "No, learning it in one night should not be a simple feat but..." (Gaelion) Gaelion is scratching his head with his hind foot making a crunching sound. This fellow acts like a dog.

"Somehow or other Naofumi-chan is a hero you know? Being able to do it might be natural-" (Sadina) "You're settling a person's efforts as being a hero" (Naofumi) It was even more trouble to learn than magic. With magic it's fine if you just somehow use magic power and chant a chosen phrase after all. Thinking about it, memorizing the magic wasn't that hard, I feel like learning the written language was way more difficult. So with that said, magic would be simpler?

Hm? I wonder what it is. Something is sticking in my mind.

"Worthy of the origin of power. The Hero of the Shield commands. Decipher reason once more, protect that one!" (Naofumi) In the middle of chanting, a puzzle arbitrarily formed in my field of vision like with Dragon Pulse, but it can be felt as it is.

...?

I was taught that magic and Dragon Pulse were made of different systems but....

It seems I could grasp something but, somehow it probably won't go well. This is also vital to research into.

"Nn~?" (Firo)

Firo moaned with sleepy eyes. Then her whole body skillfully began shaking with a buruburu. Like I said what is that behavior? It's unpleasant when done in human form so I want you to stop.

...It's gotten pretty late too. I'm also worn-out from magic practice.

"We should call it a night and sleep soon" (Naofumi)

"That's right, progress was fast so even I forgot about time" (Gaelion)
"Even if you praise me nothing will come out of it" (Naofumi) "I'm saying it's not a lie but...oh, fine. Well then" (Gaelion) "Kyua!" (Gaelion)

Right after he finished talking, Gaelion returned to child Gaelion, who tried to invade my bed.

"No!" (Firo)

"Kyuaaaa..." (Gaelion)

There Firo kicked off the obstruction, and Child Gaelion let out a voice of protest.

"Give it up, your punishment for mischief as not ended yet" (Naofumi)
"Kyuaaaa!" (Gaelion)

Child Gaelion is also starting to want to sleep in my bed like Firo. Though, he's male so I could probably sleep with more peace of mind with him than Firo.

"Beh-!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion kept looking back like he was charmed by his back hairs while walking trudgingly, and left the house.

"Well then let's sleep" (Sadina)

"Su-..." (Atla)

Atla is already sleeping. Her ease of sleep is dreadfully good. Just, Sadina has said she occasionally moves suddenly as if she remembered

something so an eye needs to be kept on her. Sadina is somehow or other doing her job properly, as expected of the one Raphtalia relies on...right?

"Well the children are asleep so does Naofumi-chan want to do something fun with oneesan?" (Sadina) "As if!" (Naofumi)

Really this fellow, she started joking like this after losing to me in a drinking contest. It's not interesting and I'm telling you to stop.

"Too bad, but I'll keep you company any time-" (Sadina)

"Just hurry and sleep!" (Naofumi)

Honestly...oh yeah this fellow is also simply levelling up fast. Seeing she's already up to 62, isn't she fighting even more efficiently than Firo? It's limited to the sea though....

With the trivial chatter finished for the day, I went to bed. Never would I think even in my dreams, that the embers of the problem I overlooked would become such a big fire the next morning.

Chapter 205: Season of Love

W...What? I woke up to a sensation like something heavy fell. But I can't move my body and felt really hot.

"Haa...haa..."

Awfully rough breathing can be heard. I took a look, and of all things, Firo was pressing on me in Filo Rial Queen form while she slept face up.

"Oi! Why are you on me! Rather don't break the rules we set!"

(Naofumi) "Haa...haa...n..." (Firo)

Firo's eyes are suspicious. I wonder what, the eyes of a carnivore or rather, her eyes now resemble times when she's about to attack a monster in battle. Nevertheless, her breathing is rough. She swallowed saliva with a gokuri, then once again stared at me with rough breathing.

...Chills ran down my back. For now I'll call out the monster crest item and invoke the penalty on Firo! Electricity ran through the monster crest item with a bachi-.

"Wh, What!?" (Naofumi)

The monster crest is not functioning again!? Exactly what is happening? Did something happen when I was sleeping!?

"Master..." (Firo)

With her feathers swelled, Firo leaned on me and continued talking as is.

"What? Heavy, move!" (Naofumi)

"Master...want to eat" (Firo)

Firo spilled drool as she muttered. She's finally revealed her true colors, this bird! To want to eat your owner of all things, you've no doubt revealed your true nature by attacking me.

"Don't mess around! Move!" (Naofumi)

I change my shield to the combat-use Soul Eater Shield and hit Firo

with all my strength. But there was no point to my attack, as Firo took no damage. I tried pushing using all my strength but, that Firo, how did she escape my pushing power unperturbed.

"Want to eat, want to eat..." (Firo)

"Gu..." (Naofumi)

I didn't want to use this hand but....

"Atla!" (Naofumi)

"Nn...? Yes!" (Atla)

I'm guessing it's a situation where Atla is crawling out of bed after being awoken by my voice. She can't see but, she can probably understand with Firo on top of me.

"Wh, what is happening?" (Atla)

"This bird is revealing her true nature and trying to attack me of all things!" (Naofumi) "Is, Is that so!?" (Atla)

But...Atla inclined her head in doubt as she spoke.

"There is no hostility though?" (Atla)

"When you eat, do you direct hostility towards your meal?" (Naofumi)
"No, but I believe that sort of thing is different?" (Atla) "That's fine already, hurry and get Firo o--" (Naofumi) Before I gave my order, Firo pressed on me harder.

"Buwa--stop" (Naofumi)

"Master-" (Firo)

"!? That's no good. Firo-chan!" (Atla)

Atla ran over and thrust into Firo. I who understood the flow of magic power was able to see. She moved around and thrust at Firo's vitals.

"Ouch-!" (Firo)

Firo bent backwards from the pain and fell from the bed. Okay! I jumped onto my feet from the bed and set my shield towards Firo.

"Ow-...Atla-chan what are you doing-...?" (Firo) Firo turned her head back as she rubbed spots poked by Atla with teary eyes.

"It's because you tried to attack me" (Naofumi) "Firo did? Why?" (Firo)

...She seems somehow different from earlier. For now I'll call the monster crest again and try penalizing Firo.

"Ouch-! Ow ow, stop it master-!" (Firo)

Firo began to struggle with a dotabata. The monster crest is functioning normally. Exactly what is going on?

"What's the matter-?" (Sadina)

Sadina was woken up by the disturbance and was getting up.

"Ah, this bird violated our arrangement and attacked me" (Naofumi) "Is that so?" (Sadina)

"Firo doesn't know! Master stop it-! Ouch-" (Firo) Okay, well something like this. I stop the monster crest's penalty.

"Uu...Firo doesn't remember..." (Firo)

"For the time being, there was a promise to not go into monster form inside the house" (Naofumi) "Yeah. Huh? Why is Firo in this form?" (Firo)

"I don't know" (Naofumi)

"Hey. What kind did you mean, saying you were attacked-?" (Sadina)
"She leaned onto me while breathing roughly, spilling drool while repeatedly saying she wants to eat me" (Naofumi) "Firo won't eat master-!" (Firo)

"Who knows, after all you might instinctively think I look delicious" (Naofumi) "Boo-!" (Firo)

Firo changed to human form and protested again. The facts tell the whole story.

"That's-...hasn't Firo-chan entered her season of love?" (Sadina) "Hah?" (Naofumi)

"Eh-?" (Firo)

I was taken aback by Sadina's words, even Firo tilted her head.

"Mating season huh" (Naofumi)

Firo was quickly brought to Rat's place after that. Ah, Melty was called over for mediating just in case. Firo received a medical examination from Rat while Melty soothed the struggling Firo. Oh yeah, after that Firo once again changed into her monster form, looked at me with the eyes of a bird of prey and muttered, "want to eat".

"Mating season huh-..." (Naofumi)

It's a troublesome thing, or rather estrus even though it's only been around half a year since Firo was born huh. Well, wild animals' breeding cycle should be short. Thinking back recently, she's been shivering and shaking, so that was a premonition huh.

"So, what should be done? Will it be cured if we put Firo into that test tube?" (Naofumi) "No-!" (Firo)

"Stop any behavior that could break the equipment!" (Rat) Rat gave a tsukkomi while looking fed up.

"There's medicine to promote it, but medicine to curb it huh-...even if medicine with a calming effect is prescribed, with a variation of Firo Rial it'll just be water on a hot stone..." (Rat) Rat muttered while rummaging through her medicine shelf. Let's try asking Melty the Firo Rial mania here.

"Melty, do you know anything?" (Naofumi)

"If it's the season of love, I wonder if it'd be correct to let her do as she pleases...even if you repress it, isn't it something that can't be endured?" (Melty) "That will become me being attacked though" (Naofumi) "Hm-?" (Firo)

She herself doesn't seem to remember times when she's in estrus though-. Moreover she seems to realize I'd hate her if she did something like that, it's already a different personality.

"There are plenty myths of Firo Rials and humans having children

together" (Melly) "Melly, you know there will be no followup even if you say such things to me right?" (Naofumi) Is it okay like that? Your important Firo is becoming something dreadful.

"If she gets sexually excited, isn't it fine to pair her with another Firo Rial" (Rat) "No-!" (Firo)

After Firo raised her voice in protest, she again had bird of prey eyes saying "want to eat".

"Master...other, no..." (Firo)

What do you mean I'm the only target of your sexual urges. Ah really, what kind of face would Raphtalia make if she knew about this. Atla poked Firo to return her to normal.

"Ouch-!" (Firo)

"For now she's being calmed down with pain, but I don't know what will happen if she enters full-blown mating season" (Rat) "You said something ominous..." (Naofumi)

Rat brings out her desire research as she takes out pen and paper for producing documents.

"Kyua!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion came in such circumstances and rode on my back, then whispered. Is it really necessary to expressly keep it hidden?

"Fumu...the Firo Rial Queen is in estrus hm, want me to suppress it?" (Gaelion) "You can do it?" (Naofumi)

"Leave it to me" (Gaelion)

Okay, as expected of a dragon. If it's Gaelion he might be able to do something. He's a like a being that rules sexual desire after all.

"Then next time leave me alone with the Firo Rial's queen. Also make sure she cannot run away" (Gaelion) I don't know what's going to be done but, he probably needs her kept from running while he is chanting the magic. Well, no choice but to try.

"Firo, come here for a bit. Melty and the rest of you wait there"
(Naofumi) "Ye-s?" (Firo)

I took Firo out of the laboratory with Gaelion on my back, pushed them both into another room and locked the door.

"Kukuku, let's have a go-between with a dragon and filo rial..." (Gaelion)
"No-!" (Firo)

"Nngh!? Eei! Be obedient!" (Gaelion)

Wait a moment hey! Not with magic or anything, isn't he trying to have Firo let it out physically!?

"No-! Firo...wants to eat master...dragons...I'll devour" (Firo)
"Nuaaaaaaa! S, someone help meeeeeee! Muu--" (Gaelion) Looking inside after quickly opening the door, Gaelion looks like he's about to be devoured from the head down by Firo. Hearing the disturbance, Atla returned Firo to normal again. Trying to devour Firo with sexual desire, instead getting devoured from the head down...as I thought he's an unreliable Dragon Emperor.

"Master is cruel!" (Firo)

"I don't know" (Naofumi)

"Do you hate it that much?" (Firo)

"Isn't that obvious!" (Naofumi)

"Kyuaa..." (Gaelion)

//thanks

Gaelion's shock from being defeated by Firo made him go back inside child Gaelion it seems. Honestly, what Dragon Emperor. You lost to Firo so easily didn't you. Firo in estrus somehow seems to lose various restraints. When she was pressing on me, she was even undaunted by my push so it's substantial.

What should be done.

...Suddenly, Motoyasu's face comes to mind. That pervert seems like

he'd happily do it with Firo. But, I'm not a pervert.

"Mel-chan. Master is so cruel" (Firo)

Firo is tattling to Melty. I don't know.

"Why do you hate Firo-chan so much!" (Melty)

"Hate? If I hated her Firo would already be everyone's breakfast you know" (Naofumi) "No-!" (Firo)

"What did you say!?" (Melty)

"Enough already-...isn't it ok if you just be her partner one time. It's nothing to fret over" (Rat) "Not a chance" (Naofumi)

"The count is also stubborn-...even though I have some interest in the veracity of the legends" (Rat) "Research into dragons or something" (Naofumi)

Rat probably also dislikes animals with a similar ecology to firo rials. You're contradicting yourself.

"Really, what should be done" (Naofumi)

Won't even Atla become unable to stop it if it's left as is? Not only that, it doesn't seem like it'd stop unless I be her partner. But I'd rather die. There is also the method of having Firo endure it, but it doesn't seem to be something at the level that can be endured.

"Well then, how does pleading with the firo rial's queen sound? She might lend us some insight" (Melty)

Chapter 206: Fitoria's Request

“Hmm...” (Naofumi)

Fitoria, huh?

Looks like Melty's just as optimistic as ever. I guess for now, I'll ask the queen.

I grab hold of Firo's ahoge like it's a mic and try asking.

“You're seeing this right? Isn't there something that can be done?”
(Naofumi) I wait for a response.

Before long, Firo starts nodding her head.

This ahoge of hers is just about as useful as a cellphone, huh?

It'd be nice if this world had some form of telecommunication, although I don't know much about radios and the like myself.

“Well you see~... It's not like there's no way, but she said she wants your help for something first.” (Firo) “Of course she does. Tell her no thanks.”
(Naofumi) “She says nevermind. Letting Firo power up from eating you would probably be easier anyway.” (Firo) Gu...What a cruel suggestion.

If Firo falls completely into heat... Make no mistake, I wouldn't stand a chance.

Wait, could I just confront her about it directly?

It's not like I'm out of ways to make her give up, but I really don't want to have to resort to them...

After all's said and done, I do appreciate how hard she's trying.

...Come to think of it, couldn't Fitoria be the ring leader behind this whole mess?

I started getting a little doubtful.

The fact that she has control over other monsters is suspicious on its own. Gaelion is a Dragon Emperor, so it's not strange that he could slip through her effectiveness. But I do get that harem-loving dragon isn't

worth much to her.

But, I'm in a situation where I can't really refuse, so I have no choice but to listen.

"I understand. What do I have to do?" (Naofumi)

"Well you see. She says, recently, in master's home country, a carriage was targeted by some bandits." (Firo) "A carriage?" (Naofumi)

"Ah, come to think of it, I've heard that story as well." (Melly) Melty joined in the conversation.

I guess the fact that she knows must mean these bandits are pretty infamous.

"From what I understand, the bandits only appear at night. Apparently, some peddlers and the like end up getting challenged to a contest, with their carriages on the line." (Melly) "Their cargo gets stolen, huh... that's troublesome." (Rat) "That's not it. The victims' cargo is returned later. It looks like the bandits are just after the carriages." (Melly) "What?!?" (Naofumi)

What do you mean they're just after the carriages?

Looks like there are some weird bandits around.

In the first place, I don't get the point of using carriages at night.

I guess whoever's doing this may not be human.

If that's the case, this would have to mean that Fitoria can't handle this on her own, huh?

Then I should commend her on asking me for help.

"I've heard that many nobles have had their carriages taken away from them by some weird bandits. Moreover, some beaten up carriages have been returning full of treasure. Enough to the point where traders are going out looking for the bandits." (Melly) "Wait a second. What's up with that!?" (Naofumi) If this is related to Fitoria's request, then...

"Do Filorials have a trait of wanting to battle between carriages?"

(Naofumi) "Yeah... She says they do." (Firo)

Jeez...

In short, she wants me to find a solution for some territorial dispute.

Although if they're wild Filorials, it should be pretty easy.

"The loser has to hand over its carriage. And since it's mating season, Fitoria says that the loser won't have its love recognized." (Firo) Are they hermit crabs, or what?

Huh? So in other words, all we need to do is win.

Moreover, Firo is good at racing.

If that's the case, if I beat Firo in a race, she'd give up on me right?

"Alright Firo. Have a match with me. A race until the castle. Ready, go!" (Naofumi) As long as I make it outside of Gaelion's area of magic jamming in time, I could win easily with Portal Shield.

"Master is going to be cheap, so no!" (Firo)

Tch. She saw through it.

What's really sad is that I really have to race with Firo eventually.

There's no way I can beat her without Portal Shield.

"...So? What is Fitoria asking me to do?" (Naofumi) "Somehow, you know~. The Filorial in that area aren't taking orders properly, so she wants you to go punish them." (Firo) Hmm... It doesn't sound too bad, but...

From Melty's conversation, I feel like there's something else.

Is there some other Filorial Queen trying to expand her territory?

I guess I'll have to look into it myself.

"I understand. Tell me where. Just in case, let me take some people along that can fight." (Naofumi) I'll take along Firo, Rishia, Atlas, and...

"Melty, are you coming?" (Naofumi)

"Somehow I have a bad feeling, but I'll put up since it's for Firo's sake."

(Melly) Hmm...Female Knight is out of the question since she's still occupied with Ren.

Who else...

"Is Rat coming?" (Naofumi)

"What are you expecting from me?" (Rat)

"I thought you'd come with us for the sake of research." (Naofumi) "Just hearing about the situation is enough. I'm busy with managing the monsters here anyways." (Rat) Well it's a territorial dispute between Filorials, after all.

If finding out how to calm Firo down wasn't in the deal, I probably wouldn't have agreed anyways.

Whatever.

"How's your research going?" (Naofumi)

"Pretty well. If Gaelion would let me borrow his core, it'd go even better." (Rat) His core, huh... If I remember right, he refused initially because he hadn't gathered enough fragments.

I wonder what it'll look like when it's finished.

Aside from her, I guess there's only Gaelion and Taniko who I could take along.

Well, actually thinking about it, there's no limit to how many people I can bring since we're not going for EXP in the first place.

What kind of challenge will we be facing? Just like hermit crabs, maybe one of carriages crashing into each other? I don't have much of an idea.

Either way, Firo's still in heat, so it's probably better if we bring less people for less of a burden.

Taniko isn't necessarily on bad terms with Firo, but Gaelion is...

Yeah, I guess that's enough people.

"Firo and Rishia, Atlas and Melty. You guys will be accompanying me this time around." (Naofumi) "Okay." (Everyone)

After deciding that and making proper preparations, we set off.

...I feel like I'm overlooking something.

Wait, I didn't even think about which way we're heading.

"Was it around here?" (Naofumi)

After that, Firo sometimes went back into heat, but for the most part, she was focused on pulling the carriage.

Soon enough, night was falling. We'll be unable to travel soon.

You can already see the moon pretty clearly.

We're currently in the mountain range of Melromarc.

Firo is trotting along the mountain path.

"Let's see. It seems like this should be the area." (Melly) "I really took up a request from a Filorial. Will I do anything, or what?" (Naofumi) "I'm think I'm a little jealous." (Melly)

Says the Filorial Manic in an attempt to console me.

"Naofumi-san, are we going to punish the Filorial here?" (Rishia) "Let's see. Whether we're crashing with other carriages or not, this'll probably turn into a battle one way or another. That's why I brought you guys along." (Naofumi) "Okay. I'll do my best." (Rishia)

"Let's do our best, Rishia-san." (Altas)

Aside from Melty, this lot's an honest bunch, so they cooperate very well.

Rishia was also raised pretty well, so as long as the job isn't too difficult, it's an easy win... I think.

"...Nothing's happening?" (Rishia)

"Yeah. It's like we're searching for bandits here, so it can't be helped." (Naofumi) Although they're supposed to show up around here.

Will they not show up today?

"Don't they have a hideout or something? Or rather, a nest since they're

Filorials.” (Naofumi) “Fitoria says she doesn’t know-“ (Firo)

What useless information.

In the first place, we’re looking for Filorials, right?

While thinking that, a torch-like object suddenly appears in the distance, and starts approaching amidst a cloud of dust.

It seems like they’re heading our way pretty quickly from across the mountain range.

It’s that thing where a torch being lit means you’re friendly, right?

We too left our lamp on in the carriage to lure them in the first place.

Now then, I wonder what kind of crooks they are.

Wha-, What?

I look at the so-called bandits... and wrinkle my forehead deep in thought.

The cloud of dust clears up.

The ones pulling the carriage were three red, blue, and green feathered little girls. And in their cargo was....

“Long time no see, Father-in-law. Street Racer Motoyasu, at your service.”

With a flag tied to his spear... the so-called “street racing” Spear Hero had appeared.

Chapter 207: Race

Ha? Eh? Street Racing?

What the hell is this idiot saying?

Street racing... He's drifting further and further away from being a hero.

What's more, he's giving off a very refreshing smile.

It's annoying. Insanely annoying.

It's a face I might unintentionally punch with all my might.

I don't really want to involve myself with this anymore.

I lift up my shield...

「Portal-」 (Naofumi)

“Wait, wait! You're leaving!?” (Melty)

“After seeing that, what other option do you want me to pick?”

(Naofumi) If there's an option B or C, please tell me.

“If you leave, what will happen to Firo-chan?” (Melty) “Hm... I'll give up on her.” (Naofumi)

“Say what!?” (Melty)

If I leave her be, Motoyasu will definitely do something. I've decided to believe in the man.

Though that's only for my own convenience.

“No!” (Firo)

Firo is resisting quite hard.

“Fuee... What is that guy doing, the Hero of the Spear!?” (Rishia) “Ah, that person's been like that for quite a while.” (Naofumi) “What did you do!?” (Rishia)

“This person's sister broke him, and then Firo destroyed all remaining parts of his personality.” (Naofumi) “Sister...!” (Melty)

“The Sword person also turned strange due to the former princess,

right? Are you not going to save him?" (Rishia) "The individual is satisfied with his current situation." (Naofumi) "Ah, and who is this 'Father in Law'?" (Rishia) "It seems to refer to me." (Naofumi)

"And Why!?" (Melly)

Explaining sounds like a pain. I want to run away as soon as possible.

The one who isn't here when Firo was in a pinch was that man... Is it because he was raising Filo Rials?

He really does unnecessary things.

I was worried because I hadn't seen him for a while, but he was raising children.

He couldn't get Firo's attention, so he raised other Filo Rials to console him!

"Firo wants to return home..." (Firo)

"Yeah... I also want to return." (Naofumi)

Firo doesn't like being around Motoyasu.

But I need to put her somewhere while she's in heat.

"Um... Motoyasu, what exactly are you doing?" (Naofumi) "Street Racing." (Motoyasu)

"That doesn't answer anything!" (Naofumi)

This is no good. Too many things aren't adding up.

The Curse Series... I want to believe that that is the cause.

"...Why are you operating a place for street racing?" (Naofumi) "These kids said they wanted to, so I let them do as they pleased." (Motoyasu)

"Ah, I see. Aren't you giving them a little too much freedom?" (Naofumi) Filo Rials love carts, and like hermit crabs, occasionally steal them from each other... and he let them act freely.

I don't understand.

I never was able to understand all of Motoyasu's actions, but in the time

I haven't seen him, he's turned even more unpredictable.

I should have noticed when Filo Rials came up.

I was deceived by being told tales of Fitoria and Bandits.

But let's see here, Ren was a thief, and Motoyasu became a Bandit... Is Itsuki aiming to become the Pirate King?

"Hey, why are you Father in Law!?" (Melty)

"Perhaps because I'm the one who raised Firo." (Naofumi) Motoyasu seems to think owner = parent.

Firo may be my subordinate, but she's definitely not my child.

Even if I was her father, isn't this guy older than me?

Why is he calling someone younger than him 'Father in Law'?

"See, Firo-tan. It's our children." (Motoyasu) "Is that true!?" (Naofumi)

So while in heat, she already did it with Motoyasu.

But she still wanted to do it with me? What a bitch.

What a troublesome person. I placed quite a bit of trust on her... I hate bitches, you know.

If it's true, she better be prepared for quite a bit of punishment.

"No! He's wrong, Master! Firo never did anything like that!" (Firo)

"There's no way Firo-chan would do such a thing! Please stop lying!"

(Melty) "By the way, there are quite a few pigs around you, Father in

Law." (Motoyasu) "Listen to me! And what do you mean by pig!?" (Melty)

"P-pig!?" (Rishia)

"Pig? What do you mean by that, anyways?" (Naofumi) "I mean exactly as I say. Aren't there a lot of pigs around you?" (Motoyasu) ... um, well...

Motoyasu did call some women pigs before at the inn we stayed at.

He also called Raphtalia Tanuki-pig.

Could it be...

"Oy, when you look at this, what do you see?" (Naofumi) I point at

Melty.

“A blue piglet. It’s saying oink over and over again. I find it annoying. It’s gross...” (Motoyasu) “What was that!? When you say pig, are you referring to me!? Cut the Crap!” (Melty) “Give it up. It’s your sister’s fault.” (Naofumi) “Idiot Sister!” (Melty)

Well, I guess I can understand Melty’s rage at being called a pig.

But this seems to really be the case.

After being swallowed by the curse series, Motoyasu can only see women as pigs.

He’s not reacting to Melty’s words, so he can’t even hear them.

But... He doesn’t seem to hold any ill intentions.

“So are those Filo Rial really your and Firo’s children?” (Naofumi)
“Nope.” (Motoyasu)

... He answered very honestly... He probably bought them.

Don’t make up stuff to send us into panic.

Now that I think about it, when I went to the Slave Dealer’s place to drop off money, something was strange.

He didn’t look me in the eye.

Was this the cause?

“Now then, Father in Law. I challenge you.” (Motoyasu) “Why!?”
(Naofumi)

“We’ll set the torch up by the cliff as a goal point. The first person to reach it will be able to select and keep one of their opponent’s angels. Does that sound alright?” (Motoyasu) “Don’t go deciding things on your own!” (Naofumi) “Mo-kun, is it time yet?” (Filo Rial)

“Almost, dear.” (Motoyasu)

Who the hell is Mo-kun!?

Those three Filo Rials are Red, Blue Green. It reminds me of old racing

games.

To complete the set, they would need a Yellow, but... Ah, I guess Human form Firo is blond.

Those three each seem to have distinct personalities...

But I don't really want to check.

"Now then, let's start the race!" (Motoyasu)

"O-oy! Listen to me!" (Naofumi)

Before I can stop him, Motoyasu disappears down the path he came from.

The sight of the Three Filo Rials running in little girl form...

In my world, this scene would have gotten him arrested immediately.

"W-what will you do?" (Melty)

"... Let's ignore them and go home." (Naofumi)

"Won't that become our loss?" (Melty)

"Probably, but I don't really care." (Naofumi) Damn you Fitoria. Next time, I'll just have Rat shove Firo in a test tube.

It may be dangerous, but we'll fill her with sedatives until her mating season ends.

The scenes in my imagination shift to SF. This sounds like Cold Sleep.

She probably won't die, she'll wake up before that.

"Hm? What do you mean?" (Firo)

"Well, Firo-chan. If you lose to the Spear Hero, you will belong to the Spear Hero." (Melty) "That's right Firo-chan. Thank you for the time we shared 'til now. I'll take up your role of sleeping next to Naofumi-sama." (Atlas) "Eh!?" (Firo)

It's a bit late, but Firo finally realizes she's been made into a competition prize.

"No!" (Firo)

“Uwa-” (Naofumi)

Firo starts running off at a remarkable pace.

“FUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!” (Rishia)

I agree with Rishia’s shout.

With the difference in start times, we’re already losing by quite a margin.

What is the course like?

I bet it’s advantageous to Motoyasu. That man’s been using this mountain as his territory, right?

Let’s see. I take out a map.

With all the shaking, it’s hard to read.

I look through the map, but... There are so many winding paths I have no idea which way to go.

There are plenty of paths that go alongside cliffs.

... It seems Firo’s motivated, so I guess I should support her.

He never said magic was banned.

「Zveit Aura!」 (Naofumi)

With this, her speed should rise.

“Firo, use the inertia of the carriage to maintain speed as we round that curve.” (Naofumi) “Okay!” (Firo)

As I propose that, the bird begins a drift with the carriage.

What sort of turning method is this? I’m worried that the wheels will break.

But Motoyasu is doing the same. In a cliff ahead of us, I see Motoyasu far ahead, rounding a corner through drifting.

Firo’s base speed is higher, but Motoyasu’s familiarity with the course, and his early start make it hard to catch up.

“Right! Left! In that fork, the left path is shorter!” (Naofumi) It’s hard to drive while looking at a map.

Also, our carriage is made of metal, and has quite a few passengers.

If we want greater speed, it’s probably best to leave then.

“Hey Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What~?” (Firo)

Inside the shaking carriage, everyone is frantically holding on to the sides to prevent themselves from falling out.

“Can you leave the carriage and chase them?” (Naofumi) “I can’t!” (Firo)

“Why?” (Naofumi)

“This is Firo’s battle, right? Then Firo can’t leave the carriage.” (Firo) “I see...” (Naofumi)

Is it something carved into her Filo Rial instincts?

... Now that I think about it, if I purposely lose then Firo will become Motoyasu’s... but he seems to have sworn loyalty to me, so we can make that in name only, and he can deal with Firo’s mating season without me.

I don’t need to know how he’ll deal with it.

After we’ve saved the world, in the sunset, he’ll meet with Firo and once again...

“Master is thinking something strange!” (Firo) “Naofumi, please quit it with that face you make whenever you think something rude!” (Melly) Ah, they saw through me.

Well, even if we lose, we won’t lose that much.

“No matter how dirty Firo gets, as long as she works hard, I’ll never abandon her.” (Naofumi) “Bu-! Firo’s not dirty!” (Firo)

Firo’s speed rose.

Does she know what that means? She must be mad because she does.

Should I make a mistake as the navigator now?

No, I'll need to have a reason she can accept.

"Firo, go left there. It should be faster." (Naofumi) By the way, that way has a bridge suspended by ropes, apparently.

It will be difficult with a carriage.

"W-wait, Naofumi! We're heading for a rope bridge!" (Melly) "Yeah."
(Naofumi)

If we fall, I'll use Portal Shield and warp us out.

Snap. Snap. We hear the sound of ropes snapping around us as we cross.

"KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" (Melly)

Melly's screaming voice is quite annoying.

"FUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" (Rishia) Rishia's scream is also quite comparable.

Atlas nervously looks between the two screaming people, and grabs my shirt sleeve.

"I-it'll be fine, right Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

"I-I see, What happened to those two?" (Atlas) "They're shouting to distract themselves from an unescapable reality." (Naofumi) As if she heard me, Melty starts shaking my body back and forth as she screams.

"Mu!" (Firo)

With a final snap, the bridge splits in two.

Now then, to escape.

I prepare to use Portal Shield, but then...

Firo faces the carriage, dis-attaches herself from it, and grabs the rope of the broken bridge. As the Carriage passes over her, she delivers an amazing kick to it, sending it all the way to the other side.

Chapter 208: Shortcut

“Fube-” (Firo)

With Firo’s acrobatic kick, the carriage was shot to the other side of the ravine.

The people inside, us, are all slammed against the sides of it. We’ve all developed some mental traumas now.

“To-!” (Firo)

Running up the collapsing bridge, Firo is able to catch up to the carriage at an amazing speed.

I knew that crossing the bridge would be an extreme shortcut, but it was outside the bounds of human ability.

... Well, Firo is a monster.

“Uu... I don’t think I had enough lives to spare for that.” (Melly) “What a coincidence. I think the same.” (Naofumi) “If you think that, then choose the route more carefully!” (Melly) “We have to use this route if we want to win.” (Naofumi) I leave it at that.

Honestly, I don’t care whether we win or lose.

But this was a great shortcut. We’ve pretty much caught up with Motoyasu’s group.

I pull out the map and check it again.

Let’s see, Motoyasu is... If I rely on the light of the torch, he’s quite ahead.

“Next comes five devilish hairpin turns. Be careful.” (Naofumi) One wrong step will send us hurtling down the cliffs. Truly a devilish series of turns.

... When did my mind shift into Race Game mode?

“Yeah!” (Firo)

Firo takes the turns perfectly.

Yeah, this would be impossible with a car.

The carriage shakes up and down, and sways from side to side.

“Uge... Aga...” (Melty)

“Fue... Muwa...” (Rishia)

“This is quite amazing.” (Atlas)

Why is Atlas perfectly fine when we’re shaking this much?

I’m relatively fine, though.

Is it because of Magic Flow or Chi?

No, Rishia is no good, so that’s probably not it.

“Uu... I’m going to die. At this rate, we’re all going to die.” (Melty) For once, Melty acts like a child.

You’re the one who wants to win. Deal with it.

Be thankful you were born in a world where this much isn’t enough to kill you.

“Fueee...” (Rishia)

“If you hate it so much, then let Firo become Motoyasu’s.” (Naofumi)

“No...” (Melty)

“To prioritize friendship over your life, you’ll become a fine Queen.” (Naofumi) “That doesn’t make me happy. If you tell me that now, that doesn’t make me happy at all...” (Melty) I’m surrounded by corpses. Perhaps I should have taken Taniko and Gaelion.

They could evacuate the people here...

“Now that I think about it, can’t you just get off?” (Naofumi) “How am I supposed to do that!?” (Melty)

“Use magic?” (Naofumi)

“There’s no way I can chant Magic in this situation!” (Melty) “It’s not like anything’s preventing you. Right. Can’t you use water Magic, and use the recoil to fly?”

“Quit joking around!” (Melty)

The other option is to send them off with Portal Shield.

But if I do that, I won't be able to get back.

“Can't you even act a little motivated?” (Melty) “Not with Motoyasu as my opponent.” (Naofumi) “I can understand your feelings, but don't you care what happens to Firo?” (Melty) Ehehe. Master~.

... I guess Firo has been helping me quite a bit.

And I can't deny that looking at her soothes me.

But I can't forget how she looked at me as if I were her prey this morning.

Her head is only filled with thoughts of violating me. And food.

As I think that, my head seems to cool down.

“What? Even if Firo becomes Motoyasu's belongings, we'll still interact with her the same way.” (Naofumi) “After thinking, that's your conclusion!? Do you really hate doing it with Firo-chan that much?” (Melty) “Isn't it obvious? I care for Firo, but I don't have the time to be doing things like that.” (Naofumi) “Ah... I never thought the day would come when I wished the creepy Naofumi were here.” (Melty) “Fuee, My head is spinning. I think I'm going crazy...” (Rishia) “To say such a thing here. Rishia, you're quite a pervert.” (Atlas) “Why are you only speaking up to that!?” (Melty) Even though I say that, we've almost caught up.

But we're also closing in on the goal.

At this rate, we'll lose.

Ah, the light is shining on Motoyasu from the torch on the cliff.

There's quite a turn before we can reach his location. If we were able to jump to the other side of the curve, we would be able to win, but I don't think that's possible.

“Firo, you can see a light on that cliff, right? That's the goal. At this rate we will lose.” (Naofumi) “No!” (Firo)

Firo veers off the road!

“Cliff! Firo, that’s a cliff! We can’t fly, you know! We’ll
Faaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-!” (Melly) “Fueeeeeeeeeeeeeee!” (Rishia)

It’s over. Everything is over.

Was I satisfied with my short life?

It would be nice if we could survive.

Hm?

There’s still something we can do... but there probably isn’t enough
time.

“To-!” (Firo)

Firo grabs onto the top of the carriage, and starts flapping her wings.
The wind begins to pick up.

The wind whistles loudly.

Could it be that Firo is going to fly?

I recall how she was trying to beat Gaelion. Did she practice to be an
aerial mount?

I forgot the obvious fact that Firo is a bird.

If she pushes herself, she should be able to fly.

Oh? We seem to be gliding for a bit.

“Wauuuuuuu...” (Firo)

What sort of island is this? (TL: this is a reference, but I don’t know to
what.) Though she may fit, being a gluttonous character.

Does she plan to take a shortcut like this?

But I’m not sure if this will go well. There’s a high chance of failure.
We’re slowly losing altitude.

Firo’s body is not one modelled for extended flight.

Is it her weight? I’m surprised Gaelion can even fly with his massive

body.

Could it be because physics work differently in this world? Then what of the usually flightless Filo Rial?

... I should probably lend a hand.

「E Float Shield! 」 「Second Shield! 」

I deploy these shields at the very end of my range.

And...

「Change Shield! 」

I choose the rope shield. It can be used as a grappling hook.

This was an ability that unlocked when I awakened it.

Using it, I can send a rope out of the Shield and pull things closer.

The Chimera Viper Shield has a similar effect, but its range is smaller.

Pretty much, I will be able to attach the carriage to the floating anchors.

After we swing on the first shield like a pendulum, I send the hook towards the next one.

「Shield Prison! 」

My shield prison manifests below the carriage.

“Firo!” (Naofumi)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

When we get close enough, I release the Shields, and Firo Kicks the carriage with all her might. We arrive at the other side of the cliff. And Firo uses the Shield Prison as a platform to reach us.

We once again start heading for the goal.

“I definitely didn’t have enough lives for that one...” (Melty) Melty is collapsed on the floor of the carriage in exhaoustion.

I feel the same.

I'm never racing with Firo again.

Next time a race comes up, I'm abandoning her with Portal Shield.

But I don't think a race will come up again in the foreseeable future.

"I'm dying. I'll definitely die." (Melty)

"I withstood the Spirit Turtle's attacks. I'm here with you." (Naofumi)

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?" (Melty) What's bugging her so much?

Worse comes to worst, I'd at least use a technique to cushion our fall.

Though we'd be left in pitch black at the bottom of the cliff.

Anyways, we've taken a massive shortcut. Motoyasu should be behind us.

We pass by the torch that marked the goal, and stopped.

"Victory." (Naofumi)

Since we fell behind in the start, we had to desperately grasp for victory. As expected of Firo.

The fact that Motoyasu's three Filo Rials were able to take on Human form, means they're probably Queens as well, though.

But they don't have Ahoges.

"Uu..." (Melty)

"Fue..." (Rishia)

"I won!" (Firo)

While surprised with her victory, Firo climbs onto the roof of the carriage and begins singing.

What sort of ritual is this?

She's really excited. Has she forgotten the resentment she had against me?

But our carriage is now on the verge of collapse.

The wheels can barely be called as such, and the frame is severely warped.

I'll have to buy a new one.

Wasted money...

Should I request it from Motoyasu?

No... I don't really want his beat up carriage either...

"It's Firo's win! Firo is number one. Firo is the fastest. She won't lose to the likes of Gaelion!" (Firo) She's getting loud.

I have a feeling she's looking at me like I'm prey again.

"The only one Master will ride is Firo! The only one Master will ride is Fi... ouou." (Firo) I tolerated the first half, but I couldn't forgive the second one. She was swaying her hips.

Until Motoyasu arrived, Firo kept singing of her victory.

Does she really hate Gaelion that much?

And soon after, Motoyasu and his noisy three come storming in.

"I-I lost..." (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu confirms that we arrived first, as he falls to his knees and places his hands on the ground.

—Author Note—

By the way, one of Motoyasu's Filo Rials is male.

Chapter 209: Lust

"Victory-!"

Firo still won't stop doing the victory dance. Does she like competitions? Melty and the others are still groggy and suffering.

"Well then...the winner gets to take one firo rial from the loser, was it?" (Naofumi) I don't really need it, but that's how it's been decided. Umm, looking carefully, these three seem to have their own characteristics.

The red one with a short bob hairstyle gives a strong-willed impression from their eyes. The blue one with long hair gives a tidy young lady impression. The green one with braided hair seems like a docile, plain class representative type, I'd say similar Rishia.

Firo is like that so I won't judge to what's inside, but the green one looks easiest to use.

"Okay, then send over that quiet-looking emerald green one" (Naofumi)
"No gooooooooood! Green is no gooooooooood!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu protectingly clung to the three of them. Is Midori it's name? I have no duty to say it, but what terrible naming sense. It's very likely that the other two have been named by their colors as well.

"Really you..." (Naofumi)

Bringing up the match yourself and declining when you lose, what's with that. I don't really need you speaking your mind. I have a surplus with even Firo. I don't need just another two.

"Mo-kun!"

"Mo-chan!"

"Motoyasu-san!"

Call him the same way! Is what I will leave unsaid. It'd probably get noisy. The three clung to Motoyasu and were all crying together. Reluctant to part huh? I don't need this.

"It's fine already, just come back. Don't cause trouble. Follow the filo

rial queen's instructions" (Naofumi) Good, mission complete. Firo will quiet down too.

"Father-in-law!" (Motoyasu)

"Stop calling me that!" (Naofumi)

Honestly, you just keep getting broken.

"Please give me your daughter" (Motoyasu) "Again!" (Naofumi)

Ah really...so troublesome. Or rather, to ask for more even when you lose the match huh.

"Uu...the bad feeling has finally been cured"

"I've found the spot that works for motion sickness" (Atla) Before I realized, Atla was looking after Melty and Rishia. Recovery seems fast.

""Mu-...""

Motoyasu's followers are saying the same thing as Firo. They are identical on the inside after all.

"No-! Go home if you lost!" (Firo)

Firo declared loudly. As a matter of fact that's how it is. It'll take work to apprehend her, and Gaelion is not here so I don't want to get involved. Let's hurry back.

"Reach Firo-chan! My feelings!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu suddenly wielded his spear and took a pose. What? I didn't get a good look at that flag-attached spear, but the handle is black. Somehow...smells like the Curse Series.

"Temptation!" (Motoyasu)

It felt like something like a barrier was developing in the middle of Motoyasu.

"Wha-" (Naofumi)

What's this guy doing. A really disturbing word is floating into mind. There are many skills with this name that usually have charm-type effects. I concentrated my eyes and look at Motoyasu.

Huh? What? Motoyasu has become good-looking. There're glittering sparkles around him like a lame cloth and the background is dyed pink.

No way...such a hottie...if he's this good-looking even I'll fall for him....

"...Yeah right!" (Naofumi)

I maintain my sense by swinging my head. That was dangerous. I almost got to the point of no recovery.

"Are you okay!?" (Naofumi)

I look toward Melty and the others.

"Ah, yeah. I'm alright...I just thought that person looked a bit cool but I'm okay" (Melty) "Fuee...I have Itsuki-sama so it's no good..." (Rishia)

"What do you mean?" (Atla)

Atla...was there no effect because she can't see?

"Naofumi-sama is the only one for me no matter what" (Atla) "I see" (Naofumi)

Anyways, Motoyasu...what are you doing all of a sudden.

"Hey you-...what's that spear?" (Naofumi) "It is L*st Spear IV. Father-in-law" (Motoyasu) IV! Higher than Wrath!? Just how sick have you gotten. Or rather, answering so easily is a bad disposition! Last...it's not last. It's lust, no doubt. Why did he answer so honestly I wonder.

"Father-in-law. If Firo-tan desires it, please allow our engagement" (Motoyasu) "Don't you just want to brainwash Firo with your temptation skill?" (Naofumi) "It's different! It's a skill my heart summoned to convey my [love] to Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu) "Other females have been tempted too. Even males were affected" (Naofumi) What are you learning a brainwashing skill for. Even though I wanted to know about the existence of a brainwashing shield so much, why are you using it. Because Motoyasu before he got broken was loud saying brainwash brainwash.

"I don't need any love besides Firo-tan's" (Motoyasu) "I see" (Naofumi)

But to think his lust for Firo exceeds my anger....

Wow. Losing is fine already. I want to return. Speaking of...Firo is being quiet.

"Firo?" (Naofumi)

"Haa...haa...n..." (Firo)

This rough breathing, it's come huh. Motoyasu's dearest desire. It's over, I wonder if I should give up. Should I have Atla return her to normal? In RPGs of the past, charm and confusion could be offset by an attack from an ally. Though sometimes it wouldn't work.

"Okay Atla, hit Firo" (Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Atla)

Atla hit around Firo's flank. However....

"Haa...haa..." (Firo)

She won't return.

"Firo-chan?" (Atla)

Ah, she won't come back. Is it impossible to help Firo without defeating Motoyasu?

"Firo-tan! I am over here!" (Motoyasu) ""Muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!""

Leaving behind the three burning with jealousy, Motoyasu opened his arms widely waiting for Firo. Tempting the other with the spear's power is love? However...Motoyasu's plan is--

"--aster. Want to eat" (Firo)

Heading in another direction, the box that must not be opened was opened. Of all things, Firo turned to face me and started walking plumpily.

"Haa...haa..." (Firo)

Her eyes look more dangerous than this morning. A chill ran down my spine. What is this. My instincts are sounding the danger alarm. The goosebumps and chills won't stop. It'll be bad if I don't stand and leave here immediately!

"Portal Shield!" (Naofumi)

I keep relying on this but it can't be helped. I won't get away if I don't rely on it. But....

Transfer failed!? Because of Motoyasu's skill huh.

"I won't let you escape..." (Firo)

Looking closely...something like a mist is enshrouding Firo, with firefly-like lights floating around nearby.

"...Sanctuary..." (Firo)

Firo lightly chanted a magic. It's probably the same system of magic as Gaelion's Dragon Sanctuary without doubt I think.

Dragon Pulse?

No, firo rials would not use it. But the atmosphere and area resemble the time when Fitoria appeared. Why can Firo use it.

Tell me how you were able to use it before me who's relying on Gaelion! No, there's no mistake...it's useful because of the current circumstances.

"Fi, Fitoria! Repay me now and send it!" (Naofumi) Whether or not I was heard, Firo's ahoge is shining. But it had no effect, and something black was silently coiling about around the ahoge.

"Naofumi-sama!" (Atla)

Atla stood in front of Firo.

"Move" (Firo)

Firo nimbly held Atla's shoulder and moved her aside.

"Ah--" (Atla)

How fast. Even though Atla's movements were good too. Well, being compared to Firo is unfair. She's the fastest of my subordinates after all, this fellow.

"Atla, do you know what's happening to Firo?" (Naofumi) "Yes! Something black came out from that person and is coiling around Firo-

chan" (Atla) Then, Atla pointed at Motoyasu.

Chapter 210: Jealousy

Motoyasu put the end of the flag into his mouth and stretched it with all his strength as he glared at me with a look of jealousy.

"Wasn't it your own fault! What are you looking at me enviously for!" (Naofumi) "No way, father-in-law! Doing that as parent and child is a crime! It's not like I'm feeling jealous or anything!" (Motoyasu) "Don't make it so obvious idiooooot!" (Naofumi) Step by step, Firo is approaching me. Should I run away? I have a feeling Firo is only approaching slowly because I'm within range. Well, I'll confirm with the monster crest item first. It's unrefutably a sandstorm. Operation impossible. Next is, exclude Firo from the party!

"Meteor Shield!" (Naofumi)

"Hindrance-" (Firo)

The developed Meteor Shield was destroyed in one hit! H, hey! This is seriously bad. I'll get done by Firo at this rate!

"So jealous, so jealous-! I'm so jealous of you being loved by Firo-tan" (Motoyasu) "Shut up-!" (Naofumi)

Who's fault do you think it is! Motoyasu's spear...it seems that spear is granting power to Firo. It probably has an effect of lending power to those overcome by lust. What a bothersome ability to possess.

"Motoyasu, hurry and change that spear!" (Naofumi) "What are you saying, father-in-law. There's no way I could change a spear that appeared from my love for Firo-tan" (Motoyasu) "Your beloved Firo will run wild at this rate!" (Naofumi) I am the main victim. Isn't it normally the opposite?

Defeating Motoyasu for Firo who was brainwashed by Motoyasu...won't happen. It's become to defeat Firo to stop her rampaging caused by Motoyasu.

If I am defeated in the former scenario, Firo will be done by Motoyasu. If I am defeated in the latter scenario, I will be done by Firo. Why is it.

"No goooooood! Firo-taaaaaaaan!" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu rushed over and stood in front of me as if to shield me. Then he faced Firo and shouted.

"That's no good Firo-tan. Incest is no good!" (Motoyasu) "We aren't even real parent and child!" (Naofumi) I've had enough of this state of affairs. From the start.

"Firo-tan! That's no good" (Motoyasu)

"Move-" (Firo)

"Nuah! Even then, I'll show you that I can prevent you from going down the path of evil!" (Motoyasu) Why Motoyasu is trying to stop Firo's advance with his back turned towards me, I want to consult this with Raphtalia. Why is Raphtalia not here. Raphtalia would be able to understand. This resentment with no comparion.

"Like I said, hurry and change your spear!" (Naofumi)

"Master...haa...Firo's-...haa...n..." (Firo)

"Youuu! Father-in-law. I'm soooooooo envious. Being so valued by Firo-chan, soooo bitterrrrrr! Is, how I feel" (Motoyasu) "Shut up!" (Naofumi)

Who's fault do think it is! It's you! You!

"So jealous, so jealous!" (Motoyasu)

Don't stamp your feet it's disgusting! Don't put on that disgusting smile while getting grappled by Firo. As to why I know what his face looks like, it's because he turned this way and spoke. The idiot.

"So bitterrrrrr..." (Motoyasu)

What!?

A black aura is gushing out of Motoyasu's spear. The flag tied to Motoyasu's spear tore...the spear's tip is revealed.

...Why does it look like the tip of Motoyasu's spear is covered by a mosaic?

"Wha...wha..." (Melly)

Turning to look towards the voice, I see Melty's flushed face. Identically, Rishia who stood recovered from motion sickness was using both hands to cover her eyes with a red face.

"Why do you have a spear with such a shape!" (Melty) Her loud voice echoed.

"Umm...you can see it Melty?" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi can't see it!?" (Melty)

"Just on the spear's tip, there's a mosaic...it appears blurred" (Naofumi)
"Fuee...I saw iiit..." (Rishia)

What? I can't see because of the mosaic, but it seems Melty and the others can see it clearly.

"Why can't you see it" (Melty)

"What kind of shape is it?" (Naofumi)

On the other hand, I'm welling with interest since I can't see it. Rather why is it only me who can't see it?

"That's sexual harrassment! If you weren't Naofumi, severe punishment would've been dealt! Rather, aren't you just saying you can't see to humiliate me!" (Melty) "Sexual harrassment...huh" (Naofumi)

Just...what kind of shape does it have? Things to consider...stuff covered by mosaics on television. Guro..probably not. There would have been mosaics when monsters were being dismantled.

In which case, I'm guessing it probably has the shape of that thing in the wagon of Elizabeth's portable shrine. //phallic festival What kind of game did the men's thrusting spear appear in again. A spear that does double damage to females.

I'll confirm the shape of Motoyasu's spear once again. An ominous scorpion and snake ornament adorn the handle. The spearhead is still covered by a mosaic.

"Fa, ther..." (Motoyasu)

This guy is still calling me father-in-law at this point. Even while being corroded by the Curse Series. How admirable. It already feels like it'd be fine to call it my loss.

"I will steal, your daughter. With this Lust Envy Spear IV" (Motoyasu) ...Haa. I'm about to be corroded by melancholy.

"Firo-tan! I, will stop you, and take your purity!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu pointed his spear towards Firo.

...Just where are you pointing at. Don't set your aim at the lower half of her body.

"Uu...I'm not going easy if you get in my way" (Firo) Firo also seriously gathered power and took a stance. Thus Firo and Motoyasu began slowly approaching each other as they looked for openings.

"...Um, what would be good for us to do?"

Atla and Melty ask with half-amazed expressions while standing as if to protect me. I don't know either.

Why is Motoyasu protecting us? Motoyasu is acting like an enigmatically. It's so baffling my head is starting to hurt.

"I don't know" (Naofumi)

I just want to quickly return. But, I won't be able to return at this rate. Motoyasu started circling towards Firo's rear with his spear still pointed downwards. Where are you intending to set your aim!

"Fire! Ressentment!" (Motoyasu)

Again, something is passing through nearby. Temptation also affected me. But, the skill this time....

Fumu, for some reason I recall the incident when I was had by Motoyasu and Witch. But these feelings of resentment are a daily thing, nothing was affected by seeing the betrayed and ruined Motoyasu. Or rather, Raphtalia's face came to mind right afterwards but nothing happened. What kind of skill was that?

"Uu...my head is getting strange" (Melty)

"Fueee...Itsuki-sama-" (Rishia)

"Onii-sama...I'm envious..." (Atla)

Melty, Rishia, and Atla are moaning painfully. Is the skill a mind attack type? Temptation was also a mind attack type, you could say Motoyasu is a pro in that field. To be using it himself, even though he's badmouthed and attacked me over a brainwashing shield....

"Get yourselves together!" (Naofumi)

""Hah!?"""

"What did you feel?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Melty)

Melty quickly averted her line of sight. Next, Rishia muddled her words with the usual "fuee".

"The image of onii-sama and Naofumi-sama having a harmonious relationship appeared in my mind" (Atla) "Why should I get along with Fohl" (Naofumi)

It seems to set a field with the effect of amplifying feelings of jealousy...that kind of feeling? Well, it wouldn't be strange even if everyone held one or two feelings of jealousy. As I thought, it was a mind attack type. Why did this guy use this kind of skill!

"The power in my heart, is increasing" (Motoyasu) Ah, boosting yourself with the power of jealousy.

"Reach it! My! Heart of love!" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu hoisted his spear up high.

...What part of Firo are you planning to thrust that spear.

"Don't, get in Firo's way-!" (Firo)

Firo was able to turn and dodge faster than Motoyasu could thrust. Maybe thanks to the curse, Motoyasu's movements are considerably fast. No, I have a feeling it's not just that. He's even faster than Ren. Not that he wouldn't be able to keep up at all, but I doubt he'd be able to catch up.

"Firo-tan! Meteor Spear!" (Motoyasu)

Bashii! Motoyasu fired his skill aimed at Firo.

"Nnnngghhhhh!" (Firo)

Firo dodged Motoyasu's Meteor Spear by a paper-thin margin and kicked Motoyasu's chest.

"Gu...Firo-tan's kick, I'm so happy..." (Motoyasu)

Chapter 211: Infighting

“As expected of Firo-tan. My heart is beating so fast my chest will split open...” (Motoyasu) Even though Motoyasu was kicked, he’s showing an expression of ecstasy as he gets up.

How long will this headache continue?

And from the sound, it didn’t seem like Firo held back at all with that Kick.

It was a serious kick, and she’s also receiving a bonus from the Lust Spear. My Zveit Aura should also still be in effect... Yet he withstood that.

The past Motoyasu would have been split in half. Even the Curse Series shouldn’t increase his stats to this extent.

I don’t know why, but he’s still doing just fine.

“Motoyasu-” (Naofumi)

“WHAT is it, FATHER?” (Motoyasu)

(TL: Motoyasu is randomly switching between Hiragana and Katakana here.) “... Never mind... Have you been trying out other reinforcement methods?” (Naofumi) “YES Firo-taN’s fATHER’s words are absolute.” (Motoyasu) ... I don’t need your imitation!

So this idiot finally began using the strengthening methods I passed to Shadow.

The result... The current Motoyasu is probably stronger than me.

My Wrath hasn’t been enhanced much, and it’s only at level III.

Motoyasu is at IV. His weapon’s definitely stronger.

If I make an enemy of him, will I lose?

What should I do in this situation?

Firo is putting up an amazing fight.

And he’s counteracting with the boost of his curse skills.

... Isn't this bad? Motoyasu probably won't fight Firo seriously.

But Firo is coming at him with all of her might.

Right now Motoyasu hasn't taken too much damage, but if Firo continues like this things may get ugly.

After that, Firo will, without a doubt, come after me.

If Motoyasu fights to the death, we may have a chance, but we've been told that killing heroes is bad.

If possible, I wasn't to avoid that.

"Hah... Hah...n..." (Firo)

Firo takes an offensive stance.

This stance is...

Magic power begins swirling around her center of gravity. The current me can see it.

I think this is the stance to recover mana.

But in this situation, it probably isn't replenishment, but amplification.

"Reach Firo-tan! My feelings!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu sees this as an opportunity to attack.

But...

Firo's magic replenishment finishes much faster than I expected.

「High Quick!」 (Firo)

There's a flash!

A white afterimage passes through Motoyasu's body. The sight of a white ribbon continuously piercing through Motoyasu's body is burned into my eyes.

"Gufu..." (Motoyasu)

M-Motoyasu! Could he be done already!?

"Amazing. Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu)

Ah. He got up.

That's good. The meat shield protecting me is still alive.

"Um... Should we be doing anything?" (Atlas) "You want to go into that battlefield? It'll be dangerous even for me, you know." (Naofumi)

"Right..." (Atlas)

But should we really just stay on the sidelines?

I should probably look for a way to escape...

"Rishia, try to run!" (Naofumi)

I order Rishia to try running alone.

"Fue!?" (Rishia)

"Naofumi?" (Melty)

"Now! Quickly!" (Naofumi)

"Yes, Naofumi-sama is saying it, so Rishia-san, please run!" (Atlas) "Y-yes!" (Rishia)

Upon Atlas's recommendation, Rishia begins running away.

But... she soon returns.

"Fueeee! Why am I back here!?" (Rishia) As I thought. We're in something like a special loop.

It seems we'll be unable to escape for a while.

Motoyasu and Firo are still fighting.

I'm grasping for the means to do something, but I can't think of anything.

I just hope that the two forces will collapse simultaneously.

But the situation is heading in a negative direction.

"Diiiiiee-!" (Filo Rials)

Motoyasu's three subordinate Filo Rials begin attacking Firo.

"W-why is everyone-!?" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu stands in front to protect Firo.

But the Filo Rials continue their assault, one with a kick, another with magic, and the last one with a battle axe.

The one who kicked was Red, the one who cast was Blue and the one rushing with an axe on their shoulder is Green.

All of them have strange looks in their eyes.

“Hate... The one who monopolizes Mokkun’s love, while seducing another man. I hate you!” (Filo Rial) “Mo-kun is ours...” (Filo Rial)

“Yeah... I won’t approve of that person!” (Filo Rial) “S-stop! Everyone!” (Motoyasu)

“””I Want to be the one to eat Mo-kun (Mokkun)! And that bitch is in the way!””” (Filo Rials) To protect Firo. Motoyasu begins fighting the three.

Though not as fast as Firo, they are still quite fast.

“Atlas.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, something black is wrapped around those three. It’s more potent than with Firo-chan.” (Atlas) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

From what I see, they have yet to Class Up.

The fact that they are able to hold off Motoyasu must be due to his own support.

I mean, they’re clearly being effected by his Curse Series.

Lust and Envy.

Like Firo, Lust is putting them in heat, and Envy is making them attack Firo.

With those three on the offense, Motoyasu has no choice but to defend her.

But they’re his precious daughters. I don’t think he can hurt them.

Motoyasu is protecting Firo. Firo is approaching me with a dangerous

aura. The three Filo Rials are trying to kill her.

It may be my imagination, but originally, Motoyasu was the enemy, Firo was an ally, and the Filo Rials were Motoyasu's subordinates, and by transitive property, were enemies.

In reality, Motoyasu is now an ally(?), Firo is an Enemy, and the three are... A third power?

I'm starting to have a hard time differentiating friend and foe.

And then...

"Master... Finally the nuisance is gone..." (Firo) With her back to Motoyasu, Firo begins walking towards me, step by step.

I've had a long time to think, so I have a few plans to test out.

Among them should be one that should be able to handle this situation.

Idea 1: Activate the Wrath Shield and turn everything to ash.

Con: The wrath shield hasn't been strengthened, so the fire power may be lacking.

It will be difficult to beat Firo with it. Even including Iron Maiden and Blutopfer.

I can't even use the latter. Even if I get the chance, the chances of it hitting Firo are low. And if it did hit, Firo would die.

Idea 2: Use idea 1 to take out Motoyasu.

Con: I don't have enough information on the current Motoyasu to take him on with certainty.

I also don't know the exact effects of his skills.

Idea 3: Talk to and convince Motoyasu.

Con: There's no precedent showing he can even be reasoned with. To get him to agree, I may have to have Firo talk to him.

But with Firo like this, I can't really do that.

Idea 4: Talk to and convince Firo.

Con: She's not in a state where words will reach her. Convincing her seems impossible. I don't think she'll agree to anything I ask of her.

Idea 5: Cast support on Motoyasu's followers and have them take care of everything.

Con: Firo will get killed. I want to avoid that.

This is no good.

Even taking an uncertain gamble is better than these options.

I wondered about the power of a Wrath Shield reinforced Shield prison and E Float Shield.

My personal defense is very high, but I wasn't sure about external attachments.

And so I experimented with infusing these items with Magic.

But... in order to make them succeed...

"Master~..." (Firo)

I'm going to be defiled!

That is...

"A-at least in human form!" (Naofumi)

What the hell am I saying!?

But being violated by a little girl has to be better than being violated by a giant bird.

"No." (Firo)

Ku... That's a nostalgic line from Firo.

When we first taught her to speak, Firo repeated that word over and over.

So I'm going to be defiled by a giant bird. I would rather die.

Motoyasu may be delighted with this, but this is not my fetish!

I have to restrain Firo no matter what.

「Shield-」 (Naofumi)

I feel the flow of energy all around my body.

My desperation, my desire to succeed in this no matter what, makes my mind move faster. I begin to understand this power.

This is... Not Magic. Is it... the Chi that Atlas senses?

No, this power surfaced when I was about to activate Shield Prison.

This is probably the phenomenon known as SP.

「Pri-」 (Naofumi)

I feel the power flowing towards my designated target.

I see... Is that the point where I have to send my magic?

I get the feeling that I can do it.

But I don't have time. Before I cast it, I cut it off.

「...」 (Naofumi)

The power flowing out returns to my body.

But there is something that surprises me even more.

When I was about to release it, Firo jumped away from the point that I targeted.

Did her instincts tell her to avoid it?

So even if I successfully infuse it with magic, Firo will avoid it.

I'm doing this without any practice. And it requires a lot of concentration to infuse the magic. And now I find that It probably won't even hit her.

I don't have any more options. I could try using this power to strengthen the Meteor Shield, but it's still cooling down.

But... If I give up here, my purity...!

Perhaps I should shift my target to Motoyasu?

Chapter 212: Love Hunter

"Kunu! Nuo! Angels! Stop!" (Motoyasu)

Ye-ah...looks like those followers are attacking Motoyasu to seal him. It'd be good if Motoyasu were sealed, but can these three do it? Two of them can hold him down, but there's still Firo. It's definitely my loss if this fails.

Not to mention Motoyasu is concentrating on the fight and moving around. It's hard to target him. It'd probably be best to take a chance against Motoyasu, but I'm not confident I can add magic power well from out of range. I think it's something like stretching just the added magic power, but without practice, I probably won't be able to do it even if it can be done.

"Master...want to eat" (Firo)

You're still saying that!

"Firo-chan!" (Melty)

Melty went protectively in front me and called out.

"It's dangerous so step back!" (Naofumi)

"No! I am Firo-chan's friend! I can't abandon Firo-chan who's like this!" (Melty) I'm doubting if this fellow is really Witch's little sister. The resolve to risk your own life for friendship huh...if Melty's life is in danger, I'll probably have to protect them too. If they have chosen to eliminate their friend Firo when she gets in the way, then I'll have to defend Melty and Rishia while directing attacks.

"Meru...chan?" (Firo)

Oh? Firo turned her face to Melty's call. Good, keep that up.

"That's right! Firo-chan! Naofumi does not wish for relations with you as you are, so...don't be manipulated by that guy's power, return to normal!" (Melty) "Gu...u..." (Firo)

Having heard what Melty said, Firo unsteadily approached her while

trembling.

"Firo-chan" (Melty)

Melty reached out her hand to brush Firo's chest. I stay in the background tempering magic power and readying SP for the worst case scenario.

"Now, Firo-chan. Turn...back to normal" (Melty) "... " (Firo)

Did the persuasion work? Firo was quietly lowering her head to Melty. Melty was also smiling while brushing Firo's head.

"--Firo, wants to eat Mel-chan too" (Firo)

"Eh--" (Melty)

Firo firmly gripped Melty's shoulder.

"Ah, hey!?" (Melty)

Then she reached towards Melty's lower clothes--

It's a bit evil, but it'd be a waste to let this chance go. Apologies Melty. I'll definitely pay this debt afterwards.

"Now! Shield Prison!" (Naofumi)

"Wh, what are you saying!?" (Melty)

Both Melty and Firo were locked in the prison made by my shield. It's okay. Firo's conscience should recognize Melty as something important like with me. Like how she says she wants to eat me, it does not look like she intends to make food out of Melty...I think.

"Naofumi--wai!" (Melty)

The prison was completed as Melty was being attacked by Firo. Gu...I let out all the magic power I was holding. With this, Firo should be contained for a little while....

"Fuee...the princesss!" (Rishia)

"We've received Melty's noble sacrifice. It's fine. Surely" (Naofumi) The worst case...let's not think about it. Let's just hope Melty is also a target

of the lust-controlled Firo. It would've been dangerous if she was controlled by gluttony.

"Atla, how is it?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. I felt the enclosure cast by Naofumi-sama block the ominous power" (Atla) "Is that so!?" (Naofumi)

That's good. In other words, Firo will return to normal while in the prison. Melty did a good job too.

"The prison made by Naofumi-sama is simply wonderful. There are still a few frayed spots but, the ominous power has been obstructed" (Atla) "Ohh..." (Naofumi)

It seems adding magic power to Prison somehow gets rid of its openings. I've heard something good. Female Knight destroyed it easily, but next time won't be so. Training this is vital.

Next is Motoyasu and the others.

I didn't notice because I was focused on Firo but, they're still quarreling. It's ok for me to help out but...what to do.

"Nuoooooooooooooooo! I'll protect Firo-tan and father!" (Motoyasu) He says.

"Angels! Stop already!" (Motoyasu)

Like that, they make a very annoying racket.

"Mokkun is mine--"

"No, Mo-kun belongs to me--"

"That's wrong. Motoyasu-san is mine--"

""We won't give you to that bitch!""

Ah really. Just do that forever! They're close huh, those guys. They're all similar to Firo, but there's no ahoge.

The red one will mostly use its claws but will sometimes breath flames. Filorials can breath fire? There might be a magic variety.

The blue one mostly uses magic but also plucks and throws its own

feathers. An attack like Feather Shot.

The green one is always in human form. It looks like a human growing feathers and uses magic while wielding an axe. You could also say it has the most demihuman-like fighting method. This fellow is energetic despite appearing so docile.

How should I put it, all their fighting styles differ from Firo's. Is it the filorials' individuality? I don't even want to know.

And thus we're waiting for Prison to disperse, but its duration has extended probably because I added magic power. It's lasted three minutes even though it usually only lasts fifteen seconds.

"Long" (Naofumi)

"It sure is long" (Atla)

"Fuee..." (Rishia)

I don't even want to imagine what is going on inside. I wonder what will be awaiting us when this prison disappears. It's a kind of cat box. Was it Schrodinger's cat? I guess it's different. What will be going on with Firo and Melty once this prison disappears....

There are many possibilities. Firo might have come to her senses just as I imprisoned her. Conversely, it might have done something terrible to Firo. The possibilities are endless.

Melty may have successfully persuaded Firo. Then when five minutes passed, softly...the prison disappeared.

"Fuu..." (Firo)

Firo was sitting there with ecstasy visible on her face. She looks like she's feeling good with her feathers ruffled.

Where is Melty? I pray she has not been eaten by Firo. If I think about it, she's the princess so I'll have no choice but to flee the country if that happened. I shouldn't distrust the friendship between Firo and Melty.

"Oh?" (Naofumi)

Melty is also alive. Near Firo...she's lying down with the defeated pose of a fellow known for their pointless struggling. Her clothes have been removed and scattered about so I try not to look for the princess' dignity.

"Melty-sama!" (Rishia)

Rishia worriedly rushed over to Melty. Rishia turned Melty's face up to check for life, and a trickle of tears spilled out of Melty's half-laughing eyes. Umm, I feel like I've seen this scene somewhere. Like a light yuri manga with two girls I think.

"Melty...um...I'm really sorry. I'll definitely compensate for this after...um...sorry..." (Naofumi) I reflexively said those words afterwards. To think a conclusion of this extent was waiting...though I did imagine the possibility. How should I put it, it was only a moment but...there may have been a better way. It's okay to begrudge my powerlessness. I'm really sorry.

The cat in the box was violated. What happened inside, only the cat knows. Well, I'll know if the person herself talks though. Melty probably won't say.

Then Rishia picked up the clothes of the rolled up Melty.

"Are you okay!" (Rishia)

"Uu...I faced something terrible" (Melty)

"Let's do it again!" (Firo)

"No!" (Melty)

The calmed Firo leaned her head on Melty.

"How's your condition?" (Naofumi)

"Umm--somehow refreshed" (Firo)

"Of course, since you rampaged that much" (Naofumi) "Naofumi! I'll definitely kill you after this so prepare yourself!" (Melty) "I do feel apologetic. I'll accept a suitable punishment. But, I just believed in the friendship between you and Firo" (Naofumi) I won't say anything since your relationship has gotten to that point. It seems Firo also really loves

Melty so there probably isn't anyone who can separate them.

"I won't be tricked even if you try to deceive me with skillful words! I absolutely, absolutely will not forgive you!" (Melty) "Well...bear with everything being the fault of me and your older sister" (Naofumi) "Muki-!" (Melty)

"Mel-chan. Why are you angry?" (Firo)

"U, umm...you see. Firo-chan. Umm" (Melty)

"Are you angry we kissed? But you said it was okay when we did it earlier" (Firo) What did you say? These guys...they willingly developed quite an abnormal relationship when I wasn't looking. Even I am not boorish. Let's watch over them from a distance from here on. Also called by the name of fade out.

"Um you see. It's not about that" (Melty)

"Firo's first time was with master so it's ok" (Firo) What did you say? When was I attacked? No, impossible. I'd probably notice even if I was attacked while asleep. She's saying whatever random thing she wants.

"...Firo-chan. My first kiss was taken by Firo-chan quite long ago..." (Melty) "But Mel-chan was wondering what a kiss is like" (Firo) "Second and third bases too Firo-chan...uu...I absolutely can't tell mother" (Melty) Melty talked to Firo with a flushed face. I thought it was suspicious but it's because you went that far on your own huh.

Good for you Firo, your relationship with Melty has gone beyond close friends. So don't target me with your sexual urges. Resolve it with Melty.

Firo's first time? Kiss? Me? Umm-...I do remember being licked with all her strength but, is it that? Ugh...if that counted then even I have been kissed huh....

"Melty" (Naofumi)

"What!" (Melty)

"Let's not count Firo. It'll be the rule for you and I" (Naofumi) "Don't mess around!" (Melty)

"I'm not really messing around" (Naofumi)

I don't want it. It'll become a matter of fact if Melty doesn't mutually agree to not mind it.

"That's unnecessary!" (Melty)

"Well? What will it be?" (Naofumi)

"Uu...fine!" (Melty)

"Good. Then let's move the next course of action" (Naofumi) Fumu, looking carefully the barrier on Firo has dispersed, we'll be able to run away at this rate. Motoyasu's side is...still fighting. It's a miracle no sparks have come our direction. What should be done. It seems like they'd fight forever if left alone. It won't be funny if I use a skill poorly again.

"Firo" (Naofumi)

"Ye-s? (Firo)

I order Firo whose glaze has gotten better.

"Face Motoyasu and say as I say" (Naofumi)

"Eh-...no-!" (Firo)

Honestly, she's still defiant even if her reason is back.

"If you don't you'll be manipulated by Motoyasu again. I won't help you this time for sure...who knows what Motoyasu will do when you don't realize--" (Naofumi) "No, no-! Master! What should I do!?" (Firo)

"Say exactly as I do" (Naofumi)

"What are you intending for her to say" (Melty) The unkempt Melty purified her body with magic, changed her clothes and asked.

"Ah, actually--" (Naofumi)

"Let's stop!" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu continues trying to persuade his followers. You are the cause. It seems your followers love you so they feel jealousy towards Firo. You probably won't listen to what I say, so I'll have the now-calm Firo settle

this.

"Umm-! Listen spear person-!" (Firo)

Motoyasu turned towards Firo's voice. He put on a happy-looking face that made me want to punch him.

"Ye-s! What is it Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu)

"Um, let's see. Firo likes platonic people, I'm not considering such things until the world is truly peaceful-. Besides that um, what was it? Umm, sincere and, kind to everyone, not be sneaky, and properly follows conditions set when gambling. Also, don't just promise in appearance, reliably keep them-" (Firo) I have Firo say complaints toward Motoyasu. It'd be good if he'd improve with this....

Also, things about Firo's tastes are lies. A fellow who was attacking Melty until just earlier has no persuasive power. Even this situation may be resolved immediately. You could call it the sage time in Firo talking.

But Firo, you've left out one thing.

"Ah! Lastly, properly listen when people are speaking-. Especially listen to master's orders no matter what. Also, don't follow Firo around until the world has truly become peaceful!" (Firo) I did not tell her to say that last part....

She has wisdom at a strange place.

"I, is that so!? Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu)

Good good, the negotiations with Motoyasu are successful. Firo, next is just to have him change his spear.

"And so-..." (Firo)

Firo's eyes swam and looked toward me. She's forgotten what I told her. This bird brain.

"Ah. That's right, I'll hate you if you don't change that spear to another one! That spear is especially no good-" (Firo) "S, such a thing! Understood! I, Motoyasu. Will absolutely not transform to this spear!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu quickly changed to a different spear according to Firo's words.

What an honest guy...way too readily. Or rather, this guy changed it so simply. Motoyasu's followers fell to the ground like they ran out of batteries the moment he changed his spear. Now it's gotten quiet.

"Well then..." (Naofumi)

I gave Firo her next message.

"Umm-...Firo-, likes heroes who fight for the sake of the world--so face your sins and surrender to the Queen-" (Firo) "Understood!" (Motoyasu)

He should've already returned to normal but, Motoyasu is somehow strange.

"Motoyasu-" (Naofumi)

"What is it, father-in-law!" (Motoyasu)

"...What does this fellow look like to you?" (Naofumi) Again, I point at Melty.

"A blue piglet" (Motoyasu)

He hasn't returned-!

But the spear is a normal one. Is it the influence of the Curse Series? Like when my sense of taste was obstructed, are his sight and hearing obstructed? Though if he's been saved by Firo then it'd be fine if he recovered. Well, that's that.

"Father-in-law, I, Motoyasu vow from here on to contribute for the sake of world peace, and also to become a love hunter to capture Firo-tan's heart" (Motoyasu) He's saying nonsensical things again....

"...For now, go to the castle. And never come back" (Naofumi)

"Understood! Come let's go! My angels! Portal Spear!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu's group disappeared instantly. Now it'll become quiet.

"We're returning too. I'm worn out" (Naofumi)

"Oh yes...Naofumi, I absolutely won't forgive you" (Melty) "I know..." (Naofumi)

Melty sure is obstinate too. Well I guess it can't be helped. I do think

just an apology is not enough, but doing that was my only option at that time. I'd come running without fail if Melty was truly in trouble so forgive me.

With this, it's one matter settled. Right?

"Naofumi-sama's ability was wonderful" (Atla)

...Atla said something random. Let's return now. Firo's estrus will probably be suppressed for recompensation.

"Uu...Firo's carriage-..." (Firo)

"You did it yourself" (Naofumi)

"Carriage-..." (Firo)

"Haa. I'll buy another one afterwards, so cheer up" (Naofumi) "Ya-y!" (Firo)

"Fuee...I don't want to ride a carriage for a while..." (Rishia) "What a coincidence. Me neither" (Naofumi)

Well, with that, we returned to the village in the same day. I think today is the most worn-out I've felt since I came to this world.

Somehow the sunlight is dazzling.

Chapter 213: Nap

After returning to the village, I took a light nap.

Because of Firo's misconduct, I have forbid her from coming into my bed.

In order to keep up the Atlas countermeasures, I invited Melty over, but...

"W-w-why do I have to sleep with Naofumi!?" (Melty) "Originally, it was Firo's duty, but as she caused quite an uproar, she has been banished as a punishment." (Naofumi) I asked Rat for the reason for her suddenly going to heat.

She said it may be because I slept next to her so much.

Something about... Being attached to me, or something.

I have no idea what she's trying to say.

I have no intentions of setting up house in this world.

Building a Harem in another world?

I threw away such dreams long ago.

"And so her successor is you, Melty. I thought I would leave her duties to you. Despite what I say, you're pretty strong. You should be able to drive Atlas out." (Naofumi) "I don't want to!" (Melty)

Melty's face is dyed a deep shade of red.

But of course.

I did sacrifice her to halt Firo's movement...

"I see. You hate it that much. Then there's no helping it." (Naofumi)
"Eh... ah, wait." (Melty)

"I was in the wrong." (Naofumi)

"Ah... Yeah..." (Melty)

What? Melty is making a strange expression as she hesitantly lowers

her extended hand before leaving.

Now then, I have to find another tribute.

Besides Melty, is there someone else in this village who can fight on par with Atlas?

“Hero-sama, I’ve come to deliver your requested equipment.” (Imya) At that moment, Imya came with the peddling clothing I ordered.

Kiel and the others have good faces, so I thought of making them wear nostalgic Maid outfits, or some clothes that have niche audiences when they go out peddling.

The reception was quite good, and earnings increased.

“Faaaa...” (Imya)

Imya hands the clothing over as she stifles a yawn. Did she stay up all night making these?

Fumu... If she’s sleepy, then her timing is good.

My Atlas troubles are common knowledge in the village.

She should understand.

I’m worried whether or not she will be able to drive Atlas out, but there’s no one else here, so there’s no choice.

“Now then, Imya.” (Naofumi)

“What could it be?” (Imya)

“Won’t you sleep with me?” (Naofumi)

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEH!?” (Imya)

After pausing for a few seconds, Imya lets out a loud voice, and falls over.

“Oy, what are you so surprised about?” (Naofumi) “M-my heart isn’t ready...” (Imya)

“What do you mean? It’s just sleeping.” (Naofumi) “And I’m... dirty...” (Imya)

What is she saying? I stare at Imya.

I don't get the dirty feeling I got from Raphtalia when I bought her. Just from looking her, I see she has put a bit of attention into personal hygiene.

The Raphtalia from back then hadn't bathed in weeks. Though I don't know why my mind is comparing them.

"Don't mind it." (Naofumi)

"I can't!" (Imya)

"I'm also sleepy, so hurry and come to the bed." (Naofumi) "A...ah... Yes." (Imya)

Imya is shaking. Am I really that scary?

But if she's learned to remain vigilant, I guess that's a good thing.

Why is she loosening her clothing?

A half-naked Imya shakes nervously as she approaches me. Why is she half-naked?

I don't know what her customs are, but does she sleep half-naked?

Timidly, she lies down on my bed.

I put the covers over her and close my eyes, but Imya seems to be making pained sounds as she continues shivering.

As a Mole Demi-Human, are human Beds no good for her?

"What's wrong? Calm down. You won't be able to sleep like that."
(Naofumi) Maybe because I've been sleeping with Firo a lot, having something next to me when I sleep calms me down.

I no longer toss and turn from my trauma like before. I guess sleeping with Firo has been a good rehabilitation.

Oh? Imya's body temperature is quite high. I lightly pat her head.

And Imya twitches violently.

"Hii!? Um... As I thought... It's impossible for me! Sorry!" (Imya) Imya

says as she jumps up and runs out of the room.

“Oy. What happened to her?... O-y.” (Naofumi)

Did she think I would try to make a move on her?

No, I don't think she's someone who would make that big of a misunderstanding. The fact that Firo sleeps with me as an Atlas countermeasure should be common knowledge here...

As I chase after Imya, I find her discussing something with Kiel. As soon as she sees me, she runs away again at an alarming speed.

Should I invite Kiel instead?

“Niichan! What are you doing!? Don't you have no interest in women?”
(Kiel) Kiel acts rebelliously like she always does, but as soon as I get on the bed, she quiets down.

“Uu... Niichan. What do you plan on doing!?” (Kiel) I pat dog form Kiel as I lie down.

Maybe because I'm used to stroking Firo's feathers.

Perhaps that's what lets me sleep easily with others.

In Puppy Mode, all of Kiel's body is covered in fur. It's similar and quite soothing. Though Imya would have been fine as well.

“Oh, if Atlas tries to come in, drive her out. Then I'll be sleeping.”
(Naofumi) “Ah, Niichan! What do you mean by that?” (Kiel) “You're being noisy. Quiet down.” (Naofumi)

“I-I got it Niichan.” (Kiel)

Following my orders, Kiel goes quiet, as she lies in the bed waiting for me to fall asleep.

“Niichan. Don't cause so many misunderstandings... and don't scare Imya-chan so much...” (Kiel) “Ha? What are you talking about?”
(Naofumi)

“... Niichan, is it true that you're doing it with Atlas-chan and Firo-chan?” (Kiel) “I don't know what you're misunderstanding, but there's no

way that's true. Everyone should know, right?" (Naofumi) "... First I'm hearing of it, Niichan." (Kiel)

"Is that so? I though Sadina passed on the information." (Naofumi)
"There's no way Sadina Nee-chan would tell the truth about situations like this! She said that you would be aiming for me next!" (Kiel) What is that whale telling these kids!?

There's no way I would do such things.

"I did something bad to Imya. I'll have to apologize later." (Naofumi) "... I don't think you have to worry about it. Imya-chan seemed happy." (Kiel)
With question marks floating above my head, I went to sleep.

By the way, Atlas did indeed come, and Kiel drove her off with her barking.

Amazing. Kiel is acting like a guard dog.

My evaluation of her has risen ever so slightly.

By the way, because of her barking, I couldn't sleep well.

Anyways, after I woke up from my nap, it was the afternoon.

After distributing lunch to the slaves, I teleported to the castle.

Since Motoyasu surrendered, I have to tell the Queen.

If Firo continues manipulating him, he'll probably help work towards world peace.

I also have to stop by the Old Man's place to place in an order for a carriage.

When I appeared in the Castle, Trash was in front of me.

"..." (Naofumi)

"..." (Trash)

His clothes are quite normal today.

After silence ruled the area for a while... Trash turned and left.

After seeing Atlas, he's gone quiet.

The Queen always comes here to greet me, so this time I go to her office.

“If it isn’t Iwatani-sama. How are you doing?” (Queen) “You know why I’m here, right?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, it’s about the Hero of the Spear, right?” (Queen) “Yeah. Did he come here?” (Naofumi)

“... Early in the morning, he was standing in front of the castle, turning himself in... I went to see him after hearing the report, but he was a little... He wouldn’t listen to me, and I had to speak to him through a male interpreter.” (Queen) The queen uses a fan to cover her mouth as she glares at me.

I can understand her feelings. Recently, I’ve been starting to doubt whether or not his mind even has the capacity to accept logic.

He follows Firo’s words without question, but everything else is...

“This is all your daughter’s fault.” (Naofumi) “I’m aware. But this change was mostly brought about by Iwatani-sama’s pet bird, correct?” (Queen) I can’t deny it, but when you say it like that...

“So? What are you going to do with Motoyasu’s sentencing?” (Naofumi) “As you’ve probably assumed, we’re not going to press further punishment as long as he participates in the wave. Though the individual has also honestly admitted to being a bandit in the mountains.” (Queen) The Queen’s avoiding eye contact.

It seems evident that she’s hiding something.

Or perhaps she’s signaling for me to deduce it myself.

She probably had a hard time dealing with Motoyasu.

“And? What did he do?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, did you understand what I meant?” (Queen) “You avoided eye contact to make me understand, right?” (Naofumi) “I’m thankful for Iwatani-sama’s deductive ability...” (Queen) “Just get on with it.” (Naofumi)

“Then let me report. The individual in question demanded that he be punished, but we kept trying to tell him that we had no intention of doing so. He refused to pull back, so we told him attaining world peace was to be his punishment.” (Queen) That’s a bit much, I told the Queen.

Well, it’s not like he’s repenting anything. He probably just wants to show Firo that he’s starting over for her sake.

“After that, how should I say this. Up until that point, things proceeded relatively smoothly, but after that, the Hero of the Spear began to take increasingly troublesome action regarding the Filo Rials within the castle...” (Queen) “Ha?” (Naofumi)

Chapter 214: The Revolutionary Faction

“Filo Rials again...Motoyasu really makes trouble wherever he goes.”
(Naofumi) Most of which relate to Filo Rials.

He’s a troublesome man to no end.

He must have been ecstatic when he saw the castle’s Filo Rial stable.

Just how broken does he have to get to satisfy himself...

“There was no helping it, so we gave him some Filo Rial eggs, and gave him a mission.” (Queen) “... The mission was just a front to drive him off, right?” (Naofumi) “Correct.” (Queen)

I’ve been thinking it for a while, but this country’s Queen is surprisingly honest.

Even so... That man wants even more Filo Rials? Just how severe is his ailment?

“When he came to the castle, he was already followed by 10 Filo Rial Queens...” (Queen) ... What?

10? Wasn’t it 3?

Now that I think about it, he kept referring to them as his angels, and he never said he only had 3.

Is that Idiot building Up a Filo Rial army?

“And the fact that he wants more Filo Rials on top of that...” (Queen)
Well, he is a pervert.

Though Firo didn’t notice it, before he warped away, Motoyasu collected all of Firo’s dropped feathers.

I don’t want to know what he plans on using them for.

“My daughter, Melty, also has a peculiar passion for Filo Rials, but the Hero of the Spear has one that far surpasses hers.” (Queen) Melty?

She’s passed the ‘Friend’ line with Firo.

Her love for Filo Rials can be compared to Motoyasu... no, she loses out

to him.

She couldn't take all of Firo's overflowing love.

In a sexual way.

"So Motoyasu is no longer here?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. He said he was heading to Iwatani-sama's land." (Queen) "Don't pass your problems onto me." (Naofumi)

Motoyasu is coming to my place? This is no joke.

No matter what, I don't want to have to deal with that idiot.

Now that I think about it, it's suspicious that he never came there to see Firo before.

Uu... My stomach hurts.

"After he left, I received another report of him purchasing Filo Rial eggs from a monster dealer." (Queen) He bought more after getting them at the castle!?

How many does he need, that man?

This is already a disease. He had 10 from the start already.

"Okay, I understand what happened to Motoyasu. Is there anything else that happened?" (Naofumi) "The Hero of the Bow has still yet to be sighted. Also, the Anti-Demihuman faction of this country has increased its activity." (Queen) "Ah, you talked about that before. What do you mean by increasing in activity?" (Naofumi) "It seems... from circumstantial evidence, and my intuition, mind you, that they're building up forces for a rebellion." (Queen) A revolution... is it?

In the Human Supremacist Melromark, seeing the Queen give preferential treatment to Demi-Humans is leading to rebellion...

"Punishing Trash let us ease some tensions, but... the limit to that is approaching. We have yet to find definite evidence, but there have been some signs of suspicious activity." (Queen) "But there's no definitive proof...?" (Naofumi)

“The amount of Nobles refusing to give quests to Demi-Human adventurers is increasing.” (Queen) “Can you do anything about it?” (Naofumi)

“If I take any drastic measures, the situation may explode.” (Queen) So it’s a dangerous situation.

This country’s contamination really runs deep.

“But Iwatani-sama’s actions are gradually improving the public view of Demi-Humans. There is little signs of revolutionary action among the general populace.” (Queen) “Hm?” (Naofumi)

“The sight of your Demi-Humans travelling the country while peddling has left behind a good image. People are forgetting past prejudices, and learning that Demi-Humans and humans can cooperate to overcome the wave.” (Queen) “I see.” (Naofumi)

For my peddling to have such an unforeseen effect.

Well, those slaves are uselessly motivated.

I guess it’s not weird for them to be able to change some opinions.

“Oh yeah. I thought it was about time to expand the scope of my enterprise.” (Naofumi) “Outside of my country? The documents you have should be good enough for that,” (Queen) The Accessory merchant may have realized that. He may be laughing at me.

He’s been asking me to stock some of his wares in my peddling carriage.

I probably should do so in order to ensure a steady stream of income into the village when I’m gone.

My current goal is to make a peaceful village for Raphtalia that will be able to function without me.

Of course, I’m also building up forces to counter the wave.

I see. Now that I think about it, my village bears the brunt of the political struggle of this country.

I may be seen as an enemy by the various groups here.

I need to proceed with caution.

“I wonder if I should report that as well.” (Queen) “Was there something else?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. This country’s penitentiary area was destroyed during the Spirit Turtle attack. We have confirmed the deaths of most of the prisoners, but...” (Queen) “But?” (Naofumi)

“There’s still a chance that some escaped.” (Queen) “I see...” (Naofumi)

So some prisoners may have escaped.

It’s quite an ominous conversation.

“My intuition tells me that they may be involved in this rebellion. Also, another force was driven out by Iwatani-sama’s work as well.” (Queen) ... The Three Hero’s Church is still laying low.

This may be a big problem.

So they’re still within this country. I guess it’s a good thing nothing’s happened yet.

A lot of unreasonable things have been happening to me recently. It feels good to get prior notice for once.

“I’ll leave information gathering to you.” (Naofumi) “I understand.” (Queen)

“... Do you not carve slave seals into your prisoners?” (Naofumi) “We do, but the people who held the slave ownership rights were the guards that died in the attack.” (Queen) Ah, I see. The people with the authority to send punishment are dead.

This is quite troublesome.

“I think you should leave this situation to be solved by the heroes that caused it.” (Naofumi) Ren seems to be earnestly repenting, so he’ll probably accept the task.

It seems that he’s slowly being accepted into the village.

“For what reason?” (Queen)

“You’ll be able to drive out the revolutionaries all at once without the country at fault.” (Naofumi) “... Understood. Honestly, I don’t think this is a situation where I should turn to the heroes. This situation is a result of my incompetence.” (Queen) “I know that isn’t your true opinion.” (Naofumi) I think it’s a good idea.

Honestly, it seems like a pain, and I don’t want to get involved.

But if I don’t get involved, it would be the same as abandoning my village.

That would be extremely foolish.

“I thank you for your cooperation.” (Queen)

“Omit your thanks.” (Naofumi)

“Iwatani-sama, please remain vigilant. This issue is deeply connected to your land.” (Queen) “I know.” (Naofumi)

If the Three Heroes Church attacks, I should get the support of the other churches. Though they denounce them as imposters.

And it’s not like my villagers do nothing but eat. They’re quite useful individuals.

“All of this is thanks to Iwatani-sama’s benevolence.” (Queen) “... Let’s leave it at that.” (Naofumi)

She seems to be saying her genuine opinion. This makes it all the more suspicious. I don’t trust her.

Melty is much easier to handle. By the way, that was a compliment.

... Sometimes, I wonder whether she was really born of the same parents as that Witch.

She prioritizes her friendship with Firo over all else, and is a generally good person. She was raised well.

She’s also quite practical.

If I were asked if I had common sense, I would say no. Quite a few of the people around me are lacking in that field.

But I also have Raphtalia and Melty around me.

Discounting the slaves, to which I am like a parent, Melty is one of my most trusted people.

Though... she still might resent me for what I did to her the other day.

Now that I think about it, the Queen hasn't asked me about Melty.

What's done is done, so I was prepared for some punishment...

As long as it doesn't come up, it should be fine.

It may come up down the line, so I should think up some countermeasures.

... No, I think it will be easier to settle this now.

From my experience, putting things off never leads to anything good.

"What should we do about Melty?" (Naofumi)

"Meaning?" (Queen)

She dropped her formal tone.

Was it too troublesome to keep up?

"It's related to Motoyasu's case, so I thought I would bring it up."
(Naofumi) "About the Filo Rials? Shadow was following your party to some extent, but a barrier-like item was erected, so I don't know what happened after that. I only have the Hero of the Spear's testimony. I believe he called Melty 'That Blue Pig' or something." (Queen) Good!

She doesn't know anything about it.

I don't think Melty wants to spread the info. Perhaps I can hide it.

"Yeah, Motoyasu's attack sent my Filo Rial out of control, and Melty sacrificed her body to get it under control. If Melty wasn't there, we would have been in trouble. Please praise her later." (Naofumi) ... I'm not lying.

Melty probably won't tell the whole truth, and if her parent praises her she won't be able to.

If I silence Rishia, then the matter will be confined to oblivion.

“I see. Melty does love Filo Rials.” (Queen)

The Queen seems satisfied with the explanation as she nods.

But still. Even when a calamity is hitting the world, the people prepare for a rebellion.

Just how rotten can this world be?

Chapter 215: Barbarian Armour + 2

After I finished talking with the Queen, I made an appearance at the Weapon Shop.

“Oh. Well isn’t it Laddie. It’s been a while.” (Oyaji) “So it has. I haven’t seen you guys much because of your thriving business.” (Naofumi) I was finally able to meet the Old Man from the weapon shop.

Imia’s Uncle was also there as a shop assistant, lining up weapons in the store.

There’s a better array of products than before.

They looked busy, and business seems good.

“How are you?” (Naofumi)

“We’re pretty good. Just a little longer and it’ll be finished. The shield for Laddie, that is.” (Oyaji) “I see. How much should I pay?” (Naofumi)

“You let me work this guy freely so 10 gold for the material fees is fine.” (Oyaji) The Old Man from the Weapon Shop said generously, pointing at Imia’s Uncle.

It’s a masterpiece made with the materials from the Spirit Turtle. So it’s likely that it’s as fine as the products on auction in Zeltbur.

Moreover, it’s made by the Old Man so it might fetch an even higher price.

The problem is what to do with the shield after I’ve Copied it....

Because amongst the guys I have faith in with handling it, there are none who use shields.

“The average market price would be 50 gold, right.” (Imia’s Uncle) Imia’s Uncle replied, as if reading my thoughts.

It’s the Shield version of the displayed Spirit Turtle Sword that had been scheduled for auction in Zeltbur before.

It’s a product made by the Old Man, and its performance can be

expected.

The problem is its cost.

Well the current me can afford to pay 10 gold.

Because I've earned that much from managing the land.

Or rather, when spending money to provide for war power to fight the waves, preparing weapons and armour is the most important.

It seems cheap, but if it was 50 gold then it would still cause some hesitation.

"Is it that much of a quality product?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. If there's no way to use it then having the outlook of selling it is also part of a merchant." (Imia's Uncle) The Old Man also nodded.

But still....to part with the product that they worked hard to make for me is a bit regrettable.

I want to have it on hand even if it ends up gathering dust.

"Well, I'll think about that when the time comes. How's the armour?" (Naofumi) "It was a good core. With that, there will be no problems inserting it. With those thoughts, we made that first." (Oyaji) At the Old Man's instructions, Imia's Uncle brought the armour from the shop's interior.

Its appearance was very similar to the previously equipped Barbarian's Armour.

However, looking again at the fundamental materials, the metal parts were appended with turtleshell material.

Also, a few of the dark-coloured joints became colourful.

"This is?" (Naofumi)

"We used metal yielded from the Spirit Turtle. There were a few problems with the weight but we've already fixed that flaw. Mysteriously, it became lighter after we affixed the core." (Oyaji) "I see." (Naofumi)

I examined the Barbarian's Armour.

Barbarian's Armour + 2?

Defence Up Shock Resistance (Large) Fire Resistance (Extra Large) Lightning Resistance (Large) Absorption Resistance (Mid) HP Recovery (Weak) Magic Recovery (Weak) SP Recovery (Weak) Magic Increase (Mid) Dragon Emperor's Divine Protection Magic Defence Production Automatic Repair Function Earth Pulse's Divine Protection Dragon Attribute Dragon Territory Growing Ability There are even more endowments.

A variety of things are increased in return for the loss of Dark Resistance.

Was the Fire Resistance thanks to the core?

There's also the Dragon Attribute. The dragon aspects probably correspond to Gaelion's core being used.

What's Dragon Territory? The growing ability was an effect I somehow came to expect.

I should ask Gaelion.

"How much is the fee?" (Naofumi)

"Laddie will make good use of it so take it as commission for being the liaison for the materials." (Oyaji) "That's helpful." (Naofumi)

"It's because I profited from that. To charge you money here, my pride won't allow it." (Oyaji) The Old Man really did a lot for me, I've always considered him the second most trustworthy after Raphtalia.

It's really disappointing that he won't come to my land though.

"Can I wear it immediately?" (Naofumi)

"Sure! Show us." (Oyaji)

I took the Armour and went to the dressing room to change.

For some reason, despite it feeling familiar, it feels brand new.

Such a mysterious feeling. This....

However, there's no great change in design. Just the colouring is

different.

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

The cotton-like texture is different. I understand that something good has been used.

I’ve received a fine product.

The sizing is also correct, it fits perfectly.

“How is it?” (Naofumi)

“Oh, when speaking of Laddie, it’s that kind of image as expected.”
(Oyaji) “Um... I find it hard to understand but, some growth is....in regards to Hero-sama....there isn’t any.” (Imia’s Uncle) Imia’s Uncle says ambiguously.

Of course it’s like that....the Old Man was pleased, but I also thought it was a fin-de-siècle small fry at first. [T/N: Fin de siècle = end of the century. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fin_de_si%C3%A8cle]

However, I feel the illusion of being very powerful just by wearing this.

Because as far as I’m concerned, this armour made with the Old Man’s confidence is the most reliable armour.

Raphtalia said she wanted to be my sword.

And the Old Man granted me with this armour.

In regards to armour, the production of this Barbarian’s Armour is the best indeed.

“Thank You.” (Naofumi)

“It’s been a while since I’ve heard Laddie’s thanks.” (Oyaji) “I just said it.” (Naofumi)

“By the way, where’s the Miss? She hasn’t come at all.” (Oyaji) [T/N: Miss = Raphtalia]

“She’s still in training.” (Naofumi)

“Hmm....” (Oyaji)

“That’s right. Old Man, can you see the flow of magic?” (Naofumi)
“What’s that?” (Oyaji)

I tried explaining to the old man about how adding magic when cooking or compounding improves the quality.

“I don’t see it. But I do understand about adding magic.” (Oyaji) “Is that so.” (Naofumi)

Well, I probably don’t do it as precisely as Laddie though. Will you try helping next time?” (Oyaji) “I’ll think about it.” (Naofumi)

“And also, it’s no good if you don’t listen carefully to the materials. Pushing is good but pulling is also important.” (Oyaji) Hmm... Adding magic is also important but there must be a guide or something, right.

Adding magic is fine when improving inferior products but if the foundation is good then it shouldn’t be put in?

Or was it like the Dragon Pulse method?

Hm? I feel like something flashed.

I should try it next time.

“Now then, I don’t want to overstay my welcome....Ah, that’s right. Can I have you make me another carriage?” (Naofumi) “Hm? What happened?” (Oyaji)

“Firo’s reckless driving made the carriage do unreasonable things.” (Naofumi) “What the heck did she do.” (Oyaji)

“A race on the mountain passes....she was competing on a mountain trail and jumped off a cliff.” (Naofumi) “What kind of situation is that!” (Oyaji)

As expected, the Old Man was also surprised.

Imia’s Uncle was the same as well.

“There won’t be a next time, so I’d like to request something similar to before.” (Naofumi) “I get it. I’ll make the frame so bring Miss Birdie along once, it’s better if I improve it to match her, right?” (Oyaji) “Ah, then the

next time we come.” (Naofumi)

“Alright.” (Oyaji)

“I will also return to the village soon.” (Imia’s Uncle) “So in the end, you’re coming?” (Naofumi)

“Temporarily. One way or another, it’s better if we make equipment for everyone in the village, right?” (Imia’s Uncle) “Mn....That’s true.” (Naofumi)

Even now, they’re still using second-hand weapons.

If I’m irresponsible and don’t replace them then they’ll get worn out.

I’m doing maintenance on them for now but it’ll probably reach a limit.

Imia has been exhibiting such skills. I’m hoping Imia’s Uncle also has a similar level of talent.

“I know who the Hero of the Shield-sama really wanted to come though.” (Imia’s Uncle) “No....that’s..” (Naofumi)

Ugh. This is awkward.

Certainly, I wanted the Old Man from the Weapon Shop to come.

Usually I would curtly refuse but that’s in comparison with the Old Man.

My apologies, but that’s what I really think.....

“Please don’t worry about it. I don’t have any intention to lose.” (Imia’s Uncle) “That’s right, Jeez, you’re not any less capable. I don’t think I could’ve finished that shield without you.” (Oyaji) “Because the Hero of the Shield has such expectations. I don’t have any choice but to do it. Or rather, I must do it.” (Imia’s Uncle) If the Old Man says so then his skills must be reliable.

Then I’ll be anticipating it.

“I’ll be looking forward to it. Should I gather materials from somewhere?” (Naofumi) “Yes. And then, I’ll be grateful if you could make a Blacksmith’s Workshop for me.” (Imia’s Uncle) “Understood. If you tell

the neighbouring town, there are some knowledgeable guys so you can leave it to them.” (Naofumi) It’s probably fine if I ask at the Accessory Shop.

One way or another, making accessories require the refining of metals and such anyway.

I know that such a workshop was built in the village.

Therefore, he should be able to make one in the village.

I’ll haggle as much as I can. He also communicates with the Slave Merchant and is a masochist so he’ll be delighted if I haggle.

Of course, I won’t let him cut corners with his construction.

“Then until later, when the shield is complete.” (Naofumi) “Ah, I’ll see you then....” (Oyaji)

And with that, I left the Weapon Shop behind.

Chapter 216: Joint Ownership

“Well, Hero of the Shield, did something happen? Yes.” (Slave Dealer)
“Last we met, I had the feeling you were avoiding eye contact. Does that ring any bells?” (Naofumi) I go over to the Slave Dealer’s place, and ask as such with my arms crossed.

I’m not saying anything was his fault, but this man is one of the many reasons Motoyasu caused me such trouble.

“Absolutely none. Yes.” (Slave Dealer)

“...*Sigh*” (Naofumi)

He’s putting on a business smile.

He’s definitely faking it.

“I’m thinking of leaving my gluttonous Filo Rial in your care for a while.” (Naofumi) “T-that is...” (Slave Dealer)

“Of course, you’ll be footing the bill. I won’t let you refuse.” (Naofumi) I have some political power now, but also this person is earning a lot by selling me slaves.

There’s no way the Slave Dealer would needlessly strain our business relations.

“I understand. Yes. The fact of the matter is that I did indeed offer some Filo Rials to the Hero of the Spear.” (Slave Dealer) “So you admit it.” (Naofumi)

“He barged into the tent repeating the name of the Hero of the Shield’s Filo Rial, so I offered them to him as an experiment.” (Slave Dealer) Ah, right. The Slave Dealer was trying to find out the conditions for a Filo Rial becoming a Queen.

But I had my hands full with my Glutton Firo, so I turned down his experiments.

I got my next Filo Rial much much later, and I left his care to Firo so nothing happened.

Could it be... I'm also at fault?

No no no.

I just didn't participate in his research, and this isn't my responsibility.

And the Slave Dealer was merely doing business. He sold his merchandise to the person looking for it.

I wonder how long ago he sold them.

The last time that I saw Motoyasu was... When Kiel and the others did their Class Up I think.

It was when I learned Portal Shield.

Back then, the Slave Dealer wasn't there.

Perhaps I missed him and he later encountered Motoyasu.

I don't really need to dig too deep into this.

"Regarding that matter, there is something I would like to propose."
(Slave Dealer) "What is it?" (Naofumi)

"This morning, the Hero of the Spear paid a visit, and the contract ink with your blood is all gone." (Slave dealer) "What you say!?" (Naofumi)

Until this point, I never worried about its stock. It was something that naturally came with the slaves I bought.

Slaves aren't free, and since testing the seal was easy, there wasn't a risk of fake ink.

In this world, getting a slave without a seal is pretty pointless.

So Motoyasu is in possession of the Ink now.

"On the shelf where I kept the ink, I found several bags of Gold, and a sheet with a signature reminiscent of a Spear and a Filo Rial." (Slave Dealer) D-damn! When I had Firo persuade him, I never had her tell him that crime was wrong.

What Firo told him was to be kind and honest.

Because of that, he left money. But we never told him stealing was bad.

I thought that that was included in being honest, but I guess the term literally means simply being fair in one's actions.

So Motoyasu raises his Filo Rials honestly, and leaves them under my providence.

I don't know how he thinks, but in his mind, perhaps that is Honesty.

"Damn!" (Naofumi)

I hastily open up the monster management Window.

... The amount of names I don't know has exponentially increased!

That idiot! He used my ink to contract his Filo Rials.

"I've heard of joint ownership of slaves and monsters... This is probably..." (Slave Dealer) I forgot to tell him not to take annoying action on his own.

If I don't do anything about him, then Filo Rial Queens will continue to be mass produced.

He received some eggs from the Queen, and got more from this Merchant.

I need to get back to the village quickly!

"The ownership rights can be annulled by you yourself so there shouldn't be a problem. The Hero of the Spear said he was going to the Hero of the Shield's place." (Slave Dealer) ... The Queen said that as well. What does he plan on doing there?

Even taking an army of Filo Rials with him...

This is serious. I need some drastic countermeasures.

"Got it. I'm going back to my village! 'Cya!" (Naofumi) "What should I should I do about finding you slaves? Yes." (Slave Dealer) "Please continue as before." (Naofumi)

"I understand. Yes." (Slave Dealer)

I care not for that at the moment. I run out of the tent and summon a portal.

Ah, I forgot. The Queen said it seemed like Motoyasu's followers had Class Upped.

I return to the village and quickly scan the surroundings.

Good. Motoyasu isn't here yet.

I need to prepare for when he gets here.

Or else...

Now that I think about it, the one who will be doing the work will be Motoyasu. I have no part in it.

Perhaps he opted for joint ownership to get my status boosts.

If he builds up forces, he may oppose me but I don't think that Firoholic will do such a thing.

No. If he takes action on his own I'll be troubled, but as long as I get Firo to tell him when he gets here... it should be fine!

"Hey, Naofumi. Do you know what's going on?" (Ren)

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

Before I realized it, Ren was in front of me.

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"I don't know. There seems to be something going on outside the village. I can't leave, though." (Ren) "Outside?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. I can only see from afar, but... Isn't that Motoyasu?" (Ren)
What?

It suddenly feels like my blood temperature has dropped..

Ren, and Female Knight both stare towards the outskirts of the village...
Where we built the Firo Rial Stable.

The slaves seem to be gathered there.

I timidly approach the area.

"Ah, Niichan-wow! Your clothes are amazing!" (Kiel) Kiel looks at me, and jumps back at the sight of my clothes.

I don't think I've worn my Barbarian Armor since I first established the village.

For me, this clothing is normal, though.

"Don't mind it." (Naofumi)

"No... I can't. Niichan, are you in to that sort of clothing?" (Kiel) "I don't know whether I like or hate it, but it's abilities are high, and it was made by someone who treats me well." (Naofumi) "Is that so?" (Kiel)

I'd like to move on from this topic already.

What is happening in the Filo Rial stable!

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"I just got back. What's happening?" (Naofumi)

"I think it was right after Niichan left. Or perhaps before that? It seems there were intruders in the stable." (Kiel) "I-I see." (Naofumi)

"We were deliberating how to drive them out, but because Niichan wasn't here, we didn't want to take action yet..." (Kiel) "Yes, Sadina-san isn't here either, and when we sent someone to ask Melty-chan in the neighboring village, we got a report saying Firo didn't want to come here no matter what." (Atlas) The bad feeling in my chest begins to encompass more parts of my body.

Motoyasu is definitely here.

"What should we do?" (Atlas)

"L-let me go confirm the situation there." (Naofumi) Perhaps I can talk to him.

I carefully walk up to the Filo Rial stable and put my hand on the large door.

I can hear some noises coming from the inside.

Firo should only have one follower right now. I did plan on getting more in the future though.

What is this? My blood goes cold again.

Every single instinct in my body is telling me not to open this door.

But putting this problem off won't solve anything.

I muster up my courage and swing the door open.

“Wha...!?” (Naofumi)

The inside of the building was pitch black.

No... that's wrong. There are too many Filo Rials, and all outside light is blocked.

“Ah, the scent of Filo Rials... Sniff. Sniff.” (Motoyasu) Right before my eyes, Motoyasu was embracing a Filo Rial Queen, and taking in her scent.

Surrounding him is a large flock of Queens.

I hear the sounds of feathers ruffling as all heads turn to face me.

I'm surrounded by eyes.

“”Who is it?”” (Filo Rials)

“Ah, I think he was the Master Moto-kun was talking about.” (Filo Rial)

“Right. His eyes look mean, but he somehow looks nice.” (Filo Rial)

“Yeah. That must be it.” (Filo Rial)

“I get you man. Somehow looking at him makes me feel motivated.”

(Filo Rial) “Right, right. The feeling he gives off is different than Motopi.”

(Filo Rial) Goosebumps break out all over my body.

““Master! Let's play!”” (Filo Rials)

Bang!

I immediately slam the door and run.

A few seconds later the door opens once more. I look back and am confronted with the terrifying sight of a flock of Filo Rials gaining on me.

“MOTOYASUUUUU! GET OUTTTTT!” (Naofumi)

My heartless cry echoes through the village.

By the way, my salvation came in the form of Firo, who mustered up her courage and came to check the situation out. I now owe her one.

I won't say what sort of things happened to me until she came to my aid.

Chapter 217: The Hero of the Shield's Capture Walkthrough

Now then, it's been a few days since Motoyasu has separated from the village and made his own Filo Rial farm (He built a fort with the stable at the center).

The shock from that incident made me unable to approach it for a while.

I was attacked by an army of Firos straight out of my darkest nightmares.

...

But when I asked him if I could borrow a Filo Rial, Motoyasu obediently lent one.

Using a relatively cheap Prairie Schooner, I restarted my peddling enterprise.

Though not as fast as Firo, his Filo Rials are quite fast, so they're starting to take over the Caterpilland's jobs.

The problem is the fuel efficiency.

All of the food in the village's storehouse has vanished.

The new Filo Rials do nothing but eat...

If I don't do something, death by starvation seems to be quite a possible future.

As such, we decided to expand our Bioplant cultivation.

The plants have started to become like a forest encircling the village.

The Dunes are working very hard every day in order to maintain the soil for them.

I have to reward them sometime soon.

"Niichan! So Filo Rials really were scary animals!" (Kiel) Kiel runs at me

with her tail wagging in dog form.

Did they try to eat him?

Ever since she learned how to transform, she seems to take that form whenever she gets excited.

This loinclothed dog.

“Besides tables and chairs, they eat everything with legs. Be careful.” (Naofumi) (TL: Wow, this joke actually works in both languages) “Okay! Imya-chan’s also being targeted, so I have to protect her!” (Kiel) Well, I already told Motoyasu to make sure they don’t eat any villagers so it’ll probably be fine.

Also, since Firo is technically the future Queen of the species, they follow her with absolute obedience.

From the data I’ve collected in the past few days, it seems that all of the Filo Rials besides Motoyasu’s initial 3 will obey her.

I guess this is what you call a pecking order. (TL: puns...) Filo Rial Queens require expensive slave seals, but with Firo’s Ahoge and Firo’s magic, it seems we will be able to manage.

The restrictions I place on them work as normal.

Of course, when I first met them, these birds had yet to fall under Firo’s dominion.

It seems that after Firo saved me, they battled it out for superiority.

I think I remember the slaves watched their fights enthusiastically.

But because of the shock, my memories of that time are kinda hazy.

“I wonder if Motoyasu is in today.” (Naofumi)

He went off to train his newest Filo Rials.

Before that, he saw Rishia wearing the Firo Plushy, and screamed, “You Fake Bastard!!!” at her, so I sent him off to shut him up.

For some reason, however, he was looking at the costume in envy.

By the way, to this day I still have no idea exactly how many Filo Rials Motoyasu has.

So I timidly peer into the stable from the window.

Hm? Insider, Firo is fidgeting around as she sits next to Melty.

Melty is looking at her while smiling.

As I thought. She is a pervert comparable to Motoyasu.

“Um, now then... Let’s start the conference on how to get Master to praise us.” (Filo Rial) (TL: This is not Firo. Everyone besides Firo pronounces master wrong.) ... What are they doing?

“The Chairman will be our Future Queen Firo-sama, and I will be managing.” (Filo Rial) There is a loud cry from the audience. Or perhaps I should call it a whistle.

The sound of soft things coming into contact with each other is also there. I believe they are trying to clap.

They’re good at imitating human language. Is it because they’re birds?

The Filo Rial Queen speaking... I think I’ve seen her before.

Motoyasu’s follower? No I don’t think so.

“Now then, let me give you the results of research I have carried out since my birth. To put it bluntly, Master does not hold a high opinion of monsters that communicate in human speech.” (Filo Rial) The Filo Rials watching start talking amongst themselves.

“But Firo-sama is able to get close to him in human form isn’t she?” (Filo Rial) “Try to remember, everyone. Is there not always a set distance between the two of them?” (Filo Rial) “Hm? You know, Firo is liked by master~” (Firo)

“This is the opinion of Firo-sama, but the truth has yet to be ascertained. Did she not get penalized after starting a commotion earlier?” (Filo Rial) Melty cringes. I think she just remembered something she didn’t want to.

I want to forget it as well.

I'm surprised she doesn't try to escape from this absurd situation.

"At this point, swaying master's heart by normal actions may prove to be impossible." (Filo Rial) "That's wrong~ Firo is Master's number one vehicle." (Firo) "Is that true? Do you not think you have been losing to Gaelion as of late?" (Filo Rial) Upon these words, Firo begins pouting.

It seems he struck a nerve.

Whenever anything happens, she competes with the dragon.

"What are you looking at?" (Gaelion)

Speak of the devil. Gaelion comes next to me, and peers into the window as well.

"Ah, the growing population of Filo Rials. If they do anything to my territory, I will eat every last one of them." (Gaelion) "What can you do when you were devoured yourself?" (Naofumi) But I don't really care about that.

What exactly are they meeting for? Where is Motoyasu?

Perhaps he isn't here today. His usual three and... the freshly hatched chicks aren't there.

"Pii!" (Chick)

A chick jumps onto my shoulder.

The two left out chicks stand on Gaelion's head and look inside as well.

Didn't Filo Rials and Dragons not get along?

"Now then, everyone. Let us practice speaking out of human tongue. KUE!" (Filo Rial) "KUE!" (Everyone)

"That's right. Around Master, do not speak human tongue. Slowly build up fondness, and occasionally get close and offer your head to be pat. When he's in a good mood, he will play with you, so indulge in it to your heart's content. But if you are too persistent, he will hate it, so approach him in moderation." (Filo Rial) "YES!" (Everyone)

... The hell is this?

I'm at a loss for words.

It feels as if I just heard people I thought I got along with badmouthing me behind my back.

And what the hell are they trying to get my affection?

I know they can talk already so acting dumb won't get them anywhere.

"Now then, next is practice on making one's self appear loveable." (Filo Rial) The chairman's eyes turn innocent and round as he tilts his head and looks at a point close to the ground.

Is that where I'm supposed to be?

"KUeee?" (Filo Rial)

He blinks numerous times while his eyes shine and he approaches that point.

It's as if I'm truly standing there.

... If I didn't know better, I think I would pat him.

How sly... It's somehow pissing me off.

Ah, I remember. That's Firo's number one follower.

He has a bowtie on his chest, and his feathers are groomed as he gives the presentation.

He's the Filo Rial I've known for the longest besides Firo.

So he became a Queen.

I don't know the gender so he might be a King.

Even so... I found him more loveable than Firo, but that was all an act.

"Like that, in order to get close to Master, you need cuteness. Also, even if you can, you must refrain from using human speech. Does everyone understand?" (Filo Rial) "Yes!" (Everyone)

"With Motoyasu-san, he'll be happy no matter what you do, but in order to be liked by Master, you must have diligence and patience." (Filo Rial)

“Yeah!” (Everyone)

“Now then, to practice.” (Filo Rial)

“KUE!” (Everyone)

The Filo Rials in the stable begin practicing. It somehow feels like a cult to me.

What was that Filo Rial’s name again?

I often played with him in the mornings, but I don’t know his name.

I think the slaves named him.

Compared to Firo, he seems quite smart.

Perhaps because his boss is an idiot... he learned from having a bad example close to him.

Though I hate his slyness.

Now that I think about it, Firo is an airhead. Even if she can speak, she still has some genuine cuteness.

But... now I think I’ll put up a bit more distance.

I know all of these birds can speak already.

It’s pointless to say KUE! Just when you’re in front of me.

I guess they’re still birds in the end. They’re too shallow minded.

Even Gaelion, who is currently sitting on my head has more cuteness.

Kogaelion Mode has a sense of Purity to him.

Though if I get close to him, Firo gets loud so I refrain from doing so.

Should I end his punishment and give him preferential treatment? I don’t have anyone to sleep with me to drive away Atlas at the moment, so the timing is good.

Ah, why is Melty in there anyways?

Well she’s a person who’s a little more than a friend with Firo.

Did she come to relieve stress?

If I stay any longer they'll notice me, so I quickly retreat.

By the way, I learned later that Follower Number 1 became a Queen because of Motoyasu's influence.

Gaelion said it before, but it seems that if a Hero raises a Filo Rial, it transforms into royalty.

I get the feeling Firo said it too. That if I wished for it, he would become a Queen.

Motoyasu loves Firo, so he probably wishes for one of his Filo Rials to turn out like her. He tried caring for her subordinate.

And because of that, he became a Queen without Firo's orders.

It seem that a few days later the slaves and Atlas participated in this meeting as well.

Gaelion told me that they were researching my preferred type.

They plan to conquer me!? Cut the crap! (TL: Again, as in Galge) I immediately called these meetings to a close, but... I get the ominous feeling that something's still going on in secret.

Skipping to the result, it seems my Filo Rials became more loveable, and sales increased.

A number of Nobles asked if we would sell them, but Motoyasu started complaining, so we ended up turning them down.

Chapter 218: Loyal Loincloth Dog

As a change of pace for the day, I felt like making a suitable dessert with the wheat flour (which may be different in reality) I received from the town.

I'm making a dessert because I was able to have refined honey produced by a variation of the Bioplant that I made by researching with Rat.

I also make samples for taste testing.

"Nii-chan! What are you making?" (Kiel)

"Be quiet and watch. Ah, the fire.... it's best to have it as weak as possible." (Naofumi) I heated the iron plate and made the dough by mixing the wheat flour with monster milk.

I also whip some milk and let the fat float to the top to make some cream. I put some honey in the cream to add sweetness.

In addition, I also prepare some fruits.

While I am cooking, the slaves, monsters and Filo Rials gather, enticed by the smell.

.....Do I have enough?

For the time being, I also have the rest of the cooking slaves make some more using the same materials.

"Anyway, don't you guys have things to be doing?" (Naofumi) "It's natural, Nii-chan!" (Kiel)

"Is cooking Naofumi's hobby?" (Ren)

Ren asked, having finished his training with the Female Knight.

If I'm not mistaken, aren't there language studies waiting for you next?

I wanted to know how determined this guy was so I gave him the order to study.

For the time being, he obediently follows it.

I thought he would be the type to disliked it being told to study by people, but he seems to be taking it seriously.

I've made him a table of letters and he's transcribing it earnestly.

If he had asked for 'a means to quickly become stronger instead of this kind of thing' or something, then I would know there was no remorse.

"It's not particularly a hobby. I just learned it before I noticed."

(Naofumi) "So it's just like you got used to it. The smell is good too."

(Ren) "That aside, would you like to learn?" (Naofumi)

"If Naoufumi wishes it....." (Ren)

".....Just kidding. If you would like to eat, then wait a bit." (Naofumi)

"Ah, I'm looking forward to it because the meals Naofumi makes are delicious." (Ren) Are you trying to get on my good side?

Even though you're the type to just think about yourself.... I'm still not used to it.

"Okay." (Naofumi)

I made the dough as thin as possible and cooked it on the round iron plate, immediately flipping it over to cook the other side.

I move that base to a different table, spread some fruits and cover it in the cream, and then finally wrap it into a cup shape.

"It's finished." (Naofumi)

"Ah, you were making a crepe after all." (Ren)

"Well, I know how to make them because I used to part-time at the Food Corner." (Naofumi) "Part-time..... what a nostalgic word." (Ren)

"Ren didn't work part-time?" (Naofumi)

"I didn't. Even though I would have liked to." (Ren) Ah, Ren is a high-school student, and there are many students who are not allowed to have a part-time job due to their schools or parents.

In fact, my younger brother goes to a school where part-time jobs are prohibited.

Me? As a high-school student, I had a part-time job because I wanted the money.

You can guess what I used the money for.

That being said, I pass sample No. 1 to Ren.

Did I reproduce it well? The one who could give the best appraisal is probably Ren.

“Mu..... it’s as delicious as I expected. The taste is a little different than I remember but it’s nothing to worry about.” (Ren) “So. It was delicious after all?” (Kiel)

Kiel asks with her eyes sparkling.

“Look, this is one of the foods from my world. It’s called a crepe.” (Naofumi) I made a second one and pass it to Kiel.

“Crepe..... it’s a food I’ve never heard of. Food from Nii-chan’s world.” (Kiel) Kiel smells and looks at the crepe intensely.

Right now, she is in her human form. But recently she’s been a dog more.

According to her, transforming consumes magic but her senses are sharper and her body becomes lighter so it’s comfortable.

With a chomp, Kiel ate a mouthful from the crepe.

“It tastes like nothing I have eaten before.” (Kiel) Kiel wags her ears and tail many times while chewing.

“It’s tasty!” (Kiel)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

At Kiel’s words, the slaves, monsters and Filo Rials express their desire to eat as well.

And so I begin baking crepes one after another.

“Tasty! The crepe is deliciouuuuus—!” (Kiel)

Kiel begins to run while saying that.

“Don’t fall down—” (Naofumi)

I think it happened around the same time I said it.

Kiel tripped!

“Hey.... Haven’t I seen that somewhere before? That scene.” (Naofumi)

“What a coincidence. Same here.” (Ren)

Furthermore, the crepe falls to the ground magnificently and is scattered everywhere.

“I think it was an ice-cream that time.” (Naofumi) “For me it was shaved ice. It was a while ago, but I’ve seen this before.” (Ren) An event that happens in Japan also exists in the strange world of the VRMMO it seems. (TN: short for Virtual Reality Massively Multiplayer Online) Kiel..... you’re a person who cannot escape from it.

“Wahhh..... the crepe that Nii-chan made is— aaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!” (Kiel) Kiel cries while staring at the scattered crepe with teary eyes.

If you’re that disappointed then I’ll immediately.... do we have the ingredients?

After I have finished handing them out to the whole village, it’s doubtful that there will be enough.

“.....” (Kiel)

Kiel stares at the crepe strewn on the ground very regrettably.

The other demi-human slaves extend their hands to help her stand , but she doesn't notice it.

Eventually.....

Chomp!

She ate it!?

I don’t know what she was thinking, Kiel transformed into a dog and started eating the splattered crepe on the ground.

“Kiel-kun! What are you doing!” (slave)

“You’re going to get a stomach-ache!” (slave)

“Let me go! It’s something Nii-chan made with great care. I’m not going to let it go to waste.” (Kiel) “That’s no good! Didn’t Onii-chan say not to eat stuff that has fallen on the ground.” (slave) “Even so, I’m going to eat it! Out of my way! I can’t reach the crepe! Uwa~aaaahhhhhhhh!” (Kiel) This Kiel, even while being restrained her eyes dart wildly around, and one of her hand stretches out to the splattered crepe.

Ah..... did I put in something addicting?

I need to report the failure of this honey to Rat.

“Settle down! Hey, I’ll give you my share!” (Ren)

“You will!?” (Kiel)

“Yes.” (Ren)

The situation was barely contained by Ren shouting about giving Kiel his crepe.

Ren must find it hard to understand why Kiel is so upset, but he’s considerably adapted to the village.

Well, you’ll get used to the village after you have lived here for a while.

Not long after that, Ren returns with a slightly troubled expression.

“To be this emotional.....” (Ren)

“No. The honey might have some narcotic components in it.” (Naofumi) “I think it’s different. So please don’t stop what you’re doing. Everyone is looking with expectant eyes, so please continue making them.” (Ren) Ren might be feeling pressured by the slaves.

I suspect there might be narcotics, but it’s not confirmed so it’s fine.

During our talk, Motoyasu comes over while being surrounded by Filo Rials.

“Father in Law. You are doing something that’s making me envious!” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu says after seeing the Filo Rials receiving the crepes and eating them with great pleasure.

That's the first thing you say?

I always thought Motoyasu's remarks were annoying since the time he was being accompanied by Witch.

You're calling me 'Father-in-Law' as usual and yet what is it that you envy?

Say something more appropriate..... I wanted to preach.

Well, even though dealing with Motoyasu is troublesome, I know how to handle him well.

"Father in Law!?" (Ren)

Ren asks in a shaky voice while pointing at Motoyasu.

"We didn't have the chance to speak, but what on earth happened!?"

(Ren) "Ah—..... I forgot to explain. Ren, Motoyasu was betrayed by Witch and has now been broken." (Naofumi) "Is that so?" (Ren)

"Father in Law, it's impolite to say "broken". I was only just awakened by true love. Ren-kun must not make the same mistake either."

(Motoyasu) "Ren.....kun!?" (Ren)

Ren who is trembling with goose bumps seeks help from me.

What a relief.

Looks like it's not only me who is being called with a strange name.

Because it can't get more sickening than Motoyasu attaching '-kun' to Ren's name.

"What's this about "true love"!?" (Ren)

"Ah—..... to make it easy for you to understand, just like Witch whispered to you when you were down..... and our foolish bird gave him words of encouragement afterwards. Rather than an owner, I who is the foster parent is considered to be the father-in-law." (Naofumi) "Ha~a..... I'm not sure I understand it well, but he seems happy." (Ren) Ren analyzes Motoyasu, who was laughing merrily while touching the Filo Rials.

“And? Motoyasu, are you doing anything? If you don’t have any errands, then play with the Filo Rials.” (Naofumi) He was so devoted to bringing up Filo Rials, I hadn’t given him any particular instructions.

If you raise that large quantity of Filo Rial Queens, they could probably play an active part against the Waves.

“Okay. I would also like to know if I could buy new Filo Rials.”
(Motoyasu) “You still want more! That’s enough!” (Young Filo Rial) At my anger, a young Filo Rial appears from somewhere and berates Motoyasu.

This Filo Rial..... It’s the one Firo borrowed from Motoyasu and entrusted to me. He disappeared before I realized and reappears whenever I’m angry or troubled. Though his Level is raised, there are no changes to his appearance. He has a lovely charm because of his really small appetite. (TN: Not sure if this is a male or female Filo Rial) What is the reason for this?

I mean, was this the Filo Rial counterpart of the Dragon’s core?

This Filo Rial would appear whenever I invite child Gaelion to sleep in the same bed, and they would proceed to intimidate each other.

Well they usually would get along well though.

On the surface they are on good terms, but they have a cold relationship of checking and restraining each other.

“I see..... I will endure it then.” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu backs down meekly.

Or rather I want you to stop calling me your father in law.

However, it doesn’t seem like he would concede over this and there’s no sign of him quitting.

“And? Isn't it almost time to continue your studies, Ren?” (Naofumi)
“Ah. That’s right.” (Ren)

“Father in Law!” (Motoyasu)

“.....What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I would also like to learn.” (Motoyasu)

“Ah, yes. Then go ahead and study together with Ren and the slaves. When night comes, I will do a review.” (Naofumi) He can also observe whether Ren is working seriously.

I will not forget. The thing at Cal Mira Island.

I remember how fervently these guy agreed with Itsuki when he mentioned where they learnt the Different World Language Comprehension skill.

You’ll have to show your sincerity.

“Let us go then! By the way, can’t something be done about how this pig smell? My nose is about to fall off.” (Motoyasu) “I won’t deny that there are many women, but it’s impossible. Your personal odor.... I’ll consider it when you cure your bird odor.” (Naofumi) “Father in Law, isn't this a matured fragrance that is both noble and mellow?” (Motoyasu) “How annoying. Keep your opinions to yourself. If you don’t like it, then leave.” (Naofumi) This guy, he can immediately tell that Kiel is a girl.

I wonder why that is.

Kiel is certainly a female, but she looks like a bishounen. (TN: beautiful boy) Speaking of androgynous faces, Ren would be the king. [T/N: Ren has a super androgynous face]

No doubt, Motoyasu being able to talk to Ren is because he can tell.

“Alright then, I will brace my nose and endure it.” (Motoyasu) “..... Hurry up and leave.” (Naofumi)

I finish distributing the crepes and resume studying for the day.

Chapter 219: Peerless Activity

“Now then...” (Naofumi)

Recently I’ve been practicing adding magic to my skills.

I think it will be good if I can use it as easily as breathing.

My weakness is that the magic consumption is huge so it’s hard to regulate.

Even just Air Strike Shield, sending 2 is the limit of my magic consumption.

Also, as far as I know, what changes depending on the skill is that the cooldown increases proportionately.

And it seems that if I add magic to the Portal Shield, the number of people I can transport increase. With the 6-person limit according to Motoyasu, I was able to transport 7 people because I unintentionally added magic. That was probably it.

I can’t control the part that I’m aware of though.

I can’t do it no matter what, huh.....

One way or another, the magic consumption is extreme. The natural recovery I have is troublesome.

Using Mana Potions are a waste so I have to save them. I use magic also when compounding.

But it’s good if I can use magic when making good things.... and as the Old Man said, it seems that listening to the ingredients is important too.

When I think about it, there’s no end.

Lately I’ve also been doing self-study when Rato isn’t teaching me Alchemy.

A part of my shield has an Elementary Alchemy Skill so I started to learn.

Letting the shield make it is fine but I know it’ll turn out better if I can

make it myself.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atla)

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I feel like your accuracy has improved, but there are still tears?” (Atla)

Atla thrust at the weak points of the Air Strike Shield I fired.

For now, it seems that its strength has improved but it often breaks while being prodded.

“There, right.” (Naofumi)

I can’t help feeling like it’s still incomplete somehow.

I think something more basic is insufficient.

However, it reached a stage where the Female Knight’s attacks became ineffective.

I proposed a contest with the Female Knight who had been training.

The Female Knight mastered the Peerless Transformation Sword Style.

Apparently because she could beat Ren, he happily became an opponent every day as well.

As expected, it seems that Ren’s skills are better normally than when he’s been corroded by the Curse Series.

Since long ago, the frequency of being hit by the Female Knight’s attacks was high.

Well, I specialise in enduring. Even when I’m engulfed by anger, receiving the opponent’s attacks is insignificant.

I think if I face being hit like this then it’ll probably collapse.

It’s fine if that’s the case.

I want to test how well the Prison will work in actual combat on the Female Knight.

“A fight with Iwatani-dono, huh, then I’ll be going at it seriously.”

(Female Knight) “To overtake me and bypass my defence, I won’t less you

pass that point.” (Naofumi) “Well then, it’s fine to see if you can take this! Multilayer Crumble Attack!” (Female Knight) The Female Knight’s special skill that bypassed defence faced me.

The first strike warded off the shield, and the second strike changed direction to my forearm.

The third strike repeatedly intersected, mixing together at high frequencies and when I was about to receive it, I followed the flow of her body and struck.

“Shield Prison!” (Naofumi)

Without overlooking my chance, I materialised the Prison to trap the Female Knight as she focused her consciousness on her attack.

“Ku....But—” (Female Knight)

The imprisoned Female Knight attacked with a bang.

However...the cage gave no sign of breaking.

I think the sound reverberated for around three minutes but before long, it became silent.

And then....Five minutes later.

“What’s with my efforts? The style I finally learnt was also destroyed.....” (Female Knight) She muttered complaints.

“What are you so down about?” (Naofumi)

When I called out to her, she suddenly came to her senses and glared at me with determined eyes.

“Pft! You may have beat me this time but I won’t let you next time so prepare yourself. I’ve received full mastery but I’ve only used the basics.” (Female Knight) “Is that so.” (Naofumi)

It seems the Female Knight doesn’t have the ability to strike the weak points like Alta can.

So next is Rishia.

“Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“W-what is it?” (Rishia)

I call Rishia, who been making progress with her mood change lately, to test it out. [T/N: So no more Fue?]

This guy, she’s levelled up and has gotten considerably strong.

“I’m going to trap you in the Shield Prison for a bit so can you try to break out?” (Naofumi) “Right....I understand.” (Rishia)

Rishia takes out and readies her sword, and I imprison her like the Female Knight.

“Ei!” (Rishia)

It took her around three hits. Her’s was a relatively quick destruction.

As expected, Rishia is stronger than the Female Knight.

Was it only....the status difference?

I don’t understand the disparity of the Peerless Transformation Style.

“Speaking of which, what kind of School is the Peerless Transformation Style? I can’t tell from just the legends so please teach me.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, Yes.... Is what I heard from Master okay?” (Rishia)

“Yeah, I just heard from the Old Hag about how it’s a famous School that rivals the heroes so it’s fine.” (Naofumi)

I heard that there was a legend that matched the Four Saint Heroes and the Seven Star Heroes but I don’t know the actual circumstances so I’d like to hear.

“Lets see....In Master’s story, it seems the origin was an adventurer wanted to overcome danger without relying on the heroes so he founded the School.” (Rishia) Without relying on the heroes, I see.... well in this world, whenever something happens then they summon heroes or rely on the Seven Star Heroes, or at least that’s the image i get.

So it’s a School made from searching for a method to become stronger without relying on those heroes.

Thinking about it normally, to leave the world to the Four Saint Heroes

and the Seven Star Heroes, only 11 people, is an act of sheer madness.

Despite the difference between being able and being unable to do something, having people who will think of a solution by themselves is more natural.

In addition, to leave your own fate in outsiders summoned from a different world or something....

No, they probably had no choice but to leave it to them ability-wise, but there were people who couldn't consent because of that.

"To be able to handle the elements is the foundation, skills come after that." (Rishia) "I see..." (Naofumi)

"I was able to handle the elements and so I ended my absence-of-leave. The other techniques was one part but they were the application of the original School." (Female Knight) "Didn't Master also praise you for achieving mastery?." (Rishia) "Yes, but.... Teacher has yet to teach me about the inner workings, isn't Raphtalia working on those hidden purposes now? Rishia, I also saw her teaching you things that I don't know." (Female Knight) "Th-that's right, isn't it." (Rishia)

"Isn't it obvious that the continuation time of Peerless Activity differs too much?" (Female Knight) "Peerless Activity?" (Naofumi)

"Ah, I only use it during the instant when attacking Iwatani-dono or avoiding. So to speak, it's similar to handling protection magic. Rishia excels at maintaining that activity for a long time. If I try to imitate her, I can probably only hold it for a minute." (Female Knight) "Hmmm...." (Naofumi)

A technique that the Female Knight can only use for an instant, Rishia can invoke that for a long time?

It's that. The so-called 'Overdrive' skill or attack in games.

Giving a massive Power Up for a certain time but it's consumption is extreme or something, so Rishia has that kind of attack.

Or rather, was Rishia able to maintain it for a long time because her

disposition was good?

The Female Knight who used it economically and the Rishia who could use it for a long duration.

It seems the Female Knight had a weaker effect as well.

Actually, I already succeeded in making the Female Knight's special attack become powerless and unable to break open the Prison.

That Ren will probably be surprised. If he knew that I neutralised the Female Knight who was stronger than him.

I'm not going to tell him though.

Either way, the Female Knight can use it so I can probably use it as well.

Hypothetically, even if I can't use it, I should be able to apply it as long as I understand the principle.

The problem is that I didn't realise that that technique was being used until now.

I thought it was natural to have the magic swell up only during the instant of attack.

Actually, in all the battles I've seen, the attackers use magic instantaneously.

In that case, was magic a separate component to that?

Lately, there are times where I feel a discrepancy when I talk to Rishia or the Female Knight, and Atla.

It's when they start talking about 'the elements'.

I don't really understand but, I'll observe these three more attentively.

"I always worry about if my strength has reached its peak. But I can't lose to this level! Rishia! Practice with me!" (Female Knight) "O-okay!" (Rishia)

And so, the Female Knight started training with Rishia.

“Atla, did you understand what she meant?” (Naofumi)

“Um...If I’m not mistaken, Eclair builds up essence inside during the instant she attacks or avoids. I think she was talking about that. Shall I imitate it?” (Atla) “Please.” (Naofumi)

“Then I’ll be starting.” (Atla)

After Atla built up her strength, she jumped towards me.

Fast! Her speed is several times more than her usual speed.

“This is... I’m sure the body and spirit doesn’t possess this.” (Atla) And then she faced me and fired a hit.

Gu.... I didn’t dodge Atla’s attack that disregarded defence and was injured.

There was a slight struggle in my body.

I see, this is really brutal indeed.

Or rather, Atla really is a genius to be able to copy this simply from watching.

Already, she can’t be stopped by the Female Knight.

And so we trained with this kind of feeling.

Chapter 220: Trap

(TL: The one that warrants Hououin Kyouma going, 'Daga Otoko' in the background. Not the Admiral Akbar type.) Eventually night falls, and I invite Ren and Motoyasu to my house. I want to see how earnestly they've been studying.

I used this country's language to make up a test.

Though I don't know why the study hating me is acting like a teacher.

... Well the past few days have been pretty much like this.

Though Motoyasu starts today.

"Motoyaasu, if you're here to play with Filo Rials, then leave!"

(Naofumi) Motoyasu pats his Filo Rial followers as he looks over the questions.

"You can't! If I don't have them, how do you expect me to study in this room that stinks of pigs!?" (Motoyasu) "... *Sigh" (Naofumi)

According to Motoyasu, my entire village stinks of Pigs, and he can't stand being in it.

The only way he can handle it is if he's surrounded by Filo Rials.

I ignore Motoyasu and go check over Ren's work.

"There are a few grammatical errors, but it seems you've gotten a grasp of the language." (Naofumi) "That's because Naofumi diligently teaches me every night." (Ren) He learning quite fast, while I took quite a while.

Of course learning from a chart is much easier than learning from scratch.

It was really difficult for me, who only ever managed to get average scores in English.

Learning a new language will always be quite tough.

Though it was an essential for my life, so I have been able to become quite fluent in it.

“So, Motoyasu, how are you doing?” (Naofumi)

I look at Motoyasu’s paper.

... His scores are higher than anticipated.

They’re just elementary problems, but he has around 80% correct.

He was quite a Realer (TL: Riaju) in his own world. He may be smarter than me.

I don’t know why such a man got hooked on Net Games, but it seems that it is no longer possible to get such information from the individual, and I don’t really want to.

“All is for Firo-tan. I am working hard.” (Motoyasu) “... I see.” (Naofumi)

So he’s learning fast because they’re the letters of Firo’s world.

I guess this is what they call the determination of an idiot.

It seems that he’s highly motivated.

“Do you understand why I’m having you learn the letters of this world?” (Naofumi) “... To help in your peddling?” (Ren)

After thinking for a while, Ren answers.

If he had said ‘In order to learn magic’, then I would have stopped his lessons. I guess he gets passing marks.

It may be an essential skill to learn magic, but if he answered as such, that would mean that he was still lusting for power as he had been before.

“That’s also a reason. Though I’m not sure if you’re saying your true opinion.” (Naofumi) He seems to have some desire to save the world. I’ll leave it at that.

I understand that I’m acting stuck up. But originally, this is a skill he should have picked up on his own.

He should be grateful that I’m even teaching him.

“Well, Ren’s been busy with his sword training recently, so should we end studies here?” (Naofumi) “About that...” (Ren)

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

Ren doesn’t make eye contact. He stumbles over his words.

“Could I, like Naofumi... Be given a job?” (Ren)

He seems to be trying hard as not to be put under suspicion. He looks straight at me and stops talking.

It seems... He is motivated at least.

Though I don’t know his prowess.

“A job... Do you mean like my compounding?” (Naofumi) “Since I’ve come to this village, I’ve heard that Naofumi’s been doing a lot. Cooking, and compounding, making accessories, and even dabbling in alchemy. That’s why I... want to learn to do something.” (Ren) “My dream is to become a Filo Rial herder.” (Motoyasu) “Motoyasu, be quiet for a second.” (Ren)

I see... So Ren has gotten an interest in manufacturing.

Ah, is that why he’s been so earnest in learning the sword?

As he’s a Hero, if he unlocks the required weapons, then he should be able to gain manufacturing skills like mine.

If he really wants to, I don’t see why I shouldn’t...

“I see your enthusiasm. So you want to become a person who makes things.” (Naofumi) Because of the Curse of Greed, Ren can’t touch money, and his monster drops are all bad.

I think it will take a month to recover. Though when coupled with Gluttony, I don’t know.

It’s only been a week and a half since he’s gotten here, so it’ll be a while.

“T-that’s true... but when I see this village’s children, I get the feeling that I can’t continue doing nothing.” (Ren) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

I see where he's coming from.

A majority of the villagers are good with their hands. They make goods to be peddled.

So he got such an impression.

"When your curse lessens, I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi) "Got it." (Ren)

... Doesn't the Onsen at Cal Mira have Curse reducing effects?

Though you can't do anything else while recuperating.

I remember my curse, which was supposed to take a month, being dispelled faster while I was there.

Though I used Blutopfer again shortly afterwards, so my stats fell again.

Since we have a teleportation skill, I should probably look into it.

Should I go check it out tonight... Even though it's for treatment purposes, it sounds a little fun.

Can the other heroes warp there?

Though the island isn't really far or anything.

"Hey, can either of you warp to Cal Mira Island?" (Naofumi) "Hm? Ah, it's a place I haven't set. The Island Activation prevented teleportation skills." (Ren) "How about now?" (Naofumi)

"It's the off season. We won't know unless we try." (Ren) Then it might not be so bad to visit for the onsens.

I'll send the nuisance Motoyasu away to check it out, and wait for his return.

I can leave it to Ren as well.

I wonder if Heroes are able to teleport each other.

"The next thing I need to ask is whether or not Heroes can teleport each other if they're in the same party." (Naofumi) "That is... I never tried so I don't know." (Ren) I guess I'll have to experiment.

I'll try teleporting somewhere with Motoyasu later.

“Mo-kun, are you still studying~?” (Filo Rial)

“I am, Marin-chan. I need to work hard to get Father-in-Law to approve of my marriage.” (Motoyasu) “Muuuu!” (Filo Rials)

Upon hearing that, Red and Green punch him simultaneously.

By the way, I wouldn't let them in my house unless they took on human form.

They made the same promise as Firo.

If they break it, I have punishment in store.

“Marin-chan?” (Ren)

“Don't get involved, Ren.” (Naofumi)

“Well, I'm not really sure, but having a conversation partner is important, right? That's what I've been thinking recently.” (Ren) So he's speaking from experience.

It's not like he's wrong, but he should consider who he's speaking to.

Motoyasu's a landmine. You should steer clear of him.

“I'm glad you asked!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu's eyes sparkles as he loudly proclaims this.

Ah, you stirred up the hornet's nest.

Motoyasu joyfully proceeds into a speech I have no interest in.

“First, this Red child's name is Kuu-chan. The origin of this is Crimson. Next, the Blue one's name is Marin-chan. Her name comes from Aquamarine. Finally, we have Midori. Her name is just as it sounds.” (Motoyasu) (TL: Crimson = Kurimuson, so Ku. Aquamarine = Akuamarin. Green = Midori) “Nice to meet you!” (Filo Rials)

The three quickly lower their heads.

But their eyes are different when they look at me than when they look at Ren.

These birds...

Including Witch, Motoyasu always had three women tagging along with him. Even when he became a pervert, he still continued to be surrounded by women.

But it seems that this time they actually like him.

“I-is that so?” (Ren)

“Motoyasu-san, is this how it’s done?” (Midori) Midori picks up Motoyasu’s question sheet, and starts doodling all over it.

Now that I take a closer look, she got all the answers correct.

Was she cheating?

No, I was watching over Motoyasu when he filled it out, so that shouldn’t be the case.

“Midori, you’re smart.” (Motoyasu)

“Mu!” (Marin and Ku)

Red and Blue let out discontent voices.

They each seem to have different personalities... but I don’t care.

“Ehehe...” (Midori)

The emerald colored one seems to be the smart one of the group.

“Ah right. That one doesn’t fight in monster form, right?” (Noafumi)

“Yeah, she says that angel form is easier.” (Motoyasu) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I see the other two’s monster forms all the time, but I’ve never seen the emerald one.

Hm?

Does a ranking system exist among these three...?

The red one seems a little cold.

Is it my imagination?

I do hate red. I can’t help but associate it with that woman.

I get the feeling that red things are strong-willed.

“It’s because my legs aren’t as powerful as Kuu or Marin.” (Midori) (TL: Uses Boku) “I see...” (Naofumi)

So she’s of a Filo Rial race that isn’t good at kicks?

Yet in human form, she wields a heavy-looking battle axe.

I might look into this.

It seems that there are many types of Filo Rial.

“Instead, Midori is good at identifying poisons, medicines and other things.” (Motoyasu) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Master has mean eyes, and is worse at interaction than Motoyasu-san. But don’t worry, I won’t hold it against you.” (Midori) “What was that!?” (Naofumi)

Firo has been wishing to spit poison for a long time.

This one is toxic in another way... But I won’t say that.

“It’s something a child said. Don’t mind it Father-in-Law.” (Motoyasu)
“I mind it. Send her out! A mouth like that will bring disaster.” (Naofumi)
“I see... I’m sorry Midori, please go home.” (Motoyasu) “Y-you can’t! Motoyasu-san! Let me back in! As I thought, I’m...” (Midori) Motoyasu swiftly transports the emerald one outside of the room.

Amazing! Are my orders truly absolute?

It’s not like I’ll order to him to kill or anything.

but it’s good that he knows who’s boss.

“There’s... something off.” (Ren)

Ren looks over that exchange with a strange look on his face.

He seems to have caught onto something.

“Ah, Midori is the only male among the first angels that hatched. Could that be it?” (Motoyasu)

Chapter 221: Release Time

“What was that!?” (Ren & Naofumi)

I unintentionally harmonize with Ren. But that's to be expected.

That green bird was Male? By his appearance, I can see him as nothing but a little girl.

He's a Filo Rial King?

“N-now that I think about it, you added a -chan to the other two, but didn't for him.” (Ren) “He seems to be self-conscious of the fact that he's male, so he gets angry if I add a -kun.” (Motoyasu) “He seems like quite a troublesome person.” (Naofumi) Ah, I mean Filo Rial.

I guess based on this world's system they would be classified as monsters... I don't think anything will come from thinking over it.

And so I gave up pondering the subject.

It's already night, so I don't want to stress myself out.

“Be he a boy or a girl, the love I give out doesn't change.” (Motoyasu)
“Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

Both me and Ren's faces go stiff.

Does he just see all his Filo Rial as his dear children?

But... He wants Firo as his Waifu.

And these three want to become his lovers.

He's building up some twisted relations.

Though it doesn't seem that the other Filo Rials love him to that extent.

“He used I and spoke in formal tone... I wonder what Itsuki's doing right around now.” (Ren) (TL: this is difficult to convey to English audiences. Midori and Itsuki both speak in a form usually attributed to young boys. They use Boku to refer to themselves, and both speak very formally (With a hint of arrogance)) Ren seems lost in thought.

To get Itsuki from that Toxic green bird. His mind works in strange

ways.

“Going with this flow, he’ll probably be used by Witch around now.”
(Naofumi) “I hope it hasn’t come to that yet...” (Ren)

But that’s a fleeting hope.

Midori repeatedly knocks on the door in protest. It’s annoying.

Motoyasu pats the blue one as he signals me to move to the next topic.

It’s a pain, but to answer his expectations, I randomly think up a problem.

“Returning to topic, Motoyasu, do you want to get a job?” (Naofumi) “I want to be the Lord of the Filo Rial Ranch.” (Motoyasu) “Besides that.”
(Naofumi)

“I’ll do anything if Father-in-Law wishes for it.” (Motoyasu) His canines sparkle as he gives a refreshing smile.

I want to smack him very hard.

... Sigh.

Talking to this man is enervating.

I guess I should arbitrarily assign him some sort of work.

I want Ren or Motoyasu to learn how to make weapons and other equipment.

They could reduce the Old Man’s workload by learning metallurgy.

Also collecting items, and mining doesn’t sound bad either.

“For now, Ren. Soon a smithy will be built in this village, so when your curse weakens go help out there to learn iron working skills.” (Naofumi)
“Understood.” (Ren)

Ren changes his sword’s shape a few times.

Perhaps he’s looking for one that has some iron working functions.

... Oy, go learn how to do that by yourself.

Still, unlike me he has a lot of copied weapons.

“Now that I think of it, Ren. What will you do about releasing the restrictions for your weapons? I don’t want you to waste a lot of time, so I could give you some materials.” (Naofumi) “Releasing...? Ah, I see.” (Ren)

“Why do you suddenly look like you’ve figured something out?” (Naofumi) “Well, the status bonus from releasing weapons is really small, right? I knew Naofumi was strong, but that was the reason? I guess if you continue to stack up trash it will eventually become a mountain. I see... Naofumi really is amazing.” (Ren) Ha? What are you deducing on your own?

“Um... Let me ask this, but about releasing...” (Naofumi) “Ah, besides the ones that give essential skills and bonuses, I’ve put them off.” (Ren) My head hurts again!

So that’s why I found him weak for his level.

Most likely, the contents from his world, Brave Star Online, are still rooted in his head.

I believe he said that Level came first, and Status Boosts second.

His game was a VRMMO. I guess it can be compared to FPS. In those games, Offensive abilities are focused on, and many other stats are left to rot.

He’s begun to realize that this isn’t a game, but he still hasn’t come to terms with it.

“Motoyasu, what about you?” (Naofumi)

“Me? I guess I’ve released them to some extent, but I can’t say it’s perfect.” (Motoyasu) So Motoyasu is better in that aspect...

Since he played normal MMOs, did he try for absolute completion?

I go over to the village storehouse and come back with Spirit Turtle materials.

“Okay, go absorb these into your weapons. Or have you already done so?” (Naofumi) “No, it’s a material I haven’t seen...” (Ren)

Ren feeds the material to his sword.

“With me, the shield it unlocked gave a bonus of Defense + 15. How about you?” (Naofumi) “Attack +10 and Defense +5. But it seems it will take a while to awaken.” (Ren) What?

Um I think I was able to release it in about 12 hours...

“How long do you think it will take?” (Naofumi) “Hm? At this rate, around 3 days.” (Ren)

3 Days... That is a long time.

Does it differ based on the weapon?

I guess the Shield has a shorter release time to compensate for its lack of attack.

“That’s long. Is it fundamentally different from mine?” (Naofumi) I give some of the material to Motoyasu in the same fashion.

“Motoyasu, how about you?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s see. I think I’ll be able to release it tomorrow.” (Motoyasu) So there are differences.

That means...

“Take out your weakest unreleased weapon.” (Naofumi) I look for a weak shield I haven’t used before.

But I can’t find one in my possession. I’ve released them all.

I go over to the kitchen, and borrow one of the fish monsters Sadina brought back.

Ren and the others probably haven’t seen this monster before.

The shield it unlocked was the Blue Bonan Shield.

It was a monster that looked like a sunfish.

According to Sadina, if you boil it, and make it into Jelly, it goes great with Sake.

“Everyone, say the time needed for release.” (Naofumi) “Um... 12 hours.” (Ren)

“Around 6 hours.” (Motoyasu)

“2 hours.” (Naofumi)

“...” (Everyone)

12 hours = Ren.

6 hours = Motoyasu.

2 hours = Me.

(TL: There are no speaker annotations, so that was ambiguous in the original text) For Ren to take 12 hours, how slow is his sword?

“Does it just differ by weapon?” (Ren)

“That’s a possibility, but Ren. Please bring out a sword you haven’t released that has a really short release time.” (Naofumi) “I got it. What are you testing?” (Ren)

“The possibilities are as follows. Each legendary weapon has different release times for each weapon, each legendary weapon has a different release speed in general... or that release proficiency is a stat in itself.” (Naofumi) There the chance that the Spirit Turtle materials were defense-oriented, and thus had a good compatibility with the Shield.

But I think it’s probably the last one.

If Release speed decreases on a level like system, then I, who had diligently released all of my shields, would have a shorter release time.

That also explains the discrepancies in me, Motoyasu and Ren’s times. A simple experiment can prove or disprove this.

“After you’ve released about 30 of those, go check the release time of the Spirit Turtle sword again.” (Naofumi) Ren nods, and changes to a weak weapon.

It’s at times like these that I wonder.

Just how many secrets do the Legendary Weapons hold?

“I’ve been putting this off, but I guess we should discuss the next wave as well.” (Naofumi) “Ah, that...” (Motoyasu)

According to the hourglass, we still have a bit of time left. It's not an urgent matter, but I guess I should tackle it at some point.

"Does anyone have any clues as to the meaning of the Blue Hourglass?" (Naofumi) "My apologies." (Ren)

"... Motoyasu?" (Naofumi)

"No Idea." (Motoyasu)

... That was no help.

Itsuki is probably clueless as well.

"Then... After the Spirit Turtle, what will appear?" (Naofumi) "Houou." (Ren)

"It's Houou." (Motoyasu)

(TL: If you want me to use Phoenix, I can)

Ah, so they knew it.

That's quite amazing.

I did let them both off without much punishment. They have to be of some use in times like these.

"I think you needed to be level... 130 to beat it..." (Ren) "To do the quest, you needed to be 70." (Motoyasu) "There's a 60 level discrepancy here." (Naofumi) Ren was a solo player so... he needed to be 130?

No, we have proof with the Spirit Turtle that that info is of no use.

"After that was the Kirin at level 90." (Ren)

"Oy, it fell!" (Naofumi)

"There's no helping it. Houou was way too strong, and the Spirit Turtle too weak, so they adjusted the game balance when they released the Kirin as a boss, and gave him special abilities." (Ren) Ah... things like that happen in games.

Things start out easy, but enemies get harder as the developers release more. And then players complain, and the Game Balance is restored.

Though I have absolutely no idea whether that info is useful here.

“With a party and appropriate team play, it was easy at 100... but that was info from a game, and I don’t know if it applies here.” (Motoyasu)
“From my experience ‘til now, I don’t think it will go so well.” (Naofumi)
The Spirit Turtle was ridiculously strong. I shouldn’t trust this information.

This is just my hypothesis, but that Spirit Turtle... If they had fully enhanced weapons and party members with growth corrections, they probably would have won.

Ren and Motoyasu recommended a level of 60.

If they were fully equipped, that may have very well been possible.

Of course, I took massive damage from his special moves, and couldn’t deal any.

No matter how strong you are, strong attacks still hurt.

“Then, here’s my next question. What comes after Kirin?” (Naofumi)
“Ouryu.” (Ren)

“Ah, as expected.” (Naofumi)

An even bigger question would be why this world is being attacked by the Four Spirits.

Why would such knowledge from my world manifest in the wave?

Shouldn’t the ones bringing misfortune be the Four Evils and not the Four spirits?

The four Spirits are supposed to be symbols of good luck, you know.

This knowledge is often referenced in literature, so I’m quite knowledgeable.

I mean, I was a textbook Otaku by nature.

Thinking about it from another angle, if they’re monsters essential to the world, that cause atrocities when they appear, that sounds strange as well.

The Spirit Turtle went after and killed living things.

It wasn't limited to humans. It also devoured monsters, so it simply tried to eliminate life.

The other monsters may possess similar traits.

... It's a thought that doesn't lead to an answer. I guess I'll end it here.

"The level required to fight it is 120. The recommended Solo level is 150, and the recommended party level 130." (Motoyasu) "Ah, Yes, yes."
(Naofumi)

Just how strong is that?

The inflation rate of these monsters is amazing.

I sense the ending of the Era of Net Games.

"I believe the story was... The fragments sleeping in the Dragons around the world assimilate and release the seal. The setting was something like that." (Ren) I almost fall over.

... this is definitely a story I've heard before, oy!

Dragon Emperor Gaelion, remember this! You are the Wave!

*

Author Note: I don't think I have to say this, but no, he is not the wave.

Chapter 222: Game Knowledge

“... What comes after that?” (Naofumi)

I'll put off shouting at Gaelion for now. Right now we're thinking of plans for the future.

“To be decided.” (Ren)

“Yep, To be decided.” (Motoyasu)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“The next major boss hasn't been released yet. The updates following that were all events in Local Maps, and they didn't release anything pertaining to the main story for a while.” (Ren) Ah, that's right. If the world achieves peace, the game is over.

Long live preserving the industry. Damn you preserving the industry! Go bankrupt already!

“The Spirit Turtle was Update 7, right?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, the seventh large scale update.” (Ren)

“Do you have any idea how that may relate to the wave?” (Naofumi) “If you consider the time we were summoned to be the start of service, then that would make the first wave we participated in Update 2.” (Ren) Then what of the first wave that decimated Raphtalia's village...?

And would that make Glass's appearance to be 3?

What of 4-6?

Since Ren and the others destroyed the Spirit Turtle seal, were they skipped?

Glass. She disappeared after leaving behind some ominous words.

Ren and the others lost not only to the Spirit Turtle, but also to Glass.

That means that it was probably an unforeseen event.

“Do you know if Humanoid enemies can appear in the Wave?” (Naofumi) “No, that never happened in the games.” (Motoyasu)

Fumu...

It's not like I'm going along 100% with Ren and Motoyasu's game knowledge, but it seems like Glass's appearance was unexpected.

Now that I think about it, that woman seemed to be separate from the calamity of the wave.

The Black Lion that Raphtalia saw, and the Soul Eater that the Three Heroes defeated didn't appear to be beings with intellect.

The Spirit Turtle was no exception.

I don't know if Houou will actually manifest, but he probably won't be intelligent.

... Glass, was it? What exactly is she?

I don't know.

I don't even know the meaning behind her parting words.

Anyways, the Spirit Turtle that awakened with the Blue Hourglass, and the ones that may appear, Houou, Kirin and Ouryu. If we count those monsters as part of the wave, we've done 3 waves so far.

But the only enemy that ran from us was Glass.

Where did she come from, and where did she go?

Another dimension? Another world?

I have no idea what sort of existence she is.

"Did you lose because she was an unforeseen factor?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, she was really strong. I was really suspicious when Naofumi beat her, but considering recent events, I guess it's to be expected." (Ren) "I don't need your praise. Anyways, how did the wave work in the games you played?" (Naofumi) Quests and bosses?

Or were they large scale guild raids and event bosses?

"In my world, they would be fought on the server as Event Bosses, and the events could later be replayed through quests." (Ren) Fumu... It's a common system.

I haven't personally played such a game, but I'll consider it as a TRPG-like system.

"In the actual Spirit Turtle event, a city became unusable due to massive destruction afterwards. In replays, you chose a city to protect and if you failed, you wouldn't be able to access it until you defeated Houou." (Ren) "I see. That's an annoying gimmick. So how widespread were the damages caused by it?" (Naofumi) "... I think that it was great enough for some players to give up the game, and that the turtle was greatly weakened upon replays." (Ren) "You went up against such an enemy!? Wasn't he supposed to be weak!?" (Naofumi) "At that point in time, the level cap was 50. It was said that it would have been easy at 80... Is an excuse. According to the game, if you left it alone, it would gradually get stronger, so it was better if you killed it quickly." (Ren) Just how low level were these players?

Well, in the games that I do know of, the starting level cap is low, and it rises with every major update.

In a First Person VRMMO, level is a very important factor.

A difference in level can easily decide the flow of battle.

Though patches do come around to make it easier for new players.

"Was it the same for you, Motoyasu?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Motoyasu)

"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

I think that Motoyasu was the one who released the seal right before the Spirit Turtle was unleashed...

"In your quests, was it best to undo the seal quickly?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, but it drops rare items if you leave it, so some people purposely let it rampage. For that, Level 80 was recommended. If it gets too strong, it's best to run." (Motoyasu) The basics of Net Gaming. Everything is based on rare drops.

To summarize, the fact that he undid the seal this early in the game

was partially for the sake of the world.

And as in MMOs, where discussing matters with the country bears no fruit, he refrained from doing so.

But it's weird that these guys couldn't beat an unpowered-up Spirit Turtle, but I could beat it after it was left alone for days.

"By the way, how widespread was the destruction in your game?" (Naofumi) "There will be some difference in area names, but is that alright?" (Motoyasu) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

I take out a map, and display it to the two.

"Looking at the update history, the damage spread to these areas." (Motoyasu) Let's see...

The country the Spirit Turtle was sealed in, all the neighboring countries, Melromark, Schild Freiden, and some countries I've never heard of.

The only place I've been that wasn't effected was Zeltburg. That area seems like one that would have a lot of Minigames and easy money in an MMO. They made sure to defend it, I see.

It seems that Faubley and Silt Welt weren't effected either.

"During the event, players were forced to spawn in Faubley. The area around it was immediately rebuilt whenever it was damaged, but many players complained that it was a pain." (Motoyasu) "I want to get a clearer picture. Melromark was..." (Naofumi) "It was a popular city to start in. But it was completely destroyed at some point in time. It was something that happened before I started playing." (Ren) So I was able to prevent that.

Seeing the power of the Spirit Turtle back then, it's not weird for it to bring about this amount of destruction.

"I don't intend to run from my crimes. I don't think that spreading this information will offer me any salvation." (Ren) "Yes, yes. I get it, so don't go killing yourself or anything." (Naofumi) Asking any more of him will

increase his sense of responsibility, so let's wrap this up.

"So next is Houou." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Ren)

"Right." (Motoyasu)

An enemy strong enough to disrupt the game balance.

Though I have no idea how far this info will take me.

"Do you know where it is?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Ren)

Ren and Motoyasu both point to an area.

It's... a country west of Melromark.

So the Spirit Turtle was East, and Houou is West... This may be serious.

"It doesn't seem that the Blue Hourglasses have teleportation functions, so... We'll have to go and check it out." (Naofumi) (TL: I think he's talking about how he gets warped to the wave, but not to the Spirit Turtle) "About that." (Ren)

"Hm?" (Naofumi)

Ren once again breaks eye contact.

What is it now?

It seems that Ren has a hard time asking things of people.

I guess it is difficult considering his position.

"I want to leave Military leadership to Naofumi." (Ren)

"Well, I'll probably be the one to direct the battle." (Naofumi) I did go in front during the Spirit Turtle Battle.

Of course, the plans themselves were handed to me by the Queen and other leaders.

I guided the troops, and did the actual execution of the plan on site.

"No, not like that, I mean I want you to give us orders." (Ren) "... I

understand what you're trying to say, but..." (Naofumi) My analysis is that Ren and Motoyasu are no good at large scale battles.

Though Motoyasu seems to have some Guild experience.

"Do you have experience of doing so?" (Ren)

"A long time ago... I wasn't the strongest, but I did help in directing a large guild." (Naofumi) "As I thought." (Ren)

"You could tell?" (Naofumi)

"When I first met you, you gave off a similar feeling to someone I knew." (Ren) "A friend?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. Her personality was somewhere between the past and the present Naofumi. She was good at taking care of others, and people naturally gathered around her." (Ren) The past me...

Back then, I felt like I could strike up a conversation with anyone.

Rather than worrying about being deceived, I think I just wanted to have a fun life.

"She managed a large guild. So I thought that Naofumi might have some experience as well." (Ren) "I did manage some raids and sieges in my day." (Naofumi) That's one of the major appeals of Net Games.

In order to see just how strong we could get in the virtual world, we would fight. We would aim to enter the strongest dungeons and obtain the rarest items.

Among the countless event presented on the server, there are thousands of things that can't be experienced Solo. That's the appeal of Guilds and Teams.

But it's a little hasty to compare the wave to that.

I can't imagine what sort of things may happen during them.

I always try to avoid battle as much as possible.

"In games, it's usually obvious which guild will win which event." (Ren) And if you can't beat these large scale events, then you won't get the

exclusive items.

You'll miss out on major EXP, and rare items. This is why major guilds scramble for these victories.

But in order to preserve relations, some guilds instead vie for alliances.

Allied guilds sign non-aggression pacts, and repel other guilds in order to not cut their losses any further.

Of course, there are always problems in these agreements, and some people want to protect their positions.

For the leader of a Guild or Team, it is essential to look for the route that gives one's own members the most advantages.

As such, the most important thing for a Guild Master isn't being the strongest, but to make one's team the strongest.

"I don't think it matters who leads, though." (Naofumi)

Team play is important, but in a battle of hundreds of people, it's impossible to watch everything.

(TL: Get on Shiroe's level)

Besides basic commands like 'Advance' or 'Retreat', it's difficult to make appropriate decisions.

Though there are meetings beforehand.

At least in Net Game large scale battles, I don't have the experience of holding major strategy meetings, and making plans to weaken the enemy before the battle.

"In the games you've played, how large of a guild did you manage?" (Ren) "In one server... we were the third largest alliance guild. But we weren't large enough to compete in world competition." (Naofumi) We were quite strong, but nowhere near the strongest.

The character I owned wasn't at the level cap, and instead of raising level, I raised money and human relations.

One of the reasons for this was that it was a game that relied on

expensive equipment and recovery items.

Basically, I went to college and did part time work during the day, while leaving my character's AI to complete simple transactions. At night, I played with my Guild Members.

If there was an event, I would spend more time with them. But I didn't limit myself to games. I also spent a lot of time on Manga and Light Novels.

So I didn't feel an intense need to be the strongest.

I was satisfied with having weaker characters commanded by strategy and teamwork, rather than raising many strong players.

Though I did rise to around 5-10 levels below the max quite easily.

When I went out to help other guild members gain EXP, I would play whatever role was needed.

I think it was a common playstyle.

Anyways, with the power balance, it is impossible to become the strongest in a Net Game.

Even if you do, the next update may weaken you, or increase the abilities of another job, and that's the end.

In the end, it just turns into a competition of who has the best build and skills.

And here is where the game differs from Reality.

"Then you have much more experience than me." (Ren)

"For argument's sake, yes. But the number of times such experience has come in handy here is close to 0." (Naofumi) In the First wave, the only thing I could do was protect the villagers. The next one was the same.

In the Spirit Turtle battle, the Queen and other country leaders were the ones doing the planning, and I was merely their stepping stone.

Though I may be the one with the most experience among the four summoned heroes.

Ren only knows how to play Solo.

Motoyasu was in a small guild.

Itsuki was on Console Games, right? It may have been a strategy game, but I don't think that counts.

We'll have to think up a plan if Houou appears in the next wave.

It's probably best to venture to that land to search for methods to defeat it.

There was the Mural in the Spirit Turtle village. The past heroes probably left something else.

"How did the Quest go with Houou?" (Naofumi)

"According to the game story, after the Spirit Turtle attack, the countries began seriously investigating the matter, and They found the seal and tried to strengthen it, but eventually they failed and it revived."

(Ren) "I see." (Naofumi)

"It's fine, Father-in-Law. I, Kitamura Motoyasu will defeat the Houou with ease." (Motoyasu) "Please be quiet for a bit." (Naofumi)

He says whatever's convenient to get in my favor... Motoyasu, you weren't able to do anything to the Spirit Turtle, right?

I'll deal with him later. He'll probably have something important to input.

Wait... When fighting the Spirit Turtle, the sealing magic failed.

The reason is unknown. Perhaps the turtle was too strong, but that's probably not everything.

I still haven't solved the puzzle left by the past heroes either.

The mural was destroyed and decayed, so only the important parts were hidden.

-because of the wave, the world will ... so this monster to prevent...

Was it?

in the end, what was supposed to be in place of the ...?

Collapse? Ruin?

To prevent that, this monster harvests life?

I'm back to thinking about this.

Anyways, there is a high chance that the countries will fail to seal Houou.

I should probably report this to the Queen.

*

Author Note: You've probably realized from the beginning, but original Naofumi was a Frivolous and diplomatic person.

He participated in many offline meetings.

Chapter 223: Aspiration of Dedication

“Then I’ll ask some more questions. You know about the Class Up, right?” (Naofumi) “What about the Class Up?” (Ren)

“Apparently the level cap for the people of this world is Lv100. However, I’ve heard that a Class Up to surpass that limit exists, but it has been lost.” (Naofumi) “Ah... it looks like it’s different from the game in my world. There was no such thing as being unable to exceed 100, even with the job changes.” (Ren) “I see....” (Naofumi)

“The level cap of 40 was there though.” (Ren)

The knowledge from Ren’s world is also quite doubtful.

It’s very likely that Motoyasu will be the same as well.

It’s all just useless information. It would be great if we could establish a Class Up method to surpass the limit like this though.

And yet, Gaelion wasn’t able to.

“By the way, Father-in-Law. How did Father-in-Law come to possess that little angel that is sticking to him?” (Motoyasu) I ignored Motoyasu and continued the conversation.

“I thought so, but don’t you also feel like this world just keeps leaving out important information?” (Naofumi) “That’s right. Honestly speaking, normally we wouldn’t forget something like a Lv100-surpassing Class Up.” (Ren) Isn’t that right.... even regarding the Peerless Transformation Style, why has such an excellent martial art become something only the Old Hag knows.

The past conflicts are also on my mind but the investigation would be endless.

I’m not getting the information I want, as if it’s intentional.

Somehow it’s an unpleasant atmosphere. I can sense an invisible malice.

I know that the mystery is still ongoing but the trouble is increasing.

“This is just my guess, but is it alright?” (Naofumi) “Tell us.” (Ren)

“It’s the possibility that they need a hero to surpass the limit. It might be that it wasn’t attempted so the method was lost.” (Naofumi) “Ah, I also inferred something like that. It’s just that apparently Heroes are sometimes summoned and sometimes selected so it’s somehow doubtful.” (Ren) “Is that so.... if they were summoning periodically then there’s no way it would be forgotten.” (Naofumi) This wasn’t a case of discussing with Ren and coming up with an answer either.

Discussing things that we don’t know, there’s a low chance of thinking up a solution.

“Really, what the hell are the waves.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah...” (Ren)

“Father-in-Law. Please tell me about the little angel.” (Motoyasu) “Do you have any information about efficient hunting grounds?” (Naofumi) “Right, in that case—” (Ren)

And so I inquired to Ren about everything and procured information.

As far as it goes, it seems that Melromarc is a country with an abundance of good hunting grounds according to the knowledge from the game Ren knows.

I had him tell me about hunting grounds for Lv90 ~ Lv100, but it just confirmed the hunting grounds stated in the Monster Book. If I remember correctly, there should be around 60 locations.

It might not have been taking into account the negative effect of the change in ecosystem or the change due to the waves.

It looked like the enemies were becoming stronger with each wave, and the deployment modifications of net games is probably there.

Well, this world isn’t a game though.

“Sorry for not being of much help.” (Ren)

“Don’t worry about it. I wasn’t relying on it that much.” (Naofumi)
From the start, it was knowledge from guys who caused such a debacle.

I had asked with the assumption of failure so it's the same as not taking any damage.

"Naofumi isn't really questioning me about being responsible for the Spirit Turtle, huh." (Ren) "Oh? I remember you speaking disagreeably though?" (Naofumi) "No, I thought you wanted me to compensate with my life or something." (Ren) You said it with all your heart though... it's because he was corroded by the curse.

Oh well. I'm trying to recruit the good Ren as an ally.

"To put it bluntly, I dislike the people of this world. Whether they live or die has no relation to me. It's enough to just protect those who have been improving before my eyes." (Naofumi) "That's pretty dry." (Ren)

"I don't need you to tell me that." (Naofumi)

"That kind of direction....may be good." (Ren)

Ren stared at me enviously.

He's misunderstanding something though.

"Hey—" (Naofumi)

"Huh?" (Ren)

"You, I think you're quite a naive fellow so I'm saying this. The monsters you've defeated also have families, and you might be ruining their happiness though?" (Naofumi) At my question, Ren's expression gradually turned blue.

Ah, he never even considered that kind of thing.

"To those guys, 'the one who killed your family was me'. Can you go around saying that you're responsible for that? If you make a separation, thinking monsters are monsters, then what will happen to the beloved Filorials of Motoyasu's?" (Naofumi) "Eh, ah....u..." (Ren)

Sigh.... it's a troublesome age.

"You might be confused as to why I'm saying this, but there's a girl looking after monsters in the monster hut, right?" (Naofumi) "Y-yeah."

(Ren)

“She’s a Demi-human that was raised by the dragon you killed. It’s your fault she became so unhappy.” (Naofumi) Ren hurriedly put his hand on the door as if he was going to exit the house.

“Where are you going?” (Naofumi)

“If I don’t apologise quickly..” (Ren)

“What will you do to apologise? Say ‘I’m sorry for killing your father. I will die here in exchange’?” (Naofumi) In this situation, should I call Taniko?

Well even if I call her, she’ll probably be very sullen.

Ren didn’t actually know, but she already knew.

She did say that she wanted to stop this chain of hatred, and it seemed that she didn’t going so far as to take revenge against Ren.

Because wild animals, or monsters in this case, lived severely.

They didn’t know when they would die, so they didn’t need something like vengeance.

She had a firmly-rooted conscience, thanks to Gaelion’s teachings.

To not be thinking of revenge deserves some merit.

I do respect it, but it’s something I can’t do in practice.

“B-but—” (Ren)

“You’ll just be striking at her. That’s why you should leave it.”

(Naofumi) “Even then....I..” (Ren)

“It’s the same as eating meat and eating vegetables. In the end, you’re living by sacrificing something else. The world won’t turn with just the lip service the Female Knight spoke of. Or rather, it’s better if you have the resolution to survive by trampling on someone and make up for your sins.” (Naofumi) “Isn’t that a contradiction?” (Ren)

“Huh? What are you, a hero who grinds monsters and becomes stronger in order to save the world, saying? It’s survival of the fittest, right? I

wouldn't prefer to just kill as if in a game." (Naofumi) This is a world where experience can even be gained by killing humans.

Don't say nonsense such as humans and monsters being different.

"That's why, Ren, if you want to apologise to her then when you kill monsters, kill them with proper determination." (Naofumi) "I-I got it." (Ren)

He made a reluctant face.

It's because Ren is similar to the Female Knight. He probably has high ideals.

"But even so, I.... want to apologise, and protect everyone." (Ren) "I see." (Naofumi)

This is already a disease.

It's just a complete change from a gamer's mindset to aspiring to be a saviour with dedication.

Moreover, there's even the addition of masochism.

"Father-in-Law. Please tell me." (Motoyasu)

"Shut up. Hurry up and go back, study and then sleep!" (Naofumi) That Motoyasu, he probably didn't listen to what I said.

Ignoring that, I turned to a different problem.

What was it that I wanted to ask Motoyasu?

For now there's that.

"That's right. Motoyasu, the spear you used.... Lust Envy Spear, was it. What sort of compensation does it need?" (Naofumi) "?" (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu tilted his head in confusion.

Hey, what's with the question mark.

"Did I use something?" (Motoyasu)

"The Temptation thing. The other one was Ressentiment, right?" (Naofumi) [T/N: Ressentiment: a sense of hostility directed at that which

one identifies as the cause of one's frustration.]

“Ah, that skill was something that appeared when I reached IV.”
(Motoyasu) What the hell!?

In other words, it's a skill superior to Blutofer?

A skill that can be invoked with no compensation, how much of a cheat is that.

“Did anything happen when you used it?” (Naofumi)

I don't really understand, but I didn't feel envious of Father-in-Law after I used Ressentiment. I didn't feel like changing it but that spear couldn't be changed.” (Motoyasu) It was invoked at the cost of Envy?

Then what about Temptation?

Thinking about it, it probably uses Lust.

However...

“Motoyasu, what do you want to do after being engaged to Firo?”
(Naofumi) “Hahaha, Father-in-Law is quite hasty. Of course, it would be building a happy family. I want lots of children.” (Motoyasu) “”Muuu!”
(Filorials)

Motoyasu's followers started hitting him repeatedly.

No matter how I interpret his words, I feel like Motoyasu just wants to do obscene things with Firo.

Motoyasu has so much Lust that it can't even be completely taken away by the Curse Skill.

Or rather, it's apparent that his condition has a foundation of Lust, with Envy mixed in.

Therefore, it's fine to think that Motoyasu's incomplete Envy separated from him.

How was he as a human?

“Yes, but I have one thing I must apologise to Firo-tan and Father-in-Law for.” (Motoyasu) “It's not just one thing.” (Naofumi)

You need countless apologies.

Enough to apologise to the underworld even.

Because you could've become a demon lord or something.

"Actually, there's one other eye-catching person apart from Firo-tan."
(Motoyasu) "Oh really, then head that way." (Naofumi)

"However, I only met her once so I do not know her. She looked like an extremely large Filorial." (Motoyasu) Fitoria....so you had encountered Motoyasu before.

You didn't go yourself that time because you had such a reason. [T/N: Refers to Fitoria making Naofumi deal with the carriage stealing problem (which turned out to be Motoyasu and his harem of Filorials)]

"It seems she came because these children were candidates to be the next queen but when I realised, they had already lost their candidacy."
(Motoyasu) "...What happened?" (Naofumi)

"Who knows? Before I knew it, all that was left was a lot of loose feathers." (Motoyasu) He embraced her.

And so she frantically teared him off and ran away.

"Ah...she was beautiful like Firo-tan, and so my tolerance....excuse me. I, Motoyasu, am devoted to Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu) "No, it's fine because she's eye-catching." (Naofumi) That stupid Bird Queen. In the end, she dumped this troublesome thing on me.

It wasn't a disobedient Filorial, she probably wanted Motoyasu to meet with me.

...Firo's sexual urges were also suspicious.

Jeez.... After our conversation, Ren and the others each returned to their own homes.

After that, Atla and Sadina came to my house to sleep.

It's already become routine.

By the way, Firo was grounded so she slept at Melty's.

Sometimes Gaelion will come so I'll ask him, but recently Kiel or Imia will be sleeping in my bed.

Apparently they've been switching around because it's a 'daily special'.

As far as it goes, Kiel is a veteran among the slaves so her friendship is widespread, and Imia has deep relationships with the production team.

Hence they are the perfect people to inquire to about the status of the village.

And incidentally, they can also be good as a countermeasure against Atla.

"Nii-chan. We came together to sleep." (Kiel)

"Please treat us well." (Imia)

"Ah, let's go sleep early. Imia, how are your colleagues?" (Naofumi)

"Right. Everyone is working day and night to make products." (Imia)

"....Be careful not to harm your health. Mass production is important but I'll be troubled if you guys get sick." (Naofumi) "Yes, I understand." (Imia)

I don't know if it's because those dexterous Lumo and Aquatic slaves liked it but if I didn't caution them, they would work all night to manufacture goods.

It's been profitable thanks to that though....

I've given them a portion of the proceeds and when I ask what they'd like as thanks, they request that I cook some food.

I wonder if that much is fine....

"Uuh, Naofumi-sama. Why is it that only I cannot sleep together with you?" (Atla) "Atla, I get the shivers when I sleep with you. That's why it's no good." (Naofumi) Mainly, I feel like she will target me as a carnivore.

If I didn't have the intention of running a household, staying in this world would be unthinkable.

The next morning, Ren tried hard to look after Taniko, which she hated.

Taniko also didn't do anything about Gaelion but she glared at me for

Ren's situation, although I didn't really care.

"Now then, Gaelion. Shall I have you explain the meaning of this?"
(Naofumi) While Taniko and Ren had their little dialogue outside the monster hut, I crossed my arms and glared at Gaelion.

Firo, in her monster form, lay in wait behind him.

That was so I could threaten him depending on his answer.

"Wh-what?" (Gaelion)

"I heard from Ren that the fragments will form a being on the same scale as the Spirit Turtle – Ouryuu. What's that about?" (Naofumi) [T/N: Ouryuu, also known as Yinglong, is a dragon from Chinese mythology.]

"Wha!? I-I don't know!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion declared, his eyes swivelling around frantically.

"You better not be lying. Depending on your answer, I might feed you to Firo." (Naofumi) "Hmm? You'll do that to Gaelion?" (Firo)

I knew she disliked him but that Firo, she opened her mouth in jest.

So you hate him that much.

"I really don't know! So that sort of thing will happen after I collect all the fragments!?" (Gaelion) Hmm.... this panic, it seems he really doesn't know.

"Even if that happens, I can always explain the pretext and won't betray thou!" (Gaelion) "It's possible the assembled fragments will take over." (Naofumi) "In that case, defeat me without hesitation!" (Gaelion) "Ah, yes yes. I get it, I get it." (Naofumi)

"By the way, the Hero of the Sword seems to be making a pass at Wyndia. Will you please move aside?" (Gaelion) "He probably wants to take responsibility. Let him do as he likes." (Naofumi) "Thou.... if that's so then explain." (Gaelion)

"Why is that? It's because only his sense of responsibility is strong. I have expectations for Taniko's response." (Naofumi) Ah, I heard the

sound of a slap.

That Taniko got angry and hit Ren's cheek.

“Even if you apologised, Father won't come back!! So if you want forgiveness then go save the world!” (Taniko) Such a thing could be heard, spoken in a loud voice.

Well, there wasn't any need to peep.

I don't know the details of what happened, but Ren started hanging around Taniko a lot afterwards.

Or rather, Taniko...even though your father has changed his form, he's still nearby.

Even now, I don't understand Gaelion's reason for hiding.

Chapter 224: Fiancé

Ren: “I’m fine like always”

Naofumi: “I see”

I decided to not go peddling today.

This time, the one going was the Hero of the Sword.

I still don’t completely trust Ren yet, but since he was wasting time at the village, I decided to let him go peddle while being escorted by the Female Knight.

If he doesn’t return, I will definitely kill him.

Ren: “Well then I’ll be heading out”

Naofumi: “Yeah”

Incidentally, Taniko is also going along to peddle.

She was reluctant, but I convinced her to leave the village.

It was quite the noisy struggle.

I also convinced Rat to watch over the monsters since she wasn’t that busy lately.

The reason being is thanks to Motoyasu and his army of Philorials.

Naofumi: “Don’t fight”

Taniko: “But the Hero of the Sword is-”

Taniko immediately came to me to complain.

She didn’t want to be near Ren. And of course I knew she had no interest in him either.

Naofumi: “I know that taking responsibility is useless. So I’m counting on you to watch over his feelings. Along with that arrogant and selfish Female Knight. It’ll be just like a romantic comedy.”

Taniko: “...Romantic comedy?”

Well, Taniko wouldn’t be affected, but it would be an amusing situation

to throw her in-between Ren and the Female Knight.

Though I might wake up the next day to find out that it turned into a murder mystery.

Naofumi: "Hurry up, get going"

Philorial: "Kue~"

...In front of me was a Philorial that just cried out kue.

You do realize that I know you can talk.

The carriage vanished at a remarkable speed.

Naofumi: "Well then, I should get ready to make lunch"

I began some small preparations in the kitchen.

Naofumi: "Do you want to eat something uncooked?"

Melty arrived while riding Firo.

Melty: "How rude. We came with a request for the village"

Melty: "Whether you take it seriously or not, you are still an Earl and I am your subordinate.

Naofumi: "Well, I suppose you're right"

Melty: "I guess it can't be helped, since you are the Hero of the Pot Lid"

Naofumi: "Melty... I never expected you to say that too!"

I thought it was only the soldiers who treated me as nothing but a cook, but it seems to have spread to the entire village.

Sometimes they try to make me cook for them, but I won't let them have a single bite now.

Melty: "Huh? Did it offend you? I was under the impression that the Shield wouldn't mind"

Naofumi: "Firo, you have exceeded the bounds of everyday friendship. That's why, Firo I leave Melty to you."

Melty: "Stop bringing that up! It was an emergency situation-"

While we were talking, I finished all my preparations.

By the way, the request that Melty mentioned was that the Queen was coming to visit in the near future.

That was the official reason... but.

It seems to be a trap to draw out all the revolutionaries.

Whether it is ally or foe, there seems to be various conspiracies going on.

And, finally Melty who had enough of my teasing, left the village.

Damn, treating me like a babysitter. I'll get my revenge later.

Speaking of which, the village is pretty quiet-Motoyasu: "Father-in-Law!"

It can't be.

Naofumi: "What is it, Motoyasu?"

Motoyasu: "What is it that you would like me to do?"

Naofumi: "Go to Cal Mira and make a portal there"

Hmm? His three followers looked confused when I mentioned Cal Mira Island.

Naofumi: "Go visit the hot springs, you can bring those guys as well"

Followers: "Yay"

That reminds me, Firo said that the Philorials had begun losing interest in work.

While there are many reasons, I had no clue.

Just what kind of compounding did he make them do.

Motoyasu: "Well then, Father-in-Law when will you accept the engagement between Firo and I?"

Naofumi: "I already told you... wait until we achieve world peace!"

At least once a day we end up having this conversation.

I had enough of it already.

Do you really like Firo that much?

Naofumi: "So, Motoyasu, give up on Firo and settle for those three"

Upon my order, the three's eyes started to sparkle.

Eh? What, is it really something that would make you guys that happy.

Motoyasu: "Hahaha, Father-in-Law that is a great joke"

Naofumi: "It is?"

Motoyasu: "After all, it's a crime to lay ones hands on children"

...What?

Huh? Does that mean he hasn't done anything to them yet?

That lecherous pile of lust Motoyasu?

This is unbelievable.

Midori: "It is as Master said, that going into heat won't bring us happiness"

Motoyasu: "That is absolutely correct!"

Midori: "That's right. We believe that Motoyasu-san is the one who can bring us true happiness"

The three stated chirping away in an uproar Too noisy.

And lastly Green, just what are you planning to do with Motoyasu.

Naofumi: "So Motoyasu, I take it that you haven't laid a hand on any of the Philorials in the village?"

Motoyasu: "Isn't it obvious"

Naofumi: "Ah...I see"

Huh?

I recall seeing the Philorials carrying around eggs from their stable.

....

Philorial: “Kue-”

Naofumi: “Were those eggs Motoyasu’s?”

Philorial: “Kue! KUEKUE!”

To deny my accusations, the Philorial shakes it head.

Although its head’s motion is good, I still find it strange.

Naofumi: “Do their species lay edible eggs?”

Motoyasu: “I think so”

Philorial: “Kuekue”

Midori: “As I thought Serenity is fond of Master too. How popular” (TL note: I have no idea what name this could be スリネタ for now I’ll go with Serenity) ...Hang on.

Midori: “The Future Queen Firo said that if she wasn’t here, we should give Master lots of love in her place”

I’m...I’m finished.

Calm down me, its just something a bird said.

Motoyasu: “Hahaha, Father-in-Law sure is popular. But I won’t lose either”

Naofumi: “Shut up!”

I’m at my limit with this ridiculous situation!

How do I get rid of this idiot.

Naofumi: “Hurry up and leave already”

Motoyasu: “Yes, the preparations are ready but I sill have some time left, right? So I want to spend it bonding with Father-in-Law”

Naofumi: “Get out!”

Motoyasu: “Hahaha. Father-in-Law, getting angry like that is bad for your blood pressure”

Dammit. I want this to end already.

Then I made a realization.

Right now I could have the best revenge on Melty for treating me like a babysitter.

Naofumi: "Motoyasu, I wanted to tell you earlier but... the truth is that Firo already has a Fiancé"

Motoyasu: "Of course Father-in-Law is referring to me"

Naofumi: "Your wrong"

Motoyasu: "Eh...?"

Motoyasu had an expression as if he was on the verge of collapse.

Fufufu...That's the kind of face I wanted to see.

But then again, completely believing that you were already engaged is a problem itself.

Naofumi: "Her name is Melty Melromark. She is the future Queen of this country"

Motoyasu: "Wha..."

Naofumi: "Ah, Incidentally don't think about killing Melty. She is taking care of Firo's heat. I believe Firo is with her right now. Of course you realize how bad it would be if you killed her and Firo found out, right?"

Motoyasu: "Melty, if I remember right, she is the sister of Witch?"

Naofumi: "Yes, she is the younger sister of Witch and the legitimate heir to the throne. And I believe the right to choose belongs to Firo. But against those odds do you think you can win?"

Motoyasu: "W-well..."

Oh? Is he starting to get jealous?

Motoyasu: "Firo-tan's Fiancé...I will make you recognize that it could only be me!"

Naofumi: "Okay?"

Motoyasu: "I will show you that the only one worthy enough to be Firo-

tan's Fiancé is me"

Motoyasu declared as he held his spear to the sky.

With that can you finally calm down?

It sounded nice, but it was going to end up a problem later.

Motoyasu: "Everyone, lets go!"

Followers: "Yes!"

Motoyasu goes to the carriage that is pulled by those three.

Followers: "Please give us your orders"

Motoyasu: "Isn't it obvious!"

With Motoyasu's reply, the three charge off to the town at an amazing speed.

Slave: "Did I see something amazing just now?"

A slave came to ask me.

Naofumi: "Well, I guess so"

With this the village is once again peaceful.

I still have some time before I meet with Atla for her compounding lessons.

Later that day, Melty, in a fit of rage, came firing magic at my home.

Furthermore, she wouldn't stop until her magic was completely exhausted.

As a result, my house was completely demolished.

Well, It can't be helped since I did think that I went a bit too far.

But it was something that was unavoidable when dealing with Firo.

Also, it seems that Motoyasu was able to converse with Melty without treating her like a blue pig.

Motoyasu must have recognized Melty as someone he could respect.

Motoyasu: "[I won't give Firo-chan to the like of you!] I will make you

accept it as fact! I will save Firo-tan from this impure relationship!"

Naofumi: "How did you end up talking with Melty?"

Motoyasu: "At first I thought that she was just a blue pig. But, since it was someone Firo wanted to get along with, I realized that it couldn't be a pig. Although it hurts to admit it, she was indeed the future Queen"

Hmm, it seems that Firo can affect whether he sees someone as a pig or a women.

I should handle Motoyasu more carefully or it could end up badly.

Then again, Firo flirting with a blue pig was not the story I had told him.

Motoyasu: "But even so, I will not give up"

Motoyasu: "...I see hypnotism"

Of course the odds that Melty brainwashed Firo is zero.

Will Motoyasu ever grow out of that?

No, No. Motoyasu already has a complete monopoly on brainwashing.

I glad for you Melty.

Motoyasu seems to have recognized you as the only human women.

Not only that, the future Queen as well. And also as a rival in love.

Naofumi: "Now that everything is settled, hurry up and go make that portal at Cal Mira"

Motoyasu: "I understand, Father-in-Law. Let my actions be testimony to my worth as her Fiancé"

After hearing my words, Motoyasu left in earnest.

As a result of our experiments, I found out that it was possible for Heroes to use the portal of allies.

Although the system message said it wasn't possible.

Either way, the village is once again quiet.

That being said, I told his three followers to try and stay at Cal Mira Island for as long as possible, but given his last words I shouldn't expect too much.

Chapter 225: Disagreement

“Now then, today we’ll be going to the Weapon Shop to order Firo’s carriage so get ready.” (Naofumi) “Carriage~?” (Firo)

Firo, who sent Melty back to the town, inclined her head and asked.

“Yeah, I want you to come, Firo, to choose the kind of carriage you want.” (Naofumi) “Okay! I got it~!” (Firo)

I don’t have anyone else I want to bring at the moment..... just Firo is fine.

Using the Portal, I jumped to the Castle Town with Firo.

And then we made an appearance at the Weapon Shop.

“Oh? So it’s Laddie. You have bad timing.” (Oyaji)

The Old Man looked at my face and muttered a little regrettably.

“What’s wrong?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, we finished your Shield and were waiting for you. But we didn’t know when you would be coming so I guy took the opportunity and had that guy deliver it.” (Oyaji) [T/N: That guy = Imia’s Uncle]

“Is that so.” (Naofumi)

Well, I hadn’t asked when it would be completed and similarly, we hadn’t clarified when to come for the carriage commission either.

The Old Man took in the situation and did the smart thing, but it was bad timing indeed.

“I think it’ll be arriving any time now.” (Oyaji)

“Then I’ll be looking forward to it. Is it okay to pay you the money now?” (Naofumi) “It’s fine to pay after you’ve received the goods.” (Oyaji)

“Hmmm... Then I’ll give you 5 gold now as a deposit and I’ll pay the rest after I’ve received it. Is that okay?” (Naofumi) “Laddie is stubborn like that. It’s fine to just pay me afterwards but it makes you feel at ease then it’s alright.” (Oyaji) The Old Man nods when I pass him the money.

His generosity is nice and really helps a lot.

“So? Today you’ve come for Miss Birdie’s carriage, right?” (Oyaji)
“That’s right. You told me to bring her along last time, so I did.”
(Naofumi) “Hm~? Yeah. Carriage~!” (Firo)

Right then, Miss Birdie. What sort of carriage is good? An iron one like before?” (Oyaji) “How much would that cost?” (Naofumi)

“How much is your budget?” (Oyaji)

“For the time being... I can afford it. It’ll depend on its value.”
(Naofumi) “Alright.” (Oyaji)

The Old Man showed Firo the blueprints and asked which was good.

“The last one was broken, right? Should I make it more resilient? Or should I make it lighter so it’s easier to move? Then it’ll be able to handle more unreasonable movements, to a certain extent.” (Oyaji) “Hmm... you know~ the heavy one is better.” (Firo)

“That is, well....” (Naofumi)

“Miss Birdie is strong so it might not satisfy you, but lightness is important for running quickly.” (Oyaji) “Is that so?” (Firo)

“Yeah, if the carriage is light and durable then you can transport heavy items. It all depends on Miss Birdie though.” (Oyaji) The Old Man also lets Firo take part in most of the discussion. Frankly, I’m afraid to ask because it seems like their realising a child’s dream.

It seems that it’ll turn out to be a seriously weird carriage.

“If you want a heavy one then it’s fine to just request that Laddie fill it up with items. That’s why I recommend a sturdy and light one.” (Oyaji)
“Then that’s good.” (Firo)

“What will you do about the metal?” (Oyaji)

“Let me see~ I’d like something that will react when I charge it with power.” (Firo) “Alright. Do you want two wheels? Four?” (Oyaji)

“Four~” (Firo)

“With a canopy roof? Or enclosed?” (Oyaji)

“A big house-like one would be good~” (Firo)

“Haha, don’t go overboard with your dream.” (Oyaji)

I fear it may turn into something like a camper van.

“And then~ it’ll transform with a bang~” (Firo)

No such carriage exists. Or rather, we don’t need it.

If possible, I’d prefer a normal carriage. I seriously think so.

We don’t need a Robo! We really don’t need it!

I’d be troubled if a carriage-shaped Golem was made.

“Do you want it to be two-storied as well?” (Oyaji)

“Hmm...” (Firo)

The Old Man and Firo continued the conversation like that and in the end, they decided on a design that was slightly larger than the previous carriage.

I couldn’t be as patient as the Old Man.

If he was less skilled, it would’ve turned into a house-like carriage.

Apparently the metal used would be an ore that would react to Firo’s magic to become lighter and sturdier to a certain extent.

“If I remember correctly, Laddie will be supplying the ore, right.” (Oyaji)
“Yeah, I can borrow a mine from the Queen. I should be able to tell them to lend it to me with precedence for you.” (Naofumi) “That’s right. A somewhat rare ore is mixed in so if you can provide that afterwards then the production cost will be cheaper.” (Oyaji) “Understood. Please give me a memo with the materials. I’ll bring them later.” (Naofumi) “Thanks for your patronage. I’ll also be taking some materials from Laddie’s warehouse in the Castle.” (Oyaji) The Old Man wrote the memo while muttering, which I received and then proceeded to check the materials.

Yeah... there are some ores mixed in that I haven’t really heard of. I’m doubtful as to whether I can supply them.

It seems it could be handled in Zeltbur, but can they be mined in Melromarc?

I'll try to ask the Queen later.

Well, it wouldn't be bad to take the Lumo slaves in the village and go mining either.

Imia's Uncle is now a blacksmith in the village, and he'll also need a large supply of materials.

"Then I'll come again after I've gathered the materials." (Naofumi)
"Alright. I'll be looking forward to your next visit." (Oyaji) "Yeah, I'll come again." (Naofumi)

Well, I am a regular of this store. I can have him make a shield again if I collect good materials.

If I think about it, it seems he can make it if I bring monster materials.

Anything apart from the Spirit Turtle would be fine.

It seems I can increase the efficiency if I also get Imia's Uncle to make them.

The problem is money though. I can manage to some extent.

"So how much will the production cost of the carriage be?" (Naofumi)
"I'll be making various things so it won't break. For you, it'll be 20 gold coins." (Oyaji) "It's rather high but... I'll take a gambit." (Naofumi)

Because it's something that will counterbalance Firo's actions.

The expenses are quite severe but I can probably manage with my current finances.

"Ah, also, there might be a disturbance in the Castle Town soon so please be careful." (Naofumi) "I got it, Laddie." (Oyaji)

"Worst case scenario, there may be an incident with the reason being that I am a regular here. Please take care." (Naofumi) "You're too prone to worrying." (Oyaji)

"Because I wouldn't be able to survive if I wasn't." (Naofumi) The Old

Man nodded many times in reply to my response.

“Even so, this is a famous Weapon Store in this Castle Town. I’m accustomed to jealousy and harassment, and I used to fight a lot of bandits in the past. Don’t worry, Laddie, I won’t lose to such half-hearted things.” (Oyaji) “....That’s right.”

One way or another, the Old Man appears to be strong, there’s no need to worry.

“Well, soon I’ll be away for a short while though.” (Oyaji) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“For material supplies. We might even meet in the mines, perhaps.” (Oyaji) So he’s short on supplies.

The Spirit Turtle incident caused the facilitation of the arming of citizens all across the country.

As a result, many of the ores used as weapon materials were used up. It’s not like I don’t understand, and that was also profitable.

Above all, everyone’s sense of danger grew and there a large number with a strong interest in the waves as well.

Back in my world, even if there was a calamity somewhere in Japan I had thought my own surroundings were fine as well, but I’ve probably improved my awareness by looking at this damage that I can see.

“It’s regrettable, but I should leave it as it is.” (Naofumi) With that feeling, I exited the shop.

Ah, when I showed up at the Queen’s place to ask about the progress, it hear that the plan has been advancing in these few days.

It’s a dangerous state of affairs.

Come to think of it, I feel like the Castle Town was also a little tense.

For some reason, there were several adventurers directing their animosity at me and looking into the Weapon Shop.

....For preliminary arrangements, huh. I’ve already warned him, so I

can't help thinking it'll be alright.

Just to be sure, I'll leave a report for the Queen.

We returned from the Castle Town and resumed my studies with Atla while I waited for Imia's Uncle.

"He's late." (Naofumi)

The sun had set and dinner was over, and yet Imia's Uncle had not turned up.

Speaking of which... the slaves who were supposed to return today haven't come back either.

Were they delayed?

Even if I'm worried, I can't do anything. They've probably been delayed by some other delivery.

I didn't really think too deeply about it.

That was until... there was a disturbance in the neighbouring town the next day.

"Hero-sama!" (Imia)

When I was preparing lunch, Imia turned up with a change in her usual facial expression.

"What's the matter?" (Naofumi)

"U-um...Uncle is...." (Imia)

"What happened to your uncle?" (Naofumi)

"That is, he came to the town with a huge injury." (Imia) "What did you say!? I'm heading to the town immediately. Everyone is to suspend their work, arm themselves with weapons and armour and remain vigilant until I return." (Naofumi) Leaving those words behind, I ran to the town with Imia.

Chapter 226: Abnormality

Elena: "Oh, well isn't it the Hero of Shield"

Naofumi: "You are-"

At the town's clinic, was someone that I knew.

If I remember right, she was one of Motoyasu's companion, Elena.

Like before she was attentive and calm, even as a clinic receptionist.

Her personality when she was a companion of Motoyasu seemed like a complete lie.

Naofumi: "Why are you here?"

Elena: "To help my parents"

Now that I think about it, her mother was a merchant.

And I recall her saying that she might come and visit my land soon.

Elena: "While I was going to your town, I somehow was attacked by bandits but I was saved. I believe the one who helped me was the demi-human right next to you."

Elena: "Just as I thought, the nice man that saved me was you! You have my utmost gratitude"

You already have gone under a class up, so fight them yourself.

Elena explained that while she was under attack by the bandits, Imia's Uncle protected her and let her escape, but he sustained pretty bad injuries in the process.

When we found Imia's uncle, he was covered in wounds and his carriage was nowhere to be found.

Even though Imia's uncle should be at the level where he can easily protect himself.

Imia's Uncle: "You shouldn't worry about me. If anything I should be more concerned about the sparks from the forge."

Naofumi: "I see"

Imia's Uncle: "Also...I was debating whether to tell the Hero of the Shield this, but the bandit was well-dressed despite being a bandit, though I could be mistaken. "

Hmmm...Right now, I am more concerned about the condition of Imia's Uncle.

Should I tell the Old Man of the Weapon store?

For now, I decided to wait and see what kind of state he was in.

Naofumi: "For now, I'll keep quiet about your condition."

Imia's Uncle: "Yes!"

Naofumi: "Elena, was it? It's a shame but for the time being please help out with the investigation"

Elena: "Ah, of course. I also recall a place that was very suspicious"

Naofumi: "To make sure your innocence, we will go and investigate it"

Melty immediately had sent her subordinates to investigate the incident, as to ensure that no false charges were made.

As we talked with the receptionist, we explained the situation.

Afterwards, she showed us the way to the healer.

At the examination room, Imia's uncle underwent a treatment of recovery magic.

Imia's Uncle: "Ugh..."

Imia's uncle had lacerations covering his body, they were quite bloody.

Imia's Uncle: "I'm fine...is what I would like to say"

To help with the treatment, I took out some medicine as it can work in combination with the magic.

Imia's Uncle: "Hey, Hero..."

Feebly, Imia's uncle tried to talk with me.

Imia's Uncle: "I would like... to apologize... All the effort we put in...was stolen so easily"

Naofumi: "Don't worry about. Its fine that it was taken. More importantly, I am glad that you are still alive."

Imia's Uncle: "I'm so sorry... ugh..."

Imia's uncle painfully grasped his head.

Would the old man be okay? The bandit's blade may have been coated with poison.

I use an antidote just in case.

When the treatment had finished, Imia's uncle's condition had stabilized.

Looking at his body, you could see the traces of a stab wound and the remainder of a cut.

It did not look like it could be fatal...but it still seemed strange.

Recovering from this would be rough.

There was a possibility of him being under a curse, if so we might need holy water or the dragon pulse to completely cure him.

Right now Imia's uncle is fast asleep.

Naofumi: "Well then..."

Since he is nearby, I should inform the Old Man of the Weapon shop on the current situation.

Since I can't let them run free, I should go and immediately subjugate the bandits in the area.

Those who go against the shield would not be forgiven.

But for now, should I go report to the Old man of the Weapon shop?

Though I should refrain from saying too much.

Imia: "Uncle..."

Imia looks anxious while looking at her Uncle's sleeping face.

Naofumi: "Don't worry. His life isn't in danger. Once he wakes up, you can take him to the village to recover."

Imia: "Okay..."

Naofumi: "Well then, I'm going to do a little bandit hunting"

Imia: "Okay!"

I won't stand by and turn the other cheek.

I will hit back when hit.

To steal in my territory, you better be prepared to lose everything.

While Imia is looking after her uncle, I leave with Firo, Atla and Rishia to the place that Elena informed us about.

It was near a forest at the edge of my territory.

It is along one of the routes I use to reach Castle town from my village.

Naofumi: "Firo, can you tell if there is anything here?"

Firo: "Hmm... There probably isn't anyone around, I suppose?"

Hmmm.

I guess that they won't be that easy to find.

Naofumi: "Their hideout might be nearby. Go look for it"

Rishia: "Yes"

Firo: "Yes~"

Naofumi: "Atla, can you sense anything?"

Atla: "Well... there seems to be some remnants of a malicious power"

Naofumi: "Malicious?"

Atla: "It is similar to the power that the Hero of the Spear had, as well as the Hero of the Sword..."

Naofumi: "Eh?"

It seems that Rishia noticed immediately.

As much as she tried to avoid it, she should have known that it was only a matter of time.

It seems like our encounter with Itsuki was vastly approaching.

But what could he gain from using bandits to steal from Imia's uncle?

It is possible that it was under Witch's influence that caused the attack on the Demi-Human.

But...for Elena not to notice would be strange.

Anyway, how did Imia's Uncle normally bring shields to me?

Though I was unable to ask him, it could have been with a push cart.

Also, Imia's uncle did not have anything else on him.

And Elena wasn't at the scene of the crime, so she didn't know where they fled.

I can't expand the search area.

Naofumi: "Anyway, I do not know what they are planning. So everyone be careful"

Rishia: "U-Understood"

Atla: "Yes"

Firo: "Yes~"

Well, ambushing Atla and Firo would be impossible.

Just in case, I activate Meteor Shield, in the off chance they do launch a surprise attack.

We spent rest of the day searching, but we were unable to find a single thing.

Naofumi: "Was it a waste of time?"

I went back to the town to inform Melty of the situation.

For the time being, we will let everyone now that there are bandits in the area.

If I'm lucky, an adventurer will take care of the bandits.

Melty: "Ah, that's right. There is something I think Naofumi-san should know"

Naofumi: "What?"

Melty: "Lately, there have been less people visiting and leaving the town."

Naofumi: "Is something going on?"

Melty: "Now that you mention it...there is something strange going on... Some merchants have suddenly become rather unfriendly, and they seemed like different people"

Naofumi: "Hmmm..."

Somehow, I have a bad feeling about all these strange incidents, as if there were indirect attacks.

Is what I would want to believe.

Melty: "I have contacted Mother about it, but it is possible that we were infiltrated by a spy"

Naofumi: "Is security that bad?"

Melty: "It isn't bad, rather it seems strange. It best to be careful"

Naofumi: "I know. But you should be careful too, since you are the next in-line Queen, it would be best to increase your guards"

You could tell that Melty was nervous.

I decided to part ways with Melty and Firo, and return to the village.

Naofumi: "I'll be going now"

Melty: "Oh, then take care"

I saw Ren unloading luggage from the carriage.

Since they were with a Hero, they all seemed safe.

Rather, I want to ask him if he saw anyone suspicious.

Naofumi: “There seems to be bandits in the area you were in, did you have any trouble with them?”

Ren: “No? There was nothing out of the ordinary”

It seems like Ren didn’t encounter them.

Ren: “However, I was able to understand my curse a bit better”

Naofumi: “Ooh...”

Ren: “Apparently, I won’t gain any experience points that I earned through fighting”

The Curse of Gluttony.

I believe the price paid was only a large drop in experience but it seems that it may also stop any experience gain.

Naofumi: “Was I nearby when you fought?”

“Ah”

Before this, I tried investigating the penalties of the Four Saint Heroes with Motoyasu.

It turns out that experience would not be gained if another Hero was nearby as they would interfere with each other’s growth.

There may be other penalties, but the experience loss was the most concerning issue.

As long as there isn’t another Hero within range of one kilometer, the experience gained would be fine.

The area wasn’t small, but quite large.

This area would not allow any experience gained by fighting.

Of course, to be that far away and be affected, would not normally be possible.

But Ren was outside of that range so the possibility it was his curse was quite high.

Really now, to be hit by the effects of two curses, Ren sure has it tough.

Well, as long as he puts in some serious effort, even with a little curse, he should have no difficulties.

Naofumi: "Did Female Knight and Taniko go in already?"

Ren: "Taniko? Is that what you call Windia?"

Ren that bastard, does he not know any of the nicknames I've given?

Well, I guess its fine.

Naofumi: "Yeah. So, did they enter or not?"

Ren: "No, it was only me"

Naofumi: "I see"

Well, they would normally come back soon, since I can trust them to that extent.

Naofumi: "Ren, there are some guys trying to do something in my territory. One of my subordinates was attacked and suffered grievous wounds. Be cautious"

Ren: "What? I-I understand. I'll help out as much as possible. Just say the word"

Naofumi: "Is that so. Then I'll leave patrolling to you"

Ren: "You can count on me"

I gave the Hero of the Sword the duty to patrol. As it should be something that he can handle.

I should also be on guard.

Naofumi: "That reminds me, the others haven't returned yet"

I look around restlessly, for the other group that went peddling today.

Now that I think about it, those guys that left two to three days ago still haven't come back.

Did they run away?

Just in case, I check on the status of the slaves.

...?

I both see it and don't... what's going on. It seems to be slightly flickering while being filled with static.

They are alive, and they haven't violated any orders, but...?

Naofumi: "That reminds me, Kiel isn't here either"

She should have gone peddling in the morning.

Rather than taking one of the many Philorials, she went out with a Caterpilland.

Its hard to imagine that loincloth wearing dog who would eat a fallen crepe off the ground, to run away.

Though I can't deny the possibility that it was all an act, but the reason for leaving the village was weak.

And it makes more sense to obey all my orders if you were a spy.

Taniko: "The Caterpilland has come back!"

Eh?

Looks like I was worried for no reason.

But, as I turned around I was left speechless by a scream.

Taniko: "What happened!?"

Taniko was screaming as she rushed over.

The Caterpilland came back, completely covered in wounds.

Chapter 227: Poison

The rope that had connected the caterpillar and the carriage had broken, and the carriage was gone.

Kiel and the others were nowhere to be seen.

“What happened!?” (Naofumi)

As soon as the Caterpillar saw me, it quickly ran towards me.

It mumbled something while staring and clinging to me.

“I was attacked when I was peddling! The children who were riding in the carriage were kidnapped? Eh? That’s not it?” (Taniko) Taniko tried to understand the Caterpillar, but she did not seem to understand its words well.

It was only being transmitted that something had happened.

“Where was the place!?” (Ren)

Ren asked Taniko.

“Well...” (Taniko)

“It should be in the direction where this fellow came from?” (Ren)

“Probably.” (Taniko)

Ren traced back the caterpillar’s foot prints and started running.

“Oh, wait! Don’t leave me!” (Female Knight)

The female knight chased after him.

But that wouldn’t be enough.

“Filo, go with Ren.” (Naofumi)

“Kue!” (Filo)

The filo which was next to me, on my instruction, started running to accompany them.

It would be best if the case was resolved with this, but....

I suppressed the uneasiness in my chest. (not sure about this) “First,

we're treating this guy. Call Rat." (Naofumi) While chanting recovery magic, I told Taniko to call Rat.

Recovery magic was not very effective on monsters. In this case, natural recovery or recovery by medicine would work better.

Taniko ran to Rat's laboratory.

Suddenly, a problem started.

The caterpillar started to behave violently and tried to return the way he came until Rat arrived.

It was hard to say, but he had a powerful desire to become strong. He grieved over his cowardliness for not going after Ren. (cannot make a better translation than this) "Okay? What happened?" (Rat)

"Apparently, thieves attacked the carriage and kidnapped the slaves." (Naofumi) After hearing the commotion, Gaelion came flying.

The caterpillar began to tell something to Gaelion.

"Hmm... Hmm... What?" (Gaelion)

"Did you understand something?" (Naofumi)

"The fact is that there was a surprise attack that came from both the front and back" (Gaelion) (this took the longest to translate and i think its still not good.someone can check this for me) "What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

For a moment, I thought that the protection shields that the slaves received were rotten.

To be frank, they are much stronger than any ordinary adventurers.

I thought that the uncle of Imia class up was done and that they were defeated by smaller force, although it seems to have been different. (this may be wrong) Still, I would like to investigate thoroughly.

Motoyasu, who was not here, came to my mind first, but I think it's different.

Reasonably, this was Itsuki's way of doing things.

However, a question still remained.

Itsuki, despite his selfishness, is all about his sense of justice.

This was my evaluation as a guy who investigates thoroughly.

However, even the possibility that Itsuki is moving with the mystery theory like Ren and Motoyasu is conceivably sufficient, because the Itsuki that I saw in Zeltbur got broken in various ways.

Even though it remained the same and didn't appear, I think it's really insidious.

These events were extremely annoying.

This bad feeling was doubled because the former Motoyasu did not hide anything that did not seem pretty.

Well, I think isn't it Perfect-Hidden-Justice.

Huh... Anyway, it was unfortunate that Itsuki did not get captured.

Through my work, the former Ren and Motoyasu have become better already.

They changed drastically, but the way they are now is much better.

"Caterpillar also says he was attacked and fled for his life." (Gaelion)
After conveying his message properly, caterpillar felt relieved and lost all his strength. (this is the best meaning i can make) Dead! I thought and checked his pulse.

He was breathing and not dead. He probably pushed himself in the emergency.

Well, he reached me properly and lost consciousness in a reassuring place.

But... why did Ren go to such a dangerous place?

Is it dangerous?

I need to rush after them.

It can't be helped. I confirmed that Rat is coming, and I get ready to go

out.

“Filorials.” (Naofumi)

” ” “KUE!””” (Filorials)

“Also, Gaelion, Rishia, and Alta will go with me!” (Naofumi) “Yes.”
(Gaelion)

“Okay!”(Rishia)

” ” “KUE!?””” (Filorials)

“What is it? Are you dissatisfied? The remaining members are to guard the village! Maintain the caution until I return!” (Naofumi) I led the group while I rode on the back of Gaelion.

The Filorials and the others ran and followed me from the ground.

Though I caught up with Ren and the others before long from the sky, as expected, there was nothing in the spot where Kiel and the others were attacked.

I let Gaelion track them by smell, but he was not able to track them even halfway.

The sun had set, and I was forced to abandon the search.

Ren was not done yet, but he finally resigned after I warned him to not let a second accident occur.

I returned to the village, counted both the number of monsters and slaves, and began to prepare for dinner.

Certainly, the numbers have been reduced little by little recently.

It's not that I didn't notice, but I thought that peddling took time.

Now's not the time to look away.

The Slave Crests were still functioning and have not been removed.

The numbers have not decreased, and they should be in range according to what I remember.

Yet, I do not know their whereabouts.

Because no conclusive evidence had been found today, I felt that the air in the village was heavier.

Will Raphtalia be okay? Is she training well? I pray that nothing has happened.

But, I still need to issue her instructions to come back since a problem has occurred.

The problem is... whether the instructions will arrive.

I cut today's material with a kitchen knife and threw it into the pan.

Though I stewed it, it's being boiled. It doesn't stick to the hand so much.

Ren also seemed restless.

But the situation would not improve for the better even if we searched at night.

Because I could not calm down, I cooked.

Heroes are powerless at this time, and there's no chance for me to do anything.

For now, we can only wait for something to happen. (cannot make a better translation) "Oh! What's with this?" I said while trying the soup that I cooked today. (Naofumi) It's dangerous!

Alerts sound in my head.

"Huh..." (Naofumi)

What is it? Did I add something dangerous to the dish to make it a failure?

There were no such things so far, and the soup connoisseur worked in my sight.

Toxic substance. Toxicity... middle degree. Breathing hindrance. Natural poison.

I used an antidote, and the detoxification magic cured me immediately.

What?

No, no one could make such a dangerous poison with the materials right here.

Did I mess up and make a dangerous thing with alchemy by mistake?

“Is it done?” The slave in charge of cooking asked while seeing the soup.
(Slave) “No, looks like I failed.” (Naofumi)

“Eh? When it smells so good?” (Slave)

“Indeed.” (Naofumi)

While saying so, I wash away the soup with a bottle of water.

Danger!

The same alerts from before were reflected in my field of vision.

What!?

Was it the water?

I carefully asked the connoisseur about the water.

“Hey, where was this water taken from?” (Naofumi) “What? From the well that we always use...” (Slave) But what do I say that it is mixing or it is poisonous?

I had an unpleasant hunch.

“It’s useless!” (Naofumi)

“I don’t get it.” (Slave)

“Anyway, it’s no use and it’s painful.” (Naofumi) When I looked outside at the dining room, a Filorial picked a quarrel with a slave and prevented him from drinking the well water.

Filorials have wild intuition. He is talking, since I’m not there, and interfering.

The Filorial did well. I will prepare a reward for him later.

“All members, do not drink the water.” (Naofumi)

I gave instructions in a loud voice.

“What happened?” (Slaves)

“There is a possibility that a poison was mixed into the well” (Naofumi)

“Is that true?” (Slaves)

“It is like that, and I will investigate it in a little bit.” (Naofumi) I called for Rat, who finished treatment of caterpillar, to investigate the well and the nearby river.

The result was that poison was mixed in both.

Fortunately, the bio-plant was detoxifying, and the poison won't soak into the earth.

However, if you look closely, fish-type monsters were dead and floated in the river.

The sun had set, and in the dark, the search for the criminal who poisoned the river did not go well.

However, I found a corpse of a Demi-Human adventurer upstream.

“Is this fellow the culprit?” (Naofumi)

“I don't know.” (Rat)

Rat checked the corpse like a doctor.

Did this demi-human pour the poison into my village? Even if I'm mistaken, this person is certainly not from my village.

In the village which I command, for the time being, I seem to be their religion's God.

Could it be the people of the Schildwelt or Schildfrieden?

I cannot pinpoint it from the corpse, which won't speak.

“Earl, look over here.” (Rat)

Rat pointed at the corpse of the demi-human.

“There's a paper in his hand. Something is written on it.” (Rat) “Can you read it?” (Naofumi)

“It is the judgment of the person who calls himself a god. But, aren’t these letters from Melromarc’s official language?” (Rat) “What?” (Naofumi)

Wait a minute, did the radicals of the Religion of the Shield attack me?

No, that’s doubtful. It’s Melromarc’s official language.

The official language of Schildwelt or Schildfrieden should have been used if that was the case.

“Looks like you wrote and translated it well. It’s feeling that you got used to by understanding the habit of the characters, right?” (cannot find any better translation) “Such a thing?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, also...”(rat)

Rat picked up a medicine and dripped it onto the chest of the demi-human.

Then, on the chest of the body,... A slave crest shone faintly.

It was a slave crest that disappears upon death. They intended to cover it, but they cannot deceive us.

“It’s a slave I... Oh, it is white.” (Naofumi)

“Well.” (Rat)

For a demi-human Schildwelt or Schildfrieden slave to poison and then commit suicide for a religious reason... would be impossible.

I heard in that in such countries, demi-human and human slaves have the same family/tribe crest.

The possession of the paper, the mystery of the concealed slave crest, there must be a hidden, decisive reason.

Moreover, it was obvious that their wrath is aimed at me...

It seems that they want me to be suspected.

I will let you make a human slave if it is me.

What a childish trick.

The one which made the criminal demi-humans affiliates or gave a bad impression and stood up...

“Bury it carefully.” (Naofumi)

“Is that okay?” (Rat)

“He was a victim. He would have gone through a lot of hardships so far. I will treat the dead politely at least.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 228: Brainwash

Now, for the guy who put poison in the well The water... might not have been from the river.

The water of the river is fundamentally different from the water of the well.

I think it would have taken time for the poison that flowed through the river to arrive at the well via underground.

We can also consider if it went through the soil, but I think the poison was poured directly into the well.

Still...

A major problem remains.

My village isn't made so that anyone can come in easily.

Because I was wary, I placed a guard originally so that only slaves and people who I trust can enter.

Needless to say, Gaelion and the filorials would have said something to me if there was a stranger around.

Thus, the evidence suggests that the well was poisoned by an internal perpetrator.

I do not like to doubt.

I mean, I should have set it up so if you performed such an estranged act, you would pay with the price of life.

"Gaelion!" (Naofumi)

In accordance to my call, Gaelion came flying.

"What is it?" (Gaelion)

"You were in the village today." (Naofumi) "Yeah." (Gaelion)

"Was there a fellow who did something to the well?" (Naofumi) "Even if you say that... There were not any particularly strange people." (Gaelion)

"What about soldiers and visitors from the castle?" (Naofumi) "No."

(Gaelion)

Identification of the criminal is getting difficult.

The slave crests aren't working.

Also, Gaelion said no soldier or magic person/seller came to the village.

Well, it could be that the precautionary ability of Gaelion can't be fully trusted.

Therefore, I went back to the village and gathered slaves to ask them.

"I want to identify the time when the poison was poured. Who was the last to drink the water and be safe?" (Naofumi) To my question, a few slaves raised their hands and took their time to talk respectively.

I learned that the well water was moved to the water jars for cooking just a little while ago.

"I wonder who the culprit was?" (Naofumi) "Excuse me, Naofumi-sama." (Atla)

"Hmm, what happened?" (Naofumi)

Atla raised her hand and made a proposal.

Her face seemed tense or something.

Was there something that only Atla can sense?

Atla slowly returned to the clinic and pointed at Imia's uncle who was resting in the corner of the dining room.

"Imia's uncle, something abominable is coiling itself around you." (Atla) "Huh?" (Naofumi)

Imia's uncle looked around in a perplexed expression after being confronted by Atlas.

"I'm, what are you saying? Please be careful while joking." (Imia's uncle) "Yeah Atla, no matter what, for uncle to do such a thing-" (Naofumi) "It's, so... No... actually, I remember causing something-" (Imia's uncle) Imia's uncle was at his wit's end and began to groan.

He pushed Imia away toward the other slaves and staggered away unsteadily.

“Hero of the Shield, please, I...” (Imia’s uncle) Imia’s uncle asked for help as he suffered.

No, wait...

“Please punish me... Before I commit a crime again!” (Imia’s Uncle)
“When the thieves caught you, did they put a curse on you!?” (Naofumi) “I understand, oh... Guu...”

I opened Imia’s uncle’s slave status.

To state the problem... It was different.

There’s noise! <This kind of Noise> It’s apparent that something strange was going on .

If you thought about it calmly, he was found a day after he was supposed to arrive.

Basically, where he was attacked was uncertain.

What would have happened if Elena hadn’t passed by, I don’t know.

What would I do if I happened to pass by and had to escape from a strong adventurer?

Imia’s uncle was taken to the clinic for treatment.

And there’s no doubt that he specifically came back to the village to pour poison in the well as he was ordered.

The problem is that whatever was eroding Imia’s uncle might escape the eye of treatment.

“Hero of the Shield!” (Slaves)

“Naofumi.” (Ren)

The slaves, Ren, and Atla asked me for help.

‘I am not almighty,’ I want to say that, but I can’t. I understand the feeling of wanting help.

“We,... oh, huh!” (Atla)

“It’s no good!” (Ren)

Rishia stepped forward and stood with Imia’s uncle.

“Even though, I know how is it done!? For me,..... I can’t hold out my hand” (Imia’s uncle) Even Ren, who’s acquainted with the slaves, can’t lend a hand?

Similarly, even the female knight cannot move.

I think, this is an abnormal situation.

If she slays Imia’s uncle, I’ll have to banish Female Knight.

I’ve been called indecisive.

I can’t follow the situation.

What should I do?

Well, if it was a game, persuasion would be the means to restore a former companion who was manipulated by someone, but it’s quite difficult in reality to break free from brainwashing. This is not a game.

Still, I cannot deal with everyone

By no means is it easy. It’s quite troublesome.

“Uncle! Please stop! ‘I’d like to be of assistance to the Hero of the Shield,’ wasn’t it you who said that!?” (Imia) “Oh, that... GUU... ” (Imia’s uncle)

Imia’s uncle’s consciousness was becoming cloudy. This is not the situation for persuasion.

“Everything... Justice...” (Imia’s uncle)

He began to chant in a strange tone.

“Please... Stop me–” (Imia’s uncle)

Imia’s uncle began to chant magic.

The Lemo species knew the appropriateness of the soil.

He used magic that manipulated the earth to make a hole and pushed out a rock using magic.

“I am one who commands the origin of power. I have read once again and deciphered a law of nature, Earth. Slaughter these people! Zweit Earth Drive! (ツヴァイト・アースドライブ)” (Imia’s uncle) “I as the root of the power give an order. I have read once again and deciphered a law of nature, Earth. Hinder the magic of the person in front! Anti-Zweit Earth Drive! (ツヴァイト・アースドライブ)” (Imia) From the same species, Imia interfered with the magic that Imia’s uncle chanted, and there was simply a crack in the ground.

“Naofumi!” (Rat)

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“Please confine Imia’s uncle by creating a wall in four directions! Needless to say, the strongest one. Please.” (Rat) I see! Such a thing!

I started building magic power and mix SP into it.

“Uhh...” (Imia’s uncle)

Imia grabbed her uncle and looked at me.

“Now! Hero!” (Imia)

“Are you sure?” (Naofumi)

“Stop me! Please! I request it.” (Imia’s uncle) “Understood! Shield Prison!” (Naofumi)

The cage made with shields confined Imia’s uncle together with Imia.

“Atla?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, the abominable power was interrupted by the cage, and its power was cut.” (Atla) “So did it go elsewhere?” (Naofumi)

“No one among these here.” (Atla)

“That’s fortunate.” (Naofumi)

It would be serious if someone began to behave violently like Imia’s uncle did.

Afterward...

“First of all, for now, let’s figure out the situation before the cage disappears.” (Naofumi) “Oh.”

“Yes.”

It is certain that Imia’s uncle was the one who poured poison into the well.

Perhaps it’s a kind of curse.

Thinking about it, the same as back then with Motoyasu, it looks without a doubt like a Legendary Weapon skill.

Ren has not used his.

He’s been under tight watch from the start.

If he used it, he’d be noticed. Immediately.

Motoyasu is currently on Cal Mira Island.

He may be coming back soon, unfortunately for Firo, and it would be troublesome for me.

Also, there are Motoyasu’s beloved mass-produced Filorials among the victims.

If that ridiculous condition was an act, there would be no helping it, but probably not.

Above all–.

“Itsuki-sama” (Rishia)

“The possibility is high.” (Naofumi)

From the fact that Imia’s uncle muttered justice.

To begin with, I am concerned with what kind of power was used to control Imia’s uncle.

When I think about it, the missing slaves may be related to this.

I cannot cover it anymore.

“Rishia. There are things I need to tell you.” (Naofumi) “Oh, What is it?” (Rishia)

“Actually, quite some time ago, I saw Itsuki.” (Naofumi) “FUE!? (ㄟ ㄎ ㄟ ! ?)” (Rishia)

“Do you remember when we went to buy Atla?” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Rishia)

“At that time, I found Itsuki in the Colosseum. Like some crippled person, he seemed to fight to receive people’s praise.” (Naofumi) “.....” (Rishia)

Rishia looked down.

Well... I knew this would happen, but it can’t be helped since I had reasons for hiding it.

“It looked like Itsuki was lost, and if Rishia were to see such a figure of Itsuki–” (Naofumi) “That’s enough. Thank you Naofumi.” (Rishia) Even if Rishia became estranged here, I cannot stop her.

“It’s okay. So what happened to Itsuki?” (Rishia) “The country’s Shadow was monitoring Itsuki but lost sight of him, so his whereabouts are unknown.” (Naofumi) “Is... is that so.” (Rishia)

We may already consider this an attack by Itsuki already.

Don’t come with nastier methods than Ren and Motoyasu.

Chapter 229: Multiple Culprits

Ren: "Itsuki..."

Ren mutters his name bitterly.

I wonder how I should deal with this matter.

Atla will probably be able to find Itsuki's location.

Soldier: "There, there's trouble!"

A soldier from the castle burst into the dining room.

He was covered in wounds and his clothes were in tatters.

Naofumi: "What happened?"

Soldier: "Large scale riots have broken out at one of the towns! Its terrorism aimed at the populace"

Naofumi: "What did you say?"

Soldier: "Its a emergency request from Melty-sama! Hero! We need your strength!"

There are more riots than Firo can take care of?

The scale of their attack must be massive.

Naofumi: "I understand!"

Ren: "Can I come with?"

Ren stepped forward with his request.

Hmmm.

It would be simple to let Ren accompany me.

And the Female Knight can also come along...

But, something is bothering me.

Imia's uncle was attacked by bandits, Kiel and the others were abducted, the village was targeted with poison, Imia's Uncle was controlled, and a riot broke out in town.

Their timing is too good.

If this was a planned attack, then why?

The purpose behind the enemy's motive...

The Queen's story about the Church of the Three Heroes, seems to be connected with Itsuki.

Perhaps, the riot at the town is just a clever diversion.

Which means.

Naofumi: "Its possible that there will be an attack targeting Melromark castle"

Ren: "Wha-"

Ren looked pale.

Well, its not too surprising.

I will not let the malicious acts that transpired here be repeated.

Now that I think about it, the people carrying out these acts could be manipulated just like Imia's Uncle.

What could be done to stop all of this?

For now, the only method for the brainwashing is to use Shield Prison to seal them off, nothing else would work.

But, the problem is that the scale is too big.

I would have to take into account the magic consumption and the cool-down, as well as finding the ones that Itsuki was controlling.

Just like Ren, he could be corrupted by a curse, but someone must have given him the idea.

But, manipulating him would be difficult.

It could be similar to Ren, where he keep on repeating what he believed in.

Just what kind of person is Itsuki.

He has an usually strong sense of justice, yet he is also conceited.

How would one manipulate such a guy?

Naofumi: "Ren, this is a hypothetical. But what would someone have to do to manipulate a Hero of Justice?"

Ren: "Eh? ...Wouldn't you just need a villain?"

It was such a simple textbook answer, but it is believable.

Furthermore, he targeted both my land and Castle town for his acts of turmoil.

Then his target would be either me...or the Queen.

Now, I try to think of his intention.

If he was in a place where he could see the messenger go out for help... then there is a good chance the enemy is in Castle town.

Motoyasu: "Father-in-Law. I have returned"

Oh? Motoyasu had returned just at the perfect time.

He suddenly appeared through the use of a portal.

Naofumi: "Oh! Motoyasu, I know its sudden, but can I ask you to do something?"

Motoyasu: "What would you like me to do, Father-in-Law. Even if it is an act of evil, I, Motoyasu will gladly serve you."

Naofumi: "...I need you to go to the castle in Melromark and check its situation. If a problem were to arise, crush it. Motoyasu, I also want you to go with your Philorials."

Motoyasu: "Understood, Father-in-Law. I, Motoyasu, will stake his life to carry out this task! Let us go, my angels!"

Having just returned, his three followers, obeyed Motoyasu's order with a slightly tired expression.

I take it that you guys spent your time running around sightseeing.

The real problem is that we can't identify the target of Itsuki's attack.

Even with a large military force, our enemy would be able to advantage of it.

Motoyasu proved that one's consciousness could be altered, and at worst Firo may end up in the hands of the enemy.

Ren: "So should I go too?"

Naofumi: "No, Ren should stay here. Just in case"

Spreading my forces too much would be dangerous.

We would have walked into a trap if it wasn't for my earlier foresight.

Motoyasu: "Then let us depart!"

Followers: ""Yes""

Taking his Philorials, Motoyasu headed towards town.

The portal is not usable during its cool-down, but he should be fine since he runs fast.

With this I hope nothing happens, but...

Afterwards, I go to see if the Cage of Shields had dissipated.

Imia's Uncle: "My deepest apologies! Please forgive all the inconveniences I have caused!"

Having arrived, Imia's Uncle bowed his head down in apology.

Imia is also with him.

Naofumi: "Don't let it bother you. More importantly are you alright?"

Imia's Uncle: "Y-yes!"

Naofumi: "Can you explain to us what happened?"

Imia's Uncle: "Yes"

As I thought, Imia's Uncle was attacked the day before.

He recalled that there was a sudden attack from the bushes that he was unable to avoid.

Did it cause that scar I saw at the clinic?

Huh, it didn't look like an arrow mark...

From that point his memories became hazy, but he continued to fight until his mind became muddled.

He began having mixed thoughts that the bandit wanted to help him, even though he was an enemy.

He then escaped the fight, but he vaguely remembers protecting Elena.

Naofumi: "He escaped?"

Imia's Uncle: "...When he left, I felt relieved. Then on my way back with Imia...I recalled our arrangement to intentionally bump into a person"

Naofumi: "It was arranged?"

Imia's Uncle: "Yes. I believe it was at that time I was given the medicine"

Of course, what he gave you was really poison.

Brainwashed into using the poison, Imia's Uncle was tasked with poisoning the well with his own hands.

It would be quite troublesome to make these arrangements, but it avoided suspicion.

To have planned that elaborately ahead, must have been difficult.

Imia's Uncle: "Then I was to put the entire village to sleep with sleeping pills, and during that time-"

Naofumi: "Wait...sleeping pills?"

If the poison wasn't discerning enough, there were also sleeping pills.

An appraisal of the poison showed that it was a moderate toxin, and when taken it would affect the repository system.

Most would die suffering upon taking it, it was truly a horrible thing.

It was quite a severe way to die. It would have caused them to suffocate to death.

Did you make a mistake in using the sleeping pills?

There is a large difference between the testimony and reality.

However there was still something puzzling.

There was the Demi-Human slave whose death was disguised as a suicide.

If Itsuki is behind this, according to Imia's uncle story, he would have finished him with the brainwashing.

But even though he had a slave crest he wasn't brainwashed. The reasoning behind this, is something I don't know.

Was the slave crest placed simply because I used them as my subordinates.

Or was it for a completely different reason.

...What if there were multiple culprits?

If he isn't working with anyone then, its likely Itsuki is being manipulated by someone.

That wouldn't be surprising. Itsuki is just a big lump of justice. He would hate such evil deeds.

Well, if it was for the sake of justice he could probably do it.

The possibility that Itsuki is corrupted by the Curse series is also very high.

In fact, compared to Ren and Motoyasu, Itsuki's mental damage seems to be the highest.

Its probable that Itsuki can't suppress the feelings caused by the curse, since it consumes your will and is virtually impossible to control.

That would mean that those controlled by Itsuki's brainwashing couldn't be controlled by others.

He would probably say it was for the sake of justice or something.

Even though the use of the sleeping pills and poison would be unforgivable, for the sake of justice he would allow it.

Lets think about the facts.

Itsuki and the three other groups... the remnants of the church, the revolutionaries, and the missing Witch and her companions, most likely one of these groups are acting separately.

It is unclear if they are cooperative relationship, but there is not doubt they are involved in this turmoil.

Each of them work on different ideologies which means the enemy wouldn't be under a united leadership.

Which means, Itsuki could have been given those sleeping pills and poison by another party.

While being corrupted by the curse, it wouldn't be strange for him to ally himself with one of the groups.

Assuming that there are four groups, including Itsuki, their targets would be our footholds.

My village, the Town and Melromark Castle.

A considerable force would be needed to overwhelm the three at the same time.

Of course, it would be impossible for the Remnants of the Church and the Revolutionary Faction.

And there were people brainwashed by Itsuki at all three locations.

Me, Melty, and the Queen.

From these three, one will be targeted for death.

After some planning, Ren is going to head to the town, while I defend the village.

Since the power to brainwash is already well known, Ren will be careful.

Naofumi: "Please continue"

Imia's Uncle: "From them on...I'm not sure"

Naofumi: "Hmmm"

The question is, after knocking out the villagers with the sleeping pills, what would be his next step.

They could attack using a force controlled by Itsuki.

Itsuki may have also thought the poison and the sleeping pills would be enough.

The group that is behind Itsuki, uses poison as their main method of elimination, or am I wrong to assume so?

Otherwise their actions are just too random.

After all, the reason they used they poisoned the village was to weaken our war potential.

Which would mean, Itsuki is a puppet.

Even if he isn't working with anyone, Itsuki would be unlikely to use the sleeping pills in the first place.

Actually, the poison used by Imia's Uncle when he was controlled and the one the culprit used for the river was different.

After using the pills and forcing me to deal with the riots in town, just what was he going to do?

The answer was obvious. I wouldn't have to think hard to figure it out.

Gaelion: "What about the Philorials and monsters?"

Gaelion: "Most of the Philorials went with the Hero of the Spear, but there were some that stayed"

Naofumi: "The remain Philorials, monsters and Gaelion. Along with the slaves, go suppress the situation in town. If you succeed, please act under the orders of the future queen Melty who is at location"

Gaelion: "Understood"

Philorial: "Kue!"

Gaelion: "And the others?"

...The truth is that it would be best for all forces to help out in town and

leave the village empty.

Among my forces, there was one that could crush Itsuki and all his forces.

But if Itsuki were to come and capture this village, it would be difficult situation.

Honestly the Three Heroes Church and the revolutionary faction are not that big of threats.

If Itsuki was captured, we could undo the brainwashing.

Therefore, it would be best to solve this in the shortest manner possible.

In that case, walking into a trap wouldn't be too bad.

Naofumi: "The others-"

Chapter 230: Contagion

The village was silent. Everyone was holding their breath.

Dinner casually finished in silence without anyone lighting any lights. It was as if the entire village had already gone to sleep.

A large number of missing carriages arrived at once.

The Filo Rials pulling them and the slaves riding them were probably being controlled.

One by one, they stepped off of the carriages and began walking towards the village.

And then, carrying off the slaves who were pretending to be asleep, they returned to the carriage parked farthest from us.

There...

“That’s enough!” (Naofumi)

I stepped out of my hiding place from a nearby house.

At the same time, the slaves being taken away began to resist.

“Oh, Niichan. What’s wrong?” (Kiel)

Kiel stood in front of me, who responded as if nothing was wrong.

I opened up Kiel’s slave management screen and tried to activate punishment.

But... as if the battery had died, nothing happened.

“Kiel, I know that you can’t act. Tell me honestly. Is the mastermind controlling you inside of that carriage?” (Naofumi) “Control? What are you saying, Niichan?” (Kiel)

Kiel’s eyes looked strange. She stared at the other controlled children, and they all tilted their heads in confusion.

“We were finally released from Niichan’s brainwashing. That’s why it is our duty to free the others as quickly as possible.” (Kiel) I see... they were released.

That's the lie Itsuki implanted in their skulls to control them.

With such a reason, it sounds like Itsuki is on the side of justice.

At least, within his head.

That is... If they were truly being released...

It would be just as Rishia said.

A while ago, when I proposed the plan, Rishia said as such: "Naofumi-san. Even after all that's happened, I still love the legends of the Heroes. When I was little, I would read about them whenever I could." (Rishia)
"What are you saying all of a sudden?" (Naofumi)

"Do you know of the enemy that appears in the Heroes' tales... The Demon King with the power of control?" (Rishia) "The Hero of the Shield, right?" (Naofumi)

Rishia slowly shook her head from side to side.

"At least, within the world of fiction, he was called as such. But according to history, there were many Heroes at the time, and along with the heroes, much death came." (Rishia) Was that why people kept saying I have a Shield that can brainwash?

That means that it didn't have to be the Hero of the Shield.

The people of this world just arbitrarily developed a grudge and arbitrarily placed it on the Shield. As long as they could shift the blame, then any weapon would do.

I've heard about it in Manga.

The Hero and the Demon King are just two sides of the same coin.

Yet here, they are one and the same.

All the bad things are the fake's... The Demon King's fault.

There's no way that someone with such dark power can be a hero.

... A Hero rejected by history.

"And... According to legend, everyone working under the Demon King

was a victim bent to his will.” (Rishia) To summarize, it’s like this:

If I don’t get rid of Itsuki quickly, it’s going to get troublesome.

Worse comes to worst, I’ll have to capture each person in my Shield Prison one at a time.

I wonder just how much magic that would take.

I guess I should tell about Ren as well.

If Itsuki decides to show his face in the village, I want to capture him alive if possible.

If that turns out to be impossible, we’ll have to kill him. I’ll take responsibility for it.

That’s what I told him.

But Ren was opposed to killing Itsuki.

I feel that his emotions are getting deeper as of late.

Before, he tried to put up a... Cool, indifferent atmosphere. I guess this is better.

By the way, if he tried to use his dark past to elicit sympathy, I planned on kicking him out.

Though, it appears that there are no problems at this point in time.

No matter what happens, I don’t think he will kill.

Also, though I made him unlock the other reinforcement methods, his curse makes him unable to get materials or money, so he can’t really use them. It will be difficult to crush Itsuki, who is currently being devoured by his own curse.

“I’m home~.”

A carefree voice came from the coast.

“Is it already sleeping time? I planned on getting Atlas-chan and heading over to Naofumi’s place, but what’s happening?” (Sadina) Sadina had a relaxed expression as she stretched her arms and walked towards

me.

“Why are you coming back so late anyways?” (Naofumi)

It's obvious that she had no idea about the emergency situation.

Why was this idiot waltzing in so easily?

“Why, you ask? ...Didn't Naofumi-chan ask me to try my hand at Salvaging?” (Sadina) Ah, right!

Sadina told me that plenty of interesting treasures slept at the bottom of the sea, so I asked her to try her hand at them.

Recently, she had been coming back with things like old coins.

They were things that would drive collectors insane. We got a good price for them.

That's why I got happy and asked her to do it on the spur of the moment.

“Today, I found some nice wine and a good harpoon.” (Sadina) Sadina held out an ornate harpoon that looked as if it were made out of coral.

Is that really something that someone lost in the sea?

“It seemed like it'd been at the bottom of the sea for a while, but it still held its shape. Its blade is quite a nice one.” (Sadina) “Ah. Anyways... Can you step back a bit?” (Naofumi)

Sadina playfully spun the harpoon around her body before returning it to the bag on her back. She looked around her.

“Sadina-neechan. Niichan is being cruel.” (Kiel)

“Ara? What could be the problem?” (Sadina)

Kiel slowly stepped towards Sadina.

“No! Sadina-san! Get away from Kiel-kun!” (Rishia)

It happened the second Rishia shouted out her warning. Kiel changed into dog form and bit the space Sadina was in.

But at that moment, Sadina backed off at a surprising speed and created

some distance between her and the dog.

“Damn... I missed.” (Kiel)

“... What are you trying to do? Based on your answer, this Onee-chan may have to issue out some punishment.” (Sadina) Sadina immediately readied herself for battle as she pointed the harpoon at Kiel.

Kiel’s attack put her on high alert.

I should have warned her quicker.

“Hypothetically... If like in the story, we slaves were just moving at the Demon King’s whim, then...”

Rishia’s words echo in my mind. I can imagine the worst possible outcome.

“I see. Itsuki isn’t directly issuing brainwashing. He’s made a status effect that can be spread... Atlas, what can you sense from Kiel and the others?” (Naofumi) I asked Atlas who was in hiding.

This is merely a single possibility, but I should have Atlas look into it.

“The dark energy that is wrapped around Kiel-kun has begun extending tentacles towards Sadina-san.” (Atlas) Damn. This is troublesome.

Kiel, the controlled Filo Rials, and the controlled Slaves took offensive stances.

Currently, Kiel’s level is 70.

Just based on stats, she falls short of Raphtalia, but that doesn’t mean she isn’t strong.

Due to her race, Kiel can make quicker movements.

However, I can probably withstand her attacks.

The problem is the infectious nature of this brainwashing.

It’s like a game where you have to defend single a point from countless enemy units.

And there’s nothing we can do about it.

Neither side will seriously try to hurt the other, but when any of my side gets infected, they'll become enemies.

"Is there anything I can do here?" (Naofumi)

Ren should also be in quite some danger right now.

I guess I should warn him.

"WAOOOOOOOOOOON!" (Kiel)

With Kiel's battle cry, the slaves began their assault.

... The slaves I trained as soldiers have turned against me.

I had planned to end this by capturing Itsuki.

Of course, I had considered the possibility of fighting Kiel and the others. But what the hell is it with this contagion factor.

It's even worse than a plague.

"The stories told of the Hero's companions having strong wills and being able to withstand the control. It was quite a touching tale..."
(Rishia) Rishia answered as she blocked Kiel's attack.

The village has already been swallowed by battle.

Though I shouted out a warning, the enemies' preemptive strike rendered quite a few of my combatants unconscious. We were doing worse than I predicted.

I stepped in front to protect the slaves to the best of my ability, but still, I can't handle everything.

"Are you alright!?" (Naofumi)

"S-somehow." (Slave)

"It seems that the effect isn't that contagious, but if we continue to take attacks, then it will definitely spread." (Naofumi) I have confidence in my own defense, but when facing an army of Kiel-class enemies, there's no way either side will come out unscathed.

If I want to use my Shield Prison trump card, I'll have to gather them in

one place.

Though, the quickest solution would just be to find and capture Itsuki.

“Atlas! Can you still not sense Itsuki anywhere?” (Naofumi) “...It’s no good. An ominous aura is filling the area, and I can’t pinpoint anything.”

(Atlas) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I guess I shouldn’t get my hopes up.

Damn. Everything is turning on me.

I got the idea to defeat Itsuki and end everything from Motoyasu, but that seems to be impossible.

If the brainwashing is infectious, then it will just spread naturally.

Itsuki doesn’t even have to be anywhere near the village.

“Niichan, prepare yourself! How dare you use all of us!” (Kiel) “Ha! Just go eat a crepe covered in dirt!” (Naofumi)

From my bad habits, an angry line escaped my mouth. The line of a cheap villain.

I really shouldn’t be provoking her right now.

Chapter 231: Miscalculations

Sparks fly as Kiel's claws brush lightly against my shield.

Though she can't overcome my Defense, it doesn't feel good to intercept the momentum from a full-body attack.

All of the attacking slave's attacks seem to be centered on me.

I've narrowly managed to block everything without taking damage, but I wonder how much longer I can keep this up.

As I receive attacks, I feel the curse afflicting them dealing additional damage to me.

It feels like my internal organs are twisting around each other. I feel dizzy.

Damn. At this rate, my body isn't going to hold up.

"All is in the name of Justice. Niichan must be defeated!" (Kiel) "Kiel... you better remember this later. Even if you were brainwashed, that doesn't mean I'm lessening your punishment for this at all." (Naofumi) ... This justice crap is getting annoying!

Aren't they getting something wrong here?

I'm no saint. I'm no philanthropist.

Of course I would use all of you people.

I mean, aren't I always saying it?

'Get back to work,' and such.

No, the normal Kiel should be well aware of that.

I should think of the person in front of me as a separate entity controlling Kiel's body.

What should I do? Should I use Wrath and turn everything to ash?

"You're wrong! Naofumi-san is... definitely not evil!" (Rishia) Rishia cautions Kiel with a strong tone of voice.

What?

I didn't know she could speak with such a tone.

“Naofumi-chan, should this Onee-san do something radical to gain control of the situation?” (Sadina) “What do you plan on doing?” (Naofumi)

Ah, by the way, Sadina is level 75. Her stats are also quite high.

Honestly, if you don't count Raphtalia and Firo, her stats are some of the highest I've seen. They're higher than Kiel's.

Her weak points are Speed and Attack Range.

But, when in the water, these weaknesses disappear.

“Just... a little.” (Sadina)

“... I asked what you were going to do.” (Naofumi)

“Let's see. The result of this plan will probably make you forgive Kiel and the others.” (Sadina) “Oi! You couldn't be...” (Naofumi)

『I who has understood the source of power command. Let the truth once again manifest itself. Oh lightning, shoot down all that stand before me! All Dreifach Chain Lightning!』

From the tip of Sadina's harpoon, several streams of lightning bright enough to cause permanent eye damage shoot out towards the brainwashed children.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”
(Children) Kiel and the others fall to the ground.

The lightning continues for a while. I smell the scent of burnt hair.

“Sadina, you...” (Naofumi)

“It's alright. I controlled the output. If I was serious, it would look even more amazing.” (Sadina) I see. (TL: Naofumi uses sarcastic slang here)

“Is everyone alive?” (Naofumi)

“We're fine, but some people are beginning to spout words similar to

Kiel-kun.” (Rishia) Ah, so they awakened to the wonderful world of Justice.

Is this some sort of religious cult?

... The situation is quite unfavorable.

“Brother of the Shield, prepare yourself!” (Slave) (TL: This is not Kiel) So there were still some hiding around.

More of the missing children begin pouring into the village.

Dammit... They’re putting my subordinates to good use.

They’re definitely cutting their losses here.

Even if Itsuki was consumed by his curse, I doubt he would have enough power to beat me and my subordinates head on in battle.

But, the people standing before me are those I personally raised and gave stat growth increases to.

These children are already leagues above the average knights and adventurers.

And for many of them, like Raphtalia, this is their homeland.

Normally, this would be a group that even entire countries would hesitate to challenge.

I have to congratulate him for the brilliance of his idea, but it’s quite inhumane.

He probably lured out the weakest of slaves, brainwashed them, sent them back, and had them bring their friends. In the end, everyone would happily try to kill me.

He probably spent a long time planning this.

Ah... This really is hitting below the belt.

Among the seven sins, I wonder which one would grant such an ability.

“Is this all of the slaves that went missing?” (Naofumi) “No... I think it’s less than half.” (Rishia)

As I thought.

Honestly, if he suddenly gained such an amazing fighting force, he would start off by spreading it out.

Also...

“That carriage is...” (Naofumi)

The slaves were carried off towards it, but the battle’s been going on for a while, and I’ve seen no activity from it. Is Itsuki there?

Did he miss his chance to make a dramatic entrance?

I wonder. Something seems fundamentally wrong here. I have a bad feeling about this.

“How long do you think Kiel’s group will be knocked out for?”

(Naofumi) “You shouldn’t expect too much. Kiel-chan’s become quite strong.” (Sadina) “Then we’d better investigate that carriage while we can. We may find the source.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-san...” (Rishia)

“What is it, Rishia?” (Naofumi)

“...” (Rishia)

Is she going to ask me to spare Itsuki?

Female Knight did something like that as well.

Well it depends on the situation. If I find a way to free Itsuki of his curse, I may be able to use him later.

And from his ability to cause such chaos, I think the boy will be quite useful.

At least in battle.

I wait for Rishia’s question, but it doesn’t come.

“If you’ve got nothing to say, then we’re heading out.” (Naofumi) “... Okay.” (Rishia)

I guess she’s dealing with many conflicted emotions. I wonder what she’ll do when she meets Itsuki.

Anyways, I hope it doesn't come to her betraying me.

That would really be a pain. I'll have to use the slave seal to stop her then.

I open Rishia's slave management screen just in case.

"Oi, whoever's hiding in the carriage! Just get out already." (Naofumi) I shout out as I approach it.

... Is there really no one there?

That can't be. From Kiel and the others' movements, there's got to be something here.

"Oi!" (Naofumi)

This isn't getting anywhere.

"Sadina, go cast your magic on that carriage." (Naofumi) "Are you sure?" (Sadina)

"I gave enough warning. Use your full power on this one." (Naofumi) "I guess there's no helping it." (Sadina)

Sadina approves my proposal to attack the carriage.

『I who has understood the source of power command. Let the truth once again manifest itself. Rain down thunder on my enemies! Dreifach Thunderbolt!』

Thunder sounds out as a bolt of electricity strikes the carriage.

And a human figure quickly scrambles out just in the nick of time.

"What!?" (Naofumi)

I-it's not Itsuki...

The figure held a cane in his hands and wore a long robe. On his head was a needlessly pointy hat. It was the stereotypical clothing of a mage you would find in a child's story book.

The robe had intricate embroidery stretched over the trim, and the cane gave off an expensive feeling.

I can tell from a glance that the hat was also made of good materials.

But the thing that surprised me the most was the fact that the man was not Itsuki.

He was clearly a mage of some sort. I have the feeling that I've seen him somewhere before, but I can't remember where.

And... he pulls out a dagger glowing with a strange light from the chest area of the robe.

"You bastard... Devil of the Shield! Treating your own subordinates and ours in such an inhumane manner." (Mage) Who was this guy again?

I'm pretty sure I've seen him... somewhere.

He seems to know me, but... is he the guy Ren mentioned as being Witch's companion?

That means that there's a possibility I may have met him before.

I have some familiarity, but... It's just not coming to me.

"Could it be..." (Rishia)

Rishia's face becomes increasingly pale.

What? Do you know him?

As I thought about it, I remembered.

I'm pretty sure this guy was the mage in Itsuki's party.

The time I spent with that party was short, but I think this guy may have been there.

I do feel a little guilty, but you can't expect me to remember every little stupid detail.

The reason Ren didn't remember clearly was because he went off and did Solo Play on Cal Mira. He probably only saw him for a few minutes.

I shouldn't be criticizing him for it though. Besides Armor, I don't remember any of them.

I mean, they all said pretty much the same things.

To put it bluntly, I don't remember anyone from Itsuki's party.

But... This is quite a miscalculation.

The contagious nature of the brainwashing was one thing, but Itsuki isn't even here.

And the wound Imya's uncle received was not by bow.

Kiel seemed to refer to more than one person when she spoke as well.

Did I think it was Itsuki due to the continued utterance of the word 'Justice'?

No, there's still a possibility he's involved in this.

Okay, I'll capture this guy and make him spill everything.

"Welst-san! Why are you in a place like this!?" (Rishia) He had a name like that? First I'm hearing of it.

It's not like I care or anything.

Among the other heroes' companions, there are very few that I even remember.

And wasn't Itsuki abandoned by his companions?

I assumed as such when I saw him acting independently, but I guess I should have investigated further.

Ren's died, and Motoyasu's ran away.

I see. So Itsuki's companions survived.

Then, why was Itsuki mentally broken and fighting in Zeltburg?

"Why? That's what I should be saying. Rishia, to think you would be conspiring with the Devil of the Shield... What could you be thinking?"

Nonono, the ones who drove Rishia out were you people.

You were there—you saw everything.

You can't just conveniently forget that at this point in time.

Chapter 232: Effort

“This is... the village Naofumi-san built from the ground up. I am merely here to assist him. Welst-san, so you survived?” (Rishia) “I find no joy in having found you like this. So you assisted in establishing this filthy Demi-Human village? That’s an insult. An act of rebellion towards all of the proud people of Melromark! I need to punish you!” (Welst) The mage person begins chanting, and Kiel’s group’s injuries are healed.

Ah, he realized that his own half-assed magic would be useless against us.

Kiel and the others slowly pick themselves up off the ground like zombies.

... Perhaps because they’re not fully conscious yet, they sway back and forth as they walk.

But if we attack them anymore, I can’t guarantee the slaves’ safety.

“Where is Itsuki? Is this situation his doing?” (Naofumi) “That fake who pretended to preach justice? Why would I speak with such a demon?” (Welst) Fake who pretended to preach justice?

So there’s been a shift in the hierarchy of the group.

It seems they didn’t get along as well as I thought.

The possibility that they were working with Itsuki has decreased.

Itsuki may even be completely unrelated.

Though he’s probably the instigator of much of it.

“Please tell me! What happened to everyone and Itsuki-sama?” (Rishia) “Why must I answer to evil!? Now then, my messengers of justice, rid this world of the source of evil!” (Welst) In response to the mage’s shout, the slaves begin swarming around me.

“Messengers of justice, we’re going to chant Choral Magic!” (Welst)
「「「I who has understood the source...」」」 (Slave)

What?!? I feel the magic in the air gathering and solidifying.

I've heard a bit about Choral magic from Sadina and the Magic Shopkeeper, but it shouldn't be something with an output this high.

Perhaps it is because all of their minds are thinking the exact same thing or that their chants are in perfect sync.

I prepare myself for a large impact.

"Please stop it now!" (Rishia)

Rishia appears right in front of the Mage person.

"Wha-So fast!" (Welst)

It's a speed the past Rishia wouldn't even have dreamed of.

This mage must have been imagining the old Rishia and underestimating her.

"However, with this, you will become my follower!" (Welst) The mage faces Rishia and thrusts a glowing dagger at her.

"Your movements are too easy to read!" (Rishia)

Rishia easily dodges the attack and uses her own rapier to knock the dagger into the air.

"Damn... 「I who has...」" (Welst)

"「Zveit Elemental Blow!」" (Rishia)

Elemental magic... I believe it's a synthesis of Fire, Water Earth and Wind magic. It's apparently hard to control, and there are few people with the necessary magic attributes to use it.

A rainbow mass of light slams into the mage's chest and sends him spinning into the ground.

It gives off a feeling like that Ninjutsu involving a sphere of wind. (TL: Rasengan from Naruto) The Magic Shopkeeper tried hard to get Rishia to learn it. She said that there were very few people with the potential to use it.

But, it was the perfect magic for the Jack of All Trades, Rishia.

“How absurd... Could this be the extent of the Devil’s power?” (Welst)
“My power? No, this power is the accumulation of all of Rishia’s effort.”
(Naofumi) It isn’t Stats.

Of course, stats always help, but Rishia put all of her being into getting as strong as she is now.

I won’t let you write it off as my power.

The mage who was the center of the Choral magic collapses, and the chant ends in failure.

However, that doesn’t mean the slaves’ attacks have stopped.

They begin attacking me with physical blows.

“If I use any more magic, Kiel and the others will be in trouble. What should I do?” (Sadina) “They’ve gathered in such a small area. I can just capture them now.” (Naofumi) 「Shield Prison!」

I activate Shield Prison with myself as the center.

“Ah... Uu...” (Naofumi)

I’m locked away in the dark cage with the slaves, but...

They’re still attacking me!

What’s the meaning of this?

That hurt! Don’t hit me there! Don’t stab me! It’s not piercing me, but the curse hurts!

...

And for the next 5 minutes, Kiel’s group treated me as a sandbag.

It seems that the Brainwashing Contagion doesn’t work on me.

At least that’s something to be happy about.

As the cage disappears, I find Atlas and the others watching us.

“Hm? Naofumi-sama, Kiel-san and the others aren’t returning to normal?” (Atlas) “That seems to be the case. Can you identify the cause?”
(Naofumi) I cast healing magic on myself as I start dodging the attacks.

“The power influencing their actions from the outside was cut off by Naofumi-sama’s cage... but the second the cage disappeared...” (Atlas) I see... So if it’s just one person like Imya’s uncle, I can save them, but it’s impossible for this large group.

If one of the candles goes out, the other ones will simply relight it. Something like that.

The sinister powers encircling the brainwashed form a spider-web like structure in between them while in the cage.

That’s why I can’t dispel the brainwashing on a group.

This is truly a pain.

I guess we’ll have to deal with that guy first. He seems to be the cause anyways.

“Our first priority should be to draw information from that man. Can you get these guys off of me?” (Naofumi) “Yes~... Can I be a little rough?” (Sadina)

“No more lightning.” (Naofumi)

“I know.” (Sadina)

On Sadina’s signal, the aquatic Demi-Human slaves rise from the water.

Now that I think about it, they were living in the ocean with her.

And they begin chanting Choral Magic. And... For some reason, the unaffected slaves begin backing off.

“Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“I’m sorry. Grit your teeth for a second.” (Sadina) “Wai-” (Naofumi)

「「「Choral Magic! Daidal Wave!」」」

(TL: This is a pun. Dai is big in Japanese, so they mixed Dai with Tidal Wave) This is that. What Witch was trying to do while she was testing the limits of the Slave Seal.

The target of the attack isn't me, but the swarm of slaves surrounding me.

“Gyaaaaaaaaa!” (Naofumi)

Upon the chant's completion, a Tsunami rises and washes away everything in its path. Including me.

The world spins around me, and I can't breathe.

As I think about it, Sadina steps into the wave and drags me out.

“It's a bit like a defensive wall of water, but the duration has been shortened and the impact has been increased to make it an offensive magic.” (Sadina) “Won't they die?” (Naofumi)

“No, don't worry about that. I controlled the output.” (Sadina) Just as Sadina said, the water is only covering a limited area.

The village's buildings aren't damaged.

The effect time was probably around 90 seconds. After which, the large wave of water disappeared as if it had never existed.

The only things left were the bodies of the brainwashed slaves collapsed on the floor.

“Now then, everyone tie them up so they can't move.” (Sadina) ‘Why have you become the leader,’ is what I wanted to say, but I don't have the energy to do so.

And then...

“Now spill everything.” (Naofumi)

I speak to the tied-up former comrade of Itsuki.

“Why must I answer to Evil?” (Welst)

“You know... Do you know who you're directing your words at?” (Naofumi) I have quite a bit of confidence in my psychological torture skills.

Firo isn't here, but there are still plenty of Filo Rials here.

“Even if I were to die here, that would just be a sacrifice for the sake of justice.” (Welst) “Justice... is it?” (Naofumi)

Doesn't this man have anything else on his mind?

He's acting like those annoying knights of the Three Heroes' Church.

But I guess he's of a similar type.

“Rishia, what sort of person is he?” (Naofumi)

“Um, among the companions in service to Itsuki, he's been there the longest.” (Rishia) Ah, so he was there when no one wanted to be my companion.

I no longer feel any mercy.

Though I never really had any from the beginning.

“And I've heard that his family was nobility within Melromark.”

(Rishia) “Were they related to your family?” (Naofumi)

“They were in different territories. There are quite a few noble families in Melromark.” (Rishia) Well that sounds about right. As long as there wasn't a large-scale event, I guess they would never meet. What's more, Rishia's a fallen noble.

He must have used a few of his connections to get himself into the Heroes' starting party.

Just like the princess mixed in among them.

Does that mean some seditious nobles are backing him?

I turn my gaze to the suspicious dagger the mage held.

I can't appraise it. It's quite a suspicious item.

I wonder what it is.

“Rishia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Rishia)

“Use this to stab him.” (Naofumi)

“Fueee!?” (Rishia)

Rishia reveals a surprised face as I turn her on her former comrade.

However, the mage's face is even paler.

He's turning blue.

"Stop! Don't turn that thing on me!" (Welst)

"So you can use it on others, but the reverse is forbidden? You're quite a selfish fellow." (Naofumi) I should begin threatening him.

This weapon is definitely related to the brainwashing.

Looking at it closely, it has a strange gem embedded into it.

"Atlas, can you feel anything from this?" (Naofumi) "Yes, from the weapon Naofumi-sama is holding, a sinister aura is being emitted."

(Atlas) "I see." (Naofumi)

There's no doubt.

If this stabs him, he will be corrupted by Justice.

"Well, Rishia? This is a good opportunity to get back at the guy who planted false charges on you and got you kicked out." (Naofumi)

"Fueee....." (Rishia)

Rishia wears a troubled expression and shakes as she approaches the mage one step at a time, dagger in hand.

So she's really going to do it.

"Stop it! Don't get any closer! The hammer of justice will punish all evil!" (Welst) "Yeah, that's right. You're evil, and I'm justice. And Rishia is the hammer that'll punish you." (Naofumi) "Evil should stay silent!" (Welst)

"I'm fine with evil. But you will be the one yielding to such evil. How unfortunate. Where is your justice now?" (Naofumi) I wonder just how deeply the belief that he is justice is embedded in his head.

Even if we stab him, I'm not sure he'll even change at all...

I guess I should at least dispel the brainwashing on Kiel.

I drink a mana potion and enclose Kiel in my Shield Prison.

“Fue...” (Rishia)

“If you don’t want that dagger in your ribs, then spill out your guts.”
(Naofumi)

Chapter 233: The Dagger of JUSTICE

“...Rishia, weren't we comrades? Just defeat that devil behind you, and together, we can spread Justice throughout the world. I'll put in a word to Mald. I'll convince them to let you be our comrade. So let's come to an agreement here.” (Welst) Who the hell is Mald?

An important member of the Itsuki party... Is it Armor?

I get the feeling that there were a few more, but I'm not sure they even told me their names.

I mean, they were selfish beyond reason.

“... Where is Itsuki-sama?” (Rishia)

“If you save me now, I'll tell you. So won't you offer your hand here?”
(Welst) Silence surrounds the two figures.

Eventually...

With the sound of the wind being cut, the ropes tying the mage fall to the ground.

“Good work! Now go die in a ditch with the Evil over there!” (Welst) The mage picks up his cane and begins chanting magic at Rishia.

“Gah-” (Welst)

And then he suddenly stops moving.

“As I thought, it was a lie. You have deluded yourself into thinking that in the name of justice, everything you do will be forgiven...” (Rishia) I witnessed it.

Rishia didn't just cut the ropes, but the Magic User's body as well.

Rishia didn't believe from the beginning.

“Justice... Purge the evil...” (Welst)

“I won't let you.” (Rishia)

Rishia picked up the ropes and quickly bound the mage once more.

“Naofumi-san, I apologize. I was unable to draw out any useful information.” (Rishia) “No, just bring him to the prison. We’ll just torture him until he confesses everything. Nothing has been lost.” (Naofumi) Anyways, so this dagger is able to brainwash.

And Itsuki was not needed in this plan.

But then, why is everyone repeating the words of Justice?

Eventually, the magic user awoke in the prison, and I once again began the interrogation.

“W-what!? I am...” (Welst)

“Now then, as I said before, I’ll have you spill everything.” (Naofumi)
“Ku...” (Welst)

This man sure is stubborn.

But I have plenty of ways to make him talk. And there are plenty of things I want to experiment.

“Okay, now I’ll have you drink this water.” (Naofumi) “W-what are you trying to do!?” (Welst)

From that reaction, it seems he’s not the one who ordered the poisoning of the well... Or was he just not told?

If he plainly refused, then that would clarify it.

“Just drink it.” (Naofumi)

“Guha! Sto-” (Welst)

I order the slaves to make him drink it forcefully.

“Gaba... uguuuuuuu... hah... hah...” (Welst)

He violently grasps at his own throat. His eyes are bloodshot.

“If you speak, it’ll be easier for you.” (Naofumi) I take out an antidote and hold it at the tip of his nose.

You can use poison like this as well.

I don’t know who set the poison, but he did me a favor.

“Hey, hey, messenger of justice. If you don’t confess soon, you’ll die.”
(Naofumi) “Naofumi-chan, you look like you’re having fun.” (Sadina) “I’ll bet it’s quite a refreshing smile. I can tell from his voice.” (Atlas) The peanut gallery is getting loud.

Though if Raphtalia was here, she would get mad at me.

“I won’t help you until you confess... If I’m able to capture all of your comrades, the nobles should retreat.” (Rishia) “Ugu... I’ll speak... I’ll speak, so...” (Welst)

Ah, so he is afraid of death.

And he seems to be in a bit of pain.

“Then speak. Based on the contents, I may free you. If you lie, you’ll be drinking more poison.” (Naofumi) And so, we drew out information from the mage-like person.

Backing him was this country’s revolutionary faction, and he confirmed that Witch was with them.

Mald was their leader, and though he was their comrade, the mage didn’t know too much about him.

“Then tell me. What happened during the Spirit Turtle incident?”
(Naofumi) I could see the whites of the mage’s eyes, so I fed him the antidote.

“I think you already understand, but if you stay silent, then you’ll be drinking poison again.” (Naofumi) “Ku...” (Welst)

The mention of poison makes the mage cough. He glares at me as if I were a piece of garbage.

And then he begins speaking,

Itsuki’s group arrived before Ren and Motoyasu’s. Half a day faster at that. And he destroyed one of the statues just like the others.

But nothing happened, and the group was captured by the soldiers of the country.

Armor pushed all of the blame onto Itsuki. Armor shouted at him, telling him that he was no hero of justice.

With their trust broken, the group was thrown into jail. They were set to have an audience with the king... but the Spirit Turtle revived, and Itsuki was forced to challenge it.

But without lifting a finger... His comrades came to a silent agreement. They got together behind Itsuki's back. They ran away, leaving him as a sacrifice to the Turtle.

Later, Armor declared that Justice without power was no Justice. Since Itsuki was unable to stop the Spirit Turtle, he was no justice.

And that was the story, apparently.

Most of the story was the mage's biased opinion, so I omitted it.

But that's quite something. I think I've heard those words in my world as well.

I see, so his comrades told him that he was no justice. They left him behind to give themselves time to escape. I guess that was enough to break him.

His current state was brought about by him denying the reality he was facing.

And, it seems that Raphtalia's experience on Cal Mira was no coincidence.

His party had long since noticed his habit of lying and holding back.

To satisfy his sense of justice, he went off to challenge the Spirit Turtle, and his comrades had had enough.

"Next is this." (Naofumi)

I take out the dagger.

I have a pretty good idea already, but just to make sure.

"What is this?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Welst)

“Will you let your silence destroy you?” (Naofumi) “I got it from the people supporting Princess Malty.” (Welst) Malty? Who the hell is that?

Ah, it’s Witch.

That name should have been forbidden.

But, I guess it’s natural for the revolutionary faction to call her as such.

I guess I’ll ignore it for now. The dagger is more important.

It seems that all he knew was that anyone slashed by the dagger would awaken to the concept of justice.

This is quite a peculiar item.

It’s not... A legendary artifact, or something, right?

“Atlas, can you sense anything?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s see... Aside from its ominous Aura, there seems to be a strange power coming from the center.” (Atlas) Is it from the strange jewel?

Its design looks a little familiar.

Witch... so she really was involved in this case.

But she isn’t here.

Is she in the Castle Town?

It’ll probably be dangerous if I don’t come to their aid soon.

I thought everything would be solved when I defeat Itsuki, but the situation is beyond my expectations.

Witch is backed by the Revolutionary faction and probably the Three Heroes Church, and the poisoning of the water supply was conducted by one of these parties.

Three Heroes Church... I recall the weapon the pope held.

This is just a hypothesis, but...

Could this be the same? A replica of a weapon wielded by a Hero? Or perhaps an item that merely replicates its effect?

“N...niichan” (Kiel)

I had previously dispelled Kiel’s brainwashing with my Shield Prison. She unsteadily walks towards me with a hand on her shoulder.

I had left her outside of the prison.

It’s been a while since I started the interrogation, so I guess she came to her senses.

“Oh, loin-clothed dog. How do you feel?” (Naofumi) “There’s no way I could feel good. What the hell happened, Niichan?” (Kiel) “You were brainwashed. You acted as if I were some sort of grand villain.”

(Naofumi) “Haha. Niichan can’t be that great of a person. You’re minion class at best.” (Kiel) “What was that!?” (Naofumi)

Well, there are some things I want to say, but it seems that the brainwashing has been dispelled magnificently.

Though, there’s still a possibility that she’s just acting.

“Do you remember what happened while you were brainwashed?”

(Naofumi) “Not really. But, I do remember being taken to a strange cave somewhere.” (Kiel) “Cave?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, it seemed like everyone was gathered there... I had the feeling that someone told me to go there... I had a vague idea that a trustable person like Niichan was there for some reason.” (Kiel) So the main justice is inside of that cave?

Wait.

If the dagger was a Replica, then where’s the original?

How was it even produced in the first place?

The infectious attribute on it was exceptionally high.

In Kiel and the others’ case, they had to take quite a few hits before they became infected.

But, it seems this dagger only has to pierce you once.

That means...

Witch is directly reporting to the Three Heroes Church and is receiving funds from the nobles.

That's why their cooperation is all over the place.

The sleeping drug was from the nobles, but the revolutionaries themselves didn't want to use Demi-Humans so they switched it to poison.

This sort of ad-libbing... Perhaps they'll try to masquerade as one of my slaves next.

Anyways, I'll have to seal off this Dagger's ability for now.

Based on all of this justice, this replica may have been based on Itsuki.

I heard that they were researching into the field of making replicas. If I assume they had some success in it, then this may have been the result.

The situation is much worse than I thought.

I don't think I could have expected such a situation even in my dreams.

"Do you know where the cave is?" (Naofumi)

I can probably find out with some more interrogations, but Kiel may know already.

"I think I'll be able to go there by scent." (Kiel) "Good! Then let's go slaughter... no I should go to the neighboring village and check the damages." (Naofumi) "Understood!" (Kiel)

And so, we left the tied up, brainwashed slaves in the hands of the free slaves and set off for the neighboring village.

Of course, we took the magic user with us just in case.

If he tries to attack us again, he'll get what's coming to him.

"..." (Rishia)

Rishia seems to be lost in thought.

"Are you pondering over whether Itsuki is the culprit or not?" (Naofumi) "... Yes." (Rishia)

“For now, we can assume it’s only his comrades. This may be wishful thinking, but Itsuki may be innocent.” (Naofumi) “I understand. For now, I’ll just fight as Naofumi-san orders.” (Rishia) I wonder. Will she say the same if Itsuki steps onto the battlefield?

I think that Itsuki is definitely involved in this riot in one way or another.

We need to be prepared for when he chooses to show himself.

But, for now, I’m worried about what became of the village I left to Ren and Firo.

Chapter 234: Mob Mentality

As I approach the city, I could see fires blazing even from afar.

The people were not evacuating. They were taking refuge in the mansion Melty was using as her residence on the outskirts of the village.

The Justice Zombies were attacking while shouting out negative propaganda about me and the country.

These brainwashed people would usually be difficult to distinguish at a glance.

However, if they took a sufficient amount of damage, and the host's consciousness faded, then the bodies would continue to walk around like typical zombies without wills.

Their behavior is also a problem.

The situation has devolved as such: The zombies would attempt to climb the stone walls surrounding the mansion, while the people inside would knock them down with wind magic or physical force.

And within the fire, Ren and Firo were taking the initiative, going around and knocking out the insurgents.

The others would then use rope to tie them up.

"Are you alright!?" (Naofumi)

"Ah, Master~! Well, you see..." (Firo)

"Naofumi, how did your side go? Did you find Itsuki?" (Ren) "No."
(Naofumi)

I summarize the events of the village while I step in front to act as the shield I am.

These brainwashed people should have a sense of priority instilled within them.

They should be prioritizing killing me or Melty.

"For the sake of Justice, Perish!" (Merchant)

A merchant who had been laughing and conversing with me just yesterday thrusts a dagger at me.

And without a word, I activated Erst Strike Shield and Change Shield, creating a combo that inflicted Paralysis.

“What about the people you’re supposed to be protecting?” (Naofumi)
“Ah, this kid says that matter is fine.” (Ren)

“Well, you see. I somehow know.” (Firo)

I see, so Firo can sense it with her feral instincts.

She can sense the actions of the other Filo Rials and their support.

“And this is that dagger?” (Ren)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I take out the dagger and present it to Ren.

Of course, in order for him to analyze it.

Trying to insert it into my shield seems dangerous, so I’ll have Ren make a Copy of it.

It’s a dangerous item, but if he makes it his own... It might be fine.

“Try holding it for a second.” (Naofumi)

“Okay.” (Ren)

Ren grasps the hilt of the dagger, and his sword shines for a moment.

“Curse Series... The Dagger of Mob Mentality?” (Ren) So it comes down to that.

And wait, it’s a Curse Series?

There’s more than the 7 Deadly Sins?

I see, so this dagger makes one’s mind a single part of a whole and prevents an individual from making decisions on their own.

“Wait a second... Let me check it for more details.” (Ren) Ren opens his status screen and reads through it.

“I apologize, I don’t really know what this is supposed to mean.” (Ren)
He answers as he knocks down several zombies with his sword.

“Does it have any strange effects?”

“Equipment Bonus... Release by Brainwashing; Mutual Understanding;
Don’t worry, I understand you.”

... That’s seriously suspicious.

Ren probably thinks so as well. He has a complicated expression.

“This is Release? Mutual Understanding? Can you even call that understanding?” (Ren) “Does it mean your troubles will fade away?” (Naofumi) So it stains you with the ideology of another...

Anyone who objects to that psychology is an enemy, and if you infect them, they’ll be comrades once more.

This isn’t a game...

This is quite a disgusting dagger.

“Where is Eclair-san?”

Rishia looks around and asks Ren.

Eclair... Is that Female Knight?

She’s probably being useful around now.

I mean, the girl knows nothing but how to fight.

“Ah, she is...” (Ren)

Ren’s face darkens.

And he points to the mansion.

“Is she defending from the mansion?” (Rishia)

“It seems that she received quite a shock upon seeing the strange actions and speech of the enemy.” (Ren) “What?” (Naofumi)

“How can I get them to understand me? The Justice I seek is nothing like this. She couldn’t raise her hands against her former comrades.” (Ren) Ah, Female Knight had a strong sense of justice.

If the enemy takes on the name of Justice and spouts incomprehensible nonsense, I guess she would get mad.

The citizens she vowed to protect were fighting her.

Though they were being controlled by others, they still maintained some of their selves. It would be impossible to attack at full power.

They may even pretend to be allies.

This possibility could lead to suspicion and infighting.

This really is an annoying ability.

“A world without Slavery or Discrimination. An equal world,’ she said as the amount of turned allies around her increased. It must have been tough.” (Ren) Well, she does have a point.

In this country’s eyes, it is impossible for humans and Demi-Humans to live side by side. If a Demi-Human is officially treated as an equal, then people accuse the government of giving them preferential treatment.

One side says that I’m doing the brainwashing, while they spread their argument through brainwashing. There’s no end to it.

This village had no one who could undo the brainwashing, so there’s no helping it.

Equal? No Discrimination? Those are some expressions that make me sick to my stomach.

Even in my ‘equal’ world, there’s been no one who’s been able to practice true equality.

Superiority exists in all worlds.

When someone is born, he’s already being judged. Equality is a laughable concept.

(TL Note: Yoraikun does not endorse any views offered by our protagonist.) The quest to make an impartial, equal world without war is merely a trigger to unleash more war.

It’s like when she beat up and performed minorly tortured Ren in order

to teach him a lesson.

Anyways, what does the word Equality even mean?

The meaning I know has all humans treated equally without discrimination or favorable treatment.

It's unattainable and merely something to be strived for.

But in a world with Slavery as a set system, if such things are preached, no one will lend their ears.

My world only got rid of slavery recently.

If anyone actually supported such a cause, they would have ulterior motives.

And the reason slavery became extinct in my world was largely due to the changing times; slaves were no longer needed. (TL: He's talking about Japan here) This world is still in need of some form of labor.

To try and preach such a concept that's realistically impossible, I can only see her as a child.

That's a concept that the Three Heroes Church and the Revolutionary faction would simply use to their advantage.

"I'll put lecturing Female Knight off to a later date. Do you think we'll be able to manage here?" (Naofumi) "The enemy numbers are too great. At this rate, we can tie all of them up, but it will take too long." (Ren) "I see..." (Naofumi)

Even if the people I brought along also fight, it will still take a long time.

"Naofumi-cha~n." (Sadina)

... Ah, right. Sadina was with us.

"Hey... Sadina. Do you have a way to take out the overflowing mass of brainwashed children and put out the fire all at once?" (Naofumi) "Leave it to me! Everyone!" (Sadina)

Sadina began swinging her harpoon like a conductor's baton.

Perhaps because she brought along more people this time, I can feel the magic in the air condensing to greater levels than before. It's already a large scale magic formation.

Ah, this person is comparable to Firo in useful abilities.

Hm? Firo?

"Firo, mobilize the other Filo Rials to cast Choral Magic as well!"
(Naofumi) "Got it~! N... Nn..." (Firo)

Firo cleared her throat and began singing.

And in response to that, the other Filo Rials in the area began chirping.

"Naofumi-chan, go evacuate the children who aren't brainwashed."
(Sadina) "Understood." (Naofumi)

By my orders, I evacuated everyone who was still sane.

I won't let the situation devolve to the level it was before.

"Wait!"

"Submit to the will of justice!"

"Devil of the Shield!"

All the brainwashed people say the same things.

"Ren!" (Naofumi)

"Leave it to me! 「Hundred Sword!」" (Ren)

The pursuing slaves are blocked by countless strikes from Ren's area of effect skill.

Heroes with offensive capabilities sure are useful.

「「「Tidal Wave!」」」

「「「Sweet Song!」」」

Upon Sadina's magic, a large wave washes away the Justice Zombies in front of the mansion, and upon hearing Firo's song, other Zombies turn white-eyed and fall down on the spot.

It's probably a magic with a sleep effect.

It seems that Firo's singing ability has reached magical levels.

"I guess that we succeeded in the suppression for now." (Naofumi) "No, not yet." (Ren)

Ren points deeper into the city.

And from that direction, Brainwashed Zombies continue to pour in, one after the other.

Where the hell did these people come from anyways!?

They must have grown in number from the inhabitants of this village.

"... The person leading all of them probably isn't here." (Naofumi) In a situation like this, the person leading the charge, like the Magic User in my village, probably retreated already.

"No, there's one suspicious place." (Ren)

Ren signals towards the village plaza.

Hm? For some reason, I see a Gaelion-like object breathing fire all over the place.

On its back is someone who looks like Taniko.

"Naofumi, there was a church built behind there, right?" (Ren) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

"The Brainwashed army's built up their defenses there. We can almost break through. Won't you come with us?" (Ren) "I see." (Naofumi)

Itsuki may be there. Maybe...

"We're going over to the church. You guys should continue to bind the defeated enemies. Find a way to contain them all." (Naofumi)

"Understood, Naofumi-chan." (Sadina)

Yeah, it's best to leave the defenses to her.

It would be bad if we thinned our forces enough for them to break through.

And the constant battle has fatigued both sides.

Just raising one's level doesn't change sustained injury, fatigue, or hunger.

"Then Firo and the Filo Rials will go over to where Gaelion is fighting!"
(Naofumi) "Eh?... I have to go to Gaelion?" (Firo)

Firo states her opinion.

It seems the other Filo Rials agree.

"Just shut up and go." (Naofumi)

"Oka~y..." (Firo)

"Is Melty alright?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. Melty-chan is strong, so she's fine." (Firo) "I see. Well, she was strong enough to blow away my house." (Naofumi) A militaristic princess... It's a common theme in literature, but it makes me see just how much Melty has changed.

Even though I'm the cause.

But that doesn't matter for now. I just need to find a way into the church.

I get on Firo's back and gallantly rush onto the battlefield.

Ren is with us.

On the way, we encounter attacks from brainwashed people, but they are no match for Firo's speed.

My place's Filo Rials sure are high class.

Though, besides Firo's first disciple, Motoyasu raised them all.

Is he going to become the Filo Rial Master?

What would I do if he actually becomes one...

Chapter 235: Remnants

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Aboard Firo, we assault the heavily fortified church.

People fly left and right in the face of Firo’s charge.

... They’re fine, right? I don’t think they’ll die from something like this.

I somehow feel invincible right now.

And we reach the area where Gaelion was fighting.

Firo and Gaelion lock eyes and begin intimidating one another.

They’ll still fight in a situation like this?

They stare at each other, fighting with their gazes for a while. Suddenly, Gaelion lets out a laugh.

“Mu-!” (Firo)

“This isn’t the time for that! By the way, what is supposed to be here?”
(Naofumi) I pose the question to Rishia and Atlas, who are riding the same Filo Rial.

“A sinister aura is intertwined with the flow of energy here. I’m not exactly sure.” (Atlas) “Fumu.” (Naofumi)

It would be nice if we finally found Itsuki, but that’s just wishful thinking.

We step over the Church’s threshold.

Inside are several people I have never seen before, busy at work tampering with the arrangement of the building. They are mainly scratching out the shield mark on the four saint symbol and destroying any shield-related objects of worship. (TL: The four saint symbol is the border of my header) “Good job coming all the way here.” (???)

A slightly familiar face steps forward and boldly greets me.

Who is this again?

There are too many people who I've seen before but can never remember. It's quite troubling.

All of these people are wearing work clothes.

They're probably not the people who are supposed to be managing the church.

I have way too many enemies to remember them all.

"To the Devil of the Shield, let me inflict God's Judgment." (???) "... Ah, so it's like that." (Naofumi)

So the people who infiltrated the temple and began to desecrate it were the remnants of the Three Hero Church.

I think I saw some of these people when I tried to buy holy water and they tried to sell me low quality ones.

And, I remember the person in front of me.

It's the Sister who drove us away from the Dragon Hourglass.

"So this is where the rebels went." (Naofumi) "No matter what the Devil says, the religion of Melromark is the Three Hero Church. We will follow the late pope's wishes and govern the world." (Sister) Govern... the world.

It's a psychology that runs rampant in cults.

A united world would just be unnerving.

"And... You've fallen into our trap, Devil of the Shield!" (Sister) A large magic circle lights up on the floor beneath my feet.

And at that moment, my body suddenly feels several times heavier.

"Ku..."

Ren, Rishia and the rest groan.

"Kyuaa!?" (Gaelion)

Gaelion covers Taniko with his wings as if to protect her. He readies himself to attack.

"What did you do?" (Naofumi)

“It would be troublesome if you moved, so we set up some magic to restrain you.” (Sister) Hmm... So this magic circle can prevent movement.

“Hm? It’s heavy?” (Firo)

Firo slowly lifts her feet and begins walking towards the Three Hero Church remnants.

I guess they’re witnessing the overwhelming difference in power.

Firo received my stat corrections from birth, so I guess a normal level of restraint won’t hold her.

“Raise the output!” (Sister)

The magic circle begins to glow brighter, and Ren slams onto the ground.

Where are they supplying the power from? I can’t tell...

“Naofumi-sama, what should we do?” (Atlas)

... I wonder why Atlas is still fine.

She’s standing next to Firo as if nothing happened to her.

I’m also able to handle it to some extent with my stats.

... If I think about it, isn’t my situation still really advantageous right now?

As I thought that, brainwashed slaves begin pouring into the church.

It seems things just won’t go my way today.

“Those who have awoken to our faith. Even if they be stupid, vulgar Demi-Humans, if they are willing to lay down their lives for us, then perhaps God will forgive them in heaven. Now, fight to repent for your existence!” (Sister) That was a really dubious speech.

I really want to retort something now.

Why am I only ever surrounded by idiots?

Why are they sending them to fight with the assumption that they’ll die?

Maybe it's because they're people of the Devil's village.

... And what does she mean by 'perhaps'? She really left it open ended.

But, this is kinda bad. Rishia might be able to move, but Ren and the Filo Rials are immobile.

I think Gaelion and Taniko are fine as well.

Besides Ren, it seems that everyone above Class-Up level is alright.

"Kyua!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion lashes his tail out at the approaching slaves' faces, but the magic circle makes his movement too slow.

Ah... It seems that this magic is only affecting us.

What should I do? With Firo's help, these guys won't be a problem.

But if we leave Ren and the others behind, they'll be in danger.

I'll have to fight anyways, but I get the feeling there's a better strategy here.

And then, I suddenly remember something.

I put my hand on the shield and change its form.

The shield I select is the Spirit Turtle Carapace Shield.

I've strengthened it to some extent.

It's not as strong as the Soul Eater Shield, but its defense is considerable.

And its Equipment Bonus is Gravity Field.

"Oh? My body is lighter?" (Firo)

"Yeah, a little bit." (Ren)

Everyone affected by the magic begins to rise up.

Right, the Gravity Field ability allows me to manipulate Gravitational force to some extent. This restraint magic simply made one's body heavier. If they used something like magical rope to bind us, then we

would be in trouble.

Imagining the feeling of becoming lighter, I deployed a field.

Of course, it's an ability I've tested before by myself.

Its weakness is that once one becomes lighter, they are unable to put the same amount of force into their attacks.

Contrarily, by increasing gravity, it becomes harder to move, but you can put more force into your attacks.

Another disadvantage is that it can't differentiate between friend and foe. An interesting use is that if an enemy is sent flying, it can increase their impact, and if you are sent flying, it can decrease yours.

There's no question why this was such a difficult material for the Old Man to make a weapon out of.

"This should let you move a little. Please endure it until we can dispel this trap." (Naofumi) "Ah, like this, I can fight." (Ren)

"I'll also try hard." (Atlas)

"Yes." (Rishia)

Rishia and Atlas nod

"Let's go!" (Rishia)

Rishia throws her knife, and it rapidly blocks the escape of the Sister who deployed the trap.

As I thought. She's moving well under these conditions. Atlas follows her lead and thrusts at the brainwashed slaves.

"Ugu-" (Slave)

The slaves that take on Atlas's strike cry out.

"I'll have you sleep for a bit." (Atlas)

"I apologize! 「Meteor Sword」!"

Ren apologizes as he uses Meteor Sword to send Shockwaves at the Slaves and Remnants.

“What are you doing!? Increase the radius and output further!” (Sister)
As the enemy formation is thrown into disarray, some of us are able to step out of the circle.

I sit on Firo’s back as I direct the battle.

Well, the difference in power is quite evident. They’re all pretty much small fries.

The representative, annoying Sister continues to scream out orders.

“Rain down your spells on the Demon!” (Sister) Finally!

I’ve been waiting for this.

I bring out the Spirit Turtle Heart Shield.

Equipment Bonus: C Magic Snatch, C Gravity Shot, Tenacity Enhancement.

C is short for counter. I need to be attacked to use them.

I’ll finally be able to test out Magic Snatch and Gravity Shot.

The Three Hero Church faces me and begins to cast Choral Magic.

「Choral Magic! Lightening Judgement!」

An electrified mass of magical energy in the shape of a cross flies towards me and Firo.

I lift up my shield and take it head on.

“Naofumi!?” (Ren)

“Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas)

“Naofumi-san!” (Rishia)

I feel some static coursing around my body, but I don’t feel any pain.

“Waaaaaah... Firo’s feathers are standing on end, master!” (Firo) The static electricity seems to have made Firo ecstatic. Ignoring her, I look at the enemy. (TL:... Are those Crickets I hear?) I even needed to protect the brainwashed slaves from the large scale magic assault.

Aren’t they supposed to be allies now? These guys are scum as always.

“There’s no problems.” (Naofumi)

“As expected of Naofumi-sama!” (Atlas)

“Amazing...” (Taniko)

“Yes.” (Rishia)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Taniko and Gaelion also chime in as they prepare their magic.

Both of them specialize in the same magic system, so they can do joint spells.

『I order of thee to guide Gaelion’s power, and to request for it to materialize. Earth Pulse, give me power.』 (Taniko) 『KyuaKyuaKyua!』 (Gaelion)

「High Fire Blaze!」 (Taniko)

As Taniko finishes the chant, a large ball of fire appears from Gaelion’s mouth and flies towards the Remnants of the Three Hero Church.

Oh, it’s got quite a bit of power to it. It also gives off a joint attack-like vibe, which is cool.

Not that I really care or anything...

Anyways, while Gaelion and Taniko were busy showing off, I had just been hit with Choral Magic.

My shield shines blue, and the Counter Effect begins to activate.

And from the shield, several Blue and White balls fly back out at the casters.

“Wha-”

It must have been an unexpected attack. Quite a few people are unable to avoid it.

Well, the balls are quite fast. Besides people who have classed-up and people that are hiding special powers, most will find them difficult to dodge.

“W-what!? Nothing’s happening isn’t it? Devil of the Shield, don’t surprise us like that!” (Sister) “The surprise comes later.” (Naofumi)

I give a wide smile.

These people have no idea just what sort of attack they just took.

“Gu... My body is!?” (Sister) <ED: Surprise Muther F’ker> All of a sudden, she puts her hand on the floor. She desperately struggles to lift herself, but it’s not working.

Oh? The restraint circle is fading. I guess the casters lost their concentration.

And the blue and white lights leave their targets and return to me.

I check my status and find that my Mana has recovered.

Right, Magic Snatch and Gravity Shot fulfilled their duties.

These two will be a useful counters against mages.

Magic Snatch, as its name suggests, steals magic from its target. Gravity Shot immobilizes them with Gravity Magic while Magic Snatch does its work.

But, as expected, it doesn’t do any damage.

“Attack!” (Naofumi)

On my orders, my comrades nod.

“Okay!” (Atlas)

“Leave it to me!” (Ren)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

The Three Hero Church remnants use the brainwashed people as shields to retreat further into the church, and we eventually lose sight of them.

Of course, we tried to pursue, but there were too many enemies.

“Damn... Running is all they’re good at.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 236: The Demon Lord of the Shield

The shouts of justice from the brainwashed slaves fill the air, and I can no longer hear anything else.

I am getting the urge to burn them all with my Wrath, but I can't really be inflicting damage on these people.

I'll have to pay them compensation when all of this is resolved, and if they ask for medical fees... Should I just play dumb?

"Firo." (Naofumi)

"What~?" (Firo)

"Throw them off! With enough force to kill!" (Naofumi)

"They're people Firo knows, so no!" (Firo)

Ku... she's fine with leaving them on the brink of death, but she won't kill.

It may be because she spends much more time in this town than me.

Her memory isn't to be underestimated, so she can probably recognize the villagers.

But this swarm is making it hard to proceed.

"Naofumi sometimes makes some dark jokes, doesn't he?" (Ren)

"Everyone usually understands when he does." (Rishia)

"Right, we all know of Naofumi-sama's kindness." (Atlas) "KYUA!" (Gaelion)

"No idea what you're talking about. I just want to end this and go home." (Taniko) The one who wanted to return was Taniko. She seemed to be fed up.

I don't know what sort of misunderstanding everyone was making, but I was pretty serious there.

But correcting them would be a pain.

Fighting is also getting to be a pain, so I gather my comrades into a single area and deploy a magically strengthened Meteor Shield.

It seems that if I charge it with magic, I can increase its range.

I expand it to a radius of 5 meters.

With the barrier deployed, we drive all the enemies out of it.

Ren and Co. protect the barrier while we walk forward. But this is also a pain.

The slaves keep on breaching my defenses.

When that happens, the infiltrator gets knocked out and tied up.

It's a common setting in Zombie franchises, but having to deal with it in a fantasy setting is annoying.

If the culprit was a vampire or something, then I might look forward to fighting them, but this setting isn't fun at all.

And we reach and open a large door in the depths of the church.

Inside is...

The room looks quite important. It has multiple platforms of raising elevation.

In the center is a ceremonial altar, or perhaps I should call it a ritual altar.

I think that I remember being told that that point had geographic significance or something.

It seems we've fallen into a trap once more. The remaining remnants of the church and Itsuki's former companion, Armor, are sitting on a high place, looking down on us.

"So you finally arrived, Devil of the Shield. I was getting tired of waiting." (Armor) "... Does the fact that you're here mean that Witch is here too?" (Naofumi) "Are you referring to our comrade, Princess Malty? Unfortunately, she is not present." (Armor) "Damn! By the way, am I right

in assuming that you're the primary culprit in inciting this ruckus?"
(Naofumi) "Ruckus? You call our crusade in the name of Justice a simple Ruckus!?" (Armor) "Crusade? You sure love to joke, you terrorist."
(Naofumi) I laugh as I provoke him.

Armor's face dyes red as he visibly gets increasingly angry.

It's because this guy has a needless amount of pride.

It'll be easier to make him self-destruct with words.

"What was that!?" (Armor)

"Could it be that you're a believer of the Three Hero Church sect? That heretical one?" (Naofumi) "No, the Three Hero Church sympathizes with our Justice. They are merely our kindred souls." (Armor) "Is that so."
(Naofumi)

As always, he's carrying a self-centered sense of Justice.

This Armor always had a stuck up attitude. Perhaps that came from his status as a noble.

Even so, he answered quite naturally.

I guess using his compatriots to provoke him won't work.

"And, like, did I even do anything to make you mad at me?" (Naofumi)
Though the Three Hero Church has its own reasons, I don't remember offending Armor or the rest of the Itsuki Party to that extent.

I'm sure that they do dislike me, but only to the extent where cooperation would be impossible.

I didn't even interact with them much.

We were only in the same party for an hour or two on Cal Mira.

"Don't play dumb. You use your power of brainwashing to obstruct our Justice!" (Armor) ... The hell?

Um... You've lost me, mate.

Let's put aside the fact that they're the ones brainwashing for now.

What exactly is his justice supposed to be doing?

“Let me ask for argument’s sake. What is your Justice?” (Naofumi) He probably won’t say anything good.

“Our Justice is one where evil does not exist. It is to make a peaceful world based on our glorious ideals. And as such, we must Judge all evil with our power!” (Armor) Totally self-righteous.

The thing that shocks me the most is that people with such a dictatorial mindset actually exist in this world.

Isn’t there something they find strange about calling themselves Justice in the first place?

I guess the result of Itsuki’s loss is starting to take root in them.

“And? What exactly did I do to get in your way?” (Naofumi) “You... No, the Fake Heroes caused our party’s prestige to drop, and caused us to be pursued by the country. You all destroyed our status! Atone for your sins!” (Armor) ... So because of Itsuki’s loss, their prestige from being of a Hero’s party fell, and they were unable to reform the world and convince others to follow them as they pleased. And all fault lied with the Four Heroes?

What’s more, the fact that my peddling within Melromark helped raise the morale of the populace and was looked on as an act of good simply pissed them off further.

Oh, I think I’ve received requests from villages to send peddling carts over.

Because I made sure to regulate the pricing, I didn’t really pay attention to the orders themselves.

Because of my work, they were unable to gain ground, so they came to resent me.

Please just get over it. These people with broken thought processes are gathering against me.

I’m getting the urge to punch them into silence. And that will take a

while with my attack.

“Devil of the Shield... No, Demon Lord of the Shield! We, the new Heroes, will defeat you!” (Armor) With a flash, he takes a familiar sword out of his scabbard and takes the shield off of his back. He gets into a battle position.

So I’ve finally surpassed the stage of Devil, and evolved into the Demon Lord.

For a Hero’s enemy, a Demon Lord is standard fare, but no matter how I look at it, this situation is a bit off.

And why does he get to be the New Hero?

Just proclaiming it yourself doesn’t make it so.

If I lose here, will all the fault of this incident fall to me?

Now that I think about it, there’s no need for them to use my slaves in their rebellion.

They could simply have them rampage and then kill them in the name of Justice to earn fame.

Something similar will probably happen here as well.

They’ll kill all the Demi-Humans and sweet talk the Humans into silence and eventually abandon them.

Just how self-righteous of an organization are you making here?

“Evil, is it... Naofumi, what should we do?” (Ren)

“Justice and Evil are idiotic concepts. The reason we were summoned was to prevent as many casualties as possible from the wave. We can’t really choose the means.” (Naofumi) “That sounds like something you would say. No, now I think you’re actually in the right. Next is... Ah, the person who was with Witch was that person.” (Ren) Ren holds out his sword and glares at Armor.

Ah, so I was right.

Why couldn’t he remember until now anyways?

Well, the Ren back them thought Solo Play was cool, so he didn't put anyone besides his own comrades to memory.

Not that I should be talking, but I bet he never looked at their faces more than once.

"Someone who would do things like this, even if they were deluded, even if they were seen as Heroes, will never be Justice." (Ren) "Yes, I think so as well!" (Rishia)

Rishia seems motivated.

For her to give such a definite response with her former comrade, Armor, as the enemy... Rishia sure has changed.

She would have trembled before him if it was the Rishia I first picked up.

"What course of action should we take, Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas)
"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

"Should we just take them out?" (Taniko)

Atlas, Gaelion, and Taniko are also quite motivated.

"Mu... Is the one standing there Rishia? As I thought, you were a filthy traitor!" (Armor) "What do you mean traitor? You were the ones who drove her out." (Naofumi) "...I ... can't accept anyone who would lead things such as this!" (Rishia) Rishia boldly declares at Armor.

Did she just nonchalantly ignore me?

Don't just treat me as a background character. I'll smack you.

"There's no way this is Justice!" (Rishia)

Ah, and the thing that caught my attention, armor's sword and shield...

I remember the sword quite clearly.

It's the one I saw at the Zeltburg auction, the Spirit Turtle Sword.

It was an item so expensive, I would never dream of holding it. Why does Armor have it?

He probably used the influence of the nobles backing him.

Or perhaps it was stolen.

Steal... Now that I think about it, there are plenty of Heroes who break into houses and look through the drawers and chests.

This is magnificent. He's definitely a Hero.

But that doesn't really matter. It's not like that sword is mine.

But that Shield that looks like the counterpart of the sword.

Could that be...

"Oy! Is that Shield stolen goods?" (Naofumi)

"Surely you jest. I merely purified a wicked item manufactured by the Demon King." (Armor) Oy, that's the Shield the Old Man and Imya's uncle worked hard to make. The Shield made just for me.

I won't forgive this! It's time for judgment!

What do you mean purify, you thieves!?

"That Shield is mine!" (Naofumi)

If it's used carelessly and gets scratched, its value will drop.

"That Armor is my prey. You guys go deal with the rest. There's no need to keep them alive, so fight with all your strength, but don't kill the brainwashed ones." (Naofumi)

Chapter 237: Spirit Turtle Shell

I'm reaching my limit here.

I don't plan on letting these people live. My stress has reached its peak.

"Understood! But... They're Itsuki's former comrades, right? Will you be alright?" (Ren) "They're no one's comrades right now. They're the scum of this country... no, of this world. We need to deal with them as soon as possible. There's no merit in leaving the Three Hero Church alive either." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Ren)

With Ren's reply, the other members run forward.

I get off Firo and begin walking towards Armor.

I left Firo to deal with the others. If I let anyone else fight this one, then the shield I've been waiting so long for would get damaged.

"Die!" (Armor)

Sure of his victory, Armor swings down the Spirit Turtle Sword at me with all his might.

It seems that the remnants of the Three Hero Church are continuously casting support magic on him as well.

They don't have any time to discuss the matter. They're unorganized 'til the end.

However... I use one hand to catch the blade just before it reaches me.

Sparks fly everywhere as the metal collides.

"Gunu!? He stopped it unarmed!? What is this farce!?" (Armor) Armor's expression is colored with surprise.

I apply pressure to my hand as Armor puts all of his weight into withdrawing the blade. Did he think that someone who never received any growth corrections would be able to defeat a fully-strengthened Hero?

I've never seen his stats, but the only thing I can compare him to is the Rishia of the past.

The support magic doesn't seem to be helping much.

"Nuo! Unhand me, Demon King! Don't grace me with your foul presence, you fiend!" (Armor) (TL: This is more of a literal translation. If you didn't get it, he's saying he doesn't want to be near him.) Even though he was the one who rushed at me.

Since when were counterattacks off limits? Are you a child?

Should I feed you a poison mushroom?

... I don't think that I'm bullying him, but I'm getting a strange feeling.

"How absurd! The Hero of the Sword is only at that level... I guess the true Demon Lord can't be dealt with with such half-hearted measures..." (Armor) "Shut up." (Naofumi)

I use the principle of leverage to steal his sword.

Without taking any damage, I managed to take my opponent's weapon. I think I've seen this scene in a game before...

I didn't think I would be able to do such a thing in real life, but it was surprisingly easy.

Though, it's probably due to the defense I'm getting from the Shield.

This sword was quite valuable, right? I bet I could sell it for quite a bit.

Though I could also let Raphtalia or the other slaves use it.

But first, I better let Ren copy it.

"Ren!" (Naofumi)

Before the system rejects it, I throw the sword at Ren.

And Ren catches it by reflex.

"Wow... This is quite a sword." (Ren)

I'm not sure if the Weapon Copy is working, but it looks like he's reading its stats.

As a result... The sword suddenly became worn out beyond recognition.

"Ah! The Sword I was going to put to good use!" (Naofumi) (TL: Literally

recycle) “Um... Sorry.” (Ren)

I had completely forgotten about his curse!

Dammit.

I have to move on. It’s not like losing it hurt me.

It wasn’t mine to begin with.

“Wha... The Holy Sword Rusted... You Monsters!” (Armor) Yes, it is quite a spectacle when you’re seeing it for the first time.

Just as surprising as when I first witnessed the brainwashing dagger.

No, for now, I have to think of how to get the Shield away from him.

The shield the Old Man made is special.

I can’t let Ren touch it.

“Ren, no matter what, you can’t touch the Shield he’s holding.”

(Naofumi) “G-got it. So please don’t glare at me with such bloodlust.”

(Ren) Ren changes his sword to the Spirit Turtle Sword.

“Now then, I’ll have you return that shield.” (Naofumi) As I step forwards, it seems evident that Armor lost all of the momentum he had before. He draws back, as if to retreat.

Did he lose his confidence from having his prided weapon destroyed?

“You seem to be the ringleader here. I’ll have you spill everything. It may be a bit messy, but I’ll have you pay the tab for picking a fight with me as well.” (Naofumi) Without a moment’s delay, I grab Armor’s collar and drag him towards me.

Armor immediately puts the shield in front to protect himself, but it’s too late.

This guy’s been pissing me off for a while. I’ll take the opportunity to inflict a bit of torture.

His Justice is a nuisance.

“There’s no choice. Mald, I won’t forget your sacrifice!” (Three Hero

Church Member) “What!? Are you betraying me!?” (Armor)

One of the Three Hero Church followers takes out a bomb-like item and throws it towards us.

“There!” (Rishia)

Rishia throws her dagger at the projectile, causing it to explode in midair.

And the explosion encompassed the thrower as well.

“GYAAAAAAA!?” (Three Hero Church)

Did he plan to take everyone out, enemy and ally?

There should be a limit to idiocy! (TL: And then came the internet) As soon as he was at a disadvantage, he cut off all his comrades. As expected of the people Witch sided with.

Now then, how do I take this shield...

“Atlas!” (Naofumi)

“Yes, coming!” (Atlas)

“What about Firo?” (Firo)

“You’re overkill. Go play with the slaves.” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Firo)

“Can you to render them unconscious?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll try.” (Firo)

Now then, as per my order, Atlas comes running over.

I push Armor in her direction and issue orders.

“Keep pricking his vital points until he can’t feel anything anymore.”

(TL: The phrase used here is *これでもか*, which means, ‘And still more!?’ This pretty much means do it so that onlookers will say, you’re still going to hit him after that 10000 hit combo!?) “Yes, as Naofumi-sama commands.” (Atlas)

“Guru... Uge... Sto...” (Armor)

Atlas circles the man while thrusting at him. He desperately lifts the shield to defend, but Atlas is too fast.

Every time she hits, his facial expression changes. It's quite interesting.

And after a while, he drops the Shield, and I lift it up.

As soon as I touch it, a light goes off, and Weapon Copy begins to activate.

You have activated Weapon Copy.

You have unlocked the conditions to use Spirit Turtle Armor.

Spirit Turtle Shell 0/70 C (TL: Yes, it says Shell, not Shield) Ability Bonus

...

Equipment Bonus

Skill:

「S Float Shield」,「Reflect Shield」

Special Bonus:

Gravity Field, C Soul Recovery, C Magic Snatch, C Gravity Shot, Tenacity Enhancement, Magic Defense (Large), Lightning Resistance, SP Drain Block, Growing Power Weapon Proficiency 0

Amazing... It has all of the best bonuses from the other Spirit Turtle Shields.

Excluding Wrath, its base stats are the highest of any Shield in my possession.

I wonder what sort of effect Growing Power has.

Can this Shield Evolve like Wrath?

S Float Shield is probably an extension of E Float Shield and a Semi-Passive Skill.

It'll probably let me extend beyond 'Second Shield.'

What could Reflect Shield do?

From its name, I expect it to reflect received damage to some extent, but I guess that makes it useless against small fries.

I'll have fun unlocking more powers by awakening it.

But, I don't think it can get much better than this.

This is the best part. I probably already have many of the needed materials in order to strengthen this shield.

It's made of the same materials as the other Spirit Turtle Shields I have, so I'll assume that's the case.

It's unfortunate that I don't have the free time to strengthen it right away.

"Let's go!" (Atlas)

"Pii!" (Filo Rial)

Matching Atlas's timing, a Filo Rial chick joins and kicks Armor.

"Guhaaaa!" (Armor)

Armor twirls in the air as he flies several meters.

You reap what you sow.

Remember kids, stealing is bad.

This man's thought process sure is strange.

Could it be that? He thought he could win against a stronger opponent through resourcefulness and skills?

Their group is unorganized through and through.

If he won, he would claim that it was because I was foolish.

And saying those lines would make his side seem like the righteous one.

Throughout history, most tacticians can be seen as cowards if you change your perspective.

... I don't mean to criticize; I'm a fan of Manga and Light Novels, so I get it.

From the enemy's side, I'm most definitely a heinous villain.

"Now then, have you finally understood the difference in power, self-proclaimed 'New Hero?'" (Naofumi) "Gu..." (Armor)

Looking around, it seems that all but the brainwashed slaves have been pretty much taken care of.

Seeing the annoying Three Hero Church that put me through such agony in such a state puts my heart at ease.

"Take them all in. Everyone who resists gets a death sentence."
(Naofumi) "You sound just like a villain, Naofumi..." (Ren)

Ren retorts. How annoying.

I won't say I'm not one.

I glare at Ren, and he shifts his gaze back to the enemy.

"Running also warrants death." (Ren)

Says Ren in a yakuza-esque voice, pointing his newly copied weapon at the Three Hero Church remnants and threatening them.

"G-god... Please deliver us from the Demon Lord's curse..." (Sister) A sister of the church pleads.

Aren't the people before you supposed to be fake heroes who go against God?

Begging for one's life now is unsightly.

"I don't think I'm wrong, and I don't believe you're right. Even without the brainwashing." (Ren) "That's just because you've been brainwashed!" (Sister) "... This isn't getting anywhere. You people only believe whatever's convenient at the time. Because I've been wrong many times, I'll say this. You people are wrong! If you want to make amends, now is the time. I'll plead for everyone here to keep their heads. Surrender."
(Ren) How soft. I doubt these people have any hope of rehabilitation.

... Looking at it from Ren's perspective, he made many mistakes, and Female Knight was the one who preached to him and woke him up. He

probably wants to do the same for another, but he's picking the wrong group.

Just as I thought. Ren's words fall on deaf ears, and the Sister pulls a dagger from the inside of her robe.

"Submit to our Justice, you fake!" (Sister)

She stabbed at him.

But that was a meaningless action.

Firo is already behind her.

"Hup! (Firo)

"Gyah!" (Sister)

Firo lightly drops her heel on the sister's head, and the sister falls onto the floor.

... Is she dead? I hope so.

The other remnants are pretty much the same. Besides the brainwashed slaves, they pose no threat whatsoever.

Gaelion starts making a game of lightly tossing them at one another.

There is no need to hold back against the ones who acted of their own volition.

More and more Zombies are pouring in, making escape impossible.

Annihilating all of the forces here should be enough to set back their plans.

"Damn..." (Armor)

Armor slowly rises to his feet.

He's surprisingly tough.

"I guess it's about time to finish this. There's no need to keep you alive. Shall I make you regret baring your fangs at me?" (Naofumi)

Chapter 238: Chasing Too Far

Ren and Motoyasu are Heroes, so I can't kill them, and there are some things I need to make Witch do, so I'd like to leave her (barely) alive if possible.

But these guys are different.

In fact, in order to prevent them from harming more people, it's best to make them leave the stage early. For the sake of the world.

"And, like, did you seriously think you could beat me with such low power?" (Naofumi) A possibility is that Armor challenged Ren when he was a bandit and thought he could beat me if that was my power level. But, the Ren of that time had not yet learned strengthening methods.

To face me, he kept himself in perfect condition and got his hands on the strongest equipment he could find.

He used brainwashing to amass an army to wear me down so he could strike the finishing blow.

But those assaults had pretty much no effect on me.

He seriously underestimated his enemy. I should use this as reference. (TL: Learn from his mistakes) Though, I have no idea if an enemy with that large of a gap in strength will ever appear before me. I have no idea how strong Houou is supposed to be.

I should do what I can for now.

My current mission is to take care of this ridiculous farce.

"You're cowardly otherworlder who does nothing but rely on the strength of your Legendary Weapon! This World will be saved by its own people!" (Armor) "Cowardly... You're in no position to tell me that!" (Naofumi) You people arbitrarily summoned me. I don't need your complaints.

What is this person even trying to say?

It doesn't seem that words are getting through.

Though I get the feeling they weren't getting through from the start.

"This world's people will save themselves? That's quite a noble thought, but it was those very same people who decided to rely on the heroes and perform a summoning ritual. Your argument lacks persuasive power."
(Naofumi) And just because you happened to summon someone you didn't like, why must you abandon him?

I should direct those words at Trash.

The Queen supported me to the best of her ability, but it seems the country has lost some economic power.

When I see her tackling a mountain of paperwork, I find it hard to ask for funding.

I acknowledge that I may be a devil, but at least I have a conscience.

I'm surprised she hasn't ruined her body from stress yet.

No, perhaps she has.

I've seen her swallowing medicine before.

She's also been patting her stomach. She's definitely acquired stress ulcers.

Now that I think about it, how's the Castle Town doing?

I think Motoyasu and his Filo Rials will be able to suppress any uprisings.

I also sent a messenger to Raphtalia's group when this mess started, so I wonder what happened to them.

... It's been around half a day since this mess started.

If Raphtalia immediately came running back, I would suspect her of being brainwashed.

"Anyways, it's best for your sake if you honestly tell the whole story."
(Naofumi) From the Magic User's testimony, this guy's the ringleader. Perhaps I can wring Witch's location out of him.

"If you don't, my subordinates will torture you until you wish you were

dead.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, leave it to me.” (Atlas)

Atlas happily starts shadowboxing. She punches the air in front of her.

What’s with her movements?

“Yeah, Firo wants to do it too.” (Firo)

Firo begins imitating her.

Is that the new fad? Not on my watch.

When I turn around, I find that the others of my group have driven the brainwashed people outside and are in the process of setting up a barricade.

And just like I’m doing, Taniko borrowed a dagger from Ren, and began threatening the Three Hero Church remnants.

Ren cautions her that she shouldn’t be doing such things, but she shouts at him to shut up.

Gaelion has a delicate expression on his face.

I wonder who the girl takes after.

Rishia has just finished binding all of the remnants.

In the confusion created from throwing the bomb, they had scattered all over the place inside of the spacious church.

Rishia’s quite skilled.

She even ran on the walls... though I don’t know the logistics behind it.

Could she be concentrating magic on her feet to temporarily bind them or something?

Perhaps she’ll be able to run on water as well.

Hey, I told you people to kill them...

“Hey... just talk. You’ll lengthen your lifespan by a bit.” (Naofumi) As I declare this, Armor retreats a few steps and catches his breath.

Has he finally gotten a grasp of the situation he’s in?

His face is blue.

He assured himself that he would win and that his enemies were all evil, and now it's come to this.

Caught up in Itsuki's justice, he began to believe that he was justice itself.

"I'm waiting." (Naofumi)

"Ku... If I have to talk to you, then I'd rather di-" (Armor) Just as he was speaking...

The roof of the church caves in, and three brainwashed Filo Rials rain down from the sky.

"Wha-" (Armor)

"KUEEEEEEEE!" (Filo Rial)

"You're in the way!" (Firo)

"Please, Move!" (Atlas)

Two of them grapple with Firo and Atlas while the last one forcefully throws Armor on its back and starts running.

"Like I'd let that happen!" (Naofumi)

Just as I'm about to deploy Shield Prison, I remember something.

Where are they running to?

I thought I would leave Itsuki up to Kiel, but if I follow them there, I may find Witch and her compatriots. I can capture them all at once.

And it seems that Armor would rather commit suicide than be captured.

There's no point in capturing a dead man.

So I should use him as much as I can while he lives.

"Move!" (Firo)

Firo kicks away the Filo Rial blocking her and begins to give chase.

With her speed, catching up will be easy, but the destination is the

important part.

The situation is this dire. It's probably not a trap.

If we just manage to find the enemy stronghold, then no matter the situation, we'll be able to apprehend them sooner or later.

Of course, if they run towards Castle Town, I have no intention of letting them get far because I'll probably find Witch and Itsuki there.

"Wait, let's chase them too far!" (Naofumi)

(TL: I can't think of an English alternative. Pretty much, the term means to pursue a goal too far, and is usually used with a negative connotation, but Naofumi means to chase them to the end.) What's with that line?

It's something I said myself, but I have no idea what it means.

Aren't you usually supposed to say 'Don't chase them too far'?

Well, I do plan on pursuing them until the end.

"What's wrong Master? You don't want to capture them?" (Firo) "If they're going to run... then we'll just use that. Haha. It's hunting time."
(Naofumi) "As expected of Naofumi-sama. You let one escape to capture them all, right?" (Atlas) "You can see through everything, can't you?"
(Naofumi) Atlas's comprehension ability is scary.

Could this be an instinct of the militaristic Hakuko tribe?

She can cut off her anxiety and calmly view the situation.

For now, I should get the Filo Rials on our side. They're Motoyasu's, so their stats aren't bad.

I lock the one Firo kicked away in my Prison.

"Good. Now, you guys will be bringing the Three Hero Church Remnants to Melty's estate! I'm leaving Gaelion's group in charge."
(Naofumi) "Understood!"

As if they were expecting the order, Rishia and Taniko were already holding a net which they use to hold the Three Hero Church Remnants together after gathering them in one place.

The situation reminds me of a large haul of fish on a fishing boat.

All of the Remnants are directing foul language at my group.

It's truly a stupid sight. I'll apply some torture later.

If I don't let them suffer a bit, I won't be able to calm down.

... For this to be a possible stress-reliever... I've changed as well.

In a bad way.

Though, I have no intentions of correcting myself.

"Gaelion, you catch up with us later. And Taniko, I'll leave the command of the people at the mansion to you." (Naofumi) "Taniko!? Do you mean me?" (Taniko)

"I told you before, right? Why are you so surprised?" (Naofumi) "No, I knew! But hearing it directly is..." (Taniko)

"I'll pursue the cause of this ruckus. You guys should focus on suppressing the violence in this village. Tell Kiel, who's supposed to be good at tracking, to follow me." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Taniko)

"And after you deliver that message, send Gaelion over. Decide whether you'll come or not based on the situation." (Naofumi) Taniko nods at all of my orders.

"Then everyone else is following that Armor with me. Get on a Filo Rial." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Rishia)

"Let's go!" (Naofumi)

"Ya~y!" (Firo)

With Firo at the head, Rishia, Atlas, and Ren all board Filo Rials and follow to chase Armor.

"Are you sure they went this way?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, I thought that if we were too close, they'd notice, so Firo is keeping some distance." (Firo) . . .

Without any lights, we rely on Firo's instinct to give chase. It's already

been two hours.

All of the Filo Rials from my place are quite fast.

Without a cart, their normal running gait is around the max speed of a wild Filo Rial.

And such an amazing Filo Rial is running at full speed with Armor. They're already outside of my territory and on the mountain roads.

I wonder where they're running to.

But, I'm not about to waste time. Atop Firo's back, I begin Reinforcing the Spirit Turtle Shell.

It will take a while before it awakens, but I've already managed to raise its abilities beyond Soul Eater Shield.

What's more, it has a Growing Power ability, so I can't wait to see what happens next.

As expected of the Shield the Old Man made.

Ah, right. About the non-copy one, I had it carefully packaged and sent to the Mansion with Taniko.

It may get taken again, but taking it with me here would provide the highest chance of it getting scratched.

I won't let anyone touch it.

I don't think it will be able to get any more skills, but it's still an amazing Shield.

By the way, I tested out Reflect Shield to find out its ability.

When I shouted out the skill name, a list of the Shields I had with offensive power popped up.

There are a few I can't choose, but it seems this ability can temporarily give my Shield some offensive features.

It will be useful for attacking when using shields with high defense.

E Float Shield → Change Shield → Reflect Shield is also a possible

combination.

Then, the manifested shield can have greater durability.

My possibilities have increased.

“Master, it seems they’ve entered a building.” (Firo)

There’s a building out here?

I see a mountain fortress with some traces of light leaking out of it.

We’ve finally discovered their base.

I’ll make this a splendid massacre.

“Is that their stronghold?” (Ren)

“Seems like it.” (Naofumi)

I nod at Ren’s question.

Though it could just be a resting spot, it’s a fortress built in the middle of the mountains.

There’s a high probability that it’s an important point.

They’re probably recycling a fortress abandoned by the country.

It would be nice if Witch were somewhere here, but...

“Itsuki-sama...” (Rishia)

He may be there.

Either way, we’ll have to apprehend them.

But, Armor sure is a fool. Did he think he had outrun us?

That Filo Rial used to be mine, you know.

But I guess he had no choice but to run.

‘It was all a trap, now die Demon Lord!’ is also a possibility.

But I have confidence I’ll win. He’s a small fry.

I don’t know his level, but he wasn’t even able to scratch me when his blade was in direct contact with my skin.

At this rate, whether it be the Three Hero Church, the Nobles, Witch, the Rebels, or Armor, I don't think any of them can hurt me.

It would be strange for them to have someone with such capabilities.

... Now that I think about it, can the current me only be hurt with attacks on Curse-Series-level strength?

Then, my first objective should be to defeat Itsuki.

And with me are Firo, Atlas, Rishia, Ren, and the other Filo Rials. A perfect Battle Party.

With this party, it will be easy to capture him alive.

... The only problem would be if Rishia betrays us, but I have an idea for that.

"What's wrong, Master?" (Firo)

But, I can be certain that some of my own brainwashed subordinates are there as well.

I'm also taking that into account.

Firo and Ren can only inflict fatal blows, so I'll save them for enemy management and Itsuki.

Atlas and Rishia can manipulate the invisible force of Chi, so I should send them to deal with the brainwashed slaves.

Anyways, to stop two Heroes, a Filo Rial Queen, and an awakened Rishia, is probably impossible.

All that's left is to trample them.

"Now then, Itsuki or Witch... Who's hiding here?" (Naofumi)

Chapter 239: Opportunity

“Anyways, the only thing we have to do is infiltrate the fortress and take out the leader.” (Naofumi) “Um, about that...” (Rishia)

After hearing my order, Rishia timidly raises her hand.

Though I have a general idea of what she’s going to say.

“What?” (Naofumi)

“Hypothetically, only hypothetically, if we encountered Itsuki-sama... If we ended up fighting him, could you leave it to me?” (Rishia) “Hmm... what’s the reason? Like Female Knight... Eclair, do you plan on trying to persuade him?” (Naofumi) “Um, yes. Could you leave that mission to me?” (Rishia) “Well, if we did encounter Itsuki, I planned on detaining him. I want to avoid killing him if possible. But if he resists, it may escalate beyond that.” (Naofumi) “I know. I... still want to try talking to him.” (Rishia) Rishia has been working hard for the sake of my village.

“Rishia, will you let me participate as well?” (Ren) For some reason, Ren begins pleading to me as well.

“Just like I was offered a second chance, I want to try offering one to Itsuki. And for that purpose, I wish to lend my power.” (Ren) It’s not that I don’t see where he’s coming from...

I don’t know how his situation is, but it may be similar to Ren’s.

And this is where we establish their relation.

I do plan on harassing him a bit, but if he can become a convenient piece like Ren and Motoyasu, I should consider it.

And it seems that killing Heroes is bad. It’s probably best to leave persuading him to others.

Even if he ends up dying, we can say something like, ‘We tried to persuade him, but he showed great resistance’ or something like that.

“Understood... But Rishia, if you and Ren end up cornered, you need to abandon that mission. Is that alright with you?” (Naofumi) “Yes.”

(Rishia)

“Thank you, Naofumi.” (Ren)

“Don’t say such disgusting things.” (Naofumi) Ren’s dedication sends shivers down my spine.

If he were broken like Motoyasu, I could just keep my distance, but he seems to have developed a strange sense of justice. I don’t have a good compatibility with him.

And wait, was Ren always this hot-blooded?

He was supposed to be a cold-blooded cool person. Though he wasn’t a bad person from the start.

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

I hear a voice from above, and when I look up, I see Gaelion with Taniko aboard his back.

I’m surprised they were able to track us.

“So you’re finally here.” (Naofumi)

“Did you manage to turn over the remnants?” (Ren) “Yeah. I handed them to the princess.” (Taniko) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“And I told them the situation, and was sent to bring a message. She said it was something the heroes probably didn’t know.” (Taniko) An order from Melty?

She seems to be well informed about the Heroes.

The Queen also seems to love the legends.

But the only part of it that shows normally is her love of Filo Rials.

“Um... what was it again? It was something she found out from an old book in Faubley...” (Taniko) Taniko tried hard to remember.

Why didn’t she just bring Melty along?

Though Melty’s probably busy with dealing with the rebellion.

Is it okay over there? Sadina’s there too, so it should work out.

“According to the childrens books, after the Demon Lord was defeated, the people had their brainwashing dispelled, and everyone lived happily ever after. But according to the old book, the brainwashing persisted even after he was defeated.” (Taniko) “What?”

Then What?

Even if Itsuki is the mastermind, if we defeat him the brainwashing won't be dispelled, and the only cure for the infectious pandemic is my Shield Prison?

My head hurts.

So to save everyone, I have to take them one by one and put them into a magically reinforced shield?

Just how tedious is that supposed to be.

Though it's eventually something I'll have to do.

“I didn't need to know that.” (Naofumi)

I had considered the possibility, but I wanted to believe there was some other way.

“Fueeeeee...” (Rishia)

“That sounds... rough.” (Ren)

“Then we must simply quell the fire by killing everyone who opposes us.” (Atlas) Ah, then there's no helping it. Atlas's heartless words draw me back to reality.

She truly is from a violent race.

The amount of people potentially saved, and the amount of victims don't balance out.

In a situation where the vaccine itself is limited, it's just a dream to be able to save every patient.

“Anyways, for now our mission is to charge their base and bring out the ringleader! Let's go!” (Naofumi) “Yeah! We can figure out the details later. Perhaps we may even find the solution in there.” (Ren) “Let's go! No

matter what happens, I won't give up!" (Rishia) Rishia has grown...

She still goes 'Fueee', but she's started complaining a lot less.

She's been obediently following my orders, and I've given her an opportunity to face Itsuki.

Though I have no idea whether she'll be able to convince him or not.

And so, we stormed the fortress. Armor retreated into from the front.

Inside the fortress were some remnants of the Three Hero Church, and some brainwashed soldiers and Adventurers protecting them.

But none of them were particularly strong.

There are none of my former slaves here.

Perhaps it's because they're right in the middle of an opportunity to take down the country. They've dispersed their forces away from the base.

The Filo Rial Armor was on was collapsed, exhausted, near the entrance, so I quickly put it in a Shield Prison.

"For the sake of Justice, Die!"

"Demon Lord! Prepare yourself!"

"All is for the Three Hero Church!"

The remnants shout to incite the Justice zombies. But they're the smallest of small fries.

Ren and Rishia knock them out in an instant.

They are victims, after all.

These two can't bring themselves to kill them.

"Tah!"

It doesn't seem that they're holding back against the remnants, though.

Rishia embedded her throwing knife into the arm of a priest-like person, cancelling out the Choral Magic he was preparing.

"Guaaaah! You Bastard!" (Priest)

「Gravity Sword!」 (Ren)

Ren's sword changes to a dark transparent material as he slashes his enemy.

And the enemy collapses as if a force was pushing them towards the ground.

“Ugu...”

“A new move?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, it came with the Spirit Turtle Sword.” (Ren) “I see...” (Naofumi)

This was the perfect time to test it.

I'm also testing out my S Float Shield.

As I thought, it was a skill to increase the amount of Float Shield.

And it works in tandem with E Float Shield.

Its maintenance cost is low, so it feels like my E Float Shield has powered up.

“Naofumi, that floating shield is kinda cool.” (Ren) “Really? It moves as I wish, so it's quite convenient.” (Naofumi) In the past, there was a protagonist who fought with two floating shields.

‘It was a game where girls crossed blades.

If only I could use swords and bows like that protagonist. My life would be much easier.

(TL: Apparently the Game is Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth. I can't vouch for it, as I only played covenant.) “And Ren, what sort of skill does your blade have?” (Naofumi) “It seems to use Gravity to obstruct an enemy's movement. It also has a skill called Soul Steal.” (Ren) ... That's an ominous sounding skill.

I've seen a protagonist take an attack of the same name, and die instantly.

Though that was just an Event Battle.

The game didn't end there, and some bosses who could use that skill popped up later.

(TL: I think this is Romancing Saga 2)

「Soul Steal!」 (Ren)

As I'm lost in thought, Ren uses the skill without restraint.

His target is a Three Hero Church follower, so I guess there's no problem with an insta-kill skill.

“Gufu!”

Ren slices the opponent he had immobilized with Gravity.

A blue light flies out of his target, and assimilates into him.

I check the follower he defeated.

(TL: There's no response... It's just a corpse) ... He's not dead.

But his face is pale.

“Gu... My magic is... Gu...” (Follower)

Ren's blade robs targets of their ability to move, and he follows up with this skill.

And it seems it was no Zantestuken.

But insta-kills sound way too convenient... probably.

“Ah, this is... an SP recovery drain skill.” (Ren) “It seems that this one has no magic left.” (Naofumi) There seems to be a difference between SP and Magic, but I still can't understand it.

“Its cooldown time is long, so I can't use it consecutively.” (Ren) “I see, but it seems convenient.” (Naofumi) Atlas pokes me in the side.

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“The magic that entered Ren-san resonated with his weapon, and changed in nature.” (Atlas) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

So Atlas can sense that sort of thing as well.

She's quite convenient.

Should I nickname her Convenient Woman... No that's dangerous. In multiple ways.

"Ei!" (Firo)

Firo lightly kicks the left over enemies, and we proceed forward.

The Gaelion+Taniko Pair seems to be competing with the Firo+Filo Rial group in taking down enemies.

"This building is larger than I thought it would be." (Naofumi) The building had an arena-like institution, and was littered with strange statues. I can't figure out its purpose.

Another surprising thing was that the entrance was an ornate Western-Style door.

It rivalled the Melromark palace door in construction.

Eventually, we reached a door that was locked.

Though I just order Firo and Gaelion to break it down.

What are these strange items that are littered all over the floor?

It's like a game I used to play, where fiddling with the needle of an old clock would make a key appear.

Just what was the maker of this building trying to accomplish?

Chapter 240: Research Material

“Is this supposed to be an old RPG Dungeon...” (Naofumi) There were plenty of traps, but we managed to destroy them through physical means.

Rocks chased us, and the ceiling fell on us, but Firo and Gaelion dealt with these one way or another.

The rocks were kicked to oblivion.

The ceiling? I acted as a pillar of support while Firo and Gaelion competed in destroying it.

How should I put this. The Justice Zombies and traps made a certain post-apocalyptic game play back in my head.

We’ve been scouting for around 30 minutes, and we’ve managed to proceed quite far.

At one point, we found a passage that led outside. The exit was a cave-like structure.

Could this have been the one that Kiel was talking about?

There were also prison-like rooms arranged in a grid formation. ‘The Devil of the Shield’s Subordinate Asylum’ was scribbled on them.

Finally, we emerge in a room that seems to be a research lab. Looking over the documents scattered around, a certain one catches my eye.

“We did an analysis of their combat strength, but it seems that was all based on secondhand information. Their actual strength is estimated to be much lower.”

Various plans to harass my territory, such as the commandeering of my Bioplant Field, are written, but it seems they’ve been put on hiatus.

There are plenty of test tubes like the ones in Rat’s lab, so it seems that an alchemist has been here.

Also...

“Just how large is this building?” (Naofumi)

“There’s a document about me here too.” (Ren)

Ren begins flipping through a document with his name on the cover.

The problem is that his reading skills are not that high, so he doesn’t seem to understand what’s written.

“Estimated level: 75, but actual level estimated to be higher.

Skill level allows for him to take out a group of twenty level 80 enemies.

Danger level: (Average)”... How sad.

“According to Mald, his swordsmanship isn’t very high.

According to the Princess’s testimony, the possibility that he will help our cause is low. And as such, we will decrease his power by taking any useful equipment or funding he may hold.”

Well, you know... Ren wasn’t really fighting for real, so it’s not like you can estimate his strength from that.

And the Ren of that time really wasn’t particularly strong.

However, just by relying on the power of the legendary weapon, he was without a doubt stronger than Armor.

“It seems that the reason for Witch abandoning you is documented here.” (Naofumi) “Really?” (Ren)

“Apparently, ‘the possibility that he will help our cause is low’.”

(Naofumi) “Of course... Naofumi is one thing, but if a group wanted to take over the country, I’d probably refuse... I think.” (Ren) “No, that’s

where you should be certain.” (Naofumi) “Yeah, the me of that time was a

little messed up, so I don’t really have confidence that-” (Ren) “The old

you was supposed to be a (self-proclaimed) cool, analytical character, right? You’d probably have left them without saying anything.”

(Naofumi) “Don’t put it so bluntly... but you’re probably right.” (Ren) My document is next to his. It’s quite thick.

“Estimated level: Impossible to Determine.

Danger Level: (Maximum).

God Class.

Reports indicate that he was able to block the Spirit Turtle's attacks, but the truth is unclear.

Still, it can be concluded that he has very high defense.

His weak point would be his low attack, but he has been starting to build up forces.

Urgent countermeasures are required."

"Without careful planning and resources, defeating him will probably be impossible...

Within my forces, the most detailed reports are ones about Raphtalia and Firo.

My forces had planned to have their subordinates dress up as robbers, and attack Raphtalia when she was out training, or Firo when she was peddling. They were to awaken them to the notion of「Justice」. But the plan failed, and their agents' whereabouts have yet to be determined."

I don't know where, but it seems we've already had a victory against them.

Raphtalia's group probably apprehended them and turned them in to the nearest town.

Only people like Atlas would be able to see anything special about that dagger anyways.

There's also a report of using the Sword Hero to test my ability.

This one seems to be quite recent.

"Estimated Level 100.

If we send a large amount of disposable pawns trained in dealing with his Shield, victory may be possible.

We will send our Trump Card, Mald, to finish him with the strongest equipment.

This is theoretically the most effective measure."

“This... is...” (Naofumi)

A grave mistake! The work of a fool.

I’m sorry, but it seems your expectations have betrayed you.

I was already able to stop their strongest equipment. I guess that’s something they weren’t expecting.

The next few documents about me seem to be a little older.

They’re things like learning Hengen Musou in order to break through my defense. Apparently, acquisition of the techniques proved to be too difficult, and the plan was put on hiatus.

Well, that martial art required quite a bit of talent and a lot of experience.

They didn’t have that much time, so it was impossible to learn for people who only wanted strength to inflate their own egos.

Besides, the current me can negate a weak defense-breaching attack.

There were many other plans proposed, but in the end, they shifted towards infecting my subordinates with「Justice」.

How troublesome.

Put your useless efforts toward something more productive.

“Master, there’s something strange about this wall.” (Firo) “For reals? Destroy it!” (Naofumi)

What about solving puzzles? Don’t care.

There’s probably a key somewhere around here, but searching for it is a pain.

An officer of the Three Hero Church is probably holding it, and I don’t need it.

“Ye~s!” (Firo)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Firo and Gaelion competitively reduce the wall to rubble.

It seems there was a secret door somewhere in it, and behind it is a single room.

“It’s more research data.” (Naofumi)

Upon entering the room, I found many more documents piled up.

“What is this? Reproducing... the Heroes’ weapons?” (Naofumi) I read the document from the start.

... It’s a report on the weapon the pope used.

It spoke of maintenance cost and how to imbue it with magic. They looked at the problem from quite a few angles.

Apparently, these weapons were items of a lost civilization, and reproducing them with modern alchemy was difficult.

Yet, they planned to aim for mass production.

In the end... It ended in failure.

However...

“If we can capture a Hero test subject... Research will advance leaps and bounds?” (Naofumi) After that was a sketch of... something labeled as a fragment of a weapon.

A sketch of a fragment of the Demon Lord’s weapon.

I’m pretty sure that Legendary Weapons couldn’t be damaged.

So there was something like that?

Also, where the hell did Armor run off to?

He probably proceeded smoothly with a key.

I’m fed up already.

I’ll have the Queen send people to look over this research later.

There’s no end to these stacks of paper.

And, continuing our pursuit, we end up going deeper and deeper into the lab.

We pass by a test tube. It is filled with a strange liquid, and a dagger is suspended in it.

This seems to be the origin of those weapons.

“Atlas, can you see anything?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. The evil aura... is coming from over there.” (Atlas) Atlas points to the source of the pipeline connected to the test tube.

Well that’s obvious.

“It’s gotten stronger than before.” (Atlas)

“Then the origin may be over there.” (Naofumi)

Should we go over and do some collection?

I think Rat would be delighted here.

I wasn’t able to procure that much funding, so maybe I’ll repossess some of these facilities and recycle them.

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion looks ahead as he tugs on my cuff.

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I smell the scent of treasure from over there.” (Gaelion) “Leave it.” (Naofumi)

In the end, he’s still a dragon.

Later, I’ll repossess that too.

Though I have no idea where they got their treasure from.

“Yay. You got him mad.” (Firo)

And Firo is Firo.

Anyways, while we were messing around as such, we arrive in a wide room.

There, Armor is tapping on a stone tablet as if it were a keyboard.

“So this is where you went. Thanks for leading us here. As a reward, I’ll

send you to the other world.” (Naofumi) (TL: As in the afterlife) “Ku... So you’re already here, Demon Lord of the Shield!” (Armor) “There were quite a few interesting gadgets set up, but we destroyed them all. Didn’t you hear us get here?” (Naofumi) What is he doing, anyways?

Armor gives a wide smile as he places his finger on the stone tablet.

“But you’re too late. We’ve already fulfilled our purpose!” (Armor) By this pattern, something’s going to pop out, right?

As I think that, the ground behind Armor splits in two, and something rises out of it.

From the looks of it, it’s another test tube.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“There’s a fearsome, ominous aura emanating from over there. I assume it to be the progenitor of this incident.” (Atlas) “I see.” (Naofumi)

What’s going to come out?

Usually in these situations, a large monster is summoned.

And then Armor would become a sacrifice and get killed by it.

“Ha ha ha.” (Armor)

I ignore the laughing Armor and gaze into the test tube.

“Wha-” (Naofumi)

The Hero of the Bow, Itsuki, was lying down inside of it.

But he seems a little strange.

“Bufu!” (Itsuki)

His eyes are covered, and a Gag ball is in his mouth, preventing him from speaking.

What sort of joke is this?

He’s probably been forcefully apprehended. The fact that I’m imagining S&M scenarios makes me question my own psyche.

Anyways, it's not a pretty scene.

I want to laugh.

Just when I was wondering where he had gone, I find him confined here.

"I-Itsuki!? What happened to you!?" (Ren)

"FUEEEEEEEEEEE!?" (Rishia)

In a contrast to my amusement, Ren and Rishia seem highly troubled.

But, I guess their reactions are the correct ones here.

I feel that if Raphtalia were here, she would put pressure on me.

"Is that your trump card?" (Naofumi)

Isn't Itsuki supposed to be a false prophet to this guy?

Did he lose hope and come crying to Itsuki for help?

Then why is Itsuki in a test tube?

"Now awaken! It's time to annihilate the Demon Lord of the Shield!"
(Armor)

Chapter 241: The Bow of Justice

A glugging sound fills the room as the liquid drains from the tube containing Itsuki. Eventually, the tube opens.

Armor lifts Itsuki up and removes the blindfold and gag ball.

It's quite a scene.

I... kinda want to run away.

His appearance is a gag in and of itself. I find myself holding back laughter.

"..." (Itsuki)

Itsuki slowly opens his eyes and drowsily looks around the room.

"Now! Awakened Hero of the Bow! The evil who defies our justice has infiltrated our base all the way up to here! Use your power of Justice to slay him!" (Armor) "What the hell are you saying, you bastard!" (Naofumi)

You infiltrated my base and ran back here with your tail between your legs!

"And to start with, didn't you guys have a fight with Itsuki!?" (Naofumi) From the Magic User's testimony, they cut off their connections.

"How foolish. In order for the Hero of the Bow to discover even greater power, we merely let him experience some difficulty." (Armor) I guess it's all a matter of phrasing. But, the truth is leaking out.

This man hasn't called Itsuki by his real name once.

I can assume that he still does not place any trust in Itsuki.

The reason he ran all the way back here was because Itsuki was all he had left.

Itsuki looks at me with a dazed expression, and he begins releasing a dark aura so thick that even I can see it.

That's the aura that surrounds a Hero devoured by their Curse.

So what is it? What curse is eating at Itsuki's mind?

"Naofumi..." (Itsuki)

This is amazing bloodlust.

Out of all the people I've faced, it's top class. It makes my blood go cold.

"Your actions are unforgivable! You've done things that I will never forgive!" (Itsuki) "What are you saying all of a sudden? Keep your sleep talk to when you're asleep." (Naofumi) He's a troublesome fellow even right after he wakes up.

Is it due to his curse, or was he like this from the beginning? It's a delicate line.

"Itsuki-sama! You can't believe Mald's words!" (Rishia) "Right! That man's a criminal!" (Ren)

Rishia and Ren try to persuade him.

But Itsuki's gaze remains fixed on me, and he doesn't even glance at the two.

"Then let me say it. You gather slaves, put them through heavy labor, and keep all of the profits to yourself!" (Itsuki) "Isn't that just common sense?" (Naofumi)

This man... I think I've heard him say similar things before.

Isn't that what slaves are supposed to be?

Of course, manual labor requires appropriate compensation, but slaves are supposed to work without one, right?

If you ask whether there's a problem with buying and selling humans, I'd say there is one, but that's just the sort of world this is.

If you want an extreme analogy, then perhaps slaves can be compared to vacuum cleaners.

Do you feel sorry for a vacuum cleaner for having to deal with the garbage on the floor every day?

Slaves are like appliances. Convenient means to an end.

Wait, something's popping up in my head.

"Niichan! Make me dinner! Crepes~, Crepes~!"

"Food!"

"Crepes are tasty!"

"Make some good food, please!"

"Play with me!"

Don't mind it. Don't mind it.

Get out of my mind!

"That is nothing but evil! I heard! In exchange for giving a girl high quality medicine, you forced her brother into heavy labor! One of the slaves Maltysan saved told me the story!" (Itsuki) "There's no way that Witch would help someone!" (Naofumi) "Who is this Witch...? Oh, and as expected of Naofumi-sama. You saved a pair of siblings besides us?" (Atlas) "No, that's you." (Naofumi)

He's most likely talking about the girl tilting her head towards me and her older brother.

I don't know how much info he's got, but he's clearly cherry picking here.

And for Witch to help a Demi-Human is more unlikely than a girl falling from the sky.

"And you sell medicine to rich nobles without doing anything for the poor!" (Itsuki) "I'm no philanthropist. If you're running a business, you can't just give things away to those without money. It's common sense to take something as compensation." (Naofumi) Those nobles just barged into my place and demanded medicine, all while looking down on me.

Also, I do have memories of giving medicine to the poor. After they pleaded to me with the few copper coins they could scrape together, the least I could do was give them some.

"Just when I thought the Evil Nobles would die from illness, the Hero of

the Shield stepped in and hindered our plans!” (Itsuki) “You’re pointing fingers at the wrong person there. I merely sold medicine to the people who paid money for it. What they did afterwards is of no concern to me. It’s stranger to think that just because they had done something bad, I would refuse to sell them medicine and leave them to die.” (Naofumi) And what is this? When did selling medicine to rich buyers become a crime?

If I didn’t sell it to them, would you be shouting at me for denying medicine to those who asked?

No matter what I do, it’s a crime. Stop screwing with me!

“Even though you were granted the power to help people as a Hero, I’ve heard a person shouting that you couldn’t save their daughter!” (Itsuki) “... I have no idea who you’re talking about here.” (Naofumi) Nope, nothing’s coming to mind.

Couldn’t save? If it was illness, I would at least do what I could do.

Though, I would demand some compensation, as little as it may be.

Of course, people have tried to run away without paying.

But, I simply asked around for their destination and apprehended them anyways.

“A girl came crying to me saying she would never forgive you!” (Itsuki) Do people hate me that much?

...

“Is the daughter... dead?” (Naofumi)

“Yes! Naofumi’s shield can bring about such miracles, and yet, you deny people its power!” (Itsuki) Itsuki isn’t using any honorifics with me.

But, I guess I’ll leave that as it is.

“Surely you jest... Even the Legendary Shield doesn’t have a power that can revive the dead.” (Naofumi) I think I have an idea of who it is.

Occasionally, when I go to villages, some people come to me asking me

to bring their loved ones back to life. They come crying, carrying the dead bodies.

There are people who come to me after hearing rumors of the Saint or the Hero of the Shield.

Logic does not get through to those people.

When I say I can't do it, they continue pleading in tears.

Some even transfer their anger onto me.

I've had some corpses abandoned in front of my village.

If I tried to give them proper burials, the culprits would come out and shout at me. I've had the soldiers send them out a few times.

That's why the sign on the village's entrance says as such. The dead can never come back.

Because of this, I've made it so that I only personally treat patients in the special clinic building.

"That's just unjust resentment. You just want to label me as evil no matter what. Why don't you bring them back? You're a Hero too."
(Naofumi) "No, princess Malty told me. It's a special power only granted to the Shield!" (Itsuki) That Witch. She's left me with an outrageous parting gift.

Itsuki has no way of logically proving that statement to be false.

What's more, with Itsuki as he is, I don't think that anything I say will be able to persuade him.

"Itsuki, that sounds wrong. With Naofumi and Motoyasu, I've gone over the weapon systems. The effects differ slightly, but each legendary weapon generally has a corresponding weapon with the same effects. If Naofumi has such a power, then my Sword should have an equivalent one. Or, does your bow have a power that our weapons do not?" (Ren) Ren offers a plausible argument.

There's definitely a difference in defensive and offensive capabilities between weapons, but the effects themselves are generally the same.

It's something I learned from talking with Ren and Motoyasu.

The only one who doesn't know is the lonely Itsuki.

But, perhaps I've just yet to find it. I can't deny the possibility of there being a weapon that can bring the dead to life.

And, if there were a single weapon that would have it, I guess it would be the Shield.

But if I could use it, then I would.

Who knows just how much I could rake in if I advertised that I could revive the dead?

"And there are still many other sins you have to answer to! I definitely won't let you off!" (Itsuki) "And I don't need you to forgive me. The true evil here is probably that Armor behind you. He assaulted my subordinates and launched several attacks. He provoked much needless violence. Is your justice merely a word? He even conspired with the Three Hero Church you know so well." (Naofumi) Upon my word, Itsuki turns his gaze to Armor.

"Those are merely the Demon Lord of the Shield's lies! You mustn't be swayed by them!" (Armor) "Whether that's the truth or not is something I'll determine with my own power." (Itsuki) "A-Ah, wait... Stop!" (Armor)

Itsuki sprouts white wings. Though they're supposed to appear divine, they somehow give off a sinister feeling. He takes out a highly ornamental bow and shoots an arrow at Armor. <ED: In the knee> "Guha!" (Armor)

Is he dead?

"Naofumi-sama, the ominous aura gathered at one point and pierced through the person we were pursuing." (Atlas) And the Armor in front of me collapses forward.

Did he dispose of a foolish subordinate?

As I thought that, Armor suddenly rises from the floor.

"Itsuki-sama, it is as the Demon Lord of the Shield said. In order to

satisfy my selfish desires, I engaged him in battle and lost. I ask for your forgiveness.” (Armor) ... What?

Armor’s behavior is clearly strange.

What is that bow’s ability?

It’s without a doubt the foundation for those daggers.

“I accept your apology. From now on, let’s work together to lead this world towards peace!” (Itsuki) “Yes! Itsuki-sama!” (Armor)

His eyes are weird.

His face is not one led by his own ambition. It’s not the one that only strived for self-satisfaction. Just like the brainwashed people, he carries an abnormal expression filled only with a lust for Justice.

“Itsuki... That bow...” (Ren)

As Ren points his finger at the Bow, Itsuki answers with a bright smile.

“Isn’t it amazing? It’s an amazing bow that I just got my hands on. Its name is the Justice Bow! It’s clearly a weapon meant for me. One shot from this bow dispels brainwashing and lets others understand me.”
(Itsuki)

Chapter 242: Denial of Justice

Justice Bow?

It dispels brainwashing and lets others understand you...?

There's no way that others would sympathize with you so easily.

And Itsuki, you aren't even trying to come to an understanding with me right now.

You're the one who's doing the brainwashing.

What do you mean, Justice?

"Princess Malty told me that this bow was too much for me to handle. She told me to rest here until my power stabilized, but it seems that things won't go as planned." (Itsuki) I see... I skimmed through the data on the way here.

There was an important piece of information among them.

And from it, I can come to a simple conclusion.

Itsuki is... their Hero Research sample. In order for him to act as a power source for those daggers, he's been put to sleep here.

Most likely, Witch tempted him with sweet words and got him to feed a strange weapon fragment into his bow. They then analyzed the resulting bow.

And, because the effect was useful, they put him to sleep so he could assist in their mass production.

They probably were able to advance their ability to replicate Legendary Weapons as well.

Let's consider it from Itsuki's perspective.

After losing to the Spirit Turtle, Witch's influence allowed him to unlock the new power known as the Curse Series.

It's a plot right out of Mecha Anime, and, out of those same Anime, he would have to rest until the power of his Bow settled within him. (TL: I

don't know what reference this is) Even so, there's no doubt that Itsuki has been devoured by some form of curse.

Though, that seemed apparent from the start of the incident.

"Itsuki, let me tell you something. There's no Justice in that bow. It's a sinister weapon with the power of brainwashing." (Naofumi) "You're wrong! This Bow is without a doubt my Justice! How else would Mald, who I was at odds with, come to an understanding with me so quickly?" (Itsuki) He's acting like he's some sort of protagonist throwing out an irrational argument. Like in Manga and Anime, he thinks that everything's fine as long as he can get his enemies to understand his cause.

It may appear to make sense at first, but there's no way an enemy can come to understand you just because you beat them.

That just means they didn't have enough willpower to stand up to violence from the start.

"Now, everyone, fight with me! I'll make you understand what's right and what's wrong!" (Itsuki) This is a different matter altogether from Ren's case.

Ren knew in the depths of his mind that what he was doing was wrong. Itsuki is different.

He honestly believes in his idiotic Justice, and he feels obligated to force it onto others.

If I were to equate it to a deadly sin, I guess it would be pride... But that's also a delicate line.

It could also be Vainglory. But there's something about that that feels off.

With his Chuuni imagination, he could have created his own, new sin altogether.

If he did create an eighth sin, I guess there are two possibilities.

The first is Justice.

When Justice goes too far, it can be crueler than any sin.

No small sin will be forgiven. Everyone has to atone with death.

Another possibility is... Fanaticism.

Believing too much in a single idea and forcing it onto others, continuing even when you know that what awaits is nothing but destruction.

There's also the chance that his power could be a mix of the four.

Motoyasu got the Lust and Envy Spears or something.

And Ren was simultaneously devoured by Greed and Gluttony.

I've only confirmed that having two at once is possible. But, I can't deny the possibility of three, or even four.

Anyways, I've once again confirmed my belief that Justice is a disgusting existence.

I've caught a glimpse of just how twisted the Justice that Itsuki wants to enforce on the world truly is.

"You're wrong!" (Rishia)

In a very loud voice, Rishia denies Itsuki's words.

"Itsuki-sama is misunderstanding Naofumi-san's actions!" (Rishia) "Is that you, Rishia-san? You are merely one of the many who are being brainwashed by that man." (Itsuki) "Itsuki-sama, you said it, right? That Naofumi-san put slaves through hard labor and reaped all the profits, right?" (Rishia) Itsuki nods with an unpleasant face.

"Then why are all the people working at Naofumi's place always healthy? Did you ever hear of a slave he abandoned? Have you ever heard of any slave he's worked to death? Have you ever heard of any slave he's even shown cruelty towards?" (Rishia) "That's none of my concern. The information I have comes from the many people who live in this base." (Itsuki) "Then, that's nothing but hearsay! Itsuki-sama, I'm asking whether you, yourself, have witnessed any of this man's misdeeds!" (Rishia) What's this? Rishia's acting much more outgoing than usual as

she's conversing with Itsuki.

At least, in the time I've known her, I've never seen Rishia this angry before.

Wasn't Rishia supposed to be a childish girl who said 'Fueee' whenever she was troubled and trembled when faced with hardships?

"I've been watching Naofumi-san for a long time. I saw him extend his hand to the slaves and build them a home from scratch. The slaves... the Demi-humans who work at Naofumi's village are always working happily as they earnestly try to make the village a better place! Itsuki-sama, for the people who had lost their status as human beings and dropped into slavery, do you know just how much of a savior Naofumi-san was to them!? And he... put them through hard labor and reaped all the profits? Please don't make a fool of him!" (Rishia) "Right! I've never seen a single child unwilling to do the work given to them there!" (Ren) Ren hops on board the bandwagon and tries to persuade Itsuki.

For some reason, Taniko is being especially quiet. I hear her whisper under her breath to Gaelion, 'Are all the Heroes like this?'

I think the current Gaelion will only respond with 'Kyua's' though.

"No matter what happens, until the culprit confesses to his sins, my resolve will not be shaken!" (Itsuki) "Confess? About working my slaves hard? Yeah, I do that." (Naofumi) "... The people at Naofumi's place are a bit different. Classifying them as slaves is difficult." (Ren) ... Are they different?

From society's perspective, as long as they have slave crests, aren't they slaves?

"It's more like Naofumi-san is the one being treated as a slave there." (Rishia) "Wha...!" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, every day he works late into the night assisting everyone in their work! After that, he works on compounding medicine by himself! I can't tell who's the slave here!" (Ren) "What are you... What the hell are you people saying!?" (Naofumi) Rishia, are you asking me to activate your

slave crest?

I'm definitely no one's slave.

"Naofumi's pretty much a parent to the children in the village!" (Ren)
"Wrong!" (Naofumi)

What are these people misunderstanding?

Is it that they're acting out of desperation and saying whatever comes into their heads?

Hm? Taniko pokes me in the side.

"Are they wrong? Everyone says you're like a mother." (Taniko) "They're wrong! I work all of you hard as slaves." (Naofumi) "That was your intention? I think you're failing." (Taniko) "You know-" (Naofumi)

"Master may have a bad mouth, but he's really kind. The only time he scolds us is when we actually do something really bad." (Firo) Even Firo hops on board.

Isn't it stranger to scold people when they haven't done anything?

That would impact morale.

In the past, I remember my neighborhood convenience store's manager had a bad personality. The employees would constantly change.

After a few years, when the manager changed, the nostalgic, help-wanted sign disappeared from the window.

And of course, when you have a good leader, you can work people beyond their own limits.

My thoughts may be going astray here. Anyways, the point is that there's no reason to unnecessarily drop troop morale. It's clearly not kindness at work here.

"You're all definitely wrong!" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama, I believe." (Atlas)

Believe in what!?

These people... Along with the other villagers, they're going to get a lecture.

"No matter what you say, the truth is as it is! Naofumi is definitely evil!" (Itsuki) Itsuki won't step down.

But Rishia continues speaking.

"Itsuki-sama? Does that mean you're a perfect, honest, and upright person? Right now, it doesn't seem that way to me." (Rishia) "Please quit it with your trite performance. It makes me want to vomit. Your evil is making me nauseous!" (Itsuki) Itsuki has a bitter expression as he stares at Rishia.

He's giving off quite an oppressing aura.

Should he really be saying such things?

"Yes, I have committed sins. I can't deny the fact that my actions have led to many deaths." (Itsuki) "Itsuki-sama..." (Rishia)

"That means there is one thing I must do. I must destroy all of the evil in this world. I must destroy it personally. For eternity!" (Itsuki) "That's not happening." (Naofumi)

As long as humans exist, there will be conflict. Itsuki will never be satisfied until the end of the world.

And so, based on Itsuki's criteria, Ren, Motoyasu, and I have been labelled as evil.

Perhaps everyone who does not bow down to his ideals will be labelled as Evil.

That means that the only time Itsuki will be able to end all evil is when all life comes to an end.

"...My powers may be insignificant. Even so, I... I can't forgive this unfairness!" (Itsuki) Itsuki shouts a line from some main character as he points his bow at me and draws it back.

And on it, an arrow appears.

“Naofumi! Let me pierce through your unfair existence!” (Itsuki) I hear the air being cut as the arrow Itsuki releases flies towards me.

I use my Float Shield to redirect it.

“Unfair... is it?” (Naofumi)

That’s my line.

I wondered what the man ruining the country with his brainwashing bow was going to say.

Oh, but I’m not allowed to kill heroes.

“...Itsuki-sama, no matter what, you won’t try to understand?” (Rishia)
Rishia draws her sword and enters a fighting stance.

“Itsuki-sama, I deny your justice. My own justice prevents me from accepting you!” (Rishia) “Itsuki! Return to normal! If you lose yourself to that cursed power, there will be nothing left of you in the end!” (Ren)

“Don’t get in my way!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki raises his bow once more.

Another arrow comes flying.

The target is... Me again.

This time, I just grab the arrow out of the air.

「Shining Arrow!」

Itsuki pulls back his bow once more, and an arrow made of light manifests.

But it seems it will take a while before he can shoot it.

“I understand that nothing will change your opinion. So I will step forward as your enemy and fight you with all of my might!” (Rishia)

Chapter 243: The Conditions for a Duel

Rishia holds her blade out as if to challenge him.

What's this? I can feel Chi gathering en masse with her at the center.

It's not coming from within her body.

Chi is collecting from the outside and lending her power.

「Musou Kassei!」

(TL: Peerless Activity. I didn't change Hengen Musou, so I'm keeping this as is) I hear a loud snapping sound, but perhaps it's just my imagination.

However, as soon as I heard it, I suddenly felt Rishia's strength increasing.

The current Rishia's Chi rivals Firo's... no, it exceeds her's.

Amazing... Is this how Rishia is when she's serious?

Hengen Musou. The style that was born out of the desire to save the world without having to rely on Heroes.

Rishia has grasped the essence of it and is utilizing it to increase her power level.

Right now, I cannot measure just how high her basic strength is.

I'm not sure if she can breach my defenses, but she's at least an opponent I would have to be wary of.

The anxiety I had when Female Knight challenged the cursed Ren isn't present here.

"I see... So you can gather Chi like that. How interesting." (Atlas) Right.

I'm in agreement with Atlas's words.

Like that, she can fight using an outside energy source and without expending any of her own Chi.

It looks easy, but I bet actually putting it into practice is ridiculously

difficult.

“Hmm?” (Firo)

And wait, I think I’ve seen those movements used by someone else before.

That bird who’s tilting her head right now.

Those movements are exactly like Firo’s when she’s recovering her magic.

“Hah!” (Rishia)

Rishia takes off at an amazing speed and rushes right at Itsuki.

“Hengen Musou Rapier Skill! 「Spiral Slash」!” (Rishia) Chi begins gathering around her blade in a spiral pattern.

“Ku!” (Itsuki)

Perhaps he sensed that he wouldn’t get off lightly from such a blow. Itsuki dodges by a paper-thin margin and releases his arrow.

... For some reason, it draws an arc in the air and heads towards me again!

「Meteor Shield!」

I promptly activate Meteor Shield and strengthen it to take on Itsuki’s arrow.

The glowing arrow splits and multiplies, and countless blasts rain down on my shield.

I angle the Shield on my arm upwards just in case.

With the sound of breaking glass, my Meteor Shield crumbles, and the leftover arrows come down on me.

By the way, I take no damage.

When he’s fighting Rishia and the others, why must he focus on me!?

“I won’t let you escape!” (Itsuki)

With her first attack dodged, Rishia continues her assault on Itsuki.

It seems the only skill she's using is that one called Spiral Slash.

It's amazing that she can fire it off so consecutively.

Unlike Female Knight's barrage of light blows, I feel that each and every one of Rishia's attacks are at full power. I can tell just by looking.

"Don't forget about me! 「Gravity Blade」!" (Ren)

"Gu..." (Itsuki)

However, perhaps because his weapon had high specs, Rishia's and Ren's attacks are unable to inflict any deep wounds on him.

And it seems that the wounds he received are regenerating.

Perhaps that damn Witch went as far as to perform Body Modifications on him.

"Just this much... Isn't enough to stop me!" (Itsuki)

The Curse Miasma around Itsuki explodes and knocks down his enemies.

"How troublesome... Eclair beat me when I was using this kind of power!?" (Ren) "Itsuki-sama, you can't lose yourself to that power! You'll definitely regret it!" (Rishia) "You're the ones who will regret it! Just awaken to Justice already! 「Arrow Squall」!" (Itsuki) "Like I'd let you! I'm sorry you two!" (Naofumi)

Before Itsuki can use his skill, I gather my magic and release it.

「Shield Prison!」

My prison manifests with Itsuki at the center.

Rishia and Ren wanted to persuade him, but I need to get the situation under control.

Our first priority is to seal the cause, Itsuki.

"Wha-No matter what attack you throw at me, I-" (Itsuki) Luckily, I manage to lock him up before he could dodge.

"Itsuki-sama! You bastard! What did you do to Itsuki-sama!?" (Armor)

Armor rushes at me unarmed, baring his fists.

“Tei!” (Atlas)

“Deyrah!” (Firo)

“Ugu-” (Armor)

Atlas and Firo’s kicks and strikes land on him simultaneously, sending him flying. He crashes into a wall and faints.

I wish you sweet dreams. For the rest of your life.

“Atlas, how is it?” (Naofumi)

“... It’s no good. Even though you sealed the source of the ominous aura, the people infected with it are connected like a spider web. They’re sending power to each other, and the power isn’t dispelling. The person we chased hasn’t changed at all.” (Atlas) “Damn.” (Naofumi)

There’s no doubt about it. Even if we defeat Itsuki here, the brainwashing won’t be dispelled.

The prison shakes violently, and cracks begin to spread across it.

His Curse weapon seems to have high abilities.

“Rishia, Ren. The cage is going to break now. Prepare for battle immediately.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Rishia)

“Got it!” (Ren)

“I’ll help out a bit. 「Zveit Aura」!” (Naofumi)

I start casting various support magic on the two while I wait for the Prison to shatter.

The cage should have lasted 5 minutes, but it broke apart just after I finished casting.

I can assume that it was destroyed through physical means.

“Is that all you have? Then it’s my turn! 「Frozen Rain」!” (Itsuki) Arrows made of ice multiply in the air and fly towards me.

Again, why me!?

“Itsuki-sama, stop messing around! Your opponents are over here!”
(Rishia) “Gaelion! 「High Fire Blaze」!” (Taniko)

“KYUAAAAAAAAA!” (Gaelion)

The ice arrows melt and evaporate in the flames Gaelion release.

But mixed in was an ominous white arrow. The arrow was undeterred by the inferno as it flew straight at me.

“Master, get down!” (Firo)

“I won’t let you!” (Atlas)

Firo and Atlas knock the arrow out of the sky.

“Even if I may be outnumbered, as long as I take you out, it’s my victory.” (Itsuki) So Itsuki’s actually aware that he’s at a disadvantage?

Sometimes, Television Heroes fight alone against many.

He may be basing his character on someone like that.

But to reach the king, you have to actually get through the castle.

Is Itsuki’s only objective my defeat?

I think I’ll be able to grab the arrows or use my Float Shield even if it does get through.

“Atlas and Firo. Gaelion as well. Please Listen. It seems Itsuki’s only aiming for me, so back off a bit.” (Naofumi) “But Master...” (Firo)

“Firo-chan, Naofumi-sama is just trying to protect us from injury. Perhaps we are only in his way at the moment. It’s alright. Naofumi-sama will never lose to a lowlife like that. Please believe in him.” (Atlas) “Uu... I got it.” (Firo)

“Naofumi-sama, I wish you luck!” (Atlas)

Atlas quickly takes some distance, and Firo reluctantly follows her.

And I walk forward to distance myself from Gaelion and Taniko.

“Itsuki-sama, do you realize what you are trying to do?” (Rishia) ...
「Blaze Arrow」!

Rishia and Ren narrowly avoid the rain attacks, sometimes taking blows. In the end, all of them end up heading towards me.

“Since I’ve met you, I’ve always been thinking about what Justice was supposed to be.” (Rishia) “I have no tongue to converse with evil!” (Itsuki)

“Evil... What is evil? What is Justice? To Itsuki-sama, is Justice not but whatever makes you satisfied!? Without talking, without understanding, and without thinking about the purpose behind people’s actions, you simply take down your enemies. Is holding everyone down with violence truly your justice!?” (Rishia) “I’ve heard that power without justice is violence, and justice without power is pointless. Itsuki, didn’t you look up to Heroes of Justice? You never spoke about yourself, and the me of the past never bothered to learn about you. However, I want to know more about you now. What is your goal? What do you seek? Why are you sad? I want to know. I am... We are not your enemy. So please speak to us!” (Ren) (TL: ... The ship has sailed...) Despite running off his mouth, Ren’s still fighting him at full force.

I’d like you to consider me too. His attacks are all centered on me, here.

But there is a bit of sense in Ren’s words.

I have no idea what sort of person Itsuki is supposed to be.

I can see his personality, but I have absolutely no idea who he was or what sort of life he lived.

“Justice is power. It’s the proof of righteousness. It’s to save the weak and crush the strong!” (Itsuki) That again.

Those were the words Armor acted on when he abandoned him.

... Hmm?

I think I’m getting something here.

Let’s reverse engineer Itsuki’s actions.

Perhaps this man is acting based on the depressed life he lived in the other world?

Itsuki wishes to be a Hero.

Quite a few commercialized heroes were normal kids or bullied kids. They would transform and take out the bad guys. They would become the main character.

Famous heroes like SuOrman and SpiOman were like that, right?

Was his Shogun-sama play based on that?

When inflicting his Justice, Itsuki acted undercover a lot.

Was that his Hero complex?

I see. Heroes of Justice are strong. They save people.

The stories can be summarized as 'Good deeds are rewarded, and Evil is always punished.'

Justice wins. Evil loses.

It would be nice if reality was that simple.

"Even if people call me evil, I am a Hero of Justice!" (Itsuki) He desired praise and worshiped heroes... The conclusion he arrived at was...

"Itsuki, what happened to you was exactly what you did to Rishia. That's why you don't want to face her. That's why you don't want to fight her." (Naofumi) "What!?" (Itsuki)

"If you want to fight me, you'll have to beat Rishia first. Otherwise, there's no way you're worthy of being my opponent." (Naofumi) If I don't offer up some conditions, Itsuki will never pull back.

Then, I just have to confront Itsuki as the Evil he wants.

Scenes like this are common in TV shows.

It's what Motoyasu did to me when I got to this world.

When one side has an absolute advantage, they make some conditions for the battle.

This time, I have no reason to offer these conditions, but... I promised I would leave this to Rishia.

"If you won't do such a simple thing, then you're not worthy of

challenging me.” (Naofumi) “Ku!” (Itsuki)

As I say this with an expression looking down upon him, he clenches his teeth.

So I was right.

This is just my guess, but Itsuki was probably bullied in his past world.

And when Rishia held Itsuki as the center of her life, they drove her out with severe bullying.

Because looking at the timid Rishia reminded him of the past he wanted to bury.

She was an existence that he never thought would rise to stand in his way.

There's no turning back for a Hero.

“I see. If I have to defeat this girl who's being controlled by evil, then I guess I have no choice.” (Itsuki) While keeping his eyes locked on me, Itsuki turns his bow towards Rishia.

And Rishia deeply bows towards me with gratitude.

Chapter 244: Justice vs. Justice

“Naofumi-san, thank you. Please leave the rest to me. I’ll definitely persuade Itsuki-sama.” (Rishia) “Yeah, I’ll wait expectantly. Just like Female Knight, the current you should be able to do it.” (Naofumi)
Understanding the situation, Ren backs off.

Perhaps he believed that two on one was unfair for a duel, or perhaps he was moved by Rishia’s resolve.

I don’t know the reason. Whatever the case, he understands that he shouldn’t get involved in this case.

It seems that Itsuki has finally recognized Rishia as an enemy.

The problem would be if Rishia lost, but we’d be able to kill him with my Wrath Shield combined with Gaelion’s flames.

Luckily, Firo’s also here. We can definitely win.

Anyways, it’s quite a development for Rishia to be fighting Itsuki.

She was always talking about her devotion to him.

It must be hard on her to fight to the death with her beloved.

“I’m coming! Haaaaaaaaaaaah!” (Rishia)

Rishia closes in on Itsuki at quite a high speed.

“Damn! 「Saint Arrow Rain」! 「Spread Strafing」!” (Itsuki) Itsuki steps back as he continuously fires off arrows at Rishia.

The arrows he fires straight and the ones he curves are timed perfectly to strike multiple locations simultaneously.

Evading seems to be difficult.

“Hengen Musou Rapier Skill, 「Circle」!” (Rishia)

But Rishia twirls her rapier in a full circle, and her blade makes a high shriek as it passes through the air. All of the arrows fired at her are mowed down.

I thought Rishia wouldn’t go all out, but it seems she fighting toe to toe

with this Hero.

Could I be witnessing the true Hengen Musou style?

Female Knight said that Rishia was able to master the difficult skills.

It may be due to the influence of her natural talent, but Rishia has gotten strong.

Having all his arrows knocked down, Itsuki glares at her with an irritated expression.

“Itsuki-sama? I’m your opponent right now. Please pay more attention.”
(Rishia) Even now, Itsuki occasionally glances over at me.

He must be seeing the person in front of him as merely an obstacle to reach me.

There’s no way he can beat Rishia like that.

The current Rishia’s stats, techniques, and determination are among the highest of all of my subordinates.

“Fu... It seems that you’ve learned how to talk, Rishia-san. But my true power is higher than this!” (Itsuki) The dark aura envelops him, and Itsuki readies his bow.

「Rechtsfanatiker!」

(TL: レヒトファナティッカー)

I feel a barrier-like thing being erected.

It feels similar to Firo’s and Gaelion’s sanctuaries.

“UOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki’s eyes turn red and begin to give off a suspicious light.

Then the miasma envelops his body, forming a sort of armor.

It’s a winged, full-body armor, reminiscent of an angel... but some parts here and there seem demonic in design.

It’s definitely a status buffing skill.

What’s more, it even created a set of armor.

The armor reminds me of the combat suits for those Rider and Ranger people.

Rishia is silently waiting for Itsuki to initiate an attack.

Her expression is exceedingly serious.

If we step in here, I don't think she'll forgive us.

Ren tries to step forwards, but I hold my arm out to stop him.

I won't let anything happen like that time with Ren.

I'm a man who keeps my promises. Be it for better or for worse.

"I'm coming, Rishia-san. With this, I'll make you understand me and assist in defeating Naofumi!" (Itsuki) "No, I definitely won't approve of the current Itsuki-sama. Even if it costs me my life!" (Rishia) Rishia sticks her sword into the ground and bends down.

She extracts Chi out of the ground and coats the entire body of her weapon with it.

It's like what Female Knight does the moment she hits a target, but the amount is clearly different.

"Hengen Musou Style... Special attack. First Stance..."

『Let this foolish sinner experience the retribution of God's justice! With my belief as compensation, carve this punishment upon your body!』

「Gerechtigkeit-」

Before Itsuki can finish chanting his skill, Rishia pulls the blade out and begins running.

「Alleinherrschaft!」(TL: ゲレティヒカイトアラインヘルシャフト)

「Sun!」(Rishia)

Rishia begins emitting light as she thrusts her rapier at Itsuki.

I wonder why. I get the feeling she just got some Super-Divine power up.

And what's Itsuki's skill doing!?

Countless orbs of light are scattering from his body. They destroy the

ceiling and take on lion-like shapes in the sky. They then begin raining down endlessly upon Rishia.

... This is bad.

No matter how I look at it, that's a Curse Skill rivalling Blutopfer.

Even a Super-enhanced Rishia will have trouble dealing with it.

“Second Stance, 「Moon」!” (Rishia)

The light emitting from Rishia grows brighter, and the lions shatter into crescent shaped fragments.

Amazing... This is the first time I've seen someone take a Curse Skill head on.

I don't know what its effect is supposed to be, but Itsuki seems to have a shocked expression at finding his skill nullified.

“There's still more! I haven't used my trump cards yet!” (Itsuki) “Third Stance, 「Star」!” (Rishia)

Without any hesitation, Rishia appears in front of Itsuki and begins thrusting at him.

It's a consecutive stream of attacks rivalling Female Knight's multilayered attacks.

Each successful hit destroys part of Itsuki's armor and causes it to disperse into nothingness.

“Gu...” (Itsuki)

The rain of blows continues to pour down on Itsuki, and I can feel that each and every one has Chi imbued in it.

That's no joke.

Since I've trained, I may be able to withstand it, but it would probably breach the defenses of a Cursed Ren or Motoyasu.

It's an attack with that much power.

“Quit messing with me!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki's aura explodes again, sending Rishia flying backwards.

"Fuee... There's still more!" (Rishia)

Rishia rolls as she hits the ground and gets up. She takes a deep breath and prepares for battle.

"Justice is not something that can be stopped by the likes of Rishia-san! Don't go around destroying my special attacks!" (Itsuki) And why should we listen to you?

This isn't a turn-based RPG.

If this were a real-time action game, you would try to destroy special attacks when you saw them.

... Ah, in Hero Media, the opponent waits for the Hero to finish his attack.

Those high powered beams and kicks and those things where five weapons unite into one.

"Itsuki-sama, please stop it already. For the current you, it is impossible to stop me." (Rishia) Rishia shouts with a voice filled with emotion.

It does look like she's the one with an overwhelming advantage here.

"Itsuki-sama, your justice is misled! Please release that dark power at once." (Rishia) "Wrong! With this power that I've gotten my hands on, I will save the world! I will save the people!" (Itsuki) The shape of the bow distorts...

And in response to that, his aura changes in color as well.

... Most likely, he's awakened to another curse series as well.

If he strengthens himself with the effects of multiple curses, will Rishia be at a disadvantage?

Besides Motoyasu, the other Heroes haven't used strengthening methods, I think...

"Are you alright, Rishia?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. I don't need any help." (Rishia)

“... I see. Then do what you will.” (Naofumi)

The situation seems to be taking a bad turn, but if Rishia says that, then I guess I'll continue observing.

I won't help until she asks for it.

Whether she wins or not is a separate matter.

If persuading him proves impossible, we'll have to knock him out.

But even if he's rotten, he's still a Hero.

We'll need a decisive blow.

“Take this! 「Shadow Bind」!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki begins moving. He shoots an arrow at Rishia's feet.

I get an ominous feeling from the ground.

“Rishia-” (Naofumi)

But it didn't hit.

The arrow lands in the ground behind her.

“M-my body is...! (Rishia)

Before I could warn her, Rishia's movement was sealed.

It's as I thought.

It's a skill that can block enemy movement by hitting their shadow.

「Bind Arrow」!

Itsuki fires off another restraint skill at the immobile Rishia.

The Arrow pins her to the wall behind her.

“I-I can still fight!” (Rishia)

“No! This is the end!” (Itsuki)

『Let this foolish sinner be burned to death by the Brass Bull. Writhe and scream in anguish under the wrath of the raging bull!』

「Phalaris Bull」 (TL: The Brazen Bull Torture method was created for

Phalaris, the Tyrant of Acragas in the 5th century BC) Like my Iron Maiden... A statue of a giant Bull opens up and locks Rishia within.

Then the statue glows as it fills with fire.

“Rishia!” (Naofumi)

Itsuki smiles as he confirms his victory.

It’s a skill that rivals my Iron Maiden.

“With this, it is my victory. Naofumi, prepare yourself.” (Itsuki) Ku... I thought victory was assured. Was I too naive?

But first, I have to save Rishia.

Ren’s already running towards her.

But just when I was contemplating this...

Cracks begin to surface on the bull Itsuki summoned.

“What?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki’s face is once again colored by surprise.

And with a loud sound, the Bull crumbles to pieces, and Rishia jumps out.

“Fourth Stance! 「Devil」!” (Rishia)

Rishia walks towards Itsuki, swinging her rapier in wide arcs.

What is this? The tip of Rishia’s sword is glowing, leaving black tracks in the air.

“Gu... M-my eyes!?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki covers his face with both hands and cries out.

Is it an attack that inflicts Blind?

That’s quite an efficient attack.

“Don’t just go about claiming victory on your own.” (Rishia) Rishia says as she holds her shoulder and breathes deeply.

She even managed to thwart an execution device... Rishia’s growth is

beginning to surprise even me.

Excluding Motoyasu, She's probably the strongest out of all my subordinates right now.

But, perhaps Raphtalia can enhance herself this much as well.

Chapter 245: Awakening

“Again and again. Do you plan on standing in my way until the very end!?” (Itsuki) Itsuki rubs his eyes as he shouts at Rishia.

“I definitely won’t forgive you! For you to mess with me! For you to mess with Justice! You are but the opening act, and I will have you get off the stage!” (Itsuki) Itsuki’s bow starts warping again.

It loses its pure white ornaments and takes on a darker, bat-like design.

(TL: Itsuki is now randomly switching between Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji) (ED: 4 U tO mEs5 wltH M3! fOr yU 2 mE55 w/jUstlcE!) “Die... Those who rise against me... deserve death!” (Itsuki) “Itsuki-sama, I’ll say it as many times as you want. Please abandon that power and return to normal. That dark power isn’t something you need to rely on.” (Rishia) ... Rishia is crying.

Is she weeping at seeing her beloved falling into darkness?

But I believe the current Rishia has enough power to stop him. She once again swings her sword.

Itsuki can only see Rishia with eyes of Hatred.

“For Justice! Die! You are. This World’s. EVIL!” (Itsuki) He desperately draws back his bow again and again.

All of his arrows fly directly at Rishia.

And she is able to knock all of them down. But I hear an undesirable sound as she hits them.

“Master!” (Firo)

“Yeah...” (Naofumi)

That was the sound of Rishia’s weapon, the Speckle Rapier, breaking.

Rishia... Reinforces the broken parts with Chi as she continues swinging it.

But, it’s probably quite hard to send Chi into an object without a

definite shape.

Her face is getting paler and paler.

And while she seems to be getting weaker, Itsuki is diving deeper and deeper into madness.

“Why are you laughing? Itsuki-sama, I have not lost yet.” (Rishia)
“What are you saying? You have already been defeated.” (Itsuki) “No... Itsuki-sama said it before, didn't he? Justice never gives up until the end.” (Rishia) “Kukuku... How foolish. From the start, you were nothing but evil.” (Itsuki) “... Itsuki-sama, no matter how much pain you put me through, no matter how much despair you make me experience, I will not give up. That's what Itsuki-sama taught me when he saved me from despair.” (Rishia) Her breathing settles down, and she assumes a stance to cast magic.

Since her sword is gone, she'll resort to magic, I guess.

A will to never give up.

I... somehow feel kind of proud of her right now.

For that no-good girl to grow up this much is shocking.

Rishia was a fallen noble who even had to sell herself into slavery for the sake of money.

And the one who saved her from such despair was Itsuki. He became her goal. Her aspiration.

That's why she can overcome the despair before her right now.

Though she did lose to it once and jumped into the ocean, you could also say that she had enough willpower to do such a thing.

There are plenty of things that humans can do only if they have the resolve to die.

“I'll say it again, Itsuki-sama. Please release that power. And once more, in order to regain your lost trust, fight for the people of this world.”

(Rishia) “This power is something I will never let go of. I. I. I will use this power to Save the World!” (Itsuki) “Itsuki-sama! I declare that your justice

is wrong! I saw what became of the Spear and the Sword, so I can say as such.” (Rishia) “Evil should shut up!” (Itsuki)

At the same time, Itsuki builds up his power again.

It was enough power to shock everyone watching.

It was nothing human like Rishia’s growth, or Hengen Musou, or anything like that. It was nothing of such a low level.

Itsuki’s bow begins shining brightly. Itsuki himself has to close his eyes.

I can only see it because I am watching from afar.

... The light flies out of his bow and flies right at Rishia.

Rishia has no time to dodge. She meets the light head on.

But she comes out without a single injury.

The light from the bow quietly settles down in her hand.

And I see Rishia’s Slave Seal crumble and disappear into nothingness.

“Too bright...” (Firo)

“Kyuaa...” (Gaelion)

“My eyes hurt.” (Taniko)

Firo, Gaelion, and the others squint their eyes as they observe the mysterious phenomenon.

“W-what was that?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

Atlas approaches me and begins speaking.

“From the midst of the sinister aura... a single, pure power flew towards Rishia-san.” (Atlas) “... Pure? Do the legendary weapons have even more hidden functions?” (Naofumi) So Itsuki’s bow sent power to Rishia?

Is it lending its power to her... Is that how I should rationalize it?

“Rishia?” (Ren)

Ren calls out to Rishia.

“This is...” (Naofumi)

I was also surprised.

Within Rishia’s hand was a single knife.

Its blade seemed normal in every way, but the hilt had a strange gem embedded into it.

The entire item is semi-transparent. Its existence itself seems to hang in the balance.

Is it an item made with magic?

What exactly is it supposed to be?

Rishia clenches her hand, and it changes to a Kunai used by Ninjas.

And then it turned into a boomerang.

Does it have the power to change shape like the legendary weapons?

What does this mean?

“Wha-What the hell is happening!?” (Itsuki)

Even (TL: Speedwagon) Itsuki is afraid.

At the very least, it doesn’t seem that he’s scheming something.

“Is that so?... I understand.” (Rishia)

Rishia speaks quietly. Eventually she holds the boomerang out towards Itsuki and shouts.

“Itsuki-sama, even the Bow of Heroes refuses to accept your justice. In order to put a stop to your madness, it has lent me some power!” (Rishia)

“That’s a lie! Like I’d let that happen! There’s no way my bow would betray me!” (Itsuki) “Now I will use this power to stop you!” (Rishia)

“Shut the hell up!” (Itsuki)

More black miasma pours out of his bow.

It’s gathered so thickly that I doubt Itsuki himself can see through it. And with such a demonic form, Itsuki rushes at Rishia.

『Let this foolish sinner experience god's wrath for the sake of never ending peace! With my heart as the sacrifice, let the executioner send you to eternal sleep!』

「Heldenkaiser Reich」

(TL: ヘルトカイザーライヒ)

(ED: literal – heroemperor realm/empire; sounds a bit stupid and in german it would probably be one word as the german language allows to combine several nouns into one long word.) Itsuki pulls back his bow with all of his strength.

The bow multiplies and sprouts many wings imitating those of angels and devils, and all the bows fire at Rishia.

The shots come together and form the shape of a bear-like beast as they fly at Rishia.

“Hengen Musou Throwing style, 「Rolling Spin」!” (Rishia) After pouring Chi into it, Rishia throws her weapon at Itsuki.

The shining boomerang beheads the bear, and its body falls to pieces.

“Wha... You bitch! Just how much more do you plan to resist my absolute justice!?” (Itsuki) “You’re wrong. Because you stepped on the wrong path, your bow is merely trying to correct you.” (Rishia) Rishia raises her right hand, and the boomerang returns to it.

And Rishia changes it to a Chakram.

Her eyes flicker for a moment. They seem to change color in my eyes.

She’s concentrating chi on her eyes.

“Right now, I can see everything. I can see the flow of the energy tying Itsuki-sama down. I can see the power taking over your bow... with this...” (Rishia) Rishia faces Itsuki and tosses her weapon

「Erst Throw」! 「Zweit Throw」! 「Dritt Throw」!

(ED: I deletetd the “e” from “Dritte” ’cause it would follow after “erst” and “zweit”) Erst?

I thought that naming convention only existed with the legendary weapons.

Is that a legendary weapon?

One of the Seven Star ones?

The three weapons Rishia threw each take on different shapes.

A knife, a hatchet, and a short spear.

What sort of weapon is that?

Even if it is a Seven Star Weapon, I can't tell what sort of weapon it is. The Spear is supposed to be Motoyasu.

And each of the three weapons thrown seems to fall into a different category.

「Tornado Throw」!

The weapons circle Itsuki at a high speed, starting up a whirlwind. It blows away the black aura.

“GUAAAAAAAAaAA!” (Itsuki)

A Chakram appears in her hand again, and she tosses it at Itsuki's bow.

“Itsuki-sama, by your word, I have proven that you are not justice... please, won't you start over?” (Rishia) The chakram come into contact with Itsuki's bow and returns to Rishia's hands.

And... Itsuki's bow... makes a loud sound and begins crumbling.

“GUAAAAA... My... my new power... my salvation...” (Itsuki) “I'll say it once more, but you're wrong. And Itsuki-sama, please remember this. There are as many forms of justice as there are people in the world. One's Justice is... always evil in another's eyes. My justice is the same. Because from the start, the opposite of Justice isn't evil. It's justice. Evil is merely the label for the loser's justice.” (Rishia) “Wrong... I am... I am... not evil. I'm not bad. I'm not wrong. Everyone is... He is...!?” (Itsuki) “Even without justice, it is easy to judge and condemn others. But I think that accepting them is important as well. I'd like to believe that any person, no matter

how bad, has a chance of rehabilitation.” (Rishia) “U...uuuu...” (Itsuki)

The bow that had taken on a weird shape crumbles and reverts to the one I first saw when I came to this world.

And as if his plug was pulled out, Itsuki falls to the ground.

From what I can see, it seems that the sinister aura has vanished.

“Atlas, how is it?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. Rishia has completely destroyed the source of the bad aura with her new power.” (Atlas) “I see. Rishia, what is that weapon?” (Naofumi)

“Um... I have no idea.” (Rishia)

Oy, you swung it around without knowing anything?

You even shouted out skill names!

“Gu... Justice!” (Armor)

Damn. Armor’s waking up.

He sure is tough.

And for him to be screaming out 『Justice』as soon as he wakes up...

The justice cult is amazing.

So even though we beat up Itsuki, the Justice Virus will continue to circulate.

No, but, could the mysterious weapon in Rishia’s hands possibly be...

“Mu... There!” (Rishia)

Rishia throws her chakram.

They twirl around armor in a strange trajectory, cutting off the dark power flowing into him before returning to her hand.

“Ah... This... is!?” (Armor) (TL: SPARTA!?)

Armor’s eyes return to those of a man overcome by desire.

“Hero of the Bow! How could you be defeated!? How pitiful.” (Armor)
“You’re in no place to say that. What sort of king are you supposed to

be!?” (Naofumi) (TL: Watch the Vocaloid song Shinde shimaui no wa nasakenai! It’s not really referencing that, but it’s referencing the same line from old RPGs.) He’s not dead or anything.

He’s not going to be dragged to that annoying save point inside of the castle.

Dammit! You’re making me remember Trash!

“Ah, right! I definitely won’t forgive you for using Itsuki-sama when he was injured!” (Rishia) Changing her weapon to the boomerang, Rishia throws it at Armor.

It gives a nice sound as it collides.

Torment him more.

“Ugu...” (Armor)

Two more collide with his face and stomach. Armor faints.

Next time, I’ll be the one to beat the living daylights out of you.

“I’ve been wondering for a while, but what did you do?” (Naofumi) “Eh? It seems that if I throw it, I can cut off the dark power surrounding the controlled people.” (Rishia) So that means we can undo the Justice Zombie’s brainwashing!?

There’s no need for me to use Shield Prison on each and every one of them.

This situation got quite out of hand, but the result isn’t as bad as I thought it would be.

“Good job, Rishia!” (Naofumi)

“Fuee!?” (Rishia)

“And like Atlas, you can now see Chi, right? Though it looks like you have to concentrate to do it.” (Naofumi) “Ah, yes. I can see it for some reason.” (Rishia) Rishia, you’ve grown.

Continue doing your part as my convenient pawn.

“Then Rishia, you understand what we have to do now, right?”

(Naofumi) “Fuee... I know. We have to solve the mess Itsuki-sama made, right?” (Rishia) “Yeah. And for your sake, let’s just say that Itsuki was being used, and that the fault lies with the people who manufactured those daggers.” (Naofumi) Is it a legendary weapon? Is it one of the Seven Star Weapons? Its abilities seem to be high.

And Rishia owes me quite a few favors.

Chapter 246: Revolution

“And like that, Itsuki’s out of the picture. Just in case, we should check out the castle town too.” (Naofumi) “Firo is sleepy.” (Firo)

“Kyuaa...” (Gaelion)

The monsters yawn drowsily.

“It’s definitely late, but this is the time where we should be working hard!” (Atlas) Though Atlas gave such a declaration, Firo and the others continuously relay their fatigue.

They’ve been constantly fighting for a while, and it’s long past bed time.

“Don’t worry about it. Everyone gather here.” (Naofumi) Let’s see. I think the maximum for the Portal Shield was 7 people... but if I think about it, Ren has his Transfer Sword as well, so we can move even more.

It may be best to check the castle before returning home...

“Ren, can you teleport to the castle town?” (Naofumi) “No.” (Ren)

Well, he is supposed to be under house arrest at my place. It’s only recently that I gave him the right to move around freely.

And the only ones who can undo the brainwashing are me and Rishia. What should we do?

“We also need someone to look over Itsuki. Rishia, you’re one of the keys to resolving this incident, so I have to put you to work.” (Naofumi)

“Fue...” (Rishia)

“Just think of it as for Itsuki’s sake.” (Naofumi)

“I know.” (Rishia)

“Now then, for now... Let’s go to the Castle Town. Witch is probably there.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, want me to look after Itsuki?” (Ren) (TL: THE SHIP HAS SAILED) Ren volunteers for the job.

I guess that’s not a bad idea.

The Castle Town has Motoyasu, so they should be okay to some extent.

Instead of keeping all of the Heroes in one place, it's probably best for me to leave one here.

That means, including me, I need seven, so... Me, Atlas, Firo, Rishia, Gaelion, and Taniko?

The Filo Rials we used to get here should stay to help hold down Itsuki when he gets up.

They haven't class-upped yet, so their levels are stuck in the 30s though.

It's best not to move him around too much... But taking him with us seems dangerous.

I want to leave some people who can block teleportation with him as well.

"Then Ren, Gaelion, and Taniko will be turning Itsuki in with the Three Hero Church remnants." (Naofumi) "Got it." (Ren)

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

"We just have to take these people to the village, right?" (Taniko)
"Yeah. Ren has a transfer skill, so you should be fine. Now the people left are..." (Naofumi) The Filo Rials' eyes are shining. They're signaling for me to choose them.

It's good that they're motivated, but don't stare at me like that.

"You all..." (Naofumi)

"KUE!" (Filo Rials)

They cry out happily.

For the love of...

"I guess it should work out fine." (Naofumi)

"Yeah..." (Ren)

And like that, Ren and I divide into two groups and activate our transfer skills.

The point I teleport to in Melromark's Castle Town is the same one I always use.

The space I set is inside of the Castle, so that works out perfectly.

But as always, this spot reeks of dust.

I peer out of the door from the room I appeared in and check the situation.

I hear the sound of multiple footsteps scampering all around the place.

"Bring down the Evil Queen who discriminates against her own people!"

Words like that echo through the hallways.

So they are here as well.

"Atlas and Rishia, can you feel anything?" (Naofumi)

I let Rishia look outside.

"Yes, there is some negative aura coming from that direction." (Rishia)

"Right." (Atlas)

Yeah, as I thought.

"Ah, right, Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas)

"What is it?" (Naofumi)

"The nature of the dark Chi seems to have changed." (Atlas) "Changed? What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"How should I put this? Since Rishia defeated that person, it seems to be losing a sense of order." (Atlas) "I see." (Naofumi)

I think Itsuki called it the Justice Bow or something.

That bow had some sort of controlling effect.

I don't really know what changed. We'll have to find out through battle.

"Alright, Rishia. You go around dispelling brainwashing with that weapon." (Naofumi) "Okay." (Rishia)

As I issued those orders, I throw open the door and run out.

“W-who are you!?”

A group of eight soldiers with strange eyes turn towards us and get into battle formation.

“Tei!” (Rishia)

But before they can do anything, Rishia throws her chakram, and they circle each soldier individually.

Long range projectiles sure are nice.

I can only take attacks and counter to some extent.

My weapon is supposed to be a defensive armament. It has a good affinity with long range magic and weapons.

“Gaha...” (Soldiers)

As if they were marionettes who had had their strings cut, the soldiers all fall to the ground. But they get up soon after.

“What? Where... is this?” (Soldier)

“Are you up yet?” (Naofumi)

“The Hero of the Shield...” (Soldier)

“Are you guys part of the Three Hero Church?” (Naofumi) “N-no... but for you to be an ally is... a bit...” (Soldier) There are still quite a few soldiers who hate me.

But, work being work, they do follow the Queen’s orders without complaint. That doesn’t change their opinion of me, though.

But, it’s not something I have to worry about. I don’t really care what they think.

The soldiers are avoiding eye contact as they speak.

“Did something happen? What’s the situation?” (Naofumi) “My consciousness was vague...” (Soldier)

“Just tell me what you know. Speak already.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Soldier)

The soldiers’ story went as such.

This evening, various groups rose up and started a revolution.

They called for the death of the Discriminatory Queen.

The soldiers rushed out to suppress this rebellion.

But after a while, the soldiers that were supposed to suppress the enemy forces ended up joining them, and the situation got out of hand.

And, by the time the sun had set, the rebellious faction succeeded in occupying part of the city, and various nobles began supporting them.

That's around the time we began our plan.

The representative of the Rebellious Faction was Witch.

Quite a few people had anticipated that the nobles would rise up in protest at some point. A few people even tried to instigate them to get rid of those nobles. But they never thought it would escalate to this level.

I can't really say anything here.

Well, you know... If I had the ability to predict that they would invent a weapon with brainwashing powers to try and usurp the country's royalty, I would be a prophet by now.

They do have the Shadow information system, but I guess they never managed to dig as far as the rebels' scientific research projects.

I didn't expect those at all until I encountered them myself.

And, unless a random passerby casually took a stab at you, you wouldn't realize they were brainwashed.

And, more than anything else, the existence of a weapon with such abilities would usually be denied by the general public.

Even if it were to be reported, there's a high chance the report would not be taken seriously.

But that doesn't matter for now. I can ask all the questions I want later.

The Shadows work as this country's secret spy service, but it's not good to rely on them too much.

Their numbers seem to have dropped during the Spirit Turtle incident, so there's no helping it.

And, if I think about it, there are some shadows in the Three Hero Church as well.

Could members like that still be running rampant in their ranks?

They're not just limited to working in this country, so they're definitely short on personnel.

(TL: Apply to be a Shadow now)

... Since the start of this incident, I haven't seen a single one. They may be doing something important.

"And? Why are you walking around brainwashed here?" (Naofumi)
"That is... When we were trying to evacuate people... A person began attacking from within our midst and... I can't remember anything else."
(Soldier) So it was a Zombie Outbreak after that.

When even a single infected person gets in, a safe building becomes a prison with no escape.

In hindsight, I'd say that their organization was bad.

However, only criminals would be able to immediately assume that their allies were suddenly brainwashed.

Even though Melty told tales of the brainwashing Demon Lord, stories are stories. Jumping to a conclusion based on them is a tad bit hasty.

Even if I remembered the tale, I'd collect a bit more information first.

In that situation, perhaps the best course of action would be to hold down the fort and wait for reinforcements.

At least at this point in time.

Or perhaps there is meaning in holding down the fort in itself.

Causing this incident... probably isn't their final goal.

Even if the Revolutionary faction gets taken out, various problems will remain and outside countries will take advantage of those.

Even if the Queen were only pretending to be my ally, based on her position, she wouldn't take such risks.

I don't have enough information. I need to gather some more.

"Then Witch is waiting for you guys to open up the castle?" (Naofumi)
"Unfortunately..." (Soldier)

I have no idea what state the castle is in. I guess I have no choice but to drag these guys along.

Looking at it from a different perspective, the fact that we... The fact that Rishia is here means that we're able to destroy the foundations of their plan.

If we keep dispelling the brainwashing, their forces will be lower than expected.

"Okay. First, we'll need a full grasp of the situation. We'll need to confirm the Queen's safety." (Naofumi) "Yes!" (Soldier)

"Do you know where she is?" (Naofumi)

"I think she's holed up at the top of the castle." (Soldier) "Then we'll head there." (Naofumi)

Taking the soldiers with us, we head towards the Queen.

Chapter 247: The Castle Town Riot

On our way to the top of the castle, we meet multiple brainwashed parties, but each time, Rishia throws her weapon and nullifies the brainwashing.

The higher we climb, the more we encounter, and the more our forces increase through our dispelling of the brainwashing.

While we climb, I am able to look out of the windows at the situation below.

Many fires have broken out, and smoke is rising from parts of the city.
Hmm?

Is it my imagination? I see dust clouds racing across the scenery.
That... It's best not to think about it.

I give up on the outside and begin searching the castle itself.
Eventually, I run into a wall made out of a thick layer of ice.
It's most likely a barricade the Queen and her magicians made.
She did say her specialty was ice.

The brainwashed people are slamming their weapons into and casting magic on the wall in an attempt to break it.

We easily bring them to our side, so there's no problem.

"What should we do? Should we break through here?" (Naofumi)
"You're smashing it?" (Firo)

"There doesn't seem to be another path..." (Naofumi) We could scale the walls outside, but they probably have defences set up there.

"Firo will try." (Firo)

"Okay." (Rishia)

"I'll also help." (Atlas)

Firo and Atlas begin running towards the ice.

“Ah, oy!” (Naofumi)

If I just leave it to Rishia, we may be able to break it from afar.

“Deryaaaaaah!” (Firo)

“Tei!” (Atlas)

Firo and the Filo Rials’ kicks, on top of Atlas’s... vital thrust... easily cause the wall to crumble.

“It was quite hard. Was that because of the magic?” (Firo) “Probably.” (Atlas)

In the end, they’re all muscle-heads.

The guards we saved seem to be surprised.

Now that I think about it, I haven’t encountered anyone from my village here yet.

We proceed and run into a door sealed with ice.

I put my ear to it and hear a familiar voice.

It’s probably one of my slaves.

I see. So they’ve pushed the Queen back all the way here.

I’ll be able to increase my fighting force.

“Firo, Atlas!” (Naofumi)

“Yes~.” (Firo)

“As you command!” (Atlas)

We break down the door and peer inside.

And for some reason, we find the slaves tied up lying on the floor.

I ask Rishia to dispel their brainwashing.

It’s always nice to increase ally count.

But why are these slaves here? They don’t seem to know either.

Were they defeated? Were they taken as prisoners of war?

The inside of the castle is locked down.

So how did Witch slip them in this far?

“Oy, what did Witch declare, anyways?” (Naofumi) I direct the question to the soldiers.

“Yes, she said that by giving preferential treatment to Demi-Humans, the Queen was trampling on the traditions the proud country of Melromark had carried out for generations, and that’s why their position was the logical one.” (Soldier) That means that using Demi-Human slaves to defeat the Queen...

Wouldn’t be a possible *modus operandi*.

They need to have the Queen captured by Human hands...

But, they could just order my slaves to kill the Queen and then declare that they would never forgive the Demi-Humans who would cause such unrest.

Or, that she would never forgive the Demi-Humans who killed her mother. She could cause the public to harbor even greater resentment against them.

That’s possible.

In the end, that means that they would turn their forces against me and once again wage war with Silt Welt.

And like that, Witch, the Three Hero Church, and the Revolutionary Faction would all gain power.

That seems like a possible plan for that Bitch.

“Anyways, we have to march forwards.” (Naofumi) Taking the slaves with us, we proceed forward by destroying more walls of ice.

We finally reach the top.

“... There’s no one here.” (Naofumi)

The room the Queen had apparently barricaded herself in was empty.

“What happened?” (Naofumi)

I search the rest of the castle, but there's nothing.

But, some of the brainwashed soldiers we find later claim that they were helping the Queen before they were attacked.

It seems that these soldiers lured the enemy out and sealed them behind walls of ice. Everyone was getting desperate.

"Is there some sort of emergency exit or something?" (Naofumi)
Though such an exit holds no meaning if one's own forces are brainwashed.

For even Witch not to know is beyond wishful thinking.

I should have brought Melty along.

She would probably be knowledgeable.

"So the only thing we can do is to check the outside." (Naofumi) "Yes."
(Atlas)

"Fue... Where's the Queen?" (Rishia)

The most important person here lets out a pitiful voice.

She looks really unreliable.

No one would believe that she shouted such powerful words at Itsuki and defeated a Hero devoured by multiple curses.

"Ah, right Rishia. So in the end, is your weapon a Hero's weapon or not?" (Naofumi) "Well... I have no idea." (Rishia)

"Then why can it change form?" (Naofumi) "A large selection of weapon options appeared in my field of vision, so I picked some." (Rishia)
Is it different from my Shield?

I still don't know if it's a Seven Star Weapon or not.

"Can you see reinforcement menus or help screens?" (Naofumi)
"Reinforcement? Help? I don't see anything like that..." (Rishia) None?

Just what could it be, this transparent changing weapon?

It has quite a bit of power.

“But something called SP did appear on my status.” (Rishia) “Fumu.” (Naofumi)

Let’s just say she’s a Hero for now. I can investigate it after this incident is resolved.

We talk as we go back down the path we came. We arrive at the Castle’s gates.

The gates are wide open.

We walk to the plaza.

And there is a painting of hell. Corpses are piled all around... or not.

“Uu... J-justice...”

“Our cause...”

Justice Zombies are tied up and lying all over the place.

They are either unconscious or immobile.

Even so, they continue to preach out their Justice.

I keep all of this to myself. I say nothing to Rishia.

These people who were forced to use justice to judge people ended up being judged.

“What the hell happened here?” (Naofumi) At the same time the words escape my lips...

“Ha HA! Angels! Onward we march!” (Motoyasu) “”Yes!”” (Angel Army)

Standing on a cart pulled by many Filo Rials, Motoyasu kicks up a large cloud of dust as he passes me.

“ ... ”

And they simply run over everyone that looks like a Justice Zombie in their path.

Humans are being thrown into the air like garbage. I may get traumatized from this.

So Motoyasu is behind this terrifying spectacle.

... What is he even trying to do?

“T-thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it! My Father-in-Law, the Hero of the Shield asked me to protect this town!” (Motoyasu) An Adventurer who had escaped brainwashing goes up to Motoyasu.

Um... Yeah. It seems that the Castle Town’s problems have all been solved through violence.

They sure are fast. Ah, right. I think Motoyasu’s Three have class-upped.

“Oy, Motoyasu!” (Naofumi)

“Ah!? Could the person there be Firo-tan and Father-in-Law!? As you asked, I have been working hard to quell the riot in the Castle Town!” (Motoyasu) As I call out to him, he shows off his white teeth and approaches us at an amazing speed.

Now I really want to run away.

“Mu! Go away!” (Firo)

Ah, my hand instinctively went to my Shield.

I had almost unintentionally used my Portal Shield.

It’s a good thing it’s still on cooldown.

“Are you sure you haven’t become the cause of a disaster yet?” (Naofumi) “What are you saying, Father-in-Law!? I’m working this hard for you. Won’t you offer some praise to the Angels?” (Motoyasu) “”KUE!”” (Angels)

“...” (Naofumi)

My head hurts.

It’s a pain, so I randomly pat a Filo Rial’s head.

“Where’s Witch? I think she was making a base somewhere around here.” (Naofumi) “Witch? Who is that?” (Motoyasu)

Is he denying her very existence?

In reality, he only sees Firo anyways.

And like this, he does listen to my orders. I won't complain... though I want him to change how he calls me.

"It's the name of the woman who threw you away." (Naofumi) "Ah, now that I think about it, there was a pig like that. Though, she wasn't here when I came." (Motoyasu) "I see..." (Naofumi)

Which means there's nothing but Justice Zombies in this town, and Motoyasu is offering relief to the survivors.

What's happening?

"Master." (Firo)

"What's up?" (Naofumi)

"Well, you see, I smell Raphtalia-Oneechan's scent." (Firo)

"Raphtalia's?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. Over there." (Firo)

The direction she pointed was outside the city, towards Ryuut Village.

But, it's finally come to tracking by scent... Her monster abilities come out here.

Or is that common sense for animals?

"For now, Rishia, you need to go around Castle Town and return the Zombies to their senses. We'll look for the Queen, Witch, and apparently Raphtalia. Everyone else should help out with Rishia's work." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Rishia)

"Father-in-Law! What do you want me to do?" (Motoyasu) "Continue taking down the Zombies and gather them in one place. Help anyone who hasn't been brainwashed." (Naofumi) "Understood, Father! Now, my Angels, onwards!" (Motoyasu) "KUE!" (Filo Rials)

"Ya~y!" (Filo Rials)

Later, this incident came to be known as the Witch's Rebellion... not. It

actually came to be known as the Melromark Holy Bird Riot.

But, that doesn't really matter to me.

I get on Firo, and she begins running.

"Ah, Naofumi-sama, don't leave me behind!" (Atlas) With Atlas.

"Alright, Firo. If Raphtalia is here, we should go find her." (Naofumi) I shout out as we barrel down the main road.

The Weapon Shop enters my field of vision.

... Is the Old Man alright? I don't want to find him as an enemy later.

I want to believe he's okay. I'll check quickly.

"Firo, stop by the Weapon shop." (Naofumi) "Oka~y." (Firo)

I carefully scan the inside of the dark store.

The shelves... Have been cleared of all weapons.

"Old Man... Are you here?" (Naofumi)

...There's no response.

I cautiously enter the store.

I put my hand on the handle to the only door inside of it and open it.

"You thief! For the sake of Justice, die!"

"Uwah!" (Naofumi)

The Old Man? No, it's an adventurer I've never seen before.

Firo and Atlas make him faint immediately.

Who's a thief? Isn't that you?

"Ah, that surprised me." (Naofumi)

I thought it was the old man, and my heart skipped a beat.

"Naofumi-sama, it seems that besides this person, there is no one else in the building." (Atlas) "Yeah, there's no one." (Firo)

"I see." (Naofumi)

Atlas can see with Chi, so she can search the area to some extent.

And Firo has her feral instincts, so I guess there's no doubt about it.

I hope that the Old Man was able to escape safely.

He may be loitering around somewhere.

Anyways, why is this adventurer here?

I'll leave it as one of the mysteries of Zombies.

"Okay, we're starting again." (Naofumi)

"Ye~s!" (Firo)

And so, we pass through the Castle Town gate that was supposed to be barred during the night. We run across the plains, barely illuminated by the rising sun.

Chapter 248: Raising an Army

It's been a few minutes after that.

As we were heading towards Ryuuto Village, we encountered people who appeared to be seeking refuge.

It seemed a soldier was keeping a lookout so everyone could evacuate smoothly.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield-sama!" (Soldier)

The soldier saw me and began to speak with a relieved expression.

"Let me just ask. What are you guys doing?" (Naofumi) "We're in the middle of evacuating citizens because of the violent revolutionaries in the Castle Town. We were able to rescue everyone safely, thanks to the Hero of the Spear-sama." (Soldier) "I see. Now, let me release the brainwashing being caused by the revolutionaries in the Castle Town Plaza. I should probably also resolve this conflict personally." (Naofumi) "I-is that so!" (Soldier)

Starting with the soldier, the refugees' faces brightened at my words.

"Where's the Queen?" (Naofumi)

"She has been directing the evacuation until just then, but she's taking a break now." (Soldier) And with that, the soldier pointed to a carriage residing near the refugees.

"Shall I call for her?" (Soldier)

"No, I'll go directly so there's no problem." (Naofumi) I get off Firo and approach the carriage.

There, Raphtalia and the Old Hag, as well as Fohl and some of the slaves, were resting.

"Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

"Atla!" (Fohl)

Raphtalia rushed over joyfully while looking at my face.

Futhermore, Fohl was running over to Atla in the same manner.

Over there is, it's inconsequential.

"It's been a while." (Naofumi)

"Yeah... I really...missed you." (Raphtalia)

"Well, there's a mountain of stuff to catch up on, but why are you guys here?" (Naofumi) "Ah, right. We were coming to ask for Naofumi-sama's permission to Class Up and were just passing by some meadows when we saw smoke rising from the castle unexpectedly, so we came rushing over in a hurry." (Raphtalia) "That's right. We never thought that we'd encounter such a strange situation." (Old Hag) The Old Hag added.

You haven't heard but.....

Honestly, I'm not good with this old woman.

"Atla! Atla~! Big bro missed you!" (Fohl)

"Hang on big brother, don't come so close, please. Naofumi-sama is watching!" (Atla) Atla pushed Fohl away, looking like she really disliked him rubbing their cheeks together.

I haven't seen Fohl in a while but he's grown somewhat.

Atla still seems like a child, but Fohl seems to be approaching adulthood already.

That's the reality when comparing visually.

Compared to Atla who is around ten years old, Fohl is probably around 16 ~ 17 years.

Speaking of which, his looks are somewhat reminiscent of Trash....

It's what the Queen said so it's better not to worry about it.

"So the ones who helped the Queen were Raphtalia and your group?" (Naofumi) "Yes. We rode in front of those who were trying to start a revolution." (Raphtalia) "It's Iwatani-sama...." (Queen)

While I was talking to Raphtalia, the door of the carriage opened and out came the Queen.

“Right now I’m learning about the situation.” (Naofumi) “Is that so. Shall I report as well then.” (Queen)

“Where’s Trash?” (Naofumi)

The Queen silently points to within the carriage.

Trash was absentmindedly loitering inside the carriage with an extremely complicated expression on his face.

“Our beloved daughter started the revolutionary. It should be alright for him to utter his complaints freely.” (Queen) “You also have it quite tough.” (Naofumi)

“I did try to comfort him though?” (Queen)

Really? I can only see a disheartened couple-like relationship though.

I really don’t understand the relationship of these two.

“That sort of thing is fine. Tell me about the incident from start to end. I heard some of it from the unbrainwashed soldiers in the castle but.... it’s probably better for me to tell you the good news on my end first.”

(Naofumi) I reported to the Queen about the unaccounted Itsuki, the castle soldiers’ tale, my land and the stronghold of the revolutionaries, and that Rishia became able to release the brainwashing.

I also spoke of the mysterious weapon obtained by my companion, Rishia.

I suspect that it’s most likely a Seven Star Weapon, but I wonder how it is really.

“Is this the Hero’s Weapon-like thing that came from the Hero of the Bow-sama’s Bow?” (Queen) “Yeah, you can see it seems to belongs to the projectile weapon category.” (Naofumi) There were throwing knives and throwing axes, spear, slings, boomerangs, arrows, as well as shuriken.

To summarise the characteristics, there were a lot of projectile weapons.

There shouldn’t be any mistake.

“That’s strange. There should already be a Seven Star Projectile Hero but.....” (Queen) “What about them dying and the title becoming Rishia’s?” (Naofumi) “Just like the existence of the Four Saint Heroes are known, the Seven Star Heroes also have their existence known so that shouldn’t be.” (Queen) “I see...” (Naofumi)

What kind of reasoning was that?

“Well let’s leave that decision for later. Tell me about the other thing.” (Naofumi) “Then—” (Queen)

The Queen talked about the events in the castle.

With Raphtalia supplementing some things in the middle.

A riot was caused in the Castle Town due to Justice Zombies, and Witch hoisted a flag in the plaza in front of the castle as a representative of the revolutionaries.

“I, Malty Melromarc, look down on Melromarc’s traditions and I pledge to overthrow the racist Queen Mirelia Q Melromarc for the sake of governing this country!” (Witch) Witch raised her sword and declared loudly, as if there had been no change in her name.

Surrounding her were the remnants of the Three Hero Sect and the revolutionary nobles, and it seemed the brainwashed citizens were also drawn along.

“”Yeah~!”” (Justice Zombies)

The Justice Zombies raised their voices in agreement with Witch’s declaration.

Apparently, the castle gates were closed for the time being and the Queen’s preparations for ambushing were progressing.

Dragon Knights tried penetrating the castle walls at times but it seemed counterattacks were made in time.

However, there were justice zombies inside the castle as well, and the preparations were at an inadequate level so the soldiers opened the castle gates.

“Go!” (Witch)

At Witch’s order, a suspicious robed person charges ahead and enters the castle.

Of course, this robed guy is one of my slaves who has been brainwashed.

As I expected, it seems that the plot that Witch thought of was a plan which involved marching into the castle and having one of the slaves I raised kill the Queen.

“Wait right there!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia’s party arrived to calmly clear away the Justice Zombies immediately afterwards.

“Just what are you doing!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia proclaimed with her sword pointing towards Witch.

“Oh? Well isn’t it the Demon King of the Shield’s right hand man?”
(Witch) [T/N: Naofumi has been promoted from devil 悪魔 to demon king 魔王 XD]

Witch quietly scowled at Raphtalia and replied.

“That speech of yours really..... can’t be called a surprise. To cause such damage while conducting a revolution!” (Raphtalia) Sensing the situation, Raphtalia glared back at Witch and proclaimed.

“Such damage? I am a victim. Of the spear-wielding imposter, of the sword-wielding imposter and... well, let’s leave this to later.” (Witch)
Witch probably thought of Raphtalia as a summer bug flying in the flames.

She laughed.

“So who is correct. Let us verify it here.” (Witch)

Holding a strange dagger I have no recollection of in her free hand, Witch pointed her sword at Raphtalia.

“Two sword style...?” (Raphtalia)

“I’ll let you watch me personally reform the Right Hand of the Demon King of the Shield.” (Witch) Cheers broke out in the vicinity.

If she refused the match then everyone here will probably attack.

It doesn’t look to be an amount that can’t be handled but that suspicious dagger is on my mind, and I don’t understand why those in agreement with Witch are raging here either.

“....I understand. Teacher and everyone else, please watch quietly.” (Raphtalia) Rather than using her power to settle the problem of being outnumbered, Raphtalia chooses to accept Witch’s proposal.

Witch is also an idiot~

Does she really think she can beat Raphtalia?

....Come to think of it, Witch and Raphtalia have fought once before.

Back then was before Raphtalia had her Class Up and Witch pushed through with the difference in levels.

Witch hasn’t seen Raphtalia since then and even with my sudden growth in strength, she probably doesn’t expect Raphtalia to have become as strong.

I wonder if she looked over the documents gathered by the revolutionaries and remnants of the Three Heroes Sect?

....Nah. Witch is only concerned with knowledge about using others, she wouldn’t think to make such calculations herself.

She probably intends to lure Raphtalia into a trap while calling it a 1 vs 1 battle this time as well.

Or rather, she intends to brainwash Raphtalia using the dagger.

She will win with if she gets a single hit in, so even if her ability is inferior, she can end it with one shot.

“Then as usual...” (Revolutionary noble)

A revolutionary noble raised his hand.

“Fight!” (Revolutionary noble)

He signalled the start of the match.

“Teryaaaaaaa!” (Witch)

Witch faced Raphtalia and brandished her sword with a large swing.

“Ha!” (Raphtalia)

With a small exchange, she stuck Witch’s abdomen with the hilt of her sword.

“Ugu—” (Witch)

“This is for luring Naofumi-sama into a trap.” (Raphtalia) [T/N: Refers to Malty joining Naofumi’s party in the very beginning and then betraying him (stealing the chainmail and funds)]

Incidentally, she made a kick.

“This is for framing Naofumi-sama.” (Raphtalia) [T/N: The false rape incident.]

And then she struck the top of Witch’s shoulder with the sword.

“Gyaaaaa!” (Witch)

“And this is for instigating the 1-on-1 fight between the Hero of the Spear and Naofumi-sama and then using an underhanded trick in the end.” (Raphtalia) [T/N: Refers to the fight after the banquet where Raphtalia’s slave status is revealed and Witch cheating with wind magic.]

She extracted the sword and this time cut at the legs.

“There’s still more to come. This is for putting a bounty on Naofumi-sama and trying to kill Melty-chan.” (Raphtalia) “Eep!” (Witch)

Witch inhaled, after undergoing a torturous barrage of attacks during which she couldn’t help but scream.

However, Raphtalia didn’t loosen her hand.

Well, she did cause a lot of severe hardships, even if it wasn’t to me.

Chapter 249: Complete Victory

“Did you know? Melty-chan still thinks of you as her own sister. And for such a simple reason, she will always believe in you. Do you want to betray her feelings?” (Raphtalia) Witch’s movements dull for a second, and Raphtalia launches a powerful slash at her.

Wait. I’m pretty sure Melty never really believed in Witch from the start...

She may have talked about it with Firo and Raphtalia when I wasn’t listening.

“Wai-” (Witch)

“I won’t wait. Naofumi-sama is the same. Naofumi-sama believed in you as his only companion, and swore to himself that he would treat you dearly. He thought of you so highly, yet... you trampled on his emotions. You broke him.” (Raphtalia) Even as she says this, Raphtalia’s movements are so calm and collected that even I am shocked.

It must be because Witch isn’t deserving of any mercy.

The only thing I can say is, “Good Job.”

“Do you know just how many people have grieved, suffered, and fell into despair because of your actions? ... What I’m currently doing to you is less than ten percent of the pain Naofumi-sama suffered.” (Raphtalia) Eventually, Witch emerges beat up with several cuts on her body. Raphtalia steps backwards to create distance.

“And now you’re going to resort to underhand tricks, right? Go, have your people cast their healing magic on you. I’ll just beat you up more to compensate.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia confidently provokes her.

In response, Witch’s face turns red, and she screams out.

“You bitch! Who do you think you’re facing right now!? You turned your blade on the person who’s going to become this Country’s Queen!” (Witch) “Like I care. Also, this country’s future Queen is Melty. There’s no space for you. Right now, you’re just a normal adventurer... no, a

traitor.” (Raphtalia) Cool headed ‘til the end, Raphtalia glares at Witch with cruel eyes.

“Now then, whether it be support or healing magic, have them cast whatever you want. I’ll still destroy you all the same.” (Raphtalia) As if she was trying to kill Raphtalia with just her eyes, Witch glares at Raphtalia and clicks her tongue.

“Or, are you perhaps going to cheat already?” (Raphtalia) “YYOOUUU BAAASSTTAARRDDD!” (Witch)

Recovery magic is cast, and Witch’s wounds heal. She swings her sword around violently as she comes at Raphtalia.

But Raphtalia sees through her sword and dodges her attacks easily. Even in the eyes of her brainwashed followers, Witch looks like nothing but a fool.

But, she doesn’t know when to give up.

Pretending that she was overcome by rage, she begins casting magic.

「Dreifach Hellfire」!

She quickly casts her magic. While Raphtalia was busy barely dodging one of her thrusts, she slams it at her.

“Hengen Musou Sword Skill, 「Circle」!” (Raphtalia)

But, Witch’s last-ditch magic is calmly destroyed.

Witch is taken aback for a moment, but she immediately recovers and throws her dagger.

Her decisiveness and her ability to look down on people are her specialties.

Raphtalia bends backwards to dodge the projectile, and Witch loses her trump card.

But it doesn’t end there. That’s one of Raphtalia’s good points.

Just as she dodges the thrown dagger, Raphtalia extends one of her hands and grasps it out of mid-air. She points it towards Witch.

“... What is this? I realized that you were unfamiliar with fighting with such a weapon, yet you still kept trying to hit me with it. It was quite obvious, you know.” (Raphtalia) “Damn!!” (Witch)

Without answering Raphtalia’s question, Witch raises her hand in the air and loudly declares.

“Everyone! Kill this follower of the accursed Demon Lord of the Shield!” (Witch) “... I knew it would come to this.” (Raphtalia)

But Witch never noticed it.

Raphtalia had been chanting magic for a while. Her tail was slightly swelling.

『I, who has understood the origin of strength command. Let the truth once more be read forth. Let all mistake theirs’ for mine.』

「All Trick Mirage」! (Raphtalia)

“Ho ho ho! As if I would go all out on a follower of the Demon Lord!” (Witch) With a victorious smile, Witch backs off to leave Raphtalia to her minions.

But that’s where her plan collapsed.

All magic fire support suddenly turns on her.

Magic rains down on her relentlessly, and Raphtalia begins receiving support magic. She begins receiving healing even though she hasn’t received a scratch.

“... You people! Why are you attacking me!? Don’t come, stay away! Why!? You idddiiooots! (Witch)”

It seems having her own brainwashed followers turn against her was completely unforeseen.

“Why? There’s no helping it. Everyone here simply sees the two of us reversed at the moment.” (Raphtalia) “Y-you! GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!” (Witch)

Witch’s screams are erased by the legions of people swarming around

her.

Her plans were completely destroyed by Raphtalia alone.

What a pitiful state she's in.

It's a fitting end for the ugly witch.

(TL: This time, witch is in Japanese. He means witch, not Witch) My heart is filled with joy.

The only regret I have is that she was not dealt with by my hand.

Though, I have doubts whether or not I would be able to do that much damage.

"I don't know exactly what you were planning, but the show ends here."
(Raphtalia) The brainwashed legions shout out their victory.

It seems they have yet to realize their own folly.

Raphtalia seems slightly shocked. She steps forwards and impersonates Witch.

"I will personally send the Queen to the underworld. Everyone, please bind the Shield conspirator. Seal her mouth and torture her. After that, you can wait on standby in the castle. This is—" (Raphtalia) The legions answer with what they thought she was about to say.

"Our rebellion of Justice!" (Brainwashed followers) The applause ends, and Raphtalia leads the Justice Zombies in infiltrating the castle.

Inside, she undid the magic and returned to the Queen. Apparently, she tied up my followers and sealed the rest behind walls of ice.

She had no idea how to undo the brainwashing, so she just sealed them for now.

And, the chain of command fell into disorder. Escape was difficult, and quite a few of them misunderstood the situation, thinking that they had barricaded themselves with walls of ice to protect themselves.

"After that, with Raphtalia-san's help, we escaped from the castle and took whoever wasn't brainwashed with us." (Queen) "I see..." (Naofumi)

Witch's last days. I wanted to see them.

If I had just used my portal to jump here instead of chasing Armor, would I have seen them?

I get the feeling that I made the wrong choices.

But, we did manage to capture Itsuki, so I think that may have been the best option.

"After that, we don't really know what happened." (Raphtalia)

"Raphtalia, can you tell apart who's brainwashed and who's not?"

(Naofumi) "I can only tell if I look in their eyes, but it's possible."

(Raphtalia) I see. So her eyes are better than those who came back early from training.

Ah, perhaps Rishia could tell as well. I never asked.

She never really spoke up, and perhaps she was afraid of me cross-examining her.

But, it seems the current Rishia can see them clearly.

"Ah, right. Did you see the Old Man from the Weapon Shop?"

(Naofumi) "I met him. I left the evacuations to him. They've probably arrived at Ryuut village by now." (Raphtalia) I see. So he's safe.

"Now that I think about it, I saw a cloud of dust enter the city right after we left it..." (Raphtalia) "Ah, don't worry about that. That matter will be resolved soon." (Naofumi) Witch may have even turned into a zombie and gotten run over by him.

That would be quite an amusing scene.

Rishia may find her as well.

"Naofumi-sama, you're laughing again." (Raphtalia)

"How nostalgic, that phrase." (Naofumi)

"It's been a while, but you haven't changed at all." (Raphtalia) "Humans don't change that easily... No, that's probably wrong." (Naofumi) Looking at Raphtalia and Fohl, I see that's not true.

She was just a small girl when I found her, but now she's practically an adult.

Fohl was just a cheeky brat, but he's grown up well.

I guess we can change.

And not just in appearance.

"Firo is sleepy." (Firo)

"Right. I'm also getting a bit sleepy. Raphtalia, do you think you'll be out training for much longer?" (Naofumi) Seeing the situation resolve itself, the fatigue is starting to set in.

But now that I think about it, the matters at the village aren't resolved at all.

Do I have to interrupt Rishia's work?

"It's about time to end it. One more week should be enough." (Granny)
"Ah, I see. We're going to go pick up Rishia and then go to dispel the brainwashing in my village. What will you guys do?" (Naofumi) "Are you sure the castle is okay?" (Raphtalia)

"Let's see... We've managed to stop the zombies, so it should be fine if we leave them for a bit. Can I leave this place to you?" (Naofumi) "As you wish." (Raphtalia)

"Understood. Then, is it fine for me to borrow Raphtalia-san for a few days?" (Queen) The Queen interjects.

I turn my eyes to the Granny, and she nods.

"Got it. After we've taken care of the village, we'll rest for a while and send Rishia over again. I trust you to hold on until then." (Naofumi)
"Leave it to us." (Queen)

"Then Firo, go grab Rishia. We're going home." (Naofumi) "Ye~s." (Firo)

"Ani-sama, please go away." (Atlas)

"Aah, Atlas! Atlas!" (Fohl)

Atlas shakes Fohl off and jumps on Firo's back.

I also hop on and Firo gallantly runs off.

I see. So Raphtalia will only be gone for a little while longer.

And, when we return to the Castle Town...

“Fueeeeeeeeeeee! Why is even Witch-san heeeere!?” (Rishia) We hear a loud cry resound through the city.

And so, the curtain suddenly closes on the brainwashing incident.

I can't say I didn't gain anything from it.

Kukuku... We even managed to capture that bitch.

I feel happier than I was at the birthday party my parents threw me after I put a stop to my brother's delinquency. (TL: Read Chapter 1) That metaphor is a bit questionable...

Now then, what will the Queen do?

Will she execute her when this all calms down? I pray for the day her head falls from her neck.

Chapter 250: Promotion

It's been three days.

Me and Rishia endlessly worked towards putting an end to this incident.

After we dealt with all the zombies in my land, we finally got some time to rest.

These people know how to act normal, so we have to have Atlas or Rishia search for them.

In the Castle Town, Raphtalia and Granny had to look them in the eye to find them. But, they somehow managed.

Luckily, dispelling the brainwashing turned out to be surprisingly easy.

All Rishia had to do was throw her weapon.

Though, I still have to use a reinforced prison.

We've roughly dispelled all traces of the brainwashing, and after we look over the people again, we can bring this incident to a close.

The amount of brainwashed people has severely decreased, and it has been decreed across the country that anyone who spouts messed up logic and criticizes me will have to be apprehended.

Though, some may find this quite oppressing.

Whenever someone criticizes me, they get suspected of being brainwashed.

The people who truly hated me regardless have quieted down.

That's the big difference between them and the brainwashed party.

Anyways, this and that happened, and the incident headed toward resolution.

And on the morning of the fourth day.

The Queen invited all of us to come to the castle.

Ren and Motoyasu as well.

About Itsuki... I'll tell you later.

He's on house arrest in my village.

"I sincerely thank you for resolving this country's internal conflict."
(Queen) When we were called in for an audience, we found that Raptalia and the others stayed in the castle and waited for us.

Trash was quietly sitting in a corner.

It seemed that Witch's revolutionary movement has caused him to age a bit. He's also lost his confident atmosphere.

I guess I should call him pitiful.

This look really suits him.

"And? What did you need?" (Naofumi)

"I don't think Iwatani-sama will be pleased with it, but this is a sort of ceremony to reward you for driving out this country's filth." (Queen) "Ah, so it's like that." (Naofumi)

"There are a few other things as well, but this comes first." (Queen)
"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

I did put a stop to the revolution trying to overturn the government. I guess the royalty has to give a large reward or they'll lose face.

Though, I think there's an inherent problem with Witch spearheading the rebellion.

I'll ask about that later.

"First, is the person who poured in his aid and led this conflict to a swift resolution. Hero of the Shield, Iwatani-sama." (Queen) "Yes." (Naofumi)

I'm handed a ceremonial sword again. I stand before the Queen and lower my back. I unsheathe the sword and hand it to her.

The Queen takes it, touches it to both of my shoulders and declares, "For your efforts, I hereby award you the title of Marquis." (Queen)
Uwaa... I really don't want it.

So I'm promoted from Count to Marquis. It is a step up, I guess.

There are way too many ranks in my world.

I wonder if this one is the same.

“The rewards for your subordinates will also be bestowed through Iwatani-sama. If you want anything specific, please ask him. The other heroes are also included in this.” (Queen) “Yes.” (Naofumi)

So I’ll be accepting praise for Raphtalia’s efforts as a representative.

Ren is also nodding.

Motoyasu... Please stop staring at Firo. She hates you.

Though Ren and Motoyasu are Heroes, they’re currently working under the pretense of making up for their sins. Even if they work hard, I don’t think they’ll be promoted.

Perhaps because she realizes that I find this to be a pain, the Queen makes it short.

And... Can a title be bestowed on Raphtalia as well?

I glance at Raphtalia, and she shakes her head.

It would be a pain. Though, I’ll make her get one in the end.

“You did it, Naofumi!” (Ren)

“No, it’s not like I’m happy or anything.” (Naofumi) “I-I see.” (Ren)

My response renders Ren silent.

I’m honestly not happy at all.

And were Ren and I even close enough to quarrel about this?

“Father-in-Law, for my efforts this time around, I would like you to let me expand my Filo Rial Ranch.” (Motoyasu) “Motoyasu, shut up.” (Naofumi)

I thought he couldn’t understand the Queen’s words.

Is he just saying whatever he wants?

“Now then, there is another here who is deserving of a reward.” (Queen)
Hmm?

The Queen gestures towards Rishia.

“Rishia Ivyred.” (Queen)

“Fuee!? W-what could it be?” (Rishia)

The Queen beckons her to come forwards.

Rishia timidly walks forward, observing the fixtures of the room as she comes in front of the Queen.

“Rishia Ivyred. During this incident, you have contributed greatly to the resolution of this incident and to the prosperity of this country. You have been highly evaluated by me, Queen Mirellia Q. Melromark. This is a separate matter from Iwatani-sama’s work.” (Queen) “Y-yes!” (Rishia)

That’s true.

The one going around and undoing the brainwashing was Rishia, and she may be considered the most important contributor.

What’s more, though we don’t know if it’s a hero’s weapon, she did obtain some form of 『Mysterious Projectile Weapon』.

“The Ivyred House will receive a financial reward, and Rishia and her parents will both receive the title of Baron separately.” (Queen) Wow. Rishia’s also promoted.

Is she going to receive land as well?

She probably won’t leave because she has to look after Itsuki though.

Even so, I can’t call her a Fallen Noble anymore.

“Pick whatever land you want from the plots I’m handing over to Iwatani-sama.” (Queen) “I’m getting land?” (Naofumi)

“Yes... In this incident, a large amount of nobles were taken into custody, so there’s quite a bit of unattended land.” (Queen) I really, really don’t need it.

“The fact that you don’t want it is written all over your face, Iwatani-sama.” (Queen) “I mean...” (Naofumi)

I just wanted some land to raise my army. If I have to take responsibility

for the disputes of a larger area, I think I'll collapse.

I'm leaving this world anyways, so getting land or status doesn't really mean anything...

"Don't worry. A portion of the items and taxes collected from that land will be presented unto Iwatani-sama." (Queen) "I see!" (Naofumi)

It's not like the lord is the only one who does the managing, anyways.

I'll have to send people there to govern.

I'll just leave it all to Melty!

And if you suspect it's going to turn out that way, then just leave it to your daughter from the start.

Since most of the rebellious nobles have been sentenced to execution, there are many vacant territories.

Also, if I get more land, my actions will be more restricted, but it will be easier to take greater action.

Since there will be at least two waves after Houou, I'd like to reinforce my forces.

In that sense, the resources and money derived from greater plots of land may prove to be invaluable.

And it seems that I'll have to cover the equipment enhancement costs for Ren and Motoyasu, who've glued themselves to my village...

Itsuki's case... depends on Rishia.

"... About that, Queen-sama." (Rishia)

Rishia has an apologetic face, but her voice has a firm tone.

"What is it?" (Queen)

"I am very grateful for the honor you have bestowed on me. However, I have one favor that I wish to ask of you." (Rishia) "... I'll hear it out." (Queen)

"Please make it so that the status, land, and honors I've received never

happened. Instead, could you forgive the crimes of the Hero of the Bow, Itsuki-sama?" (Rishia) The Queen's aides and knights begin talking amongst themselves.

Itsuki himself was greatly involved in this event, though it was officially proclaimed that all the fault lay with Witch and the Three Hero Church Remnants.

It seems Rishia's been thinking as well.

This is the only chance she has.

"I understand your request. Rishia Ivyred, I shall discard all the awards bestowed onto you and exempt the Hero, Kawasaki Itsuki, from his crimes. Of course, with some conditions." (Queen) "Conditions?" (Rishia)

"Yes, he must continue to risk his life fighting the waves that threaten this world, no matter how long they last. Also, the next time he brings harm to this world or its people, he will be sentenced to death without question. I'll leave his management to you, Rishia Ivyred. Please bear this in mind and do a splendid job." (Queen) "Thank you very much!" (Rishia)

That's quite a judgment.

It seems that they have decided to keep Itsuki alive. They vied for the safest option.

I also had a promise with Rishia. If she didn't speak up, I would have asked the Queen myself.

Just how much does that girl like Itsuki?

"Now, let's leave the discussions of rewards there and discuss who the responsibility for this event falls upon." (Queen) I feel the atmosphere getting heavier.

But we all knew this would come up.

"Can I ask something?" (Naofumi)

"What could it be?" (Queen)

“The Three Hero Church remnants were able to flee during the Spirit Turtle incident, right? Why were they not executed on their capture?” (Naofumi) “Quite a few of them never laid hands on Iwatani-sama directly, so they avoided execution. Also, many were citizens of this country and many of them were of noble birth.” (Queen) Ah... So that’s it.

Even if they wanted to execute them, the noble families stepped in.

If they were executed without question, this revolution would have grown even greater in scale.

What I can’t understand are these 『Nobles』. Are they really that important to be respected?

In my world, I believe the Guillotine was a device reserved for noble criminals.

Is there a troublesome procedure to execute them here?

“Some were waiting for their execution dates, and some were still being interrogated. When we were in the middle of taking control of their facilities... the Spirit Turtle began to advance.” (Queen) Would it be like this in my world? A criminal was being held in a criminal cell, but an earthquake destroyed the prison and sent the country into chaos?

I’ve heard that in foreign countries, prisoners were held in detention for a while before their trials, so they have a chance to escape before it.

I didn’t think it was even that long between us defeating the pope and the Spirit Turtle attack.

With the nobles involved... I guess it’d take around two weeks to argue for execution.

I can understand why they were still alive.

“And? What happened in the end?” (Naofumi)

“With an incident this large, I don’t think it’s possible for a noble to step forward to defend them. At the moment, it’s impossible to even speak against Iwatani-sama, so their executions have been decided.” (Queen) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“I’ve also heard about the actions of the Hero of the Bow’s former subordinates. It’s been decided that they will be executed in Iwatani-sama’s presence.” (Queen) So Armor and the others are being executed as well.

I can’t wait.

And they’re going to show the entire event to me?

I don’t think that’s good on the eyes. Is there really a need for me to be there?

“For crimes this large, we hold large scale public executions in the Castle Town plaza.” (Queen) “Heh...” (Naofumi)

“Even though we may seem peaceful, executions used to be really common here. Most of the criminals were the generals of enemy countries though.” (Queen) Was that how it was?

Since I was born in the modern era, it’s difficult for me to imagine such a scene.

For some reason, I’m getting an uneasy feeling. But enemies are enemies.

You reap what you sow. It’s a bit of a pity. My emotions are a mix of these two.

“The people who will be given a public execution are the people who led this revolt, the nobles of the revolutionary faction and the Three Hero Church officials. The others will be executed through other means.” (Queen) “What’s the method?” (Naofumi)

“We have quite a few ways, but do you have a preference?” (Queen) “No, I have no idea what you have.” (Naofumi)

And why would you ask me to choose it...

“For the nobles, it’s the Guillotine. For the Three Hero Church, the Iron Maiden. For the former subordinates of the bow, the Brass Bull.” (Queen) ... Those are the Curse Series arms, aren’t they?

Did the former heroes use them, and they took them as reference? Still...

Ren has a bitter face like mine.

If we watched, we would get the feeling that our own skills were killing them.

“We also have impalement and using magic to make beehives out of them. Our repertoire is quite vast, so is there anything you would like?” (Queen) Hearing the Queen calmly list execution methods scares me.

No, this may be normal here.

Trash and the Queen were at war with Shild Freiden for a long time, so things like that happen.

I had grown somewhat accustomed to this world's values, but I guess I'm still fundamentally different “We also have electrocution by lightning magic. It's apparently great as a torture method.” (Queen) ... Sadina's magic comes to mind.

She's quite skilled with lightning.

Hmm? Why is the Orca-ish Demi-Human good with electricity?

Not that it matters.

“Father-in-Law! What are you guys talking about?” (Motoyasu) “You shut up! Ah, Midori, was it? Go interpret the words of women for Motoyasu.” (Naofumi) “Okay, got it.” (Midori)

Motoyasu's Filo Rial, Midori, begins talking with Motoyasu in private.

Motoyasu starts nodding. Eventually, he speaks up.

“Then let me offer a suggestion.” (Motoyasu)

“What is it?” (Queen)

“Sky Burial.” (Motoyasu)

Sky Burial!?

I believe that was... Where the criminal was left out for birds to pick at.

Wait a second. For the criminals to undergo a sky burial...

“Rejected!” (Naofumi)

What do you think will happen if you teach these birds the taste of human flesh?

They may begin eying other things.

And if they began to enjoy it, we would have created some troublesome monsters.

“Master, what’s a Sky Burial?” (Firo)

“You don’t need to know!” (Naofumi)

“Eh...” (Firo)

Motoyasu... If you’re in charge of these birds, why is it fine for you?

He’s become a bit... no, he’s become quite scary.

This topic is dangerous. We must change it immediately.

“Next, I don’t really want to hear about it, but what’s going to happen to Witch?” (Naofumi) “Ah, that matter. Bring the Witch in.” (Queen)

The Queen issues orders to her aides.

Witch was presented to the crowd. She had a gag on to prevent speech, and she was wearing magical restraints to prevent movement.

“Mu-! N-!” (Witch)

From the look in her eyes, she hasn’t given up on life just yet. She’s glaring at me as her sworn enemy.

Based on the direction of her glare, it seems that Raphtalia is also included on her enemy list.

Chapter 251: The Bloodline of Heroes

“Now let’s talk for a bit. Take off the gag.” (Queen)

“... Puhah.” (Witch)

Even though she was captured, Witch looks down at everyone gathered with conceit.

She must have confidence that she won’t be executed no matter what.

“Now then, Witch. Do you have anything you wish to say?” (Queen)

“Mama, I was being brainwashed. There’s no way I would take part in a rebellion against you.” (Witch) Ku... Now that she’s here, she mouthing off some suitable lip service!

Even if she failed, she could simply say that she was one of the many that they had brainwashed to escape punishment.

Though Rishia and Atlas would be able to see through this, she would probably claim that they were acting out of personal prejudice.

Just how much of a Bitch is this Witch?

“Witch, did you seriously believe such an excuse would pass?” (Queen)

“Hmph! Mama, so how do you plan on executing me? I’m your daughter, you know. If you were to execute me, how would the country look at you, Mama?” (Witch) “... I understand what you’re trying to say.” (Queen)

“And? How shall I be killed off? Or will you marry me off to another country? Perhaps you plan on cutting off my limbs?” (Witch) You Witch!

She knows the situation she’s in, yet she’s using that fact as a provocation. Just how rotten is she?

The Queen also seems to have seen through her intentions. I haven’t raised a hand yet, though.

“No matter what you may do to me... I have no plans of yielding to you.” (Witch) “Death! I demand Capital Punishment!” (Naofumi)

I shout out.

And no one stands up to object to my words.

Even the now-hot-blooded Ren doesn't raise a finger.

"And didn't I just say it? How will the people react to a cruel Queen who raises her hand to her own daughter?" (Witch) I understand that she has confidence that her eloquence will at least spare her life.

I feel the blood rising to my head.

"... No." (Queen)

"Wha?" (Witch)

The Queen shakes her head with a fed-up expression.

"I'll have you become the bride of the king of a certain country."
(Queen) Witch's face becomes red for a moment.

"You're too soft! You need to kill her after force-feeding her all of the horrors of the world!" (Naofumi) I raise my voice high enough to shock even me.

But, I have the right to say such a thing.

I was framed. Again and again, I was faced with disgrace. Sometimes people would come to kill me.

Every day was a living hell. I withstood it. I beared the pain and crawled my way here.

The simple fact that that woman was alive and well is enough to piss me off. And yet you arrange a political marriage!? Cut the crap!

"Is that so? Mama, that means I'm heading off to somewhere around Silt Welt, correct?" (Bitch) That possibility is quite high.

The area worships the Hero of the Shield, and there are plenty of people angry with this bitch's harassment of me.

It may be a good place for Witch's final days.

Perhaps it would be nice to send her as a sacrifice.

But still, my grudge won't subside.

“No.” (Queen)

“Eh?” (Witch)

Witch lets out a surprised voice.

The Queen expands the fan in her hand and covers her mouth... She continues in a manner-of-fact tone.

“The place you’re going... is Faubley.” (Queen)

“Hah?”

Both me and Ren raise our voices together.

Motoyasu? He’s staring at Firo. Do you think he cares?

“What are you talking about? Isn’t Faubley supposed to be the biggest country? Marrying her off to somewhere like that is more of a favor than an-” (Naofumi)

“NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!” (Witch)

As I try to raise an objection, Witch begins shaking and her face turns blue. She screams out.

“Wha...?” (Naofumi)

My words are interrupted, and I turn to Witch.

I’m at a loss for words... I guess that’s the term to describe my emotions.

She was fine with executions and even being married off to her enemies, so why does Faubley scare her this much?

I don’t get it. What does it mean?

“Mama! No matter the crime, that’s too much!” (Witch)

“You’ve been bad. I told you before you set out for Cal Mira, didn’t I? If you continue to perpetuate intolerable acts, I would marry you off for the sake of peace. I told you that if you didn’t want that, you would have to work with the Heroes for world peace. If you did that, I wouldn’t have gone this far.” (Queen) “Even so! Why must it be Faubley!?” (Witch)

“They said they would forgive us for monopolizing the Four Hero summon, so there’s no helping it.” (Queen) “What do you mean?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, I never explained it to Iwatani-sama and the others, did I?” (Queen) Hmm? Rishia’s fainted with bubbles coming out of her mouth!

Really? Is it that bad of a place!?

“The current King of Faubley is a man who drowns himself in carnal pleasures. When he looks at women, he sees... and I’m quoting here... ‘simple toys of pleasure.’” (Queen) “I-is that so...” (Naofumi)

“He cares not for appearance and takes on beauties and uglies. Everyone. When I was younger, I dreaded the day my parents would try to marry me off there.” (Queen) Trash is also down for the count!

What’s with you people!? Is this sentence really that bad!?

“And just how old is that king!?” (Naofumi)

“He’s Trash’s brother... so I think he’s 13 years his senior.” (Queen) Um, I believe Trash was the prince with the lowest status.

Doesn’t that make this incest?

“He’s ugly and stupid, but he at least has the wisdom needed to keep his own power. Even though he’s rotten, it isn’t by luck that he’s managed to hold the throne for so long in a country plagued by power struggles.” (Queen) “But still... I can’t understand why everyone here hates it so much...” (Naofumi) I still don’t understand what makes marrying there worse than marrying into Silt Welt.

Since Witch is caught up in physical appearance, could she just hate his looks?

“Let me give some explanations. Faubley has had a long tradition of marrying the Four Summoned, the Seven Stars, and their children into their family. Because of that, they’re known world-wide as the bloodline of Heroes.” (Queen) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

Well, heroes are said to be an existence close to God. It’s natural for a

country to hold such beliefs.

The people summoned are treated nicely, so they're alright with it, and it seems quite safe.

If their children perform well, they're once again favored, and they carry on the line.

"And please understand that those children are usually divided into categories." (Queen) "Divided?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. First, if they're male, many of them are born with exceptional looks. These people would play around a lot and make their own harems. They would try to surpass others and would fight often. Contrarily, quite a few become reclusive. These people are the targets of many foreign countries because whimsical princesses think they can get married off to handsome foreign princes and they happily give their hand in marriage. Ah, sometimes Heroes personally marry in as well." (Queen) Um... By heroes, do you mean otherworlders like us?

I don't know the conditions required for a summon, but looking at the current heroes... We're all gamers.

When we first got here, even I had a dream of making a Harem.

That means these skirt chasers would mass produce children and carry on the bloodline. Plenty of unfortunate children would probably be born as well.

I may not be in the position to say this, but the Heroes probably got through this new world with cunningness and craftiness.

Their bloodline would have amazing power struggles.

And if I think about it, Trash is one of their descendants.

Is that why he's supposed to be wise? I don't know if that's true. I don't want to know.

"In the case of females, they are also usually blessed with good looks. There are some that even make reverse harems. I wonder if this is the grace awarded by the blood of heroes. The Heroes' descendants seems to

be blessed with looks over knowledge.” (Queen) “Is there a greater chance of Heroes being male?” (Naofumi) “There are also females, but their blood doesn’t get spread as much as men.” (Queen) The fate of a harem.

Stallions and mares have different production rates, so there’s no helping it.

... How lively these people are.

And wait, the Heroes may work hard, but if you look closely, they’re a collection of failed human beings.

This may be limited to the summoned ones though.

Wait. Are the Seven Star summoned as well? I don’t know the criterion, but I believe they were chosen from the people of this world.

Anyways, that means otherworlders like us got the idea in their heads to build a harem in another world, and their bloodlines mixed and brought forth the Faubley Royal Family.

“People with such blood get into power struggles with one another, win, become king, make more children... and prosper. The current king is more skilled at power struggles than Witch. What’s more, he’s a long-lived king.” (Queen) “Ah, and...” (Naofumi)

He’s more manipulative than Witch... I don’t want to meet him.

“Let’s see. His appearance is... one that one would hesitate to call human.” (Queen) What sort of person is that?

Is he like one of those frog-like disgusting otaku characters that appear in anime?

“The closest description I could give would be an overgrown pig.” (Queen) Oh, really?

That’s supposed to be the king? Of the biggest country?

And our Queen is getting hostile here.

“Rejoice, Witch. It seems the other party has been waiting months for your arrival. If you go, it seems that they’ll turn a blind eye to our crimes.”

(Queen) “Hiii!?” (Witch)

Witch steps back with a pale face.

It’s not like I can’t understand where she’s coming from.

Still, is this a fate worse than death?

Shadow appears and whispers in the Queen’s ear. I haven’t seen her in a while “Ah, Witch. It seems you’re going to be proudly welcomed as the 10000th toy.” (Queen) “Ten Thousandth!?” (Everyone)

Wait a second... so he’s had 9999 female toys before this?

No matter how I look at it, that’s impossible.

Even absurd eroges don’t use such high numbers as a setting.

No, he’s supposed to be older than Trash, right?

I have no idea how many days are in a year in this world, but if I take a girl a day, assume 365 girls per year, then multiply that by his approximate age... I guess it’s barely possible.

... Even so, it’s shocking.

“Ah, please bring that item to make it easier for Iwatani-sama to understand.” (Queen) The door behind me opens, and soldiers rush in with two items covered by cloth.

“When you Heroes were off on Cal Mira island, this is the item we presented to the king to stall for time. A life sized Witch Doll.” (Queen) The first cloth is pulled off.

What’s revealed is a doll that looks exactly like Witch.

I already want to make it my punching bag.

Anyhow, it’s an exact replica. It’s as if I’m looking at a mirror.

And isn’t this what my world would call a Love Doll?

“Next is the item that we retrieved from a compost heap in Faubley, two days later.” (Queen) S-seeing the next item made me doubt my eyes.

Um.. This is Witch... right?

The hair has been pulled out, the eyes are out of their sockets, both arms have been cut off, and the legs have been cleanly sheared off as well.

Are those burn marks? There are a few places that have swelled up from soaking too long as well.

The mouth, and another place, have strange holes cut into them.

The lopped off stumps of the arms and legs are the same.

Um... I'm definitely not looking into the holes...

"Those holes were made for the exact reason Iwatani-sama is imagining, you know." (Queen) "Geh!?" (Naofumi)

"The King of Faubley's motto is 『Toys that have gone through enough pain that they wished they were dead feel much better』. This is a good representation of that." (Queen) Wow... If you take sadism to an extreme, do you become like this?

These aren't dolls.

He's dealing with live women here.

"For girls of good birth that have caused problems, Faubley is the answer. Upon having such a sentence, most commit suicide on the spot. It's that famous of an execution method in this world. It seems that his favorites are kept alive for as long as three months through magic, Yggdrasil medicine, and other things. Apparently, he wouldn't permit them to die..." (Queen) This marriage has already turned into an execution method.

And for him to be so famous, yet still keep his position, Faubley is a mysterious country.

I believe it was at the start of the Legend of the Seven Star Heroes, the Four Summoned Heroes, and this world's largest country.

They're the first people who received the right to perform the Four Heroes summon.

And from Rat's words, they apparently have several Seven Star Heroes

as well.

From the previous conversation... from repeated breeding, a bad hybrid popped up.

It's a country with massive land and military might.

It's the birthplace of Heroes, so it must have a long history.

It may become troublesome in the future.

And for that famous fiend to hold the throne... Don't uprisings happen?

9999 Women are dead here. Isn't he really hated?

Ah... Does he oppress them through money and might?

He's already something like a criminal, so slapping more crimes on him doesn't really do anything.

Some people may sell themselves to him for the sakes of their families as well.

Like Rishia.

Starting with Melromark, going to Silt Welt, Zeltburg, and now Faubley.

Does this world have no decent countries at all?

It seems that no matter where I go... I'll have my share of trouble...

Even after the wave, I'm seriously worried about the fate of this world itself.

No, it's not like I care what happens to it.

It's a shitty world. And I'm tired of it.

"It seems the other party is very pleased with you, Witch. He plans to use you as his toy every night. My heart aches as I wonder what will happen to you. Now, how many days will you last?" (Queen)

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" (Witch)

Witch's voice resounds through the castle.

Chapter 252: Pleading for Life

“They’ll back us up with medical facilities and military power if Witch agrees to attend to their king.” (Queen) The Queen continues speaking in a calm tone.

Even though the restrictive clothes Witch is wearing prevents her from moving her hands, she desperately struggles to use them to cover her ears.

I unintentionally let out a smile.

And this is the first time Raphtalia doesn’t raise her voice at me.

Though, she’s probably just overwhelmed by the situation right now.

“In reality, it’s a crueler sentence than death. The woman who lived her life by bewitching men will die by a man’s hand.” (Queen) “Even so...” (Naofumi)

From what I’ve heard, he’s an evil scum of a man, but the fact that he’s male bothers me.

What do we do if Witch works her wiles on him as well?

The only thing she’s good at is deceiving people.

She may abuse her needlessly good appearance to twist the King of Faubley around her fingers.

If that happens, then we’ll get a situation more dire than any we’ve faced.

“Is there any chance that Witch is the exception? That she’ll be able to make use of the King?” (Naofumi) “I won’t say the chance of conciliation is zero, but up until now, the countries apart from ours have tried countless times. Because he rules the world’s largest empire, getting him under your thumb is the same as taking control of the world. However, there’s no precedent of him ever listening to the words of a woman.” (Queen) So he’s like the current Motoyasu. In a bad way.

The current Motoyasu isn’t a scumbag like the previous one. He’s more

like a broken madman.

And if you think about it, that king's a condensation of the blood of otherworlders. He may be like the past Motoyasu.

But Motoyasu is kinda a Feminist.

"Even Witch should be able to tell whether or not her words will get through. Right? When she studied abroad, she was chosen by him after a single glance, and she almost fainted. Perhaps this matter has been decided since that point in time." (Queen) "Mama! I beg you! This is the only thing I'll ask of you in my life! Please! Please defer your decision!" (Witch) "Let's see... It is a matter that strains my heart as well. But even if you claim to be brainwashed, society won't forgive you so easily... Alright. Then how about I entrust your fate to the heroes?" (Queen) "What!?" (Witch)

The Queen closes her fan and smiles at us.

What does she plan on doing? It's probably nothing good.

"If there's a single hero here who wishes to take Witch under their wing, then I'll defer my decision to Faubley." (Queen) "Cut the cra-" (Naofumi)

Before I can finish, Witch uses all of her strength to get away from the soldiers holding her and prostrates herself on the ground before me.

"Hero of the Shield-sama! I'll do anything! Please... please take me up as your comrade once more!" (Witch) "..." (Naofumi)

She's really desperate.

She's hanging her head while throwing teary side glances to everyone in the room.

I silently step on her head.

"Thank you! Trample on me as much as you wish! I'll do anything. If you ask me to act as your pig, I will do it for the rest of my life!" (Witch) The fact that this makes me really happy makes me once again realize that I'm a scumbag.

Raphitalia stares at me with a complicated expression.

But I'm not swayed.

"Get violated by that pig and die!" (Naofumi)

I kick her away with all my might.

She stares daggers into me once more, but realizing she doesn't have the time, she moves over to Ren.

"Hero of the Sword-sama-" (Witch)

"Go to hell!" (Ren)

Ren's eyes are dead!

He's not going to forgive Witch here.

Though if he did, I would beat him to death.

"Hero of the Spear! Please offer me forgiveness!" (Witch) "Firo-tan, do you want to go for a scenic drive after this?" (Motoyasu) "No!" (Firo)

Witch finally kneels before Motoyasu, but he's flirting with Firo and doesn't hear her.

Firo seems terrified.

And for a drive... Where do you plan on going?

Is riding a Filo Rial even considered driving?

Anyways, Motoyasu doesn't react to Witch at all. Because she is a woman.

But Witch refuses to give up.

She desperately appeals to Motoyasu.

They've known each other for a while, and he may be the only one here who would willingly save her.

... The past Motoyasu that is.

"What is this ugly Red Pig? Firo-tan is finally looking my way, you know. Go away pig." (Motoyasu) "Motoyasu, if you don't deny her, she'll

follow you home.” (Naofumi) “Then disappear!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu swiftly pushes Witch away.

Amazing. He completely ignored his beloved witch when she was pleading to him with teary eyes.

Humans sure do change.

And Itsuki is absent.

“Mama! The Hero of the Bow isn’t present! This isn’t a fair trial.”
(Witch) “Should you really be saying that!?” (Naofumi)

“Right! Whose fault do you think it is that Itsuki ended up like that!?”
(Ren) Ren accuses her loudly.

Itsuki’s absent because of you!

Even if it’s wrong... Well, I’ll explain it to him later, but once he calms down, he’ll surely reject you!

“Damn you all! Rather going to Faubley, I’d rather die here and now!”
(Witch) A snapping sound resounds through the room.

Witch bit her own tongue with a lot of force.

Blood starts flowing from her mouth.

Did she commit suicide? Is this sentence really that bad!?

“Don’t let her die! Take her alive!” (Naofumi)

Why the hell am I saying such lines?

The soldiers run over to Witch, and the healers begin desperately casting healing magic on her.

A cloth is shoved into her mouth, and her life is saved.

“And that’s the result. What should we do for Witch’s trial?” (Queen)
“Nothing’s been decided, but I’m a little satisfied... or perhaps I should say bewildered.” (Naofumi) I got to abuse Witch when she was desperately lowering her head to me. I guess I’ve calmed down a bit.

Perhaps Ren is the same. A cold smile floats on his face.

The current Ren is a person who would sacrifice his own body for his allies, yet...

Motayasu is... Stop chasing Firo around already.

“Then we’ll reset Witch’s level to 1 and ship her to Faubley... I’m a little worried with just the castle’s soldiers, so could Iwatani-sama personally escort her?” (Queen) “Rejected. What reason would I ever have to spend a long period of time with that Bitch?” (Naofumi) But the Queen’s opinion is sound.

With just this country’s soldiers, there’s too great a risk.

Even so, if I leave, then that would mean setting my land and Itsuki’s matter aside.

Though with my Portal Shield, I would be able to jump back and forth. It would be a pain, but it’s possible...

... Ah, right.

“Fumu... We don’t know when or where Witch’s conspirators will try and recover her. Could you put Motoyasu on transportation duty?” (Naofumi) “Leave it to me!” (Motoyasu)

Before the Queen can speak, Motoyasu steps forward with pride.

“Then I’ll leave it to you.” (Queen)

The Queen’s words don’t reach him, though.

Motoyasu can’t hear any female voices.

“Motoyasu, when you’re in the middle of transportation... if the pig ever tries to run, kill it without hesitation. Also, keep it under your watch until you confirm that it gets violated by the King of Faubley, and return after you have a magic crystal record of the scene.” (Naofumi) (TL:) “Yes! Understood!” (Motoyasu)

With this, I probably have nothing to worry about.

Well, if Motoyasu gets taken out, there’s nothing we would have been able to do in the first place.

Even if the Queen turns out to be lying, I can order him to kill Witch.

“The ride of the Filo Rials at my place is said to be a living hell. And after that, an even greater hell awaits.” (Naofumi) Kukuku... I look at Witch collapsed on the floor and laugh to myself.

After that, I watched over Witch’s treatment and her Level Reset. I left her in the care of Motoyasu and his Filo Rials.

In order to prevent her from biting her tongue again, her mouth was stuffed.

The tied up Witch glares at us menacingly from the carriage window.

This time, her eyes are colored with tears and despair.

Even if she tries to rebel, she can do nothing at level 1.

“Mu-!” (Witch)

“Enjoy your final trip to its fullest.” (Naofumi)

And like this, Witch tumbles down the one-way road to hell.

But she got what she deserved.

...

...

Ah, let me offer a description.

The crystal Motoyasu used as evidence... It was that Camera-like crystal that my wanted poster was displayed on... I received the recorded footage of Witch being tortured by the pig... no, the King of Faubley.

By the way, it also had audio.

Honestly, there was nothing more disgusting in this world. But, I have to see Witch’s last days through to the end.

It seemed that The King himself graciously let it be recorded.

Something about driving Witch into further despair... He was really human filth.

I want to avoid meeting him at all costs, but the King of Faubley

personally invited me over to hear my opinion on the evidence footage.

Please leave me alone...

I had a lot to say, but for numerous reasons, I politely declined.

By the way, it seemed that it was very rare for Faubley's King to send out invitations like that.

Even the Queen was surprised at the message.

And after Motoyasu transported Witch to Faubley, we received news of her death two weeks later.

Her body was sent back as evidence, preserved with Ice Magic.

It was not a pretty sight.

And, it seemed the King developed an attachment to using those Crystals to record. He sent numerous ones to me after that.

I never looked through them. When I saw the first one, it recorded all the way to the subject's death.

Did he think sending such things would earn my friendship?

Don't send footage of any woman besides Witch...

(TL: And now, Naofumi's traumatized for life)

I'm still soft. I've only caught a glimpse of this world's darkness.

I want to stay out of it if possible.

I engrave these words onto my heart.

Like this, I finally cut my long ties with Witch... It was so abrupt that it seems anti-climactic. It doesn't seem real.

*

(Note: "I just realized. Did Naofumi just invent AVs [adult videos] for this world?"

-Psychronia)

Chapter 253: Yes Man

And like that, I saw Witch off and return to the throne.

The matter concerning rewards ended, so everyone went off to rest inside the castle.

The only people left here are the Queen, the Country's higher ups, and me.

"Now then, should I begin my report?" (Queen) "That sounds good. There are plenty things I have to ask." (Naofumi) "Let's see... First, would be just how Witch was able to escape and cross national borders to start up her rebellion." (Queen) "How was it done?" (Naofumi)

"It seems that she salvaged a disguise magic tool from the corpse of a Shadow that died in the Spirit Turtle assault." (Queen) Oh, right. The Shadows had that ability.

I'm surprised she learned how to use it.

After Witch separated from Motoyasu, she apparently crossed borders.

She didn't plan on returning. She grasped for ways to live the easy life elsewhere.

"Ah, besides Elena, didn't Witch have another companion? Where is she?" (Naofumi) "She's already been captured. She's going be sent off much like Witch." (Queen) "So she's also a noble?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Queen)

Hmm... So she'll face a fate similar to Witch's.

Take that.

Even so, I never learned her name in the end.

I'm sorry, but I'll be forgetting you soon... Um... Woman 2.

"Next is about her slave seal. That matter's already been settled." (Queen) "Why didn't it work?" (Naofumi)

"It seems that the Spirit Turtle's presence caused some sort of bug, and

after that, she stayed in an area with devices made to jam the signal.” (Queen) “Oh, right. You investigated the building I reported about. Did you find the device there?” (Naofumi) “Correct. During this incident, it seems that the aura causing the brainwashing had an interference effect as well. The seal’s now in working order, and we plan on turning her slave rights over to Faubrey’s King.” (Queen) So there was a jamming effect. What a pain.

Hmm? I can hear some noise from the castle’s yard.

I peek out of the window.

And I see Fohl holding Atlas while stepping away from Trash.

Atlas is frowning.

Trash is... holding his hand into the air as if to cut the sky.

In his hand... is that food?

Is he trying to bait Atlas?

Trash fainted when he heard Witch’s sentence.

Is he searching out Atlas to fill the void in his soul?

I guess it’s fine. I’ll leave them be.

“Next is...

The slave release ceremony that’s become a famous rumor on the streets was apparently done by the Three Hero Church.” (Queen) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

I heard it from the slaves when Taniko first came to the village.

Something about a charitable organization that granted slaves their freedom.

“The Three Hero Church is charitable? That’s suspicious beyond doubt.” (Naofumi) “Yes... It seems that in order to procure subjects for their experiments, they would lure slaves in with the pretense of breaking their slave seals.” (Queen) So that’s it.

They were those sorts of people.

“When we took them in, we heard something along the lines of, 『Sure, we released them... from this world!』 and 『They became sacrifices towards our noble cause』.” (Queen) Those are quite some lines.

But the time those people will be released from this world as well is swiftly approaching.

If there's anything I'm unsatisfied with, it's that there's no repose for the victims.

“They were being held in a section of the facility Iwatani-sama reported.” (Queen) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

“Many died from experimentation. However, there are just as many survivors.” (Queen) “... Are they alright?” (Naofumi)

The Queen quietly averts her eyes.

Ah, I see. So the situation isn't that good.

“Many of them will need treatment. However...” (Queen) “I got it. I'll look at them at my place. Having a few more doesn't change much at this point in time. As long as they weren't directly related to the incident, I won't do them harm.” (Naofumi) “I give you my sincerest thanks.” (Queen)

... I'll put my order to the Slave Dealer on hold.

It seems I'll be getting an influx of slaves soon.

My place has an alchemist, and if I give them the medicine, they should get better.

I hope.

“Do you know their home towns?” (Naofumi)

“About one third of the captives have homes. The others have had their villages destroyed by slave hunting long ago.” (Queen) So the same pattern as Raphtalia.

Why must this country detest Demi-Humans to this extent?

They may have their differences, but if you try to talk to them, it's not

like they won't understand you.

Rather, it's the people that do the discrimination that refuse to understand.

Ah, right. I procured the research equipment from the facility and gave it to Rat. She was quite happy.

There were some machines she wanted, and some documents she wanted to use as reference.

However, she discarded all the information about replicating Heroes' Weapons after a quick glance.

She said it wasn't worth it.

Currently, the castle soldiers are rushing to perform a full investigation on the building.

"Iwatani-sama, what has become of the Hero of the Bow?" (Queen) "I've entrusted him to Rishia... but he's not looking so well." (Naofumi) It was the noon after we had finished resolving the brainwashing incident.

We heard the report from the slave we put on watch that Itsuki had opened his eyes. Rishia and I rushed to the Camping Plant where he was being held.

"Itsuki-sama!" (Rishia)

Itsuki had gotten himself off of the bed.

I crossed my arms and watched over the worried Rishia. Just in case Itsuki went out of control, I had Firo, Atlas, and Ren on standby outside.

"How do you feel, Itsuki?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Itsuki)

With an expressionless face and sleepy eyes, Itsuki slowly turned towards me and replied with silence.

"..." (Itsuki)

The silence continued.

Rishia seemed to be waiting for him to say something, but there were no signs of that happening soon.

“Oy, say something.” (Naofumi)

“... Something.” (Itsuki)

...!?

He’s got quite some courage to pickin’ a fight with me so soon!

“I’m sorry Rishia. It seems I’ll be breaking my promise to you.”
(Naofumi) There was no point in keeping someone who wouldn’t repent in the slightest.

“Fueeee! Wait a second. Itsuki-sama, just honestly apologize here.”
(Rishia) “... I’m sorry.” (Itsuki)

Expressionlessly and monotonically, Itsuki lowered his head.

What was this? Was Itsuki this sort of person?

“Itsuki, what happened?” (Naofumi)

“... I don’t know.” (Itsuki)

“Are you hiding something again? You sure like doing things like that.”
(Naofumi) “... Am I hiding something?” (Itsuki)

“Umm... Itsuki, have you possibly forgotten just who you are?”
(Naofumi) I hope his curse cost wasn’t something like amnesia.

From what I’ve seen, it wasn’t strange for such a thing to happen.

But if that happened, it would truly be a pain.

“No, I am Kawasumi Itsuki, the Hero of the Bow. I had intentions of Justice, but I lost.” (Itsuki) “It isn’t amnesia, right?” (Naofumi)

“I don’t know.” (Itsuki)

What didn’t you know?

“Don’t hide anything here. What are you planning?” (Naofumi) “... What am I planning?” (Itsuki)

“Like I know! I’m asking you! Don’t answer questions with questions!”

(Naofumi) What was this?

Itsuki was still expressionless, and he seemed to be spacing out.

His ambition seemed non-existent.

He was not disabled... I think.

When I asked him to say something, he honestly said, 'Something.'

...

"Itsuki, do a handstand while taking off your clothes." (Naofumi)

"Yes..." (Itsuki)

Itsuki followed my orders and stood on one hand. He used the other to slowly undo his buttons.

"Itsuki-sama! Please stop." (Rishia)

"Yes." (Itsuki)

Upon Rishia's words, Itsuki stopped and stood upright.

Wait a second. He was just performing whatever people asked him to do.

"Itsuki, kill yourself." (Naofumi)

"Yes..." (Itsuki)

Itsuki pulled a rope out of his bow and began searching for a place to hang it.

He was not acting of his own will. If it was Motoyasu, it would be like that anime.

I mean, the weapon fits.

(TL: I think he's talking about Lancer always being ordered to suicide)
(ED: From Fate/Stay Night. I concur) "FUEEEEEEEE! Please stop, Itsuki-sama!" (Rishia) "Yes..." (Itsuki)

"Itsuki, what do you want to do?" (Naofumi) "What do I want to do?" (Itsuki)

... Oy, could it be?

I had the feeling that he shouted out that he was offering his belief and his heart, or something.

Without his own belief... he was unable to use his will to decide anything.

Inside his head, he's become unable to tell what was right and what was wrong.

"Why are you expressionless? What do you think of me?" (Naofumi)
"Am I... Expressionless? I don't really think anything of Naofumi-san..." (Itsuki) (TL: The ship hath sunk) "Then what do you think about evil?" (Naofumi) "Nothing really... If it exists, then it exists..." (Itsuki) "You don't get angry?" (Naofumi)

"I don't feel anything..." (Itsuki)

Expressionless and emotionless?

And, it was weird for the secretive Itsuki to be talking this much in the first place.

"For now, you have lost to us. You are our prisoner. Rishia is in charge of you, so stay put and listen to her." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Itsuki)

Itsuki stared at Rishia... and turned to me again.

"Is there anything I should be doing?" (Itsuki) "What will you do?" (Naofumi)

"Um, what should I do? Should I just stay put? If I move..." (Itsuki) His decision making power was null.

The curse took away his will in itself.

And, why are all the Heroes that come to my place cursed?

"Itsuki, what are you going to do from here on out? Think about it." (Naofumi) "That is... I don't know." (Itsuki)

"That's because of your curse. You'll eventually recover. At that point, I'm not sure if you'll oppose me, but if we do end up fighting, I won't hold back. Remember that." (Naofumi) "... Understood." (Itsuki)

“Itsuki-sama, I will fight with you so you can make up for your crimes.”
(Rishia) As Rishia faced Itsuki with these words, he nodded.

“I look forward to working with you. Rishia... san.” (Itsuki) “Yes.”
(Rishia)

For some reason, Rishia was crying.

Well, this was pretty much someone else in Itsuki’s form.

And he did whatever someone asked him to do.

With him like that, it would have been exceptionally dangerous to bring him to Witch’s trial.

If he were there, he would have immediately forgiven Witch when asked.

Chapter 254: Vol. 1

“Then, I’ll move to the next question.” (Naofumi) “... Yes?” (Itsuki)

The current Itsuki seems to be incapable of lying.

I should take this opportunity to thoroughly interrogate him.

This way, it’ll be too late for him to lie when his curse clears.

“What nickname did you go by in the Coliseum?” (Naofumi) “Perfect Hidden Justice.” (Itsuki)

“Fu-” (Naofumi)

Ah, I almost started laughing.

He said it expressionlessly without any tone in his voice.

“And why did you go with that name?” (Naofumi)

“Because Justice helps people even when they don’t realize it.” (Itsuki)

“Are you an idiot?” (Naofumi)

“Perhaps I’m an idiot to you. To you.” (Itsuki) “... What was that?” (Naofumi)

Wait, this guy is just saying whatever pops into his head.

He’d usually refrain from making such comments.

But the fact that he thought such a thing pisses me off in itself.

... It’s fine. I’ll find out why he’s so fixated on justice later.

Or else I’ll run out of patience.

I have quite a short temper.

And I don’t care about this one’s sense of justice whatsoever.

“... You said that this world was ridiculously close to a game you knew of, correct?” (Naofumi) “Yes. I thought this world worked in a similar fashion to the game Dimension Wave.” (Itsuki) Past tense?

That implies that he thinks differently now.

So his game sense has weakened from the curse?

“Then here’s the question. Why did you challenge the Spirit Turtle?”
(Naofumi) “Because if you don’t defeat it quickly, you’ll have to fight it anyways in a Story Mission. But that is...” (Itsuki) I’ll omit the rest.

Most of his explanation overlapped with Ren’s.

The conversation’s pretty much going as expected.

“Next is Houou, right?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Itsuki)

“Fumu...Next Question. For this Dimension Wave game you played... What was the ending?” (Naofumi) This is the fundamental difference between the games Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki played.

Ren played VRMMOs, and Motoyasu played MMOs. Itsuki was on console.

Itsuki’s the only one who could play the game to the ending.

“After you beat Ouryuu, the first part comes to an end. After that, it’s a free world, and you can do side quests.” (Itsuki) “What!?” (Naofumi)

This is bad! Itsuki’s info has proven itself to be useless.

And what does he mean by ‘first part’?

There are games that come in multiple parts to make you have to buy the sequel.

Was it something like that?

Cut me some slack here. Finish the damn game before you get sent to another world.

“What sort of game was it, anyways?” (Naofumi)

“If I were to categorize it, it would be Hack and Slash. The game itself was made about 30 years ago in my world. An unnamed demo version was packaged with an Ero Doujin Game. It required 2TB of hard drive space to run, but it instantly became a sensation.” (Itsuki) “Hah?” (Naofumi)

He suddenly starts speaking eloquently.

In the first place, Itsuki's world had 2 Terabyte hard drives 30 years ago?

I thought his world was the normal one here. Even if he wasn't as technologically advanced as Ren, he was still from the future.

No wonder I wasn't able to get across to him.

Does that mean Motoyasu is the one whose world is closest to mine?

No, he must come from a world straight out of a Galge. Definitely.

Though, it might just be a Galge for him.

"And?" (Naofumi)

"This game was released without a known manufacturer. Eventually, the rights to manufacture and sell it were bought by a single millionaire under house arrest who gave up all his assets to obtain ownership of it. It was quite a famous event and was all over the news." (Itsuki) "... Please say it in a way I can understand." (Naofumi) "It happened before I was born, so I only have info from the internet. The rights to sell and manufacture it were bought at a very high price, it seems." (Itsuki) "Hmm... And?" (Naofumi)

"As soon as he obtained the rights, that millionaire went missing. Though, he did leave behind his name in the history books. The items he left behind were investigated." (Itsuki) "O-okay. What does that have to do with this Dimension Wave?" (Naofumi) "It's greatly connected. As a result of the analysis of the unnamed, unfinished gaming platform he left behind, the game Dimension Wave was born." (Itsuki) According to Itsuki, Dimension Wave was a game where anything was possible if you tried it.

Hero, Villain, Saint, Merchant, King, Lord of the Night. (TL: Yes, in that sense) The amount of characters that could be created were endless. That was the game's main appeal.

But, all classes were connected in that they had to complete the World

Quests. They had to combat the waves of disaster.

This aspect was different from the original, in that the map wasn't as large. Not that I really needed that information.

Most quests could be redone besides these ones.

Anyways, it was pretty much a free form game.

And Itsuki came to this world after completing Volume 1. He convinced himself that he was a Hero playing a game.

In his game, you were able to finish off the Spirit Turtle quickly in order to prevent casualties down the road.

"So you don't know what comes after Ouryuu?" (Naofumi) "No." (Itsuki)

This is useless...

"... Next Question. There was a blue hourglass inside of the turtle. Do you know anything about it?" (Naofumi) "There was one in the game, but it was in a different location to the one Naofumi-san found." (Itsuki)

"Where was it?" (Naofumi)

"It was in the center of the town where it was sealed." (Itsuki) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

Was it treated as a background object?

It has to mean something, but the mystery will probably clear itself up next time.

Since it was only volume one, there must have been some sort of level cap.

"What was the max level?" (Naofumi)

"100." (Itsuki)

Uwah. This isn't helping me at all...

And how dare he call me a cheat when he only had this much info on the game.

"I'm surprised you went off to fight the Spirit Turtle like that."

(Naofumi) "It was supposed to be an easy enemy at level 60." (Itsuki)

"What about Houou?" (Naofumi)

"70." (Itsuki)

"... Kirin?" (Naofumi)

"75." (Itsuki)

Again... it seems I can't expect much from this.

This guy lost easily at level 80.

"Is Houou strong?" (Naofumi)

"He's not particularly strong. You have to deal with two of them, and the fact that they fly is annoying. But, I always used a bow to take them out easily." (Itsuki) "Is that why you got the illusion that you were the strongest?" (Naofumi) "Yes. Dimension Wave was a Hack and Slash on the surface, so most people didn't realize how powerful the long range weapons and skills were." (Itsuki) "What do you think now?" (Naofumi)

"The Bow has some pros and cons." (Itsuki)

Well, I guess he would realize it after we continuously beat him up.

Or perhaps he had realized it, but he was simply denying it.

Right now he can't lie, so he's saying whatever he thinks.

"Fue... What are Itsuki-sama and Naofumi-san talking about? I can't follow the conversation at all." (Rishia) He never even told his comrades about his world?

Just how secretive does he have to be?

"I still have more to ask you. What led to you being held in that building?" (Naofumi) "I was bounty hunting in the Zeltburg Coliseum, and princess Malty invited me over saying she wished to grant me power." (Itsuki) Princess Malty... is it?

It seems Itsuki actually doesn't know.

"From here on, you are forbidden from calling the first princess by anything other than Witch. Of course, without honorifics." (Naofumi)

“Yes. Then Witch explained all of Naofumi-san’s wrong doings, and I... agreed to assist her. When I followed her, she brought me to that building where I found Mald and all the others who used to work with me. They were all plotting schemes against Naofumi-san.” (Itsuki) “I see. Continue.” (Naofumi)

“Mald and his companions explained to me that their previous treatment of me was in order to grant me an opportunity to mature. Witch and some researchers handed me some sort of weapon fragment. I inserted it into my bow, and I got a new power.” (Itsuki) Fumu... up ‘til this point, the story shares some similarities with common Robot and Battle animes.

Upon receiving a strange power, one obtains a duty to fight for world peace. Unbeknownst to the public, they must destroy evil. After losing to a strong enemy, the group dissolves for a while.

But, the leader continues to fight his own battle. Eventually, his old comrades join him again, and he teams up with the princess driven out of her own country. Together, they defeat a great evil.

What’s more, the former princess led him to discover greater power.

With a situation like that, I guess I can understand why he came to believe he was the main character... or can I?

The new power placed too much of a strain on his body, so he had to sleep in a test tube until the right time came.

I might actually watch an anime like that.

“Let me say this first. Those people were only using you. I’ll show you the evidence later.” (Naofumi) “... Is that so?” (Itsuki)

When the curse clears, he’ll go back to normal. I better clear this up while I can.

It’s not like he lost his memory. If his curse starts weakening, he’ll be able to think for himself.

“Do you still think that what you’ve done isn’t wrong?” (Naofumi) “... I

don't know." (Itsuki)

He really has lost his power to make decisions.

Though, he does answer questions honestly.

'What do you think about...?' 'Which is right?'

He can't answer questions like that.

"Itsuki-sama..." (Rishia)

"Then, you don't know what sort of item the Heroes' weapons are, do you?" (Naofumi) "No." (Itsuki)

He really isn't useful.

It's not like my expectations were that high for the people who lost to the Spirit Turtle though.

Even so, the fact that I can't get any useful information is depressing me.

"... Is there anything else? Anything that changed?" (Naofumi) "Now that you mention it..." (Itsuki)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"For a while, my SP and Mana haven't been recovering." (Itsuki) Oy, does that mean he has a curse preventing him from using Magic and Skills as well?

This is the worst.

Ren can't get any EXP, nor can he hold anything worth any money.

Motoyasu... doesn't really have any problems. But he sees women as pigs and can't understand their words.

And Itsuki complies to any order you give; he's expressionless and emotionless. His sense of Justice is gone, and it seems he has no pride either.

But, Itsuki used even more curse-like skills than Ren, so he's being affected more.

“Is there anything else? Will you ask me anything more?” (Itsuki)

“Hmm? What’s wrong, Itsuki?” (Naofumi)

“About what?” (Itsuki)

“Itsuki-sama?” (Rishia)

“Did I say something strange? What should I do? Naofumi-san is glaring at me.” (Itsuki) Itsuki starts exhibiting suspicious behavior.

... Something is strange.

For now, I’ll try issuing an order.

“Itsuki, try lying. Tell me this room looks like a palace suite.” (Naofumi)

“No, it’s a strange house made of peculiar plants.” (Itsuki) Ah... so it’s a curse that affects thought.

Even so, it seems he can’t lie at all.

This room truly is a strange one made of strange plants.

“Itsuki, what do you think of Rishia?” (Naofumi) “She was weak, but she somehow got much stronger. It has to be a cheat.” (Itsuki) “Fuee!? What is a cheat!?” (Rishia)

“The word means that you broke the rules to abuse the system. I guess that means he thinks you’re weird.” (Naofumi) “Fueeeee...” (Rishia)

I can’t confirm it with just this test, but I think it’s like this.

The current Itsuki just says the first thing that pops into his head. He can’t make up lies.

Probably.

I can’t let this guy into the outside world...

Even if he’s a Hero with high combat abilities, he only listens to orders. He’s like a doll.

I have no choice but to watch over him at my village.

Chapter 255: Starting Point

“And like that, it doesn’t seem that Itsuki will pose a problem. We’ll need to monitor him, but as long as Rishia’s there, it’ll work out. He can’t really run, nor does he seem to have the intention of doing so.” (Naofumi)
“I see, then I’ll leave him to you.” (Queen)

“Well, if he does end up running away again, then I’m really going to dispose of him.” (Naofumi) “... That’s something I would like to avoid.” (Queen) “Alright. Next, we can use Motoyasu’s teleportation to make use of Cal Mira’s healing onsen.” (Naofumi) “The heroes all seem to have an overly convenient warping ability. Please make use of it to recuperate yourselves.” (Queen) Before Motoyasu left for Faubley, I ordered him to take Ren there once to make sure we could open a portal if necessary.

We negotiated with the Count there and got permission to use the onsen that cures curses every night.

With this, the curses should pass faster.

“... We suffered quite some heavy damage during this incident.” (Queen)
“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

It’s the same at my place.

Though, it’s still within levels that we can recover from, and my Filo Rials are helping in procuring materials. It seems recovery will be faster than expected.

I didn’t want to spread the Camping Plants too much, but I’ve had to distribute them to the village.

I also brought some here to use as temporary relief. We’ll all be able to manage somehow.

Though, I dread what’s become of this nation’s finances.

Ah, right. The base the Three Hero Church used had some treasure piled up in it. Apparently, it came from the nobles.

The Queen decided that all of it would go towards financing the

recovery effort.

This country's trash has finally been driven out.

"Again... and again, I kept telling her to correct her personality. Even from when she was little." (Queen) "Like I care." (Naofumi)

"That's right... this is all due to my negligence." (Queen) "You're also slacking on Trash duty." (Naofumi)

"... He was an extraordinary person at the start, but he's changed. He was swallowed by the power and authority he obtained." (Queen) I peer out the window again. Fohl and Atlas are questioning Trash.

Trash is absentmindedly staring in the direction Witch was taken while he talks.

Hmm?

Fohl seems speechless.

What could they be talking about?

"The executions will start up tomorrow, but what will you do, Iwatani-sama?" (Queen) "I'll stay for some closure. After the primary offenders are taken care of, I'll take my leave. I have to deal with Itsuki and prepare for the next wave. I can't really afford to waste my time here." (Naofumi) "I see. Then we'll get into contact with you later." (Queen) I can finally give the Wave my undivided attention.

I get the feeling that I've finally gotten to the starting point.

"Then I guess we should be off." (Naofumi)

After I finish my talks with the Queen, I prepare to head back.

"Ah, we'll be continuing our journey for a little longer." (Raphtalia) "I see." (Naofumi)

So we'll be separating from Raphtalia... I feel a bit of regret, but it seems that she will be done soon.

"Atlas! Atlaaaaaas!" (Fohl)

"Onii-sama, just go on your trip already." (Atlas)

Ah, right. Fohl also completed his Class Up.

I sent Firo with him to the Dragon Hourglass, but it seemed he couldn't perform a special Class Up.

There was no choice, so I sent Gaelion over.

Just what standards does that Ahoge operate on??

With this, Atlas has taken the Firo route, and Fohl, the Gaelion route.

Even now, I can't tell just what makes them different.

Since their race is the same, perhaps I will be able to witness the difference between the two Class Ups.

"Because of Fohl-san, our journey is taking longer than it should. Please be obedient here." (Raphtalia) With a fed up voice, Raphtalia reluctantly lifts up her hand and embeds it in Fohl's solar plexus.

"Ugu... I can still go on!" (Fohl)

"Then, me too." (Atlas)

Atlas chops the back of Fohl's head.

"Guha! A-Atlaa..." (Fohl)

Hey!

Why are you following up?

"Your training is running late?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. If we give him the chance, he tries to run home. It's quite troublesome." (Raphtalia) "Right. The instructor always leaves Fohl-san under Raphtalia-san's watch." (Rishia) "Is that so?" (Naofumi)

Dammit, just how much of a Sis-con does he have to be?

He runs away from his own journey.

"I'm currently the strongest of master's disciples, so it naturally turned out like that... I can understand that he treats Atlas-chan dearly, but I think he should put his effort towards getting stronger for her."
(Raphtalia) "But, it's going to last for only a little longer, right?"

(Naofumi) “Yes. I look forward to coming home.” (Raphtalia)

“Then, let me walk you to the outside of the Castle Town.” (Naofumi)

“Thank you.” (Raphtalia)

My group accompanies Raphtalia’s to the edge of town.

“Look forward to the souvenirs.” (Raphtalia)

“You got some?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. We brought a large variety.” (Raphtalia)

Are they materials she got while training? If so, I’d definitely want them.

Raphtalia has values similar to mine. She probably knows what would make me happy.

“Well then.” (Raphtalia)

“Cya soon.” (Naofumi)

I wave my hand as I watch Raphtalia set out.

“Then, should we be off as well?” (Atlas)

“Yeah, we already sent Ren and Rishia home ahead of time. We should...” (Naofumi) “Carriage...” (Firo)

Firo suddenly lets out a questioning voice.

For some reason she looks like she’s going to cry.

“Ah, yes, yes. I haven’t stopped by the Old Man’s place yet, so I better go ask him.” (Naofumi) Does not having a carriage bother her that much?

But, I am also worried about the Old man, so it’s not a bad idea to check.

Though, I did talk with him a bit after the incident.

Apparently, the Three Hero Church remnants raided his shop and tried to stab him with the Dagger of Mob Mentality.

He could tell it was a strange weapon at a glance, so he immediately knocked them senseless, closed shop, and locked them up in an

acquaintance's house.

I did warn him, so this was to be expected.

After the incident began escalating, he helped evacuate the populace.

He truly is a reliable person

More importantly, just what level is that Old Man?

Level isn't related to combat experience and technique, so perhaps it's a rude thing to ask.

But, he seems to have a lot of experience for some reason.

"Oh, if it isn't the young lad." (Old Man)

"How's your store been faring?" (Naofumi)

"Quite a bit's been stolen, but it seems that my money is still safe." (Old Man) "I see. So do you plan on reopening soon?" (Naofumi) "I can open at any time. Though, my variety won't be the best." (Old Man) "Then won't you come over to my village this time?" (Naofumi) "Again, laddie? I have no intentions of answering you at this point in time." (Old Man) Imya's Uncle has just returned, so I shouldn't be too insistent with my invitation.

"And, what are you here for today?" (Old Man)

"My bird is begging for her new carriage." (Naofumi) "Ah, that matter. I'm sorry, young lady, it's not done yet." (Old Man) "I see... Firo is sad." (Firo)

"As compensation, I'll use some techniques from Faubley to improve it. Don't worry." (Old Man) "What do you plan on doing?" (Naofumi)

"They have something that lifts the wheels and body to lessen impact apparently." (Old Man) ... Suspension?

I see. This world has such things as well.

The old man unrolls a blueprint and shows it to me.

It involves attaching simple springs to the Wheel's couplings.

"Then..." (Naofumi)

I supplement the design by sketching a damper on it.

Even so, it only uses simple pipes, water and air pressure.

It's not like I'm that knowledgeable on the matter.

I'm only reiterating information that one of my friends who liked cars lectured to me long ago.

However, even with that, the Old Man's eyes shine with admiration. He nods a few times.

"Boy, you know some interesting things. I'll test it out." (Old Man) "My world was one without magic. If you try using magic with this design, I think you may get a good effect." (Naofumi) "I understand, boy. You don't need to sketch it all out. I have the inspiration." (Old Man) "I see. I'll look forward to it." (Naofumi)

"Yeah! Firo will look forward!" (Firo)

After looking over the blueprints with the old man, we warp back to the village.

Chapter 256: Superiority Complex

After that, I got busy.

I had to treat the new Demi-Human slaves from that facility, and there are too many things that need to be done in the village.

I also have to offer compensation for the damages to the merchants in the neighboring town.

Apparently, the Accessory merchant helped quiet everybody down.

He argued that the tax was ridiculously low, and that The Hero of the Shield was treated as a devil in this country, so such events were to be expected.

It seems he thinks that there are great profits to be made here.

The main reason for this is the expansive trade network built on my Filo Rials' fast legs.

We agreed to carry his goods, so his profits rose.

Whenever Motoyasu gets his hands on some money, he goes off to buy and raise Filo Rials. We have no scarcity in that department.

And the repairs to the damaged buildings are proceeding at a good pace.

Even in such a time period, I cook every day, and spar with Atlas. It's getting really hectic.

And three days after I returned to the village.

Me and Atlas learned the technique Rishia used for sucking in Chi from the air.

"It's quite difficult." (Naofumi)

"Yes... Musou Kassei, was it? It seems that I'll be able to keep it up for quite a while." (Atlas) Yes, Atlas learned how to hold up Musou Kassei for long periods of time.

But even though I learned how to suck in Chi, I can't seem to get a grasp of Musou Kassei whatsoever.

“Master, are you doing it again? Let Firo join.” (Firo)

When Firo tried to copy our actions, she immediately grasped how to do it.

It seems that Genius type characters like to gather in my village.

Even though Firo had experience using the pose to recover magic, in just a day of practice, she learned to suck in Chi and move around.

For her to be able to obtain power so easily... how convenient.

What’s more, it seems that Firo subconsciously activated Musou Kassei. Her movements are quicker than before.

Just how strong are these people getting?

Firo can’t use pressure points, or Hengen Musou, but she can use her natural overflowing power to subjugate her enemies.

“Fuee... Naofumi-san and the others learned to use it without an instructor?” (Rishia) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

Rishia happens to pass by in the middle of looking after Itsuki.

“I tried so hard to learn it, and yet... This can’t be...” (Rishia) From Rishia’s point of View, Atlas and Firo are absolute geniuses.

But that Granny said Rishia was the one with outstanding talent. From watching her fight with Itsuki, I’m pretty sure she’s a genius in her own right.

I get the feeling that the Musou Kassei that Firo and Atlas picked up is somehow different from the one Rishia used.

They only learned through observation. There’s no way it’s as effective.

Even so, Rishia says their skill is not inferior.

Still, it somehow gives off a different feeling...

Ah, right. Just as I can’t grasp Musou Kassei, Rishia somehow became unable to use it.

Even so, she fights without problem. For some reason, she seems even

stronger than before.

Perhaps Heroes just can't use it.

"Then the two that learned to use it should proceed with caution, you know." (Rishia) "Why is that?" (Atlas)

"Why~?" (Firo)

"It's best not to keep Musou Kassei on for a long period of time. Your body won't hold up." (Rishia) Ah, so it's that sort of boost skill.

In Manga and Anime, quite a few secret skills put large burdens on the body, and make it so that you can't fight again after you use them.

But when the main character faces an extreme dire situation, he uses it and loses his ability to fight. He either miraculously recovers, or awakens to some other power.

But it's not as if the world is that convenient for us.

It's likely that Rishia's ability to take in Chi is on another level.

The amount of Chi she had from the beginning didn't get that high even when she raised her level. That's the only reason I can think of.

And no matter how long Firo and Atlas can keep Musou Kassei up, there's still a limit.

Using only internal Chi, it's one minute. While taking Chi in, five.

But Rishia was able to use it throughout her battle.

"That's correct. There are times when you can hear grinding sounds from your bones. When you see opportune moments, you should activate it right before you attack." (Rishia) "Right." (Naofumi)

Female Knight's Musou Kassei wasn't very effective, and had a short active period. These aspects aren't really that important.

Fumu... Even though we just copied what we saw, it's surprisingly complicated.

"It's around time for food." (Naofumi)

I put my training on hold, and go to the dining hall to prepare food.

And I prepared it with the slaves I left the initial set up to.

We already set up a Bioplant to take care of the poisoned well and river.

The Three Hero Church didn't leave anything positive behind in their legacy.

They were executed yesterday.

The head sister was sent to Faubley to become food for the pig. The rest were sentenced to the Iron Maiden.

In order to keep up the image, I had to go out in front of the public, and pretend to be one of the executioners.

Perhaps because I was raised in modern Japan, seeing a public execution was not good for my heart.

I had nightmares that night.

As the populace suffered quite a bit of damage, they booed and jeered at the convicts right through their deaths.

I've read in a book that such executions were held in the Middle Ages in my world in order to help the public vent stress.

Though I don't know if that's true.

Is it some instinctual stress reliever?

Like the feeling you get when you watch a public bonfire?

Why are they using a torture device like the iron maiden for an execution, anyways?

The victims' screams echoed throughout the town. It was traumatizing.

And Armor, along with all of Itsuki's other companions that I haven't seen since Cal Mira, were executed as well.

Ironically, they were burned inside the Brass Bull.

In my world I think it was called the Phalaris Bull.

It's one of Itsuki's curse skill.

Even though Armor had been informed beforehand that he was set to die, when the time came, he trembled and begged for his life. His legs gave way below him.

Dreadful screams came from the bull statue.

Yeah, this is quite a cruel world.

I do think that some criminals deserve death, but when I actually encounter such scenarios, my head starts spinning.

It wasn't refreshing in the least.

If I were to kill them by my own hand... would I feel any better?

Now that I think about it, I killed the pope with Blutopfer...

Back then, I didn't feel refreshed at all. The only thing I could think about was the pain coursing through my body.

Yep, I don't understand it.

At this point, I shouldn't be bothered by killing, but watching people die in such gruesome ways makes me sick.

Uu... After remembering what happened yesterday, I have become disinclined to cook meat dishes.

I had my nose filled with the smell of Itsuki's comrades burning, and I want to avoid blood for a bit.

"Niichan! Food!" (Kiel)

A loinclothed dog excitedly runs up to me, begging for food.

"Okay." (Naofumi)

I take out an item I had prepared. A crepe covered in dirt. I place the plate on the ground by the dog's feet.

Everyone is at a loss for words as they stare at me.

What's so surprising? I'm a man who keeps his promises.

Even if she was being brainwashed, I have to give some sort of punishment to the one who spoke so ill of me. (TL: Refer to the last lines

of Chapter 230) She should be thankful that her punishment ends with just this.

Anyways, for today, Kiel is the only one that gets a rundown crepe.

“I won’t let you say you forgot about it. That’s your meal for today.”
(Naofumi) By the way, I made the meal a little bit more extravagant for everyone else.

With this, she should reflect on getting brainwashed by the enemy so easily.

Though I’ll probably end up giving her food anyways.

“Thank you, Niichan!” (Kiel)

“Wha-?” (Naofumi)

Kiel begins devouring the crepe like a dog.

The other slaves stare at her with their mouths wide open.

“Hehe.” (Kiel)

With eyes brimming with a sense of superiority, the loinclothed dog looks over the other slaves in the dining hall.

The slaves swallow their spit as they stare at the plate she licked clean.

Taniko and Ren, who were eating together, are silent as well.

“W-what? How should I say this, it seems that only Kiel got the best food. And it looks like he made it especially for her.” (Slave) “Yeah”
(Slave)

“Shield oniichan, please give me a crepe too.” (Slave)

“Me too!” (Slave)

“Gimme!” (Slave)

“That’s not why I made it!” (Naofumi)

It’s lecture time!

Why does it seem like I’m giving that loinclothed dog special treatment!?

These people... They're way too optimistic!

Chapter 257: Revelation

“Now then, where was I again?” (Naofumi)

We somehow finished lunch, so I returned to my training.

I’ll have to think of another punishment for Kiel.

Ren left with a group to go peddle.

It seems that he’s working diligently, and Female Knight is with him, so it should be fine.

Female Knight never got brainwashed during the incident.

However, she became greatly troubled over the nature of Justice due to it.

She sure likes to beat herself up.

But I’ll deal with that problem at another time.

Right now, I’m training for battle.

By sucking in Chi from the outside, I can hasten my SP and Mana recovery.

That’s efficient in itself. I can see it having a lot of uses.

However, it’s disappointing that I can’t use the convenient skill known as Mussou Kassei.

“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

“Master, what’s wrong?” (Firo)

“Well, I’m thinking of how to apply it to my skills. 「Shield Prison」!” (Naofumi) I test to see what happens if I mix the Chi in the air, and my internal Chi... My magic and SP when I use a skill.

Checking my status, I can see that the SP cost was cut by quite a bit.

Its flaw is that I cannot use it immediately. It’s quite difficult.

“How is it, Atlas?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, the prison feels much more complete than before. I don’t think

even I would be able to find its weak points and break it.” (Atlas) “I see.” (Naofumi)

It seems that the skill’s effect also increased.

And with the cost reduction, I’ve learned something nice.

I need to get this to a state where it’s usable in battle.

Take in energy from the outside, join it with my internal power and convert that energy into a skill.

The skills that haven’t been able to protect anybody lately may become quite useful.

My Meteor Shield and Shield Prison seem to get destroyed every single time. I was worried if I would be able to use them in battles to come.

If I can decrease the activation time, and increase the accuracy, I can try strengthening my skills in battle.

Hmm?

Wait a second. Isn’t this similar to something?

Isn’t this the same fundamental theory as the Dragon Pulse Law?

... Right.

It was a magic where you gather power from the outside, and use your internal power to set it off.

That seems to be what I’m attempting at the moment.

If I can apply it to skills, can I use it in magic?

I can. Probably.

Yeah, I better test it.

“Did something happen?” (Firo)

“Wait there for a second.” (Naofumi)

I take a deep breath, and begin chanting magic.

I use my body as a medium to borrow power from the area.

Right now, I need to rely on the power on the outside... and the power called SP from my shield.

And my magic... I hold it back. I'll use it separately I take in Chi, and lead its flow like a complex puzzle.

At the same time, I picture a magic chant.

Uwah... This is really hard.

The puzzle I need to make shows itself to me.

If I don't concentrate with all my might, it won't be solved. If I move, it will immediately shatter.

Even so... I construct the puzzle under this pressure.

Good, with this, It's complete.

It's not the best, but I was able to make it.

『I, the Hero of the Shield, order the heavens. Cut off reason, retie it and release it. Power of the Dragon Pulse, with my Magic and my power as a Hero, I, the Shield, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth of creation once more be read forth and manifest, Give all his things to me.』

The Chant was freakin' long.

I'm impressed that I was even able to chant it.

It'll be a little difficult to use in real battles.

But still, I did it.

Using the Dragon Pulse, I can see just how different its structure is from normal magic.

The foundation is definitely the same, but the difficulty is different.

The magic I make with my own power from this world's words focuses on ease of release. But you need to be able to memorize the higher class spells from the start.

But casting magic to obstruct another's spells takes too much time.

Contrarily, the Dragon Pulse Law makes the user assemble the power flowing into them.

There's no set chant.

Because there's no set formula, you have to assemble it differently every time.

Perhaps this could be compared to the difference between English and Math.

If you want to make flames, normal magic just has you reading out the words for fire.

However, each level of fire has a different word. You need to remember what to use for blaze, inferno and hellfire.

However, using the Dragon Pulse, you have to figure out what = Fire.

Along the way, you can calculate Fire + Oil = blaze, or inferno + water = blaze.

Taniko can borrow the earth's power and still make fire. From Earth + Darkness, she somehow solves for the Darkness, and converts that to flame.

That's why obstructing the magic may prove simple.

By taking in the variables, and reasoning what the enemy is going to solve for, you can derive it first.

I can also see why it proves effective with choral magic.

Even if you don't solve a puzzle alone, as long as it's solved, it's solved.

I see why these two types are incompatible with one another.

However close the theory may be, like oil and water, their compatibility is terrible.

But SP is the link that connects these two worlds.

... That means that only heroes have the ability to mix them.

Okay, let's release this power.

「Revelation Aura」!

(TL: I'm not sure if it's liberation of revelation. The higher level is testament, so I'm leaning towards Revelation. Also

<http://batspi.com/index.php?>

%E3%83%AA%E3%83%99%E3%83%AC%E3%82%A4%E3%82%B7%E3%83%A
Revelation... is it a level above Dreifach?

The words come naturally out of my mouth.

Now then, who should be my guinea pig?

I'll try casting it on the sturdy Firo.

“Firo, stay still for a bit.” (Naofumi)

“Eh...” (Firo)

Firo's face shows blatant discontent.

What's with that attitude?

“Whenever master says something like that, nothing good happens.”
(Firo) Ah, I get that feeling too.

Especially for Firo. Those are the words I used when she had the Monster Crest carved on her.

The Firo of that time was shaking. Did she get a trauma?

If that's the case, I guess I can understand why she would hate it.

“Well that's true, but it won't really hurt this time. I think. So just become my test subject.” (Naofumi) “No...” (Firo)

I hear Firo complaining, but I forcibly cast it on her anyways.

I really am a devil.

But it's support magic, so it shouldn't hurt.

Anyways, the magic eventually comes into contact with Firo.

The visibly dense mass of magic envelops Firo, and permeates into her skin.

Gu... My magic and SP's been drained clean.

That's just how much it cost.

"W-what did you cast?" (Firo)

"I used it before, right? It's the spell Aura, which increases all stats. I think it's a higher level this time." (Naofumi) "Is that so?" (Firo)

"Yeah, so try jumping." (Naofumi)

"Okay." (Firo)

Firo tries to jump lightly while flapping her wings.

But...

"Wa-" (Firo)

With amazing force, she sends herself flying towards the ocean.

It was as if a rocket had been launched.

"Ah..." (Naofumi)

Yeah. For now, let's check Firo's status.

Uwah, this is amazing. Every single stat has more than doubled.

I guess moving with this status would cause her to blast off.

I chased Firo with Atlas.

"Ahahaha~! Master, this is fun!" (Firo)

With a rumbling sound, Firo is... running on top of the ocean.

Wow... before one foot sinks, she's already put her weight on the other one.

No matter how amazing she was, even Firo was unable to run on the ocean before.

So this is the power of my magic.

After about 10 minutes, the effects of Revelation Aura wore off, and Firo sunk.

She swam back to shore.

"That was fun, Master. Do it again~." (Firo) "Rejected." (Naofumi)

That was ridiculously difficult! There's no way I could use it continuously.

But with this, I've understood the theory behind the magic.

Perhaps Mussou Kassei artificially creates something similar to SP.

When that's in place, Magic increases in effectiveness.

But without SP, Magic has its limits.

That means Hengen Musou may have been created in an attempt to become closer to the heroes.

Anyways, I should tell the Magic Shopkeeper about this.

Even if Revelation is impossible, I think I could use it to do a Dreifach Heal.

I can use it to reconstruct a magic that I already know to find another answer.

And if I just remember the chant that comes out, my life will be easier.

I never thought I would be able to master magic by studying Chi.

With this, I can get a discount on my payments to the Magic Shop.

Chapter 258: Gaze at Both Sides of the Shield

The night of the next day.

I was watching over Ren's studying, when he suddenly let out a deep sigh.

"What's up? If you don't concentrate, you'll never learn the language."
(Naofumi) If you don't have the motivation to learn, I'm not going to teach you.

"Ah... Just a bit. Won't you hear me out?" (Ren)

"That depends on the content." (Naofumi)

"As I thought. Actually, it's about Eclair-san." (Ren) Eclair... Female Knight?

Just by hearing her name, I feel that this is going to be a pain.

However, I'm slightly curious as to why Ren would sigh over her.

"Did that woman cause any problems again?" (Naofumi) Is it time to send her back to the castle yet?

Since Ren has begun working on his own, there's no point in me having her around.

Right now, she's sparring with Atlas outside of my house.

How diligent.

"Did something happen?" (Naofumi)

"Well, that is..." (Ren)

Apparently it happened around noon.

Some reckless thieves tried to go after them while they were peddling.

Even though everyone from my place has the ability to crush a bandit group or two.

I think the group Ren usually goes out with is Taniko's.

No matter how many bandits we capture, they still keep popping up.

But that doesn't really matter.

According to Ren, they subjugated the bandits immediately, and tied them up.

"Oy, jump up and down. I can see that you're still hiding something."
(Taniko) "Uu..." (Bandits)

Taniko uses her magic to threaten the bandits like a gangster. She even takes all of their small change.

The threatened bandits desperately look to Ren for help.

"Wyndia. There's really no need for you to do that." (Ren) "Shut up."
(Taniko)

Ren is shut up immediately, and Taniko continues extorting the bandits.

And at that point, even Ren starts to feel sorry for them. He grasps her shoulder and pulls her back.

Recently, Taniko's developed a sort of switch. She occasionally becomes very dark and negative.

In the village, she happily plays with Gaelion, the Caterpillands, and the other monsters.

She occasionally goes over to see Rat as well.

Because of her switch, Gaelion has come to consult me as well.

I'll have to think of something.

"Really, where could you have learned such a thing..." (Ren) "It doesn't matter where, does it? More importantly, they still have some valuables, so move over." (Taniko) Ren sighs at seeing how bad Taniko's upbringing was. Female Knight, who was busy tying up the other bandits, heard them and came over.

Taniko was in for a long lecture... she thought.

But Female Knight went over to the bandits that were being threatened.

“Hey, jump. You still have some valuables in your possession, do you not? How does it feel? To have your things taken instead?” (Female Knight) She starts threatening them with her sword.

... Eh?

What does this mean?

Within my village, I thought she was on the honest side...

“O-oy... What happened to you!?” (Ren)

“Wyndia, help me carve the consequences of their crimes into their bodies.” (Female Knight) “Sure.” (Taniko)

“Now Jump!” (Female Knight and Taniko)

“H-hii...” (Bandits)

As the bandits jump, coins scatter across the floor.

The ground was covered with several copper and silver coins.

“Really, you could have just handed them over...” (Female Knight)

“What the hell are you doing!?” (Ren)

Ren got over his initial shock, and shouted as Female Knight kicked the bandits around with a cold expression, while loading them onto the carriage.

“Ren, this is a necessary evil. For someone who makes a good life off taking the belongings of others, it’s necessary for them to feel what it’s like to get taken from. They need to learn from experience.” (Female Knight) “Wha-” (Ren)

After that, they turned them in to a nearby town, but Ren had believed that Female Knight was normally not a person to do such things.

But no matter how far he pressed her, she never gave an honest response.

“So that’s why you were troubled?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah.” (Ren)

What could have caused this change?

I can't think of a reason why that stupidly stubborn Knight would go so far.

If there was one, it would be related to that brainwashing incident...

"Call Female Knight... Eclair over." (Naofumi)

We call Female Knight inside from her training.

After a while, she enters the room.

I reiterate Ren's story, and ask.

"What sort of change is this? To you, weren't all of my actions cruel and unjust?" (Naofumi) "Ah, so it's about that." (Female Knight)

Female Knight has a philosophic expression as she turns to me.

What? It's rare for that diligent knight to make such a face.

"Do you remember that incident the other day?" (Female Knight)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Up 'til that point, I thought it was best for me to only follow the justice I believed in. However, I realized that their justice also had some logical points." (Female Knights) "It did?" (Naofumi)

They had no logic, and their arguments were all over the place.

"I'm not sure what they told you, Iwatani-dono, but this is what they were screaming at me: 『In order to make a world without Discrimination, we can't allow them to give Demi-Humans preferential treatment.』『Even those that take can only live by taking. They have their own situations.』" (Female Knight) I'm not sure about the first one, but how about the second?

"There was definitely some logic. The second person added on, 『If it's wrong to take from people, then how about monsters? There's no reason for us to think about reaping crops. It's human pride. For the sake of asserting our rights, we are waging this rebellion.』"

"You know..." (Naofumi)

That's like saying that bullying is right because the bully has reasons for bullying.

Even if that's true, that doesn't make it right.

I have no reason to empathize with those messed up zombies. Just hearing their arguments makes me tired.

"By that logic, I who aides one side of a war is definitely evil to the other. But still, I have my justice. That's what I believed. Even so, I kept seeing the people I protected, the people I trusted turning on me. Then what is justice... It must be something that constantly changes. The second I thought that, my own justice began to collapse. Perhaps I was evil from the start." (Female Knight) "So that's why you've given up your honesty, and started doing bad acts?" (Naofumi) That's way too extreme of a change.

She was always one who over fixated on small things, but she was still fundamentally a good person.

Just because your opinion clashes with others, that doesn't mean one of them is wrong.

"You're wrong." (Female Knight)

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"Doing what you believe to be correct is definitely important. But there's a flaw in living only by that belief. In the end, it leads to using violence to solve problems, and silencing all that prove to be flaws. It's merely an endless cycle." (Female Knight) "No matter how you're trying to live, your way of thought is too out there." (Naofumi) I thought she was idiotically diligent, but isn't she getting a little strange in the head?

Perhaps I'll have to throw her in solitary for a while.

"And while I was worrying about all of this, I recalled my father, and Iwatani-dono." (Female Knight) "... Why me?" (Naofumi)

"In a country of human superiority, my father established a land that favoured Demi-Humans. But were his actions truly correct? And Iwatani-

dono continuously performs evil and brutality, but..." (Female Knight) By evil, do you mean my treatment of bandits?

I don't really think that taking from them is particularly evil.

"If you change perspective, my father is the one who broke the rule of human superiority. Even so, I don't think his way of thought was wrong. But evil is evil, and the one who continued to protect this land was father. There's no way... he did something that could be called a crime to humanity."

Well it's not like I can deny that.

The Queen is the one who administers this country, and she does use her power to silence nobles.

There's a possibility that nobles who take unnecessary action are fated to get into accidents.

No, unless they cause an incident of this level, I don't think she would execute them.

She's more of the type to control their actions from behind the curtain.

"And the answer that came to me was one I learned by Iwatani-dono's example. That is my conclusion" (Female Knight) "Hah?" (Naofumi and Ren)

Both I and Ren make the same noise.

I can't follow what part of the previous conversation led to this.

"Iwatani-dono is loved by his Demi-humans. Even if they are supposed to be separated by the wall known as master and slave. That isn't just because he is the Hero of the Shield. However, Iwatani-dono calmly perpetuates acts of evil. Yet still, the people follow him... It's because he has the resolution to do evil for the sake of his allies." (Female Knight)

"That wasn't really my intention..." (Naofumi)

"Don't be humble. I had misinterpreted the words father left to me. 『Live nobly, without any regrets.』 I think he was asking me not to become like him... But I want to become a person like my father. I want to be a

noble who fights for the people.” (Female Knight) “And how does that lead to extorting from bandits?” (Naofumi) “A long journey starts with the first step. Iwatani-dono and the people living here do whatever they can to make as much profit as possible. It was something I had labelled as evil, yet it was done with resolve.” (Female Knight) Is that how it is?

No, Female Knight is being less stubborn, so I guess I can say she’s grown a bit. But that growth is in quite a strange direction. It’s a bit scary.

If handled badly, this may become the thought process of a tyrant.

“Ren, this one’s head is getting strange. I leave her guidance to you.” (Naofumi) “A-ah... I’ll do what I can.” (Ren)

Ren has a better sense for these things than me. He might be good medicine.

From continuously witnessing malicious acts, she began to be dyed with evil... Since she lost her parents, she had no one to lead her back on track.

Though I shouldn’t really be the one to say it.

“In the lands my father liked, Silt Welt, and Shild Freiden, theres a saying like this. 『Gaze at both sides of the Shield』. Don’t just gaze at the front, look to the back as well. On the other side of glory, there is tyranny and disgrace. One can only make a judgment after carefully observing both the good and bad of a situation.” (Female Knight) A word very familiar to me appears here?

No, my Shield may just be translating another word as Shield.

“Iwatani-dono is a one who displays both sides readily, I believe. His actions on his territory are worthy of respect, and he performs tyranny in order to protect his territory. In order to protect his people, even if he is a Hero chosen by god, he will dye himself with evil.” (Female Knight) Female Knight’s eyes seem to have reached enlightenment.

She seems very excited.

Once she starts believing something, she’ll follow it to the death, this

one.

I thought she had become more flexible, but... Her explanation leaves some to be desired.

“And so, I’ve decided to study land management under Iwatani-dono. Eventually, once Iwatani-dono leaves, I’ll protect this land with Raphalia.” (Female Knight) Gu... She hit a good point.

Yeah. I was worried over what would happen once I left this world.

Even if the Queen prevents Demi-Human discrimination, the people may eventually revolt.

The Demi-Human slaves had always been abused as a source of labor.

If the people were to see such Demi-Humans walking around normally in broad daylight...

It may be peaceful now, but plots are already in action, and the chance that my village will cease to exist isn’t zero.

We may have gotten rid of the extremist faction, but there’s no telling what the moderate faction will become.

And then, my village will be swallowed whole.

For its survival, Demi-Humans would have to be given preferential treatment, and political aide.

So Female Knight’s words aren’t wrong.

“I understand your thought. But extortion is going too far.” (Naofumi)
“What are you saying? I merely imitated what Iwatani-dono was doing.” (Female Knight) ...Ah. When I took care of bandits with Female Knight, I did say the same things.

Though Female Knight complained to me afterwards.

She was just imitating me?

“Naofumi... you did such things?” (Ren)

Ren looks over me with doubtful eyes.

“There’s was no choice! And doesn’t this country have way too many bandits as it is?” (Naofumi) “Now that you mention it, that’s true. I get the feeling that when we were summoned, public order was being kept better.” (Ren) Though most of them were probably just in hiding.

There’s also the fact that I’ve expanded trade routes, and distribution recently.

The Accessory Merchant passionately gave me a speech on expansion.

The appearance of the Spirit Turtle, and the country’s internal conflict caused a surge of nervousness among the populace. In order to protect their lives, many people have loosened their purse strings.

Some merchants want to hop on to the bandwagon, and get with this flow of money.

With food shortages and such, there are plenty of potential money trees around.

Perhaps the sudden increase of commerce has caused the amount of bandits to naturally increase.

Some unruly adventurers made a guild to gather money behind closed doors, while amassing forces apparently.

That’s what’s now known as this world’s Bandit Guild.

I don’t really have any relation to them, but the Adventurer Guild, the Merchant Guild, the Knight Brigades, the Church... Currently the Four Hero one... They’re all supporting one another.

When they first got here, I think Ren and the others began earning at the Adventurer Guild.

I’m not someone who would get hired. I’m more on the hiring side, so they’re unrelated to me.

Returning to topic.

For a Bandit Guild to emerge, it must be a den of criminals.

Since acting alone is dangerous, ruffians get together, and profit off of

attacking merchants and towns.

The Spirit Turtle incident has, for various reasons, messed up the public order in Melromark.

“I may have to perform a grand sweep of them soon.” (Naofumi) “But what will you do?” (Ren)

“I have an idea.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 259: The Chivalrous Thief

“And so, I thought I would dump this large job on you.” (Naofumi) “I-I don’t want to! When I make up for my sins, I decided to return to my village and live a decent lifestyle.”

Right. The one who had an abnormally high encounter rate with me, and the one who was under Ren when he was devoured by his curse. I got special permission from the country to take him out of the state prison, after which he had his slave rights turned over to me, and I had a contract written up.

I’m in the middle of persuading him.

Despite his repeat offenses, he’s repenting nicely. Or perhaps he just doesn’t want to contract with me.

“Did you think you had the right to refuse?” (Naofumi) “No matter what, I’m in rehabilitation so I can lead an honest lifestyle! I beg of you. Please don’t get in my way.” (Bandit) “Calm down. First, listen to what I have to say. It’s not like I’m asking for the impossible. And you’ll also benefit quite a bit.” (Naofumi) Even though I continuously beat him up, he continued carrying on his role as a thief. My evaluation of him is quite high.

He may just be cursed with bad luck.

“First, I’ll specially grant you a class up. I’ll even cover raising your level.” (Naofumi) By the way, the sentences the country issued to him included forced farm labor after having his level reset.

Meaning his current level is 1.

He has no means of fighting. He’s in the middle of hard labor in order to make up for his crimes.

Of course, he’s treated as a slave, so if he tries to escape, his slave seal will kill him.

It seems that management is much easier here than in my world.

“I don’t know where your hometown is, but I’ll even give financial aid to your family. Under the pretense that you were hired by the country. You’ll make your folks proud.” (Naofumi) “Gu...” (Bandit)

The bandit lets out a small grunt at my proposal.

“You’re doing a good deed. If you do well, I promise you a large reduction on your sentence.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, you look like quite a villain right now.” (Ren) “Can it. It’s a plea bargain.” (Naofumi)

“No, I think it’s a little different.” (Ren)

“Then Agent Provocateur.” (Naofumi)

“He’s an Agent?” (Ren)

Ren is looking at me with skepticism.

“Even so, I will...” (Bandit)

“Calm down. Don’t be so hasty. This sudden situation must have made you hungry, right? Should I bring out some food?” (Naofumi) And I bring out a dish I made to imitate a Katsudon. (TL: Usually given by the police. See Hataraku Maou) It was impossible to procure all the ingredients, so it’s really a different dish that only looks like one.

Guu...

The Bandit’s stomach growls.

He looks at the dish I made, and gulps.

“Don’t worry, it isn’t poisoned. Do you want me to feed some to one of my slaves to demonstrate?” (Naofumi) I call over the loinclothed dog, put some on a small plate, and give it to her.

“Niichan. This is delicious too! Give me more.” (Kiel) “Just wait a second. If this guy doesn’t agree, you can have it.” (Naofumi) “Then decline, evil-looking person.” (Kiel)

“I-I just have to eat it, right!? Right!?” (Bandit)

Fu...

The bandit starts eating the pseudo-katsudon.

“W-what is this!? It’s ridiculously delicious, isn’t it!? My hands can’t stop! It reminds me of my mother’s cooking... the tears are...” (Bandit) (TL: Tate no Yuusha no Nariagari is a cooking Web Novel) I stare contently at the Bandit, who is assaulting the bowl.

Now that he’s relieved some stress, he’ll probably listen to some of my words.

Now I just need to make an under-the-table deal with him.

Negotiations like this sure are fun.

“Gu...” (Bandit)

“If you just move by my words, I’ll write up a letter asking for your pardon.” (Naofumi) “Even so... I can’t do something like selling out my comrades.” (Bandit) “Firo!” (Naofumi)

“I got it! When I succeed, you’ll make them let me free, right!?” (Bandit) I have various methods to ‘negotiate’.

With that previous method, I think quite a few people would have agreed.

“Of course. It’s a promise.” (Naofumi)

That is if you succeed.

“Naofumi...” (Ren)

Ren opens his mouth as if he wants to say something.

“What?” (Naofumi)

“No... there’s no choice... right? I feel like I just started to understand what Eclair-san was getting at.” (Ren) “Still, there’s a limit to going out and hunting bandits, right? In that case we better just cut them off at the source.” (Naofumi) Using this bandit, we can investigate the cause of the sudden influx of bandits, and keep up public order at the same time.

If the coming of the heroes strengthens the world’s light, we have to manage the shadows that come as a result as well.

And just how many people in this world would deduce that a heroes

would go around employing bandits?

Even if someone did, now that all four heroes are stationed at my camp, there's nothing to fear.

If I think about it, my position's changed quite a bit...

"First, you have to gather your thieving brethren. Then you have to build up your forces. Of course, you can't go around attacking any merchants from my place." (Naofumi) By the way, I've already negotiated with the accessory merchant.

He was ecstatic, and said something about making me his successor.

I can't understand just what moves him so.

"If I can't attack merchants, how do you expect me to live!? Don't underestimate bandits!" (Bandit) "I never told you not to attack them, right? There are actually some merchants I do want you to attack." (Naofumi) According to the accessory merchant, there are several bad merchants who don't sign in with the Merchant's Guild. They break the rules and regulation, and sell in other's territories.

And backing them are the moderate faction of the anti-shield coalition.

They didn't act up during the brainwashing incident, but even now they're building up wealth and power to get rid of me.

I remember seeing a few nobles like that glaring at me.

And people with so much influence are the ones more likely to be keeping bandits under their belts.

Though I don't know the truth of the matter.

"I can't see the difference!" (Bandit)

"It's fine. I'll report the routes and schedules for my merchants and peddlers. You will be choosing evil merchants, and taking their cargo." (Naofumi) People call this looking for trouble.

I guess he would be a thief of justice who would only steal from evil.

"And? What should I do about the load from that theft?" (Bandit) "Let's

see. You can bring it to my place, but it would be troublesome if they followed. Let's use half of it to pay your subordinates, and distribute the other half to the unfortunate towns and villages. If you do so, you won't be evil to the world. And the country will... Looking at me, you can tell, right?" (Naofumi) "Is that something a Hero should be doing...?" (Bandit)

I don't want to hear that from a bandit.

Covert operations are standard fare in a large organization.

Together with the Queen, I'll just carry out a large scale trash sweep.

"Will it be alright?" (Bandit)

"The Heroes will also go around under the pretense of getting rid of bandits. As a boss with good intuition, you'll manage the operation. If you find a troublesome subordinate or someone getting in your way, the people from my place will take care of them. But if you attack us for revenge, we won't show any mercy." (Naofumi) And so I succeeded in taking a bandit as a disciple.

What about leveling him up?

I'll leave it to Firo's Spartan training program.

"Naofumi... aren't you getting darker and darker? It would be troublesome if Eclair and Wyndia were to imitate it, you know." (Ren) "If you just cut off the top of a weed, it'll grow in again, right? We need to pull it out from the root to clean up the lawn." (Naofumi) "No, it's not like I don't see where you're coming from..." (Ren) And from my little protégé, I learned one thing.

As I thought, the main cause was the increase of wealth brought about from my land.

Since this country's bandits were regularly caught by my slaves, their forces decreased. And thus, many foreign bandits began to expand their area of activity here.

Because of that, the amount of bandits here increased.

It's like the cause and effect where if you hunt one animal too much,

another increases too fast.

To summarize the result, a large organization known as the Chivalrous Thief Guild suddenly popped up in Melromark.

The country thought it was a good way to manage their more malicious bandits.

Well, the number of underworld organizations in this world merely increased by one.

(TL: Discworld, anyone?)

By the way, the Bandit that I personally trained eventually became quite famous, but that's another story.

Chapter 260: Growing Worse

And so, the events of the morning after dealing with the bandits.

“Naofumi-sama! I’m home~!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia opened the door and entered the house.

We met just a few days ago, but feeling like we haven’t seen each other in a while is because we’re now in the village, or because we’re in the house I live in with Raphtalia, huh.

I can’t tell.

“Hm...ah, Raphtalia, welcome home.” (Naofumi)

“Onee-chan, welcome home~” (Firo)

“Ah, welcome home Raphtalia-chan~” (Kiel)

“Welcome home, Raphtalia-san.” (Imia)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Raphtalia looked around in wonder at my surroundings.

It’s not a reaction I see often.

“It’s gotten worse than before!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia exclaimed in astonishment right after returning.

By the way, on the bed was Firo and Gaelion, as well as the loinclothed dog and Imia.

“What’s the meaning of this, Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia) “Ah, I invited Firo to my bed as a countermeasure against Atla in the beginning, but Firo caused a problem after a short time so I had Kiel and Imia stand guard instead.” (Naofumi) “Sadina onee-san!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia questioned Sadina, who was lying on the other bed with Atla.

“As I promised, I haven’t let Atla-chan into Naofumi-chan’s bed.” (Sadina) “That’s not what I’m asking about!” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia staggered and then leaned against the wall.

Is she alright?

“Are you tired from training? You’d better rest well. I can cast recovery magic if you like. Recently I’ve worked out a way to increase its effects.”
(Naofumi) “It’s not that!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia was in denial.

I was thinking of showing her the newly thought up Liberation-type magic though.

“Naofumi, what’s up? What happened?” (Ren)

Hearing the commotion, Ren and Rishia and Itsuki exited their temporary house.

Their response is good.

It seems they’ll be able to cope when an incident occurs.

“...Why are the Sword and Bow Heroes here!” (Raphtalia) “Huh? I haven’t told you?” (Naofumi)

She came out from the Castle as if it was natural so I thought she knew, but she didn’t know?

To begin with, she should have heard that I was cooperating with Motoyasu to protect the Castle Town but... ah, that was after Raphtalia broke out, huh.

Speaking of which, Motoyasu views Raphtalia as a pig so they can’t hold any conversations.

Because Raphtalia is female.

“I had some growth as a human being, and came to work in Naofumi’s place after I thought about fighting for the sake of world but...” (Ren)
Even I would like you to hurry up and be independent.

Saying ‘hey, hey’, he came to reside in my village for some reason.

Well, it might be fine like this in terms of management.

“Atla!” (Fohl)

Fohl came into the room and embraced Atla.

“Nii-chan finally came home!” (Fohl)

“Please stop, Onii-sama, Naofumi-sama is watching.” (Atla) “Hmph! Now that I’ve returned, don’t go thinking you can continue as you have been doing!” (Fohl) “Ah, yes yes.” (Naofumi)

It looks like Fohl’s really glad to officially be back, that Sis-Con.

He’s actually crying. So he liked Atla that much.

Huh, Fohl is alright.

“Naofumi-sama, please explain!” (Raphtalia)

“A lot of things happened.” (Naofumi)

“A one-liner! Aren’t those just some convenient words. If you don’t explain properly, I won’t be accountable for what happens.” (Raphtalia) “Ask the person himself.” (Naofumi)

At my reply, Ren started talking about being deceived by Witch and then being defeated by us, which led to him coming here for rehabilitation.

How Rishia defeated Itsuki in the same way and Itsuki being in recuperation was also explained.

Because the current Itsuki has become a ‘Yes Man’ and will obey everything that is said.

“Sigh... I understand the circumstances. Come to think of it, such a terrible thing happened in the village so it’s a likely situation.” (Raphtalia) “Is there really such a change?” (Naofumi)

“There is! Hasn’t the village’s surroundings become a dense forest! Moreover, there’s also a farm nearby with Filorials that look like Firo!” (Raphtalia) “It is like that, now that you mention it.” (Naofumi) “It really does look like a lot of things happened while I was away.” (Raphtalia) “I suppose.” (Naofumi)

Come to think of it, even though it’s only been a month and a half since

Raphtalia left for training, I feel like there's been a lot of fighting.

Bringing down each of the three heroes is still fresh in my mind.

Some of it can be called beating, but there are also some shady things mixed in.

It can be taken as lengthy too.... or is it short, it's been a series of battles day after day.

"Now then, Raphtalia-chan's return means Onee-chan has completed her duty." (Sadina) "That's right." (Naofumi)

"It's disappointing that you didn't understand what I meant, Sadina Onee-san." (Raphtalia) As far as it goes, was she helpful?

Well, Atla didn't enter my bed.

"And so, Raphtalia-chan, I'll be taking Naofumi-chan~" (Sadina) "What are you saying!" (Raphtalia)

"What are you saying!" (Naofumi)

"Er.... I am.. seriously aiming for Naofumi-chan?" (Sadina) Sadina calmly answered while swaying.

Stop it, that's disgusting

"Perhaps Naofumi-chan prefers this human form? Then shall Onee-chan gallantly take care of you in my human form?" (Sadina) "Sadina Onee-san..... are these your true feelings?" (Raphtalia) "That's right~" (Sadina)

"Then now that Raphtalia san has returned, you can finally start the fight." (Atla) Atla asked for confirmation as if it was a matter of course.

This wasn't a preparatory period!

I can tell you like me from your attitude but all your heads are just filled with flowers.

Especially Raphtalia.

"That's right. I did as promised with Atla, and I waited until Raphtalia-chan returned. Now then, won't you assault Naofumi-chan together with

Onee-chan.” (Sadina) [T/N: ...3P rape?]

Raphtalia’s expression turned pale before my eyes and she turned to face me.

“Naofumi-sama.... could you possibly have had a drinking competition with Sadina Onee-san?” (Raphtalia) “Yeah, we did.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia bent back and facepalmed as if she received a shock.

What’s with that?

“Naofumi-sama... Sadina has been telling the villagers about a certain rule for a long time now.” (Raphtalia) “Sigh...” (Naofumi)

Kiel also nodded in agreement.

What the hell.

“Sadina Onee-san said ‘My life companion must be someone who can drink more than me! If I meet someone like that, I’ll never let them go so everyone should be prepared~’” (Raphtalia) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“If Sadina nee-chan is designating Nii-chan as her future husband to that extent, then Nii-chan must have had a drinking competition and won or so everyone in the village has been thinking.” (Kiel) “Come again?” (Naofumi)

Well it’s true I had a complete victory in the drinking competition against Sadina.

Eh? So that’s the reason Sadina wanted me as a husband?

I thought it was just a prank.

When I looked towards Sadina, she was in her human form, holding her cheeks with her hands and looking bashful.

“I really enjoyed the days of watching Naofumi-chan’s sleeping face every night.” (Sadina) Ugh.... not just Atla, the perverts are increasing!

I’m not interested in that.

“Nii-chan, how did you win against Sadina nee-chan?” (Kiel) “I just ate a

Lukor fruit?” (Naofumi)

“”Of course....”” (Kiel & Slaves)

Kiel and the other village-born slaves nodded unanimously.

It seems Imia also nodded.

Was it well-known because Sadina played the role of Big Sister in the village?

“It was shown sometime when we went peddling, I think.” (Naofumi)

“Eh? That was the Lukor Fruit? I thought it was a sign of welcome.” (Kiel)
It’s about the guy who made me eat Lukor Fruit as a countermeasure against impostors calling themselves the Hero of the Shield to become famous.

As expected, it seems there are no other guys who can safely eat Lukor Fruit apart from me.

It was thought to be some kind of reception and a tool to judge imposters.

“...I see, Naofumi-san is an ability wielder of Intoxication Neutralization. Everything points to that.” (Itsuki) Itsuki just said something incomprehensible.

Ren and I slowly turned to face Itsuki,

“Ability wielder?” (Naofumi)

“Was there such a system?” (Ren)

I have abilities that resemble a resistance against abnormal status conditions.

Can I say it’s like that?

Unfortunately, I don’t recall an ability to neutralise intoxication.

“No, that’s not it. Us dimension travellers only attained these abilities before we came to this world.” (Itsuki)

Chapter 261: ESPer

“Abilities we’ve had since before we came to this world?”

Hmm?

What is Itsuki talking about?

Is it that?

Something like how Ren’s world had VRMMOs?

At that time, Ren called normal MMOs archaic, and threw us into confusion.

I feel something similar from Itsuki right now.

“Hey Ren, do you have any idea what Itsuki is talking about right now?”
(Naofumi) “Sorry. There are a few possibilities, but I’m not sure.” (Ren)
“Fumu.” (Naofumi)

Like Ren, I have my guesses, but for now Itsuki cannot lie, so it would be faster just to ask him.

The current Itsuki just says whatever pops into his head.

If we ask him about these powers, he’ll probably answers.

“Itsuki, what powers would you be talking about? Do you mean about the power of the legendary weapons?” (Naofumi) “No. The legendary weapons may have a similar function as well, but I’m referring to something completely different. Isn’t it obvious?” (Itsuki) “Hah... Please elaborate. In the world that you came from... what were these powers?” (Naofumi) I hold up my hand to quiet Raphtalia and Sadina.

“What do you mean what? Doesn’t Naofumi-san already understand? Or did Naofumi-san live in a rural area where power management hadn’t reached yet?” (Itsuki) Oh my. He’s answering questions with questions again.

He should be answering honestly due to his curse, though.

Currently, he’s speaking expressionlessly in a disinterested voice.

Does that mean these 『Abilities』 are obvious facts of life to him?

It's as if I just asked him how to breathe.

If asked such a thing, perhaps this is the natural response.

“Please. Explain what these powers are from the start.” (Naofumi)

“Understood. Abilities appeared in my world 25 years ago. Various incidents and calamities occurred, and by researching into the cause, it was discovered that each human possessed various abilities. They're also called PSI and ESP, I think.” (Itsuki) ... Um...

That means Itsuki's world is...

“Ren, did you get that? No, your world had VRMMOs, right? Were ESPers common knowledge?” (Naofumi) “There's no way they existed.” (Ren)

No... I thought that since Ren came from an SF world, he would understand.

Or perhaps they're both from modern day fantasies?

So Itsuki's world is in the near future, and it has ESP?

In my world, it would be labeled as Psychic Battle! I would have been excited to go there.

The problem is just how Itsuki stood in such a world. What powers did he have?

“And? Itsuki, in your world, how were these powers treated?” (Naofumi) “First, all the people with powers were each gathered into schools. There was one per prefecture. Though there were some exceptions.” (Itsuki) “I see...” (Naofumi)

Ability users...

Yeah. I don't get it.

“Powers are ranked from F to S, and classes are divided based on that rank. Of course, that also depends on the school.” (Itsuki) “Did your world contain nothing but power users?” (Naofumi) “No, that's not the case,

there were also zeroes. In fact, there were more Zeroes than ESPers.”
(Itsuki) “And you were?” (Naofumi)

“I was from the E class, with the ability 『Accuracy』.” (Itsuki)
Accuracy... is that why he's the Hero of the Bow?

How is it? Were there standards for choosing the Heroes?

Again, I don't get it.

“What sort of ability was Accuracy? I just want to confirm.” (Naofumi)
“If you set your aim, you can hit things much easier than normal humans.
If needed, I can also act like a sniper from afar.” (Itsuki) “Ah, I see.”
(Naofumi)

So he never misses.

That's why during the kidnapping incident, he kept firing at me without
minding Melty.

If he didn't have absolute confidence, there's no way he would attack
there.

If so, I guess I can understand his behavior a little bit more.

Anyways, I don't feel any doubt from Itsuki's words, but I'm having
trouble believing them.

『Accuracy』, is it?

Just by looking at it, it has quite a bit of combat capabilities.

If the ranking is S-F, it's around the lower end?

“Even though the ability's combat ability seems to be high, why is it
Rank E?” (Naofumi) “Because there is the higher level 『Deadly Aim』
ability.” (Itsuki) “What is Deadly Aim?”

“Naofumi-san was able to interfere when I fired my arrows, but if
someone with Deadly Aim shot them, they would hit no matter what.”
(Itsuki) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“No matter which direction they were aimed, the arrows would come
flying right at Naofumi-san.” (Itsuki) So it's Homing!

I guess we are dealing with ESP here.

“It’s a common ability among Baseball Players. Of course, it is heavily regulated.” (Itsuki) “So that means, Itsuki, because you had a lower level ability, you were looked down upon within your ESPer School?” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, I think you’re saying a bit too much.” (Ren) “That’s right. That’s why I enthusiastically focused on games to run away from reality.” (Itsuki) Itsuki boldly answers. I don’t hear any sarcasm or regret.

So Itsuki’s Idiotic Justice... Hero Complex came from him not being granted a superior ability.

“I had always known I was special from the special ability screening in elementary school. From middle school onwards, we were all transferred to special schools. But there, I learned that there were plenty of people better than me, and fell into despair. Even in high school, that fact never changed.” (Itsuki) Since he was surrounded by normal people, Itsuki was filled with confidence when he found out he was special during elementary school. But when he finally went to the special school, he found out that his power was nothing. He ran to games to console himself.

In most Manga and Light Novels, the main character has some sort of superior ability.

However, in an actual society based on special powers, there are people all over the spectrum. It may be hell for the lower people.

Within his culture of ESPers, he saw numerous people perform amazing feats, and defeating evil. He wished to be like that.

“I understand what you’re saying. And? I can ride any vehicle without getting sick, and drink however much I want. Are you saying that’s a power?” (Naofumi) “Yes. Naofumi-san’s power is probably 『Intoxication Cancel』. There’s also a lower level version called 『Intoxication Resist』. The lower one’s F Rank.” (Itsuki) “Intoxication Cancel is?”

“Based on the future prospects, I’d say it’s around C-D rank. Against ESPers with gravity and pressure controlling powers, it’s conditionally classified as S.” (Itsuki) “Hmm. So what do you mean by future

prospects?” (Naofumi) “Think about it. Being invulnerable to dizziness makes attacks by people who change pressure in set areas ineffective. It also strengthens one’s ears and cochlear fluid. It can change into a skill that lets one act in areas with absolutely no gravity. It’s an essential skill for astronauts. The evolved one is 『Gravity Attack Cancel』, a strange power. Its full extent has yet to be explored.” (Itsuki) Was it that great of an ability?

No no no. I’m just strong against vehicles, and I pretty much was like that in my world as well.

And I just don’t get drunk, right?

Is what I think, but even I’m beginning to get my doubts.

I didn’t feel anything when I stuffed my mouth with the Lucor Fruits that were enough to knock Motoyasu out, and even When Firo runs at her top speed, I’m unaffected.

Even if the others get used to it, it’s not as if they enjoy it.

“I also have the suspicion that Naofumi-san has a double skill.” (Itsuki)
“You mean that I have multiple skills?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Itsuki)

“What else is there?” (Naofumi)

I don’t really have to listen.

Itsuki’s world was one set in the near future and ruled by ESP.

And the reason Itsuki thought he could look down on us was because he thought we were all without abilities I guess. That makes sense.

Even so, Ren’s world has Virtual Reality, and Itsuki’s had ESpers.

What does Motoyasu have?

Whenever he talks to girls, do options appear before his eyes?

Not that it matters. He’s like that. Even if I ask him, I don’t feel that I’ll get a serious answer.

“I think you also have 『Animal Friends』, an ability that attracts animals

to you naturally. You'd do fine as a veterinarian." (Itsuki) "Ah, I see."
(Naofumi)

"Master~ Pat Firo's head~" (Firo)

"Niichan, play~" (Kiel)

"Hero of the Shield-sama, um..." (Imya)

The Bird, the Loinclothed Dog, and Imya are swarming around me.

... I wonder.

I get the feeling that animals have liked me since I was young.

When I walked around the mountains, wild birds naturally perched on my shoulders, and I encountered wildlife easily.

I once encountered a bear, and played dead to try to survive. Rather than attacking, it started licking my face.

I later learned that playing dead doesn't actually work.

When I was in elementary school, the large dog in the neighborhood let me ride on its back.

No, it's more like it sat down in front of me asking to be ridden.

I rode around waving a stick, pretending I was an Ainu Girl from a fighting game.

(TL: Ainu is a native tribe of Japan. With naturally Reddish hair. This is apparently a reference to Nakoruru from Samurai Spirits) The monsters of this world have a wild disposition, so I tend to avoid them, though...

The monsters in this village are strangely drawn to me. But that must be the power of the Shield.

Yeah. It's best not to believe everything Itsuki says.

He's talking about his own world, and mine doesn't come equipped with any such powers.

"Well, I guess Itsuki's world is just like that." (Naofumi) I think I've caught a glimpse of why Itsuki's personality is as it is.

I forcefully bring the topic to a close, and signal for Ren to help me drive him out. I turn to Raphtalia.

“I’ve kept you waiting.” (Naofumi)

“Umm... What were you talking about with the Hero of the Bow? I don’t really get what you mean by ESP and everything.” (Raphtalia) “Ah, it seems that if you look at Itsuki’s world, it’s not that different from this one.” (Naofumi) “More importantly, Naofumi-chan, won’t you do something fun with me?” (Sadina) “I won’t. I have no interest. Get out.” (Naofumi)

“Oh, Naofumi-chan, but that’s your charm.” (Sadina) Sadina ignores my rejection, and provokes Raphtalia with challenging eyes.

I’d appreciate it if you didn’t do that.

I don’t think Raphtalia wants to witness a love scene, and I’d like to avoid unnecessary things like that until the world is at peace.

“Sadina-oneesan! You’ve done enough, so please separate from Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia) “No, Oneesan isn’t going to back down here.” (Sadina) “Just get away from him!” (Raphtalia)

“Ah, for the love of god! All of you are being too loud, so everyone besides Raphtalia, get out!” (Naofumi) To clear up the misunderstanding with Raphtalia, I drive everyone else out of the room.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama, you’re being too forceful, And Onii-sama, please go away!” (Atlas) “Bu-Master is mean.” (Firo)

“Yeah, Niichan! Make some food.” (Kiel)

Atlas, Firo and the Loinclothed dog offer various complaints as I drive them out, but it’s not my problem.

I close the door, and once again celebrate my reunion with Raphtalia.

“I’m sorry. It got very annoying.” (Naofumi)

“Truly, that was a series of surprises.” (Raphtalia) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I look over Raphtalia again.

Yeah, though I get the feeling she's become stronger, her face is the same as always.

"With this, is your training over?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

I open Raphtalia's status. I haven't checked it in a while.

Her level is... 100.

Her journey led her all the way to the max level.

I need to work hard to catch up.

"From now on, I can always be with you." (Raphtalia) "That helps. There have been too many things happening beyond my power. If Raphtalia's here, my life would be easier." (Naofumi) "Naofumi-sama... I'll try my best." (Raphtalia)

"I'm counting on you." (Naofumi)

I've been with her for a long time. She can understand what I want to do, and act based on it.

"The most pressing matter is... Atlas countermeasures?" (Naofumi)
Atlas and Sadina are peering in from the window.

Firo as well.

... What should I do? It seems that they'll sneak in regardless of what I do.

And wait, Atlas is blind, right? Why does she even have to be at the window?

She can sense whatever happens in here without looking. It's kinda scary.

"Naofumi-sama rejects her advances, right?" (Raphtalia) "Isn't it obvious? The one who refuses to learn is Atlas." (Naofumi) "I think Fohl-kun will be able to stop them." (Raphtalia) "I have doubts as to whether he'll stop Sadina as well." (Naofumi) "Right..." (Raphtalia)

"And so, Raphtalia." (Naofumi)

“W-what is it?” (Raphtalia)

“From tonight onwards, you’re on guard duty. I’m leaving it to you.”
(Naofumi) “Y-yes!” (Raphtalia)

For some reason, Raphtalia’s face is red as she nods.

Did I say something strange?

If I leave it to Raphtalia, who seems strict on public morals, I think I’ll finally be able to sleep.

“Well, from here on out, I’ll be doing my morning warm up, and then I’m going to make breakfast. Won’t you accompany me?” (Naofumi)
“Understood.” (Raphtalia)

And so, Raphtalia joined me in my daily routine, and I resumed my work.

Chapter 262: Lab Visit

Noon, that day.

I head to Rat's lab to see her progress.

Atlas and Sadina went with Fohl to raise their levels.

I have no idea why Sadina's joining. Are they going to be training in the sea?

"So this is the equipment you procured from that facility you found while we were fighting in the Castle Town?" (Raphtalia) I managed to obtain various magic tools and machines, as well as many large test tubes.

Rat, Taniko, the village's more intelligent slaves, and researchers from the castle are in the middle of setting them up.

"Yeah. In order to overcome the wave, we have to make use of whatever we can get." (Naofumi) Raphtalia absentmindedly pokes an empty test tube.

The Granny is currently giving basic training to everyone in the village who wants to fight.

She's looking for people to send on her Spartan Training session.

The Loinclothed Dog is also a candidate.

Though if she goes, I would be troubled.

Despite how she acts, she helps bring together the slaves and acts as a sort of leader.

But since Raphtalia's back, I think we'll manage one way or another.

And that doesn't really matter right now.

Right now, I'm here to ask Rat about her progress.

The only thing I've personally asked her to do is the Bioplant research. I think it would be fine if she took on other projects as well.

There are jobs that need to be done, and I estimate that Rat's research

will prove useful soon.

“Ara? Count... no, was it Marquis now? What’s up?” (Rat) Rat is facing a giant petri dish and tapping on what appears to be a stone tablet.

Is that supposed to be a computer?

Rat puts her work on hold and addresses me.

“It’s a regular inspection. So has anything happened?” (Naofumi) “Let’s see... We’re in the middle of tuning the new equipment you got.” (Rat) Inside of the dish, Rat’s favorite monster is swimming around. It waves its hand at me.

When I return the wave, it gives a happy expression and begins spinning in circles.

“Can you do something about that monster?” (Naofumi)

“Right now, it’s still uncertain. I can’t complete that child’s body yet.” (Rat) “I see.” (Naofumi)

Based on her actions, we may get a powerful fighting force. My expectations are high.

But there’s the chance that she may trigger a Biological Disaster, so I still want to manage her actions.

In this instance... would it be a Magical Disaster? Or perhaps an Alchemic Disaster?

But Rat seems to be the type who takes care in her research. Maybe my worries are unfounded.

She’s tending to the Bioplant matter with great care.

Though I can instantly make vague modifications, if I leave the fine tuning to Rat, it takes a while.

“I told you that I looked through the report on replicating Legendary Weapons, right?” (Rat) “Yeah” (Naofumi)

She said something about it not being worth it.

“Does that mean that making growing weapons will prove impossible?”

(Naofumi) “That’s not the case. I think I’ll be able to do something about that one.” (Rat) “Specifically?” (Naofumi)

“It’s incomplete, but could you look at this?” (Rat)

Rat strikes the tablet with her index finger, and a single blue display pops up.

An item is displayed on it in 3D.

From what I see, it looks like a carriage.

But... it somehow seems alive. Is it an insect...?

“What is that?” (Naofumi)

“As you can see, it’s a Carriage-type monster.” (Rat)

“Hah?” (Naofumi)

“It’s still in the planning stages, but in order to make a weapon that grows... no, more specifically, a monster in the shape of a weapon, I’ll need to start large and go down from there. This is trial number 1.” (Rat) Um... That means that she’s going to make an artificial Carriage and downsize from there?

The problem is whether this thing can move on its own.

Will one of my Filo Rials be pulling it?

I get the feeling Firo would hate it.

With it being a monster, can you even put people in it?

It’s scary that it looks like it’ll eat anyone who sits in it.

“What will it be able to do?” (Naofumi)

“Magical Support and some other miscellaneous options. You can attach a crane to let it lift and bind enemies as well, I think.” (Rat)

“Fumu... Can it function as a normal carriage?” (Naofumi) “That’s what I’m looking into right now. I don’t think it will be capable of self-propulsion, so it’s only a prototype. If it doesn’t go well, I might just scrap it.” (Rat) “I see.” (Naofumi)

I guess making something like this would require prototyping.

Though Rat may seem a little strange, I knew that when I hired her.

“If that succeeds, this is next.” (Rat)

And, what appears on the display is the Firo Plushy I gave to Rishia.

Various additions and augmentations are scribbled all over it.

“The only thing I see here is a costume. Is that just me?” (Naofumi)

“Nonono. It’s a Costume-type Monster.” (Rat)

“Is that so...” (Naofumi)

Rat hits the tablet again, and the Firo Plushy on the screen begins moving.

It looks like the actual Firo running.

“The problem is that you have way too many Filo Rials, so I question whether this one will actually be necessary. It may just be a long, unneeded detour towards my goal.” (Rat) Yeah, that’s true.

But the concept is interesting. It’s an armor that levels.

Ah, right. My Barbarian Armor also got something called Growing Power.

Though I have no idea what it’s supposed to do.

“If that also turns into a success, I’m moving onto weapons, but that seems to be a bit far away.” (Rat) “Got it. It’s good enough that you have a concrete plan.” (Naofumi) “... You’re not going to speak of heresy? You’re not going to reject me? That’s surprising.” (Rat) “What are you saying at this point in time? Is your conscience finally acting up? I’m not from this world, so I don’t care about you guys’ sense of morals.” (Naofumi) And even though I look like this, I was a complete Otaku before I got here.

I’ve read plenty of manga and played plenty of games with psychopathic scientist characters.

This one is much saner than I expected.

More importantly, she'll definitely add to our fighting force.

If the Carriage-type monster goes well, we might be able to upgrade to a self-propelling car.

No... if all goes well, we may get a giant mobile Robot. But that might be going too far.

We should stay away from Sci-fi stuff in this fantasy world.

It's nice to be able to dream of something besides combat ability.

The growing Costume-type monster is the same.

Instead of constantly mending and replacing armor, we may be able to grow the strongest equipment.

"All of these concepts are intriguing. You don't need to set growing weapons as your end goal. There are plenty more possibilities here."

(Naofumi) "... This is the first time the Marquis has supported me to this extent." (Rat) "If you have time to give thanks, then go get some results."

(Naofumi) "As expected of the Marquis." (Rat)

"Shut it. Let's get to work already... Ah, would the Bioplants be a good base for the Carriage? We could try making a plant-based trial product."

(Naofumi) "Interesting." (Rat)

As I offer suggestions, I feel Raphtalia fidgeting behind me.

"You're having quite an amazing conversation there." (Raphtalia)

"There's nothing amazing about it. Ideas like these are born of the imagination." (Naofumi) There's no way to attain progress without an insatiable thirst for knowledge and an ample amount of dreams.

Common sense rarely gives way to change.

In my world, the system of slavery became obsolete, but in this one, it's a fact of life.

If you cared for what everyone else thought, you would never get where you truly wanted.

"And? When will your precious partner's body be completed?"

(Naofumi) Rat's goal is probably related to strengthening that monster. Her entire career may even hinge on it.

"If I just wanted to bring him into the outside world, I could make a Homunculus body, but that won't make him strong. That's why I want to make a sort of replaceable... this may sound weird coming from me, but I want to give him a body with a system like that of the Dragon Emperor cores." (Rat) "I see. Homunculus... is it?" (Naofumi)

She wants to make her partner out of the best materials possible.

And because she trusts her partner will answer to her good will, Rat continues researching.

Even if the body turns out to be a failure, she could merely switch it out... If she made a system like the Dragon Emperor's core stones, she could just switch its soul between bodies.

Gaelion's a good example.

The True Gaelion lives within the child one. If they want to switch, they can.

Though, it seems there's a time limit for switching.

Perhaps Rat wants to make her partner an emperor.

"Well, while you're at it, make sure to take care of my requests as well." (Naofumi) "... It's not like I can defy the Marquis." (Rat)

With a delicate expression, Rat scratches her head and nods.

"Now that you mention it, about dragon cores..." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia lifts the bag that was hanging on her waist.

"What?" (Naofumi)

"Ah, yes. While I was out training with Master, we went Dragon Hunting. I brought these back as a souvenir. I heard they were valuable, so I kept them and sent the other items to the storage house." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia presents the contents of the bag.

Inside was a large quantity of dragon cores.

One. Two. Three... Anyways, there's a lot.

Just how much did she fight?

And what's dragon hunting supposed to be?

"Then let me call Gaelion over." (Naofumi)

And so, I called over Gaelion, who was conveniently in the area.

"Fumu. This is quite the amount of cores." (Gaelion)

"It spoke-!" (Raphtalia)

Watching Gaelion dig through the bag, Raphtalia raises her voice.

Ah, I never told her.

And during the Wrath Dragon incident, Gaelion refused to say a word.

"Yeah, Gaelion can talk. Remember when we fought the Zombie Dragon? That was this guy when it was still alive." (Naofumi) "A-alive...? Just how did he come back to life then?" (Raphtalia) I give a vague explanation of Gaelion's situation.

Even Raphtalia seems quite shocked.

"With this amount, I'll get quite a bit of strength." (Gaelion) Core stones are like doping items to dragons. I guess they'll prove useful.

It's quite a nice souvenir. And there are more surprises to be found in the storage house, apparently.

I'll look through them with Imya's uncle and get him to forge some weapons and armor.

"A nice ratio of them are Dragon Emperor Fragments at that. That's a life saver." (Gaelion) Gaelion empties the bag into his mouth and gulps them down at once.

"Those would have sold for a lot. You should treat them better." (Naofumi) "Hmph, in exchange, I'll get stronger for you, so avert your eyes to this one." (Gaelion) This wimpy dragon... The only thing big about him is his talk.

Gaelion's scales begin to glow faintly.

"Fumu... I see. I see." (Gaelion)

"Did you remember something?" (Naofumi)

It would be nice if he finally obtained the knowledge on how to break the level 100 cap.

"Unfortunately, the information you're looking for was not in these fragments." (Gaelion) (ED: Your princess is in another castle!)

"Dammit!" (Naofumi)

The information we get is random, and I'm not getting anything useful.

"However..." (Gaelion)

"However?" (Naofumi)

"I learned that only Heroes can achieve the level above Dreifach, Revelation." (Gaelion) "I know!" (Naofumi)

Why. Why is it that I only get information I already know?

But I'll need to learn how to invoke it easier, so I won't call this information completely useless.

"Also, the previous four heroes, and the ones before that, though they were able to survive the wave, they were unable to win against it."
(Gaelion) Hmm? They survived, but they lost?

What does that mean? I thought beating the wave meant surviving against it.

Is it like winning the battle but losing the war?

The wave's identity remains a mystery.

"... The four must definitely not be killed... otherwise, overcoming the wave will become exceedingly difficult. It may even be impossible for the Seven Stars. Also, this wave is the last one. If you fail, the world is done for." (Gaelion) The last one... he probably doesn't mean the next battle, but the series of waves we were summoned for as a whole.

“And the Four Good Omens are...” (Gaelion)

(TL: They’re the Spirit Turtle, Houou... etc series, if you forgot) “They are?” (Naofumi)

“I can’t remember any more. This is all I could get from the fragments.” (Gaelion) “I see. It was a little useful.” (Naofumi)

I’m thankful for the information, even if it may be broken up.

I didn’t find what I wanted, but I cleared some things lingering over my head.

The problem is: what we have to do to win, or what must we do to lose?

Do we have to kill every single enemy summoned? Or is there another goal entirely?

Perhaps I’ll have to actively start gathering fragments.

“Also, the amount of people I can grant a special Class Up to has increased. If anyone wants to do one, I’m free at any time.” (Gaelion) “Got it.” (Naofumi)

I unfasten the core of my Barbarian armor and hand it to Gaelion for renewal.

... The Armors stats rose by a questionable margin.

“Ah, right. Alchemist, you examined my body, did you not?” (Gaelion) “That I did.” (Rat)

“I’m also greedy for power. If you have the tools, I’ll permit you to modify my body at any time.” (Gaelion) “Taniko will get loud.” (Naofumi)

“If it’s about Wyndia, you needn’t mind her. If I’m not strong, I won’t be able to protect what I must.” (Gaelion) “Rat was looking into the inheritance properties of dragons. Please tell her what you know.” (Naofumi) “Even if I try, it would be like my trying to explain how to breathe, you know?” (Gaelion) Mu... Gaelion gives a troublesome reply.

I guess that would be difficult.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be looking into his body by myself. Perhaps I’ll add on

some modifications while I'm at it." (Rat) "Fufufu, first, I'll need to get strong enough to take down the next Filo Rial Queen." (Gaelion) Gaelion lets out an evil laugh. He seems to understand that he's no match for his rival.

Well, like that, I ended my visit to Rat's lab.

Chapter 263: Surprise Inspection.

Now then, today I've decided to perform a surprise inspection on the slaves' and heroes' dwellings.

The reason being to make sure they didn't bring back something strange again.

Even though we can absorb things into my weapon, taking them out is difficult, so personal property must be kept safe.

Magic water and Spirit water are unexpectedly easy to compound, and quite a few useful items come out from monster drops.

But other drops and materials need to be kept apart, or we won't be able to find them when they are needed.

I warned Ren and Motoyasu not to rely too much on their weapon's automatic compounding abilities, so they should have some materials lying around.

And, I don't want them to be monopolizing rare items.

Things like those will be confiscated.

For this inspection, I'll be investigating behind everyone's back.

"Naofumi-sama, what are you doing?" (Raphtalia) I was in the middle of secretly breaking into the Camping Plant we erected for Ren.

I turn around to find Raphtalia looking at me with doubting eyes.

"I'm investigating whether Ren is hiding anything nice." (Naofumi)
"Hah... That is... I understand. Naofumi-sama is just this sort of person."
(Raphtalia) Though her expression indicates that she wants to give up, Raphtalia follows me.

She probably has something to say, but she holds it in.

I still get the feeling that I'm doing something wrong, so I guess I'm not completely devoid of human conscience yet.

There are people who praise me no matter what evil things I do, so I'm

starting to lose track of myself.

Unlawful breaking and entering, as well as theft, are trademarks of Heroes.

Most of the Heroes I know of are habitual offenders.

But... that's just in games.

The first room I check is Ren's.

"Fumu... There isn't really anything here." (Naofumi) It's a bare room with a desk and a bed. Imya's Uncle also taught him some smithing, so there are some broken swords and ores scattered around.

On the desk is a notebook he seems to be using to practice writing.

It looks like he's studying diligently.

Now that I think about it, it's impossible for the current Ren to get ahold of Rare Items.

His curse decreased his luck, and he doesn't get any EXP.

"Is this the Hero of the Sword's room?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah, Ren's using this room." (Naofumi)

But he doesn't come by this room often.

He usually goes around with Female Knight or Taniko.

It doesn't seem like he has any hidden items, so I guess that's it.

"It's cleaner than I imagined. Is he studying Blacksmithing?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah, I've left it to him. He seems to be diligently learning." (Naofumi) Is this a copper sword? I guess he made it for practice.

Because he has no luck, its make isn't the best.

The desk has a few diagrams for sword designs.

They're like the ones I make for accessories.

Wondering if he had some black history involving Chuuni, I look through them.

But unfortunately, I don't find any dirt.

In retaliation, I looked under the bed for porn, but again, nothing.

He's no fun at all.

"Naofumi-sama, if you've lost interest, you don't have to search."

(Raphtalia) "Was it showing on my face?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

Fuu... Well, since I'm starting to act like a burglar, I better call it quits here.

Ren's in the clear.

I'll check the Heroes in order. So next is Motoyasu.

Motoyasu has a house built away from the village, next to the Filo Rial stable.

He lives there with his initial three.

By the way, it's quite a big building.

I'm the designer.

Though it's just a temporary Camping Plant-based house.

Currently, Motoyasu is transporting Witch, so he's not in.

If I want to search, I won't get a better time.

I can't stand dealing with him after he went insane. Though, I couldn't deal with him earlier either.

"Is this the Hero of the Spear's house? He seemed quite different when I saw him at the castle." (Raphtalia) "Yeah, he'll call any woman a pig, and raising Filo Rials has become the meaning of his existence." (Naofumi)

"..." (Raphtalia)

I speak as I undo the house's lock.

In this village, locks are meaningless before me.

"Naofumi-sama, I think you should learn about something called privacy." (Raphtalia) "Those heroes don't have the right to privacy." (Naofumi) I mean, they are currently criminals.

I'm no demon. I won't seize anything without reason.

If it's just something like porn, I'll leave it as is.

"Hah..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's sigh is quite heavy.

Anyways, I'm in Motoyasu's house.

The entrance leads to a mixed living room and kitchen.

It's much tidier than I thought it would be.

I remember Midori and the other two saying something about cleaning up the place.

Out of the three, I believe that Midori is the most reliable one on things like this.

Though the fact that the only male in the group is as such is strange in itself.

No, is Midori the one that's weird? Given his gender, he still targets Motoyasu.

And from the shared living space, the house divides into four rooms.

Each room had something drawn over it: a red feather, a blue feather, a green feather, and finally a spear.

I guess each room is assigned individually.

Without any hesitation, I proceed to disengage the lock on the room with the spear.

For some reason, there are three sets of locks on it.

His security is making me curious.

Could it be that his behavior is an act, and he's planning on framing me again?

The door opens.

Inside is an exceedingly ordinary room, though there are a few Filo Rial goods here and there.

It seems there's no bed.

Motoyasu sleeps while cuddling with Filo Rials, so I guess a bed is unnecessary.

"This room somehow feels nice." (Raphtalia)

"Yes... but..." (Naofumi)

Something's strange.

This room is much narrower than the one I designed in the house's construction plan.

There must be some secret passage somewhere, but... finding it is a pain.

「Emergency Modification, Door Creation」

I instruct the Camping Plant to create a door.

With a creaking sound, a door is made.

"... There is no privacy before Naofumi-sama, is there?" (Raphtalia)

"Yes, inside of a Camping Plant house, there is none." (Naofumi)

Otherwise, there's no way I could let Ren and Motoyasu live so freely.

I think as I open the door.

"This is-" (Naofumi)

I close the door.

"Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

I put my hand on my eyebrows and think.

'There are some things in this world better left unknown.'

Is what I really thought.

"What's wrong?" (Raphtalia)

I silently beckon Raphtalia to open the door.

Understanding the situation, Raphtalia takes a deep breath and opens it.

“Wha...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia is at a loss for words.

Right, as expected, Motoyasu’s hidden room... was colored with Firo.

In the literal sense.

The walls were covered with hand-drawn pictures of Firo, and they even extended up to the ceiling.

On a desk is a large stack of notebooks.

Scattered around them are drawings of bird form and human form, all forms of Firo.

He’s actually quite good...

That guy’s got a nice face, he’s a Hero, he can cook, and he can draw.

If he did something about that personality, he’d be ridiculously popular.

No, he really was quite popular.

But, Motoyasu’s love life doesn’t really matter to me.

I turn off my useless thoughts and look over the room once more.

Every corner of the room is sprinkled with Filo Rial feathers, and the bed... no that’s a life-sized Firo stuffed doll (Filo Rial form) that has a life-sized Firo stuffed doll (Human Form) on top.

Using these two, could he...

(ED: OMG I’ve been looking all over for those! ME WANT) No, thinking about it is dangerous. I don’t need to look into it that deeply.

The doll’s stuffing seems to be Firo’s molted feathers.

Uu... The whole room smells of Filo Rial.

“W-what is this!?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia takes in a deep breath and shouts out with a pale face.

I’m of the same opinion.

“It’s the room of Firo’s stalker. No, perhaps the room of a Yandere.”

(Naofumi) Why has the Yandere hater become the Yandere?

I try opening one of the books.

For some reason, I hear a high pitched squeal from behind me.

Inside, sketches of Firo were closely packed together.

And I open another book... It seems to be an Ero Doujin based on Firo.

Why does he even have one for her bird form? What's more, his skill is amazing.

The male character in these is Motoyasu? No, there are tentacle ones as well...

"Isn't Firo in grave danger?" (Raphtalia)

"That Firo? Motoyasu shows absolute obedience to Firo. He's under the illusion that she'll fall for him someday." (Naofumi) "B-but even that man's a Hero. He may force Firo to do things like this." (Raphtalia) "I don't think that's happening." (Naofumi)

Even if he tries to force himself on Firo, Firo can fend for herself.

He doesn't lay hands on those three, so I don't think he'll be breaking soon. I hope.

"And if I try to confiscate any of the items here, I fear for the future." (Naofumi) "... Right." (Raphtalia)

This is most likely where Motoyasu keeps all of his pent up desires.

If I try to suppress them, he may explode.

Right now, keeping the status quo seems to be best.

Anyways, I didn't have to see this.

Motoyasu's madness is endless.

... For now, let me just go check the other three rooms.

The result: Pets tend to resemble their masters.

If Motoyasu goes on a rampage, those three will probably resolve it.

“Next is Itsuki.” (Naofumi)

“Umm... Can’t we stop at this?” (Raphtalia)

“If I leave his unchecked, he may do something troubling.” (Naofumi) I won’t let you say you forgot Motoyasu’s room.

To see what they’re planning and to make countermeasures is vital.

“But, you left the Hero of the Bow to Rishia-san, did you not?”

(Raphtalia) “Yeah, but it would be no joke if he brought Rishia over to his side.” (Naofumi) “Hah...” (Raphtalia)

But Itsuki hasn’t been here long, so he probably doesn’t have much there.

Rishia is constantly watching him, so he won’t do anything strange.

Today, he left with Rishia to assist in leveling the slaves.

Since he’s been cursed to be a Yes Man, he won’t run anytime soon.

And so, we proceed to Itsuki and Rishia’s house.

For Rishia, is it her nest of love?

I told her not do anything immoral, so it’ll probably be fine.

“Fumu... it’s all clear.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. And isn’t this Rishia-san’s house? I don’t think you’ll find anything.” (Raphtalia) Well, Rishia’s been here since the village started.

Her personality seems to be quite loyal, that girl.

The place seems to be cleaned regularly.

The rooms are decorated with weapons and armor, and it gives off the impression of an adventurer’s house.

Inside of the bedroom is a single large bed.

Do they sleep together?

It is an ordinary house without anything out of place.

I wonder what fun things Itsuki will say about living here after his curse

clears.

“Naofumi-sama? Are you thinking something strange again?”
(Raphtalia) Imagining Itsuki getting hooked on gambling and slowly whittling down Rishia’s savings, leading to the collapse of the family, puts my mind slightly at ease.

After all, Itsuki abandoned Rishia, ran off to commit a crime, and came back after we beat him up.

“Naofumi-sama! Get a hold of yourself!” (Raphtalia) “... What?”
(Naofumi)

I’m just indulging myself in some pleasant fantasies, but Raphtalia scolds me.

I mean, Itsuki isn’t repenting at all, and he can’t think at all right now.
Though I admit from my imagination, that I am garbage.

Chapter 264: Familiar

“Where to next?” (Raphtalia)

“Let’s see... let’s go to Firo’s room.” (Naofumi) I gave Firo a room once. Specifically, a room in my house.

I thought the Filo Rial barn would be fine, but since Firo wanted it, it couldn’t be helped.

Children want their own rooms, don’t they? It’s the same as that.

She herself hasn’t really used it though.

I put a lock in place just in case, but I guess it’s a good time to see what she’s been up to.

We go into my house, and I open the door to Firo’s room.

“This is....” (Naofumi)

Children’s toys and shiny things are scattered all over the place. It looks just like a little kid’s room.

Except, there’s a bird nest made of straw.

Has she used it? There aren’t many traces of it.

“There may be eggs around.” (Naofumi)

“Can Firo even lay eggs?” (Raphtalia)

“Well, maybe she made some with Motoyasu... no, Melty.” (Naofumi)

“Melty’s a human girl!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia’s retort is sharp huh.

But, while Rafutalia may not know, Firo and Melty have that kind of relationship.

The main cause for that was me though.

That whole affair is way over my head.

She herself claims it isn’t like that however.

“I don’t know, some might even be Naofumi-sama’s.” (Raphtalia) “As if

that's possible!" (Naofumi)

God, Raphtalia, who would think that?

Don't talk nonsense like making Firo my partner. (ED: In a sexual way)
...Just a little while ago she attacked me, however. [ED: also translatable as raped lol]

In any case, is such a messy room even worth investigating? But...

So, while thinking 'is there even anything in such a disordered room,' I investigate, however.....

Some quite expensive-looking minerals and ornaments were carelessly placed around.

Just where did this come from?

Then, these bones inside the nest, the hell are they? Leftovers?

Firo that girl, if I think about it she does have two sides to her.

The airheaded, pure side and the wild animal, proper, side. Perhaps, the wild animal one is her true nature.

Well I've been careful before, there aren't pellets so it's fine but.....

This bone...is dragon-ish.

Are these the spoils of war from when I let Firo go wild and had her raise her Lv?

"She'd probably get mad if we take them away, huh?" (Naofumi) "I think she'd be angry from you looking around at your own accord."
(Raphtalia) "Yeah..." (Naofumi)

...huh?

"Pii!"

Filo Rial chicks come out from the insides of my armor and start examining the room.

"What is this?!" (Raphtalia)

"Well, some chicks I received from Firo, but just from where did they

come from?” (Naofumi) When I take my armor they’re not there, even when I take off my clothes they don’t come out.

At times, they come out from the gaps in my armor.

What are these Filo Rial chicks?

“Naofumi-sama, could they be... parasitic?” (Raphtalia) “What did you say?” (Naofumi)

These two chicks, it can’t be, they are parasitizing me?

Don’t joke around!

“”Pii!””

The two baby chicks go and take something from the nest.

What is that?

They come back with a gem a little bigger than my fist.

“What a pretty gem. It’s light-pink colored.” (Raphtalia) “Yeah... What is it?” (Naofumi)

“Who knows.” (Raphtalia)

With my [Judgment], I try to identify it. [ED: Judgement here is used as a name of an ability. Exactly when Naofumi got it is unknown to me.]

Firo’s ...Magic Stone?

“”Pii!””

With the magic stone, the two monster chicks jump into my hand .

“I hold it and then?” (Naofumi)

“”Pii!””

“If Firo finds out about this, won’t it be dangerous?” (Naofumi) “”Pii!””

The two monster chicks buzz and shake their necks.

What are you two doing!?

While I was wondering about this, the magic stone in my hand melts and then evaporates.

“UWAAAA” (Naofumi)

A cloud of smoke billows up, and some kind of vapor flies towards me.

Ah Crap! Watch out!

Immediately after I thought that, the smoke wraps around me....and clears up.

“Wha, what was that?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, are you all right?” (Raphtalia) “I don’t feel particularly weird....” (Naofumi) Just in case, I confirm my Status.

I would be troubled if I got some Status Abnormality while I didn’t notice.

It may be bad judgement from me, but I feel as though my magic power has increased. Actually...What’s going on?

Something like Gaelion’s divine protection seems to have been applied.

Also, I feel like I can tell where Firo is.

Presumably, she’s heading my direction.

Seriously, what’s going on here?

“Pii!”

“Seriously you-!” (Naofumi)

As I think that, the two chick’s monster crest begin to change.

The shield is shining.

Skill < FiloRial: Familiar> Mastered.

Skill <FiloRial: Mode-Change>

Familiar?

It’s like those familiars from games right...?

What exactly is it?

But, if I mind it too much it’ll be dangerous.

Firo is very soon coming back home!

“Raphtalia. Hurry and get out. Firo is coming back!” (Naofumi) “Eh? Um, yeah!” (Raphtalia)

We leave from the room in a hurry.

Immediately after that.

“I’m back!—” (Firo)

Firo comes happily through the front door.

“Welcome back.” (Raphtalia)

“Y, you seem to have known I was coming back huh.” (Firo) “Well, somehow.” (Naofumi)

I wonder what’s that?

I can feel where Firo is without checking for things like Ki.

Speaking of which, Familiar ▪ Firo Rial and Monster Change ▪ Filo Rial are what exactly?

“Ah, Master—. You see—, Fitoria’s learned Skill, the thanks for the other time—” (Firo) She saw through me!?

In that case, there’s no need to hide, huh?

“Well, you see—, those children were entrusted by Fitoria and sent to Master, but—...They’re monsters created to be able to protect Master any time—” (Firo) “I see, so is that why they appear all of a sudden?”

(Naofumi) “Un. She said they stayed quiet until they adapted to Masters magic—” (Firo) “They’re not parasites inside me?” (Naofumi) “Yeah, um huh? I can’t hear her voice anymore!?” (Firo) (TL: Fitoria’s voice) Firo touches her ahoge and answers.

I knew it.

These Filo Rial chicks ARE parasites inside of me!

“If you dislike it, we can attach it to Firo though.” (Firo) “Heh-” (Naofumi)

“It’s become possible for Master’s magic power to be granted to Firo, so Firo knows where Master is.” (Firo) “Ah, that’s right” (Naofumi)

“...A while ago, weren’t you in Firo’s room?” (Firo) Gulp...

Well, even if it’s exposed to Firo, there’s no particular problem.

“Well, we went to go see your room. Be a little more organized.”

(Naofumi) “Boo-” (Firo)

“In your nest, we found a cherry pink stone.” (Naofumi) “There was such a thing—? Firo didn’t know at all—” (Firo) “Didn’t know huh?” (Naofumi)

“Now that you mention it... Melty-chan said she saw it too, the next morning from when we slept together.”(Firo) “Wow-” (Naofumi)

“Recently, the Melty had the same kids as Master. Did she get it the same way?” (Firo) Melty was parasited too?

She simply has a worrisome nature too.

Is it wrong to say that I’m the cause?

“Pii”

At any rate, it bothers me so let’s stick them to Firo.

I grab the two and press them against Firo. They become soft and go into her.

“Eh?”

Raphtalia is wide eyed.

The human form Firo’s wings shine.

An icon for FiloRial: Mode Change pops up into my view.

...It seems to have some sort of numerical pattern.

Default settings such as power, speed, and magic, as well as various other things, pop up.

For the time being, let’s try power.

“Ah, I feel like some kind of power is surging out of me” (Firo) “Fumu.” (Naofumi)

Ah, so I can tamper with Firo’s settings with this?

Let's change it back to default. If she ends up going out of control, it'll be troublesome.

"Pii"

The two chicks slip into my armor.

Damn! GET OUT!

Thus, I took off my armor, but they didn't come out! They're not underneath my clothes either.

Jeez, Filo Rials are unnecessary things to install on me.

Or maybe I should say, Firo strangely got a power up possibility, that kind of thing? Don't screw with me.

It would've been better if I never examined Firo's room.

I think I'll give her multiple, unreasonable instructions in spite!

"Firo, your room is surprisingly dirty. I want it cleaned regularly!"
(Naofumi) "YEAH!" (Firo)

Somehow happy, Firo starts cleaning her room as per my instructions.

The expensive-looking minerals etc. aren't needed, so she took them to the storehouse. At least a little bit of her judgement seems to have improved.

"Somehow, you see—I feel like now I can understand Master better—"
(Firo) "Is that so" (Naofumi)

"I won't lose to Onee-chan." (Firo)

"What are you talking about?" (Naofumi) (TL: Sorry Raphtalia, dense mofo) "Master, after this are you going to look around the rooms of the other children in the village?" (Firo) "Ah." (Naofumi)

I had thought about looking through the village once.

As long as it's not my stuff we're all going to see, it's all right.

So after that, we take Firo around the village to inspect things in everyone else's rooms.

Next, we go to the Loincloth dog... I mean, Kiel's room, and find her diary.

Of course we read it and, the contents were things like what delicious food she ate that day, how to wear the loincloth, 'in order to become a honorable man,' etc.

.....Inside the room there is a dog house, what does that mean!? That Loincloth dog...

Next is valley girl. (TL: Taniko)

She seems to be researching monster ecology, but it's an orderly room.

All of my monsters are cataloged and organized in books by size, shape, and personality, with details written very meticulously on each page.

She loves her monsters the same as ever I guess.

"Somehow, all this seems like a bad thing... I guess everyone's got a unique personality right?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah!" (Firo)

"I guess so..." (Naofumi)

Next up is Atlas and Fohl's house.

In fact, until recently, Atlas is the one who used it.

.....I check inside and the cleaning seems to be thorough.

Well, Atla always hangs by my place, so if Fohl isn't around, it mostly goes unused?

First is Fohl's room.

There's only a table and a well-made bed haphazardly shoved in the room.

Well, he came back today so there's no reason for there to be any changes.

Inside Atlas's room, it somehow explosively became full of stuffed animals.

Atlas never gave indication she was into that, did she?

Wait a sec, these couldn't be Fohl's belongings, could they?

Really?

Rather than Atlas's room...this is Fohl's room!?

I feel like it's become more fancy than when I saw it before.

Pink wallpaper hung on the walls. There's not much evidence that the bed was used.

Somehow..... it feels disconnected from all the rooms I've seen up until now, this room.

Like a girl vibe for instance...

"It's such a lovely room. Is this the room Atla-chan sleeps in?"

(Raphtalia) "No. It's probably more likely that the room won't be used until Fohl gets back." (Naofumi) (TL: poor Fohl) "True, Atlas is usually always sleeping in the bed next to Master." (Firo) ".....That's my bed!?" (Raphtalia)

"Now that you mention it, that's true. She and Sadina sleep together."

(Naofumi) "I'm stuck with sleeping on the bed with Atla-chan and Sadina-neesan's smell, is it.....?" (Raphtalia) Raphtalia's eyebrows rise a little frustratedly.

Come on now, don't be like that.

What Atlas actually wants is to sleep in my bed, but pointing that out doesn't seem necessary.

Let's leave it as Fohl's dream room.

So..... about Sadina's room, it's not in this village.

Her house is in that secret base.

After that is Imia's room.

The Lumos prepared their residence under the village.

I hear it's been built such that a cave-in doesn't happen.

Because it's not made from Camping Plant, I can't force my way in, but

there was no lock.

The inside of Imya's room is full of drawings of clothes. What appear to be molding models, etc, were put around, so I can see she was tackling dressmaking seriously.

Oh? The sunglasses I made are decorating the room it seems.

The one she's using now is one I later asked another of the Lumo race to make.

'It's better than the one I made off the cuff, right?' as such I recommended it.

To greatly value her things, what a good girl.

The main stuff is here, huh?

The remaining slaves' stuff are pretty similar.

Except, just like Firo's, many of them are pretty dirty.

At dinner, I inform them that I did the surprise inspection and caution them.

Chapter 265: Late Night Combat

Night fell, and work pretty much came to an end.

I became quite sleepy, so I believe it's time to go to sleep.

"Are you going to sleep soon?" (Raphtalia)

"Yeah, I'll need to get up early tomorrow." (Naofumi) I sit on my bed and ponder who to call for guard duty today... No, Raphtalia's here now, so I can just leave Atlas Countermeasures to her.

"Raphtalia, if Atlas comes here, make sure to kick her out." (Naofumi)

"Got it!" (Raphtalia)

She's quite energetic.

I get a different feeling than that of the usual Raphtalia.

"... Why are you taking off your sleeping clothes?" (Naofumi) "Eh? Ah..." (Raphtalia)

As if she were trying to strip naked, Raphtalia starts removing her clothes.

I understand that it's hot, but I don't get why she has to be naked.

Hmm? I hear a knocking on the door.

I don't know why, but I get a bad premonition as I open the door.

"Yo, Naofumi-chan. I came here with Atlas to sleep." (Sadina)

"Naofumi-sama, I'll be sleeping in your room again." (Atlas) A drunk Sadina with Atlas in tow gives a wide smile as she tries to come in through the front door.

I silently shut it.

"Go home!" (Naofumi)

"Why~? Isn't it fine~?" (Sadina)

"Right, Naofumi-sama. Up until yesterday, did you not let us sleep in the same room as you?" (Atlas) "Now that Raphtalia's here, things won't play out the same. Sadina, the same goes for you as well." (Naofumi) "Ara~?"

He's driving us out." (Sadina)

"Whatever shall we do?" (Atlas)

Atlas and Sadina begin talking amongst themselves.

If Atlas and Sadina form an alliance, there's no way Fohl will be able to stop them both.

He's weak against his sister.

"First, we must get a grasp of the situation..."

I can hear some suspicious conversation, but I ignore them.

"Um..." (Raphtalia)

"Just in case, let's sleep in the same bed." (Naofumi) "Y-yes!"
(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia back suddenly straightens as she nods.

"I won't let it go as Raphtalia-chan plans. But first, I think we should see how things play out, Atlas-chan." (Sadina) 'Can Sadina sense what's going on through some invisible force as well?' I think, but then I notice the two of them at the window peeking inside.

I slide the curtains shut without saying a word.

"Fufufu, don't think this is enough to stop our peeping~!" (Sadina) T-they're annoying as hell...

Ignoring Sadina's words, I invite Raphtalia over to the bed.

"E-excuse me!" (Raphtalia)

It's a response like the one I got from Imya when I first invited her into the bed.

Why is she so tense?

We slept together plenty of times before.

Ah, back then, she even wet the bed.

"Good, good." (Naofumi)

I lie down flat and place my hand on Raphtalia's tail.

"Hii!? N-Naofumi-sama, why are you touching my tail?" (Raphtalia)
"Hmm? I often touch Firo's feathers, and Imya and Kiel's fur, so I guess my hand naturally went to it." (Naofumi) Recently, I've been sleeping while touching one of them, so it's become somewhat of a habit. Or perhaps a custom.

It's like hugging a Dakimakura to sleep.

"You were doing things like that... You've changed quite a bit in the time I haven't seen you." (Raphtalia) "It's not like anything really changed, you know." (Naofumi) I gently stroke Raphtalia's tail.

"Ah... uu..." (Raphtalia)

The feeling is a mixture of all of the good parts of Firo's feathers and Kiel's fur.

I guess she's a good breed.

It's really fluffy.

I may make a habit out of this. The feel is top class.

"Hah... hah..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's breathing becomes strained. Perhaps it's because she isn't used to having her tail touched I pull the cover over myself and close my eyes.

"..."

What is this? I get a strange feeling similar to the one I get when Atlas crawls into the bed.

This is strange. Firo, the loinclothed dog, Imya and all the other Demi-Human slaves, I never got such a feeling with them. Is it impossible to sleep next to Raphtalia?

"Ah... uu..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia is shaking. It seems she can't calm down either.

Every time I stroke her tail, her whole body convulses.

How much time has passed? I'm this sleepy, yet I can't fall asleep. The feeling irritates me.

"N-Naofumi-sama..." (Raphtalia)

"Fumu." (Naofumi)

I sit up.

"Raphtalia, I'm sorry. It seems I can't sleep with you." (Naofumi) "Eh!?" (Raphtalia) (ED: TACTICAL FACEPALM!) Raphtalia's face goes red for a moment as she lets out a confused voice.

"I don't know why, but I can't sleep." (Naofumi) "Fufufu, Naofumi-chan. Shall the two of us sleep with you, then?" (Sadina) Sadina's voice emanates from the other side of the window.

What sort of cause and effect is that?

And those guys are still here? Go to sleep already.

"I heard all about it, Naofumi-chan. The reason you won't sleep next to Atlas-chan is because you don't want Raphtalia-chan to misunderstand, right?" (Sadina) "Well..." (Naofumi)

The larger truth of the matter is that I'll wake up if something happens around me while I'm asleep.

But recently, I've been able to ignore it.

"Then, we just have to sleep with you with Raphtalia-chan's permission. Now let us start this carnival of lust!" (Sadina) "What carnival!? Stop messing around!" (Naofumi) "Naofumi-chan, the night has just begun~!" (Sadina) "Sadina-oneesan, could you quiet down and go home!? Atlas-chan too!" (Raphtalia) Raphtalia opens the curtain and directs these words at the two.

Right. Drive them away.

The fact that she can put it clearly like that is Raphtalia's strong point.

"What are you talking about, Raphtalia-chan? We are your allies, you know. You want to do fun things with Naofumi-chan, right?" (Sadina)

“That’s right, Raphtalia-san. Let’s all sleep together with Naofumi-san.”
(Atlas) “I’m not making any alliances here!” (Raphtalia) “That’s right. It’s not like she has to sleep in the same bed as me. If she just sleeps in the adjacent bed and keeps watch over you two, there are no problems.”
(Naofumi) I close the curtains Raphtalia opened.

“And so, Raphtalia, can you sleep in the next bed?” (Naofumi) “Hah... I understand...” (Raphtalia)

With an extremely regretful tone, Raphtalia sulks over to the next bed and lies down.

... Now then, I should sleep too.

I thought that as I close my eyes, but...

“Sadina-oneesan... I can tell that you’re in the room already. There’s no use in concealing your presence.” (Raphtalia) Before I noticed it, Sadina had infiltrated the room and Raphtalia had scolded her.

It’s a pain to get up, so I pretend to sleep.

“I see. In order to pursue Naofumi-chan, I must eliminate the large obstacle known as Raphtalia-chan. Oneesan won’t lose.” (Sadina)
“Reinforcements have arrived!” (Atlas)

“Fine... Then I’ll be your opponent! Naofumi-sama, just sleep over there without worry.” (Raphtalia) The three left the room with a bang.

I hear the sound of clashing metal and thunder from outside.

“Why can Atlas-chan use Musou Kassei!?” (Raphtalia) “I learned from watching Rishia-san.” (Atlas)

“Just from watching?” (Raphtalia)

“Naofumi-sama also learned it.” (Atlas)

“For what purpose did I go on that journey!?” (Raphtalia) “I won’t lose!” (Sadina)

“Even so, the one with the most experience is me! Hengen Musou Sword Skill-!” (Raphtalia) Well, I can leave it to Raphtalia without worry.

Even Atlas shouldn't be able to defeat her.

"Master~! Let's sleep together~." (Firo)

Firo, who was supposed to be sleeping at Melty's place, arrives.

Did she run here?

She came when I was half asleep, so I absentmindedly nod.

"Yeah, then in the one-in-a-million chance that Sadina and Atlas break through, you can be their opponent." (Naofumi) "Okay. Kiel-kun and Imya-chan are with me too~." (Firo) "Niichan, Raphtalia-chan, Sadina-neechan, and Atlas-chan are having an epic battle outside right now." (Kiel) "Yes... The battle was getting intense, so everyone woke up to watch it." (Imya) "Yeah, I thought it was getting loud. So that was the reason. Well, I'm going to sleep, so see 'ya tomorrow." (Naofumi) "Who do you think will win, Niichan?" (Kiel)

"Raphtalia." (Naofumi)

"I see. Well, when I get bored of the fight, I'll sleep with Niichan." (Kiel)
"Ah, yes, yes." (Naofumi)

By the way, it seems the three of them fought until dawn. When I left the house in the morning, I found the three of them sitting back to back.

I thought Raphtalia would be able to take both of them out easily though.

But, I'm the one who went to sleep by myself, so I can't really say anything.

Raphtalia told me I could sleep without worry, so I had faith though...

"T-that's quite some skill you've got there!" (Raphtalia) "Amazing. If Sadina-san wasn't here, I would have lost instantly." (Atlas) "Raphtalia-chan's gotten strong~. But still, I won't lose." (Sadina) "It's already morning, people." (Naofumi)

"Eh?" (All Three)

These people continued fighting without realizing it.

Just how militaristic are these people?

Even Raphtalia's become a battle maniac.

Though the fault lies with me for leaving these two to her.

But, it's no joke if Sadina and Atlas have teamed up.

I can't have Raphtalia battling all night. I have to do something.

Chapter 266: Tiger Man

“And that’s how it is, Fohl. In order to make sure that neither Raphtalia nor Atlas sleeps with me, I’ve decided to sleep at your place.” (Naofumi)
“Get out!” (Fohl)

I went to Fohl’s room the following night,.

By the way, Raphtalia is in the next room just in case. If Fohl acts up, or something bad happens, she’ll rush over.

This morning, Raphtalia said that Firo, the Loinclothed Dog, and Imya ‘got an unfair head start,’ but I wonder what they were racing in.

“What are you talking about? Does the man who was dead drunk yesterday have the right to refuse?” (Naofumi) “Gu...” (Fohl)

Fohl gives a pained grunt.

“You’re able to prevent your sister from sleeping with me.” (Naofumi)
“You haven’t slept with Atlas yet!?” (Fohl)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I mean, this guy apparently learned Hengen Musou as well, and he trained with Raphtalia.

He’s strong. Or at least, he should be.

Anyways, if he assists Raphtalia, the two-on-one would become two-on-two, so we should be able to win.

But, he can’t lay a hand on Atlas, so I doubt he’ll use his full strength...

When Ren gets back, I’ll ask him as well. I bet he’d put up a better fight than this one.

“You bastard! Are you saying Atlas has no charm as a woman!?” (Fohl)
“What the hell are you talking about?” (Naofumi) “I mean, isn’t that right!? You had so much time, and Atlas was sleeping in the same room as you every night, right?” (Fohl) “That’s right.” (Naofumi)

“So you’re telling me my cute sister has no womanly charm!?” (Fohl)

“Like I care.” (Naofumi)

I really don’t.

Whenever I talk to Fohl, it turns out like this.

“Bastard! You’re saying my Atlas isn’t cute!?” (Fohl) “I have no interest. And what do you mean by your Atlas...?” (Naofumi) Ah, this is getting to be a pain.

When he learned I was sleeping with Atlas, he snapped. When I clarified that I wasn’t sleeping with Atlas, he also snapped.

“Don’t worry about it. Just lie down already.” (Naofumi) I lie flat on the bed and beckon Fohl over.

“Wha...” (Fohl)

Fohl’s face gets paler and paler.

“Could it be... you...” (Fohl)

“What is it? Ah, I think you were able to beast transform, right? Transform and come to the bed.” (Naofumi) I don’t know Sadina’s true form, but Loinclothed Dog’s is a puppy.

Perhaps Fohl can become a Tiger cub or something.

“S-stop it! I don’t have such preferences!” (Fohl) “What’s this about preferences?” (Naofumi)

Is beast transform considered bad taste?

Then the Loinclothed Dog has bad preferences, I guess.

“Hah... Hah...”

From the ceiling, I hear strained breathing.

“I-intruder!” (Fohl)

Fohl releases an orb of magic from his fists.

A section of the ceiling smashes, and a human drops to the floor.

It’s the Tailor.

“I had the feeling that a glorious situation would present itself, so I came to watch. Thank you for the splendid meal!” (Tailor) She’s energetically sketching something.

What’s she doing? I have a bad feeling about this.

There’s no doubt that she’s misunderstanding something.

“For now, get out.” (Naofumi)

I grab the Tailor’s collar and toss her out of the house.

“And so, there will be no misunderstandings. Now transform and get in the bed.” (Naofumi) “N-no!” (Fohl)

I sense the Tailor putting her ear to the door.

“Be quick about it. I’m sleepy.” (Naofumi)

I activate Fohl’s slave seal and issue an order.

“Gu... You bastard... uu... I-I got it already.” (Foahl) I guess he isn’t able to withstand the slave seal like Atlas. Fohl changes shape.

He’s a splendid white tiger.

He seems quite muscular, and I’m a little disappointed that he’s not a cub.

This is strange, the dog definitely gave off a cute impression.

But he seems powerful.

I wonder just how strong he is.

Right now, I get the impression that Atlas is the stronger one. She’s already worked off her own debt without Fohl’s help.

“Well, I guess that works too. Come to the bed already. If I have that fur around it’ll be easier to sleep.” (Naofumi) “Uu...” (Fohl)

With the face of a dead man, Fohl lies on the bed.

As I extend my hand, he immediately jumps back.

Well, I just wanted to touch him a bit.

“A-Atlas, for your sake, your brother is willing to give up his purity. Even if I become tainted, I definitely won’t lose!” (Fohl) “Shut up. Go to sleep.” (Naofumi)

It’s not like I’ve awakened to homosexuality.

But if Sadina and Atlas get that impression and give up, then I guess that’s fine too.

If Fohl’s fine with it, then I...

No. The idea is rejected.

What sort of sad situation would lead to me sleeping with a tiger? But, it’s better than not being able to sleep with Atlas and Raphtalia.

When Firo and Kiel slept with me, Raphtalia seemed to get unhappy, so...

‘Then is the male Fohl fine?’ I asked, and she permitted it, though she had on quite a strange expression at the time.

Of course, I have my reasons for choosing Fohl.

There’s something I’m curious about.

“Right, during the brainwashing incident, you and Atlas were speaking with Trash about something, right? What were you talking about?”

(Naofumi) “Why do I have to tell someone like you?” (Fohl) “If he was plotting something, would you be able to figure it out? He’s the man that drove your entire clan into a corner, you know.” (Naofumi) “Uu...” (Fohl)

When they first met, I got some information from the Queen.

Without making any excuses, Fohl begins speaking.

“He tried to offer Atlas some food, so I tried to escape. He seemed to have aged a bit since when I met him with you. He had no energy.” (Fohl) “That seems likely.” (Naofumi)

“What are you doing? I’m calling out to someone who greatly resembles Onii-sama. I’m not that old, and it doesn’t make me happy if you say I’m like the enemy of the Hakuko race. Hmph.” (Fohl) “Start from the

beginning.” (Naofumi)

“... Understood. After that, the old man looked over me and Atlas, and started gazing far away. He said in a sad tone, ‘No matter what happens, you’ve got to protect your sister, okay? Otherwise, you’ll regret it for the rest of your life.’” (Fohl) “... I see.” (Naofumi)

That was within my expectations.

If the speaker wasn’t Trash, those would have been wise words.

“What is that man doing? Why is he trying to approach Atlas?” (Fohl) “That Trash had a sister that looked much like yours. She was kidnapped by the Hakuko and is still missing.” (Naofumi) “Wha-” (Fohl)

“So perhaps you guys are the children of that sister, is what he’s thinking. Can you remember anything?” (Naofumi) “Mother was... definitely human. Though she couldn’t see, she was always very kind.” (Fohl) “What was her name?” (Naofumi)

“Alucia” (Fohl)

A different person?

No, there’s the possibility that name is fake.

And I believe Trash’s sister’s name was Lucia. It’s only a letter extra.

“A little while after giving birth to Atlas, she got dragged into the war and died... She entrusted Atlas to me.” (Fohl) “I see... So you knew you were half-human?” (Naofumi) “Yeah.” (Fohl)

“What about your father?” (Naofumi)

“Why do I have to give you so much of my personal information!?” (Fohl) “That’s true. But if I don’t know, there’s nothing I can do. I heard the Hakuko race was gathering quite a bit of power around Silt Welt. Since you’re under me, the Hero of the Shield’s protection, some of them may get jealous.” (Naofumi) “Uu... Understood. My father was... not someone who wished for fighting. He was a calm and kind person. Still, I get the feeling he was quite strong. In order to allow his subordinates, me, and Atlas to escape, he stayed on the frontlines ‘til the end, decimating

his enemies.” (Fohl) “So you lost both of your parents in that war.”

(Naofumi) “Yeah... but that was quite a while ago.” (Fohl)

Fohl’s age shouldn’t be that high.

He looked to be around 12 when I met him, so I guess if he says a long time ago, it would be 6 years ago at max.

I don’t know the details, but it seems this world is filled with wars.

Due to Trash’s leadership, it seems Melromark was able to avoid quite a few of them, apparently.

Using Witch’s age as a basis, does that mean they’ve been at peace for around 20 years?

I don’t know what sort of position his grandfather took in Silt Welt, but he was supposed to be famous.

His troublesome legacy surrounds me.

“I have to protect Atlas, even if it kills me.” (Fohl) “And that sister of yours seems to be yearning for a scoundrel like me. Do a better job at it.”

(Naofumi) “... You really have no interest in Atlas?” (Fohl) “No matter how I answer, you’ll get mad. What answer do you want?” (Naofumi) “Uu...” (Fohl)

“Is what I’d like to say, but I have no interest in love. Atlas is... let’s see... If I had to choose, I’d say she’s like a child to me.” (Naofumi) Like I think of Raphtalia as a daughter, Atlas is like an adopted daughter who forcefully tries to approach me.

I’m getting the same feeling from the village’s slaves as well as of late.

But at the moment, I don’t seem to have any emotions like love in me.

“Aren’t you in a similar position? Do your best to protect her and get strong enough as not to lose to her. Though, since I’m raising you to combat the wave, I probably shouldn’t be saying such things.” (Naofumi) “I’ll do it even without your input! I’ll beat down anything that comes in my way, so Atlas won’t have to fight.” (Fohl) “Yes, yes. Then, as you wish, I’ll think of a way to make it so Atlas doesn’t have to fight in the wave.”

(Naofumi) “Hah?” (Fohl)

Fohl seems taken aback.

“What’s so strange? I won’t take anyone who doesn’t want to fight onto the front lines, and it’s not like I’ll ignore people who say they don’t wish for battle. You don’t want Atlas to be thrown into dangerous battles, right?” (Naofumi) Though I’m the one putting Atlas through a lot of danger in the first place. Even so, if Fohl wishes for it, I could prevent her from participating.

“Are you sure that’s okay?” (Fohl)

“Only if you work hard enough to cover her share as well.” (Naofumi)

“...” (Fohl)

Fohl answers with silence.

“Well, the individual may wish to fight, so it’s your job to stop her then. I won’t pressure her decision.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Fohl)

He gives a strangely honest reply.

“I think I kinda understand the reason Atlas has... taken a liking to you. But I still hate you.” (Fohl) “Can it. Anyways, you need to try to stop your sister’s recklessness now.” (Naofumi) “...” (Fohl)

“Then I’m sleeping. If they try to come in, make sure to drive them out.” (Naofumi) And like that, the night quietly descends.

As expected, Atlas and Sadina tried to intrude, and Raphtalia and Fohl fought them... apparently.

This time, they were able to repel them quite quickly.

When I woke up, Raphtalia was sleeping next to me while holding my hand.

After apprehending Atlas, Fohl put her to sleep in her own room.

His sleeping face was that of a man who had overcome the greatest obstacle of his life.

“Tomorrow, I’ll be the one on top!” (Sadina)

“Niichan will prevent Atlas from walking on the wrong path!” (Fohl)
And the next day, they fought again.

Chapter 267: Temporary Truce

“Just give it up already, you people.” (Naofumi)

“Right, Sadina-neesan, cease this nonsense!” (Raphtalia) “Don’t be so stiff, Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

It’s been three days. Through Raphtalia and Fohl’s actions, we have been able to put a complete stop to Atlas and Sadina’s night operations.

Raphtalia’s high level worked in our favor.

Then, while we were casually eating lunch, Sadina happily approaches us.

“So, Naofumi-chan. Tonight, won’t you come to my place to drink with Raphtalia-chan?” (Sadina) “No.” (Naofumi)

She’s probably trying to get Raphtalia drunk to get her out of the competition.

“Don’t worry. I won’t bring Atlas-chan with me this time. I just want to talk with Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) “And you’re expecting me to believe that?” (Naofumi) “Then, I’ll work with Fohl-chan to make sure Atlas-chan doesn’t come, so join me. This Onee-san keeps her promises.” (Sadina) “I remember Onee-san breaking quite an important one.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia smiles as she begins releasing bloodlust.

She’s quite mad.

Yep, Raphtalia is a child who shows her anger like this.

“But Raphtalia-chan, until you returned, I made sure to keep Atlas-chan out of Naofumi-chan’s bed. I never heard anything about keeping the other children out.” (Sadina) “Uu...” (Raphtalia)

She’s getting into the technical details...

And I think I’ve heard sophism like this before.

Ah, right, it came from me.

I’ve begun to understand Sadina’s personality.

She acts lazy to prevent others from getting a hold of her, but underneath that, she easily obsesses over things.

To summarize, she's someone you can't let your guard down around.

She's really capable, and her fighting power is quite something...

She denied the Granny's training, saying it was unnecessary.

Though that very Granny said that she was one who could master fighting by instinct, so there was no real need.

I've also heard from Raphtalia.

Apparently, she uses lightning magic on herself to forcefully increase her own reaction speed to levels around Musou Kassei.

She can cast self-buffing magic and has plenty of ways to raise her own parameters.

What's more, she can use echolocation to read movements, so illusion magic isn't very effective on her.

Just how skillful is she?

But if I think about it, she's supposed to be of a race stronger than the Hakuko when in the water.

That seems right on the mark. Her appearance definitely fits an aquatic Demi-Human.

"And Atlas-chan is a little different from the other children in that aspect." (Sadina) "Is that so? Well, I just let the others into my bed as an Atlas Countermeasure, you know." (Naofumi) When I'm alone, I'm paranoid of the moment Atlas enters.

Especially on the days when Sadina is away.

"It's because Naofumi-chan is a dense mutherfucker." (Sadina) (TL: The original text says dense. I have taken a bit of liberty here...) (ED: lol)

"Is this about love? I don't have any interest, and Raphtalia is strict on public morals. I just don't want to cause an unneeded conflict." (Naofumi) I'm no harem-making protagonist.

If a man didn't realize anything from Atlas's persistent approach, they wouldn't just be dense. They would have transcended density.

"Ara?" (Sadina)

"And I've been saying this for a while, but once the wave has been dealt with, and the world is at peace, I plan on returning to my own world. I have no intentions of making a family here." (Naofumi) "Hah..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia lets out a deep sigh.

Whenever this topic comes up, she always does that.

But these guys only ever talk about things like this, so perhaps Raphtalia is just tired of it.

"Then, Naofumi-chan." (Sadina)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"After the world is at peace, and you're ready to return, make sure to leave after you give love to all the ones who want to hold you close." (Sadina) "Listen to what I'm saying!" (Naofumi)

What is this whale woman saying!?

"Ara? This Onee-san doesn't recall saying anything strange. Even when Naofumi-chan isn't here, I think there are definitely some who wish to carry your child. Like me." (Sadina) "Like hell there are!" (Naofumi)

I think the Queen said something similar.

Something about marrying Melty.

If Melty married me, the fact that they had a hero in the family may increase the country's authority, but I won't let it end that way.

That strong-willed Melty probably won't want relations with anyone besides Firo.

And wait, to obtain status from having a hero's child, how calculating are these people?

"Ah, Naofumi-chan. I'm not sure what you're misunderstanding, but

Onee-san doesn't want to become famous or have the child of a hero or anything." (Sadina) "I wonder." (Naofumi)

"Onee-san... wants mutual love with the strong drinker, Naofumi-chan. Oh my, what am I saying?" (Sadina) Annoying!

Raphtalia's bloodlust becomes stronger.

Their nightly battles may come to a conclusion here.

Should I assist in silencing this whale?

"Anyways, Onee-san wants time to talk to you tonight." (Sadina) "Here is no good?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, it's a secret matter. Here is a bit..." (Sadina) Sadina looks towards an area that seems devoid of people.

... Is there something there?

Is that where Shadow's hiding?

I don't see Shadow often, but she seems to be monitoring me.

She has the ability to disguise herself as the slaves in the village apparently.

I don't really care, because she helps out too, though.

"So come to the secret base with Raphtalia-chan tonight. If you do so, I promise I won't come to your room with Atlas-chan again." (Sadina) "Ah, yes, yes." (Naofumi)

She's quite a stubborn person. Though, she'll probably fold at some point.

"It's a promise." (Sadina)

Sadina says this as she departs.

"I wonder what that was about." (Raphtalia)

"Who knows?" (Naofumi)

That drunkard's objective is as of yet unknown.

Starting with my village, Firo, and the people in the other village, she

seems to garner great respect from all of them.

But, I can only see her as a loose person who likes to play around.

Though when the time comes, she does perform well.

Apparently, she does a lot of other things as well, but I haven't seen anything.

I've seen her speaking with Melty as well. The princess wouldn't tell me what it was about.

Even when Firo went into question mode, she continued to reply, 'It's a secret.'

Forcing it out of her wasn't necessary, so I ignored it.

But where is this charisma coming from?

Anyways, that night.

Sadina had tied Atlas up and brought her to my place.

"Now, Fohl-chan. Atlas-chan. I'm going to be heading out with Naofumi-chan." (Sadina) She... actually did it.

"Sadina-san. Is this betrayal? Is that what it is?" (Atlas) Atlas is bewildered as she presses Sadina for an answer.

Was she suddenly assaulted without warning?

"Tonight's a temporary truce. Just calm down and leave it to Onee-san. Atlas-chan should just sleep with Fohl-chan today." (Sadina) "Ah... Naofumi-sama, please save me!" (Atlas)

"Sadina, don't betray those who believe in you as a joke. That's the thing I hate most in this world. If you go too far, I'm kicking you out."
(Naofumi) It's probably a simple joke, but whenever I see someone deceive someone else, I get a strong sense of discomfort.

But Witch's already gone.

... I have to forget her.

"Yes, yes~. Then, I'll be deceiving Naofumi-chan only once more after

this~” (Sadina) “Declaring it beforehand doesn’t solve the problem.”
(Naofumi) As we were talking, Fohl picks Atlas up in a princess cradle.
He has on quite a happy expression.

“Now, Atlas. Today, you’re going to be sleeping peacefully. It’s too early for you to be doing things like this.” (Fohl) His face and build are naturally good, so he looks like some sort of prince.

No, by blood, he is a prince.

Not that that matters.

Anyways, he’s carrying the young body of Atlas, which refuses to grow any older. The scene gives off an elegant feeling like one found in Shoujo Manga.

“Uu... Onii-sama, I won’t forget this disgrace. I’ll hold a grudge.” (Atlas)
Atlas complains as Fohl carries her off.

Wouldn’t it be best to keep her tied up like that forever?

Am I scum for thinking that? Yep, I am.

I evaluate myself as I turn towards Sadina.

“Will you get on Onee-san and we’ll swim there? Or will you ask Gaelion-chan to take you?” (Sadina) “I guess Gaelion would be fine.”
(Naofumi)

If anything happens, I can use Gaelion to buy time for my escape.

Like that, we ride Gaelion to Sadina’s secret Island Base.

Chapter 268: Alcohol

“There are quite a few more things here than when I last visited.”
(Naofumi) Like a pirate’s treasure cove, Sadina’s secret base is littered with stuff.

Gold and Silver... aren’t in high quantity, but there seems to be quite a few magical tools.

It’s probably best to appraise them later.

Sadina brings back items that seem to be worth money to me, and it looks like these miscellaneous items are left.

The amount of money her salvaging has brought me is enough to cover the price I bought her for several times over.

I guess I have to raise my evaluation of her.

“Now then, today, we’re all drinking until we drop!” (Sadina) Sadina declares as she brings out a wine barrel.

“Fumu... Am I included?” (Gaelion)

Gaelion asserts his presence in response to the alcohol.

I’d tell him to go home, but Raphtalia also seems to want to drink as well, which sounds dangerous.

It’s better to have more drinkers.

“All green~ here, this is for Gaelion-chan.” (Sadina)

Sadina produces a two liter bottle and hands it to Gaelion.

(TL: It’s a 1 Sho bottle. 1 Sho is approximately 1.8 liters) Um, is that Japanese Sake?

Perhaps the previous heroes left behind the method to make it.

“Then without further ado.” (Gaelion)

Gaelion begins drinking straight out of the bottle.

“Oh... This is quite a choice sake, is it not?” (Gaelion) “Yeah~ It’s a good

enough, strong sake to please even the dragon from my home town.”
(Sadina) “I see...” (Gaelion)

Gaelion’s mood improves as he continues to drink.

And where exactly did you get such a thing...

“Now, the two of you don’t need to show any restraint. Drink. For Naofumi-chan, I even have some Lucor Fruit.” (Sadina) Sadina begins offering us alcohol.

It’s not as if Lucor Fruit is my favorite fruit or anything.

I guess this is fine.

“And? What did you want to talk about? You didn’t want Shadow or the others to hear, right?” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-chan’s too hasty~ Can you wait until I get a little tipsy? Raphtalia-chan, drink too. Raphtalia’s parents were strong drinkers, so you must be strong too.” (Sadina) “I-I am...” (Raphtalia)

Sadina pours some sake into Raphtalia’s cup, and she timidly sips it.

I think she did drink some alcohol at Cal Mira though.

I get the feeling that she was quite strong.

“How does Raphtalia-chan feel about Naofumi-chan? Onee-san wants to know.” (Sadina) “I have great respect for him.” (Raphtalia)

Is that so?

She always seems fed up with my evil acts, so I thought she had lost her respect for me.

It may seem strange coming from me, but many of my actions are quite cruel.

“Are those your true feelings?” (Sadina)

“Yes.” (Raphtalia)

“You don’t wanna get hitched or something?” (Sadina)

“T-that is...” (Raphtalia)

Eh? Raphtalia wants to marry me? She recognizes me as a member of the opposite sex?

Nonono, she's just trying hard to make sure the wave doesn't leave behind any unfortunate children like her, isn't she?

If she said she liked someone like me, I don't think I would hate it, but I think that there's something called priorities.

I remember what Sadina said during the day.

When the world is at peace, Raphtalia may... start thinking about things like that.

If we do well, her social status will be high by the time I leave.

"I am... that is... um..." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's eyes spin as her face goes red.

Her real age is still quite low. I don't think she should really be drinking, and I don't think she's at an age where she should be concerned with love yet.

She only sees me as a replacement for her deceased parents, and she must be confused at being asked how she thinks of me as a member of the opposite sex.

Yes, it's still too early for Raphtalia to love.

It's like that.

When Raphtalia felt troubled from misunderstanding the situation where she found others sleeping in my bed, it was the unpleasant feeling and denial one gets when their parents remarry, and the child sees their step-parent. Something like that.

Even though nothing's wrong, you still end up feeling nervous and uneasy.

Even I don't want Raphtalia to feel like that.

Ah, but Firo, the Loinclothed Dog, and Imya are all children as well, so perhaps it's fine?

“Nyaohyumi-sama isth my...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia’s articulation is getting messed up.

“Ara? Raphtalia-chan?” (Sadina)

“Isth my...” (Raphtalia)

With a bang, Raphtalia falls flat onto the table.

“Yes... I’m also... a bit...” (Gaelion)

Gaelion sways side to side and falls on his back with his legs in the air.

“Well well well. As expected of the wines 『Dragon Killer』 and 『Tanuki』, ... I guess it was too strong for Raphtalia-chan and Gaelion-chan.”

(Sadina) “You... planned this, didn’t you.” (Naofumi)

This is bad. It seems Sadina prepared special sake to take down both Raphtalia and Gaelion.

At this rate, this whale woman may assault me.

Worse comes to worst, I can use Shield Prison and escape with Portal.

“And so, let’s continue drinking.” (Sadina)

“Don’t want to. I’m going home.” (Naofumi)

“Now, now, this Onee-san has something to talk about, and if you go back, what are you going to do about Raphtalia-chan and Gaelion-chan?”

(Sadina) “I’ll take them with my Portal.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, that’s right~. But could you leave it ‘til after you chat with this Onee-san?” (Sadian) “What talk? It better not be about a carnival of lust.”

(Naofumi) “Wrong, wrong, wrong. Tonight’s really a truce.” (Sadian)

With a relaxing atmosphere, Sadina continues drinking as she always does.

But, in the next moment...

“Naofumi-chan, I told you before, right? That if you wanted to get into a further relationship with Raphtalia-chan, you have to be prepared.”

(Sadina) Blowing away the laid back mood, Sadina changes into her human form and stares seriously into my eyes.

“Yeah, you said that. You knocked out both Raphtalia and Gaelion, and that’s all you have to say?” (Naofumi) To Sadina, who is the child known as Raphtalia?

I don’t really know, and it seems to be something she doesn’t want to bring up. Whenever I inquire about it, she shifts the conversation.

It was quite a while ago.

When I was still constructing the village, one of the forces that came to my aid was a group of Raccoon Demi-Humans... The Raccoon race rushed to help me.

“If the Hero of the Shield’s right arm is a Raccoon, then you’re the same as family to us. Please let us assist in the revival of this village.”

Sometimes, people like these would gather in my village under the pretense of offering aid.

At that time, I looked over the Raccoon Demi-Humans, and I was surprised at the sharp contrast they had with Raphtalia.

Should I say they were well built?... To say it bluntly, a large majority of them reeked of the sticks.

I can’t say they were particularly handsome, and they smelled of earth.

I also felt that they weren’t particularly motivated.

But as they were of the Raccoon Race, I couldn’t drive them out so easily. After they saw Raphtalia, they were quite insistent on pressing her for her lineage.

Eventually, I told them that I didn’t make her my subordinate because of her race, but because of her ability, and that they had no relation to Raphtalia. I tried to get them to leave.

At that point, Sadina let out the bloodlust she usually concealed and pointed her harpoon at them.

“I apologize, but the child serving as Naofumi-chan’s right hand is so separated from you people that she might as well be a complete stranger. Using blood relations to close in on this village... could you stop?”

(Sadina) Though her words were polite, upon sensing her bloodlust, the Raccoons' legs gave out.

There, I added on another thing to bring the matter to a close.

“Well, if you want to help no matter what, then please go work towards reconstruction in the other village. I'll decide whether or not you're competent based on your work.” (Naofumi) And after that, the Raccoon group left for the village, but... I didn't hear from them later.

Ah, I remember.

Three days after they were assigned work, most of them had quietly fled I believe.

Though, a few of them are still working diligently there, even now.

The ones who stayed didn't seem particularly concerned with me.

“Hey, what's your relationship with Raphtalia, exactly?” (Naofumi)
“Naofumi-chan, to me, Raphtalia-chan and her parents were my reason for living.” (Sadina)

Chapter 269: Truth in the Darkness

*Special thanks to readers [IamMe],[Rarstyak] and [rafutlio] who made various edits and suggestion.

“Reason to live, you say.....” (Naofumi)

What kind of relationship do you have? It’s getting harder to understand. (TL: Between Sadina and Raphtalia) Chivalry or Bushido, it seems such a culture existed long ago in my world, but is it close to that?

“During the first wave, I was unable to protect Raphtalia-chan’s parents. No, when the wave occurred, I was far away and did not rush over. Because it was too peaceful back then, I had let my guard down.” (Sadina) Sadina drinks her alcohol while muttering something that sounds like regret.

This appearance is..... even if I’m wrong, it doesn’t seem like a prank.

Putting the helplessly drunk Raphtalia to sleep in a plain bed, Sadina continues talking.

If it’s a serious talk, there’s no reason to handle it cruelly.

I’ll hear you out sincerely.

“.....But when I finally managed to return a few days later, there was no one left in the village.” (Sadina) Sadina continues talking.

“I looked for her desperately, hoping she had surely survived. However, I was not able to approach the dark side of this country as a Beastman. That’s why I became a battle slave in Zeltbur, which specializes in slaves, and began looking. That place has many connections so I thought I would manage if I accumulated some money.” (Sadina) “You took quite a detour.” (Naofumi)

In reality, Raphtalia was sold ridiculously cheaply.

Although Sadina was looking frantically, Raphtalia was in the unlikeliest of places.

“It took too much time trying to find a slave named Raphtalia with the

appearance of the Raccoon species. I did find some children from the village though.” (Sadina) “Come to think of it, you were protecting slaves from the village.” (Naofumi) “Yes. And I was surprised when I found Raphtalia-chan. To think she was with Naofumi-chan, the Hero of the Shield.” (Sadina) “It’s full of drama. Raphtalia’s life is.” (Naofumi)

If possible, I hope that Raphtalia can live in peace after the world has become peaceful.

Precisely because this child believed in me, I want her to be happy.

These feelings have not changed even now.

Even though I think the world ought to be ruined, I will endeavor to make the world peaceful for Raphtalia’s sake. [TC: Naofumi hates the world but will save it so Raphtalia can live in it]

“You say the appearance of the Raccoon species, but isn’t Raphtalia different?” (Naofumi) “Just like I may be mistaken for the Ruka species, she is similar to the Raccoon species but is still a different kind.” (Sadina) [TC: Ruka species = Dolphin species, but Sadina is an Orca]

“Hmm..... well, Raphtalia is Raphtalia no matter what race she belongs to.” (Naofumi) I see.

That explains why Raphtalia is a beautiful girl, despite supposedly being of the Raccoon species whose appearance is not valued very much.

“.....That’s the good thing about Naofumi-chan. Hey Naofumi-chan..... if you have no intention of taking care of Raphtalia-chan until the end..... why not make do with this Onee-san?” (Sadina) “What?” (Naofumi)

“I hope you have the resolution to be in a relationship with Raphtalia-chan. If there is no resolution, please use Onee-san to let it out if you can no longer endure it.” (Sadina) [TC: ‘If you aren’t resolved then do it with Onee-san if you get horny’]

“Do you think I am the Devil or something?” (Naofumi)

Oh, I am aware of that sort of thing. But even if I die, I don’t want any relations with women.

If I consider what you are saying... I think you're talking about a relationship with Raphtalia.

Of course, I trust Raphtalia.

If it's a question of like or dislike, I would say I like her.

This I can affirm. To the extent of being able to assent if I was told to say it to the person in question.

But when it is the feeling of love that is called into question... I don't know.

For me Raphtalia is a reliable partner, she is the friend with whom I shared my joys and sorrows, and at the same time I think of her as something like a daughter.

Meaning I think of myself as a foster father, like what Motoyasu has been saying.

Raphtalia is prioritizing her mission until the world becomes peaceful, and she has parental affection for me rather than having an interest in romance.

Hey, I'll lose if I get caught up in Sadina's pace.

"What is Raphtalia's race? I would like to ask for the time being."
(Naofumi) "Will you take responsibility since you want to know? Will you look after Raphtalia until the end?" (Sadina) When Sadina said until the end, she probably didn't mean until the wave is over, but until the day Raphtalia dies.

.....I think that I can't take responsibility in that sense.

When this world has become peaceful, I intend to return to my original world.

"I understand. Then I won't ask." (Naofumi)

"Is that so... That's disappointing~" (Sadina)

Sadina's numerous acts of interference after Raphtalia came back is probably done out of fear that I will lay a hand on Raphtalia, and she's

learning about my personality as well as making fun of me.

Sadina's repeated attack of annoying stories and harassment is probably so I don't do anything to Raphtalia.

This person usually plays around, but somehow she has developed the technique of calmly observing the behavior of people and guiding them.

I've overlooked it because there's no mischief that has been done to me, but I wouldn't want to be her enemy.

She said this in a playful tone, but her smile doesn't reach her eyes.

"You had a reason to say all this, right? Tell me about it a little, otherwise I won't be able to protect her." (Naofumi) "Oh, you've got a point. Then, just a little bit." (Sadina) Sadina begins talking while lightly stroking Raphtalia's hair.

"You might not know, but Raphtalia-chan's father was of a noble lineage, and I was the priestess who governed that lineage." (Sadina) "Oh..... Silt Welt or Shirudo Furiden?" (Naofumi)

"It was on the outskirts, but I can't give you a specific location. Because even this is big service." (Sadina) Was it not a Demi-human country?

And what position did Sadina have?

She did say it was a priestess just now.....

"To be honest Raphtalia's father didn't want to succeed his House so he eloped with Raphtalia's mother. I wonder if he knew that I agreed with his thinking and escaped here?" (Sadina) "Did you Lv reset then?" (Naofumi)

An image of the punishment for rebelling against the law comes to mind.

"Yes, various things were lost, but there was no dissatisfaction because I had gained a lot of things. I was essentially banished." (Sadina) "Did you get the divine protection of a water dragon by working as a priestess? And compared to the lineage of Raphtalia's father, who was superior?" (Naofumi) "Raphtalia-chan's father was the most admired in the area."

(Sadina) “More so than the Four Saint Heroes?” (Naofumi)

“There is no folklore of the Heroes, but they have been described by visitors.” (Sadina) What kind of area is it?

It’s lacking in credibility and is becoming dubious.

But I feel like I have understood what kind of family Raphtalia came from.

In a certain country she would be worshipped as a descendent, like a child of God.

Let us deduce from the variety of material that has been provided until now.

The atmosphere and the name of the knockdown technique Raphtalia invented by herself, the appearance of Sadina’s human form

She’s a Japanese beauty. Sadina in her human form, that is.

And she habitually uses a loincloth.

So with ‘Japanese Style’ as a keyword, the eastern place that the Old Man from the weapon shop was talking about before comes to mind.

“The country where Raphtalia father was born..... was it in seclusion?” (Naofumi) (TL: Sakoku or “locked country” was the foreign relations policy of Japan under which no foreigner could enter nor could any Japanese leave the country on penalty of death) “Wow, Naofumi-chan is amazing. It is so. It’s been that way since the past. There are many of such countries besides our country but it is a particularly exclusive area among those countries. ” (Sadina) When I look and think about it, it’s such rotten world.

I have heard that there was also cases where some heroes were summoned in a peaceful time without waves.

It’s not strange for those guys to escape from the countries that summoned them, and use their knowledge of the modern world to make a Hidden village-like country. [TC: So a larger scaled version where the whole country is secluded]

That's why it isn't weird to have a Japanese country.

Or rather, it's weirder for civilization to be stuck in the middle ages despite heroes regularly being summoned from different worlds, especially if you include the super element of magic.

.....Perhaps there is a reason for that, but it doesn't really matter now.

"Are you worried about that country?" (Naofumi)

The country is secluded in the east.

There is a country which looks like Japan, and Raphtalia has relatives with noble lineage there.

Does she feel like a pursuer will come to retrieve Raphtalia if it gets badly exposed?

"You're only half-correct, but that's alright. I've been worried about Raphtalia's own happiness." (Sadina) "Uhh....." (Raphtalia)

Sadina puts a cloth soaked in cold water on Raphtalia's forehead when she hears her groan.

"She will be waking up soon. Is there anything else you want to ask?" (Sadina) "Why don't you speak to Raphtalia about this?" (Naofumi) "It's the directive of Raphtalia-chan's father." (Sadina) Pardon me for being involved with Raphtalia's family affairs like this though.

Let's deal with this after the world is at peace.

But then the Church of the Three Heroes and the nobles are also like that.

"Is it alright?" (Naofumi)

"I think so. They won't come unless you know too much." (Sadina) "..... About their domestic affairs?" (Naofumi)

Sadina nods silently.

Ah, so it comes to that, as I expected.

So Raphtalia comes from a troublesome lineage.

To me, an ordinary beauty of the Raccoon species would have been good.

I see, so Sadina wants me to continue keeping it that way.

Lets assume I got involved with Raphtalia and made a child with her.

Then Raphtalia, pregnant with a child by me who is considered a God by some countries, might get targeted.

Sadina is concerned about the possibility and is taking precaution.

“If you really want a child with Raphtalia no matter what, do it after you stop worrying about the whole country being destroyed. It’s a promise with Onee-san. The current Naofumi-chan is capable of doing that.”

(Sadina) [TC: ‘Stop worrying about the waves and focus 100% on Raphtalia’]

“Aren’t you being too paranoid?” (Naofumi)

She’s thinking too much about understanding the big picture.

Of course it’s better to be a bit cautious.

“That may be true but you must not underestimate a priestess or user of unique abilities. If someone like me is idling about, they may be aiming for Raphtalia’s life.” (Sadina) “I see.” (Naofumi)

A country full of people with abilities like Sadina..... I would like to ask them to help save the world.

Since Raphtalia is extremely strong, she won’t be killed easily.

But even so, I won’t do something so irresponsible.

“I wonder if Naofumi-chan has arrived at an actual decision. Onee-san doesn’t want you to do things that would make a girl cry. Though it’s fine because Onee-san is not a girl but an adult woman.” (Sadina) “Various reasons are being piled up now.” (Naofumi)

“Nuu, Onee-san is troubled.” (Sadina) [TC: Nuu = no, but more colloquial-ish? Idk how to describe it]

There was also the problem of Raphtalia’s parentage of course, but

Sadina wanted to ask about my own feelings.

That much was conveyed.

“Uhh..... Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia, who has recovered consciousness, gets up.

“Are you okay?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, yes. I feel fine, strangely.” (Raphtalia)

“That’s good.” (Sadina)

“Did anything happen while I was passed out?” (Raphtalia) “.....Not really.” (Sadina)

Sadina probably doesn’t want to tell her the truth.

I also pretend I didn’t hear anything because I don’t want to cause unnecessary trouble.

“That’s right. I just said that Raphtalia is like a daughter to me.” (Naofumi) “Right!?” (Raphtalia)

“That’s right. I also mentioned that Raphtalia is something like a Fluffy-Tailed Waifu to me.” (Naofumi)*

“Hai!?” (Raphtalia)

*gag line by Rarstyak

Raphtalia, who raised her voice in surprise, tentatively nodded in agreement.

‘If I have come to like Raphtalia then show my resolution’..... it’s a troublesome topic.

I won’t permanently reside in this world.

I think so at least.

“I was told by Sadina, with her noninterference policy, to protect

Raphtalia as a parent.” (Naofumi) I say sarcastically and in an ostentatious way.

Because despite wanting to protect you, I neglected you while you were out training.

“Isn’t that called ‘If you love your children, send them out into the world’, Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) [TC: Japanese idiom.... But Naofumi didn’t say that aloud, is Sadina reading his thoughts? o.O]

Sadina murmurs absent mindlessly.

“Naofumi-chan may not realize, but someone who becomes the slave of a Hero has an unnaturally good experience rate, and there’s also the growth of the status. To the extent that half-hearted opponents are no match for us.” (Sadina) “How good is it?” (Naofumi)

“In my experience, it should have taken several years to reach the same Lv. Please keep that in mind.” (Sadina) I see, becoming a slave to a Hero can give you good experience gain.

That reminds me, Fohl also said something similar.

Moreover, there’s the influence of growth correction.

“Then, getting a good Lv is possibly due to Naofumi-sama’s influence?” (Raphtalia) “That’s right. Onee-san has done many Lv resets and guarantees it.” (Sadina) “Now that you mentioned it, Teacher also said something similar. About Leveling quickly.” (Raphtalia) Somehow it seems as though the Hero correction thing also has some influence on companions.

I have felt it a little bit though.

“That’s why Onee-san has also become very strong.” (Sadina) “You couldn’t possibly have been going easy on me as an opponent?” (Raphtalia) “I couldn’t have done something like going easy on you. Raphtalia-chan has become very strong. Onee-san could have been defeated.” (Sadina) We finished chatting like this and returned to our respective homes to sleep.

By the way, Gaelion enjoyed drinking the liquor he got from Sadina.

Chapter 270: The Pig King

The next day.

Witch was successfully transported, and Motoyasu returns by portal. I'm made to watch the Guro movie of Witch being violated by Faubley's Pig King.

Some of the king's soldiers are here as well.

Apparently, they're here to confirm that I watched the video.

Even I don't want to watch it alone. I bring Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki along to do a private screening of it.

The soldiers caution me that it isn't a pretty recording.

Well, Raphtalia and Rishia are watching as well.

Female Knight... would be dangerous to show it to, so I drove her away.

"Hero of the Shield-san, are you watching~?"

Uwah... It's a fat, wrinkly, pig-like fatty.

I think he resembles something.

Ah, he looks like that monster that appeared in that famous movie about wars in space. (ED: Jabba the Hutt from Star Wars XD) How old is he? He's definitely older than Trash, but his terrible looks take away any age-distinguishing features.

It's like he's an ageless demon.

"Nooooooooo!" (Witch)

Witch screams out.

"You're being loud. Like this, I can't send a message to Hero of the Shield-san."

He violently grabs her by the hair and swings the naked Witch around.

"Ugu... Nooooooooo!" (Witch)

It seems that at this point, Witch can do nothing but scream.

For some reason, it puts my heart at ease.

“I told you to shut up.”

With his chubby hands, he grabs Witch’s neck. His motions seem highly practiced.

Oy, that’s the movement used to break a chicken’s neck.

“Ah... ku...”

Witch resists with her life on the line, but to no avail. Eventually, bubbles start coming out of her mouth, and she faints.

After that, the Pig King enthusiastically introduces himself, and wakes Witch with slaps to the face. The Guro scenes follow.

It’s a mix between a health video featuring the copulation of pigs, and an overly sadistic snuff film.

If you made something like this in my old world, it would be a matter left to the police.

I was right to bar the others from viewing it.

Melty may have been fine, but Kiel and Taniko would be shaking in their boots.

Regardless, this would cause quite a few traumas, so I probably won’t watch if he sends another.

“Uu...” (Ren)

Within three minutes, Ren is covering his mouth and breathing deeply.

He and Raphtalia leave the room together.

Though I feel it’s revolting as well.

How about Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Rishia?

“Fu-fufufun” (Motoyasu) (TL: Humming SFX)

Motoyasu is... spreading out a sheet of paper and sketching.

When I peek over to see what he’s drawing, I’m not surprised to find that it is Firo.

To be able to draw while witnessing this footage, I'm amazed. I honestly want to admire him.

No wait, he's not even watching.

When I'm feeling this unpleasant, he's humming and singing...

"Don't get distracted. Just watch." (Naofumi)

"What's so fun about watching pigs mate? And I've already seen the scene happen, Father-in-Law." (Motoyasu) "So you can remain cool while watching this?" (Naofumi) "It's not really different from watching monsters get killed. Hahaha." (Motoyasu) Yes. I feel madness from Motoyasu.

His three followers are watching the film while drooling.

"That pig. It has a lot of fat on it. Doesn't it look tasty?" (Kuu) "But doesn't it look a little tough?" (Marin)

"If you let it rot for a while, it'll become softer and tastier. Leave the preparations to me." (Midori) They truly are beasts.

But I guess this is how Filo Rials are.

Ah, I found this out later, but Midori is of a subspecies that could control poison and decay.

But for them to watch this footage and stay calm, they really are monsters.

By the way, when I showed it to Firo the next day, she became sick.

Does it have to do with individual personality?

Ah, but at the start, she did say, 'That pig looks tasty.'

The Pig King can't even be classified as human at this point in time.

Now Itsuki and Rishia are...

Rishia's already fainted.

Itsuki has a calm expression... No, he has no expression as he silently watches it.

“Itsuki, what do you think?” (Naofumi)

“I don’t understand what’s fun about it.” (Itsuki) “What a coincidence. I’m of the same opinion.” (Naofumi) I’m already regretting ordering this video to be taken.

No, I wanted it as evidence, but I never thought I would have to watch it to the end.

Can I not fast forward?

“To make sure you’re actually watching, we’ll be taking a video.”
(Soldier) The soldier holds up a crystal in my direction.

“I’ll at least pretend to watch it.” (Naofumi)

“Yes... Um... I’m truly sorry for the trouble, Hero-sama.” (Soldier) This soldier’s perceptiveness is a life saver.

To avoid any complaints, I have to continue watching the video to the end.

I absentmindedly stare at the screen while I use status magic to check my slaves’ statuses, waiting for the end.

“Then, I’ll be coming to deliver another one in the near future. The King was exceedingly happy to hear that the Hero of the Shield requested such a video, so he will continue sending them.” (Soldier) “... Could you reproduce and edit the footage you took right now to make it seem like I watched them? If need be, I can do some acting to increase the variety of reaction footage.” (Naofumi) “Yes, of course we can do that.” (Soldier)

The soldier said as such, and when he brought the next video, we opted not to watch it.

Our hearts are as one.

If I had to see these videos again and again, I would go crazy.

At the end of the video, Witch was all beaten up, and she was put to sleep by strangling again. But only after she had lost an arm.

Her facial expression must have been appealing, because the Pig King

gave a face of ecstasy.

I've played Guro Galge and Rape Galge before, but this is too much.

With something like this, if you simply owned it, you would be liable for arrest.

And in the end, Witch was easily killed off. But as the Pig King was under the impression that I was still deriving enjoyment from his videos, he thought that I would like to see a large variety of woman being violated.

Instead of playing with his favorite toys for long periods of time, he seemed to have found something else to take delight in.

Go to hell. Why do I have to watch these guro videos of other women being violated?

The end result, is that a large amount of useless video crystals ended up piling up in the village store house.

I really don't want to meet that pig.

I once again pledge that in my heart.

"Ah... I feel sick." (Naofumi)

A few days later, in the evening.

I mutter those words as I entered the onsen at Cal Mira.

I assigned everyone their jobs, and when evening came, I took Itsuki and Rishia here by Portal.

Itsuki doesn't recover Mana or SP, so he can't use portal.

That's why I have to bring them.

I got permission for Rishia to bathe in the men's side.

She was worried that if I was the only one there, Itsuki would die from drowning.

Wearing a white robe, Rishia helps Itsuki submerge himself in the water.

Wouldn't a swimsuit be fine here?

Ah, Raphtalia, Firo, and Melty are also here, albeit on the women's side.

Atlas was going to come as well, but Fohl stopped her.

An onsen is perfect if you want to rest your body and mind.

I had just washed my body and was about to step in, when Firo jumps over the hedge separating the two baths with Melty on her back.

"Master~ Let's bathe together again~" (Firo)

"Firo-chan! This is the men's bath! Naofumi is here, isn't he!?" (Melty)
Melty frantically covers her important places with a towel as she embarrassingly complains to Firo.

Firo. You sure brought a troublesome person to a troublesome place.

"Don't worry, Melty-chan. Right now, only Master, the bow person, and Rishia-oneechan are here." (Firo) "Isn't the fact that Naofumi and the Hero of the Bow are here the problem!?" (Melty) "Eh?" (Firo)

It may sound strange, Firo, but Melty's reaction is the correct one.

I should leave disciplining her to Raphtalia and Melty.

It would be strange for me to be telling her that.

"But bathing with master is fun, so Melty-chan should have fun too."
(Firo) "No! I'll get dirty!" (Melty)

"Hey." (Naofumi)

I submerge myself in the bathwater as I speak.

Seeing her love of cleanliness and her innocence, I'm beginning to doubt whether or not she's truly the sister of that Witch.

But I guess it's fine.

Firo ignores her, changes into human form, and sits beside me.

"Pii!"

From the towel wrapped around my waist, one of the Filo Rial familiars appears.

“Where did you come out of!?” (Naofumi)

“N-Naofumi gave birth to a Filo Rial!” (Melty)

Melty shouts out, but from her towel, a chick emerges as well.

I heard about it, but I guess they’re parasitizing off Melty as well.

“Look who’s talking!” (Naofumi)

“S-shut up!” (Melty)

“Ahaha~ Master and Melty are having fun.” (Firo) “We’re not!”
(Naofumi & Melty)

Dammit, these birds can’t read the mood.

“Master, can you wash Firo’s back?” (Firo)

“Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

If I don’t do it, she’ll complain.

It’s been a few days since I started coming here to alleviate my curse.

Firo coming to the men’s bath has become a daily occurrence.

Though, this is the first time she’s brought Melty along.

I use some soap and begin rubbing Firo’s back. Because she has wings, quite a few bubbles form.

“Hey, Melty-chan should get her back washed too~” (Firo) “Don’t! Want! To!” (Melty)

Melty sure is stubborn.

Though, I think I’m an expert in that field as well.

But Firo sure likes taking people over to the men’s side.

Ah, the first person she brought over was Kiel.

Apparently, for the male-hearted Kiel, the women’s bath was uncomfortable, so she got Firo to bring her over.

After that, it became natural to scold Firo and Kiel, who swam around the male bath as if it were natural.

Why do I have to act like a parent and scold these kids when I'm supposed to be relaxing in the onsen?

Raphtalia always lectures them not to come over, but they don't listen.

"Look, you're all clean now." (Naofumi)

"Ya~y." (Firo)

I pour a bucket of hot water on her to wash away the bubbles, and Firo shakes her entire body like a dog to dry herself. Water droplets fly everywhere.

"Master, thank you~. Is Firo clean?" (Firo)

"If you doubt it, then wash yourself." (Naofumi) "Bu-" (Firo)

Firo pouts, and Melty refuses to take her body out of the water.

The bath is as lively as ever.

"Then I'm going to be soaking for a while, so you guys better return to the women's bath." (Naofumi) "Got~ it." (Firo)

I get in the water again to cure my curse, when Firo changes to Filo Rial form and sits next to me.

She's floating. (ED: LOL)

Is she some sort of water bird? Though, Firo can swim.

"Ah!?" (Firo)

Firo seems to have figured something out as she lets out a noise. She puts Melty on her back.

"Firo-chan, what are you..." (Melty)

Before Melty can finish speaking, Firo jumps over the hedge and returns to the women's side.

"W-what was that about?" (Rishia)

Rishia inquires.

"Who knows?" (Naofumi)

“Will Rishia-san not go to the women’s bath as well?” (Itsuki) Itsuki tilts his head as he asks.

It seems that a little bit of common sense still lingers in his head.

Though, I have no idea how much we should trust Itsuki’s common sense.

“I’m alright, Itsuki-sama.” (Rishia)

These two are acting like an idiot couple.

Now that I think about it, since we started using this bath, Itsuki’s condition has gradually been changing.

He’s still expressionless, but his indecisiveness is beginning to heal.

The fact that he can ask things like this is proof.

“Oh my! If it isn’t Father-in-Law!?” (Motoyasu)

Aa, so this is the reason Firo quickly retreated.

Chapter 271: King

"Hey if it isn't father-in-law. Should I wash your back?"

"It's fine. Rather, it's already been washed."

...Motoyasu came over.

There is the reason why Firo fled.

Together with him are his three companions. Behind them, Ren is also there.

Are you coming in the bath with that Motoyasu...?

If it were me I'd come up with some reason and enter at a different time.

Huh? The women's bath became noisy.

"Kyua!"

Even Gaelion came over.

Did Ren bring him along?

Which means, Taniko and Female Knight should be in the women's bath as well.

Gaelion came flying over here, then soaked on the bath.

"Among you three, two are female right? Go to the women's bath." [He's talking about Motoyasu 3 companions, the Filo Rials]

"What's with that! Are you trying to separate me from Mokkun!?"

"That's right, no matter what you say, I'll always be with Mo-chan!"

The red one declared that while looking agitated, the blue one agreed.

Right now they're in human form.

Looking it over again, though their colors and hairdos are different from Firo, their physiques are similar.

"Even though you're that female's owner, don't push it!" [red one]

For some reason, with a strong-willed expression she raises a shrill

voice.

Motoyasu to be liked with this type of strong desire to monopolize, is he releasing some kind of pheromones?

To keep him company is a pain.

"Father-in-law said it's no good. C'mon you two, go to the women's bath."

"That's right. Ku— and Mamire are female so you're going to the women's bath."

And like that, Midori ["the green one"] happily pushed the two other's backs and forcibly drove them away to the hedge.

As I thought, she's a little black-hearted.

However, it's better than the usual noisiness.

Drive them away quickly.

""Bu—!""

As they leave behind the same complaint as Firo usually does, the two jump over the hedge.

After that, a very happy-looking Midori took Motoyasu's arm and walked over here.

"All ri—ght, I'm washing Midori—"

"Yes!"

In an extremely good mood Midori was washed by Motoyasu.

Ren was pleasantly watching that scene.

"So Naofumi also came over." (Ren)

"That's right. More importantly, the women's bath sure is noisy."

"There were some who said they wanted to come along so I took them over."

"So that was it after all."

Over there is really a noisy state of affairs.

"Kya—" those kinds of screams like they're having fun can be heard.

"This is a good water."

"Indeed. How is the situation of the curse?"

"I think it's probably getting better. Just a little but today I got some experience."

"Oh really?"

Me too, I'm confident that since I started entering the hot springs little-by-little I can see my Status Degradation getting cured more rapidly.

Well then... taking a long bath is also good but, is it about time to get up?

Thinking the same, Rishia and Itsuki get up from the spring.

"Then, I'm leaving first. Recover yourself at ease."

"Sure."

It was by the time I was having such a conversation with Ren, I think.

Motoyasu was walking along the hedge and started peeping.

"Motoyasu-san. Stop this."

"What are you saying, Midori. I must confirm Firo-tan's growth with my eyes no matter what. For instance, even if there's a lot of pigs there, enough to make me nauseous, I'm not afraid."

Oh c'mon already... even if Motoyasu comes to the bath his broken state doesn't change?

Something troublesome seems to be starting.

This time, let me get up quickly.

"What are you doing!"

Ren took care of cautioning Motoyasu who started doing that.

Previously, you were aiming for the "cool", lucky lecher act, weren't you?

Judging by appearance, he cautioned him seriously, but.

"Fue~..."

To the Motoyasu trying to peek in right before her eyes, Rishia leaked out her voice.

Indeed, trying to peek with a woman right next to you! That guy is a Hero.

In a different sense.

"Even though I was thinking of how much I want to see Firo-tan."

"Indeed, you would think to want to see Firo-san, right?"

Itsuki gets on board with Motoyasu's words.

What's with that? Why are you getting on board.

"Itsuki-sama! What are you saying?"

"But you heard it how Firo-san has become pretty too, right? That's in that meaning, isn't it?" [the word here is kirei, which means both pretty and clean. Firo became "kirei" when Naofumi washed her in the previous chapter]

Indeed, when I washed Firo she asked 'Is Firo pretty~?', is that what you're talking about?

So you're still a little weird after all.

"All right, then Itsuki, let's go peep in on the women's bath together!"

"Understood."

"Stop Itsuki!"

"Please stop, Itsuki-sama!"

"Understood."

This routine sure is troublesome.

Should I get up already?

"Come on, Midori, become a foothold!"

Now you're trying to make a foothold to peep in!?

It's dislikable isn't it. Midori wanted to come in the bath with Motoyasu after all.

"I don't want to."

Just as one thought, it was rejected.

"Nono, Midori, here you must follow my order."

And so, Motoyasu took off the towel that was wrapping around Midori.

Why did you take off the towel!?

""!?"""

Ren, Itsuki, Rishia all petrified in an instant.

I was looking away as I was leaving so I didn't see it, what's up?

"A... u... It, it's embarrassing."

For the first time Midori went into his Filo Rial form in front of me.

It's huge!

Even bigger than Firo in her Filo Rial form.

While in human form they don't differ much, even though among the 3 she's shortest, in Filo Rial form she's the tallest?

Is it because he's male?

No, in our Filo Rial barn there are other males but they're not this big.

"Huge!" Ren

"It's big." Itsuki

"Fueeeeee..."

Motoyasu jumped on the embarrassed Midori's back and tried peeking over the hedge.

Certainly I also think he's big but... why are you all surprised that much?

"Naofumi also saw it?" Ren

"Saw what?"

"You didn't see it!?"

"Like I say, saw what?"

"Before that one transformed, underneath the towel——"

"Wa, Waaaaaaa!"

Midori flails about and Motoyasu slips off, he sinks into the spring.

Midori then shuts up Ren's mouth.

"Truly a King!"

However, Itsuki ended up giving the continuation.

Don't let your emotions show up only at a time like this!

Was it really something to be that astonished about?

"King? Isn't that because he's a male?"

"That's not it..."

"Waaaaaaaaaaa! Stoooooooooooooop!"

"Understood."

Huh?

I don't quite get it.

"Naofumi-sama, did something happen?"

Rafutalia peeks over from the hedge, showing her face.

"Yeah, apparently this idiot tried peeping again but, Midori here——"

"Please. Not one more word, don't cause an uproar!"

Midori who returned to human form and covered his nether regions with the towel supplicated.

What are you so afraid of?

"Is that so?"

"Naofumi-sama... didn't participate, right?" Rafutalia "Yeah, I was just

trying to leave."

Already at the vicinity of the dressing room I wave my hand at Rafutalia as I answer.

Or should I say, don't you peep on the men's bath.

"...A little..."

"A? Come again?"

I'm not particularly going deaf.

The words Rafutalia was muttering, I heard them word for word.

Therefore, I try asking.

"You wanted me to see, is it?"

It's a fact that it's of no interest, but well.

At any rate, Rafutalia saying that kind of thing sure is unusual.

Is there some reason... Ah, is that it?

"Were you playing some kind of game? If you made me peep you'd win, that kind of game?"

"Haa....." [indeed, that was god-like dense]

So it was like that.

That noisy bunch came over to the bath so you ended up playing some weird game.

Those guys seem to have a lot of fun teasing me so Rafutalia too got pulled into it.

The principal offender, is it Melty?

Kiel would also be a strong candidate, but it seems she came into the men's bath previously.

Who else came I don't know.

Well, if they're getting along it's fine.

"Fu...."

Ignoring that situation was Gaelion, who went flying over to the hedge happily.

You're trying to peep, aren't you. Moreover it's the papa Gaelion.

Don't get aroused over humans.

"Mu—! Don't come here!"

To the Gaelion who was trying to peep from the hedge, Firo threw a bucked right on his face, a clean hit.

"Kyuaa..."

With a splash, Gaelion sunk on the spring.

Are you an idiot?

Really an incorrigible fellow.

"Anyway, I'm leaving. Rafutalia and everyone else soak up at your leisure."

"Haa... Understood."

Motoyasu sitting in a seiza alone this time is a inconsequential complement.

Chapter 272: The Second Conference of Heroes [Start]

I step out of the Onsen and expose my body to the nighttime breeze. While I bask in the cool air, Ren and Motoyasu get out as well.

Itsuki and Rishia are already out, and they're cooling off together.

I can see nothing but a couple when I look at them, but Itsuki's expressionless face makes it feel like they had just experienced a failed date.

"Naofumi." (Ren)

Ren calls out to me.

I'm not sure what Raphtalia and the others are doing, but they haven't exited the women's side yet.

They're taking a long bath.

"What?" (Naofumi)

"I asked this island's count when I got here. He allowed us to use the conference room we used last time. Can we gather all the heroes there to talk?" (Ren) "Isn't the village fine?" (Naofumi)

"That's true, but if you think about it, that's the place where the heroes started arguing with and denying one another. That's why I want us to gather there and talk once more." (Ren) "How unnecessary." (Naofumi)

"I've already talked to Itsuki and Motoyasu. Let's talk a bit before the women come out." (Ren) "Waiting for them is a waste of time. I guess it's fine." (Naofumi) There's nothing gained in waiting, so I'm fine with it.

It seems that Ren will be satisfied by it.

We climb the spiral stairs to the room we met in before.

Last time I climbed these steps, I was able to look out at the other islands.

When I try to look through the windows now, my vision is clouded by

the darkness of night. I see nothing but shadows.

The island's activation period is long over.

It's like a resort's off-season.

This island will only be lively again in 10 years.

I remember hearing it from the lord here.

Even during off-season, adventurers still come.

The area's a tourist attraction, and the monsters have moderate strength, so hunting is permitted to a certain extent.

There are some rare monsters to be found. Are the materials rare as well?

I didn't get too much money for them though.

Ren, Motoyasu and Midori, Itsuki and Rishia, and I enter the room and find seats around the round table.

"Henceforth, the second official conference of Heroes shall commence."
(Ren) Ren raises his hand and declares.

"There's no chairman, I'd like to act as a representative." (Ren) "Got it."
(Naofumi)

Recently, Ren's been overflowing with enthusiasm.

The goal of fighting the wave has ignited a flame within his soul.

My end goal is survival, so I doubt I'll ever become like that.

The fact that he's still obsessed with himself means that he hasn't changed that much from the start.

Though, I think he's on a better track than before.

"And? What did you want to talk about?" (Naofumi)

"Let's continue the discussion that was suspended last time." (Ren) "I think we were arguing about reinforcement methods." (Naofumi)
"Yeah..." (Ren)

Ren raises his sword out front and starts reading something I cannot

see.

“Naofumi gave Shadow... a list of our various methods of getting stronger. We can combine them to obtain greater strength. At first, I didn’t believe it... but Naofumi was able to integrate all of them to put a stop to the calamity we caused. This points to the fact that his words were the truth.” (Ren) “That’s right.” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu and Ren both nod.

Itsuki just gives off the feeling of nodding.

“Because of my curse, I was unable to carry out smithing or enhancements well, but thanks to the daily usage of the onsens, I’m gradually getting better.” (Ren) “There’s no way Father-in-Law would ever lie. I learned to put these methods to practice myself!” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu announces this fact with a smile on his face.

“I know, so calm down. Itsuki, what about you?” (Naofumi) “... I understand.” (Itsuki)

Itsuki fiddles with the icons on his status. His eyes dart back and forth.

“I did it.” (Itsuki)

It’s because he can’t think for himself right now.

The current Itsuki doesn’t know how to doubt others.

I guess this makes his situation worthwhile.

“... So it was true. If I wasn’t so prideful at that time, then perhaps all of that wouldn’t have happened.” (Itsuki) Since his symptoms are slowly being alleviated, Itsuki is able to utter some words of regret.

Is this because of the curse? Or are those his true thoughts? Who can say.

“That’s why, once more, I wish to continue this talk.” (Ren) “Are you sure there’s more to talk about?” (Naofumi) “No, there has to be something else.” (Ren)

“What is there left to say?” (Naofumi)

I think I know everything I need to know from the other three heroes.

“Naofumi, recently, I’ve been travelling with Eclair, Rishia, and the others from your village. During that time, I discovered something that I want to show you.” (Ren) “What?” (Naofumi)

“This.” (Ren)

Ren changes the shape of his sword and presents it to me.

It’s a strangely shaped sword which looks like a bundle of strings strung around each other countless times.

Honestly, it doesn’t look strong at all.

“What is that?” (Naofumi)

“It’s a blade called the Comrade Sword. Its ability is『Comrade Growth Adjustment (Small)』” (Ren) “What are the conditions to unlock it?” (Naofumi) (TL: Literally, the Nakama Sword) “... I don’t know. Before I knew it, it was unlocked.” (Ren) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Comrade Growth Adjustment (Small)... is it? It’s the same as my slave enhancement.

Looking at the current Ren, I have no idea how he got it.

“If this were a game, would the unlock condition be something like trusting your companions from the bottom of your heart?” (Naofumi) I start off with a vague enquiry, and Ren nods.

“Probably...” (Ren)

With a bitter expression, he continues.

“As I thought. I didn’t fully trust my previous comrades. If only this sword came out earlier, then perhaps they wouldn’t have died.” (Ren) “That’s one possibility. But that doesn’t make it useless now.” (Naofumi) “... As expected of Naofumi. That’s why, like this, I want to discuss any new things we may have discovered.” (Ren) “I see. I understand where you’re coming from.” (Naofumi) I think there are plenty of things I haven’t discovered yet, so asking around may be useful.

There may be materials I have yet to feed my shield with highly desirable abilities.

Comrade Sword... It seems to have an ability like my Slave Use Shield.
... Wait a second. Do the effects stack?

I mean, Ren's trusted comrades are Female Knight and Taniko, right?
Female Knight's another case, but Taniko's my slave.

If his comrade growth correction stacks with my slave one, then it would be really useful.

I'll need to carefully look over Taniko's status later.

By the way, I'm also doing a bit of research on my own.

"Then, should I teach you something?" (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Ren)

"Yeah, when I fed my slave's hair and such to the Shield, more Shields with growth corrections came out. In Ren's case, I recommend feeding Kiel or Taniko's weapon to your sword." (Naofumi) What I found were racial Shield systems.

But, there are plenty of skill-trees I'm unable to unlock as of yet.

Atlas, Fohl, and Sadina's races are currently impossible.

What I unlocked were race Growth Corrections.

"Recommend... Naofumi even knows that much." (Ren)

"But it's not like I've tried feeding meat and bone." (Naofumi) As if I could do something that insane.

The Heroes must remain as humans.

"Right. Ren, try Female Knight's hair too. Perhaps you'll get a Comrade Sword II." (Naofumi) "Eclair is a bit..." (Ren)

She looks like one who would complain a bit.

That girl seems like the type who would say, 'A girl's hair is her life' or something.

(TL: A Japanese saying)

“Father-in-Law, I’ve also tried absorbing everyone’s feathers into my spear.” (Motoyasu) “I’ve already unlocked all of the Filo Rial series.” (Naofumi) “As expected of Father-in-Law! How did you get them all!? Please tell me!” (Motoyasu) “Motoyasu, you’re being loud. Think about it by yourself.” (Naofumi) My base stats have risen a considerable amount.

Now that I think about it... Sadina said that Raphtalia was not of the Raccoon tribe.

Though she’s of some relation to them.

There was a Raccoon Shield on my shield tree, but it never unlocked.

I’ve always wondered why, but it must be because Raphtalia is a subspecies.

I guess I’m satisfied with that explanation.

By the way, Sadina’s didn’t unlock either.

I fed her materials to the Shield too, but the Luka Shield didn’t unlock.

She said she was of the Sakamata Race, I think.

Taniko was of the Nui Race, and when I inserted Kiel’s fur into the shield, the Wanui Shield was unlocked.

(TL: Nui is an anagram of Inu, which is dog. If I scramble Dog, they become too OP.) (ED: God Kiel lol)

From a glance, they both have dog ears and tails, but it seems they’re a little different.

I mean, Kiel can transform.

Anyways, with all the subspecies and relatives, even if I know the basic traits, I can’t tell apart the specific species.

Raphtalia’s race is pretty much like the difference between a Balloon and an Orange Balloon.

If I took some Raccoon hair, would I understand something?

No, it didn't help at all.

An icon did light up, but it didn't unlock.

I should have been able to see the name of her racial shield, but I couldn't figure it out.

Though several shields lit up, even if I knew the race, I couldn't change to it.

The Shields linked to Raccoon are ones like High Raccoon and East Raccoon. There are quite a few.

Perhaps it would be good to look at the Filo Rial tree for reference.

After I received Fitoria's feather, though it unlocked the series, after a certain point, the names showed up as ???.

It's like that.

The Filo Rial series has had all the material requirements met, so as long as I raise my level, I should become able to use them. Even now, there are a few locked ones.

In Raphtalia's case, the materials are insufficient.

Is hair not enough?

But it's not like she's a monster, so I can't get any meat or bone.

... But if you think about it, could I use humans as materials too?

What exactly are these legendary weapons?

"Father-in-Law?" (Motoyasu)

"... What?" (Naofumi)

Is he going to talk about Filo Rials again?

"How about feeding death row prisoners to your weapon?" (Motoyasu)

"..... Ren, how about it?" (Naofumi)

"Nonono! I get the feeling that's a line that should never be crossed..."

(Ren) "That's right, let's give up." (Naofumi)

Motoyasu. You're getting quite dangerous.

I think it's best to carefully distance myself from him.

I forcibly change the topic.

"Ah, right. The Hero Inscription on this island, did you people read it?"
(Naofumi) Itsuki is still learning. His magic doesn't recover, so he can't read magic words.

Even so, he's learning the written language.

That's why I address this question to Ren and Motoyasu.

"Yeah, I read it." (Ren)

"Of course, Father-in-Law!" (Motoyasu)

"What magic did you get?" (Naofumi)

There's a possibility that the magic learned depends on the individual.

I learned Zveit Aura, but it's not certain that Ren and Motoyasu learned the same.

"Zveit Magic Enchant."

Chapter 273: The Second Conference of Heroes [Middle]

“Magic Enchant, right. Its effect is?” (Naofumi)

“It’s a magic sword. After casting, it endows magic that has been received, and I can slash at enemies while it improves the strength of my magic for a little while.” (Ren) “There are some guys who can use something similar.” (Naofumi) Sadina used a technique to pour magic into her harpoon.

I wonder if it’s different to that?

“It’s fine even if it’s not my own magic. Normally I can only improve my own magic for a short time.” (Ren) “I see.” (Naofumi)

It’s quite convenient magic.

You can also aim for a counter after receiving the opponent’s magic.

“Its weakness is that you can only take up to Zweite. When I tried taking Dreifach as a test, it was impossible.” (Ren) “Is that so. What about Motoyasu?” (Naofumi)

“I learned Zweite Absorb, Father-in-law.” (Motoyasu) “Hm... its effects?” (Naofumi)

Well from its name, it seems like it would be able to absorb magic or something.

“It cancels Zweite-class magic and absorbs it. The problem is that I can’t move after casting it.” (Motoyasu) It really is a problem for Motoyasu, who is good at fighting, to be unable to move.

So this magic can’t be cast in advance.

“It’s range is?” (Naofumi)

“From what I’ve experienced, it’s around 5 meters.” (Motoyasu) “I see.” (Naofumi)

Here, different magic was learned.

But they are useful in terms of convenience.

So what is written on that inscription, based on the current pattern, is support-type magic.

It's up to Zweite, but if I can use Revelation-level techniques then they should probably be able to use something superior as well.

Because they've got a wide range of use, they should also be able to use Dreifach if they tune it.

...I can only use Recovery and Support magic, but I wonder how it is with the others?

"What are your aptitudes in regards to magic?" (Naofumi) "Speaking of which, we haven't talked about that. Naofumi was Recovery and Support magic, right?" (Ren) "That's right." (Naofumi)

"Mine is Water and Support magic. Well, there are some water spells that can heal, so I can't say it's unconditional." (Ren) Father-in-Law. I can use Fire and Recovery magic. Similarly, I can use Support magic with my Fire spells." (Motoyasu) "I have Wind and Earth magic. Likewise, I can use a bit of Recovery and Support magic." (Itsuki) Ren is Water and Support.

Motoyasu is Fire and Recovery.

Itsuki is Wind and Earth.

It's divided splendidly.

But they're able to use Recovery or Support Magic within their Systems.

"Our Recovery and Support magic don't have as high an effect as Naofumi's does." (Ren) "My Fire's Recovery magic is better." (Motoyasu)

"Well obviously." (Naofumi)

Because Motoyasu can use Recovery magic.

Speaking of which..... I have no offensive abilities.

I'm sure the Magic Shop said so.

For some reason, when one casts magic, it is influenced by the caster's

disposition and that disposition can be seen even in simple Recovery Magic or something.

Motoyasu's casting of Heal probably has some fire mixed in.

And when the caster doesn't have the disposition for it, for example when Motoyasu casts Support Magic, it is noticeably weaker.

Come to think of it.... Recovery magic should have an attack-type....

I'm sure it was Fast Decay.

I tried casting it, but it failed.

According to the Magic Shop, it's rare for someone to have no disposition for Offence like this.

But on the other hand, the magic Fast Grow Heal was a success.

Its effect is Fatigue Recovery.

Nevertheless, it has a weak effect on severe fatigue, and is rather pointless to cast on myself.

This is Recovery magic from the Support Category. Wounds also get healed somewhat.

"I guess the magic from the inscription is special." (Naofumi) Aura increases one's full capacity.

Magic Enchant endows a weapon with magic, and even has the capability of using the opponent's magic.

Absorb cancels out magic.

"What will Itsuki learn, I wonder." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Itsuki)

"Itsuki-sama, do your best to go learn it, okay." (Rishia) "Yes." (Itsuki)

Itsuki nodded many times.

Has he become a little better?

"Right, speaking of magic, do you guys know of the Dragon Pulse magic series?" (Naofumi) There's probably no reason to untactfully conceal it

any more.

Ren looks like he's reflected and no longer cares about coveting methods to become stronger.

There would be no point in this tug-of-war of arms if we lose the waves.
[T/N: Arms as in weapons. The actual word used was 足 (lit. foot/leg) but my sleepy brain can't think of the right word to use so arms will do for now]

"Is that the unique magic that Wyndia uses?" (Ren)

"It's the magic that Dragons and some monsters use." (Midori) Midori supplemented.

Well, he is a Filorial like Firo.

They hate dragons, I wonder if he even understands the magic system those dragons use.

"I heard that Naofumi can use it. How is its use?" (Ren) "Honestly, it's a pain. However, I know how Ren feels when he casts supporting magic with Water magic." (Naofumi) I take power from the water in the pitcher and let them see it put into practice.

『I guide the power of this water and wish for its embodiment. Oh Dragon Pulse. Give me power』

"Aqua Seal" (Naofumi)

I cast water support magic on Ren.

"Uwa" (Ren)

Ren closed his eyes, blinking in surprise, and checked his status.

"Doesn't magic have something similar?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, it's a spell to increase fire resistance called Fast Resist Fire."
(Ren) Raising one hand, he cast magic on me the exact same way.

I see, indeed it's similar.

I can confirm my fire resistance increasing with my Status.

“So what’s the trouble with that Dragon Pulse method?” (Ren) “The main thing is that you can’t use the Dragon Pulse method unless you do the calculations, unlike magic which you can cast as long as you can read the letters. The formula changes.” (Naofumi) “I don’t really get it but it sounds difficult.” (Ren) “You probably won’t understand until you’re able to use it. I’ll have you guys learn it eventually.” (Naofumi) I suppose it’s better to ask Gaelion to also teach the others the Dragon Pulse method.

It’s needed for Revelation and magic comprehension so it’s better that they learn.

Or rather, I think so even now, but there’s no doubt it was necessary to strengthen to this level.

“I got it. It must be true if Naofumi says so.” (Ren) “I don’t want Motoyasu-san to learn it. It’s magic that dragon’s use.” (Midori) “Midori, it’s regrettable but since Father-in-Law is telling me to learn it, I have to learn.” (Motoyasu) “Buu....” (Midori)

Midori glared at me intently.

Not that I care.

“I’ve just been sharing so far, but have you guys discovered anything?” (Naofumi) For the time being, Ren brought information on his companion’s sword.

I wonder what Motoyasu and Itsuki have?

“Kuu and Marine and Midori’s pleasure point, the statistics of the pleasure points of all the Filorials is—” (Motoyasu) “Motoyasu, shut up. Don’t talk any more.” (Naofumi) “Motoyasu-san. Please stop. It’s embarrassing...” (Midori) “Please wait, Father-in-Law. What did I say wrong?” (Motoyasu) “I don’t want to know!” (Naofumi)

Does this guy only have Filorials on his mind?

Even Midori is getting embarrassed.

Jeez.

By the way, Firo likes it when I wash around the roots of her feathers.

And also around her throat.

Firo's number 1 subordinate, the cutesy kid, also likes being stroked around the throat. [T/N: The Purple Filorial, remember the one who was teaching all the others during the 'Be loved by Master' Workshop?]

"Let's see.... then I'll talk about what I saw when I went to Faubley. For some reason, there were Asphalt roads and cars." (Motoyasu) "By cars you mean those Cars?" (Naofumi) [T/N: Cars from their world/s]

"Yes. They were quite old, but there were other vehicles apart from carriages. This is something that differs a lot from games." (Motoyasu) Well, they do periodically summon heroes from different worlds, and it's not like there's no chance of some of those guys displaying their knowledge.

And Faubley is a country that embraces heroes the most.

I guess guys who possess that kind of knowledge appear a lot.

"Yes. They exist. It seems we can make them with alchemy from a different world." (Rishia) Rishia affirmed.

Alchemy from a different world, right.

Well, I have heard that the predecessor to science was alchemy.

In that case, calling it a different world's alchemy may not necessarily be wrong.

"I haven't seen any in Melromarc though...." (Naofumi) "It's no good if we don't have paved roads, and supplying fuel is difficult so hasn't really been implemented." (Rishia) "I see." (Naofumi)

Because Heroes have a habit of keeping secrets after all.

It's also very likely that the Heroes summoned in Faubley only use such convenient knowledge for themselves.

Which reminds me, the viewing crystals resemble a digital camera.

They might be a tool made by a past hero or their followers by combining modern knowledge with magic.

Come to think of it, do they use the parts that were in the carriage I requested?

Even I had the option of using that knowledge to attempt to improve my sales.

Well with the shield's capabilities, using items or the slaves and monsters was more cost-effective so I didn't, although I couldn't really do it anyway because I don't have the technical knowledge.

The fuel supply and such is also troublesome.

Would it be better use coal to move?

Or else use magic to move.... in that case, it's probable.

Frankly, it's a world that might even have aircrafts, so I shouldn't worry so much.

I should try consulting with Imia's Uncle or someone.

"Itsuki, what about you?" (Naofumi)

"Here." (Itsuki)

Itsuki held out something that looked like a card.

"What's this?" (Naofumi)

"The Dark Guild's Membership card. As long as you have this, you can procure information from the Dark Guild." (Itsuki) [T/N: Come join the Dark Side, we have Kookie(s) XD]

Chapter 274: The Second Conference of Heroes [End]

Wait, the Dark Guild's Membership card...?

My face cramps for a second.

"... And why do you have such a thing?" (Naofumi)

"It was a prize for one of the Coliseum events." (Itsuki) "Ah, I see..." (Naofumi)

He brought out quite a dubious item...

Though, knowing Itsuki's circle of friends, it's not strange that he would have such a thing.

"As long as you can pay, there's nothing you can't get from them apparently." (Itsuki) "I'll use it if it becomes necessary." (Naofumi)

Honestly, I don't really want to involve myself.

I mean, it's probably full of people like the Slave Merchant.

Even the Pig King's taken a liking to me. This may be a bit late, but I get the feeling that most of my acquaintances are villains.

It's that: "Birds of a feather flock together," something like that.

... If I had to choose, I would say I'm a villain. I can't find any evidence to deny that.

I mean, my enemy, Witch, was sent to a brutal execution. From the point of view of some protagonist out there, my actions are befitting of a criminal.

If this was a manga, perhaps some Hero of Light would be on his way to exterminate me.

But reality isn't so sweet, so I don't think that a messenger of justice will come for my head this late in the game.

Even so, why does Itsuki have this?

It's something the previous Itsuki would have detested.

"I'm surprised a justice idiot like you kept such a thing. I thought you would try to crush them or something." (Naofumi) "If used well, even evil can become justice." (Itsuki) Is it like how assassination can be used to keep order?

That's a statement befitting of Itsuki's justice.

He may have even assassinated in the name of justice already.

"I want us to gather up the various gems, plants, and drops we've all collected. Naofumi, is that fine?" (Ren) "Yeah, that might actually be the main point of this meeting." (Naofumi) Based on all of our operations, we're putting all of our knowledge down on paper.

Even I'm remembering things I was on the verge of forgetting.

I guess there are still things for me to learn.

And sacrificing my own knowledge isn't a terrible price to pay for that.

"Ren, though you may already know, I'd like to talk about the Hengen Musou style of fighting." (Naofumi) "The one that Eclair and Rishia use?" (Ren)

"Right. That style focuses on the use of Chi." (Naofumi) "Eclair also explained it, but I can't seem to understand it. Can you?" (Ren) "A bit. Since Atlas, who can see things others cannot, has continuously been punching the weaknesses I've never noticed in my defenses, I think I've grasped something." (Naofumi) I start explaining from the first time Female Knight showed me the style. Even if the heroes cannot use Musou Kassei, the ability to recover Mana and SP will come in handy. It also has plenty of applications in skills.

As I was doing so, Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki begin reading screens invisible to my eyes.

"... It's true. It wasn't there before, but the item known as EP appeared in the help menu." (Ren) "What?" (Naofumi)

"I think it's an abbreviation of Energy Points... Using SP and Magic to

power up skills, and raising abilities... How to use it is..." (Ren) "W-wait..." (Naofumi)

It can't be in the Help. It's something I discovered.

It doesn't even involve the legendary weapons.

"It also explains how to use it. There was an occupation that could do something like this in Brave Star Online. It was a bit simpler, but I think it's something close." (Ren) "Father-in-Law, there was also something like this in the games I played." (Motoyasu) "Same..." (Itsuki)

Um, so it's something like a job skill?

Something only a certain class can use?

Quit messing with me!

"Understanding the energy within the body... this is quite hard. But..." (Ren) The Chi emitting from Ren starts changing.

It starts flowing around his sword. Eventually, it settles into a steady flow around his blade. I can tell all of this just by looking.

The same happens to Motoyasu and Itsuki.

Now if they were to use a skill, the potency would definitely increase.

"Fuee... Why can you use it after just getting that vague description?" (Rishia) "Fuee..." (Naofumi)

"Fueeeeeeee!" (Rishia)

"...fue..." (Editor)

"Fuee!" (Translator)

As I imitate Rishia, she cries out sorrowfully.

"Ku... My Mana, SP, and EP were instantly depleted. I'll need to practice to master it. I feel really exhausted." (Ren) "Right." (Itsuki)

"This is amazing! I, Motoyasu, will work hard for Father-in-Law's sake!" (Motoyasu) Belief can become power.

After listening to me, and believing in me wholeheartedly, it appeared in

their help and they became able to use it?

Cut the crap.

Just how hard do you think I trained to learn that!?

At this rate, if I just show them the basics, they should be able to use it just fine.

I check the Help screen of my own Shield.

It's not there.

... Am I a non-believer?

Perhaps the way I feel right now is the same as when the other three saw me getting strong all of a sudden.

"This power... if I mix it into skills and magic, will it amplify their power?" (Ren) I'm at a loss for words as I watch Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki learning the basics of Chi control. The only thing I can do is watch.

I thought it was something I found on my own. They took it so easily.

How unfair this world is.

Even so, it seems that these three are finally starting to catch up to me...

Should I give up on telling them about Revelation?

I kinda want to be ahead, if even just a little.

However, as long as I'm in control, it would be best to teach them if we wish to overcome the wave.

If belief can become power, then if you don't believe, then you won't find power. I don't think these people will betray me soon.

That being the case, since these people have the potential to become stronger than me, it's best if I teach them.

No matter how far I strengthen the Shield, I can't use it for offense.

And I'm curious as to what sort of large scale magic will come out of them using Revelation.

"Since you're just learning the basics of Chi, I'll have to explain SP later.

Are you fine with postponing my explanation of magic as well?"

(Naofumi) "Yeah, I wanted to learn it, but if I have to figure it out one step at a time, I guess we'll have to postpone it. If Naofumi teaches, then I think I can learn it quite fast." (Ren) Ren's lack of doubt in me is irritating for some reason.

Should I just make up some BS?

... But what if their belief in that BS makes it real!?

If it fails, they'll begin to doubt me, so I should probably give up on that.

Though it wasn't present at the time, when I checked later, it was clearly written in the Help.

And on my status, the stat of EP also appeared.

What I was able to confirm was that Heroes are unable to learn Mussou Kassei.

The Legendary Weapons make one different from the average person. Just by possessing one, the user is sent into a constant state of Mussou Kassei.

The Help called it Energy Boost.

Since it was perpetually active, it couldn't be stacked on again.

It was quite a boring result.

"... Let's see. I've also used Item Creation to try to raise the quality of items. I may be able to put it into practice... That's about all I know for now." (Naofumi) "Alright." (Itsuki)

"Father-in-Law, I still have more to say." (Motoyasu) "Yeah, that was quite a productive meeting this time around." (Ren) I get the feeling that these people were simply listening to me give a presentation though...

"Naofumi-sama...?" (Raphtalia)

The door to the meeting room opens, and Raphtalia sticks her head in.

"So this is where you were." (Raphtalia)

“Have you cooled down from the bath?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I think it’s about time we returned to the village. I was looking for you.” (Raphtalia) “Ren wanted to restart the meeting that was put on hold earlier. We were just discussing a few things.” (Naofumi) “Is that so? So did you learn anything good?” (Raphtalia) No, I feel like I’ve been the one teaching.

But since Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki are counted as part of my forces, I can’t call this result bad.

I guess these people were called to this world for a reason. They all have a screw loose in the right place.

“In order to respond to Naofumi’s trust in me, I will get stronger. Leave it to me.” (Ren) “Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

Ren’s turning into an annoying person.

I didn’t like the old Ren, but the current one is simply oppressive.

“Yeah, Father-in-Law! I’ll also work hard!” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu is annoying.

Mostly his way of addressing me.

“For some reason, I get the feeling that everyone here has gotten stronger.” (Rishia) Rishia holds Itsuki’s hand as she collects her thoughts.

But with this, Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki are on the road to becoming stronger. Is that alright?

(TL: This is not the image for this chapter, but still, it is highly relevant. Credit to Nopeandnope for posting it.)



Chapter 275: Revival Festival

A little while after the Heroes held their conference.

Recently, Ren's curse's effects have been lessening. His loss of luck, and his decrease in EXP has gone below levels where we have to worry about it.

The Status reduction from my curse is almost trivial as well.

There's around one month left until the next wave...

Imya's uncle was quite a skilled craftsman, and he's been making weapons and armor for everyone.

As his disciple, Ren and his group are going around the country looking for materials.

Now, the villagers have become quite strong. The Granny also carries out training to increase their combat abilities as high as possible.

Isn't it about time for me to go raise my level as well? I guess I should go on a quest to some monster infested dungeon or something.

As I was thinking that...

"Revival Festival?" (Naofumi)

Melty came to my place carrying a stack of documents.

"Yeah." (Melty)

"What's that supposed to mean?" (Naofumi)

"Well, we've pretty much finished reviving the villages, and we resolved the Three Hero Church brainwashing incident, right?" (Melty) "Hmm... Do we have the time to be doing such things?" (Naofumi) Houou will attack in one month's time. Should we really be holding a festival?

Is what I think, but in a world like this one, it's probably best to have fun while you have the time.

"Then just go and hold one by yourself." (Naofumi) "Are you sure? If you joined, you could expect quite a bit of profit." (Melty) "How much?"

(Naofumi)

“If you want a rough estimation, about this much.” (Melty) Melty presents a numerical estimate to me.

It was an absurd amount.

“Why this much?” (Naofumi)

“Because we’re going to host quite a few attractions, and we’ll be managing a bit of healthy betting.” (Melty) Gambling.

I don’t hate that sort of thing.

Don’t get me wrong. I hate participating in it.

I enjoy gambling others out of their money.

But that presents a problem.

“Isn’t that dangerous?” (Naofumi)

“There’s no problems. We’re planning some Filo Rial races similar to the ones at the Coliseum. Naofumi’s place has an abundance of good steeds.” (Melty) (TL: Melty uses a word to describe good racing horses here.) So we’re using the Filo Rials.

I get the feeling they’re living sedentary lives, so perhaps an event like this is a good opportunity.

“We’re having other people challenge them. The earnings will definitely be great.” (Melty) “...Fumu. Got it.” (Naofumi)

“We also have a music show by Firo-chan planned.” (Melty) “Music?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah, Firo-chan’s had experience singing in bars. She’s become quite famous by word of mouth. If you find her, go call out to her.” (Melty) Yes, Firo’s definitely good at singing.

If there’s music playing, she can make words and tunes to complement the song perfectly, and she’s got a nice sense of rhythm.

She also likes dancing, and in human form, she’s a bishojo.

It's as if she's a...

"She seems to have a lot of fans. Last time Firo sang in the village bar, the bar was so packed that no one could fit through the door anymore." (Melly) "Is she some sort of Idol?" (Naofumi)

"Some people even settle in that village for Firo-chan. Painters have sent in requests to use her as a model. Should I permit them? I think we'll be able to rake in quite a bit." (Melly) I can't wait to see what sort of face Motoyasu will make.

Will he snap, and try to monopolize Firo?

No, his wallet will probably go to the great bin in the sky as he buys all her merchandise.

"In this case, should we open up a photography session, and sell each photo crystal for 1 gold?" (Melly) "Fumu. That sounds good." (Naofumi)

Excess gold is never a problem.

I've started instating small taxes in the village as well, so my finances are rising.

Well, making Imya's Uncle's workshop, miscellaneous costs relating to weapons and armor, maintaining Rat's equipment, procuring medicine, and a lot of other things have cut it by quite a bit.

Still, Melty plans to exploit her best friend to earn money...

It seems she hasn't realized it herself, but she definitely carries the blood of her parents.

No, she's creating a place for Firo to shine... If you look at her like a Producer, I guess she's trying to benefit her friend.

"Got it. The merchant association has already began progress, so we should be able to hold it in around three days." (Melly) "Should I participate as well?" (Naofumi)

"You're the lord, so that goes without saying. Though things should proceed just fine as long as you signal the opening and closing." (Melly) "Understood. You can permit any event that guarantees profit."

(Naofumi) And stuff happened, and three days passed.

“Then the Revival Festival will henceforth commence!” (Naofumi) A grand opening ceremony was held in the town plaza, and the Revival Festival began.

The neighboring town’s started expanding on a large scale, and it’s becoming a town of magnitude second to only the Castle Town.

I’m amazed that it’s made this much progress in the two months since its founding.

Even though it was supposed to have suffered quite a bit of damages from the Three Hero Church brainwashing incident...

Well, the damaged buildings have all been supplemented with Camping Plants, so it’s more of a temporary town.

The people give a loud applause in response to the starting signal.

I haven’t heard a single good thing about this country’s state of affairs.

Perhaps attractions like these are good for the people to vent off steam
“Then Firo will sing~!” (Firo)

Melty nods, and Firo races onto the special stage we erected for this event, in special clothes we prepared for it.

“YEAH!” (Crowd)

A cheer much greater than the previous one echoes through the area.

As I look over the people, I see many of them reminiscent of Idol Groupies I saw only too often in my world scattered here and there.

Hold on... Just how many fans does that bird have?

Are those people behind her musicians?

A large number of people carrying instruments begin playing to match Firo’s song.

The instruments seem to be gentle harp-like ones, but somehow, I get the feeling of a live concert here.

“L. O. V. E. Love Me! Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu)

... Behind all of the fans, Motoyasu is waving around a flag.

I feel disgusted.

Oh, the people around him are Kuu, Marin and Midori, I think.

The three Filo Rials are staring into space with extremely bored expressions on their faces.

The contrast in enthusiasm between them and Motoyasu is amazing.

“Ah... It’s good to be alive.”

“Since the first time we layed ears on Firo-tan’s singing, we couldn’t work up our motivation to do work until we heard it again.”

“Yeah, who cares about Humans and Demi-Humans. We’re all simply people united in listening to her voice. ”

This was an unexpected result.

Because of my orders, fighting between races has stopped. I was also trying to end discrimination, but it seems some people have completely abandoned their discriminatory mindsets to pursue Firo.

Are they saying that whilst knowing her true form?

“Ah, I hope the curse that turned Firo-tan into a divine bird gets dispelled soon. We’re praying for you, Firo-tan!”

... They’re under the impression that she’s under a curse.

How convenient.

When I asked Melty later, she said that Firo’s backstory was arbitrarily decided by the fans.

Aparently she has to act as an idol and earn money in order to break her curse... or something.

It’s a setting that seems possible for a certain TS Idol protagonist. (TL: Apparently an Idol Pretender reference.) Though in truth, her true form is the bird one, people.

“Now, everyone! Let’s cheer with all our might!”

“Yeah~!” (Crowd)

The village plaza’s completely become a concert hall.

Hmm? In a distant corner, a person wearing worn out clothing is cheering for Firo as well.

I quietly leave the plaza.

“Firo’s popularity is amazing.” (Raphtlaia)

Raphtalia breaks out of the crowd, and follows behind me.

I nod honestly at her statement.

“That’s true. Melty told me beforehand, but the sales of her goods are also quite something.” (Naofumi) Since he was convinced they would sell, the accessory merchant started producing and selling official Firo goods.

He set the price quite high, but with that many fans, they’ll sell out in no time.

With this much popularity, perhaps we can have a handshake event, and charge one gold per time.

And finally, we can start producing dakimakura... or not.

“Ah... If I were to buy this... tomorrow’s food will...”

The person in the worn down robes hesitates over his purchase He obviously has not the financing... value your life more, dude.

It’s not my problem if you starve.

By the way, I was informed afterwards that Motoyasu’s three stole the stage and did a concert of their own.

Firo’s show became really heated.

“It seems today’s going to get really hectic.” (Naofumi) The people from my village wanted to participate as well, so they’ve taken various jobs...

It seems that Kiel’s stall is quite crowded.

What was she selling again?

When I look over, I see it's a crepe stand.

"Ah, Nii-chan!" (Kiel)

"Oy, you knew how to make crepes?" (Naofumi)

"Of course!" (Kiel)

An excited Kiel, in dog form, dexterously handles the crepe skins on the pan. She's selling them with the slaves usually on kitchen duty.

Hmph. I thought she was growing to be a gluttonous battle maniac, but she was able to cook as well.

I never expected to find a girly aspect in her at this point.

"Using Nii-chan's crepe as a base, and adding new ideas, this is my original crepe." (Kiel) And what Kiel brought out was grilled fish...

She cuts the body into a texture like canned tuna, adds on sliced Bioplant fruit, and wraps it into the crepe skin.

"Crepes aren't just dessert, you know." (Kiel)

"Ah, yes, yes." (Naofumi)

That sort of crepe existed in my world as well, so it's not like I find it surprising.

It's a way of cooking befitting of Kiel.

"Imya-chan's also opened up a store." (Raphtalia)

In the Bazaar area, I found the stall Imya had opened.

The walls were lined with clothes she made especially for this day.

After appraising them, I find they are all of High Quality. Even so, the price is reasonable, and they're selling like hot cakes.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield-sama." (Imya)

"If they're selling this well, why not raise the price?" (Naofumi) "But the cost of production was quite low, so selling it at any more than this would make me feel..." (Imya) "Ah, so it's about virtue. But the cost of your work itself needs to be included, so you should charge higher. Take note of

that.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Imya)

She’s quite an obedient child.

Raphtalia is carefully inspecting the cheap clothing. Wait, that’s underwear.

I feel like I’m looking at something I shouldn’t be.

It’s that. The feeling I would get if I enter a lingerie shop. Perhaps.

“Is there anything you want?” (Imya)

“Let’s see. Can you use slightly better materials to raise the defense?” (Raphtalia) “Um... Does underwear need defense? For Raphtalia-san, I would recommend these ones.” (Imya) And what Imya brought out was bright red... Victory Panties?

(TL: It’s stuff you wear when you wanna get lucky.) There’s a hole in a strange area.

“Why are you selling something like that, Imya?” (Naofumi) “Ah, yes. Master told me that these items would be in high demand, so it would be beneficial to stock them. I have something for Hero of the Shield-sama as well.” (Imya) “...Why is there a hole in the one you’re recommending me as well?” (Naofumi) And this one is around the anal region.

Even for a tailed Demi-Human, the placing is strange.

“That’s odd... Master said the Hero of the Shield-sama would want something like this...” (Imya) Damn Tailor. Just how rotten is her brain?

And for such depravity to exist in this alternate world where such a genre shouldn’t exist yet...

How frightening. The Tailor is a genius. That wasn’t a compliment.

Let me just declare this. If she were to come to my world, she would have no problems putting food on the table.

“Does it not look cool to you?” (Imya)

“Imya... I’m definitely raising you in a way that you won’t learn that garment’s true meaning.” (Naofumi) “...? Understood.” (Imya)

“Naofumi-sama! If I were to wear this, what would you think!?”
(Raphtalia) Raphtalia inquires with an excited expression. She’s holding the Victory Panties.

No matter how I look at it, she’s still a child on the inside. For her to see such a stimulating item, there’s no helping if she gets strangely excited.

“Raphtalia is already good looking, so I don’t think you have to dress up with things like that.” (Naofumi) “Is that true!? Wait, Naofumi-sama?”
(Raphtalia)

“I think Raphtalia would do fine with a normal pair. How about it?”
(Naofumi) I point to a pair of undergarments similar to the one she usually wears.

“Um, Naofumi-sama. This may sound slightly rude, but you’re not getting aroused at all?” (Raphtalia) “Meaning?” (Naofumi)

Is it like a daughter asking their father?

I think it would be best for her to look natural, rather than wearing those overly-stimulating items.

“Ah, never mind. You don’t have to answer that one.” (Raphtalia) Before I can say anything, Raphtalia puts the underwear back.

What’s wrong?

Did she guess my intentions?

It helps that Raphtalia’s so understanding.

Chapter 276: Bird Competition

“Instead, I think Japanese clothing like Hakama and such would suit Raphtalia more.” (Naofumi) [T/N: Think typical shrine maiden costume]

“Hakama? What do you mean by Japanese clothing?” (Imia) Imia asked, tilting her head.

Because she usually specialises in Western dressmaking, she has an interest in this unknown genre.

“Er.. Japanese clothing also encompasses the Loincloth that Sadina recommended to Kiel.” (Naofumi) “Ah, so you mean Eastern clothing. In that case, should I investigate and make some?” (Imia) “That’s right..... since it will probably look good, let’s request it.” (Naofumi) Raphtalia in Japanese clothing, huh.

“I understand. I’ll make it later. Do you have any preference for the materials?” (Imia) “It’s not being used for battle so it’s fin... no, I’d like you to use quality materials to make it if you can. I’ll be waiting.” (Naofumi) “Oka~y.” (Imia)

Imia finished talking with me and started serving another customer.

Raphtalia in Japanese clothing, huh.....

“Abstain from having a wooden umbrella, unrefined sake and leaves as clothing.” (Naofumi) That could be passed off as a joke if she was still around 5 years old, but letting Raphtalia wear that kind of outfit now would be a crime.

“Why is it that sort of concept, Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia) Well Raphtalia is a Tanuki....

So Shigaraki Ware only exists in my country. [T/N: Pottery & stoneware made in Shigaraki, Japan. Tanuki figures are a popular product.]

I don’t really know if Shigaraki Ware has Female Tanuki though.

Now, how should I pacify Raphtalia.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama.” (Atla)

“Why are you here!?” (Fohl)

I was wondering who Imia was serving, but it turned out to be Atla and Fohl.

“Is it bad that I’m here? More than that, what are you guys doing?”
(Naofumi) “I have been searching for Naofumi-sama.” (Atla)

“Atla! Don’t approach him!” (Fohl)

“So, Fohl. What are you doing?” (Naofumi)

“He has been choosing clothes for Atla-san.” (Imia) Imia replied.

In her hand was a cute dress and accessories.

So he’s already bought them.

“In addition to that, he has commissioned some custom-made items.
He’s requested cute clothes and stuffed toys.” (Imia) “I see, I see.”
(Naofumi)

As usual, he’s been trying to turn his sister into a dress-up doll.

“Clothes that are easy to move in are better though.....” (Atla) Atla
announced ostentatiously.

Well, Gothic Lolita and other cute styles are indeed unsuited for battle.

Besides, a resolute-type like Atla probably doesn’t like them.

“Atla, you won’t be fighting, so it’s fine for you to be at ease. Because
you’re still too young to be mobilised!” (Fohl) “Even if you say that....”
(Atla)

Atla facepalmed and then turned to Imia, looking troubled.

“Have you finished the underwear I wanted?” (Atla) “Ah, yes. It’s an
attractive pair of underwear.”

....She took out a thin pair of underwear, adorned with pretty ornaments,
that was more risqué than the pair she showed Raphtalia.

It was black.

However, the problem was that Atla had a child’s body and appeared to

be around 10 years old, so there was a disparity, or whatever it's called.

Or rather, Atla can't see so why would she even want such a thing.

"Wh—" (Fohl)

Fohl became speechless.

I also feel the same way.

What does Atla intend on by wearing that!

"Stop it, Atla! Nii-chan will never approve of that kind of underwear!"
(Fohl) "Onii-sama." (Atla)

Atla grasped Fohl's hand gently.

"The sister of your dreams doesn't exist. Please look at the real me. I'm someone who would wear this kind of underwear and attack Naofumi-sama." (Atla) "What are you saying!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia shouts with all her strength.

"Wah...." (Fohl)

Fohl looked away from Atla in disbelief and glared at me for some reason.

Why does it feel like I've stolen his lover?

I don't need that kind of development.

"Right. Since you know my feelings of it being wrong, stop your sister's rampage." (Naofumi) "Gu... I get it. Nii-chan will make Atla return to normal." (Fohl) "Do your best." (Naofumi)

"Don't you say that! Now, Atla! We're going to the next store, there's still a lot of things we need to buy!" (Fohl) "Ah, Naofumi-samaaaaaaa!" (Atla)

Don't reach your arm out to me whilst still holding the underwear.

That just looks like you're trying to give me the underwear.

"Atla-san is amazing." (Imia)

"Yeah." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia and Imia gazed at the scene with a faraway look and nodded to each other.

Was it just in my imagination that they were looking as if it was dusk?

“...Maybe I should also buy some.” (Raphtalia)

“What are you saying? I think normal underwear is fine for Raphtalia.” (Naofumi) “.....I understand Atla-san’s feelings now.” (Imia)

Atla’s feelings?

While they were talking, I heard a somewhat noisy voice from outside the town.

If I’m not mistaken, that is where the hurriedly established grass racetracks that Taniko had sponsored were.

For the time being, Rato should be there, looking after the health of the monsters that we’re in the Filorial category.

‘Waaaaaaaaah!’

I could hear cheers and angry bellows.

That was the mix of voices rejoicing their victory and the cries of defeat.

It was a little noisy but it might be good for improving Raphtalia’s mood.

“Let’s go look at the racetracks.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, wait a minute.” (Raphtalia)

When I look at the Filorial Racetracks, unknown Filorials and trainers hung their heads in defeat, and the Filorials from my place raised a victory cry.

As far as it goes, they were all guys who had changed into Filorial Queens and Kings.

Ah, Ren and Itsuki were keeping a lookout as guards.

“Kue.” (Filorial)

The Filorials located me and ran over.

“”Kueee?” (Filorials)

You won? The Filorials faced me and held their heads high, seeming to say ‘Praise me, Praise me’.

“Yes yes, alright.” (Naofumi)

It looks like this is the race under the command of Firo’s number one subordinate, the cutesy kid.

I don’t really want to address them but I stroke them anyway.

And the angry bellows from before were?

Or so I wondered but when I looked around, I saw visitors crying from losing their bets in the audience stands.

“That’s ridiculous! Our First Honor lost!?”

What’s with that horse-like name. [T/N: Racehorses have weird names.]

“Even our legendary Shield Lion! What’s with that!”

.....It seemed there were similarly named racehorse-like competitors everywhere.

“Are you these Filorials’ trainer!?” (Filorial Trainer) The losing Filorials’ trainer approached me, who the Filorials had gathered around.

“If I’m not mistaken, you’re the lord of this land, the Hero of the Shield-sama.” (Filorial Trainer) “Yeah, that’s right?” (Naofumi)

“The Filorials from the Hero of the Shield-sama’s place are all excellent. By all means, would it be acceptable to let our Filorials breed with yours?” (Filorial Trainer) “”Kue!?”” (Filorials)

The Filorials from my place raised their voices in surprise.

And then... I looked at the Filorials of the fellow who brought up the conversation.

When I do, it seems like the losing Filorials were looking this way with somewhat heated gazes.

“”KueKue!!”” (Filorials)

Everyone shook their heads and tried to hide behind my back.

Because there were so many of them, they weren't hidden at all.

Or rather, imitating normal Filorials despite being able to talk is unnecessary. [T/N: Kueee!]

“Of course, we'll provide a mating fee, so won't you consider it?”
(Filorial Trainer) And then the trainer showed me how much he was willing to pay on an abacus-like tool.

....It's a considerable amount of money.

From the audience stands came cries of 'Ooh! Mating with those legendary Filorials!? That'll be the start of a new legend!', the audience holding their breath and watching attentively.

I want to nod along with the mood but.....you know.

I glance behind me.

When I do, all the Filorials had their wings together, praying for my refusal with eyes like a calf being sold off.

I see Rato and Taniko coming for a health check-up.

Rato shrugged casually and replied 'And if the Marquis decides on his own?'

Taniko also said 'Isn't it fine if it turns out well?' and nodded.

They knew just from experience.

“Ah.... I'm the person in charge for now but the one who raised them is someone different, and I also want them have their own freedom. For that kind of thing.....naturally....that....” (Naofumi) Why are my words not coming out properly.

It's because it's not alright for me to arbitrarily decide on their engagement.

Also, they're Filorials raised by Motoyasu, I never had the right.

However, it might be good to accept the breeding charge.

If thoroughbred Filorials are added to my subordinates then I'm sure our combat power will increase.

“”Kueeeee.....”” (Filorials)

Don't cling to me, guys.....

I heard from Melty that the opponent is quite a big organisation.

Are they financed by Zeltbur? Betting is nearly everywhere there, like in the Colosseum.

Refusing is also a pain, and the prospects sound good.

If possible, I want the Filorial bonding to have been unsuccessful already and be done with it.

“Somehow it seems like these guys aren't interested. We can try to match my Filorials and your Filorials for a short time but if it doesn't go well even then, will you give up?” (Naofumi) And so we're compromising.

“I understand.” (Filorial Trainer)

Applause fills the racetracks.

It seems if it goes well, the Filorial Races get heated up.

“”Kueee...”” (Filorials)

The Filorials shake their heads in refusal.

I entered the ring and muttered so the other side couldn't hear.

“Rest assured. It's fine if you guys dislike it. It's alright to send them flying if they approach against your will, as long as there are no injuries.” (Naofumi) “Kuee...” (Filorial)

“Also, I don't think Motoyasu, who deeply cares for you guys, will swallow the story.” (Naofumi) Incidentally, well, this can also be said to the Filorials.

“There are those among you who aren't that dissatisfied so please consider their feelings.” (Naofumi) There's the main group who want to

refuse and the group who doesn't really care.

"It's not like the whole group thinks the same. You guys have the initiative until the end. Understand?" (Naofumi) ""Kue!"" (Filorials)

I don't know if they understand, but the Filorials nod vigorously.

By the way, the Filorials' breeding season lasts for a month.

The neutral group mate with the Filorials in custody, the birds that become renown later are a different story, and Motoyasu heroically fighting those Filorials is yet another story.

Well, the trouble with that later care was when some of the Filorials in custody lost their minds and decided to target Firo of all things.

Firo's kicks were quite capable of paying barely-outrageous retributions.

They tried to chase the future queen and so they were just getting what they deserved though.

Chapter 277: The New Seven Sins.

To celebrate the end of the Revival Festival, we raise a large bonfire in the plaza.

If a certain famous Japanese composition were playing in the background, it would be similar to a festival I knew of, but what's playing is Firo and her accompanying band.

When I head to my village to take a break, I see they're lively with some event over there as well.

It's already late, so it seems my villagers have already returned.

The Slaves, monsters, and Filo Rials are gathering for some reason.

"Now it's time to announce the results of the fifth popularity poll."

... What are they doing?

Fifth?

I get Raphtalia to cast invisibility magic on me, and I sneak closer.

"First, we asked the monsters, 『Who do you like most?』"

"The results are as follows. First place is Rat-san. Second is Wyndia-chan. Third is Hero of the Shield-sama."

The monsters let out their respective cries.

Seeing a gathering of Demi-Humans, monsters, and birds is quite surreal.

I think that as I gaze at Raphtalia. But her expression indicates that she doesn't find anything strange about it.

"Raphtalia, what do you think about that scene?" (Naofumi)

"Meaning?" (Raphtalia)

"Well..." (Naofumi)

"Because of Naofumi-sama, everyone in the village can live their lives happily. I'm also having fun." (Raphtalia) "Ah, I see." (Naofumi)

Oh, the chairman of this meeting is supplementing some info.

“By the way, last time’s results were Hero of the Shield-sama first, and Rat and Wyndia in a tie for second. It seems separating out the Filo Rials as a second category altered the results.”

The monsters nod among themselves.

“Next, we posed the same question to the Filo Rials. 『Who do you like most?』”

“The results are as follows. First place is Hero of the Shield-sama. Second is Melty-chan. Third is the Hero of the Spear-sama.”

“KUEE!” (Filo Rials)

The Filo Rials each begin chirping.

Why am I first?

Motoyasu tends to all of their needs, so isn’t he a shoe in for first place?

How would Motoyasu react if he learned about this?

I kinda want to know, but then again, I kinda don’t.

“The Hero of the Shield-sama’s popularity is overwhelming. Next, we posed this question to everyone. 『Which boy do you think is coolest?』”

Applause fills the area.

“This one gives divided results every time. This time around, the results are as follows. First place goes to the Hero of the Spear-sama, second to Imya-chan’s Uncle, and Third to Fohl-kun.”

This is beginning to get pointless. Should I ignore them and go home?

But why is Imya’s Uncle second?

From what I see, he’s a diligent Mole-like Beastman.

And for Motoyasu and Fohl to be up there, they’re only polling about looks, right?

“As expected, Imya-chan’s Uncle has captivated everyone.”

“Of course. The way he coolly swings his hammer as he repairs all of

our equipment is simply charming.”

I give Raphtalia a questioning glance.

“Is that how it works?” (Naofumi)

“Well... He does quite a manly job, but he doesn’t act like it. He’s a well-mannered person. But why won’t anyone call him by his real name?”

(Raphtalia) It’s because Imya’s family’s names are way too long.

I’m more curious as to how Raphtalia can remember it.

I’ve heard it once, but I can’t recall it.

It’s on the tip of my tongue, but it’s not coming.

Tri... I believe it starts with something like that.

How should I put this, his name doesn’t match his image at all.

In a fantasy story, a skilled blacksmith usually has bad habits, such as drinking. But that man is completely different.

He doesn’t gamble. He doesn’t drink. He doesn’t use any luxury items like Tobacco.

I feel that he does a good job looking after the village children.

Wait, with that many factors, I guess I can agree with his ranking.

Making armor and weapons is skilled labor, so he won’t have trouble with money.

The kitchen knives he gave me after his workshop was completed cut really well.

He’s also diligent with maintenance. He’s quite a skilled man.

And it goes without saying, because he’s my slave, but I can get him to make things for free.

The Old Man at the weapon shop’s the same. The blacksmiths of this world are good people.

He took Ren as an apprentice, and Ren said he was a kind and polite teacher.

“Next, we asked this question to everyone. 『Which girl do you think is coolest?』”

Girls... is it?

This village has a high female to male ratio for some reason.

“This time, First place is taken by Sadina-neesan. Second is Rat-san. Third is the Magic Teacher.”

Um... I don't think that's a ranking of coolness. That's just the three oldest...

More than cool, the Magic Shopkeeper gives off a reliable feeling.

In an intellectual way.

Oh, is it because they give off kind, polite impressions?

“Raphtalia, what's your rank?” (Naofumi)

“Who knows...” (Raphtalia)

For them to have done this five times, these people must be bored.

No, these people are probably having fun doing this in secret.

Their polls are covering multiple genres.

But, it felt like a pain to deal with, so I go home and sleep.

The next day.

I was called to the castle, so I warp there with my Portal. The Queen requested that I have an audience with a messenger from Silt Welt.

It was a Turtle-like... Beastman.

His tail is a snake? It looks quite plump, but is that my imagination?

“He's of the Genmu race. It's a famous race among the Demi-humans. This person is a famous noble in Silt Welt.” (Queen) Genmu... Genbu?

What sort of naming convention is that?

Hakuko was the same.

“If it isn't the Hero of the Shield-sama. I've been informed of your

exploits. I'm glad to be given the honor of meeting you like this."

(Genmu) "I... see." (Naofumi)

"During the brainwashing incident, they received word that a Demi-Human tried to poison The Hero of the Shield-sama's village. They sent a messenger for the purpose of investigation." (Queen) "Yes. The culprit seems to be unrelated to us, but Hero of the Shield-sama, is it not time for you to leave Melromark behind and pay a visit to our country of Silt Welt?" (Genmu) "Even if you ask me that..." (Naofumi)

Silt Welt is kinda far, and I get a sense of danger from it, so I'd like to avoid going if possible.

"Iwatani-sama, the Hero of the Shield, is currently assisting in moral reform within our country, so he does not yet have the free time to visit another country. I offer my greatest apologies. " (Queen) The Genmu raced Beastman looks at the Queen with gentle eyes.

I thought the situation would explode, but it seems a peaceful resolution will be possible.

"I see. But just how much longer will our people have to chant, 『Give us back the Hero of the Shield-sama』. Soon they will tire of it. I came here to ask the Hero-sama directly." (Genmu) Even though his atmosphere is calm, he says what he wants.

"More importantly, how much longer will you stay in battle form? Are you that untrusting of us?" (Queen) The Queen lets off killing intent for a moment, and the Genmu messenger smiles.

"... My, my, I always assume this form to protect myself. I simply forgot." (Genmu) The Genmu messenger... changes his form.

His turtle-like figure changes to that of a plump man.

He's a middle aged man that looks to be around 50.

He doesn't give off a bad impression.

I bet he used something like the Beast Transform Sadina and Kiel use.

"Well then, around when will the Hero of the Shield-sama be able to

return? If I don't hear at least that, then I won't be able to return either.” (Genmu) “It's as of yet uncertain... I believe I already sent a letter asking to put this matter on hold until we overcome the next wave.” (Queen) “Yes, but the Shusakus are kicking up a storm.” (Genmu) “Don't act like I don't know your true intentions.” (Queen) What is this? It may be my imagination, but I feel the messenger's subordinate... The red youngster behind him, is glaring at me.

As I direct my eyes to the young man, he breaks eye contact, but... His gaze was fiery.

“The people giving the orders are a bit overcome with desire, you see. They even sent the old, retired me to drag him out.” (Genmu) “Are you sure you're not the one pulling the strings in the first place?” (Queen) “My, my. I don't think that this conversation had anything to do with that.” (Genmu) The Queen and the messenger's cold exchange continues.

I also began to pick up the intent of the discussion.

That messenger is probably of the faction that does not wish for me to venture to his country. But for some reason, he was dispatched. The red one behind him is of the faction that wants to drag me there, so the messenger's glancing at him to make sure his behavior seems natural.

“Ah, right... Hero of the Shield-sama?” (Genmu)

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“I've heard that some Hakuko are troubling your village, but what is the truth on the matter?” (Genmu) Should I tell the truth here?

I'm counting on Atlas and Fohl to add to my fighting force.

From their stories, they've fallen quite a bit, but... what sort of position do the Hakuko hold in Silt Welt?

If I affirm the statement, I can't tell what will happen to the two.

Even so, deceiving him will be hard.

Here, I should give an answer that sounds like me.

“No idea. I'm only raising whatever slaves seem useful to me. I have no

interest in their race. But from what I've heard, they're of mixed blood." (Naofumi) I subtly give the info that they're my subordinates. I'm well aware that these people won't listen.

"But if you plan on raising your hand to my subordinates, you'd better expect an appropriate response." (Naofumi) "I see. Mixed blood... I understand. In the name of the Hero of the Shield..." (Genmu) The messenger puts his hands together and begins praying.

Does this mean... he's pulling back? The red one seems like he wants to say something, but when I fix my gaze on him, he shuts his mouth.

It would be best to warn Atlas and Fohl about this.

After that, the conversation shifts to idle chatter and ends with a lecture directed at the Queen to end all Demi-Human discrimination in its entirety. Finally, it shifts to talks about the next wave.

The Next wave will call Houou, a monster sealed to the west.

A week before, we'll head to the place where it's sealed and wait on standby. We'll evacuate the surroundings, discuss matters with the other countries, propose various plans. Etcetera.

Well, it's pretty much like a guild meeting.

Silt Welt would be dispatching a large amount of flying troops. Finally, the meeting is over.

After the messenger gave a salute and left the room, the Queen untenses her muscles and addresses me.

"Iwatani-sama, I appreciate your cooperation." (Queen)

"I get the feeling the turtle-like person doesn't want to bring me back." (Naofumi) "He's of the moderate faction, and he's famous for objecting to relying solely on the Hero of the Shield." (Queen) "What sort of country is Silt Welt?" (Naofumi)

If I think about it, I don't know anything.

"It's a country where the four great races sit on top. In the past, the Hakuko were at the very top, but at the moment, the other three are the

ones in power.” (Queen) They were at war with Melromark for a long period of time.

But due to Trash’s efforts, the Hakuko’s forces were greatly ravaged And the Genmu are of the moderate faction, and they don’t have as great of a belief in the shield?

No, it’s hasty to make a generalization about the entire race.

“The ones behind this are the Shusaku race. They’re one of the top three.” (Queen) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

“If I had to say, they’re supposed to be neutral, but... That youth seemed to be a radical. Even though I understood that, it was quite tiring.”

(Queen) “You’ve known that turtle person for a while, haven’t you?”

(Naofumi) “I’m surprised you guessed it.” (Queen)

As I thought.

They were exchanging cold words, but I didn’t feel animosity.

“It seems he was worried whether the Hakuko were meddling with affairs here. Whether they were getting special treatment as the Hero of the Shield’s subordinates.” (Queen) “Would that be bad for the power balance there?” (Naofumi) “The Hakuko were the head of the radical party. Well, the king’s gone, and they’ve quieted down, but people are wary of whether or not they’ll rise again.” (Queen) “So what was the result? I couldn’t really see what was decided.” (Naofumi) “It seems that they were satisfied with Iwatani-sama’s response.” (Queen) They’re trying to avoid pointless war as well.

My actions should be more of a reason for celebration over there. There’s no reason for them to be angry.

Their long time enemy, Melromark, has possession of the Hero of the Shield, and as a result, many of their enemies within that country were sent to execution.

“And besides those with the blood of heroes, mixed bloods are usually treated as separate races, so... The Hakuko that are your subordinates will probably not be looked at as Hakuko.” (Queen) So just because that

Trash's sister's blood runs through their veins, they're already a different category.

I don't get the reason behind that.

Well, I also don't know if it's the same with the other Hakuko.

"I've troubled you all day, haven't I?" (Queen)

"Don't mind it. Going to war would be even more of a pain." (Naofumi)
If the Queen merely sent them home here, we may have gone to war.

The Queen seems to be skilled in diplomacy, so it probably wouldn't have gone that far, but it would be best to quiet them down.

"I think that messenger group will be paying a visit to your territory soon. Be on your guard." (Queen) "Will they cause trouble, even among my Demi-Humans?" (Naofumi) "There's a skillful moderate with them, so it should be fine." (Queen) "... got it." (Naofumi)

I part with the Queen and return to the village by Portal. Melty was calculating the earnings from the Revival Festival, so I go to her estate to check it out.

On the way, I meet another idiot asking me to revive their deceased and a poor-looking lazy man. I had the town's soldiers take them to appropriate places.

And I pass by a storeroom with bags of coins stacked up like mountains.

Ah, I'm overcome with greed for a second.

If I take this, I won't go to prison, right?

"Naofumi, just in case, can you check these?" (Melty)

"Sure." (Naofumi)

Raphtalia is training with Fohl in my village.

And Melty leaves managing the money to me while she leaves to manage the clean-up of the festival.

Wow... We earned this much from that festival alone?

I've climbed this high from having nothing on me but the clothes on my back.

I slowly lift up one of the money bags and check the contents.

Gold coins chime as they fall to the ground.

... Fufufu. What should I do with this money?

Should I invest in something bigger? Should I improve the workshops, or expand the lab?

We'll need to get some results from Rat's monster creation.

To complete it within a month's time, what do we have to do?

"Ku...!" (Naofumi)

It happened as I was laughing to myself.

All of a sudden, my head starts hurting as if something were screwing through my brain, and my vision begins warping.

Curse Series. The New Seven Sins.

You have unlocked the Shield of Gene Modification.

You have unlocked the Shield of Environmental Pollution.

You have unlocked the Shield of Social Injustice.

The amount of times you can modify the Bioplant has increased!

Curse Series, Shield of Gene Modification Enhancement!

The Extent to which you can Expand the Bioplant has increased!

Curse Series, Shield of Gene Modification Enhancement!

The Shield of Gene Modification has forcefully unlocked the Shield of Poverty!

The Shield of Gene Modification has forcefully unlocked the Shield of Excess Happiness!

etc...

—!

My head hurts, and I stagger on my feet.

What!?

What the hell is happening to me!?

New Seven Sins?

What did I even do to unlock something like that?

Gu... I feel a dark power coming from the Shield. It's corroding my emotions.

It's not like with my Shield of Anger. I don't feel an endless stream of rage erupting from my stomach.

If it's something like that, I could contain it.

But... It's completely different.

More of a... something... I have no idea what to do.

You have completed the New Seven Deadly Sins Series!

"Raph...talia..." (Naofumi)

My vision goes hazy as I begin to lose consciousness. I call out the name of the woman who saved my life and extend my hand to the air before me as if to grasp something. I hit the hard ground.

And my consciousness drifts to somewhere far, far away.

*

Author Note:

The polls have been closed.

thank you for all of your votes.

Translator Note:

What the hell, those results were real!?

Chapter 278: Gene Modification

A/N: The survey result: I've decided to look at the extra material.

Day 1.

Slowly getting up, check my surroundings. [T/N: Naofumi changed the way he refers to himself. 俺 ⇒ ワシ (Btw, idk if it's important, but it's the same way Trash addresses himself)]

And then I was subjected to a feeling of ecstasy, more so than before.

I wonder why I didn't think of this until now? It would be fine to just solve everything with the shield's power, without using money.

I check the shield that transformed just now.

...It's already awakened from the start, and I can't enhance it at all.

However, there should be a surplus of abilities as a rule. [T/N: It's too much of a surplus though....]

Shield of the New Seven Sins (Awakened) O/O UR

Ability Sealed..... Equipment bonus, Gene Modification, Human Experimentation, Social Injustice = Slave Labor Ability Increase, Curse of Poverty, Prosperity of Excess Corruption, Narcotic Compounding, Taboo Alchemy Technique, Forbidden Sorcery, Study of Sealing, Food of Sealing, Sleep Mechanical Engineering, Core of Magical Science.....

Special Effects..... Bio-Custom, Logic of Life, Dragon Pulse Control, Magic Up, Emergency Convening, Alchemic Correction, Harvesting Limit Breakthrough, Rapid Growth Supplement, Pharmacy Skill Increase, Alchemy Skill Increase, Ore Creation, Magic Gem Production, MP Recovery (Extra Large), SP Recovery (Extra Large), EP Recovery (Extra Large), Cooking Skill Increase.....

[T/N: Fun fact~ Alchemic Correction can also be read as Ren-Money Correction ;)]

It's really magnificent. And as for Item Creation, I have a full set of everything I need.

There's a bit of a fatal flaw in regards to Defence, but it doesn't seem like I'll need anything else as long as I have this shield.

If I try to inspect everything, the sky will darken. [T/N: Will take too long cos there's so many abilities....so OP >_>"]

My head has cleared, just by changing into this shield.

Now then, let's reaffirm the conclusion I've come to.

What I have concluded after having my intelligence increased by the shield's power.

That is, in order to survive, I first need to prepare the environment before the world is ruined by the waves.

Unlike the petty methods so far, there's a need to change the environment on a grand scale.

Therefore, I should eradicate the majority of the people living in this world for once.

I should instigate them immediately – the masses who are easy to manipulate, the religion that manipulates those masses, and the royalty who control the country.

The people of this world are rotting.

First I should choose the survivors, exterminate the others and settle my anxiety about the future, then challenge the waves and save the world.

Otherwise this world will eventually perish on its own, without the waves.

I must guide them.

“Now then, I need to use this shield's maximum power to prepare the environment at once.” (Naofumi) I exit the room and head towards the village.

That's right. I have Bioplant Seeds in my pocket.

I deliberately take out a Bioplant Seed and call on the Plant Modification icon.

With a beep, the modification icon appeared, and I smiled.

What the hell is this, it's too obsolete.

No matter how I look at it, it's obviously at the level of a toy made by a child.

Manual operation that only raises and lowers the established stats, it's too ridiculous.

I activate the Gene Modification skill concurrently.

When I do, minor static occurs in the Plant Modification screen, and a new entry....the Free Word entry appeared.

What should I make?

Hmm... first I need a castle, to be used as a base.

I enter the word 'castle'.

A list of the equipment and materials required for the modification appears.

...It seems I'll be able to cater with a large quantity of things from Rato's laboratory.

Let's immediately confiscate the things in Rato's laboratory.

I headed towards the village at a quick pace.

"Ah, it's Master~ Welcome back." (Firo)

"Oh, if it isn't Firo. What's up?" (Naofumi)

Firo, who is one of the monsters that submissively obeys me, comes to greet me together with the slaves.

I have faith in these guys to some extent.

They're my retainers and will be good to spare when I transform the world.

"You see~ we're hungry so we've been waiting for Master to return~"
(Firo) "Sorry, Firo. Now is not the time." (Naofumi)

"Aw...everyone has been looking forward to it." (Firo) "Is that so."

(Naofumi)

But time is limited.

I have to quickly head to the laboratory and procure the equipment.

...That's right.

I call up the Gene Modification skill again to modify the Bioplant.

I enter 'Bread-producing Plant' in the Free Word entry.

Oh?

I have both the required materials and the skill on hand.

I held out a Bioplant Seed and activated the skill.

"Master?" (Firo)

"Shield-niichan?" (Kiel)

The slaves all tilt their heads and watch my experiment intently.

The Bioplant shone, scattering the wind together with the light, and changing into the shape I imagined.

There was a flash of light, the wind was dispelled, and my intended Bioplant was complete. [T/N: Dear author, you just repeated the same thing twice. I think this sentence was unnecessary.]

"Watch." (Naofumi)

I dropped the completed Bread-producing Bioplant into the ground.

The Bioplant made a conspicuous sound and grew rapidly, producing large pieces of bread.

""Oooh!"" (Slaves)

Firo and the slaves let out their voices en masse, looking dumbfounded.

I'm a little shocked that they're surprised about something on this level, but they seem delighted so it doesn't feel bad.

"Can we eat this?" (Firo)

"Of course." (Naofumi)

“””Ya~y!””” (Slaves)

Firo and the slaves each picked up a piece of bread and started eating.

“Delicious~” (Kiel)

“It doesn’t have as much flavour as Master’s cooking but it’s yummy~”
(Firo) It seems everyone is satisfied.

Then let’s head to the next destination.

“Niichan! Can’t you make a Crepe Tree?” (Kiel)

Kiel asked, tugging on my shirt.

This guy used to be a fellow of humble birth who clashed with me at first, but has turned over a new leaf and now serves me.

She’s a friend of Raphtalia’s, and is now quite a reliable guy.

I need to hurry up and go procure the goods in Rato’s laboratory now, but I guess I could make something on that level as a reward for her efforts so far.

“I’ll do it later.” (Naofumi)

“You definitely have to, okay.” (Kiel)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

When I nodded, Kiel started eating together with Firo and the others, indulging in her piece of bread.

I enter Rato’s laboratory and touch the slate established as the laboratory’s kernel. [T/N: Kernel = the most basic level or core of an operating system, responsible for resource allocation, file management, and security. -Google]

Hmmm.... As far as it goes, the security is flawless, possibly because it was made together with me.

The experimental Bioplant’s defence mechanism functioned with no incidents.

I suppose it won’t allow a stupid situation like getting hacked.

However....the security is childish. If I was serious, I could break through in less than 10 seconds.

Access to the Kernel Seed....it's formed with quite a childish frame.

I ought to modify it more extensively, it will be tough to handle it from the beginning.

I use the Gene Modification skill, make good use of the items in the laboratory, and attempt to upgrade the Kernel Seed.

It'll be around 30 minutes to completion.

Then I'll need to recruit a reliable accomplice while waiting for it to finish.

"Oh? Marquis?" (Rato)

While I was tampering with the Kernel Seed, Rato nonchalantly entered the room.

"What's the matter? There aren't any experiments, and the equipment I requested hasn't arrived so there's nothing to do." (Rato) Right now, it would be a bother if I carelessly tampered with this woman.

"Yeah, I'm swinging by to engage in a sudden check up." (Naofumi)
"...to engage in?" (Rato) [T/N: Questioning Naofumi's weird speech]

"To do." (Naofumi)

"I see." (Rato)

That was close. Rato looked at me with doubtful eyes.

If I say something carelessly, I'll waste too much time.

Let's proceed as carefully as possible.

"Marquis, the next machine we need is a Chemical Amplifier—" (Rato)
Fu... when I look at such childishness, I can't stop laughing.

I wonder how much time was spent on the vulgar experiment she did recently.

"Marquis, what are you laughing at?" (Rato)

“No, I’m just thinking that you’re talking so happily.” (Naofumi) “I guess. Given that I’ve finally gotten to research properly, I’ve got to show my enthusiasm.” (Rato) Outside the room, Rato’s beloved monster was swimming in a cultivation chamber and it waved its hand this way.

Hmmm....

Suddenly our gazes meet.

.....

“!” (Monster)

With a banging, the Monster hit the cultivation chamber and pointing at me, it alerted Rato.

“What’s wrong?” (Rato)

Hn? Did it notice my Hacking?

Should I modify that monster’s mouth shut?

And, while I was pondering, it lost interest and began swimming again.

“I wonder what that was about? Mii-kun.” (Rato)

Rato’s partner waves at me from within the cultivation chamber.

Well, it’s fine. If it doesn’t plan on doing anything unnecessary, I won’t do anything to it.

I don’t know if this woman agrees with my thinking but it’s sufficient to deal with it after I finish upgrading the Kernel Seed.

“So, Marquis. Did you discover any problems?” (Rato) “Research seems a little delayed. You should be quicker.” (Naofumi) “Obviously it wouldn’t be good if I don’t ensure its safety.” (Rato) “Limit the duration. You should bring forth definitive results while it’s safe.” (Naofumi) “Marquis, did something bad happen? You seem to be in a bad mood.” (Rato) Rato looked at me suspiciously.

At this rate, it seems my expected results won’t be produced by the fixed date.

I expected to treat her like an assistant but.... I wonder how it’ll turn

out.

“We’ve decided to prioritize life, right? Doing something dangerous and killing it will only cause regret.” (Rato) “I see, you have a point.” (Naofumi)

It’s useless to continue talking any more.

Her type probably needs to be shown results.

She’ll probably want to be my assistant after she sees the masterpiece I’ve made of modifying the Kernel Seed.

“Now then, I have somewhere I need to go after this.” (Naofumi)
“Marquis? Well, it’s not like this is the first time the Marquis’ behaviour has been erratic....” (Rato) I produced a strong security system and left Rato’s laboratory behind.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama, I heard about it. Apparently you made another strange thing with the Bioplants.” (Raphtalia) “Oh, well if it isn’t Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

When I left the laboratory and headed into the village, the person I was looking for, Raphtalia, noticed me and started talking.

Until I found Raphtalia, I had been reinspecting the village.

Currently, there are no problems with the goods.

When I made an appearance at the Monster Hut, the monsters all swarmed around me.

They seemed to sense it instinctively. That they’ll become stronger if they follow me.

I can’t understand why we stopped rearing the monsters halfway.

Well, it’s not like there aren’t any that we can count on somewhat for combat, now that Gaelion has been aiding the Class Up, but their foundation is too low.

They’re all monsters that have already hit their limit, but only in regards to Levels and, to a certain extent, growth correction.

“Just then, Kiel-kun and Firo were boasting that Naofumi made it in front of them.” (Raphtalia) “Hm, isn’t that natural. That level of things is no trouble at all.” (Naofumi) “....? Th-that’s amazing. So Naofumi-sama’s shield was capable of that sort of thing.” (Raphtalia) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

Since it was just about midday, everyone had gathered in the Dining Hall.

They noticed us, and came to greet us.

“Now then, Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

I think it’s better to be frank with Raphtalia before I announce my intentions.

“I’ve discovered a conclusion to certain thoughts and have decided to change my actions from now on.” (Naofumi) “...I? Um, what are you talking about?” (Raphtalia) [T/N: She’s talking about Naofumi’s new way of addressing himself]

I thought Raphtalia would understand and that there would be no need to explain, but it seems to be necessary to tell her personally.

“You see, the royalty of this world, the nobles, merchants, all the masses, they were all rotten from the start. And it’s evident that even if they endure the waves, they’ll still perish in the end.” (Naofumi) “Well... I won’t deny that.” (Raphtalia)

“And so I’ve come to the conclusion that we must first to clean up the rotten trash, and then challenge the waves with only the chosen people.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

I held out my hand towards Raphtalia and declared.

“Raphtalia. The world is now controlled by my hands, and I shall share half of it with you. Now, won’t you rule the world together with me!” (Naofumi) [T/N: That proposal XD]

“.....” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia drew the sword on her back and took a stance, facing me of all things.

“Who are you! You’re not Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

Chapter 279: Floating Sky Fortress

“Wha...”

What was that!?

Why is Raphtalia glaring at me with such hostility!?

“What art thou saying, Raphtalia!?” (Naofumi)

“Even though the Naofumi-sama I knew was a bit twisted, he would never do something like this!” (Raphtalia) “I’m always evolving. Mine values hath merely shifted!” (Naofumi) “Even so, there’s a limit to that. Who are you?” (Raphtalia) Ku... Why doth she be opposing me?

“Ah, Naofumi-sama. Did something happen?” (Atlas) Atlas appears with Fohl.

“Atlas-chan, Naofumi-sama’s acting strange. Can you sense anything? No, he may even be a fake.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia holds back her anger as she asks Atlas.

What be there to doubt? What’s strange about me?

The strange one is Raphtalia be it not?

Thy Raphtalia would never deny me.

She should accept my new thoughts.

“Let’s see...” (Atlas)

Atlas stareth fixedly at my face. Though she canst see.

“Dost thou continue to doubt me!?” (Naofumi)

“No matter how I look at it, it’s strange, Atlas!! There’s something wrong with him!”

“Ah, don’t worry. He’s no fake.” (Atlas)

“Is that true? Then what happened to him!?” (Raphtalia) Perhaps she activated some Hengen Musou Skill. Raphtalia stares at me.

“He seems to be... wearing a strange aura. Is that shield the source of

it?” (Raphtalia) “Raphtalia-san.” (Atlas)

“What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“There are no problems. There is nothing wrong with Naofumi-sama.”

(Atlas) “Even with the way he’s speaking!?” (Raphtalia) “Yes. I will continue to yearn for Naofumi-sama no matter what he becomes.” (Atlas)

“Doesn’t that mean you admit that something’s happened to him!?”

(Raphtalia) Raphtalia and Atlas are more heated than usual.

Hearing the commotion, Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, Rishia and the other slaves exit the dining hall and come here.

“What? What’s up?” (Ren)

“Is it a fight? How rare.” (Itsuki)

“Father-in-Law, I’d like to speak with you about my Firo-tan’s health.”

(Motoyasu) Ren and the others do come over.

“Oh my, is it not the pieces of garbage who self-destructed with their own useless knowledge. Wilst thy not stay back!?” (Naofumi) “!?”

Ren’s eyes lose color, and he looks towards Raphtalia.

She’s not someone trash like you should be laying eyes on!

“Fuee... Did something happen!?” (Rishia)

“Then should I stay back? I feel that something’s off.” (Itsuki) “Don’t run away!” (Rishia)

I tire of these fools’ questions.

More importantly, Raphtalia.

Why doth Raphtalia deny me!?

“Father-in-Law, what happened?” (Motoyasu)

“Motoyasu, you shut up.” (Naofumi)

“Atlas-chan, can you still say the same things after seeing that?”

(Raphtalia) Upon Raphtalia’s inquiry, Atlas nods twice and speaks.

“Yeah, I’ll declare it as many times as I must. There’s nothing wrong

with Naofumi-sama. Do you see anything strange about him?” (Atlas) “Of course! A lot! What was with his line back there!? He declared something about world domination, you know!” (Raphtalia) “Then let us set out to dominate the world. If Naofumi-sama wishes for it, it must be necessary.” (Atlas) Atlas acknowledges me in my entirety.

Raphtalia never blindly accepted me like this, but at the very least, she understood me.

So why is the Raphtalia before my eyes failing to understand? What doesn't she see?

... That's it!

“You over there! Are you not an imposter!?” (Naofumi) “What are you saying all of a sudden!?” (Raphtalia) “It's true, isn't it? The Raphtalia I know would never display animosity towards me!” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, let's have a long talk after you return to normal. Now stay still for a second.” (Raphtalia) Pointing her blade at me, Raphtalia lowers her stance, and prepares her Chi to use a Hengen Musou skill.

As I thought.

Raphtalia would never point her sword at me.

This must be an assassin sent by Trash. This must be his plan.

“I won't let you.” (Atlas)

“Atlas-chan, please step aside.” (Raphtalia)

Atlas throws Fohl to the floor, and steps forward.

The fake and Atlas began exchanging dialogue.

At that time, Firo appeared, and spoke with a curious look on her face.

“Onee-chan, what's wrong?” (Firo)

“Firo, there's nothing wrong with me. Naofumi-sama's acting strange, so please help me capture him.” (Raphtalia) “Eh... Master seems to be having more fun than usual.” (Firo) “There's nothing fun about it! Please help me! Quickly!” (Raphtalia) “Firo.” (Naofumi)

I call out to Firo, and she stuffs her face with some Bread Fruit, and turns to me.

The chance of this Firo being a fake is low.

I mean, the fact that she's still eating the Bread Fruit I made points to her validity.

"What~?" (Firo)

"Buy me some time by fighting that fake. I don't want to be anywhere near a faker like that." (Naofumi) I haven't finished preparations for battle.

If I stay here, I don't know what sort of thing will happen to me.

Luckily, I had just completed the modifications for the Kernal Seed at the lab.

By now, it should be answering to my beck and call.

"Got it." (Firo)

"Firo, please move." (Raphtalia)

"No." (Firo)

"I will assist you, Firo-chan." (Atlas)

"Yay." (Firo)

Firo and Atlas step onto the front lines to defend me.

Next to the Fake, Ren, Itsuki and Rishia prepare for battle.

"I don't know what's happening, but Naofumi's been devoured by some curse, right?" (ren) "... If Atlas-chan, who's infinitely more perceptive than us, says that's the real Naofumi-sama, then I'm certain that's the case." (Raphtalia) "But for Naofumi to become like this at this point in time... What should we do?" (Ren) "For now, let's stop him. We need to have him overcome his curse." (Raphalia) "That's how it is. Naofumi, I'm greatly in debt to you. That's why I'll lend my power to Raphtalia to return you to your senses." (Ren) "Ren... Not once, but twice!? You damn traitor!" (Naofumi) I saved him, and gave him an opportunity to

rehabilitate himself, yet he sides with that imposter!?

Just how ungrateful are these bastards.

“Marquis! What’s happening!?” (Rat)

It seems Rat heard the commotion and came over.

That means the research lab is currently empty.

How careless of her.

“Ah, if it isn’t Rat.” (Naofumi)

“I didn’t ask you about me. I’m asking you what the hell is going on!”
(Rat) “That imposter over there is pointing her blade at me.” (Naofumi)
“Imposter... No matter how I look at it, the Marquis is the strange one here.” (Rat) “Hmm... So youll be siding with them? In the end you’re just an incompetent Alchemist, are you?” (Naofumi) “What is the meaning of this. Why are you directing those words at me?” (Rat) “This is the meaning of it.” (Naofumi)

“Wha-” (Rat)

I hit an icon on the shield, and remotely control the modified Bioplants in the Lab.

A cracking sound rings out. Using the power of the land... The dragon pulse’s energy as food, the research laboratory begins moving. It lifts off the ground, and starts floating above me.

Since its size didn’t change, it’s about the size of a gymnasium.

A ladder descends from above.

I grasp it, and order it to lift.

“What the hell is that!?” (Rat)

“It’s my newest Bioplant Modification. The Sky Fortress, the Castle Plant!” (Naofumi) “Oy, oy... Naofumi, are you really doing this!?” (Ren)
“It’s a flying fortress?” (Itsuki)

“Fuee! What’s that!?” (Rishia)

“Slaves and monsters of the village! From here on out, I will be venturing forward to create a new world. Those who wish to follow my dream, come aboard! I’ll leave the choice to you. If you choose to become my ally, I’ll be benevolent. If you wish to be my enemy, I’ll have no mercy!” (Naofumi) The slaves each turn to one another, and start speaking. The air is filled with noise.

What is there to hesitate about?

We’ll be wiping out the fakes, and the traitors that follow them. We’ll be reconstructing the world.

“Everyone, due to some strange influence, Naofumi-sama’s gone strange. Don’t be coerced by his sweet words.” (Raphtalia) The fake shamelessly puts on a Raphtalia-esque act to incite the slaves.

It’s useless.

Look at reality.

“Niichan! I’ll follow you!” (Kiel)

“Uwah! Kiel, stop!” (Imya)

“Kiel-kun!” (Raphtalia)

Kiel changes to her puppy form, knocks down Ren, and grabs the ladder.

Getting an attack from Kiel, who he thought was an ally, seems to have greatly confused Ren.

“Firo-tan’s enemy is our enemy as well.” (Motoyasu) Motoyasu siding with our camp, it seems.

He may have some problems with his mind, but his skill is certain.

I’ll use whoever I can.

“A-atlas! Uwah! Sto! Uwaaaahhh!” (Fohl)

Fohl starts running. He reaches out his hand.

Well, as long as Atlas is on this side, he’ll listen to my orders.

I’ll bring him along.

Motoyasu holds off Itsuki and Rishia. The fake party can't launch any large attacks.

While he held them off, the monsters were raising their voices in approval, so I ordered the Bioplant to retrieve them.

... Gaelion came flying over. Taniko's on his back.

"KYUA!?" (Gaelion)

"What's happening this time?" (Taniko)

"Naofumi-sama's become strange due to a curse." (Raphtalia) "Again?" (Taniko)

"KYUAAAAAAAAA!" (Gaelion)

Gaelion changes to his small form, and flies towards me.

Good. I'll grant you the modifications you always wished for.

Is what I thought, but.

"No." (Taniko)

Taniko grasps his tail to stop him.

"What do you plan on doing by following that Hero of the Shield?" (Taniko) "He wants to become strong. Nature has its limits. He won't become strong as he is right now. As he wishes, I'll make him the strongest, so don't get in his way!" (Naofumi) "Not happening! No good will come out of sending him to you as you are now." (Taniko) "Hmph. I thought I would use you as a replacement for Rat. How foolish." (Naofumi) Now then. The slaves have each decided who they will follow.

"Henceforth, we will be moving to a location suitable for world domination. Farewell, imposter. How dare you imitate my Raphtalia. Eventually the real one will appear, and you'll have your comeuppance. You better be prepared for it." (Naofumi) "Like I'd let that happen!" (Raphtalia)

The fake brandishes her sword, and jumps towards me.

Well well well. At least this fake's resistance is first class.

“I won’t permit it!” (Atlas)

“Onee-chan, don’t get in the way!” (Firo)

Atlas and Firo work together to block her sword. Firo kicks her away.

“Kya!”

It happened in midair. I immediately use vines from the Castle Plant to wrap around Atlas and Firo to recover them.

This much distance is enough.

I’ll need to prepare magic and skills to intercept them.

“Farewell!” (Naofumi)

I order the Castle Plant, and it releases a smokescreen for escape, and a simple magic jamming to prevent counterattacks. I worry about the fuel consumption as I cast a barrier as well, just in case.

At the same time the smokescreen is released, the castle starts moving to escape.

“Ah, wait! Ku... smoke!” (Raphtalia)

“If I shoot it down, the Floating Fortress will fall to the ground, and the people onboard will take heavy damage. Do you want me to shoot it down?” (Itsuki) “You can’t, Itsuki-sama! If you do something like that...” (Rishia) “Understood.” (Itsuki)

Fufufu The fake, and her useless Heroes watch us leave with dark expressions.

The faker extends her hand towards me.

“Naofumi-sama——!” (Raphtalia)

I have nothing to offer to a fake.

If I have time to look at that piece of garbage, I’d spend it looking for the real one.

Following my orders, the Castle Plant sets out over the ocean. No one can follow us anymore.

Chapter 280: Human Experimentation

“Ara-?” (Sadina)

The place I specified the fortress to move to was Sadina’s Secret Base.

Below, I see Sadina waving her hand at me.

“Hmm? Master, we’re getting off already?” (Firo) “Yeah, the fuel efficiency of Flying Castle Mode is really bad, so we can’t fly for long periods of time.” (Naofumi) I change it back to Laboratory mode. The Castle Plant extends its roots deep underground and begins recharging.

I still have much that I have to do.

I’ll need to gather as much energy as I can.

“What’s up, Naofumi-chan? You made quite a grand entrance.” (Sadina) “Fumu, I believe that you were Raphtalia’s guardian, right?” (Naofumi) “No, right now that’s Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

“She was a fake. She trampled upon my ideals.” (Naofumi) I explain the events that had just transpired to Sadina.

And Sadina blinks rapidly in surprise.

“... Ara... That’s what...” (Sadina)

She nods with an indifferent expression.

“What sort of guardian are you? You can’t even tell the difference between the real thing and a fake.” (Naofumi) “To have fooled Onee-san, that must have been quite a fake...” (Sadina) “Yeah!” (Naofumi)

What a useless protector!

How stupid is she, for her not to notice she was guarding the wrong person.

“Master, what will you do from now on?” (Firo)

“You’re going to set out for world domination, right? What country are we bringing down first?” (Atlas) “Not yet!” (Naofumi)

Like I can invade when I don’t have a good grasp on my own forces yet.

What's more, if Raphtalia isn't here, there's no point in me ruling this world in the first place.

That means there's one thing I must do.

Within the Castle Plant, I must carry out greater modifications.

I order it to search for enemies.

I raise the output to the max.

I don't need to consider the consequences. Just once is enough.

The Castle Plant's internal lights flicker as the output raises higher and higher.

"Wha!?"

"W-what is this?"

Starting with the people in the Castle Plant, then the people of the world. Every lifeform on the planet felt, for a single moment, the feeling of some magic passing through their body. The entire world turned its head at the strange phenomena.

But at most, the people would think of it as part of their imagination, or some minor earthquake.

From the power released by the plant, I could sense the location of each and every one of my slaves.

"Good!" (Naofumi)

The person I want to find. There is only one of them in the world.

Where is Raphtalia?

Of course, I don't mean that fake. Where's the real Raphtalia?

For that reason, I use the hair from her that I had fed into the Shield to designate her as a search target.

The stone slate in front of me displays the words, 'Searching in progress.' The system computes the large amount of data at a high speed.

... Search completed. Results...

“What?” (Naofumi)

I can't do anything. I'm at a loss for words.

1 Match.

When I excitedly brought up the location, I saw that it was just the fake.

This can't be... Does that mean the real one is already gone from this world...

Absurd! My Raphtalia would never be killed off so easily.

But, I have to look at the truth before me.

There's no way the system I made would lie to me.

“U...uu...” (Naofumi)

Extreme despair clouds my heart. It feels like I'm being strangled.

“Master, you're crying. Are you alright?” (Firo) “Niichan, did something sad happen?” (Kiel)

“Naofumi-sama...? Please stop crying. If there's something I can do to stop your tears, please tell me. I'll do anything.” (Atlas) “Atlas! Don't say things like that. And this guy! He's really crying! They're real tears.” (Fohl) How calm these people are.

Even when Raphtalia is no longer in this world!

If this is the truth, then for what purpose am I living in this world...!?

Anyways, when was Raphtalia killed?

I can't remember anything of the sort.

Was it when she was out training? Or after she returned?

The fake did a good job of playing the part. She must have thoroughly investigated Raphtalia.

That means the quickest way to find out would be to capture her and torture the information out of her.

... No, if Raphtalia's not here, there's no point in the first place.

Right.

If Raphtalia is gone, then I just have to revive her.

But since I have no idea where or how she died, I have no way of finding her remains.

What do I do?

“Naofumi-chan, what happened? You were just crying, then you made a serious expression, and from then on, various emotions have been rolling around your face.” (Sadina) “... If I recreate her through a Homunculus... No, that would just be making a fake like that other one.” (Naofumi) Yeah, that fake is definitely a Homunculus in Raphtalia’s form.

From the information this Shield imparted unto me, I know the workings of Homunculi.

A Homunculus is able to perfectly mimic a person, but for them to have prolonged life, they must go through constant maintenance. Even with that, it’s difficult for them to live very long.

I can’t call something like that living.

I’ll need to bring Raphtalia back in a different way.

I realize that that statement seems very vague, but for the current me, nothing is impossible.

Okay. Let’s make reviving Raphtalia the first step to my World Domination.

I also have to strengthen these people who have chosen to be my subordinates.

As I was thinking that, the Castle Plant, which had just recovered from the overheat caused by my orders, began giving off an alarm.

I immediately put my hand on the stone panel used for management.

An image from far away is displayed on the screen.

“Wah, Amazing!” (Firo)

“What is happening now, Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas)

It's because Atlas cannot see.

She can't see the image displayed.

"Fumu, that fake has taken the Heroes, and they're on their way here aboard Gaelion." (Naofumi) At this rate, they'll arrive here in no time.

My Castle is still under construction.

As it is now, they should be able to drop it out of the sky easily.

"What should we do?" (Atlas)

"No problem. I expected this, so I already prepared countermeasures."
(Naofumi) I input commands into the stone.

The Fake is flying straight at us aboard Gaelion.

Sound also gets through, so I can hear their conversation.

"What is that building!?"

"A structure with a shape like a skull is covering the island..."

"KYUA!"

"For the love of... Let's just capture Naofumi-sama quickly and return him to his senses."

"Yeah..."

Like that's happening.

At that moment, my commands activate, and the seeds I spread on the way here sprouted.

They rapidly burst out of the ocean. The relative of the Castle Plant, the Tower Plant.

"W-what are these!?"

Gaelion concentrates as he avoids the rising towers.

It's like a scene from an Action Movie.

But it's not like the towers are enough to drive them away. Gaelion and the Fake aren't that soft.

Gaelion continues flying.

There's no way that's all I've got.

The top floor of the newly grown towers begins shining, and together with the Research Lab, they erect a barrier.

Of course, the center is the lab.

With the lab at the center, a powerful barrier is formed in the shape of a dome while the towers act as protective walls around the base.

“W-what!?” (Raphtalia)

Gaelion has no time to dodge. He rams right into the barrier and is stunned for a moment. The next instant, the barrier repels him, and he's sent flying while doing revolutions in the air.

“KYAAAAAAAAA-...” (Raphtalia)

“UWAAAAAAH-...” (Ren)

The fake and her Fake Heroes let out idiotic sounds as they're sent flying away. The scene is quite humorous to my eyes.

“Now then, with this, those fakes won't be able to approach for a while. Shall we not make preparations while they're away?” (Naofumi) “What could this be?” (Sadina)

Sadina asks while watching the screen.

Fumu, I guess I'll have to offer an explanation.

“Ah, this is a long-term barrier connected to my shield. Its origin is based on my Shield Prison and Meteor Shield.” (Naofumi) Relying on my own power, this much is nothing.

“... How convenient. Does it have any weaknesses?” (Sadina) “Let's see. I guess if you destroy all of the Eight Towers I erected, it will lose its effects. Setting it up is difficult, so if it's broken once, I'll need to halt all activity in the towers to restore it. Well, you'll have to destroy the towers starting with the first one going up to the last one, so it's at least good for stalling for time.” (Naofumi) “Niichan, that means you want us to defend

the towers, right?” (Kiel) “Yeah, protecting them is one of your guys’ duties. But those incompetent fakes will never figure it out. Because I made each and every tower have the same outward appearance. They’ll never be able to figure out which one the first one is in time.” (Naofumi) “... Naofumi-chan, won’t you teach us the order? I mean, we’ll have to be defending them, anyways.” (Sadina) “This is number one, this one number two...” (Naofumi) I carefully point out the tower’s numbers.

The enemy probably won’t figure it out, but if they do, we’ll need to defend them in that order.

“Ren-chan and Itsuki-chan are there too, right? Will they not be able to break the barrier?” (Sadina) “I guarantee the barrier’s strength. What’s more, if it does break, as long as the towers are there, I can deploy it again instantly. They’ll never be able to break through with only those Heroes’ powers.” (Naofumi) “Then we can’t get out either? That’s a little troubling.” (Sadina) “No problem. It uses the same concept as my Meteor Shield. Those I give permission to can leave and enter freely. Defend the seas however you wish.” (Naofumi) At the moment, it’s troubling to keep up. But there’s no way they’ll pierce my absolute defenses.

We’re not even the ones on the defensive here. We’re the attackers.

Trampling down the enemies before us will be my first step to World Domination.

But there’s something I need to do first.

“Wow, Amazing.” (Sadina)

“As expected of Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“Master is ama~zing.” (Firo)

“Father-in-Law! Good Job.” (Motoyasu)

“I-is this amazing? I don’t really get what’s... Atlas, do you really plan on following that man? I can only see him as a complete villain at the moment.” (Fohl) Everyone sings praise of me.

Of course I’m amazing. But having them say it makes me happy.

“Hahaha, praise me more!” (Naofumi)

“Isn’t something wrong here?”

“Right, that bitch’s owner definitely has a screw loose.”

“Yeah, but that doesn’t change what we’ll be doing.”

“And wait, I think this is the first time I’m seeing him smile...”

“He always has a bored expression on his face.”

“No matter how I look at it, he’s getting too full of himself.”

Motoyasu’s three talk amongst themselves.

Like I care.

“Niichan, Niichan! What will you do now?” (Kiel) “First, I’ll confirm our forces! Everyone, assemble!” (Naofumi) “OKAY!” (Everyone)

The slaves and monsters gather by my order.

Fumu... It’s about half of my village.

Ah, right. Should I use the slave seal to finish off that girl who thought she could take over Raphtalia’s place?

I opened up her screen, but perhaps an error has occurred. It’s too staticy, and I can’t give the order.

I can’t use the slave seal. How troublesome.

There’s no choice. I’ll leave that fake’s disposal for later... wait.

I noticed something.

“Firo, you don’t have many followers.” (Naofumi) Only about one-fifth of the Filo Rials followed.

This is way too few.

“Motoyasu, you too.” (Naofumi)

“Not everyone was there to follow us! There was too little time, so I’ll have to get them later.” (Motoyasu) “I’ll leave it to you. Even so, with both Firo and Motoyasu here, why are there so few?” (Naofumi) “Well, you see,

Piyo-chan got in Firo's way and didn't follow master." (Firo) "Piyo-chan?" (Naofumi)

"Firo's first follower." (Firo)

Ah, follower number one. He had a name like that?

That goddamn traitor!

Even though he's a faker himself, he chose to follow that fake. How foolish.

(TL: Naofumi calls Piyo a Burikko. Go to Onichanyamete to learn more about the term) I'll have to deal with him personally.

"Also, there's also some needing medical care inside of the lab." (Firo) "I see... then I'll have to ask that one's will first. Everyone else, get to work." (Naofumi) "Got it."

"What will we work on, Niichan? Peddling?" (Kiel) "Wrong. In other rooms, you'll find glowing stones. Just rest near them. They'll automatically recover your magic." (Naofumi) "Got it, Niichan!" (Kiel)

Kiel leaves, and the other Monsters and Slaves follow.

The people left are Atlas, Fohl, Firo, and Sadina.

We head to the medical division of the lab.

(TL: I think these are the people Naofumi got from the Brainwashing incident.) "Uu..."

"Don't come closer... go away..."

There are Demi-Human children undergoing treatment there.

Rat and the medical personnel should have been looking after their injuries, but... It doesn't look like they're doing well.

There are slaves curled up in the corners, and one slave is shaking with a vacant expression.

Quite a few of them seem on the verge of collapse.

I know, because I've visited this room quite often.

Yggdrasil Medicine is all-purpose, but I've restricted the use as to prevent addiction.

The overuse of Yggdrasil will affect their lives, so I've limited it.

But still, we've given them a bit, so they're at least alive.

We'll need to treat them a little at a time. Their mental health also needs to be cared for.

Luckily, they've begun trusting me and Rat.

"Firo doesn't like this place... She really doesn't..." (Firo) Firo mutters to herself.

Yes, if you have a healthy mind, you wouldn't want to spend a long time here.

"Every time, I feel a sad Chi from here. As if it would go out at any second." (Atlas) "... " (Fohl)

Fohl looks at the slaves in the room. He has a sad expression on his face, but he says nothing.

It's because the Atlas of the past was in a similar state.

"Now then, all of you." (Naofumi)

I raise my voice to the slaves undergoing treatment.

"KYAAAAAAAAAAA!"

One of them shouts out in response to my voice. It happens every time I come here. I'm used to it.

Eventually, the slave's voice dies down.

Various drugs have warped half of the slave's body, and its eyes have grown abnormally large. Perhaps I should say it became like a monster.

It's gradually recovering, but it's overly wishful thinking to believe that my Shield's power will grant a full recovery.

"Have you calmed down? Now then, do you want to follow me? Or do you want to rot here?" (Naofumi) "... "

There's no response. The slave stares blankly at the ceiling with eyes filled with madness.

Fumu... This is troublesome.

I activate my Human Experimentation and Gene Manipulation powers, and use it on the slave before me.

My goal is to treat the warping to the best of my ability.

From my Shield, a light blue pattern of formulas and letters fly out. They wrap around the slave.

“!?”

Without any ways of escape, the slave shakes violently. It tries to let out a scream, but no sound escapes its lips.

The other slaves retreat further into their corners as they look upon the scene.

Perhaps they believe that this is the time when they will be disposed of. Eventually, the patterns shine brighter, and... The treatment finishes.

“Ah...”

The slave who had undergone treatment blinks as it stares at me.

“How do you feel?” (Naofumi)

“It doesn't hurt. I'm not in pain... My consciousness doesn't feel faint anymore.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

“I think you were... The person who occasionally came by to give us medicine. Did you save me as well?”

“Yeah, now you're definitely back to normal. If you want, try running around outside. Firo, play with him a bit.” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Firo)

“Thank You!”

The slave lowers his head to me.

And accompanied by Firo, he goes outside and returns a little later.

“It’s true. Again, thank you very much.”

“Now then, let me ask you once more.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?”

“Will you be my ally, and lend me power so that I can build my new world? Or will you foolishly oppose me, and join those idiots outside?” (Naofumi) “... What will you do if I become your enemy?”

“I’ll drive you out. You’ll become part of this wide world. But this applies to everyone out there: If you attack me, your life will be a short one. Outside, you can go wherever you want. I’ll even dispel your slave crest.” (Naofumi) The slave ruminates over my words again and again...

“Yes. You are the one who saved my life, so I wish to repay the favor as best as I can. What sort of person are you?”

“Who am I, you ask? I am-” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-chan is the Hero of the Shield. The god of all Demi-Humans.” (Sadina) “Eh!?”

Sadina cuts off my self-introduction. The slaves undergoing treatment are all surprised.

“I’ve heard out your will. Now then, on to the next patient. I’d like to get you guys out of this facility and put you to work already.” (Naofumi) “Understood.”

Like this, I treat all of the slaves in the facility and gain new subordinates.

The problem is that all of them are of low level.

I’ll overcome that with the power of the Shield some way or another.

But there’s a sequence to things like this.

If I have the time to grant them power, then there are plenty of things I have to do.

Chapter 281: Life Ethics

Now then, on to the next task.

At the moment, the Slaves and Monsters are charging their magic through the Castle Plant.

I'll use that magic to create a magic amplification device to create even greater magic, and use it to expand my base.

"Good. Until the expansion is finished, I can devote myself to my own goals." (Naofumi) I step foot into the center of the Lab, the area Rat used for her own research.

"You all should get to work as well. If you need food, then go to the residential area. I have some prepared." (Naofumi) "I want to stay near Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"Firo will... Go for a walk." (Firo)

"Atlas, let's get out of here already." (Fohl)

"No way, Onii-sama." (Atlas)

"I'll go patrol the outside." (Sadina)

Atlas will stay beside me, and Fohl will follow her.

Firo will inspect the laboratory's interior, and Sadina will patrol.

"Then get to it." (Naofumi)

On my orders, Sadina and Firo depart.

"Naofumi-sama, what will you be doing next?" (Atlas)

"Isn't it obvious? My goal is to revive Raphtalia!" (Naofumi) I concentrate my Shield's power on a stone tablet, and the Castle Plant draws in more and more of the land's power... Using Raphtalia's DNA from the hair in my Shield, I began researching ways to recreate her body.

The probability this hair is from the fake is exceedingly low.

It's something I got when Raphtalia was still but a child.

If only I can recover her soul, it should work out.

It's not like I'm omnipotent. Even if I have been granted a complete understanding of Alchemy, there is no precedent to reviving the dead.

But reviving my lost Raphtalia is something I'm willing to risk my life for.

For that sake, I begin my experiments.

I won't make something half-assed like a homunculus.

This is a ritual to perfectly resurrect my ideal Raphtalia.

Inside of the large culture tube in front of me, magic-made electricity races back and forth. The power of the land gathers. My dreams gather.

And in order to make it go off without a hitch, I take care of all bugs and problems personally.

"From here on, I will be conducting research. Just watching will be boring, you know." (Naofumi) "It's fine, Naofumi-sama. Just being near you is enough for me." (Atlas) "I see." (Naofumi)

"Atlas! What are you saying!?" (Fohl)

"Onii-sama, if you have free time right now, won't you offer assistance to the people who Naofumi-sama just granted power to?" (Atlas) "Uu..." (Fohl)

Atlas and Fohl whisper together, and after a while, Fohl heads off to the slaves I had just treated.

"Now it's finally quiet. Please research to your heart's content." (Atlas) "Thanks." (Naofumi)

I immersed myself in the research.

Perhaps 6 hours have already passed.

I finally finished the first stage of my experimentation.

When I turned around, Atlas waved her hand at me.

She was watching me the whole time, was she? She has too much free

time.

“Naofumi-chan. How are things going on your side?” (Sadina) “Master~ The food is really good.” (Firo)

“Yeah, though the taste has dropped a bit from when Niichan makes it personally.” (Kiel) Sadina, Firo and Kiel drop by together.

I installed an auto cooking function into the residential area’s dining hall.

With the push of a button, it can instantly make pre-set dishes.

At the moment, the menu is a bit lacking, but at least it’s edible.

“Oh, you came at a good time.” (Naofumi)

“Niichan, what are you doing? Everyone’s already well rested.” (Kiel) “I see. Just watch for a second.” (Naofumi)

I flip a switch, and the culmination of my research materializes before us.

Electricity fills the tube, and smoke rises. The Experiment finishes.

Firo tilts her head as she focuses her eyes on the dish.

Eventually the smoke wrapping around it clears, and the bubbles that formed in the liquid within subside. The form of a new Raphtalia shows itself.

“What is this?” (Firo)

I look upon my own results.

“Fumu... I guess this is the best I can do for a prototype.” (Naofumi)
Inside the tube floats something like a... Raccoon? A Tanuki? A Red panda...? A life form that I can only see as a mix of the three is suspended in the glass.

With that form, I guess letting it out won’t cause any problems.

Using the dragon pulse, I can rapidly elevate its level. This skill sucks up the experience lying dormant in the earth, and allows me to grant it unto people. It’s a higher form of an ability wild monsters naturally

possess.

At the moment, the maximum I can grant is up to level 30.

I drain the liquid out of the tube, and take out the new life form I had created.

The new life shakes off the excess liquid on its fur, and looks over at me.

“Rafu~.”

It slightly raises its front leg to greet me.

“Um... What’s this supposed to be, Niichan?” (Kiel)

“Is it a monster? Its Chi is somewhat reminiscent of Raphtalia-san. Somewhat.” (Atlas) “Fumu, It’s a life-form born of my research to revive Raphtalia.” (Naofumi) “Amazing, Niichan. You created a new type of monster!” (Kiel) “Ara, Naofumi-chan is incredible.” (Sadina)

Firo approaches Raphtalia Prototype 1, and starts sniffing it.

Don’t eat it.

If you eat it, I’ll modify your form to be the same as it.

“Yeah, it’s smell is like Onee-chan. Its looks are completely different, but its tail and the feeling that I get are similar.” (Firo) “Rafu~”

“Well, my research isn’t over yet. Let’s call this one the first generation of the newly formed Raph race.” (Naofumi) “Yay. Pleasure working with you, small Onee-chan!” (Firo) “Rafu~!”

“It should have some ability for battle as well. I’ll be continuing this until I can make the Real Raphtalia’s body. The number of Raphs will be multiplying until then.” (Naofumi) Just in case, I’ve given it the ability to fight. I tampered with quite a bit.

Gene modification sure comes in handy here.

Honestly, to take over the world, I’m greatly lacking in manpower, so mass production is a possibility.

They’re based on a person I trust. The Raph Race may prove to be a

great asset.

“Next, I’ll make a system to mass produce Raphs...” (Naofumi) As I was preparing to give a fervent speech, the alarm went off.

“W-what?” (Naofumi)

I put my hand on a tablet to see what set it off.

What’s displayed is the figure of that fake, Ren and Itsuki infiltrating the first Tower Plant.

“What!?” (Naofumi)

They got the first one on the first try?

No, this isn’t the time to be wondering about that.

That tower’s defense mechanisms won’t be able to hold off against that fake, and those Heroes.

“Ku...”

Even if I send Motoyasu and His Filo Rials, it will be too late to stop the First Tower’s destruction.

With their game knowledge, I can’t deny the possibility Ren and Itsuki figured out the towers.

I focus the display on the tower’s inside.

The fakes easily get through the tower and break the controlling device at the summit.

“Good! Let’s move on to the next one!”

Fu... How foolish. Don’t think the next one will be so easy.

I’ve prepared some things just in case something like this happened.

As soon as the device stopped functioning on the first one, the energy allotted to it flew towards the second tower. The power output on the second one greatly rose.

The Fake and her heroes gaze absentmindedly at the second tower.

And they head towards it upon Gaelion. But without accomplishing

anything, they quickly return.

“It seems my Emergency Line is functioning correctly.” (Naofumi)
“emergency Line? Did you do something, Naofumi-chan?” (Sadina) “Yeah, when one tower gets destroyed, it will send all of its stored energy to the next one, and strengthen it. The next tower gets a large boost.” (Naofumi)
“Boost?” (Sadina)

“Yeah, for about 20 hours, that energy will impede anyone trying to proceed to the next one.” (Naofumi) The barrier was made for the purpose of buying time.

In that time, I’ll be able to prepare myself.

But I never thought I would actually be using these emergency measures.

“I was going to rest for a bit, but it appears that that’s no happening. I won’t let those Fakers destroy the second tower. Motoyasu, use your portal to jump, and bestow retribution onto those that oppose me. Take this with you.” (Naofumi) It’s a memory crystal that I made with Magic Gem Production.

I also gave him a video one with my proclamation of war recorded on it. With this, I am officially waging war on those mongrels.

“Understood, Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

“Should we accompany him?”

“No, you guys should help supply energy to the second tower. Otherwise we’ll run out.” (Naofumi) If the slaves leave the flow of magic, then managing the defenses and the system will be difficult.

The best option is to send Motoyasu to cut down their forces.

“Sadina, you go too. Motoyasu can’t hear the words of women, so use Midori as a translator.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Sadina)

“Next is... right. Why don’t I present my new Raph race to them?” (Naofumi) While waving her hand, Sadina flies off with Motoyasu through his portal.

Good, now I'll be able to offer their sought-after retribution.

The sound from the display picked up.

“For there to be that sort of gimmick... Naofumi-sama sure likes being troublesome.” (Raphtalia) “How do we dispel that barrier? We'll need to destroy all of the towers to proceed, right?” (Ren) “I don't know. But...” (Itsuki)

The fakes return to the village by portal to face Motoyasu, who returned in much the same way.

“Motoyasu just naturally returned through his portal. Aren't we supposed to be seiging them right now?” (Itsuki) Hahaha. Fools.

If you have no reinforcements, why would you initiate a siege?

Our forces have the option of going on the offensive at any time.

Eventually, Motoyasu begins carrying out my orders. He opens his mouth.

“By Father-in-Law's orders, I have come for battle! Now fall before me for the sake of my promotion! ” (Motoyasu) “Quit messing around, Motoyasu! You're choosing the wrong people to side with!” (Ren) “I'm not wrong. My enemies are Firo-tan's, and Father-in-Law's enemies.” (Motoyasu) Taking a stance with his spear, Motoyasu begins running towards the fakes.

“Ku! Like I'd let you!”

Ren steps in front of Motoyasu, and his sword collides with the spear.

“Motoyasu, snap out of it. There's no way Naofumi would think of things like that. We should be resolving this incident as quickly as possible.” (Ren) “No, Father-in-Law's words are absolute. Meteor Spear!” (Motoyasu) Ren parries the spear that came flying at him.

The blast makes a large crater as it comes into contact with the ground.

“Move aside!”

Raphtalia rushes in front, and consecutively slashes at Motoyasu.

“Gufu...”

It’s most likely a Hengen Musou skill that ignores defense.

Since Motoyasu can’t handle Chi as well as me, he begins taking damage.

“What are you doing to my Mokun!?”

The damage itself isn’t particularly high, but Kuu, Marin and Midori step up to protect Motoyasu.

“Motoyasu-chan ran forward too fast. You need to cooperate better, or you won’t even win battles where you have the upper hand.” (Sadina)
Sadina follows up close behind, and holds up her harpoon.

And from behind her, the new Raph Race specimen flies forward.

“Rafu~”

“W-what is... that?”

The fake, and the heroes. Everyone left in the village points their fingers.

Hahaha. Tremble before my technology.

“It’s something Father-in-Law created... A new breed of monster!”
(Motoyasu) “Rafu~”

“W-what is it...? It looks kinda cute, but it’s a monster I’ve never seen before.” (Ren) “I wonder. It’s voice... sounds a little like Raphtalia’s.”
(Itsuki) Itsuki looks at the Raph race specimen, and points at Raphtalia.

The Raph runs forward, and releases illusion magic.

One by one, illusionary Raphs manifest, and cover the landscape.

“Uwah!”

“””Rafu~!”””

The illusionary Raphs begin their assault.

Since they aren’t real, they don’t cause any damage, but the Raph’s target is only a single individual.

“There!” (Raphtalia)

Damn! The faker finds the real Raph among the illusions, and slashes at it.

“Rafu~!”

It dodges by a paper thin margin, and does a flip before landing on the ground. It points its paw at the fake.

And it loudly proclaims.

“Fake~”

“What...?”

Chapter 282: Bio Custom

“Fake~”

“W-what exactly is this...”

The Raph race specimen continues repeating this line. The fake is dumbfound.

Hmph! This is the special function I installed into the Raph race.

A psychological ploy against the fake.

By the way, I haven't gotten around to teaching it any other words yet.

“Fake~”

“... Is this supposed to be some form of harassment?” (Raphtalia) “Who knows? It seems that Naofumi was trying to revive Raphtalia-chan when he made this child.” (Sadina) “How...?” (Raphtalia)

“With a strand of your hair.” (Sadina)

“Naofumi-sama—!” (Raphtalia)

With a face that seems like it would burst into tears at any second, the fake cries out.

Fufufu, the mental attack was super effective.

“And this is a message from Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) Sadina takes out the video crystal and presents it to the fake.

“It's been a few hours, fake and traitors. Good job getting the order of my defense towers correct. Shall I praise you for that?” (Naofumi) After a brief pause, my image continues.

“However, don't think you will be getting here so easily. At dawn, when I have revived Raphtalia, I'll make mincemeat out of all of you. Be prepared.” (Naofumi) “Ah... How should I react to this...” (Raphtalia) The fake puts her hands on her head.

“I explained the situation to Melty-chan, and she said she would cover up the situation, but...” (Sadina) “The next time you try to invade, I'll go

all out as well. Don't think it'll ever be as easy as it was tonight. Then farewell, fakes!" (Naofumi) And my video terminates.

"And like that, we've been sent to deliver the message. If you try to attack Naofumi-chan's fortress again, we'll shoot you out of the sky."
(Sadina) "... I see. So do we have to fight Sadina-oneechan here as well?"
(Raphtalia) "Yeah, if I don't fight, Naofumi-chan will get mad at me."
(Sadina) "... Understood. Then let's fight." (Raphtalia) The fake tightens the grip on her weapon and rushes at Sadina.

Sadina is at a disadvantage, as she fights while defending the Raph specimen. But she puts up a good fight.

But why isn't she using magic?

When I asked later, she said that it would put the Raph in danger. I'll accept such a reason.

Motoyasu exchanges blows with Ren, Itsuki, Rishia, and the opposing Filo Rials.

"Trying to win with numbers won't get you anywhere!"

「Windmill!」

Motoyasu spins his spear and creates a tornado.

But because of the Skill's cooldown time, and the fact he was fighting the long ranged experts, Itsuki and Rishia, he gradually gets pushed back.

"Motoyasu-san, we're at a disadvantage! Let's retreat." (Midori) After taking blows repeatedly, Midori calls out to Motoyasu.

"But, I cannot betray Father-in-Law's expectations." (Motoyasu) "We've fulfilled our objective. If we fight here and lose, then all will be meaningless!" (Midori) "I-I see. But I haven't convinced my lovely angels to switch sides yet." (Motoyasu) "It's impossible! As long as Piyo-chan is here, they won't listen to our invitations." (Midori) "Uu... I apologize, Father-in-Law. I, Motoyasu, will retreat for everyone's sake!" (Motoyasu) "Ah, wait! Where's Gaelion? We need to take down the Anti-Teleport barrier..." (Midori) "Rafu~!"

The Raph uses illusion magic to erase its own presence. At the same time, it creates illusionary copies of Motoyasu and the others.

The fake saw through it almost immediately, but the spell is able to buy enough time.

Motoyasu, his three and Sadina are able to take the Raph and escape out of the extent of the Anti-Teleport zone.

“And that’s what happened, Father-in-Law. I offer my greatest apologies.” (Motoyasu) I saw the footage from the Memory Crystal I had Motoyasu carry.

“The results were satisfactory. It seems they truly intend to oppose us. They’re a group we must eliminate if we wish to conquer the world.” (Naofumi) There’s still some time before the barrier around the second tower breaks... I’ll increase our forces before that.

And my first day of lab construction concludes like that.

The second day.

I begin my preparations to mass produce the Raph race.

I’m still doubtful as to whether they’ll be that great of an asset, but having them is better than not.

Who should I send to defend the second tower?

Motoyasu is reliable, but he’ll be at a disadvantage when taking on everyone by himself.

I should probably send Atlas, Firo, and Fohl as well.

Even so... I have my doubts.

Even if they’re rotten, they’re heroes with their parties.

“Niichan! Is the crepe tree done yet?” (Kiel) “Ah, Kiel. I’ll do it later. I’m still busy.” (Naofumi) “I see...” (Kiel)

Kiel wakes me when I was taking a short nap in the laboratory.

Under my arm, Atlas is happily sleeping.

Fohl is also asleep.

“What will you be doing today?” (Kiel)

“Ah, today, I plan to make a powerful weapon to ready myself to defeat that fake army.” (Naofumi) “Ara? You’re planning some interesting things.” (Sadina) Sadina, who was asleep in a corner of the room, gets up and joins the conversation.

“What sort of thing are you planning?” (Sadina) “I’ll modify the monsters and create a powerful one.” (Naofumi) “Oh~! Amazing~!” (Kiel)

“There are quite a few monsters here, so there are quite a few things that I have to do.” (Naofumi) To make a body for Raphtalia, the Shield told me I need to study the bodies of various monsters as well.

Monsters have overflowing vitality, and there are a few that can continue functioning as undeads even after death.

Gaelion is a good example.

If I study that, I’ll be able to improve my Raphs. I’ll be able to get closer and closer to the original.

Also, I promised the monsters. That I would make them strong.

As I was thinking along those lines, the monster Rat cared for dearly started banging on the walls of its container.

I think she called it Mii-kun or something.

I took the research lab as is, so I guess he was here the whole time.

“Hmm? What’s up?” (Naofumi)

I can’t really tell what he’s thinking, but I can at least read his expression.

“You want me to use you?” (Naofumi)

Rat’s monster nods with conviction.

“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

He is a monster that wished to be strong.

I guess that's fine.

"You have the resolve to go through all sorts of experiments... right?"
(Naofumi) Upon my words, Rat's monster nods.

Good.

I press my Shield to the cultivation tank containing the monster, and I flip a switch.

The effect I activate is Ability Bonus: Bio Custom, Alchemic correction, and also.... Gene Modification.

Geometric Symbols and letters fly out, wrapping around Rat's precious monster.

... Strengthening it is all about imagination.

What sort of strength is he seeking? That's the most important.

Even though he isn't human, I shouldn't do any modifications he doesn't personally wish for.

"Now then, imagine what you wish to become. I'll assist you to the best of my ability." (Naofumi) Rat's monster nods once more, and its ideal image enters my mind.

... Well then.

Rat wanted to make a monster like a dragon, with overwhelming vitality. One that wouldn't die easily.

That will has perfectly transferred itself to her precious specimen.

Perhaps their hearts are linked in some way.

However... This is a bit over the physical capacity of this monster.

If modifications exceed a monster's capacity, then my Human Experimentation and Gene Modification capabilities don't work.

In that aspect, the Bioplants have an extremely large capacity.

Of course, to activate it, a large amount of magic and SP is consumed. But with the Shield's recovery ability, if I rest a bit, it will replenish on its

own.

That's just how high my current level is.

What should I do...

"Sorry, but please lower your expectations a bit. Otherwise..." (Naofumi)
Rat's monster stares at me and conveys its strong will.

Well, if I do a slightly lower modification, there are still other ways of strengthening it.

I edit the image Rat's monster sent me, lowering it a bit, before presenting it back to the monster.

This much is quite possible.

Luckily, I already have all of the necessary materials in my Shield. Though some of them are a bit rare.

"I see... So this is the strength you long for? Show me that you can withstand any pain, any curse, any suffering to attain this strength!" (Naofumi) I activate the Gene Modification.

The modification will take a bit of time.

Something bangs against the walls of the Culture Tank, and the water in it churns violently.

"Oh... wait, how long is this going to last?" (Kiel) "It'll take a while." (Naofumi)

"I see..." (Kiel)

I take out Magic Water and Spirit Water from my shield to recover my SP and Mana.

"Let's move on to the next task." (Naofumi)

Rat's monster needs further modifications... I start framing the components.

I made it so that the monster will live in a sort of core and can be transplanted into different bodies.

For its first body, I do large modifications on a First Generation Raph body.

The current body I'm making is 3 meters in height.

A Raph even larger than Firo floats in the tank in front of me.

It's the body Rat's monster will inhabit.

Eventually the modifications finish, and Rat's monster shows its new form.

It's a red... round crystal.

Rat's monster has evolved to one that controls a body from a core.

In order to act as a vessel for that core, I made this giant Raph.

I take up Rat's monster and transplant it into the Raph.

The body shakes for a while, but eventually, they synchronize. The Raph opens its eyes and lifts its arm.

Fumu... It should be able to move like this.

I press a switch and drain the fluid from the tank. I remove the monster from it.

"Rafu~"

"How is it, your new body? When my research progresses further, I'll grant you one that's easier to fight in." (Naofumi) "Rafu~!"

"Amazing! Niichan can even do things like this!" (Kiel) "Isn't it obvious." (Naofumi)

"... Naofumi-chan is amazing. He's the alchemist of the century." (Sadina) "Perhaps I'm of that caliber." (Naofumi)

"Master, good morning~!" (Firo)

Firo trods into the laboratory in a good mood.

Did she wake up and go to the Dining Hall already? Her stomach is swelling out a bit.

"Who is that?" (Firo)

Firo points at the large Raph and turns to me.

“It’s Rat’s monster.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, so this is Mii-kun?” (Firo)

“Rafu~”

As Firo waves at it, the monster known as Mii-kun returns the wave.

“He’s become large and cute now. Firo won’t lose.” (Firo) “Rafu~”

“Now then, I have an important mission to give you.” (Naofumi)

“What~?” (Firo)

“Go protect the second tower with this one.” (Naofumi) “Yes~!” (Firo)

“Well, there’s still a bit of time. Go accompany this monster until it gets accustomed to its new body.” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Firo)

It’s not like I strengthened that body too far.

It’s like a disposable shell.

I’ll need to upgrade it to something that will become its main body later.

I explained all of that body’s working functions, so... it should be fine.

Chapter 283: Pros and Cons

Now then, on to the next one...

As I was considering my next action, Kiel starts poking me.

“What?” (Naofumi)

“Umm, Niichan, could you make me stronger as well?” (Kiel) “Hmm? Well, if you wish for it, I’ll do it. If there are any other volunteers, I’ll do it for as long as they want.” (Naofumi) I need to concentrate my attention on defending the second tower.

Reinforcing my forces is urgent.

If Kiel wants to become stronger, then granting it unto her is a simple task.

“Then do me next! I’ll fight to pay it off!” (Kiel)

“... Kiel-chan, this Onee-san doesn’t think you should rely on Naofumi-chan’s power too much.” (Sadina) “It’s okay, Sadina-oneechan. I just want to become stronger.” (Kiel) “The current Naofumi-chan is a tad bit different from the one you know, so I think you should think it over a bit carefully before you decide.” (Sadina) “What are you talking about, Sadina-oneechan? The only thing strange about Niichan is the way he speaks. He went off to save sick children with whatever power he had. Nothing’s changed at all! Niichan is always Niichan.” (Kiel) “Well, that’s true, but...” (Sadina)

“Anyways, Niichan! Make me stronger!” (Kiel)

“Fumu... understood.” (Naofumi)

“Kiel-chan...” (Sadina)

Kiel’s level is actually on the higher side. But, she hasn’t achieved overwhelming strength like Raphtalia.

She learned the basics of Chi later than the rest, so you could say she’s a step behind the traitors.

As with Rat’s monster, I put Kiel into a culture tank and close the lid

before activating my ability.

“What sort of modifications are you looking for?” (Naofumi) “Let’s see...” (Kiel)

Kiel senses the link I made with my power, and she sends the image of her desired form.

But...

“This modification will break down the wall separating man and beast. Are you okay with that?” (Naofumi) “Yeah! This is what I want to become.” (Kiel)

“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

It’s not outside of my ability.

Kiel’s body is naturally healthy, so she should be able to withstand the changes.

However, this one would make her step out of the Demi-Human category, and she would tread into the monster one.

I’ll... make it so that it’s possible to change her back.

It’s difficult, but this is Kiel’s wish. For me, nothing is impossible!

“With this modification, you’ll get some fatal weaknesses, so you better prepare yourself.” (Naofumi) “Weaknesses?” (Kiel)

If I want to add the function to allow Kiel to turn back, this is my limit.

I could discard some parts of her and add functions to get rid of the weaknesses, but then there would be no point.

I don’t plan on attaining victory after using my own subordinate as sacrifices.

“After this modification, you’ll be weak against some things. If people use that to their advantage when they attack, you’ll easily lose.” (Naofumi) “Is that true?” (Kiel)

“Yeah, so will you still... continue?” (Naofumi)

Unless I do the modification itself, I won't be able to determine what weaknesses will form.

However, the modification window notified me that some would form.

"Yeah! Niichan, just do it all at once!" (Kiel)

"It seems you have the resolve." (Naofumi)

"I... won't become an existence that merely takes! Using Niichan's power... I will be reborn!" (Kiel) "Got it." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-chan. Please don't do something that you can never take back." (Sadina) I'm no fool. I understand what Sadina's trying to say.

I'll make Kiel stronger, while keeping her as herself.

"No problem. When I make my new world, Kiel will graciously be accepted as a member of that world. There's no way I would ever use anyone as a disposable pawn." (Naofumi) I activate the ability.

The liquid in the tank overflows and bubbles cloud it. Eventually they cover Kiel's form.

"This modification will take some time. Kiel, rejoice at your rebirth." (Naofumi) Eventually, the processes concludes, and Kiel exited the culture tank.

"This is the result?" (Kiel)

"Yes." (Naofumi)

Kiel looks over her body again and again.

Her appearance hasn't changed at all.

"Nothing's changed, Niichan!" (Kiel)

"If you stopped being human, I would be troubled. I added another stage to your transformation ability. If you change to that form, you will gain great strength. The weaknesses are..." (Naofumi) I teach Kiel her own new weaknesses.

If the fakes were to learn of these, Kiel would be taken out instantly.

“Now go and test your new-found powers with Firo.” (Naofumi) “Got it! Firo-chan, look at my new power~!” (Kiel)

And Kiel energetically runs off.

“... Then after looking over Kiel-chan and Firo-chan, I’m going to go on patrol again.” (Sadina) “Yeah, hop to it.” (Naofumi)

After bidding farewell to Sadina, I immerse myself in my new Raphtalia creation project once more.

Eventually, the barrier protecting the second tower fades, and the fakers charge it aboard Gaelion.

The village’s slaves have come by boat as well.

But this time, they won’t be destroying it so easily.

With Motoyasu at the front, I’ve dispatched a large force there.

My numbers are greater than those invading. It’s the reverse of before!

I watch the scene play out on a screen from a distance. I’ll be able to direct the battle.

Oh? Is that nit Rat among the fake party?

I thought she was a non-combatant. What is she doing here?

“Breaking in from the front looks difficult.” (Raphtalia) “Yeah, if I went all out, it wouldn’t be impossible, but these are Naofumi’s comrades. If we’re careless, we may put their lives in danger.” (Ren) “... How troublesome.” (Itsuki)

The fake and Ren complain.

If you think that, then you could just refrain from getting in my way...

Know that as long as the battle takes place here, I can easily gather your information.

“Anyways, let’s try to break through and make this a swift battle! We’re heading out, everyone!” (Raphtalia) Upon the fake’s words, the Heroes, Rishia, Rat, and the others nod.

Perhaps they infiltrated the last one like this as well.

Do you think the core is on the top floor?

Too bad, each tower is designed differently. Though the device was on top in the first one, the barrier forming device is around the center of this one.

... It glows, so perhaps that gives away its location.

“They’re coming!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu stands before the invaders.

“I’ll hold down Motoyasu! Everyone go forward!” (Ren) “Ku...”
(Motoyasu)

Ren stands before Motoyasu, and the rest of them proceed.

They’re both heroes on approximately even footing. This battle will be decided by how Motoyasu’s three contribute.

“Are you up for it? This is getting to be a pain.”

“Mo-kun seems motivated, so we’ll have to do a bit of work.”

“Yeah. Or else Motoyasu-san will be troubled.”

In front of the three unmotivated birds, a certain life-form shows itself.

“Kyua!”

It seems Gaelion and Taniko will be taking on the three.

Ah, by the way, because of my barrier devices, teleporting to run away is impossible.

“Motoyasu! Quit it with this farce and help us revert Naofumi!” (Ren)
Ren releases a Meteor Sword at Motoyasu.

Motoyasu holds his spear out front and redirects it. And continuing with that movement, he proceeds to thrust.

“Revert Father-in-Law? What are you talking about? Firo-tan likes Father-in-Law as he is now, does she not? That means there is only one thing for me to do. For Firo-tan’s sake, I will protect him!” (Motoyasu)

“Stop! If you do that, do you realize what Naofumi will do when he regains his senses!? He’ll definitely be mad at you!” (Ren) It seems I don’t have to focus on this battle.

I focus on the traitors that slipped past his defenses.

I scroll through the channels on my surveillance system.

There they are!

“Rafu~!”

“Rafu!”

“They’re coming one after the other!”

Damn! Those fakes are proceeding while cutting down the Raphs I put so much effort into making.

The current Raphs can’t lift a finger against Heroes, I guess.

What the hell is Sadina doing!?

I searched the channels for her and found her holding off another group of invading slaves.

She’s surrounded by Raphs, so she’s fighting without using magic.

Quite a number of people are getting by her.

I guess this is due to me not calling for a meeting earlier.

There’s no reason to dispatch the Raphs and Sadina to the same place.

Ah! The defensive line is broken.

The only room left is the one with the device.

This time, Atlas, Firo, and Fohl are defending it.

“Firo!” (Raphtalia)

“Oneechan, you came again? I won’t let you break this one.” (Firo)

“That’s right, Raphtalia-san. Give up and go home.” (Atlas) “I will... I will make sure Atlas doesn’t get injured... for that, I will... fight!” (Fohl) Even Fohl seems relatively motivated.

It was a good choice pairing him with Atlas.

“Just open your eyes already!” (Raphtalia)

“Oneechan is the one who’s blind. Doesn’t master look like he’s having so much fun right now?” (Firo) “That is not Naofumi-sama! Naofumi once told me that you once prevented him from going insane when he used the Wrath Shield. Then why won’t you try and save him this time?”

(Raphtalia) Ah, something like that did happen.

To prevent my rage from going out of control, I needed the Real Raphtalia or Firo to help me.

The bundle of instincts, Firo, is siding with me.

That means I’m not going out of control.

There’s no way I’m wrong.

“Let me explain this one. That time, Firo saw that the power was corrupting Naofumi-sama’s true nature. But this time is different. Naofumi-sama’s nature hasn’t changed much. That’s why Firo and I will stand by this Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “Yeah, the current master is... really happy and... he treats Firo and everyone well. Firo is also having fun, so she like the current master.” (Firo) “Yes. Naofumi-sama lived in a different world from us, so no one can understand his true heart or his values. But to reject him merely because his tone of speech changed... something like that is impossible for me.” (Atlas) “Is that something you should be saying to me? If he ever regains his senses, do you understand just how much pain and grief Naofumi-sama will go through as he reflects upon his actions? As he reflects on all of your actions?”

(Raphtalia) “Even so, I cannot become Naofumi-sama’s enemy. No matter what happens.” (Atlas) “Firo, I’m going to give Naofumi-sama quite a lecture after this!” (Raphtalia) “But master is master, you know? When Oneechan wasn’t there, he cried to himself. Why won’t Oneechan understand?” (Firo) “N-Naofumi did...?” (Raphtalia)

The fake’s face seems to waver for a moment.

But she soon takes up her old expression.

“... Melty-chan is angry!” (Raphtalia)

“If Melty-chan were to meet Master now, I think she would accept him.” (Firo) Perhaps her anger reached its peak. The fake clenches her sword and takes a stance.

She wraps an aura around herself, showing that she’s prepared to use Hengen Musou.

Where did she learn it? Why can this fake use Hengen Musou as well?

“It appears that this matter cannot be resolved with words alone.” (Raphtalia) “It’s good that you understand. I knew it would come to this sooner or later.” (Atlas) “I think the current Master is happier, you know. He laughs to himself a lot! Firo decided she would protect Master’s smile.” (Firo) Responding to Raphtalia’s aura, Firo, Atlas, and Fohl release their own.

“Hero of the Bow-san, Rishia-san, and Rat-san. Are you ready?” (Raphtalia) “Yes.” (Itsuki)

“Fuee... I never thought I would end up fighting Firo-chan.” (Rishia) “Yes, I’m ready.” (Rat)

The moment after they exchange glances at one another, the battle starts.

Atlas and Firo rush at their own choice of fakes.

Itsuki and Rishia intercept them from afar... or at least they try to. Fohl knocks their attacks out of the air.

“I won’t let you get in the way.” (Fohl)

“Rishia-san, what should I do? If I get serious, I think I may fatally injure Fohl-san.” (Itsuki) “Fuee! That’s something we must avoid at all costs!” (Rishia) 「Illusionary Blade!」

The fake imitates Raphtalia and hides herself.

But that is pointless.

“It’s useless!” (Atlas)

Atlas doesn't trace objects with her eyes. She follows them by sensing their chi.

She runs after and thrusts at the hidden fake.

Firo's also able to see through it with her feral instincts. The fake is underestimating them.

This time, Atlas is the first to strike.

"Ku... Musou Kassei!" (Raphtalia)

"That's something we can do too~" (Firo)

"Yes, Firo-chan! Let's do it!" (Atlas)

Atlas and Firo power up to match the fake.

For them to have to double team her... perhaps it's due to the support fire that occasionally pierces Fohl's defenses. There's no helping it.

Be careful. Don't deal any decisive blows.

Chapter 284: The Battle for the Second Tower

Hmm? The slaves that had split off into a separate regiment are approaching the central portion as well.

I change the channel.

“Kiel-kun!”

The slaves close in to find Kiel waiting for them, taking on an imposing stance.

“Move aside!” (Imya)

Oh? Imya’s mixed in with the group.

I’m surprised she came. She admitted herself that she was unfit for battle.

“I’m sorry, but you’re not getting past! I promised Niichan.” (Kiel) Kiel changes to her dog form, and the other slaves raise their various weapons.

“Even if it’s Kiel-kun, I won’t hold back. In the end, it’s all for Shield-Oniichan’s sake.”

“You’re wrong everyone. Everyone’s misunderstanding something. Niichan... Niichan granted me power. If you all ask, then you too will...” (Kiel) Kiel jumps forward and starts biting at the slaves.

However, perhaps due to the fact that they’re used to battle, the group is able to keep up with her movements.

The slaves with the highest levels work together and feign attacks at her.

They must be trying to wear down her stamina.

“...Then there’s no choice. Niichan told me not to use it if possible, but I’ll show you my serious face!” (Kiel)

WAAAOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOON!

Kiel roars to the sky, and her form begins changing once more.

Magic surrounds her, so all that is seen is a black silhouette. The sound of her bones creaking sounds out, as her form warps and changes.

“Ah... aaaah...”

Upon seeing the black shadow, a majority of the attacking slaves begin shaking.

Only Imya manages to remain calm.

“Hah... hah... How is it! This is my new power!” (Kiel) Kiel shouts out in an excited voice.

Her form is now that of a dog with three heads. That of Cerberus, the guardian of hell.

But the problem is that her form isn't particularly large. Since the base is Kiel, it still looks like a puppy... no, it's a wolf cub-like Cerberus.

Perhaps it would be best not to call it Cerberus, but Kielberus. Looking from afar, its outer appearance is still relatively cute.

(TL: This pun isn't in the original; instead, Naofumi says Cerberus in Hiragana instead of Katakana, downgrading the name's effect. I'm not sure how to convey that in English) (ED: Perhaps it would be better to call her <3Cerberus<3 XD) This is the form Kiel wished for.

“I'm coming! Prepare yourself!” (Kiel)

“Wah! Stay away! Get away, stop!”

“Father! Mamaaaa!”

(TL: Remember, the thing that assaulted the village was...) The villagers run around in panic.

“Everyone, get down!” (Imya)

Imya runs forward and stabs at Kiel with a dagger.

Kiel grumbles as the dagger stabs into her shoulder.

“If it isn't Imya-chan. You don't find me scary?” (Kiel) “No, not really...”

(Imya)

... It seems Imya's surprisingly fearless.

Though, I agree that Kiel isn't really scary.

No matter how I look at it, she's cute.

"Kiel-kun, you told me this on the day I was bought, right? The place I was going to would be somewhere where if you work hard, you'll get appropriate compensation. Is it still the same?" (Imya) "Of course!" (Kiel)

"It doesn't look that way to me. That's why I want the Hero of the Shield-sama to come back. Kiel-kun, I will defeat you!" (Imya) Then, Imya produces a cookie from her pocket and throws it.

(TL: The Trojan Aeneas was able to pacify Cerberus with drugged cake.)
"S-sweets!?" (Kiel)

Kiel suddenly turns her attention to the thrown treat. She chases it and begins chomping on it.

"Everyone, now! Calm down; collect yourselves!" (Imya) Imya claps her hands on one of the panicking slave's faces.

"B-but that monster's here! We have to escape... we have..."

... This reaction. It's somewhat like Raphtalia's panic attacks when she was younger.

Ah... I see why Kiel wanted to take on that shape.

She thought something like strength = evoking fear. She turned into what she feared to obtain strength.

However, it seems that Imya coincidentally noticed her weakness...

Did Ren and Itsuki tell her tales of the other world? Or is it chance?

The monster Cerberus lives in this world, so perhaps it has similar qualities.

I thought the same when I finished the modifications.

"If we don't do anything here, what do you think will happen? Didn't we

get stronger as not to lose to the wave!?” (Imya) “... Right, not to lose... We’re working so we won’t have to lose any precious people anymore!”

“I was scolded by Imya-chan, haha!”

“Kiel-kun! We won’t lose!” (Everyone)

“Hah! Like I’m going down so easily!” (Kiel) Kiel finishes munching on the cookie and starts running at the slaves.

She’s really fast.

As expected of my modifications.

She’s making a fool out of the villagers!

“Ku! She’s too fast. At this rate, we’ll never get through!”

“GAUUU!” (Kiel)

Kiel snaps at Imya with one of her mouths.

“__!”

Overcoming the pain, Imya grabs and holds down the other two heads.

“Now’s your chance!” (Imya)

“Yeah!”

... What is this?

The slaves have begun singing a lullaby.

Dammit! How do they know all of Kiel’s weaknesses!?

(TL: The Hero Orpheus was able to get past him by putting him to sleep with his lyre. Also see Fluffy from Harry Potter.) “Ah... Uu...”

Kiel’s jaw slackens, and she staggers from side to side.

“Uu... Not yet, I am... not done yet! Like I’d go down here!” (Kiel) ... I guess it’s time.

I open the line and connect it to Kiel’s room.

“Kiel, retreat.” (Naofumi)

“Niichan!? But...” (Kiel)

“They know your weaknesses. At this rate, you’ll definitely lose. Just fall back for now.” (Naofumi) “Damn! Understood, Niichan.” (Kiel)

Dammit... I never expected the situation to be this bad.

I showed off my massive modification of the Bioplant. Were they able to deduce Kiel’s modifications from that?

And the monster that should have been a traumatic existence for a majority of them... Did they already prepare to overcome such a hurdle beforehand?

That’s the only thing I can think of.

Kiel obeys me and leaves the room with haste.

I told him to go assist Motoyasu if something like this happened.

With his increased fighting ability, if he goes to assist Motoyasu, then something should change.

At that moment, the alarm rings once more.

From the second tower’s core piece, someone’s accessing all of the other towers’ cores. He’s trying to shut them all down.

I see... So that’s why Rat participated in this mission.

But that’s futile.

“Rafu~!”

The monster I had prepared as a final line of defense, Mii-kun, breaks through the ceiling to confront the hacker.

Some bugs were apparent when he sparred with Firo, so I didn’t want to send him into combat so soon. But, I stationed him above the core room just in case.

That’s the place where the land’s power and magic gathers. It was perfect for tuning him. I’m lucky I placed him there.

“Ku... I was so close...” (Rat)

“Unfortunately, your efforts are fruitless.” (Naofumi) I connect my

speaker to speak with Rat.

“Do you think that is enough to breach through my security?”

(Naofumi) “Marquis, just quit it already!” (Rat)

“Hahaha, I’ll make you regret ever thinking of opposing me. Go forth!”

(Naofumi) How ironic. Rat, you shall be disposed of by the monster you cherished so!

“Rafu~!”

Mii-kun swings his thick tail at Rat.

Being familiar with monsters, Rat predicts and evades his attack. She throws a syringe at him.

Again, useless. Don’t think that’s enough to stop a fully strengthened Raph.

“The drug isn’t...”

Rat freezes as if she had seen something unbelievable. Her movements are quickly limited by Mii-kun.

Mii-kun pulls out the syringe and starts walking toward his former friend.

“Rafu~!”

He raises his large arm and lowers it with great force.

“Agu...”

It’s a narrow room at the center of the tower with various devices set everywhere.

Rat’s knees give out below her, and she falls to the floor. Mii-kun raises his arm overhead, as if to give the finishing blow.

“... Rafu~”

Mii-kun and Rat exchange glances.

“... Mii-kun?”

“R-Rafu~!?”

It happened at a moment's notice.

Mii-kun grasps his head and cries out.

Ku... I guess his body's tuning is still inadequate.

"Marquis! What is the meaning of this!?" (Rat) "No idea. It's what your precious monster wished for." (Naofumi) "Even so... you went and did something like this...!?" (Rat) "Rafu~!"

Mii-kun starts going out of control, and the core room begins crumbling to pieces.

Ku... This is exceedingly troublesome.

Eventually, with the sound of shattering glass, the core piece breaks.

The tower rumbles and begins to collapse.

There's no choice.

I open all audio lines in the second tower.

"Those who follow me, the tower is crumbling. Retreat with haste. If you run to the third tower, the fakes will be unable to follow." (Naofumi) I change the channel to observe the Fake and Firo's battle. It seems it was put on standby due to the rumbling of the tower.

They haven't defeated her yet?

I guess the fake's got some skills.

Due to Kiel's help, Motoyasu was able to drive off Ren and Gaelion. They were heading to assist Firo's group.

They join up with Sadina on the way. I guess I'll have to honestly admit defeat here.

After I order him to return, Mii-kun takes a last look at Rat and climbs through the ceiling to escape.

"Mii-kun! Wait!" (Rat)

"... Rafu~!"

That isn't the Mii-kun you know anymore.

He's been reborn as one of my subordinates.

After that, Rat walks out of the room to meet the fake.

At the same time, Motoyasu meets Firo's group and uses his portal to teleport them away.

The last footage I see before the tower collapses is that of Ren and Itsuki meeting the fake and teleporting all of them back...

It seems Itsuki's getting over his curse. His SP recovered a bit.

That's bothersome.

Anyways, we lost the battle of the second tower.

I have to admit that.

Chapter 285: The Second Generation

“Let’s start a strategy meeting!”

Kiel returns with a despondent look on her face. Before I could order anything, she gathers up all of my forces and announces a meeting.

“This time, even after Niichan went to the trouble of modifying me, I wasn’t of any use at all.” (Kiel) “Kiel-kun tried her hardest. Her new form was also amazing.” (Midori) Midori turns to Kiel and throws some honest praise at her.

Even though he can be toxic, he’s also relatively sociable it seems.

“I think if Kiel-kun wasn’t there, then Motoyasu-san would have still been exchanging blows with the Hero of the Sword.”

“That’s right.” (Motoyasu)

Oh? Motoyasu can communicate with Kiel when she’s Kielberus?

That’s actually a bit surprising.

I thought Melty was the only woman whose words would get through to him.

“Motoyasu, what does Kiel look like to you?” (Naofumi) “A dog with three heads, Father-in-Law.” (Motoyasu)

“Okay, Kiel. Return to your normal form!” (Naofumi)

“Got it, Niichan!” (Kiel)

Kiel assumes her human form.

And Motoyasu’s gaze changes to that of someone staring at filth. He averts his eyes.

“A dog that can transform into a pig... That’s quite a dirty power.” (Motoyasu) Ah... because Kiel changed into something close to a monster, she got out of the category where gender mattered, I guess.

But Firo is recognized in both forms, and Kiel only in monster... What’s going on in Motoyasu’s head?

“Niichan, I’m sorry. I wasn’t helpful at all.” (Kiel) “Don’t mind it. They grasped your weaknesses, so there’s no helping it.” (Naofumi) “Then what am I supposed to do?” (Kiel)

That’s right.

Perhaps I should station her in an area that eliminates the effect of her weaknesses.

Honestly, more modifications than this will strain her body too much. It’s very likely she won’t be able to turn back.

“I’ll provide Kiel with ear plugs or earmuffs. The problem would be that I would have to give orders beforehand, and I won’t be able to coordinate your movements.” (Naofumi) That’s one of the possibilities I considered, but I never expected the situation to call for it so quickly.

I need to somehow eliminate her weakness of being unable to look away from sweets and being weak to lullabies.

For the latter, I can just cover her ears, but the former is difficult.

I could make sure they don’t have any treats on them... but I don’t have a concrete plan for that.

If I drew it into an underwater battle, then they wouldn’t be able to use it, but that would sacrifice Kiel’s improved mobility.

Anyways, I’ll have to consider how to use Kiel.

And wait a second...

“Kiel, if you’re fighting an enemy that you think you can beat, try your hardest to stay in your dog form. Only use your modified form when you need to.” (Naofumi) “So the only ones I should use it on are Raphtalia-chan, Rishia-nee-chan, and the heroes?” (Kiel) “Yeah, that seems to be the case. I guess you should steer clear of the Granny and her disciples as well...” (Naofumi) Though they don’t stand out, besides Raphtalia, Rishia, and Fohl, there are some others who underwent the Granny’s training.

This time, the fear from seeing Kiel’s Kielberus form caused them to be unable to act. But if they meet again, Kiel will be at a disadvantage.

“I’ll access the third tower... and institute a scanning feature. I’ll make it so that people carrying food-like items will be unable to reach the area where Kiel’s deployed.” (Naofumi) It will take up some time, but there’s no helping it.

“Um...”

“Hmm?” (Naofumi)

One of the slaves I treated trembles as it calls out to me.

This one didn’t participate in the Second Tower defense.

“Is there someone who’s threatening the... God of the Shield-sama?”

“Yeah, this world is full of people like that. A group of them are trying to invade this place. For that purpose, the people gathered here are putting a desperate effort towards defending this place, but the situation is turning stale.” (Naofumi) They even managed to destroy tower number two.

The main reason for this failure was that I deployed Rat’s monster before tuning him properly.

It was my own lack of judgment.

My next plan won’t have as many risks.

“Rafu~...”

Rat’s monster, AKA Mii-kun, stands around with a dejected expression.

Though he had enough battle power, he went out of control. It seems he’s repenting.

“Then... um...”

“What?” (Naofumi)

The treated slaves look at me with determination and step forward.

“Please modify us like you did that child!”

“... You guys just overcame human experimentation by the Three Hero Church. I don’t think you should be jumping at such notions.” (Naofumi)

It's fine if they just help with magic supplying and managing the lab.

Their levels and abilities are not fit for battle.

In the current situation, without the time to increase their level, I don't find it necessary to send them to war.

"I think I said this with Kiel-chan as well, but Oneechan wouldn't recommend it." (Sadina) "Sadina... should you be saying that? You were also quite useless this time around." (Naofumi) "But I was fighting alongside the Raph Race that Naofumi-chan made with care. There's no way I could get serious." (Sadina) "Then you'll be the one to finish off that faker." (Naofumi) "That's impossible. I mean, it's Raphtalia-chan." (Sadina) "That's just a fake making a mockery of her form." (Naofumi) "... Naofumi-chan believes that. But still, it's hard for me to attack her, so I can't get serious. You understand?" (Sadina) "I see." (Naofumi)

Even though she's evil, her appearance is the spitting image of the real one.

I guess I can understand how she would be hard to fight.

"And that's how it is. You get it?" (Naofumi)

"... No, since you saved our lives, we would like to be of as much use to the God of the Shield-sama as possible."

All of them seem resolute as they face me.

I get the feeling that a half-hearted refusal on my part won't move them.

No, I can easily refuse.

But if I do, they might use that resolution to infiltrate and try to defend the third tower anyways.

Even in jest, I can't call their levels high. They're very low.

Using my abilities, I can forcibly raise levels, but 30 is my limit.

Over that, and the strain on the body is too high. I don't have enough energy to expend either.

“... Promise me this. When you march into battle, you will prioritize survival over all else.” (Naofumi) “If the God of the Shield wishes it.” (All Treated Slaves) “... Understood. I’ll modify you to your hearts’ content later. Before then, imagine your ideal form of power.” (Naofumi) “Ah, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

At that point, Atlas raised her hand.

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“With Naofumi-sama’s power, I wish to get stronger.” (Atlas) “What are you saying, Atlas? Do you want to end up looking like that!?” (Fohl) “Yes, Onii-sama. I’ll change into anything be it for Naofumi-sama’s sake. Also... I don’t want Onii-sama telling me that.” (Atlas) Atlas spit her words out while emitting bloodlust at Fohl.

Perhaps she’s referring to Fohl’s beast transformation form.

“I heard about it. Onii-sama turned into a fluffy animal and slept while being cuddled by Naofumi-sama... how envious am I.” (Atlas) “Uu... That’s wrong! I... I am...!” (Fohl)

“That’s why I want a fluffy form like Kiel-kun!” (Atlas) “So you’re completely ignoring combat ability!” (Naofumi) The difference in these people is too great.

But... Atlas is applying herself a lot.

I don’t mind modifying her to some extent.

If I fix her eyes, then perhaps her movements will become sharper.

At the very least, if I give her a transformation ability, she will get stronger.

“Okay, then I’ll make modifications with Atlas as my priority!” (Naofumi) “You bastard-” (Fohl)

“Onii-sama! You’re wide open.” (Atlas)

“Gefu!” (Fohl)

Atlas pricks an enraged Fohl from behind, and he falls forward.

These two are the same as ever.

“I jabbed a pressure point. For a little while, you won’t be able to muster up any strength. Firo-chan, can you restrain Onii-sama so he won’t be able to move?” (Atlas) Firo stands on Fohl.

Like that, even Fohl will be rendered immobile.

“A-Atlas! Sto-STOOOOP!” (Fohl)

I signal Atlas to enter the culture tank and activate my Human Experimentation ability.

Symbols come from my shield and bind her. A window appears before my eyes.

And as soon as I look over it, I come to a conclusion.

“My apologies Atlas. It’s impossible for you.” (Naofumi) “W-why Naofumi-sama!?” (Atlas)

“You do not have the constitution to withstand modifications. More specifically, your body is already at its breaking point. There’s no room for any more.” (Naofumi) Due to her body, making the necessary changes will probably be fatal.

She was at her limit from the start. She doesn’t have the caliber.

She was originally weak, and she couldn’t even walk. She was always blind. Yet, now that child is walking on her own feet and even rushing into battle.

With that, she’s already near her own breaking point.

What’s more, this modification will require too much energy, so I don’t think I will be able to complete it. I’ll have to pay quite a bit of compensation for it. After this, I must conquer the world, so using that much here would be a pain.

“Give up.” (Naofumi)

“Uu... If Naofumi-sama puts it like that, then I’ll reluctantly give up.” (Atlas) After getting out of the tank, Atlas motions Firo to move. Fohl lifts

her up in his arms.

“I’m glad. Atlas didn’t have anything done to her.” (Fohl) “That’s unfortunate. I thought I would at least be able to return her vision.” (Naofumi) “H-her eyes... can be repaired.. you say!?” (Fohl)

Fohl glares at me in disbelief.

He truly is an excitable fellow.

“Then why didn’t you!?” (Fohl)

“I just explained it, didn’t I?” (Naofumi)

Even though he objected to it, why is he getting mad at me for not doing it?

“...” (Fohl)

With a regretful, yet glad, expression, Fohl steps back with Atlas in hand.

“Then... will Onii-sama be getting modified?” (Atlas)

“Wha-Atlas!” (Fohl)

“If Onii-sama become stronger, Naofumi-sama’s defenses will become unbreakable.” (Atlas) “Fumu... fine. Upon Atlas’s orders, I’ll grant you some modifications. Firo.” (Naofumi) “Yeah, got it!” (Firo)

Since he hasn’t fully recovered, Fohl is easily lifted into the culture tank by Firo.

“Wait! Unhand me! Something like this... I’ll never-” (Fohl) “Onii-sama...” (Atlas)

“...” (Fohl)

Good, he quiets down.

I activate my powers and direct them at Fohl.

... What’s with this?

For different reasons, I can’t do anything to him.

Perhaps I should say he’s already in his perfect form.

He hasn't unlocked it yet, but if he raises his own abilities, he already has another form.

(TL: Insert obligatory this isn't even my final form) He already has all of the abilities I granted to Kiel.

What is the meaning of this?

In Atlas's case... her screen had a vestigial remnant of something similar. Does it have to do with their blood?

The Hakuko seem to be such a race.

"Atlas, what do you want me to do to Fohl?" (Naofumi) "Please make him less fluffy." (Atlas)

That has nothing to do with battle. Rejected.

Ah, now that I think about it, when Kiel saw Fohl's beast form, she got really excited and kept calling him, 'cool.' How long ago was that?

"If he concentrates harder, he can get another form much like the one I gave to Kiel." (Naofumi) "For reals? Fohl-niichan is amazing!" (Kiel)

Kiel excitedly praises Fohl.

But Fohl doesn't care for any words apart from his sister's. He ignores it.

"R-really?" (Fohl)

"... What sort of form is it?" (Atlas)

"It seems to be a larger white tiger. Though his weaknesses increase, his abilities rise. It requires a lot of discipline to achieve. Actually, it seems to be impossible." (Naofumi) I mean... there's too much. Fohl's raised his level quite a bit, but he hasn't even fulfilled half of the necessary requirements to unlock it.

The Hakuko race can climb up to level 120, but... he needs to be at least 180 to use it.

Anyways, I can't modify him further.

Ah, right. The messenger from Silt Welt could transform too.

The feeling he gave off was kinda like that of a monster. Is that related to this...?

The Hakuko blood's already been modified to its fullest.

"Anyways, until the third tower's boost runs out, I'll modify you all into whatever form you want. Of course, like Atlas over there, there may be some who cannot be changed. Prepare yourselves for that." (Naofumi)
"Yes!" (Treated Slaves)

Good answer.

I guess I may be able to count on them a bit.

"Then everyone else, review your shortcomings and prepare for tomorrow's battle." (Naofumi) I signal the group to disperse.

You know, I actually have a mountain of things I have to be doing.

This time, I made improvements on the Raph race and made my next creation. I had just finished my Tali race and now this.

The second generation Raphs are made by fixing the low abilities of the first generation in mind. Their base abilities and intelligence are increased.

Their appearance is still the same, but they'll be more powerful than the first generation.

The Tali race is made in a form closer to that of humans.

I made it so they are bipedal.

As I rest to recover energy to modify the slaves, Firo comes with the other monsters.

"What's up?" (Naofumi)

"Well, you see, these children asked when it was their turn to get modified." (Firo) "Ah, so that's it. What sort of shape do you want?" (Naofumi) As I asked, the monsters turn to the Raph and Tali race specimens in the tanks and cry out.

"They want to be of the small oneechan race. In a way different from

with Mii-kun.” (Firo) “I see...” (Naofumi)

What an advantageous proposal.

If they wish to aid in my experiments, then my research will progress.

And these monsters are of relatively high level too.

Combined with the Raph Race’s power, they’ll become much more useful than the mass produced models.

“If that’s the case, then it’s simple.” (Naofumi)

I’ve already established the foundation.

I’ll just have to implant the Raph race genes into them to whatever extent they wish it.

Based on the results of their changes, my research will advance.

“Well, I’ll leave it up to you guys to what extent you want to keep your original races.” (Naofumi) Today will be a busy one.

Until the third tower becomes vulnerable, I pour my efforts into modifying the slaves and the monsters.

By the way, Firo left to invite Melty over and returned in failure.

It seems that the princess is rejecting my plan.

I was going to purify all of the trashy nobility in Malromark and spare only her, yet this is how she reacts.

She’s a stubborn lass.

“Ah, Firo. Do you want me to add anything to you?” (Naofumi) “Um, you see, Firo is...” (Firo)

I hear out Firo’s request as well.

“Let’s see. I’ll try to take care of it when I find time.” (Naofumi) “Yay!” (Firo)

She was depressed after being rejected by Melty, but she regains some vigor.

How selfish a bird.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama...” (Atlas)

As always, Atlas is sleeping near me.

Fohl failed in dragging her away.

Chapter 286: War Reversal

The third day.

I grant the modifications to the slaves that wish for it, but...

To complete the modifications, a large amount of energy is required. By the time the Third Tower's boost runs out, I could only finish a couple of slaves and monsters.

The amount of boats on the Faker's side increased by a bit.

"I won't let you get in the way of the God of the Shield-sama's plans!"

The Third Tower Defense front is a maelstrom of discord.

It's an all-out war.

However... for some reason, they are able to make use of all of my new modified slaves' weaknesses, and we face a stream of defeats.

"As God-sama ordered, we have to run!"

"Yeah!"

Taking into account what happened in the second tower, I made secret escape passages to prevent capture upon defeat.

Just by entering the various escape ways within the tower, my subordinates can achieve safety when at a disadvantage.

Now then...

Those on the front lines are the monsters I modified to have the appearance of Raphs and Talis. The sight of them send Rat and Taniko into a frenzy.

"Marquis! I'm definitely not forgiving you for this one!" (Rat) "Yeah! I'll make you regret it!" (Taniko)

Both of them are quite mad, but it's not like I care.

It's something the monsters wished for.

More importantly... those guys aren't saying anything about the new

slaves assisting our forces...

Well, it's an emergency situation, so perhaps they got used to it.

... I've been thinking this for a while, but isn't our information getting leaked?

I need to deal with this immediately.

Oh? Even Melty's participating in this invasion.

Even though they were against it, I organized the group of Atlas, Firo, Fohl, and Motoyasu to guard the core.

Everyone else engages with enemies within the tower whenever they find them.

The situation is unfavorable. My forces are often pushed into unavoidable retreat.

"You came again, Raphtalia-oneechan... Can't you let master be free already?" (Firo) "What do you mean free!? Wasn't Naofumi-sama planning on returning to his world? Why does he need to conquer this world anyways?" (Raphtalia) "Firo-chan! Stop it already." (Melty)

"Ah, Melty-chan. Melty-chan will follow master, right?" (Firo) Firo tilts her head as she asks.

But unfortunately, Melty cannot return Firo's smile.

"Firo-chan, there's no way that I could do that." (Melty)

"Is that so?" (Firo)

"Of course. I haven't met him yet, but he began scheming for world domination, started producing strange monster legions, and began modifying the children from his own village. I can't leave him be!"

(Melty) "Master is, you see, he has a great smile. Firo rarely ever saw master so happy before, you know." (Firo) "Really? I kinda wanna see that... No that doesn't matter. Firo-chan! Please help us stop Naofumi." (Melty) "Eh~? Even if it's Melty-chan's request, I won't do this one." (Firo) "... Firo-chan. Once Naofumi returns to normal, he's going to scold you severely. You better be prepared for that." (Melty) "I won't let you~" (Firo)

And the battle commences.

Or it should have. Motoyasu, who was being silent until now, addresses Firo.

“By the way, Firo-tan. Did you not call that pig over there Raphtalia-oneechan just now?” (Motoyasu) “Mu! Don’t talk to me!” (Firo)

Firo bluntly shows her dislike of him and rejects conversation.

As I thought. This battle party is no good.

“Oy, fiancé over there! Did Firo-tan really call that thing Oneesan?” (Motoyasu) “Who’s anyone’s fiancé!? Are you still believing Naofumi’s bullcrap?” (Melly) “Yeah, she definitely said that.” (Midori)

The one who supplements the info is Midori.

And wait, that is unnecessary.

“Motoyasu, don’t mind it.” (Naofumi)

I address him from a distance.

“Is that so, Father-in-Law?” (Motoyasu)

“Don’t just brush it off so easily!” (Raphtalia)

“Oya? I thought you were merely a pig, but you can speak human tongue.” (Motoyasu) “Words are...?” (Naofumi)

Mu... due to some strange reason, the fake’s words enter Motoyasu’s ears.

Besides Filo Rials, Melty is supposed to be the only woman he can hear.

“Melty-chan! Please try telling the Hero of the Spear that I am Firo’s sister.” (Raphtalia) “Oneechan, prepare yourself!” (Firo)

Firo directs kicks at the fake.

The fake sidesteps them and gives a request to Melty.

“Ren-san!” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah!” (Ren)

Ren steps in front to confront Firo.

“Move, sword person.” (Firo)

“I’m sorry, but I can’t do that. I’m fighting to repay my debt to Naofumi here.” (Ren) “Mu!” (Firo)

“I can’t go around accepting that Naofumi. No, this time, for his sake... I’ll fight to return the home he made to normal!” (Ren) As if resonating with his cry, the sword in his hands changes shape.

“Growing power...? This is...”

The double-edged sword in his hands changes shape to that of a katana. Could this be?

“It leveled up... and turned into the Spirit Turtle Katana?”

Ren swings it a few times in front of him and turns it in his hand before taking a stance.

All of a sudden, the enemy unlocks a new power. It doesn’t feel good to be on the receiving side of these situations.

“Mu...” (Firo)

Ren and Firo begin glaring at each other.

They both understand that a single move can be fatal. Neither of them can budge. That means one side needs to get support, or this won’t go anywhere.

What is Atlas doing? I look around, and find her intercepting Rishia. She’s not letting any support fire get in.

That fake! What is she plotting.

She has Ren and Itsuki and even Rishia for support.

Should I call the slaves who escaped and Kiel to help?

No, a large portion of the tower is already occupied by the slaves from the village.

I’ll need to free up Firo’s group to swiftly deal with them.

Ku... at a time like this, Sadina is... hard at work fighting the villagers.

She's using magic this time, but perhaps due to her opponent's speed, she's not hitting with it. I can't count on her as a reinforcement.

"And Fohl-kun, what the hell are you doing?" (Raphtalia)

"M-me!? But..." (Fohl)

"From the journey we had together, I can understand just how important Atlas-chan is to you. However... you're just silently watching your precious sister going down a dangerous path... Is that really something a caring brother should do!?" (Raphtalia) "Uwah... I am... I am always Atlas's ally!" (Fohl)

Fohl swings his fists at the fake.

But before the blows reach her, the fake slaps Fohl strongly across the face.

Haha, what's with that attack? It has no power behind it.

"If Naofumi-sama starts doing bad things, then like now, I will do my best to set him on the right path. But what are you doing? You just act like a tumor on her side... like that, nothing will be resolved. This will end with... Atlas-chan getting with that strange Naofumi! Is that the result of your care for your sister?" (Raphtalia) With eyes as if he just had an epiphany, Fohl looks over the fake.

"... That's right. I am... I treasured Atlas too much, so I never thought about her. I had approved of him a bit, but when he's like that, I can't be handing Atlas over to him!" (Fohl) Through a turn of events, Fohl turns. He fires a skill in Atlas's direction.

Seeing through it, she barely dodges.

"... Onii-sama, what sort of joke is this?" (Atlas)

"It's no joke! I'll use all of my power to prevent you from straying down the wrong path!" (Fohl) "So you will betray Naofumi-sama?" (Atlas)

"Yeah, that guy isn't the one I know of. The one I know doesn't have such an ominous smile, and he had a kind of clumsy kindness. If it's

that... clumsy guy, I think I would be fine with entrusting you to him. Just a bit.” (Fohl) Ku... The traitor Fohl starts battling Atlas.

What the hell is Motoyasu doing!?

“Hey, you’re going to attack me? If you lay hands on Firo’s fiancé, you know what’s going to happen, right?” (Melly) “Mu~. Melty-chan, you’re going to get hurt. Go home!” (Firo) Firo doesn’t want to see Melty injured, but she also doesn’t want to look at Motoyasu. She speaks without taking her eyes off of Ren.

“Gu...”

But Motoyasu isn’t able to take on Melty’s willpower?

Aren’t you supposed to be a Hero?

Why is your heart losing to a little girl?

“About your previous question, you’re right. Raphtalia-san is the person who fulfills the role of Firo’s sister. From Naofumi’s perspective as well.” (Melly) Melty points to the fake as she answers.

The fake sticks her chest out and glares at Motoyasu.

“T-that was the case!?” (Motoyasu)

“Can you hear my words now?” (Raphtalia)

“O-of course, Firo-tan’s beautiful sister, my Sister-in-Law!” (Motoyasu) This one... he begins praising the girl he had referred to as a pig moments before.

He looks to women as pigs and lusts after birds. Just how rotten are his eyes?

“Then Motoyasu-san. Please help us stop Naofumi-sama. It’s a request from Firo’s sister.” (Raphtalia) “Don’t listen to her words, Motoyasu. Just kill the fake already.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, please stay out of this.” (Raphtalia)

“There’s no way I could. I am-” (Naofumi)

The fake throws her sword at the Bioplant I modified to act as a

speaker.

It will take 30 seconds to regenerate. What shall I do?

“The current Naofumi-sama has become strange due to a curse. Since you were with him, did you feel something off?” (Raphtalia) “Is that so? I get the feeling that Father-in-Law always gave off that sort of feeling.” (Motoyasu) “... Your bad point is that you can’t look at others at all. You only think about yourself! Naofumi-sama will never give Firo away to someone like that!” (Raphtalia) “No way! Then I am...” (Motoyasu)

“It’s not too late. I heard about it. When Firo turned strange, you worked hard to help her. Like that time... for now stop Firo, and then let’s stop Naofumi-sama. All will be fine!” (Raphtalia) “Understood Sister-in-Law! I, Motoyasu, will shed tears as I make an enemy of Firo-tan and Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu) “When Naofumi-sama turns back to normal, he will definitely praise you for your hard work. I promise you that.” (Raphtalia) “MUUUUUU! Oneechan is mean!” (Firo)

“Ara, Firo? Now your hated person won’t be so close to Naofumi-sama.” (Raphtalia) “Ah, I see. Oneechan, thank you!” (Firo)

“Don’t thank her!” (Naofumi)

I scream out of the fixed speaker.

Fohl and Motoyasu, how have they reached the same consensus?

If they pull out, our already-meager forces will suffer a heavy loss.

“Master, what’s wrong?” (Firo)

“Look around you.” (Naofumi)

“Eh?” (Firo)

Atlas is fighting Fohl, and Firo’s been drawn into fighting both Ren and Motoyasu. What’s more, Melty is still there.

I’ll also add on that making an enemy of Motoyasu means making an enemy of his army of three.

The tide of battle immediately reverses.

Like this, we don't even have a 10000 to 1 chance of victory.

"Firo, lie all you want. Persuade Motoyasu to come back." (Naofumi)
"Okay. Please save Firo, spear person." (Firo)

"I'm sorry Firo-tan. That will have to wait until after I stop Father-in-Law with Sister-in-Law." (Motoyasu) "How mean!" (Firo)

"This is also for Firo-tan's sake, Ah... I, Motoyasu have awoken to my mission of love." (Motoyasu) "Mu~! The result is fine, but I can't stand that bitch!" (Motoyasu's Three) As always, the three Filo Rials mouth off as they side with their Motoyasu and glare at Firo.

These guys are idiots, but their presence can greatly alter the flow of battle.

If I don't order for a retreat, it'll be dangerous.

"... We've been put at a bit of a disadvantage." (Atlas)

"But Firo will work hard~!" (Firo)

"No. At this rate, we'll be made into hostages. Naofumi-sama, please grant permission for retreat." (Atlas) "... There's no choice. Granted!" (Naofumi)

Following my orders, Atlas brushes off Fohl's hands and activates an emergency escape passage.

Ku... my plans all crumbled all at once.

Now I fear for tomorrow and the day after.

"Eh? ... Firo hasn't lost." (Firo)

"But you will soon."

"Mu... I won't lose tomorrow!" (Firo)

This is what you call numerical advantage.

Surrounded by the fake party, Firo stamps her foot in frustration. She kicks the floor hard enough to open a hole and makes a run for the emergency exit on the lower floor.

“Wait, Firo-chan!” (Melty)

“Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu)

“That barrier blocks pursuit, so it’s impossible. For now, let’s destroy the tower.” (Raphtalia) You bitch... fake, you twisted your words to take Motoyasu and Fohl.

How could this... like this, I’m at an extreme disadvantage.

As expected, the third tower is destroyed, and I only have five left.

“Now then... for a strategy meeting.”

In my main base lab, an exhausted Kiel gathers the modified slaves and monsters.

“Following this incident, Fohl-Niichan and the Hero of the Spear-sama were taken by the other side.” (Kiel) Those goddamn traitors.

... Ah right, there should be one more traitor.

“Even though we worked so hard.”

“Why were they able to learn our weaknesses so easily?”

“That’s something I’ll explain.” (Naofumi)

I touch a stone tablet and bring up a certain image.

That image is of the individual who was relaxing even in the strategy meeting.. The one who looks after everyone.

“Sadina, isn’t that your fault?” (Naofumi)

“Ara? Why do you think so?” (Sadina)

“You have no motivation when fighting in the towers. Also, you were there most of the times I spoke of the weaknesses. There’s also the fact that you go on patrol a lot.” (Naofumi) I did have a vague suspicion.

But I never thought someone would plan betrayal in front of me. Especially not someone as skillful as her.

No, as we both lost Raphtalia, I thought we were sharing sadness.

However, in truth, she was leaking information to the opposition.

My doubts led me to confirmation.

I would have let this slide had it not been for today's result.

Perhaps it was my fault for not monitoring. For her to have sworn her life to Raphtalia, I didn't want to think that she was a traitor.

"Are you sure it's not a coincidence?" (Sadina)

"If you wanted it to appear that way, then you should have fought in such a manner. Unfortunately for you, I sentence you to confinement within my laboratory. If the slaves I modify for next time don't have their weaknesses taken advantage of, you'll be confirmed as a spy. As my research material, you'll be subjected to much harsher experiments than the other slaves." (Naofumi) "Ara..." (Sadina)

Sadina reaches behind her back for her harpoon, but...

"If you try anything funny, I'll be your opponent." (Atlas) "Firo too." (Firo)

Before she can, Atlas and Firo appear behind her.

"Arara, then should Oneesan surrender peacefully?" (Sadina) Sadina raises her hands above her head.

"Why would you do such a thing?" (Naofumi)

"Because the child that Naofumi-chan thinks of as a fake is the real thing." (Sadina) "Hah! How foolish." (Naofumi)

That fake is real?

The real one is already gone!

That's why I'm reviving her, isn't it?

"Throw her in a cell!" (Naofumi)

The cells I made are of material even Sadina can't break. There's a device nearby that absorbs magic, so she won't be able to use any. I can control the output on it, and this time, I'll set it to suck every fiber of magic out of her body.

Within the cell, I make her change to human form and hang her arms

up in shackles.

“Repent in here for a while.” (Naofumi)

“Ara...” (Sadina)

If you really turn out to be a spy, I’ll be giving you hell after this.

“And so, we should expect some results next time.” (Naofumi) “As expected of Niichan! But Sadina-nee-chan, how mean.” (Kiel) “Right. If this proves to be true, we’ll be torturing her for a bit when this is over.” (Naofumi) “A penalty game, right? Will you send her to be sold in Zeltburg or something?” (Kiel) “No, torture.” (Naofumi)

How peaceful this dog’s brain is.

Our side lost our fighting force, Motoyasu, you know.

Even though he’s rotten, he’s a hero. The modified slaves are at a disadvantage... I see, doesn’t Motoyasu have plenty of weaknesses?

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What?” (Firo)

“Charm Motoyasu. If possible, make him swear loyalty. Like that fake did, you’ll have to convince him to come over.” (Naofumi) “Eh?...” (Firo)

Firo clearly seems to hate the notion.

“The spear person doesn’t listen to words at all.” (Firo)

“Ah.” (Naofumi)

Yeah, that’s right. I’m surprised the fake managed to sway him.

Even I don’t have that much confidence in my ability to talk to him.

For now, I’ve been able to use Firo as an intermediate and things have worked out.

I thought I could have Firo persuade him, but now that he has a twisted goal, I’m not sure if we can stop him.

If I make Firo open her legs and seduce him... no, that’s not happening. That’s not enough to stop the idiot.

Damn... what should I do?

“Niichan, everyone here decided to follow you. Don’t worry about it alone. Let’s work hard together.” (Kiel) The slaves and monsters look towards me with fiery gazes.

... That’s right. I’ll just have to try what I can.

“Then, shall we commence the modifications?” (Naofumi)

I also need to devote time to researching the real Raphtalia.

I’ve proceeded quite far in Mii-kun’s tuning, so I’ll just have to give it my best.

I’m in the middle of using the data I got from the monsters to complete a third generation.

“First, let’s start with Firo’s power-up.” (Naofumi)

“Yay!” (Firo)

I take Firo and return to my lab.

I let Kiel and the others simulate a battle in the fourth tower.

For the slaves that had their weaknesses known, I told them to fight without transforming to nullify enemy attacks before attacking.

The newly modified slaves are going to be a large fighting force next time.

If the fakes don’t manage to grasp their weaknesses, Sadina is guilty. Otherwise, she goes free.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

Atlas follows me around.

“In tomorrow’s battle, you’ll have to stop your brother.” (Naofumi) “Yes. Even if it costs me my life.” (Atlas)

“If it seems impossible, retreat. Don’t risk your life. If we sacrifice too much to win, then I can’t call that victory.” (Naofumi) “Understood. But are you sure that’s fine?” (Atlas)

“There’s nothing I can’t solve with my new intellect. As long as the last tower remains, I’ll be able to do something. Before that, I must perfect my Raph race for the final battle! Once completed, a single one of them should be able to hold off the lot of them.” (Naofumi) Right... Raphtalia’s revival hasn’t been assured yet, but research progresses.

I must do whatever I can.

I put Firo into the culture tank and activate my abilities.

“W-what!?” (Naofumi)

Before I could proceed with her modification, I am surprised by her information window.

There are traces of experimentations like the ones I’m doing on the Raphs.

This is like the time I tried to modify Fohl.

“What’s wrong?” (Firo)

“No, don’t worry about it.” (Naofumi)

Oh? There’s even a security program like mine.

I made it so that if anyone other than me raises a Raph, it won’t grow as normal.

With this, it is impossible for anyone else to properly raise a Raph.

At best, they would be able to bring out one third of their true potential.

A system like that has been implanted into Filo Rials.

The coding seems cobbled together, and the important parts are blurry.

It’s like the codes from my first and second generation were mixed together. I worry whether or not this would make for good reference.

I want some specimens other than Firo. If I have a couple of Filo Rials, my research should make leaps and bounds I had a few other than Firo among my subordinates. Should I take some samples later?

I also want some data from the treacherous Filo Rials. I’ll think of how

to capture them.

For now, let's copy Firo's information and store it.

"So Firo, you said you wanted to be able to fly right?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, I don't want to lose to Gaelion! The only one master rides is Firo." (Firo) "Fumu, understood." (Naofumi)

I look at her modification screen and read over the individual entries.

Hmm? There's a strange, disconnected portion.

Looking at the modification tree, there's a branch that I barely have the necessary materials to unlock.

If I connect this, what will happen?

It seems to have some relation to wings.

There's a high probability that it's a function the race lost over time.

In the storehouse, Melty had a treasure that appeared to be the fossil of a flying Filo Rial.

If I analyze and tamper with this, she should be able to revert to her ancestral form. This branch, I should be able to connect it.

The materials are really rare. I only have one in my storehouse.

This may turn into a big problem later.

"What's wrong?" (Firo)

"Firo, how do you want to fly?" (Naofumi)

"How?" (Firo)

"Do you want to use your wings or use magic to propel yourself? Do you want to make footholds in the air or store up gasses within the body to float?" (Naofumi) In the open tree, I can implant any one of those concepts.

By the way, for personal reasons, if she chooses the last one, I'm changing her name to Balloon Firo.

It's based on Firo's choice, but I recommend that one.

I feel a strong affinity for balloons.

If it's Balloon Firo, she should be able to defeat Motoyasu.

I just get that feeling.

"I don't want to just float." (Firo)

"... I see. Then wings or magic. The first one requires physical strength, the second magic." (Naofumi) "What about Gaelion?" (Firo)

"I haven't confirmed it, but it's probably the latter. With wings, you can fly for a while, but if you don't lighten your own body, your all-around abilities will drop. With magic, you can use only magic to propel yourself, but you have a lower flight time." (Naofumi) In truth, Gaelion's flight time isn't that long.

He glides for quite a bit, and I bet he recovers magic while doing so.

And doesn't Firo have ways of recovering magic?

"I think the latter will be easier." (Naofumi)

"Then that's fine." (Firo)

"Got it." (Naofumi)

The materials are scarce, but if it's to power up Firo, I'll gladly use them.

With a cracking sound, Firo regains one of the powers of her ancestors.

"Now Firo won't lose to Gaelion~!" (Firo)

It will take a while until the modification finishes.

I use my Filo Rial research data and that of the other modified monsters to create my third generation Raph Race... I also construct the concept for my Riya Race.

I also want to use a dragon for reference now.

"Once your modification finishes, I have a job for you." (Naofumi) "Got it!" (Firo)

After the modification finishes, Firo flaps her wings. They left light

afterimages behind as she lifts off of the ground.

“WaaaAAAH! I’m really flying, master!” (Firo)

In great excitement, Firo reports this to me.

“Yeah, but you’re using magic to fly. It will be difficult to fly for long periods of time.” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Firo)

“Then let me give you your mission.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Firo)

“Well...”

—

“KYUA!”

“Why do I have to go get Gaelion?” (Firo)

“I wanted to use him for reference, and he’ll provide some force.”
(Naofumi) I know Gaelion wanted to come to my side.

That’s why I sent a flying Firo to infiltrate and invite him.

“... Why did you invite me?” (Gaelion)

True Gaelion surfaces.

“The one I invited was not you. I said this before, but I’m replenishing my forces. Instead of following the fake, the child Gaelion wanted to follow me.” (Naofumi) I give Firo another job.

She nods and flies off again.

“Gu... Don’t come out, just quietly... Kyua!” (Gaelion)

It seems the personalities within Gaelion are at war.

Fumu...

“Gaelion, you wanted power, so you went to Rat for modifications, did you not? Am I no good?” (Naofumi) “No, you’re fine. But I cannot stand being of the same position as that Filo Rial.” (Gaelion) “Fu... Kogaelion. If you work hard, I’ll modify you as you wish.” (Naofumi) “Gunu! Sto-won’t you stop!?” (Gaelion)

Gaelion holds his head for a while and cries out, but eventually, he raises his face.

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Child Gaelion is able to hold the older one down.

“What sort of modification do you want?” (Naofumi)

I’ll also see just how far along my research will be aided by studying a dragon.

To say the result, Gaelion wants fast legs, even when pulling the carriage.

Firo isn’t the only one thinking of her rival.

Gaelion was quite troubled over his slow speed on land.

So along with my investigations, I increase his leg strength.

Of course, on the promise that he would follow me.

After that, I send Firo out a few times and get most of the traitor’s Filo Rials to join our side.

How?

Piyo is the one holding us back, but upon seeing Firo flying freely through the sky, very few Filo Rials choose not to follow me.

Now onto the results of the fourth day.

For all of the other heroes to oppose me was a fatal error.

But there was something I am able to determine.

They were unable to pinpoint the newly modified slaves’ weaknesses.

And that was that.

Right before the fourth tower was destroyed, the faker even asked me.

‘What became of Sadina?’

“Sadina, as expected, they were unable to pinpoint my slaves’ weakpoints.” (Naofumi) “Ara...” (Sadina)

I attach handcuffs on her, take her out of her cell, and force her into my lab's cultivation tank.

"I wonder what shall become of me." (Sadina)

"I wonder. First, I'll cover your smooth skin in hair. The color will be brown. I'll make your tail striped with black and brown. So that whenever you enter water, it will soak into the fur!" (Naofumi) "Oh my. How scary." (Sadina)

"After that, I'll give you two large fangs and make people wonder whether you're a whale, walrus, or seal! You'll become a completely unidentifiable life-form!" (Naofumi) "Kya how frightening. While you're at it, can you increase my alcohol tolerance? I'd also like some gills, so I can spend all of my time underwater." (Sadina) "... You sure are calm!" (Naofumi)

How impudent! When you're nothing but a traitor!

I'll do modifications painful enough that your life will hang in the balance!

But as I activate my ability on Sadina, I lose my ability to speak.

W-what?

I look at Sadina's screen and find myself at a loss for words.

It's fundamentally different than Atlas, Fohl, and the other children.

Traces of modification, vestiges of magic, there's nothing of the sort. There's only data for her physical form.

Perhaps I should compare it to a sheet of paper.

Fohl, Atlas, Kiel, and Firo's are colored from the start. What's more, theirs had various things glued to them.

I wouldn't be surprised to find red where I was expecting blue.

But Sadina's sheet is that of a pure-white Demi-Human.

The real thing... Are these the words that I should be using here?

"You... really, what are you?" (Naofumi)

“Ara? What do you mean by that?” (Sadina)

“There’s something different about you from the other Demi-Humans.” (Naofumi) “Ah, so that’s it. Oneesan’s family, you see... is a long-standing bloodline with exclusive blood. Could that be it? Ah, this is a secret, but Raphtalia-chan’s the same.” (Sadina) “Raphtalia too!?” (Naofumi)

That means... What sort of existence are Demi-Humans? The amount of mysteries increases by one.

... If I don’t understand the concept, reviving Raphtalia will be impossible.

“But this is this, and that is that.” (Naofumi)

I activate a painful modification on Sadina.

This is the punishment for betrayal!

But as she’s Raphtalia’s guardian, I make it borderline, within the scope where I can revert her to normal.

After she loses fighting spirit, I can implant a core into her to make her follow my orders and have her fight the fakes.

“Ara, how stimulating, Naofumi-chan. Oneesan is almost going to...” (Sadina) “Just how carefree are you!?” (Naofumi)

I did enough that a normal person would faint from the pain, but Sadina remains calm throughout the process.

In order to fill the hole left by Motoyasu and Fohl, I try to do some recruiting in the village and plenty of other things, but... On the fifth day, True Gaelion betrays, and with our forces crippled again, we face yet another defeat.

Sadina destroys the core I implanted to control her, and she joins the fake’s camp.

From the fourth to the seventh day, I faced nothing but defeat.

—

And on the eighth day.

“Niichan! We can’t hold them back any longer!” (Kiel)

The fakers destroy the eighth tower core, and the barrier surrounding the laboratory collapses in its entirety.

I have not the time to erect it once more.

I thought about it before, but since tuning the equipment is difficult, moving the base would mean abandoning the lab.

I finally make the eighth generation Raph Race, Tali Race, Riya Race, Rafuta Race, and Taria Race. Even though I’m so close to reviving Raphtalia. (TL: I’m kinda glad he didn’t make a Futa Race) If I work to the very last moment, I will be unable to avoid death.

Also... I’ve already completed my ultimate weapon.

... If instead of making the Raph Race, I put my energy towards making perfect weapons of mass genocide, then perhaps I would have won.

But I disposed of such thoughts.

My goal is to conquer the world alongside Raphtalia.

She’s more important than the domination.

I have no regrets.

“Niichan! We need to get out of here quickly! They’re coming, everyone’s already been captured.” (Kiel) The fake and the heroes have infiltrated the lab. Without a place to run, my followers who risked their lives on the front-lines are all captured by the enemy. I saw all of the footage from here.

I guess this is as good a time as ever.

“I’ll go with you, so Niichan, we have to run away.” (Kiel) “So we surrender this fort to them... ah right, Kiel.” (Naofumi) “What? If you don’t hurry, we won’t make it.” (Kiel)

“You told me to make you a crepe tree before right?” (Naofumi) I hand a modified bioplant seed over to Kiel.

“See, this here is a seed for a crepe tree. It’s weak point is that it has no

reproductive capabilities. You can't grow more than one." (Naofumi)
"Niichan..." (Kiel)

"No matter what happens, you have to survive. You got that?"
(Naofumi) "Yeah! I'll work hard for Niichan's sake!" (Kiel)

Saying that, Kiel runs out.

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

Atlas comes together with Firo.

"Ah, so it's you... go with Kiel to the final battle. There are still things I must do." (Naofumi) "What about master?" (Firo)

"In the case that you guys lose, I'll activate my last resort." (Naofumi) I point towards a large tank and display my final weapon.

"It's not like I have no ways to defend myself. Fight without worry."
(Naofumi) "Okay, got it." (Firo)

"In order to serve as Naofumi-sama's shield, I'll stake my life on this fight." (Atlas) "I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

"Those words alone are enough motivation for me." (Atlas)

And Atlas and Firo leave.

... Well, the basic concept is already accommodated in the seventh generation.

Even without my input, if I increase my amount of Seventh Generations, an eighth will be born.

No matter how long it takes, I will revive Raphtalia.

I can't give her the ability to transform, and I don't have the time now.

No, it's more like this is the limit of my technology...

With as much time as I have, I need to increase the amount of Seventh Generation Raphs as much as possible. Then, perhaps, Raphtalia will one day be revived.

The probability is low, but the current me has no other option.

The final battle commences.

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Actual Author note: This extra arc will end in a day or two.

Chapter 287: Research Result

“... Good of you to come all the way here. Perhaps the result of the war has already been decided, but I will not step down here.” (Atlas) “Atlas, just give up already!” (Fohl)

Just in front of my lab’s final line of defense, Atlas, Firo, and Kiel waited for the fake party.

And Fohl screamed at Atlas.

“Onii-sama? No matter what sort of disadvantage they face, the Hakuko race is not permitted to run. That’s something I thought you of all people would understand.” (Atlas) “... I see. Then Atlas, for your sake, I will harden my heart and discipline you.” (Fohl) “Kiel-kun, Firo. When this is over, I’m going to give a hell of a lecture to Naofumi-sama, so you’d better be prepared.” (Raphtalia) “I’ll be the one to protect Niichan!” (Kiel)

“I definitely won’t lose.” (Firo)

The person to make the first move is Atlas.

“TeEEEEEEEEEEI!” (Atlas)

Atlas uses her hand like a sword to slash at Fohl and the fake, and Firo rushes at Ren and Motoyasu in the style she’s accustomed to.

Finally, Kiel closes in on Itsuki and Rishia with an irregular step pattern and begins her assault.

“Fast!”

“Atlas-san... we fight every time, but it seems you’re progressively getting stronger.” (Raphtalia) “I need strength... Getting stronger is my greatest desire. I still... need to become stronger to defend Naofumi-sama!” (Atlas) “Atlas... You’ve grown up well... But still, I won’t accept that man as he is right now!” (Fohl) Atlas presses the fake and Fohl with questions as she keeps a low stance. She dodges and parries their blows waiting for an opportunity to strike.

The battle is so tense, that you don’t get the feeling she’s at a

disadvantage, even when it's two on one.

In that regard, Firo's battle is the same... no, Firo's at a greater disadvantage.

Her opponents are two heroes and three Filo Rials.

「High Quick!」 (Firo)

「Spiral Strike!」 (Firo)

Her battle experience and actual level are high, and she has gotten an understanding of both magic and Chi. She casts acceleration magic and hits Motoyasu's groupies, sending them spiraling off.

“Gu... Over this week, I've fought you a couple times. But once more, I must say you're quite an amazing child.” (Ren) “Firo-tan! Amazing! Even though I used the strengthening methods, you can push me back this far!” (Motoyasu) Without dodging, Ren and Motoyasu lift their weapons and block the blows of Firo's onslaught.

“Atlas-chan is the same, but why do so many fighting geniuses gather around Naofumi?” (Ren) “Because Firo is the one who will protect master!” (Firo) The effects of High Quick wear off. Firo flaps her wings and releases traces of magic as she hovers to the ceiling, kicks off it, and sends her foot on a straight course for Ren.

Ren narrowly dodges it, and he swings his sword at her as she passes, but Firo kicks the flat of the blade, redirecting its path.

Aiming for that moment, Motoyasu lets loose a skill. The spear in his hand changes to... Sadina's harpoon.

Perhaps he borrowed it from her and made a copy.

「Triaina!」 (TL: It's trident, just not in English)

A single bolt of Lightning flies at Firo, and shockwaves course through her plumage.

“KYAN! ... No, I won't fall.” (Firo)

She is blown away by Motoyasu's skill, but she rolls before hitting the

ground and recovers her stance.

“Woof woof! Rishia-oneechan, prepare yourself!” (Kiel) Kiel continually assaults Rishia and Itsuki in her Kielberus form.

“FUEeE! Kiel-kun, just give it up already!” (Rishia) “No way! Niichan is... even if it’s just us, we’ll always protect Niichan!” (Kiel) “... Kiel-kun, I’ll apologize beforehand. I’m sorry, but you’ll be sleeping for a bit.” (Itsuki) Itsuki... aims a skill at Kiel. He pulls his bow fully and creates an arrow of light.

“As if an attack like that can hit!” (Kiel)

With a grand gesture, Kiel dodges Itsuki’s arrow... or she should have, but as soon as it passes her, it turns around and returns, as if connected by some invisible wire.

Kiel frantically sweeps away the returning arrow with her tail.

... But...

“Splash Arrow... ability, Sleep Arrow.” (Itsuki)

When the arrow comes into contact with Kiel’s tail, it bursts open.

“Kyan! Uu... not yet...” (Kiel)

“No, unfortunately... you’re done for.” (Itsuki)

“Eh... Ah...” (Kiel)

Kiel’s expression turns blank. Eventually, the whites of her eyes reveal themselves, and she collapses on the ground.

“As I guessed you would dodge like that from the beginning, I shot a Splash Arrow with a sleep effect. For a while, your conscience will not return...” (Itsuki) “Kiel-kun... You really cared for Naofumi-san, didn’t you.” (Rishia) “Well then, the battle still goes on. Let’s assist.” (Itsuki) “Yes!” (Rishia)

Itsuki and Rishia set their aims on Atlas and Firo and each unleash their own skills.

“Kyah... No, I’m still standing.” (Atlas)

“GYAN! Uu... Firo can't lose!” (Firo)

Even though they are sent flying and take various attacks, Firo and Atlas refuse to admit defeat. They continue fighting even when blood starts erupting from their mouths “Atlas, just stay down.” (Raphitalia)

“I-I still have fight left in me!” (Atlas)

“I see...” (Fohl)

Fohl clenches his fist and thrusts it into Atlas's abdomen.

Up 'til now, Atlas had been easily avoiding his attacks by bending backwards and spinning. She had gotten here with minimum damage.

But this time, the attack lands exactly on mark. Atlas cries out and goes limp.

“Atlas... this time, it's my victory. Your brother is full of nothing but praise for you.” (Fohl) Holding the unconscious Atlas, Fohl mutters in an emotionless voice.

Last is Firo...

At this point, I activate my final weapon.

We're outnumbered. With just Firo, we have no chance to grasp victory.

They'll arrive in the next room soon enough.

I'd like to see this battle through to the end, but I need to use the last bit of energy left.

I'm sorry Firo. Please buy me just a little bit of time.

Eventually, my weapon begins its activation.

“Rafu~”

I drain the liquid out of a large tank. What emerges is a fully armed, battle-ready body controlled by Rat's monster, Mii-kun.

Not only is his body bigger than the last one I made, I also bestowed various abilities unto him.

In the worst case, I've given him a self-evolving function, so perhaps he

will become an Eighth Generation Raph. I've buried my research reports somewhere around his core.

After I die, perhaps someone will pick up my research. If they only follow my notes, Raphtalia will revive.

This one has done quite a bit in the battles up until now.

Of course, due to my own failure in tuning him, he's gone berserk numerous times. This time, we have no time for something like that.

The battle data I loaded onto him is a compilation of that of all the Raphs I've made until now, and I've even given him the ability to change to liquid in case of emergency.

If the core piece gets damaged, it will endlessly regenerate. With this monster, I can force the fake party into an endless battle.

I guess a weakness is that its aerial abilities are below Firo's.

By sending magic to its tail, he can float, but it's only able to carry him for short amounts of time.

"You get it, right? You are the last line of defense. Wait for the fakes in front of the protective equipment in the next room and defeat them!"
(Naofumi) "Rafu~!"

A large sound echoes with every step, and Miikun exits the laboratory room.

Next is... I'll just have to accept what happens.

After activating Mii-kun, I used the energy that recovered to observe Firo's situation.

... As I thought, Firo was beaten as well.

She's been captured by the fakes, and is lying on the ground.

And... the Fakes confront my last defensive mechanism: Mii-kun.

"Rafu~!"

"T-this child is..."

Hmm? Rat joined them while I wasn't watching.

They've met numerous times, but besides his first breakdown, they've fought without much problem.

Even if they encounter each other now, I doubt anything will change.

"Rafu~!"

Now! Annihilate the Fake and her Heroes!

"Rafu~"

Mii-kun beckons them forward with his hand and surrenders the road to the fakes.

"What the hell!" (Naofumi)

He kindly destroys the defensive devices for them, forcefully opens the door, and even begins guiding them around the building.

"Um... what is this child doing?" (Raphtalia)

"Ah... Mii-kun. Could it be that you were using the Marquis, and you were waiting for an opportunity to join our side from the beginning?"
(Rat) "Rafu~"

He nods and gives a bright smile at Rat.

DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAMMMMMNNNNN IT AAAAAAAAAALLLLLLL!

I thought he was working diligently, but he was using me from the beginning!?

I won't forgive this one!

Just in case something bad happened, I made it so I could modify him remotely.

How lucky.

I use a stone tablet and activate my ability from a distance.

"Rafu~"

Mii-kun spits out the remote control core I implanted and stomps on it.

Ku... Perhaps giving it the ability to turn parts of its body to liquid was my error. I didn't properly manage the parts his core could control.

DamnitDamnitDamnitDamnit! Sadina, Gaelion, and you all had no intention of serving me!

This isn't even a joke anymore.

I guess it's time to activate the self-destruct function.

However, there are still a few slaves in this facility that have yet to evacuate.

... For an emergency escape, there isn't enough energy.

The reason is that I put too much of it towards making the eighth generation.

I could use the portal to run alone, but after destroying the defensive armaments, Gaelion cast his Dragon Sanctuary, making that impossible.

At this point, I have no regrets.

That means there's only one thing I must do.

"I've finally found you, Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

The fake bursts into my lab with her heroes and various others she picked up along the way.

Hmm? Motoyasu's spear's shape has also changed.

"How good of you all to come and visit me, fakers." (Naofumi) I activate my second final weapon.

It's something I made out of Bioplant. A vehicle form Plant Golem.

The ground rumbles, and the Golem appears under my feet. I settle into the cockpit and begin controlling it.

It has a skull motif, and I've granted it a flight ability as well.

I clear away the lab's walls and rise to the ceiling. I unload my main armaments on them.

I haven't tested the firepower, so that factor is an unknown.

Though I did set it to be something quite formidable.

“Now shall we start our final battle, fakes?” (Naofumi) “Ah... Raphtalia-san, what should we do?”

“Let’s destroy all of the defenses devices protecting him. If we don’t, I doubt he’ll even listen to anything we say.” (Raphtalia) The heroes all charge their various skills with EP and SP.

「Gravity Blade!」

「Triaina, new form Brionac!」

「Splash Arrow!」

「Tornado Throw!」

“Uguuuuu...”

The window in front of me notified me of the damage to various parts of the body.

I truly am outnumbered.

Losing even the ability to float, my Plant Golem falls to the ground. I move it to prepare for ground battle.

“Naofumi-sama, grit your teeth.” (Raphtalia)

“Who would ever grit their teeth for a fake!” (Naofumi) “... I’m at the limit of my patience. Even though you may be Naofumi-sama, I’m going to get a little bit violent.” (Raphtalia) The fake quickly approaches me while brandishing her sword.

“Take this!” (Raphtalia)

I move my Shield to take on her sword.

A foreboding snapping sound rings out.

At the same time, pain raced through my head.

And... I feel something passing through my body.

“...?”

With a perplexed expression on her face, the fake thrusts her sword at

me again, and again.

Her speed has dropped considerably from the first blow.

However, every time, something within me... I feel Chi coursing through my body with every strike.

Manipulating Chi, was it? I can't remember how I was able to do that.

"Naofumi-sama, could it be..." (Raphtalia)

With her unarmed hand, the fake slaps my cheek.

It isn't a hard blow, but my body contorts quite a bit.

"UGUHAAH!"

I taste blood inside of my mouth.

This is bad. Did something in me break?

"As I thought." (Raphtalia)

"What's up?" (Ren)

"This Naofumi-sama has absolutely no defense. If any one of us were to seriously attack him, he'd die." (Raphtalia) "W-what!?"

Ku... She saw through me.

That's right. As she stated before, my current Defense stat is... 0.

In exchange for all of its splendid abilities, this is the price for the New Seven Sin Series. It has absolutely no defense.

Or else there's no way I would stay holed up in my base the entire time.

"Why is his defense so pitifully low?"

"It may be due to his curse."

"Uwah... that's no joke."

"Rafu~"

"Marquis... isn't it time for you to surrender already?"

"Fu, who the hell would surrender!? I will continue fighting until I succeed in reviving the real Raphtalia."

At this point, I'm simply desperate.

After I beat these fakes, I'm going to rule the world. There are plenty of curse skills I haven't dared testing yet. I can't go out here.

If I use a Curse Skill on the Castle Plant... right, I'll make those who oppose me into fertilizer for my base.

Curse Skill-

"I won't let you!" (Raphtalia)

Before I can even begin chanting a spell, the fake grabs me by the collar, choking me.

"Owowowowow." (Naofumi)

The pain prevents me from collecting my thoughts.

"Naofumi-sama, please surrender. If you do so, we'll be able to think of a way to free you from that cursed shield on your arm." (Raphtalia)

"Hmph, I refuse! You false idol!" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

She shakes my collar violently, and I break free.

I prepare to use a Curse Skill again.

"Naofumi-sama! Please just quit it already!" (Raphtalia) With teary eyes, the fake leaps at me.

She pushes my head to her breasts.

"Please remember. Naofumi-sama, I said this before, right?" (Raphtalia)
The imposter takes a deep breath.

"Please believe. I know that Naofumi-sama never committed any crimes. He shared his precious medicine and saved my life. He's the Hero of the Shield-sama, the man who taught me how to live, and how to fight... I am his sword, no matter what path he chooses to tread down, I will accompany him... For me, and everyone else who chose to follow him, could you please let him come back home?" (Raphtalia) Eh?

Eh?

EEH?

What? These words are... I am... I am...

“Firo, Atlas-chan, and Kiel-kun. I understand why they chose to serve you. Even when under a curse, your base nature did not change. However, I... want you to turn back.” (Raphtalia) A familiar rhythm beats out near my ear.

And the warmth of this chest...

But how could I accept this.

If this is so, then my... reason for existence... everything I strived for... gu...

“The Naofumi-sama I believe in is quiet and unsociable. Because he has a trauma regarding women, he is incapable of loving someone else. He laughs at other’s misfortune. While he’s kind, he’s also strict. Yet there are many parts of him I have yet to come across.” (Raphtalia) ‘Ku... Let me go! Don’t touch me anymore!’

Is what I want to say, but I cannot speak.

“You are definitely one of those sides of Naofumi-sama. You lamented so much over my loss. I can tell by looking at the monsters you made. I understand just how much you trusted me. That’s why I must offer my words of gratitude.” (Raphtalia) In front of me, the... fake...

“Thank you. Because you came out, I was able to understand yet another part of Naofumi-sama’s heart.” (Raphtalia) Her face is red as she gently looks over mine.

After speaking, she takes something out of the bag hanging on her waist.

It’s a ball made out of balloon skin and a small flag.

“I brought these to make Naofumi-sama remember. To him, perhaps these were merely cheap goods, but for the current me, they are priceless treasures.” (Raphtalia) And... the fake... no, Raphtalia puts her lips to my cheek.

“I really don’t want him to return to his original world! However... more so than this world that does nothing but hurt him, I think it would be better for him if he went back.” (Raphtalia) At that moment.

Something shattered. The outside of my shield falls to pieces, and the New Deadly Sin tree disappeared.

And then I blacked out for a second.

... I see.

From the start, I was never Naofumi Iwatani. I was merely a personality created by the New Seven Deadly Sins series. Merely a false identity made with his mind as the base. A false mind with false aspirations.

“UGGUUUUAAAAAAAAHHH...!”

Along with my scream, I feel my sense of self disappearing.

No, I’m merely returning. As part of the mass known as Naofumi Iwatani.

That may be... for the best.

I am... already satisfied.

I no longer care about the fate of the world.

Raphtalia is alive. She’s living here. She’s thanking me.

That’s enough.

The ground shakes, as the Castle Plant begins to collapse.

The Castle is controlled by my Shield—my Shield is its centerpiece.

With a normal shield equipped, there’s no way it can maintain its form.

“Rafu~!”

Mii-kun signals everyone to evacuate.

“Raphtalia-san.”

“I know!”

Raphtalia starts to run, carrying me on her back.

It's... already time for me to go, it seems.

If the world grants me one last wish, then I wish that Raphtalia and the others get out of this laboratory safely. I wish with all of my heart.

Hey, that is the Hero of the Shield. The real Naofumi Iwatani.

You are... you should realize your true feelings already.

Otherwise... you will definitely regret it.

Now, I'm going to become one part of your heart again... the part of your heart that loves the girl named Raphtalia.

But still, I do regret it.

For me to call her a fake this entire time, yet be a fake myself.

There's little time left until the next wave.

Was this a complete waste of time...?

"I see... so that's it..."

With my fading consciousness, I come to a single conclusion.

Based on my brief eight days of existence, I realize that the waves are a fight for_____.

This pointless phenomenon will perhaps _____, but the world will _____.

I remember my enemy's words.

Why is he with Raphtalia...?

Chapter 288: Damage Restitution

Uu.. what is this?

I'm in pain. It feels like I've been forced to watch a strange nightmare over and over again. My head is spinning.

"Naofumi-sama!"

Raphtalia's voice returns consciousness to my body, and my eyes open, signaling the end of the dream.

Before my eyes is Raphtalia, who's carrying me with a worried expression on her face.

"This is...?" (Naofumi)

I look around and find Ren, Itsuki, Rishia, and various others gazing in our direction. We're in front of what appears to be ruins, near the ocean.

I think I was supposed to be in Melty's manor...

"Raphtalia, where exactly are we? Why have I collapsed... I think I unlocked a curse..." (Naofumi) "It's Naofumi-sama! Right now, the one who's here is definitely Naofumi-sama!"

"Hah? What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

I pick myself up, and I examine my surroundings once more.

The roar of the sea echoes in my ears, and I can easily understand that I'm not in the village.

From what I see, it's the island that makes up Sadina's secret base... yet still, something's strange.

Some sort of structure had collapsed and turned into ruins.

Is it some sort of plant?

What I saw next, is a nearby cage containing Firo, Atlas, and Kiel.

"Why are Firo and the others locked up?" (Naofumi)

"Do you not remember anything?" (Raphtalia)

“About what?” (Naofumi)

“I see... Firo and the others took advantage of a commotion and acted up a bit. They’ll be in there for a while as punishment.” (Raphtalia) For some reason, those three are looking at me with a sad expression.

“Rafu~”

“Wha?” (Naofumi)

When I look at my feet, I see what seems to be a mix between a small raccoon and a tanuki. A strange monster.

Its size is around that of a small dog, I guess.

What could this be?

“Fake~”

It lifts its paw at Raphtalia and calls out.

“Be quiet!” (Raphtalia)

Even though she rarely gets mad, Raphtalia shouts at the monster and shoos it away.

Upon hearing her voice, the monster immediately flees.

What is the meaning of this?

Hmm?

Rat is glaring at me angrily.

Behind her is a tanuki-ish raccoon, larger in size than Firo’s Filo Rial form. It looks like a bigger version of that other monster.

It has quite a sleepy expression on its face.

“Raphtalia, what happened here?” (Naofumi)

“You truly do not remember anything?” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I have a bad premonition as I nod.

“Let me tell you exactly what happened. Listen carefully.” (Raphtalia)

“Are you really Naofumi?” (Ren)

Ren comes over and asks me.

“What’s that supposed to mean... did an impostor of me appear, or something?” (Naofumi) “Well... I’m not sure if you could call that an impostor.” (Ren) Now that I think about it, I feel strangely refreshed.

It’s a strange feeling, like that I had when fighting the Wrath Dragon.
... I’m getting a really bad premonition now.

“Um... Naofumi-sama had his consciousness stolen by a cursed shield. Because of it, he became unable to use the slave crest... though that turned out for the best.” (Raphtalia) “... I see.” (Naofumi)

I have a vague feeling something like that happened.

My memory goes up to unlocking some strange series.

I believe it was the New Seven Deadly Sins.

“So what exactly did I do?” (Naofumi)

“What, you ask!?” (Rat)

Rat angles her eyebrows as she retorts.

What? What did I do to make Rat this angry?

“Yeah, please tell me in detail.” (Naofumi)

“Marquis, for some absurd reason, you occupied my laboratory, arbitrarily transferred it to this island, and on top of that, you went around modifying my precious Mii-kun to your whim!” (Rat) “Rafu~”

In response to Rat’s scream, the large... Raccoon?... Behind Rat cries out.

“Mii-kun was the monster you cared for in the test-tube, right? I modified him?” (Naofumi) “Not only that. You preached about how you were going to purify the world, carried out questionable research, and proclaimed you were going to dominate the world.” (Rat) “What!?” (Naofumi)

“... Luckily, before you did anything you couldn’t take back, everyone

worked together to stop you. It didn't turn into anything serious." (Rat) "I see." (Naofumi)

"Melly-chan proclaimed that the Hero of the Shield-sama was doing special training for the wave, so he was using unique powers to release monsters. The messengers from Silt Welt also came to our assistance." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia explains as she looks at Firo.

Firo starts shaking in fear as she extends her hand to me.

"Master... Firo wanted to protect that smile." (Firo)

"Yes, no matter what happened, we stayed with you until the last moment." (Atlas) "It was really fun playing with Niichan." (Kiel)

The three in the cage let out their opinions.

Smile? There's no such thing. Don't protect it.

"Master, you talked about Raphtalia-oneechan the whole time." (Firo)
"Why Raphtalia?" (Naofumi)

"At the start, you approached me with strange mannerism and invited me to join you in conquest. But after I refused such an offer, you came to the conclusion that I was a fake and ran away." (Raphtalia) "Strange mannerism?" (Naofumi)

"First of all, you used 'Thy' and 'Thou.'" (Raphtalia) "That sure is strange." (Naofumi)

What the hell is 'Thy'?

I don't get what that's supposed to mean.

No, the same can be said for all the one's I've seen under the influence of a curse.

To summarize, I was not an exception. My head turned strange.

"Next, it was something about how the world was rotten. About how before the wave did its work, you would purge it. You asked for my cooperation as well." (Taniko) From the sky, Taniko comes aboard Gaelion. She gets off and says as such.

“And after taking that old lady’s laboratory, you took all the monsters with you as well. You carried off quite a few of the village children while you were at it.” (Taniko) “Is there no end to this?” (Naofumi)

“Firo, Atlas-chan, and Kiel-kun rode the wave and followed you. Next, you erected a huge Bioplant castle on top of Sadina-neesan’s house. I believe you called it the Castle Plant.” (Raphtalia) Wow... what exactly was the cursed me thinking?

Could it be that I directly acted out my various dark feelings against this world’s nobility...?

I must’ve been an unreasonable fellow.

Though there are some personal matters mixed in with these complaints.

“By the way, how much time did we waste taking me down?” (Naofumi) “A little over a week.”

“What was that!?” (Naofumi)

Wait a second, it’s already been more than a week!?

I use status magic to view the countdown to the next wave.

Uwah!

It’s true. There’s only a week and a half left.

“... I performed human experimentation on that group?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. Kiel-kun.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia stares at Kiel, and she curls her tail into a ball in fear.

But sensing her intent, Kiel changes her form.

... It’s a small puppy with three heads. Cerberus?

But since Kiel is the base, I get more of a Kielberus impression from it.

“Eh?”

“When I begged him for it, Niichan happily did it for me.” (Kiel) “No matter how strange I was, that’s going too far.” (Naofumi) It’s human

modification, you know... Though she can turn back.

Did the cursed me plan to make her a disposable pawn?

“Niichan, your choice of words was strange, but you constantly worried about me, and you never hurt me. You made whatever changes that weren’t too dangerous for me!” (Kiel) With a regretful expression, Kiel begins letting out tears.

She truly adored that person, but though it was me, it wasn’t me. I have no memory of it.

It feels like she’s complimenting a stranger.

“That person, while being Naofumi-sama, wasn’t Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia cries out, and Kiel shuts up.

“Firo, you see, was given the ability to fly by Master.” (Firo) “What...?” (Naofumi)

In the cage, human form Firo bats her wings. Something glitters, and she begins floating.

She’s really flying...

But how would she lift off her normally huge body?

She seems built to run on the ground. It’s unsettling to imagine her flying around in the sky.

“FUOOOOOH! Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu assaults the cage with his overwhelming emotions.

“Mu! Go away!” (Firo)

With an extremely unpleasant face, Firo rejects him. Atlas thrusts at Motoyasu and drives him away.

“What about you, Atlas?” (Naofumi)

“You told me that it was no good... that I couldn’t be modified.” (Atlas)
“I see.” (Naofumi)

For Firo and Kiel to have been experimented on to this extent... I turn

my head towards Raphtalia, while a bad feeling fills my stomach.

“What about the others?” (Naofumi)

“... The slaves undergoing treatment in the lab all became your test subjects, and...” (Raphtalia) NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

I did something I can never take back.

There’s no way I ever planned on doing anything this inhuman.

“They all underwent complete recoveries. After that, you modified them as per their own request, and they rushed into battle against us.”

(Raphtalia) “... What?” (Naofumi)

“At the moment, like Firo’s group, they are under our protection.”

(Raphtalia) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

Per their own request... what exactly happened?

“Your charisma while under that curse was amazing. Everyone desperately tried to protect you.” (Ren) “... That’s right. For some reason, Naofumi-san is always the target of everyone’s affections.” (Itsuki) Ren and Itsuki answer.

Itsuki is expressionless, but I feel that he’s healing in a different direction from the past Itsuki.

Now that I think about it, since a week’s passed, has his curse healed to some extent?

“Itsuki-sama.” (Rishia)

“It’s alright. The current me can understand that they moved for Naofumi-san’s form of justice.” (Itsuki) “Ah, also, there’s something that’s been bothering me for a while.” (Naofumi) What exactly are those Raccoon-Tanuki hybrid monsters staring at us from the shadows of the ruins?

They all seem slightly different, and there are a couple of distinct varieties.

But without fail, each and every one of them looks like some sort of mix

between a Raccoon, Red Panda, and Tanuki. Some of their parts seem vaguely familiar.

I point my finger at them.

“They’re the last remaining traces of the monsters that chose to follow you, mixed with a completely new race of monster you created, of course. They’re the first generation Raph race.” (Rat) “Say what!?” (Naofumi)

Eh? Those are the monsters from my place!?

“Yeah. Everyone turned out like that, and they came to pick a fight with us.” (Taniko) Taniko speaks with an irritated expression.

She definitely holds a grudge!

But she did hold the monsters quite close to her heart. I can’t really complain.

“And, like, why do they look like that?” (Naofumi)

There’s a bit of resemblance with Raphtalia’s tail and ears.

Their cries also sound something like: ‘Rafu~’ and ‘Tari~’ and ‘Ri~ya~’. Connecting them gives a certain name.

Each and every one of them seems to have a conditioned reflex where if they see Raphtalia, they raise their arms and...

“Fake~”

Call out those words.

When I ask that, Sadina comes over, waving her hand. She gives a muffled laugh.

... Why is she brown? She’s also become relatively fluffy.

“After Raphtalia-chan rejected Naofumi-chan, you came under the impression that there was no way Raphtalia-chan would betray you. You started calling her a fake and started using her hair to try and revive the real Raphtalia-chan.” (Sadina) “Why!?” (Naofumi)

“Even I can’t tell you that one. After my spying was exposed, you made me look like this.” (Sadina) “Are you alright?” (Naofumi)

“According to Rat-chan, it’s fixable. I’ll be fine.” (Sadina) Muu... what exactly was the other me thinking?

“And, in the end, what are we going to do with those monsters?” (Naofumi) “They themselves wished for those forms, so... can’t we just introduce them to the world as new races?” (Rat) Rat replies with a defeated expression.

“By the way, the strange Marquis named them Raph race, Tali race, Rafuta race, Riya Race, and Talia race, or something like that, it seems.” (Rat) I truly can’t understand what that guy-me-was thinking!

What exactly was he planning on doing by making these strange life forms?

“Wait a second, you called those the first generation, right? Is there a second?” (Naofumi) “Of course there is. It goes all the way up to seven. You remade a new generation every day, Marquis. What’s more, you made battle models, final weapon models, and some other specialized ones. They got closer and closer in appearance to Raphtalia-san, and it got harder for us to fight them.” (Rat) Taniko presents a specimen to me.

“Rafu~”

“This is the seventh generation.” (Taniko)

An SD Raphtalia-esque lifeform greets me.

(TL: SD is super deformed. It’s an art style, pretty much the one you may recognize as chibi, with large head and small body.) (ED: I really hate the word super-deformed It sounds so nasty. Why couldn’t we just leave it as



chibi orz)

(TL: This is the original author's sketch of child Raphtalia. I guess you could call it a SD Raphtalia, but SD is to an even greater extent.) If I change my viewpoint, I guess she looks a little like Raphtalia when she was small.

But even in this form, all she says is Rafu~.

"I don't know what became of the eighth generation. There may be one exactly like the original walking around." (Rat) Uwah... That would be quite a development.

When I put my hands on my hanged head, Raphtalia places her hand on my shoulder.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Raphtalia)

“W-what?” (Naofumi)

“What happens after we overcome the wave?” (Raphtalia) “I go home?” (Naofumi)

“... Yes.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia puts on a sweet smile and nods.

“It’s alright. Though we had a late start, we can still get back on track. Let’s work hard together.” (Raphtalia) “That’s right... GUHA!” (Naofumi)

I vomit blood all of a sudden.

“W-what is this!?” (Naofumi)

“I bet it’s the curse.” (Ren)

Ren scratches his head as he mutters this.

Curse?

“You used your newly found intelligence to modify everyone using the minimum amount of your abilities, but it seems there’s still a bit of an after-effect.” (Ren) Well, yeah...

Looking at Firo, Kiel, the Raph Race, and all the others I modified, I am aware that I must have done a lot.

I look at my status to find that my wounds are not healing. It’s a very minor curse.

I think I can just cover this one with medicine.

Next is... my EP isn’t recovering either. I can recover it through normal means, though.

I also found this out later. In daily intervals, the EXP that I got was taken away. The taken EXP went towards feeding the new Raph Race.

If I just fight, I can make up for it.

There may be more, but at present, these are the curses I've identified.

"Though you yourself, when under that curse, was quite weak." (Ren)
"Is that so?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. Your defense was fatally low, and you didn't strengthen that shield." (Ren) Muu. In the end, that may have saved me.

"Anyways... the one who's going to be compensating for all the damage done in this incident is me, right?" (Naofumi) "Yup."

Ah... I feel that I'm going to be losing all the fortune I reaped in the festival. I may even go into debt.

"Luckily, a portion of the research the strange Naofumi-sama conducted was picked up by Rat." (Raphtalia) "It was full of things I wanted to do. With this, my own research should take great leaps. Though I feel a bit regretful for using it." (Rat) "Rafu~"

Mii-kun... was it?... puts Rat on his shoulders and begins walking off.

"If you didn't lend this child power, I still think he would have fought. You gave him a first generation Raph body, but he begged you for further strength, so you made him a special 'Final Weapon' body." (Rat) "I see... didn't you want his body to function on the same system as Dragon cores? Something about versatility?" (Naofumi) "It appears that you already did that." (Rat)

"Oh, really..." (Naofumi)

"He was the lead actor in the end. If he didn't turncoat in the end, I think we would still be fighting him right now." (Ren) Ren supplements some information.

Ah, for the love of... What exactly was I doing!?

... Mii-kun, was it?

The word of his betrayal irritates me.

In Sadina's case, she stood by as Raphtalia's ally and worked with her to stop me. Looking at the wider picture, I can't really call that betrayal, and if I was in her position, I would have done the same.

And if I did regain sanity for a brief moment, that would be what I would request.

However this one made use of my insanity to strengthen himself.

From the start, he was an ally of Rat and no friend to me. It's understandable, but unsatisfying.

"Rafu~"

What?

Mii-kun starts Rafu-ing in Rat's ear.

"Eh? What? He made you a test subject, and asked for experimental consent, but never asked you to swear loyalty?" (Rat) "... " (Naofumi)

What sophism.

Does that mean that if I had asked him to swear loyalty beforehand, he would have refused?

It's the same sophism that I use every day.

Since I was the one at fault this time, I can't complain. But still, how irritating.

To summarize, he wasn't an ally from the start, so it wasn't betrayal.

Because betrayal means to fool those who you think of as allies.

I just went and modified him, so he just quietly withstood it, is probably what he'll try and argue.

I have no memories of the incident, but based on their testimonies, I was the cliché villain, and Raphtalia the main hero.

That truly does seem to be the case.

Don't they appear a lot in fiction? Boss characters that get betrayed and attacked by their subordinates?

In Manga, after betraying the antagonist, the protagonists would welcome them onto their side.

It's not like I hate characters like that.

In literary production, that is.

When you're on the affected side, it feels quite unpleasant.

How disgusting.

Though that wasn't me.

Ah, right. I think Rat told me before that he was greedy for power.

It was the other me's fault for not understanding his personality.

But... I guess I just don't like him on a personal level.

I think I'll be ignoring him from here on out.

"Rat-san appears to be angry at Naofumi-sama, but she's truly quite thankful." (Raphtalia) "I see. I hope all's well that ends well, but..."

(Naofumi) ... I'm going to unload a few things.

It seems I went too far in various things.

Just modifying the Bioplant and displaying avarice was enough to awaken a curse series?

By the way, the current me cannot even bring up the New Seven Deadly Sins Shield. I can't even remember what sort of shield it was.

And like this, the curtain closes on my recklessness.

"By the way, where's Fohl?" (Naofumi)

"ANEKI!" (Fohl)

From a distance, Fohl runs towards Raphtalia.

Aneki? (TL: Older sister, occasionally female leader) "Did it go well?" (Fohl)

"Yes. Because Fohl-kun was able to stall the collapse..."

"The moments afterwards were quite hectic. The castle started crumbling on us all. But we were able to guide and evacuate everyone."

When Fohl notices me, he starts glaring at me.

"Aneki? Did you start calling her that during the journey?" (Naofumi)

“No, during the current incident. When Atlas-chan went to Naofumi-sama’s side, Fohl-kun reluctantly followed her and became your subordinate. I... encouraged him, and brought him over to our camp.”
(Raphtalia) “Yes, Aneki told me this. If you truly cherish your little sister, then as a big brother, you shouldn’t pamper her so!” (Fohl) “I see...”
(Naofumi)

How should I say this. It seems that quite a soap opera played out when I wasn’t looking.

The rebellious Fohl now is this obedient to Raphtalia.

Will they marry when they grow up? I don’t approve of it, by the way.

“... Naofumi-sama? Are you thinking something sinister right now?”
(Raphtalia) “About what?” (Naofumi)

“No, there’s no problem, but...” (Raphtalia)

“My eyes were blinded. I was pulled around by the selfishness of my sister, who recently started getting better. However, love must also be strict. That’s what Raphtalia-aneke taught me.” (Fohl) “Ah, I see...”
(Naofumi)

He clenches his fist tightly. It was something I warned him about daily, but he was afraid of incurring his sister’s hate. I mean, Atlas even occasionally says she will curse him one day.

“It’s all your fault!” (Fohl)

“Yeah, that’s fine...” (Naofumi)

I mean, it’s true. I feel kinda tired.

“I definitely don’t approve of you, you know!” (Fohl) “Ah, yes, yes.”
(Naofumi)

Anyways, it seems Fohl became Raphtalia’s younger brother (Follower).
... But I think her real age is lower than his.

Chapter 289: Limited-Time Offer

With this and that, we returned to the village and began the days of improving our levels until the waves came.

Within that time, I went on an expedition with the high-leveled Raphtalia and the other slaves.

Ah~... Speaking of which, it's about the events of the night we returned to the village.

I tried my daily work of compounding with the mortar.

“Huh?” (Naofumi)

After a moment of grinding, the herbs became a blackened waste and gave off a foul stench.

It's not at a level I should fail.

The more I grind, the more the waste increased.

I was only infusing the herbs so I'm puzzled about why they would change into charcoal.

“Naofumi-sama. Is something wrong?” (Raphtalia)

“My compounding is...” (Naofumi)

When I try compounding something else, it always fails.

...It seems like I've become unable to compound because of the curse's influence.

This is like Ren's Item Creation system being destroyed.

I take a break from working, and go to bed early that day.

Ah, for the Atla issue, I have slaves deployed near the house and have made a perfect defense so she can't come.

Well, Fohl is locking her in unsparingly so it should be fine.

In addition to that... the so-called Raph species are keeping a watchful eye in the village.

Raphtalia begins swinging her sword outside for the sake of nighttime training.

“Rafu~” (Raph)

The tanuki-looking, raccoon-looking monsters known as the Raph came inside the room without anyone noticing.

Come to think of it, they also can use the same illusion magic as Raphtalia.

It’s quite convenient.

And yet, they came in a large group.

“Oh? I think you were the first generation Raph species, right?”
(Naofumi) Their appearance is relatively cute.

It seems there are generations of various types but that part was pretty ambiguous so I didn’t really understand it.

“Rafu~” (Raph)

The Raph extends its paw forward and strikes the ground seven times with a digit.

They’re the seventh generation Raph species? Or I should say, they’ve got a modest attitude.

They seem to understand human language in some respects and are greatly different from those noisy birds.

In terms of liking or disliking them, I think it would be more on the liking side.

The Raphs who entered the room were small and they cry out while approaching me.

“Ra-Raphtalia-san. E-everyone of the Raph species! Onii-sama, I just want to go where Naofumi-sama is! Please move aside.” (Atla) “You cannot.” (Raphtalia)

“You can’t.” (Fohl)

“””Rafu~!””” (Raphs)

...For some reason it's noisy outside.

While they're talking I casually stroke the Raphs.

Their feel isn't bad.

Apparently I made this when I was crazy but...unexpectedly, I did a good job with them.

Hm? There are some shed hair.

....What will happen if I insert them into the shield?

I insert some as a test.

You have unlocked the requirements for the Raph Shield!

You have unlocked the requirements for the Tali Shield!

You have unlocked the requirements for the Lia Shield!

You have unlocked the requirements for the Original Raph Shield!

You have unlocked the requirements for the Battle Raph Shield!

....etc

To have a shield from a creature of a new species, what is this.

Well, if I think about it, there's also evolution on top of the monsters currently existing, so it's not strange that the entries continue to increase.

...I investigate the Raph Shield.

Raph Shield 0/20 C

Ability Sealed....Equipment Bonus, Raph Species Growth Correction
(Small) Raph Species Attack Designation 1 (Limited Time Offer)
Raphitalia's Ability Correction (Small) Proficiency 0

.....err.

I don't know which I should comment about.

What is that Limited Time Offer thing?

Is that like raising an ability with their individual limits or something, what kind of ability is it.

Well, Raphtalia is the one I trust the most so I won't be dissatisfied if she gets stronger.

Or rather.

"Rafu~" (Raph)

Is it just my imagination? I feel like this releasing method and pattern vaguely resembles the Filorial System.

The Shield Tree also unlocks with a similar feeling.

"Rafu~?" (Raph)

"Is this a kid or an adult? I think there was a large one, right? How about you?" (Naofumi) That Mii-kun fellow, how should I put it, he's like a neighbourhood sprite from the countryside, and I feel like trying to nap on his stomach once. [T/N: My neighbour Rafufu (Rarafu?)]

That fellow doesn't want to approach himself so he won't want to, but an unfamiliar Raph might be fine.

Ah, that kid is a female. It seems there are male specimen Those were originally of a different kind of monster though.

"Rafu~!" (Raph)

With a poof sound, the Raph I was hugging became slightly bigger It's just the right size for a body pillow.

And then I unreservedly throw myself onto its stomach and lie down.

...I want to try touching it a little.

While I stroke it, I lie face up as if it was a pillow.

Somehow it smells like Raphtalia.

Ah~... somehow I feel a strange sense of security.

Even afterwards, I raised them with a lot of physical contact and they've become considerably attached to me as a response.

They're pretty cute.

They're like the ideal pet I've always wanted.

“Rafu~” (Raph)

“Naofumi-sama! It’s almost time for....” (Raphtalia) The door of the room opens and Raphtalia enters.

“...What..are you doing?” (Raphtalia)

“Hm? It kind of came to play so I’m just keeping it company though?” (Naofumi) “Fake~!” (Raph)

“Be quiet!” (Raphtalia)

Somehow Raphtalia’s tail swells up, wary of the Raph.

“Ah...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia seized the Raph by the nape of its neck and drove them out of the room.

I unconsciously reached out with my hand, reluctant to part.

That sensation when I was stroking it.... even though it was fine.

I thought it would have made a perfect body pillow.

“Naofumi-sama, please don’t play with the Raph species so much.” (Raphtalia) [T/N: Somebody’s jealous~]

“Is that so? I’ve always wanted this kind of pet though. To be honest, it’s my type of monster.” (Naofumi) “It’s a promise with me!” (Raphtalia)

“Why do you hate it so much?” (Naofumi)

Well, it’s not like I don’t understand.

It’s probably like an Otaku giving their girlfriend a model figure they made as a present.

Moreover, to be freely caressing it in front of their eyes.

If I think about it properly, am I a hentai otaku!?

No, she’s not a girlfriend. Instead, she feels more like a daughter.

I doubt people sleep on their daughter’s stomachs though.

Well, when I check their status afterwards, they’re pretty exceptional.

I saw that their levels were low, but their potential was quite high.

I think it might be equal to the Filorials’.

The subspecies are also quite diverse.

There’s a specimen that can pull carriages like the Filorials too.

Those were originally Caterpillands though.

Looking at their integration, I’ll have them take on a role in combat or peddling.

Yeah, like they said, the guys in the monster hut originally wished for the modification.

“Umm... how should I say it, it’s embarrassing to watch.” (Raphtalia)

“So it’s that kind of thing.” (Naofumi)

I understand her feelings.

Even I would dislike it if a clone of me was made and was caressed by Raphtalia.

By the way, the ability that was in the shield before, the Attack Designation 1 allows me to direct the Raphs to focus their attacks on the monster I indicate.

Also, a variety of other instructions appeared.

Furthermore, there’s even a strange skill like ‘C’mon Raphs’.... the things this shield has.

When used, I can summon the Raphs by portal.

....Somehow Raphtalia makes a complicated face whenever I use it so I’m worried about whether I should seal its use.

Incidentally, the Raphs that turned wild extended their influence and now they’ve created an ecosystem in my territory, but that’s another story.

The next day.

“Now then, Naofumi-sama. Please scold Atla-chan, Firo and Kiel-kun

and punish each of them.” (Raphtalia) Atla, Firo and Kiel were kept in the village plaza and I was told to scold them by Raphtalia.

In reality, I was the one who went crazy and they were just taking my side so I think the fault should be mine.

I feel like I'm in no position to assign punishments.....

Or rather, I should be the one receiving a punishment instead.

It didn't become a big deal thanks to Melty making the necessary arrangements, but I caused quite a loss.

It seems I came to harass the village and town occasionally and caused some destruction.

Apparently it was covered for by using the profits from the Reconstruction Festival though.

I heard that I also assaulted the merchants in my territory.

According to Firo, I didn't have enough materials and so Firo raided those possessing what I needed from the sky or something.

Well, they were recompensated, and they were told not to approach the location beforehand so the merchants who did approach were at fault.

Furthermore, Melty collected all the evidence in the area so there shouldn't be any false reports.

Honestly, I want to be forgiven for this kind of incident.

That being the case, let's obey Raphtalia's instructions if anything happens next time.

To be frank, I feel guilty about Sadina's brown colouring. The person herself doesn't care and is just happily drinking alcohol though.

That her drinking ability has increased is comforting, but it's my fault that it became such an outrageous situation and I do my own self-reflection.

If I am sternly cautioned by Raphtalia now but then those three won't get the message.

“Atla.” (Naofumi)

“What is it, Naofumi-sama?” (Atla)

“...Why did you join me?” (Naofumi)

She was asked before but I’ll ask her again.

“Because that person was still Naofumi-sama, and I will always be by Naofumi-sama’s side.” (Atla) “Firo too~” (Firo)

Firo spoke after Atla did.

“You know, Master. You had a really great smile.” (Firo) And then she cries with flowing tears....oh Jeez.

Just how attached was she.

Were you that pleased about being able to fly in the sky?

“That wasn’t me. It was something that possessed me.” (Naofumi) “Eh~ that’s wrong~” (Firo)

“That’s right.” (Atla)

“Yeah! Nii-chan was nice!” (Kiel)

I was an arrogant villain! I wasn’t nice!

Or so I could respond but....it seems like I might step on a land mine so I’ll stay silent.

“Then....” (Naofumi)

For a punishment, I must assign something the person will hate so that they’ll reflect.

In Atla’s case, she might conversely be happy with whatever I order her to do.

Alright.

“Fohl.” (Naofumi)

“...What?” (Fohl)

“To drive Atla away, you’ll be sleeping in my room.” (Naofumi) “Again!”

(Fohl)

“The thing your Atla hates is?” (Naofumi)

“Ughh...Onii-sama, if you do that—” (Atla)

Atla emits a negative aura towards Fohl.

“I-I got it! Nii-chan, I’ll work hard in order to punish Atla.” (Fohl)

“Raphtalia is also fine with that, right?” (Naofumi) “Ah...yes... Fohl-kun. Please protect Naofumi-sama from the Raph species as well.” (Raphtalia)

“I got it, Big Sis.” (Fohl)

That Fohl, he now obediently obeys Raphtalia.

Damn. Raphtalia doesn’t need you!

Or rather, what the hell am I thinking.

“So next is Firo.” (Naofumi)

How should I punish Firo?

It seems like going three days without food or something will be enough for her to reflect. I can probably use the Monster Crest to reinforce it as well.

The problem is... it’s dangerous because there’s the possibility that Firo may lose judgement from hunger and cause an outrageous incident though.

“Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu starts addressing me.

He’ll probably talk about something indecent again.

Let’s ignore him.

“Ah, Naofumi-sama.” (Raphtalia)

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“The Hero of the Spear is...that is, he was very cooperative during this last incident. Please give him a reward somehow.” (Raphtalia) “Why so sudden?” (Naofumi)

“I promised him....” (Raphtalia)

Grr... speaking of which, I heard the whole story.

At first he was a subordinate of the crazy me but he was told by Melty that Raphtalia was someone related to Firo and so he recognised Raphtalia as a person and not a pig, and finally was persuaded to cooperate and such.

I hadn't concealed my surprise at him being able to converse with a female other than Melty, but it's related to Firo again.

So Melty is her fiancée and Raphtalia is her older sister.

As I expected, all the women are pigs except for those with a relationship to Firo.

When I think about it, it's an inevitable result.

Nevertheless, Firo's punishment and Motoyasu's reward, huh.....

Alright!

“Firo.” (Naofumi)

“Wha~t?” (Firo)

“Go on a date with Motoyasu for the day. You must always stay within thirty metres of him.” (Naofumi) I activate the Monster Crest and made it so she would suffer if she violated it.

“No~!” (Firo)

“Really, Father-in-Law?!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu's eyes shine!

Don't bring your face so close, it's disgusting.

“Yeah, however, I absolutely won't forgive a relationship beyond that of dating, forcefully pressing her for a kiss, or trying to have sex and such.”

(Naofumi) “Yes! Now then, Firo-tan. Let's go on the date.” (Motoyasu)

“Buuuuuuuuu!”” (Kuu, Midori & Marine)

Motoyasu's three followers protest while releasing bloodlust.

I don't care. If this much isn't done then it won't be a reward nor a punishment!

Motoyasu untied the rope Firo was bound with.

When he does, Firo struggles and starts flying in the sky.

"No~! Master, save me!" (Firo)

"Sorry. I'm not in a situation where I can defend you." (Naofumii) I'm the one who gave the punishment though.

"NOOooo~!" (Firo)

Flapping her wings, Firo flew at quite a fast speed.

She barely stopped within thirty metres.

"Hahaha, is it a rendezvous in the sky? Firo-tan!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu ran and chased after her.

"Don't come near~!!" (Firo)

Firo fled while flying.

Is that a date?

It's fine since Motoyasu seems very delighted.

Yeah. With this, they won't come back for a while.

"That female's owner, what a reward! I definitely won't forgive him!" (Kuu) "Yeah! Unforgivable." (Marine)

"Let's curse him." (Midori)

Those three are annoying.

In that case you guys should go claim Motoyasu yourselves.

By the way, apparently Firo and Motoyasu spent the day chasing one another.

Motoyasu reported back happily, but I could only wonder if that was enough.

Chapter 290: Crepe Tree

“Next is Kiel, huh.” (Naofumi)

“Niichan. I want to quickly go to that tree’s side so please hurry up.”
(Kiel) What’s with that attitude.

Do you even realise that you’re being scolded right now?

Well, I’m also a perpetrator so I can’t speak so harshly, but I do feel a little irritation.

By the way, that tree Kiel was referring to is a seed she planted in the corner of the village and raised into a tree.

That seed grew very quickly, and was bearing fruit or something.

I haven’t looked around much because it was still early morning, but I had noticed a sweet smell.

Or rather, there was a tree that was producing bread in the middle of the village.

What’s with that. Stay within the limits of fantasy, what happens if someone gets sick from eating that! But when I complained in astonishment, I was told that it was something I made when I was crazy.

Ah Jeez....

Kiel probably had me make something for her as well.

“Then should I chop down that tree as punishment?” (Naofumi)
“Niichan! Even if it’s Niichan, I’ll never forgive you!” (Kiel) “It’ll grow back anyway.” (Naofumi)

“Niichan told me it can’t regrow.” (Kiel)

“The Bread Tree appears to have reproduction capabilities though?”
(Naofumi) Kiel transformed into her Kielberus form and growled.

Well, she’s tied up so she can’t move, and my slave crest should keep her quiet.

Hmm..... all the same, I can’t bear to do something she’d hate so much.

Assigning a punishment that goes beyond reflection is just abuse.

“Well then, Kiel.” (Naofumi)

“What, Niichan?” (Kiel)

“Take the form of an ordinary girl from now on. Loincloths are prohibited. And you must wear the clothes that Imia provides.”

(Naofumi) “Eeehhhh!?” (Kiel)

Kiel raised a fuss with all her strength, seeming very reluctant.

This much shouldn't be considered abuse.

“And go peddling like that. Your assignment is to gather as many fans as Firo has, and you're to remain as a girl until you do.” (Naofumi) “I-I get it, Niichan.” (Kiel)

“Is this much fine?” (Naofumi)

“I think that's a little soft.” (Raphtalia)

Is that so?

I intended to provoke her with this quite unreasonable demand to reach Firo's scale though.

Honestly, the degree of difficulty is higher when compared to Firo and Atla.

However, Kiel's peddling records are good.

If I send her out, she might be able to achieve it.

“But that's how Naofumi-sama is.” (Raphtalia)

It seems like I'll be self-destructing if I butt-in awkwardly so I'll just agree.

In reality, I feel reluctant to scold them harshly while having faults of my own.

Of course, I wouldn't feel anything if it were a complete stranger but even if they're bad, I won't be so heartless as to go so far with my subordinates.

Yeah, I'd feel ashamed.

“God of the Shield-sama, what's the matter?” (Slave)

“!” (Naofumi)

It's this.

The slaves who were originally undergoing medical treatment in the laboratory, every one of them call me God.

Because of this, the damage to my heart every time they say it....

“Hey, please call me the Hero of the Shield if you can. Or, you can call me Shield-niichan like the other guys.” (Naofumi) “What are you saying. The great God of the Shield-sama, we cannot do such an awe-inspiring thing.” (Slave) Ugh...a refreshing smile pierces me.

To be called a God like this is painful.

“Next up is for Naofumi-sama to punish himself.... that's it, isn't it?” (Raphtalia) “Maybe.” (Naofumi)

....That's right.

I don't have any memory of it but I'm aware that I caused quite a disturbance.

“I'll restrain myself from more of my miserly actions. I don't want to have to do much self-torturing though.” (Naofumi) “You do have a point. Sorry. Naofumi-sama has the task of fighting the waves so let's not do too much. I will inform everyone.” (Raphtalia) “Thanks.” (Naofumi)

I feel like it's not really fair that I'm the only one not punished, but the only ones I punished for following the crazy me are Atla, Firo and Kiel so.... it's fine.

“However..” (Naofumi)

I surveyed the village.

It's become rather big thanks to the population and monsters increasing on a large scale.

It's already on its way to becoming a town.

“It’s been developing, hasn’t it.” (Naofumi)

“Yeah...” (Raphtalia)

The slaves recuperating in the laboratory were also able to recover so in the end... it was all good, or so I justify and console myself.

“Alright! Let’s go raise our levels today as well and prepare for the waves.” (Naofumi) “Okay.” (Raphtalia)

Well... Firo is on a date with Motoyasu so I needed another monster to be our transport but when I request it, Firo’s number one subordinate comes forward, pushing away the modified Raph species and Filorials.

I want to decline if I can, but somehow I’m in an awkward situation and there’s unspoken pressure compelling me to bring her.

It’s not like she did anything bad in particular.

Just that... I wonder what it is. The way she looks at me bothers me.

“Hey Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“Kue.” (Piyo)

I point to Firo’s number one subordinate who was resting at a distance and ask Raphtalia.

“That guy’s acting rather weird but do you know anything about it?” (Naofumi) “Let’s see.... all of the Filorials in the village went to follow Naofumi-sama, so...” (Raphtalia) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. In the beginning, they accompanied us but after that child was abducted.... somehow she became strange after that.” (Raphtalia)

“Kue....” (Piyo)

Don’t look at me with such passionate eyes.

It’s a vivid reminder of Firo when she was in heat, so it’s somewhat unpleasant.

“Did she fight?” (Naofumi)

“Yes...she was caught at the seventh tower.” (Raphtalia) “I see...”
(Naofumi)

Is she in heat?

“Kuee.” (Piyo)

Firo’s number one subordinate who defeated the monsters approached with her head lowered as if wanting to be praised.

You speak, don’t you.

“Yes yes, alright.” (Naofumi)

I stroked her appropriately, but for some reason she endeavoured to have me stroke the base of her throat.

Huh? Didn’t this guy used to know when to quit?

Somehow she’s changed a little.

“Kueeee....” (Piyo)

She looks like she’s in an extremely good mood.

Well, it’s fine to stroke her since it doesn’t feel bad, but this guy is that cutesy kid so I don’t really like it.

And when I find a good time to part, she cries out very reluctantly.

What’s with that.

That mystery was established at noon the next day.

When Firo told us drowsily, having finished her one-day date.

“Hey Firo.” (Naofumi)

“Huh~... wha~t?” (Firo)

“Subordinate Number One’s behaviour is weird. Isn’t she aiming for your position?” (Naofumi) “What do you mean~?” (Firo)

I point to her number one subordinate who was staring at me from in hiding.

“Ah, Piyo-chan? It’s alright~ That was, you know~ just her madly in love

with Master~” (Firo) “.....” (Naofumi)

So that guy was called Piyo.

I had forgotten her real name. I feel like I’ve even been told before though.

Or rather, Hey.

“....Wait, you’re saying something very ominous.” (Naofumi) “That’s right. Why is that child madly in love?” (Raphtalia) “You see~ it was after Firo became able to fly. Master, you see. You told me to go abduct Piyo-chan so I brought her, and then.. Master, Piyo-chan—” (Firo) “Wh-what did he do?” (Raphtalia)

I also nodded to Raphtalia’s question.

I’m worried about what it means by that cutesy kid becoming so clingy.

“....Firo was very envious, when I said to do it to me as well, Master said ‘You’ve already pledged your allegiance to me so no, and I only did it because it’s effective on this guy’” (Firo) “What did he do!” (Raphtalia)

I don’t understand Firo’s explanation!

It can’t be helped. It’s regrettable but let’s try asking Atla.

I head towards Atla’s place, who was irritated about Fohl being a hindrance.

“Ah, you! Why is it your side that’s coming!” (Fohl)

Fohl said in a displeased voice as I approached.

Yesterday was.... well, he was an unrefined body pillow.

I want to ask something unreasonable of Raphtalia and invite a Raph.

“Sorry. There’s something on my mind that I want to ask Atla about.” (Naofumi) “Well, I wonder what it is. Naofumi-sama? If it’s now, I’ll do anything for you.” (Atla) You’d do anything even if it wasn’t now, I don’t need you to tell me that.

That is to say, it was already broadcasted...

“So Firo’s subordinate, Piyo. What did I do to her?” (Naofumi) “It was personal grooming.” (Atla)

“Personal grooming?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. That is... the already captured Piyo-chan exposed her hostility and thanks to her pledging allegiance, turning her fury affectionate and doing a rich personal grooming, the Filorials converted to Naofumi-sama’s camp.” (Atla) “Rich?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I cannot remember how many times Piyo-chan raised her voice in pleasure.” (Atla) “Naofumi-sama!?” (Raphtalia)

“He has no memory of it!” (Atla)

Eh? Is this a metaphor?

Was I raped by Subordinate Number One or something?

“Firo, was I assaulted by Subordinate Number One?” (Naofumi) “Trying to conceive children? You’re wrong~” (Firo)

Apparently I’m wrong.

Or I should say, don’t talk about conceiving children.

“Firo also wants to be caressed like that~ I was envious..... to say something similar, it’s like the feeling he had when Master stroked the little Onee-chan today, almost to the point of ecstasy~” (Firo) [T/N: Little Onee-chan = Raph Species]

“Naofumi-sama? When did you....” (Raphtalia)

Geh.....

Actually, I was stroking the concealed Raph.

I really like the feel of them.

But Raphtalia gets upset when I stroke them so I had been doing it in hiding.

Why am I being treated like I’ve been unfaithful.

Anyway, to stroke them with that kind of feeling.... so it was having

them pledge allegiance.

I don't understand what the pledge means.

"Tell me if you saw me! Or rather, if the Raph are no good then Raphtalia! Let me stroke your tail." (Naofumi) What am I saying? It's turning into sexual harassment.

It's a case of reversed anger. [T/N: Being angry at someone who would normally be angry at you]

"Eh...ah...uhh. I-I understand. It's fine to stroke the Raph as long as it's within my eyesight." (Raphtalia) As I expected, it's better than stroking her tail. [T/N: Raphtalia doesn't want her tail stroked no matter what.]

I don't know which is proving fortunate.

"Then how do I make Subordinate Number 1 be obedient?" (Naofumi) "I think it'll be fine if you did it for a while, Piyo-chan~? About Master, I said before that Firo's love is different." (Firo) "Ah, right." (Naofumi)

"But stroke me occasionally." (Firo)

Sigh...Filorials are very weird.

As expected, the Raph are best.

They aren't vulgar.

No, it might just be that I haven't confirmed it yet.

Or rather, I'm probably too pleased with them.

"Ah, they said Kiel-kun's Crepe Tree is bearing fruit, Master, let's go eat." (Firo) "Wait wait, what Crepe Tree?" (Naofumi)

I've heard about the Bread Tree but.... so it's what Kiel was talking about when she was being punished.

That was also made by me, huh.

"Naofumi-sama, me too." (Atla)

"You're not allowed." (Naofumi)

"Aww...." (Atla)

Atla really is a dangerous fellow.

She agrees no matter what I do.

Despite this, I know that it'll turn bad if she continues to obey.

If possible, I'd like her think for herself and not depend on me.

In the past, I said this to Raphtalia.

<From an objective point of view, you and your companions need to be careful> Right, it's an objective point of view.

We must sharpen ourselves to be seen as splendid from a stranger's perspective.

I'd want put in a great effort and chase my ideals together with my partner, and have them acknowledge my current self, instead of depending on them.

Furthermore, I followed those words.

<You can't believe that you can do anything just because you are a companion of a hero. Try not to inconvenience anyone.> I don't care about the world after the waves.

However, Raphtalia will remain in this world, so I must secure a place for her to belong.

I will make a world where Raphtalia can be happy even without me.

One way or another, a problem is emerging with the slaves here being dependant on me.

From now on, I will have them rely on Raphtalia and the others first, and if it still isn't resolved then I can make my appearance.

...Huh? Isn't that no different to how it was before I turned crazy....?

Yeah, it's because Kiel, who should have been assisting Raphtalia, went on a rampage.

So I have no choice but have the slaves who are motivated, with the exception of Kiel, work hard.

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“Of the guys originally born in the village, please aid and train those who have leadership like Kiel. If possible, the guys who aren’t too attached to me.” (Naofumi) “....Okay.” (Raphtalia)

Kiel showed hostility from the start, but she’s now become too attached.

In the beginning, I somehow destroyed the ruins of the home she originally lived in, so how can she be so attached to me.

There’s also the effect of food, but she’s a charismatic person by nature.

And she doesn’t think too deeply but acts on her instincts like Firo, so I want an intelligence faction.

Piyo is like that but Firo is her superior so that’s also troublesome.

And, as we were talking, we — — became speechless.

“Wh-what is this!” (Naofumi)

Firo called it the Crepe Tree, but it really is a crepe tree!

There were flower-like things which were round dough pieces blooming, with fruit wrapped in their center, and they changed shape as they ripened.

Bugs or something seemed to be gathering, was that alright?

Then again, the nectar-filled depressions, where the bugs were gathering, were in various parts of the tree.

Somehow, when I peer inside... inside the depressions were carnivorous plants and inside, it seemed the bugs were being converted into nourishment. It was ripening with nutrients from this bug?

Ugh... it’s quite a disgusting tree....

“Ah, Niichan!” (Kiel)

Kiel addressed me, picking crepes off the tree.

In her hand she grasped crepes intended for us to eat.

“Will Niichan eat too?” (Kiel)

“No...give me a break.” (Naofumi)

“Is that so? It’s super yummy though? But it doesn’t have as much flavour as Niichan’s handmade food.” (Kiel) “I’ve also become unable to cook because of the curse.” (Naofumi) “That’s why this tree has the tastiest desserts right now.” (Kiel) Kiel answered with confidence.

As I expect, it’d be impossible for this guy to be a Sub-leader.

Her actions are too erratic.

“Kiel-kun. One of the villagers said this, but is it true that you won’t separate from this tree?” (Raphtalia) “That’s right! Cos I never know when a thief might come!” (Kiel) So Kiel has always been sleeping by the Crepe Tree ever since we returned to the village?

She must treasure it a lot.

“Keep it moderate, okay.” (Naofumi)

“I’ve got it Niichan. Ah, does Firo-chan also want a crepe?” (Kiel)
“Yeah!” (Firo)

Firo stuffed her cheeks with the delicious crepe.

That....is a crepe produced with nutrients from bugs, right? I’ve lost my appetite....but let’s not say that aloud.

Firo would be indifferent about eating bugs and stuff anyway.

Incidentally, Kiel started living in a kennel that was established next to the tree so I constructed a temporary dwelling using a Bioplant to stave off the wind and rain.

Kiel... you said you were going to protect your precious house, didn’t you. The house you neglected will cry.

Or, has it become House = Crepe Tree? Please stop with the jokes.

Afterwards, Kiel poured her efforts into looking after the Crepe Tree, and the Crepe Tree also grew as if responding to her affection.

Subsequently, the legendary Crepe Wood became a local specialty and

the moment of its birth... just kidding.

“I’d like you to not get carried away with any jokes.” (Naofumi) “That’s right.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia replies while giving the Raph a sidelong glance.

I understand it. I’d feel the same if there was a copycat who resembled me.

Chapter 291: Dragon Faith

Several Days Later

In order to consult the Queen about the forces that would assist against the wave, I head to the castle.

I also want to see if the Old Man had completed the carriage I ordered, so I bring Firo with me.

Raphtalia and Firo, and also Fohl, were dragged into my portal. I teleported him away right in front of Atlas's eyes. (TL: Not that it matters) "We've arrived."

We immediately arrive inside of the castle, and Fohl instantly begins displaying hostility towards me.

"You..." (Fohl)

"What? This is also a form of punishment, you know. We need to get her to repent, somewhat." (Naofumi) "Think about my position too!" (Fohl)

Ah, Fohl begins crying.

He's putting up with quite a bit right now.

I guess being the target of hatred for his beloved sister is too much to bear.

"I'm sorry, Fohl-kun. We're asking for the impossible, aren't we?" (Raphtalia) "There's no reason for Aneki to worry. The one at fault is that guy!" (Fohl) "Naofumi-sama is... Well, he's just like that. This is also to help Atlas-chan develop independence." (Raphtalia) "I know. I know, but...!" (Fohl)

"Master! Carriage!" (Firo)

She can already fly by herself, so isn't it fine?

Ah, does she still prefer travelling by land?

And, like, couldn't I have just confiscated her carriage as her

punishment? I guess it all worked out, though.

It's true that her leg strength is worthy of praise, and if we don't make use of them, Firo's reason for existence will be placed in jeopardy.

"Ah, yes, yes. We'll check in after our business in the castle. Until then, go rest in the castle courtyard or something." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Raphtalia)

"Got it." (Firo)

"Then will you spar with me, Aneki?" (Fohl)

"I guess I will. With the wave so close, it's not like I can relax."
(Raphtalia) "Is that how it is? Aneki fought that huge mountain over there, right? Tell me how it went. I want to use it as reference." (Fohl)
"That's fine. Firo's here too, so let's make a training regimen based on that." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia's party leaves for the castle yard, and I go to request an audience with the Queen.

When I finally got around to the audience hall, I see her hard at work.

Hearing the troubles of the people is work too, I guess.

The cabinet minister is conversing with her.

Hmm? Did the minister always look like this?

When I was summoned here, the minister who looked down on me wasn't this one.

"If it isn't Iwatani-sama. How goes your progress?" (Queen) "I believe I already sent word of that." (Naofumi)

"I heard that your Shield went out of control and caused a bit of an incident. About that...In a few minutes, an official from Silt Welt will arrive. I would be grateful if you would stay in on our conversation."
(Queen) "... Got it." (Naofumi)

Regarding that matter, there is nothing I can refute.

I mean, the fault lies with me.

The door creaks open, and the two messengers I saw before step in.

Hmm?

The Shusaku youth's face is bright.

Perhaps he's in a good mood. He smiles as he glances at me.

"Ah, Hero of the Shield-sama. I had the opportunity to partake in watching over your practice war."

The Genmu messenger begins speaking in a light and refined manner.

Practice war?

Ah, right. My outburst was labelled as such to the public.

"Ah, I see... How did you find it?" (Naofumi)

"After seeing the plans and factors you put into practice to prepare for the wave, our side now feels satisfied." (Genmu) I wonder what he truly believes... but the Shusaku messenger seems to be looking upon it favorably, so perhaps it will work out fine.

"I plan to combat Houou, who's set to revive in the west. What will you do?" (Naofumi) "We plan to include our armies in the world's allied forces to combat the wave. Many of our soldiers are full of enthusiasm at the thought of seeing the Hero of the Shield-sama's performance in battle." (Genmu) "I see... I hope they don't enter the fray with such light hearts." (Naofumi) Why didn't such a force come last time? It's probably best not to bring that up now.

Since they had three and a half months, they finished preparations.

I can do nothing but put my expectations on the reliability of the Demi-Human country's forces.

"I've definitely seen some of your resolve. Many of my fears have been alleviated." (Ganmu) "Fears?" (Naofumi)

Upon my inquiry, the Genmu messenger glares at the Shusaku.

The Shusaku holds his mouth open, as if trying to remember something important.

"What?" (Naofumi)

“No, there are no problems.” (Genmu)

“... Really? If you’ve got a beef with me, it would be beneficial for me if you were to clear it up now.” (Naofumi) “That’s true...” (Genmu)

Honestly, this is the time when we should be putting the upcoming battle over all else.

But if problems crop up immediately afterwards, that will be troublesome.

The Genmu grandpa starts stroking his beard and makes eye contact with the Queen before opening his mouth once more.

“One of the races that lead our country, the Aotatsu race is a little... Our country’s higher-ups have begun to notice them secretly taking action against the worship of the summoned Heroes.” (Genmu) (TL: If you take separate readings for the kanji of Sei Ryuu, it can be read Ao Tatsu) “So will they come and cause a disturbance in my place?” (Naofumi) “No, no, no. Nothing of the sort. It’s just that they have begun showing strong support towards Faubley.” (Genmu) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Faubley.

The land governed by a pig.

My image of the country is colored dark with personal prejudice.

However, why would people start raising objections to the Hero faith in the country of Heroes?

“Many of the Aotatsu tribe have migrated to Shield Freiden, and... recently, their leader has been working within Faubley. Our side is slightly anxious.” (Genmu) “Leader?” (Naofumi)

“He works out of Faubley. That country employs a large amount of Dragons, so their relations are favorable.” (Genmu) Why...?

Ah, Aotatsu can be read Blue Dragon. (TL: Naofumi is remarking on the Kanji) So they’re a dragon race.

When I think of dragons, the wimpy one at my place is the only one that comes to mind.

But Rat told me about it before: The Dragonewt Demi-Human race.

“If you were to categorize the Aotatsu, they would be Dragon people. They have a deep belief in dragons. How foolish...” (Genmu) Heh... I don’t really get it, but there seems to be various factions over there too.

Even within the religions that I know of, there are moderate and radical factions.

Even though their scriptures are the same, people acting on them differently is common fare. I bet the Shield Faith has many sects too.

“So is there any problem with their current actions?” (Naofumi) “There are fluctuations in the country’s faith. Some say that if the Hero of the Shield refuses to come to our country, then our country is not one worth protecting... Some strong voices are protesting.” (Genmu) “I see...” (Naofumi)

I think I’ll have to go at some point, but I don’t have the time, and I don’t want to be thrown into the middle of a conspiracy.

However, after we hold back this wave, I’ll need to collect as many allies as I can.

I don’t want to read a history book saying we lost due to infighting.

But, it’s unnatural that people of a Dragon Faith are garnishing support in the country of heroes.

I have a bad feeling about this. It sounds like the time with Witch and the Three Hero Church.

With time being of the essence, I need to prioritize Houou, but still I must pay a visit afterwards.

More importantly, I want to meet the one leading those dragons.

I’m not sure if they have any cores, but I want to see if I can get any information like I can from Gaelion.

I’m not expecting anything great though.

If they had important, world-saving information, they would have sent it

to the Heroes by now.

“But upon seeing the Hero of the Shield-sama training for the Wave up close, we have become satisfied with your resolve and have accepted the fact that you do not have time to stop by.” (Genmu) ... Recently, I’ve been the target of quite a bit of good will. I’m really not used to it.

I mean, I almost committed a substantial amount of evil deeds without even being aware of it. It’s scarier than performing evil while keeping my awareness.

“Perhaps they will come to trouble you, but if they do any harm to the Hero of the Shield-sama, my country will not keep quiet. It concerns the nation’s pride.” (Genmu) “That really helps. Regardless of your reasons, right now, fighting the Wave is priority. I’d like it if we could clean up these troublesome matters later.” (Naofumi) “Yes. In order to perform a grand sweep of Melromark’s filth, the heroes stayed in this country. I thought their operations were extending to all countries but ours, but upon seeing the mock war, I was relieved.”

The Shusaku youth says as such, as if it were a matter personally concerning him.

Melromark’s filth... is it?

I really wish he would stop treating this as an enemy country.

But as long as he’s willing to pull back out of good will, I have no problems.

“Rafu~”

“During the previous turmoil, we took one of these specimens under our protection.” (Shusaku) The Shusaku takes out a cage containing a Raph and presents it to me.

Geh!

“A divine beast created to defend against the wave... ‘Tis the legendary second coming. Won’t you turn one over for me to take to our country as evidence?”

No... I don't really want to let them off of my territory, but... I mean, it's embarrassing.

I turn my eyes to the Queen, but she tilts her head to the side and rejects me.

I guess refusing here would be bad for negotiations.

Even so, it's finally come to the Second Advent.

"Legendary Second Coming?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. The divine birds were said to be the creations of heroes long past. Or at least, the legends tell it as such."

"The truth is surrounded in mystery, but that does not change the fact that a new species of monster has come into being here. We would like to be able to take it as evidence." (Genmu) "Is creating a new monster that difficult?" (Naofumi)

Looking at Rat's research, it seems relatively doable.

But unlike the Raph race, it's more like she mixes the properties of different races.

The Raphs were made from Raphtalia's DNA, so they're closer to clones.

Though, they can already be classified as a separate existence entirely.

"A monster with this degree of completion is nothing to laugh at. I'll have some authorized personnel look into it, but this is a situation befitting of the name, The Second Coming of the Divine Birds." (Genmu) "Is... That so..." (Naofumi)

Don't dig too deep into it... but if this lets peace continue, then I'll agree to it.

It's that: sending over a rare animal to increase diplomatic relations.

This monster's maintenance costs... won't be a problem.

The Raphs have better fuel efficiency than expected. They're light eaters and omnivorous.

They're of gentle disposition and would probably make for nice pets.

"Then I'll leave that one to you." (Naofumi)

"RAFU!" (Raph)

As if to say 'Roger!' the Raph specimen faces me and salutes.

It seems to have a good head on its shoulders.

Yep, I'm slightly reluctant to send it off.

"Now that I think about it, I believe I saw a Hakuko in the palace courtyard."

Uu... the conversation took a dangerous turn.

"In accordance with the peril plaguing the world, the Queen has begun a Demi-Human discrimination abolition movement... I have definitely confirmed this fact. This will become good fuel for our own country's Human discrimination abolition." (Genmu) "Thank you." (Queen)

Eh? They're satisfied with ending it there?

It's not that I'm not thankful for it.

"By the way, Hero-sama?" (Genmu)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"Do you have any plans to tie the knot with anyone from my country?" (Genmu) ... My shoulders drop.

After that, I was shown a series of marriage interview requests the messengers brought.

There are plenty of beautiful girls, but I replied I had no interest. I politely returned them.

Is the Hero of the Shield really that sought after?

"Iwatani-sama, then how does my daughter Melty sound?" (Queen) ... From this side too.

Quit it already.

Next, we went into the actual discussions. The negotiations with the

country Houou was sealed in were already completed. We'll arrive five days before the scheduled time, have the country and Shadows look for the location, and have the other Heroes confirm it. For those five days, we would pound the ability to coordinate attacks into the newly allied armies.

Chapter 292: A New Sort of Carriage

After my talk with the Queen, I met up with Raphtalia's group. We headed to the Old Man's weapon shop.

I handed him the necessary materials beforehand, so there shouldn't be any problems.

If there is one, it would be...

"Oh? If it isn't you, kid. You never stopped by, so I was wondering what happened." (Old Man) "Well, stuff went down..." (Naofumi)

Ah, my heart aches.

I seriously set out for world domination.

Even if I get beaten half to death, I'll never admit it.

"You see, Master-" (Firo)

"If you say anymore, you get no carriage." (Naofumi) "Uu..." (Firo)

Our little birdy is way too talkative.

And why can Firo figure out and say exactly the things people are trying to hide?

She's been reserved as of late, but from the start, she's been overly intrusive.

I quiet Firo, and ask about the carriage.

"And how goes the carriage I placed an order for?" (Naofumi) "I finished it long ago. You didn't come by for a while, and I didn't have anywhere to store it, so I left it with an acquaintance." (Old Man) The Old Man explains where he left the carriage, and I hand over the money.

Since I was gone for a long time, I ended up paying for parking fees as well.

"Okay, I've definitely received the payment. If you take this paper, and that Holy Bird girl with you, they should just hand it over." (Old Man) "I see." (Naofumi)

“Then I’ll be off to get it now~!” (Firo)

I give Firo the paper the Old Man handed me, and send her to get it.

She runs off energetically, and returns a few minutes later pulling a sparkling carriage.

That was fast.

She appears to be having a lot of fun.

“Um you see... It’s really sparkly, and well made... It’s really cool!” (Firo)
I confirm the carriage she brought over.

It’s a little bigger than the previous one.

It’s supposed to be a metal carriage, but... The axels and wheels give off a mechanical feeling. It looks somewhat like... the prototype for a car.

“If you get the guy at your place to make some new wheels for it, you can do various things.” (Old Man) “Like those ones with spikes?” (Firo)

What do you plan on doing with spiked wheels?

Is this monster planning on running down monsters in our path?

“Next, well, if I put power onto this handle, the carriage becomes really light!” (Firo) Firo firmly grasps the handle, and the body of the carriage appears to float.

Fumu... does it have functions to control its weight?

“It’s made of Graweik Ore, so it can float, you know.” (Old Man) “Is it based on the Air Walk ability?” (Naofumi) “That’s right. Have you never seen one? The rocks that fly in the sky?” (Old Man) ... I have.

It’s rare, but occasionally, I see some rock-like things flying in the sky.

They helped me reaffirm that this was indeed another world. Is this made with that ore?

I look at the Old Man, and he nods.

“The raw ore can float, but when you use it in manufacturing, it just makes things lighter. In the past, we apparently had the technology to

keep them afloat, but it was lost.” (Old Man) Ah, I think I saw it on the list of ingredients the Old Man had me procure.

I just handed the sheet over to the Queen, and left it to her, though.

“Using it in abundance, the carriage can levitate slightly. The stronger you grasp the handle, the more magic it will take from the holder, and the lighter it will get.” (Old Man) “Wah... Then if Firo puts in enough power, can it fly?” (Firo) “I just said it didn’t I, bird princess. Flight is impossible.” (Old Man) “Eh?” (Firo)

“I wonder.” (Naofumi)

The power of flight is lost upon refining the ore but you can increase its effect by pouring in magic.

I take out an item imbued with magic amplification I created with Item Creation, and mix in Chi. I grasp the carriage’s handles.

... This sucks up quite a bit of magic.

“Wah!”

The carriage suddenly lifts itself slightly off of the ground.

“Firo too~” (Firo)

Firo flaps her wings to build up magic... something the strange me thought up.

The carriage begins floating even higher.

“Oh... Amazing.” (Old Man)

The Old Man shows his interest.

But, with this...

“AUUUU...”

With a bang, the carriage crashes into the ground.

By mixing Magic and Chi, this was my limit.

“I could only get it to lift off for a short time.” (Naofumi) “... Flying carriage...” (Firo)

It's an idea overflowing with romance.

I also want one. Because it seems convenient.

"Anyways, you've shown me quite an interesting thing. What will you have me make next?" (Old Man) "Let's see..." (Naofumi)

At the moment, I'm not in need of weapons or armor.

And I have no materials.

The strange me generously used all of my rare materials without remorse.

But since the wave is upon us, we're going levelling every day.

I can't compound, so I go out with Raphtalia and Firo to raise my level as well.

I get materials out of that, and have things made.

But I gave the orders to Imya's Uncle, so I don't really have anything to ask of the Old Man...

"I'd like a sword for Raphtalia." (Naofumi) "Me?" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia seems confused.

Due to the effects of the Raph Shield, Raphtalia's been strengthened even further.

And that's on top of the three months she spent training with the Granny to power up.

Her level is maxed out at 100, so I want to get her worthy equipment.

According to Ren and the others, Houou is quite strong.

I'd like to fight him with my forces in perfect condition.

"Yeah, could you possible make something with the Spirit Turtle's materials?" (Naofumi) "That will be a bit expensive, but are you okay with that?" (Old Man) "Yes. Can you make something like the Spirit Turtle Sword I told you about before?" (Naofumi) It's the blade Ren damaged beyond repair.

If we still had it, I think Raphtalia would be stronger.

“Do you need anything, Fohl? Since you fight unarmed, do you want any gauntlets?” (Naofumi) “I... no wait, do you plan on increasing my debt?” (Fohl) “I’m glad you understand.” (Naofumi)

I mean, he’s fighting to pay off his debt. I bet he’ll leave my village once he earns enough.

Though that will be after we take care of Houou.

“I don’t need it!” (Fohl)

“I see. I thought you would want it to have an edge over your sister.” (Naofumi) “Are you trying to get me to kill Atlas!?” (Fohl) “Do you not know the concept of holding back...?” (Naofumi) If you have a weapon, do you think you can defeat her?

That girl’s great with dodging and rolling. She has a strange sense for it.

She plays with Firo a lot, and she trained with me, so she knows how to defend as well.

Her fighting style is fundamentally defensive. It’s a style where she waits for an opening in the opponent’s stance before attacking.

Ah, does he mean Atlas isn’t on a level where he can hold back?

If that’s the case, then I understand.

“I recommend these nunchucks and tonfas from the far east.” (Old Man) “I refuse!” (Fohl)

Why is he acting up here?

I think having a weapon will help him in battle.

But I guess it’s fine.

Next is Firo, but...

“What’s wrong, master?” (Firo)

... I got her a carriage, so that matter’s okay, I guess.

Imya’s uncle said he could make something with the materials Sadina

salvaged.

I'll have him make some claws.

Yeah. I'll have the Old Man make just the sword this time.

"Then please make a sword by the next wave. Don't skimp out on costs. I'll take the limited resources from my place over, so choose what you need from there." (Naofumi) I remember Imya's Uncle looking through them and making a list.

I hand the list to the Old Man.

"Fumu... you have some interesting materials here. I'll need this and this. I'll make a better sword than the one you saw before, just wait and see." (Old Man) "I'll do just that." (Naofumi)

"Got it." (Old Man)

"Then Firo, we can't take the carriage by Portal, so make sure to take it home." (Naofumi) "Yay!" (firo)

I take the list of required materials from the Old Man, and return to the village.

The Filo Rials gaze at Firo's carriage with envy now, for some reason.

I believe Filo Rials had some form of pride among carriages.

Firo holds her head high among the flock of birds.

The others gaze at me, but... don't stare at me like that.

Chapter 293: Raph of the Raph Race

At night, I recovered in the hot springs and then returned via portal while still feeling hot. I wasn't able to work because of the curse and I even took time off from training and went to visit Rato in her new laboratory.

"Rafu~"

"Tali~"

"Li-a~"

.....The monsters I remodelled when I was crazy come out to greet me.

For now, we're treating them as a subspecies of the Raph species and their feel isn't bad. Or rather, it's good.

The monster based on the Caterpillands was very delighted about being remodelled into the Raph specie and was working hard to raise their levels in the Combat party. [T/N: There might be more than one but I can't be sure because Japanese doesn't really have plurals.]

Its appearance was of a jumbo Raph, and a few traces remained in its tail.

To explain these traces, there were caterpillar legs still attached to its tail.

Rather than a tail.... it seemed to be more like an insect's abdomen.

I greet Rato, who was entering something into a slate.

Hm? Sadina is also here.

"How are things going?" (Naofumi)

"Rafu~" (Mii-kun)

"Naofumi-chan. Tonight is a fine night. Won't you go drinking with Onee-san?" (Sadina) "I won't." (Naofumi)

Mii-kun came out to greet me like an assistant, but I ignored him.

It might be prejudice, but this guy makes me sick somehow.

“Ah, Marquis... how can you just come in so calmly.... that audacity is just like the Marquis though.” (Rato) Rato said bitterly.

Well, I understand her feelings but I can't be wallowing in guilt forever.

The battle with Houou draws near.

We have things we must do one by one.

Moreover Melromark doesn't have any direct involvement, but the Castle Town was becoming a little tense.

The waves were also like that but, as one would expect, now is a cautious time.

“The one who modified this guy wasn't me. It was something that possessed me.” (Naofumi) “I know that.” (Rato)

“Were you in the middle of Sadina's medical treatment?” (Naofumi)
“No. That's already settled ..or rather, don't go drinking with Mii-kun.”
(Rato) “Rafu~” (Mii-kun)

“Ahaha, but this kid has a high tolerance so Onee-san was enjoying it.”
(Sadina) Now that I look closer, what Mii-kun achieved was absurd.
[T/N: In terms of how much he drunk.]

He looks like a Raph but something's different.

“Mii-kun. Go to sleep soon.” (Rato)

“rafu~” (Mii-kun)

Somehow his intonation was odd.... he melted!? [T/N: The last 'rafu' was in hiragana instead of the usual katakana.]

Dissolving into a syrup-like form, Mii-kun crawled with a sickening sound, and exited the room.

This might turn into a trauma.

“So? What do you want, Marquis?” (Rato)

“Ah, I was just wondering about the state of things.” (Naofumi) I've been worried for a while now.

“Let’s see... it’s frustrating to say, but in all honesty, your research when you were possessed deserves to be praised.” (Rato) “.....” (Naofumi)

“I understand if it bothers you, and I don’t want to acknowledge it but, how should I say it....a genius who can do this much isn’t bad.” (Rato)

“What’s so ingenious about it?” (Naofumi)

“First is that there are hardly any side effects. And with that, the results are remarkable. For the kids in recovery, and for the monsters.” (Rato)

“Side effects, you say...” (Naofumi)

“Before the medical treatment.... there were kids who were undergoing medical treatment here, right? It used to just result in victims like that.”

(Rato) “And you’re saying I managed without guys like that.” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Rato)

I also examine them, the guys who received treatment and now call me a god.

I’m glad that it’s only to that extent, the previous modifications were too excessive. [T/N: Previous as in Kiel, Sadina & Raph modifications]

As far as it goes, it seems they wished for it themselves, but a line that mustn’t be crossed, shouldn’t be crossed.

“It looks like you embedded your data into the gem inside Mii-kun in case you were in some accident. A considerable amount of blueprints for the things I’ve wanted to do was included as well.” (Rato) Rato operated the slate and projected an image... but honestly, I don’t understand the contents at all.

In that regards, it’s quite high-leveled.

Even though I was told I did it, I can’t believe it.

“If I follow this, the majority of the things I’ve wished to do will be attained but....well, I’ve searched through most of it.” (Rato) “And? The results?” (Naofumi)

“It was a failure. It was so frustrating I feel like crying.” (Rato) “Then did it show how to make a growing weapon?” (Naofumi) “That was

something it didn't have. If I had to say, it looks like it's because you put your efforts into creating the new species." (Rato) "The Raph species, huh." (Naofumi)

"Yes, however that's only an alias. What will you do about the official name?" (Rato) Their image is already set as the Raph Species though.

No matter what you label them, it's because they were based on Raphtalia.

It's too simple to call them Raph and Tali and Ria and so forth just because Raphtalia was originally used as the base though.

Well, it's also bothersome to think of something this late.

"Isn't Raph Species fine as it is?" (Naofumi)

"There are various ones like the Tari species and Liia species. So they'll be collectively known as the Raph species. I understand. Similar to the Filia species of the Filorials, it'll be the Raph species of the Raphs." (Rato) Uh.....let's think of a name to call them.

It seems like I'll be scolded if I decide on Raphtalia's Raph species or something.

All the same, I won't give them a name like that.

"I don't know the difference between the Seventh Generation Raphs and the First Generation Raphs though." (Naofumi) They feel the same when I stroke them, and I don't really understand the difference.

It seems they differ in abilities though.

"There are only a few who look like a deformed Raphtalia, but what are they?" (Naofumi) "They're the seventh... to make it easier for you to understand, I should call them one of the Raphs you made on the seventh day, I think?" (Rato) The day count, huh.

So the hybrid of Tanuki, Raccoon and Red Panda was the foundation of the Raph Species, and it's probably fine to think of the deformed Raphtalia were one of its subspecies.

"It was Mii-kun, right. What generation Raph species is he?" (Naofumi)

“As far as it goes, that body was made on the eighth day, I think? I don’t really understand but they differ between days, and you even have upgrades with different abilities. Their structures are very different.”
(Rato) “Upgrades... it’s like they’re robots.” (Naofumi)

“Robot?” (Rato)

“Like the Golems in this world, that would be the closest term.”
(Naofumi) “I see...” (Rato)

“So, how does he differ?” (Naofumi)

“Firstly, that body was derived from the concept of Slimes. It uses a component known as ‘lump of meat’.” (Rato) Lump of meat....

It catches my interest a little. That expression.

“He has a high resistance against shocks, slash attacks and even magic.” (Rato) “There are no gaps....” (Naofumi)

My intuition informs me.

His weakness is probably—.

“However, a flaw with the components is if he gets hit with highly conductive magic while encased in water, he becomes paralysed and the inner core receives damage.” (Rato) [T/N: Lightning magic]

“And if a huge impact splits open the lump of meat, the core will be exposed, right?” (Naofumi) “Indeed, as expected of you, Marquis. The problem is that we can’t expose him to a strong force. It’ll be over if he gets struck by that.” (Rato) “Doesn’t he have a habit of betrayal?”
(Naofumi)

“Ah...Mii-kun? If I had to say, it’s just that he covets power. Thinking ‘I continue to be deprived because I’m weak’ ...but I believe in him.” (Rato)
“Right. Isn’t it just you who thinks that?” (Naofumi) Believing that your own child is cute.

Rato does have the position of a parent in regards to the monsters.

“You’re wrong. Because half of the towers were destroyed by that child’s rampage.” (Rato) “That’s how it was!?” (Naofumi)

“That’s right. After he left the important position of defender, he made a hole and created a shortcut, destroyed the safeguard apparatus, and interfered with the kids who were trying to protect the towers. If he did it badly, he would have been discarded by you.” (Rato) “It’s good that he wasn’t discarded.” (Naofumi)

“That is.... because he was fighting and participating as a Hero’s companion.... I think.” (Rato) Rampaging while in position...he was that kind of fellow?

Taking my abilities into consideration, if controlling was possible then it would have been better and so he was left alone, huh.

“Marquis, you also went on quite a rampage, we didn’t know what to do with you. It seems you raised the security of anything important. Well, apparently Mii-kun tampered with those logs though.” (Rato) Rato turned her attention towards the screen of the slate.

「ミー君。どうやらこの錬金装置を手に取りるように操れる様に技能を詰め込まれたみたいなの」

“Mii-kun. Somehow he managed to obtain this alchemic device and operate it to cram it full of abilities.” (Rato) [T/N: Not too sure about this]

Ugh....it’s just as complicated.

Er, using my common sense to simplify things.. to describe the internet world in terms of physical items, the logs are like using an erase to erase records in a notebook and rewriting them.... I think?

While I was operating the computer, even though he was narrowly able to guess my target in the network, he could destroy my imminent target with a finger... it might be close to that.

Well, even if there’s a computer in this fantasy world, I know the limits of what can be done. It’s not like the whole world is connected through the internet.

In other words, he looked at the logs and tried to fix my rampage, but he just struggled and became a hindrance himself.

Finally, after the modifications were finished, he betrayed the crazy me and followed Rato's side.

What he did was the same as Sadina at least.

"For the time being, I have plans to upgrade the homunculus Raph body that was made." (Rato) "Why?" (Naofumi)

"It seems to be still incomplete. And that's why it has problems. Be as it may, it's almost complete." (Rato) "I see." (Naofumi)

"I wonder, is your conversation over~?" (Sadina)

"Pretty much. By the way, how are you?" (Naofumi)

I inquire about Sadina's body.

"Ah, well.. I've gotten considerably better. I may lose all the fur tomorrow." (Sadina) Sadina's fur was slowly falling out in patches and I could see tinges of black and white.

The walrus tusk was already gone.

Well she did cheerfully say that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. [T/N: lit. No matter what breaks, you can grow from it.]

"However..." (Sadina)

"However?" (Naofumi)

"...Nothing~" (Sadina)

"Is that so?" (Naofumi)

I'll lose if I worry about it.

Besides, trivial matters are this girl's forte.

"What kind of Onee-san does Naofumi-chan like? Is being fluffy better perhaps? Like the Raph-chans." (Sadina) "Well..." (Naofumi)

Your brown colouring pains me when I see it.

"Sadina's natural form is better. I feel like that streamlined body has more meaning." (Naofumi) "Oh.... I was praised. Onee-san feels embarrassed." (Sadina) "Yeah, yeah." (Naofumi)

And so, I returned home after talking with two of the women whose ages were on the higher end even in the village. [T/N: They're two of the oldest ppl in the village]

Chapter 294: Collect ▪ Wall ▪ Ball

We continued leveling for the Wave. I got the Old Man to make Raphtalia a new sword and placed an order for Firo's claws with Imya's Uncle. With that out of the way, we zealously proceed to level grind.

Because of this, my level has already climbed to 105.

Raphtalia's and Firo's were frozen at 100, so they're prepared enough.

The others in the village are also reaching quite high levels.

Especially the Heroes. They're all somewhere around level 115. Their strength is also considerable.

It may have something to do with that peculiar weapon, but Rishia was able to break the level cap and advance to level 105.

Then... the problem lies with Atlas and Fohl.

Let me reaffirm the situation with the siblings.

Every day, Atlas tries to sleep by my side. To get through the strict defenses on my house, she attacks from the front and ends up fighting every night.

And every time, Raphtalia, Fohl, the Raph Race, or the Filo Rials try to halt her advance. But please remember something.

Atlas is a genius.

By experiencing something once, she can adapt 10 or 20 times faster than a normal person.

"Just a little bit more!" (Atlas)

"How unfortunate for you."

"I was told that interrupting Naofumi-san's sleep was a bad thing, so..."

I deployed a powerful force in front of the buildings. The Heroes, Itsuki, and Ren stand to confront her. They've grown to have ample ability to do so.

I discussed it with Ren a couple of days ago...

“Honestly, among the children in the village, the one growing the most is that Atlas girl.” (Ren) “Yes.” (Itsuki)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

Since the Houou battle was approaching, I increased the amount of time I spent training with him.

Of course, Raphtalia, Firo, Fohl, and Atlas also spar. And Atlas’s movements have become unbelievably sharp.

She even studied my style of defense, and even helps me study the application of Chi.

That Hengen Musou Granny said that Atlas’s defensive techniques were lacking, so I worked together with the girl to develop new techniques from the ground up.

The name is just temporary, but we made the skills 『Collect』, 『Wall』, and 『Ball』.

First is 『Collect』.

This is for magic-based attacks. Using Chi, you can move and redirect a magic attack aimed at you.

It’s convenient when facing large scale magic head on.

Its radius of effect is three meters.

Of course, if you infuse more chi into it, you can increase that.

Next is 『Wall』.

This technique manifests an invisible wall for a few seconds to obstruct enemies.

It mostly works like my Air Strike Shield.

It can stop physical and magical attacks to some extent.

It’s much more all-purpose than the skill. Its deployable area is also really large.

Its weak points are its low defense, and its short effective time.

Last is 『Ball』. This one is a counter skill.

Using it, you can gather and condense a magic attack and send it right back at the caster. Of course, there are plenty of magics it cannot send back, so it isn't that effective.

It works on a different principle than hitting attacks back with my shield.

I made it so that Atlas was able to use these skills.

They're skills based on my natural ability of defense, and Atlas was just mimicking that, though.

"It's hard to read her movements, and she's fast. What's more, whenever I think I'm going to hit, she immediately diverts my attacks. I can't get any damage through to her." (Ren) "And on top of that, her attacks naturally ignore defense, so it's hard to develop countermeasures." (Itsuki) "But do you think you will be able to do anything about it?" (Naofumi) "Probably. But, if I fought her one on one, I would have to go all out, or it would be difficult." (Ren) "It would be hard to stop her without giving her serious injury." (Itsuki) For a fully strengthened Hero to have to go all out... Just how fast is she growing?

But since the Heroes try to avoid killing any villagers, they have to hold back. I guess it would be a hard fight.

"Fohl-kun can stop her, so I think we'll manage one way or another, but as expected of the strongest Demi-Human race, the Hakukos." (Itsuki) Itsuki speaks with an uninterested tone.

By hearing him, I don't get the impression that they're strong at all.

Even so, Fohl is quite something to be able to stop her as well.

"Yeah, keeping up with her is the best I can do. She's way too agile." (Ren) By the way, Fohl is at 110, and Atlas at 103.

Just how strong is my village getting?

Atlas always takes on a large number of opponents, so she gets a lot of battle experience unrelated to her level.

During the day, she trains with other strong geniuses like Firo and Sadina. She's constantly improving herself.

"Is she seriously that strong?" (Naofumi)

When I train with her, I can take her blows just fine.

Perhaps she holds back against me. I can't refute the possibility.

Should I ask her to come at me seriously next time?

If she manages to beat the crap out of me, I have no idea what I'll do.

"Since Naofumi can only be on the defense, it's hard to find opportunities to attack, I bet. We have to mix in offense as well." (Ren)
"This is the first time I'm hearing of it. Just taking attacks is hard in itself, you know. I mean, aren't you better off than someone who has virtually no offensive power?" (Naofumi) "Well, I can't argue with that." (Ren)

Just keeping up defenses is easy... There may be some people who think that, but that's definitely not the case.

You have to catch and shift the impact of opponents' blows to stop them, and parry them as well. You can't just hold up a shield.

What's more, my self-made defense style also allows me to break opponents' weapons, thus aiding my party.

This does not work on Legendary Weapons, of course.

I can do Shirahatori, and grab weapons and arrows out of midair. (TL: Shirahadori is that thing where you clap your hands on a sword swinging downwards) I can interfere with magic as well, and support magic is my duty.

And wait, that's kinda all I can do. I mean, there's no helping it. I just don't have offensive capability.

Back to Atlas.

When sparing with me, she uses her speed to feign and break through my defense.

I'm usually able to deal with it, but I don't think my speed is that high. Is she really going easy on me?

"But you definitely are good at stopping attacks. Perhaps you learned to keep up with Atlas's speed." (Ren) "It's a matter of practice." (Naofumi)

"Well... That's true. Their race really does seem like it was born for battle. (Ren) "Is that so? When she trains with Firo and the Raphs, she doesn't look like anything special." (Naofumi) Looking at just speed, Firo is peerless.

Her attacks are extremely quick and heavy.

She can also accelerate herself to greater levels with Magic, so she's more troublesome of an opponent than Atlas.

The Raphs aren't as fast as Filo Rials, but they can use illusionary magic like Raphtalia. If you lose sight of reality, then they can easily sneak through your defense.

And also, they have their numbers...

"Firo-chan's really big, so it's easier to hit her. But Atlas's small build and dexterity make it really hard to land any blows on her." (Ren) "Yes." (Itsuki)

Her size, is it?

Even though her level's grown to 103, she hasn't grown at all.

I don't know the reason, but perhaps it has something to do with her past illness.

Even so, enemy size...

Now that you mention it, Firo is big.

When trying to dodge, her size is a disadvantage.

And Atlas's size is troublesome in another way.

The threats are of different categories.

"Fuee... Atlas-chan is getting stronger by the day. It's really troubling." (Rishia) "I see... How's Raphtalia doing, then?" (Naofumi)

“Yes, she’s gradually getting stronger too. Her movements are getting sharper and more intense.” (Itsuki) Fumu.

“If we have members of that level of strength, won’t the Houou battle be easy?” (Ren) “No, it seems Atlas won’t be participating in the Houou campaign.” (Naofumi) “Why?” (Ren)

Ren asks with a perplexed expression.

“I made a promise to Fohl that I wouldn’t let her participate against Houou. That’s why I’m taking up applicants for that battle, but Atlas won’t be included.” (Naofumi) I think it’s at the same moment I said those words.

Behind me, I hear the sound of something hitting the ground.

When I turn around, I see a sack on the floor and Atlas staring in our direction.

Her timing is bad.

And wait, isn’t my probability of happening upon these cliché situations unreasonably high?

“What’s wrong, Atlas?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama... You’re not going to deploy me into battle?” (Atlas)

“Yep, most likely. I made a promise with your brother.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama! I declared that I would be your shield, did I not? Then I need to be by your side in battle!” (Atlas) “Even if you say that, I already made a promise. I decided I would keep such promises even if it killed me. As long as I properly agreed to the deal, at least.” (Naofumi) “Onii-sama...” (Atlas)

Atlas unsteadily walks off. She seems anxious as she increases her pace.

“I’m worried about Fohl-kun, so I’m going to go check on him.”

“Me too.” (Ren)

“I as well.” (Itsuki)

“Fuee... I’m also worried...” (Rishia)

Hmmmmmmmm... The trust placed in Atlas seems to be low.

For the first thing everyone assumes to be her assaulting Fohl, just how hasty are these people?

No matter how I look at it, it didn't seem that way.

"Fohl's off getting materials to make an accessory for Atlas, isn't he?"
(Naofumi) Everyone has break time on rotation, and Fohl uses his to go fetch materials.

I won't speak up over what he does on his vacations.

He seems to have placed an order from Imya's Uncle, so he left Atlas in Raphitalia's hands and left.

He'll probably be back by tomorrow, so he's safe for today.

"Now that you mention it, that's right."

"Yeah."

"But tomorrow, I feel that something will happen."

It's a road we'll have to cross eventually.

Now then, will Fohl be able to stop Atlas?

I have to start preparing for the campaign.

So far, preparations have been smooth.

The Heroes have sufficiently recovered from their curses.

Besides his personality problems, Itsuki's curse isn't a hindrance anymore. His level even recovered.

From my visits to the Onsen every day, I've fully recovered from my wrath. Even the curses from when I went strange have disappeared.

The only remaining effects are that my experience gets sucked away at regular intervals, and whenever I compound, the product is dropped a few levels in quality.

The levels of those in the village that volunteered to fight in the wave are quite high as well, and the monsters are quite motivated.

I feel like praising myself for raising them 'til now.

By the way, the voice of the slaves, besides Raphtalia, is Kiel.

She doesn't have any delegated position, but she's quite powerful in battle.

Though, she's constantly bound to her Crepe Tree.

When I asked her if she would participate in the wave, she was overflowing with eagerness.

Chapter 295: Sibling Fight

“Onii-sama! I will be fighting with you!” (Atlas)

“Not happening!” (Fohl)

Ever since Fohl returned, Atlas has been constantly berating him.

Though, she didn’t suddenly attack him to silence him or anything.

Well, if she did something like that, I definitely wouldn’t let her participate in it.

I would never be able to trust someone like that.

Atlas...

She treats my orders as absolute and agrees with whatever I say.

And whenever my life is concerned, she will stay by me until the end.

I am her absolute doctrine.

There was a time when I wanted a girl to be blindly obedient to me, but when I actually meet someone like that, I can do nothing but worry for her.

I’m a villain, I laugh when misfortune befalls others. I’ve long forfeited my qualifications to be followed like that.

I’ve raised an army of slaves who would happily run forwards towards their deaths. For me to make a happy family would be... impossible, right?

That’s why I silently watch over Atlas and Fohl’s bout.

I have a promise with Fohl, and under its terms, he will fight for me.

That’s why the one who needs to persuade Atlas is Fohl himself.

“Even when I’m pleading this much, you won’t move?” (Atlas) “Yes, Atlas. I can’t bring you with me to such a dangerous place.” (Fohl) “Onii-sama, there is no place without danger. You don’t know when something will happen, and I could die. It doesn’t matter where I am.” (Atlas)

“Wrong. At least, if you stay here, you’ll be safe.” (Fohl) “... Is that really

the case? There's no saying when someone may poison our water again when Naofumi-sama is out. I may die from a sudden plague. A group jealous of Naofumi-sama's work may attack the village, and I may have the bad luck of being drawn into their conflict." (Atlas) She's bringing out some extreme hypotheticals.

... Though all of them have happened already.

The poison, and Gaelion's plague, and what happened here before I was summoned...

"Quit it with your sophistry!" (Fohl)

"I'm merely saying the concept of safety is but an illusion, Onii-sama. I merely wish to protect Naofumi-sama from unhappiness! Those countless possibilities may befall Naofumi-sama, you know. When I'm not there, a stray arrow may strike his heart." (Atlas) Eh? Now she's bringing me in?

What logic.

This is a parallel world, you know. Something as simple as a stray arrow won't kill the Hero of the Shield.

"I don't want to be someone who's only protected anymore! Please let me go into battle." (Atlas) "And I'm telling you that isn't happening!" (Fohl)

"I'm no longer the weak girl I was before!" (Atlas)

"Your new-found pride will only lead you to misfortune." (Fohl) Ah, for the love of... Their dialogue continues.

But if I intrude here, I can't see a good ending. What should I do?

Even if I tell her she's too young, I have plenty of young children fighting, and if I tell her she just got over her illness, I have other treated slaves fighting as well.

... This may be late, but I'm quite a brute, aren't I?

"... We've each said our part, right, Atlas?" (Fohl)

"Yes." (Atlas)

“Then as one who carries the blood of the Hakukos, you know what we must do, right?” (Fohl) Fohl and Atlas raise their fists. They begin releasing bloodlust.

What do you guys plan on starting?

“Yes, if my will isn’t enough to pierce your resolve... I just have to prove my strength to you first hand!” (Atlas) “If you lose to me, you have to honor my promise.” (Fohl) “I won’t go back on my words.” (Atlas)

How did it come to this.

And I get the feeling that these two are constantly fighting regardless.

What’s more, I get the feeling that Atlas is the one winning those fights.

I reflect on their record.

After I became strange, it seems that Fohl has been on a winning streak.

He stopped acting as a tumor on her side and started fighting her seriously.

The reason he didn’t buy any weapons from the weapon store was that he couldn’t hold back, and that he may end up killing her.

But even if you call those wins, he always had comrades. I wonder what will happen if they go one on one.

According to Ren and the others, Atlas’s growth is higher, but if you consider willpower and stats, Fohl is at an advantage.

Whenever the genius Atlas feels at a disadvantage, she retreats and adjusts her position.

By that logic, Fohl’s advantage lies in the first blow.

Since Fohl’s been fighting long before I met him, perhaps he’ll display their difference in battle experience.

“Then Onii-sama, I challenge you to a duel.” (Atlas)

“Yeah.” (Fohl)

Atlas points her hand at Fohl.

Their ways of fighting are quite different.

Fohl uses his fist to break down defenses and damage opponents. Atlas thrusts through them. Instead of hitting them straight on, she goes for the vital points and uses chi.

From this fight, we'll see if Atlas will challenge Houou.

The wind whistles, and along with it, comes a biopant leaf.

The moment the leaf hit the ground, it starts.

"DAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" (Fohl)

Fast!

For a moment, I couldn't follow Fohl's movements as he instantly closes in on Atlas and swings his fist down on her.

"Tei!" (Atlas)

Using her own hands, Atlas redirects his blow and dodges Fohl's hand with a paper-thin margin.

His fist hits the ground and gets embedded in it.

Following a bang, the earth begins rumbling. Cracks begin spreading from the area Fohl hit.

"Now!" (Atlas)

Moving to avoid the cracks, Atlas thrusts her hand towards Fohl's back.

"Like I'd let you!" (Fohl)

Using the hand embedded into the ground as support, Fohl does a handstand, and he twists his body to meet Atlas's hand with a kick.

"Damn!" (Atlas)

Atlas stops the blow with one hand, but has to twist her body backwards to absorb the impact of the blow. Regaining her posture, she tries for another attack, but this time, Fohl makes his body vertical and pushes off with his hands to get himself out of the ground. His hand

dislodges, and his body flies quite high. He turns his body and aims a dropkick at Atlas.

By the way, this all happened in 5 seconds.

Just how militaristic are these people?

With a fed-up expression, I began calculating ways to deal with these siblings.

How to block Fohl's fist... how to prepare for Atlas's fist...

Is this what you call an occupational disease?

Both of them jump back and create distance. They readjust their breathing.

"As I thought, you're stronger than when I fought you yesterday, Atlas. Nii-chan is always proud of you." (Fohl) "If you keep looking down on me, you're going to lose, Onii-sama." (Atlas) "Three months... In just three months, you managed to reach this point. It's something worthy of praise. For both me and you." (Fohl) "That's right. Three months may seem like a short time, but it's enough time for people to change." (Atlas) "And you've changed, Atlas. Looking at you now, I would never have believed that just months ago, you were crying over how your very existence did nothing but cause trouble for people." (Fohl) "... That still hasn't changed. Just by living here, I am troubling various people. That's why, I want to pay off the troubles I caused. One of the people I am in debt to is you, Onii-sama. I want to protect you as well." (Atlas) After steadying their breaths, the two continue their conversation while exchanging blows.

Good for them.

"This current me is in a place you call safe, and you won't let anything happen to me. But that means that I am not truly living. If it's to protect Naofumi-sama, Onii-sama or the others in the village, I will happily step on the front lines. If it's for Naofumi-sama's goals, then I will gladly do my part in protecting him." (Atlas) "Why must you continue to side with that man!?" (Fohl) "You can't understand, Onii-sama? Don't you realize

what lies in that man's heart?" (Atlas) "... " (Fohl)

Neither of them can land decisive blows, and the fistfight continues.

Both of them possess considerable speed, and all the people observing the fight can do nothing but watch.

Huh? Why has the peanut gallery increased?

Ah, the people in my place are quite perceptive, so they'll come as soon as something happens.

How reliable.

More importantly, Fohl and Atlas.

I bet they're reliable as well.

Ren and Itsuki are probably thinking of how to deal with those two. They're both clenching their weapons tightly as their eyes follow the battle.

Looking at myself objectively, I'm thinking along a similar vein.

"I understand your determination. But still, I cannot accept it. It's time to finish this!" (Fohl) Fohl holds his hands out front and concentrates.

"UWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!"

Fohl changes to his beast form.

Doing that increases his abilities considerably in itself.

The only ones who can keep up with Fohl when he becomes like that are the heroes, when serious, Raphtalia, Firo, and the Granny.

Is Atlas included as well?

It appears they weren't even fighting seriously yet.

"Yes... I'll do just that. But in order to make you recognize me, I'll fight seriously as well!" (Atlas) Both sides activate Musou Kassei.

The air feels like it's shaking under the pressure. And everyone present realized that different types of bloodlust existed.

The aura Fohl releases is that of a wild beast. It is sweltering and full of

primal rage.

In contrast, Atlas's aura is... cold... and ruthless. It is also something that should not have entered the hand of humans.

An aura hot enough to melt an enemy, and an aura cold enough to silence them.

As the two sides clash, the peanut gallery holds their breath and swallows their saliva.

“Hengen Musou Fist Skill! Tiger Break!”

Fohl's Chi expands. And he points his arms and fists at Atlas, releasing a skill.

Chapter 296: Clash of Tigers

“Kuh!”

Every time Fohl’s fist comes into contact with Atlas, Chi pierces through her body.

The released energy is in the shape of a tiger.

It’s also attacking pressure points. It seems to combine skills to put ignoring defense as its main focus.

It has quite a bit of output, so rather than the pressure points, Atlas is probably more worried about nullifying the impact.

I think I could handle it though. I’ve specialized myself in dealing with defense ignoring attacks. In both the theory and application.

But unlike Atlas’s, while it may ignore defense, it can’t scale off of it.

And it looks like his power is flowing all the way through and out of her body, forcing her own chi out.

It’s like an energy attack.

Those things in games that would decrease the opponent’s energy gauge.

“Not yet! Tiger...” (Fohl)

Hmm? The lights leaving Atlas’s body return to Fohl’s hand. Is he recycling the energy?

He can use it like that too?

“Rush!” (Fohl)

Fohl unleashes a barrage of punches.

Each and every hit lands on mark, and every time one hits, a strange sound reverberates through the air.

A cloud of dust rises. Fohl finishes his attack, and jumps backwards out of the cloud.

“How was that!?” (Fohl)

I think that was overkill, dude.

Is what the crowd may be thinking, but I saw it.

“As expected of Onii-sama. I take that attack every night, but it’s getting sharper by the day.” (Atlas) Atlas looks slightly beaten up, but she’s still standing.

“Gu...” (Fohl)

Fohl is the one who seems to be more effected.

“At the moment of every impact, I used the technique I thought up with Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) A 『Wall』 appears on Atlas’s hand.

“To put it simply, you’ve been banging your fists on an extremely sturdy wall this whole time. And while you were doing that, I was attacking your hands.” (Atlas) I see. So she wasn’t being beaten up at all.

It was meant to be a defensive skill, but against an unarmed opponent like Fohl, it can be used like that as well.

Even so, just how crazy of a person must she be to sew attacks into the gaps of that relentless barrage?

“As expected of Atlas. To push me back this far.” (Fohl) “Not as far as you’ve pushed me, Onii-sama. Geho!” (Atlas) (TL: Sound of coughing) Atlas vomits a small amount of blood.

Instead of redirecting some of the attacks, she took a few head on.

“Next is my turn, is it? Look, Onii-sama, make sure to watch me.” (Atlas) On top of Atlas’s hand floats a ball made out of Chi. Its size increased, to show the shape of a tiger inside of it.

“... Is that my chi?” (Fohl)

“Yes, it is the chi you released at me. I was unable to avoid a little, so I’ve sealed it like this. Now you understand what I’m going to do with it, right?” (Atlas) This isn’t going to be pretty.

『Ball』 is a counter I thought up with Atlas.

It collects power released at it, and returns it.

It's mainly geared towards anti-personnel battles but it can equally be used against large monsters like the Spirit Turtle.

And this is the first time she's using it against a single person.

"Now then, here I come. Onii-sama..." (Atlas) Atlas immediately appears before Fohl, and presses the ball of energy to his chest.

It doesn't look like she's just returning what was given to her.

It's a skill I see Female Knight, Rishia and Raphtalia use often.

In the counter ball, she put in much more of her own power.

If I were to think of a name for it...

"This is just a temporary name, but how about calling it『Point Ball』?" (Naofumi) But... At that moment, Fohl condensed Chi on his fists, and pounded them at Atlas.

"Hengen Musou Fist Skill! Tiger Blow!" (Fohl) The collision of the two causes the ground to warp, and dust rises once more.

Two shadows leap out of the cloud, and both spin in the air as they fly quite a distance.

"Ah... Gu..."

"Uu..."

Both of them find themselves on the ground.

It was that powerful of an attack. One of them, or perhaps both of them, may already be incapacitated.

I confirm both of their status screens.

No one's dead. But their stamina has decreased greatly.

At the moment, Atlas is at a slight disadvantage.

"Ugu..."

Atlas shakes back and forth as she picks herself off of the ground.

Fohl does the same.

And... Even though Fohl looks like he's going to keel over, he stands his ground.

But Atlas begins falling forward...

"Atlas, it's my win." (Fohl)

"Not... yet." (Atlas)

As she falls forward, Atlas kicks the ground strongly, and lifts herself up.

"This can't be... I thought the best you would be able to do now was to stand." (Fohl) "Onii-sama... in a battle you have to win no matter what, will you just let yourself fall on the ground?" (Atlas) "... No." (Fohl)

"Then there's only one thing I have to do. You're the same, aren't you?" (Atlas) "... That's right. This is the end." (Fohl)

Fohl directs his shaking fist at Atlas.

His footing is a bit strange.

This is the end. There will be only one survivor... It really does seem like that, but they'll be fine.

If someone were to die before the wave even hit, I would begin doubting the future...

Hmm? Ren's started talking to me.

"Naofumi, look. You're about to see why we think Atlas to be the stronger one." (Ren) "What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

I rarely ever see Atlas fighting seriously.

So I don't know what's about to happen. The others seem to be expecting it, though.

"Suu... Hah..." (Atlas)

Chi begins gathering around the girl.

What?

Atlas's wounds have healed slightly.

"Right, that girl recovers her stamina in battle. That's why if you don't beat her quickly, you become at a disadvantage the longer the battle runs." (Ren) Just how high are her combat abilities?

But Fohl's similar. Just by adjusting his breathing, he seems to be regaining composure as well.

"TEEEEEEEEE!" (Atlas)

Atlas consecutively thrusts at her brother. Fohl also starts striking.

A bang rings out as the attacks hit their marks.

And... both of them stop moving.

I look over the quiet duo.

They both passed out while standing.

How convenient of a skill... just how much muscle do they have in their heads?

『I, the Hero of the Shield, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth once more be read forth, mend all that belongs to them. All Zveit Heal!』 (Naofumi) I chant an AOE recovery spell, and heal their wounds.

The one who regained consciousness first was Fohl.

"Ha!? I was..." (Fohl)

"It was a draw. Both of you fainted." (Naofumi) "I see..." (Fohl)

Fohl picks up the yet-unconscious Atlas in a princess cradle.

This guy always holds her like that. Is that his fetish?

Not that it matters. I don't think I'll get a straight answer if I ask anyways.

"And? Will you leave her home?" (Naofumi)

"..." (Fohl)

Without giving an answer, Fohl started walking towards his house.

It's not like he was acting out to spite me. For some reason, his face is warping. Is he... laughing?

What's there for him to be happy about?

And he suddenly started spilling out words at me.

"I thank you for raising Atlas to be this strong. Thank you..." (Fohl) –
The next day, Atlas and Fohl came to my place with bright smiles on their face. Apparently, Fohl approved of her participation in the Houou campaign.

"Are you sure?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, even if we leave her in the village, she'll follow of her own accord. It's best to watch her than to let her get hurt all by herself."
(Fohl) "Is that how it works?" (Naofumi)

"Yep, that's how it works. I just have to do my best to protect her. Nothing's changed." (Fohl) "I see." (Naofumi)

In the end, this boy's still too soft on Atlas.

But I guess having their final showdown end in a draw makes leaving her home a bit difficult.

And I did use him as a dakimakura last night.

"..."

For some reason, he's staring at me.

Don't look at me like that. I don't have such hobbies.

"Rafu~"

Today, I am once again rubbing a Raph to relieve stress.

Their feel truly is the best.

Recently, I've begun getting hooked on petting things like this.

It's not like I've awakened to a love of animals or anything...

I didn't even keep any animals in my old world.

"Um, Naofumi-sama, are you perhaps patting a Raph?" (Atlas) "Yeah."

(Naofumi)

“Where’s Aneki?” (Fohl)

“She left for Melty’s place.” (Naofumi)

“Wait, you can’t go around petting those things when she isn’t here...”
(Fohl) “It’s better because she’s not here.” (Naofumi) That’s why I’m petting it in secret.

“Hah?” (Fohl)

Fohl’s face has stiffened.

What’s his problem?

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

What is this? I’m getting a really bad premonition.

I immediately turn to the direction Fohl was looking.

What I saw was the village’s usual scenery. Nothing was out of place.

... No one was there.

“Don’t startle me like that.” (Naofumi)

“O-okay...” (Fohl)

Hmm... I looked around again, but Raphtalia wasn’t there.

Did these siblings awaken to a sixth sense recently?

What are they staring at... I continued patting the Raph.

A while later, Raphtalia returned with a strange smile on her face.

Chapter 297: The Land of Houou

Now then, it's about time to finish choosing the members to take to battle.

Tomorrow, we're going to set out for the land where Houou is sealed.

The Heroes and their companions. Raphtalia and Firo are a given. Also Fohl, Atlas, Sadina, Kiel and the volunteers from the village.

Imya, and the others that specialize in manufacturing, will stay home.

It's not like I'm forcing anyone to come along. I gave them all ample warning.

"Just so you know, the Wave is no game. I don't have the confidence to protect all of you. If you don't have the resolve to fight for your life, then don't come along!" (Naofumi) I pray that my words actually reached these kids.

Right... I want to get over this with the lowest amount of casualties possible.

The slaves all nod at me, but do they truly understand...?

Ah, right, right.

We did think of sending one hero there beforehand, so he could portal back, take us all there, and let us record it in our portals. But that sounded like too big of a pain, so the proposal was rejected.

If all four of us used our teleporting skills, how many would we be able to take along...?

Including the allied forces, just how many soldiers are there in Melromakr alone?

I mean, perhaps the slaves at my place would be fine alone, but if we have the manpower, then it's best to use it.

And so, it turned out that my place's Filo Rials would assist in transporting everyone, Slaves and Soldiers.

“Then we will be accompanying you.” (Queen)

The Queen is coming along as the strategist for the army.

It seems she left the castle to Melty. Melty’s guard was left to Female Knight.

We can’t use all of the country’s forces, and She’ll do fine as a guard.

And Melty and Female Knight seem to have compatible personalities, so I don’t think there will be any problems.

The person herself was frustrated that she would not be participating, though.

She is quite skilled, but there’s no helping it.

She shook hands with Raphtalia, saying she would leave it to her.

For argument’s sake, Trash is also in the Queen’s carriage.

... He’s staring silently from the inside. He seems to have aged even more than before.

His beloved daughter died horribly, so I guess that would cause a man to age.

And his beloved sister’s look-alike, Atlas, is serving under his hated enemy. He must be quite miserable.

He was scowling at me with vigor, but when Atlas sat next to me, his expression suddenly turned soft.

Anyways, that’s how our journey went.

“Ehehe~ It’s fine~” (Firo)

Firo is showing off to the Filo Rials pulling the allied forces’ carriages. She’s being annoying.

The Filo Rials themselves seem to look a bit jealous, as if... No that is not my concern.

By competing their Filo Rial-drawn carriages, and their dragon-drawn carriages, the Allied Forces are also proceeding at a reasonable pace.

I guess that's one way to use them.

“KYUA!”

Child Gaelion is pulling a carriage with the same happy expression as Firo. He's competing well with our bird, and... his passengers are making some nice memories, involving much nausea and vomit.

“Rafu~”

I also took the Raphs with me.

Mii-kun wanted to join in the fray too, so Rat came along with her equipment under one arm.

By the way, the former Caterpilland Raphs are also helping draw the carriages.

The gazes from the army are painful.

As expected of the Hero of the Shield! To create a new type of monster to help us is amazing!

... I hear whispers all around. Everyone's bringing up my dark history. This was the result of something that was definitely not me.

Even if you praise me for it, it doesn't make me happy at all.

And, a few days of travel passed... We arrived at the land of the seal.

“So this is where Houou is sealed...”

The land we arrived in was... well, it gave off the feeling of a small, remote country.

There are quite a few people who wear china-ish clothing in Melromark, and it seems they come from here.

But the roofs are really low. It's quite different from the western style Melromark.

I get a different feeling than that of the town on the Spirit Turtle.

It's like it's from a different era...? I'm not too familiar with oriental fantasy settings, so I can't really say.

Anyways, let's just say it's Chinese-ish.

“That would be the equivalent of our country's castle, Iwatani-sama.”
(Queen) The Queen walks in front of us, as she shows us around the city.

She doesn't seem too knowledgeable on it, so I don't really think she has too, but...

“For some reason, I don't see many people.” (Naofumi)

Right, despite the city's size, and wide roads, I barely see anyone walking around.

It's almost a ghost town.

If someone told me this was the country's capital, I would tilt my head in confusion.

“From three months prior, this land was informed that Houou would awaken. After a large uproar, most of the populace evacuated.” (Queen)

“Well yeah...” (Naofumi)

Thinking about the casualties on the Spirit Turtle's land, the people would try to get out of here as quickly as possible.

The destruction of the Spirit Turtle became quite famous, and this is the result.

“...”

Ren is silently looking down.

Is he still conscious about that incident? Just don't do it here too.

Motoyasu is restlessly looking around the city.

Is he really repenting?

Itsuki is following Rishia with an apathetic expression as usual.

“... I'll do my best.” (Itsuki)

He muttered to himself.

I really don't understand what's going on with his curse. Is it cured, or not?

I'm pretty sure it should be dispelled by now, but his emotions are still faint.

"And? Are we going to have a talk with this country's head, or something?" (Naofumi) "That's right. We'll be talking with a representative, though." (Queen) "Hmmm..." (Naofumi)

In the room the Queen led us to, was a single young boy, sitting on a throne.

Is this the representative?

"Thank you for coming all this way, Four Heroes, and the Queen of Melromark. I am the one acting as this country's king."

"My, my. The king I knew of was quite a different man. What happened?" (Queen) "The previous king saw it fit to go on a long journey with his men, and all of the country's priceless treasures."

I let out a deep sigh.

Again... Why are all of this world's royalty so rotten?

Heading for the hills out of fear of being drawn into the Houou Battle...

"Understood, then are you the representative I heard of?" (Queen) "That seems to be the case. At the moment, my country's soldiers are away, trying to capture the previous king."

"Hey, Queen." (Naofumi)

"What could it be?" (Queen)

"Why are all of this world's royalty..." (Naofumi)

"He was supposed to be a skillful leader carrying the blood of Faubley Royalty, but for such a thing to happen in an emergency situation... I can't really say anything about it." (Queen) No... isn't he rotten because he has Faublian blood?

Is what I think, the kid in front of me is acting quite mature for his age.

He may be a person like Melty.

I guess he'll do better than the people that ran.

“We humbly welcome the Heroes, and the allied army. As you proposed earlier, we have compiled all information in our possession pertaining to Houou, so if you would please look through that later, I would be grateful.”

As the boy waved his hand, a scholar-like person stepped out of the shadows. It looks like he will be guiding us.

“Then the armies will be on standby in the city.” (Queen) “Yes...”

For some reason, the boy’s expression is dark.

Ah right, the land around the city seemed to be a barren wasteland.

From what I’ve seen, the few remaining residents are quite thin.

I heard that a few parts of this world were in famine.

Since I had my Bioplant, I didn’t really worry about it, but... We need to secure a source of food for ourselves.

“Shadow.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Shadow)

... This isn’t the Shadow I know.

Anyways, I called a Shadow out, took some Bioplant Seeds from my pocket, and scattered them on his hand.

“We’ll be staying here for a while. Go plant that somewhere to make a source of food. While you’re at it, you can go fill this country’s storehouse as well.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Shadow)

On my words, the Queen silently lowers her head.

At the same time, the boy bows as well.

“I’m thankful for the Hero’s benevolence.”

“If we try to send a starving army into battle, we’re the ones that will be troubled in the end.” (Naofumi) Hmm... It’s not my problem, but it seems that food problems are prevalent in this area.

I’m worried about how long the supplies we brought with us will last.

The other heroes have also unlocked the necessary weapons to modify Bioplants.

The problem is... if they keep at modifying, a strange weapon like that shield may pop up, so I cautioned them to do it in moderation.

I'm starting to wonder whether the Legendary Weapons have some sort of Karma system in them.

Ren and the others have done quite a bit. So... if they do anything strange, there's a possibility their weapons will send them berserk.

Even so, mass producing the Bioplant is essential for our profit.

If someone goes out of control here, it will be no joke.

"Will you kindly direct us to the information you compiled?" (Queen)
"Yes, this way."

We ended our short audience with the king, and followed the scholar to the place the information was stocked.

But before that.

"Raphtalia, Fohl, and Atlas. Go watch over the Allied armies."
(Naofumi) "I believe we've already made announcements to them."
(Raphtalia) "More forces will be coming soon, right? Go handle those additions. If something happens, report to me immediately." (Naofumi)
"Ah, yes. Understood." (Raphtalia)

Even if we look over the material together, I don't think the current Raphtalia is going to have too much of a role.

I sent Firo to find a place to put the carriage, and to investigate the area.
So she already isn't here.

Perhaps I should get her to sing to raise morale. She's really popular, apparently I believe there was that anime about that. Is it really effective?

(TL: I'm really not sure about this one, but perhaps it's Macross Frontier. There are plenty of Animes that fit the bill here) I think as I proceed forward.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“If anything happens to you, call for me.” (Atlas)

“Yeah, got it.” (Naofumi)

It’s not like anything will happen yet.

I think. I give a vague response to Atlas and went to go read up on our next foe.

Chapter 298: Journal of the Hero

We began browsing through the Houou reports inside of the castle.

There a couple of books documenting the damage caused by it.

Apparently, the number of casualties was nothing to laugh at.

As a last ditch resort, the Heroes were summoned, and Houou was sealed.

“Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, by your knowledge, where was Houou sealed?”

(Naofumi) “That mountain.” (Itsuki)

Itsuki looks out of the window, and indicates a mountain... It looks like a standard oriental mountain.

He points his finger at it.

“Yep, there.” (Ren)

“That’s right, Father-in-Law, there.” (Motoyasu) “Fumu... in your games, how exactly was the seal broken?” (Naofumi) “It was during a quest, right? It revived from the stone structure acting as its seal.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

In the Spirit turtle’s case, the vibrations caused by the monster destroyed much of the murals depicting it.

But now, we can go through the information at our own leisure. How relaxing.

Hmm?

It’s a journal left behind by one of the Heroes that sealed it.

From summoning to challenging Houou, it has multiple volumes depicting scenes from the start of his life in this world, to his death... apparently.

It’s like that.

Using the wisdom of your ancestors.

Imitating some hero of old to beat or seal a monster.

I mean, school teaches us to act like great people long dead, right?

The journal detailed him being summoned, and chosen as the Seven Star Hero of the Gauntlet. It detailed his daily life of fighting.

I have no idea what his past world was like.

This report says nothing of VRMMOs or Espers. Is he from a world like mine or Motoyasu's?

This kinda reads like a Web Novel, though it's based on his real experience.

Something about beating up a guy who pissed him off. A majority of it was just about the guy bragging.

Quit talking about your Harem. That's just disgusting.

I really don't care about the touching scenes with your heroines.

His wife number 1 seems to be the princess present at his summoning, but mentioning princesses around us is like stepping on a landmine. The girl's real name is included.

Including me, are all otherworlders like this?

Anyways, I tried to skim through it, but worried about missing crucial info, so I started reading it carefully.

When will I find something useful?

And wait, leaving something like this for the future generation, what was this guy thinking...?

Was it simply a diary?

I mean, it's written in Japanese, so this world's people can't read it. That possibility exists.

That means that it might be highly dramatized.

At least, I don't think the individual planned for anyone else to read it.

Otherwise, it would just be embarrassing.

Ren has a doubtful expression.

Motoyasu is... having Midori read it, and is playing with his three's feathers.

Wait, Midori can read Japanese?

Itsuki is indifferently reading through it. But if he finds anything, I think he'll speak up.

Just tell us about Houou already.

And... I read through each and every volume of it.

The only books missing are the ones pertaining to Houou, and the ones pertaining to the wave.

If only he depicted his strengthening methods, of how to class up, or something like that.

“Oy, the most important parts are missing.” (Naofumi) “This is all the information we have on hand.” (Scholar) Again.

Oy... why do they only have this set of thin books, with the necessary info omitted?

Did someone intentionally get rid of it?

I really want to complain to someone, but it is as it is. There was no useful information.

“... In the past, a war raged on this land. At that time, much of our information went up in flames.”

“The flame really was accurate in the information it swallowed.”
(Naofumi) “I-I’m sorry...”

The scholar apologizes as he reorganizes the reports, and looks over them.

Uwah... this is useless.

But it's not like complaining will do anything.

“This is the last one. A single manuscript remained.”

I was handed a bundle of paper.

This is more of a stack of scraps than a book. What's more, it's full of holes.

Ah, it has a minimal description of Houou.

Houou's goal is... to win... is prevented.

You cannot seal it during the last set of waves.

And to defeat it, you need to... both... or else...

Here is its attack pattern...

As expected, the writing was unable to withstand the ages. Much of it is impossible to decipher.

I mean, the above was the only thing I could figure out after consulting the rest of the Heroes.

For it to become illegible just before going into attack patterns, are they trying to insult me?

Who was it? Who was so negligent in taking care of this precious manuscript?

"Next is a mural left by the past heroes. Could you please look over that as well?" (Scholar) "Sure."

Expecting murals like that in the Spirit Turtle's city, we stepped into a temple that seemed to be a tourist attraction.

"The armies are lined up strangely."

At the temple's front gate, a structure slightly separated from the main body, I noticed a queue forming.

Some merchants are walking around and peddling to the line... When Houou is this close... Their commercial spirit is admirable.

"That is also an area we would like to have the Heroes check out later."

"Hmmm."

So I won't have to ask about it now.

What we need right now is information on our foe.

There's a high probability that we're the only ones who can understand what's written on the mural.

It may just look like a strange pattern to those of this world, but to us, they should become letters.

Like with the Spirit Turtle.

And like that, we stepped into the building.

It appears that this truly was a tourist spot dedicated to the heroes. We continue walking through the stone structure.

The atmosphere feels heavy.

As we walk, our steps echo into the darkness.

A Buddhist priest-like person came to greet us... Even so, I see a few catholic priest-like people as well. What's going on with this world's religion?

Flickering candles light the dark temple.

The inside of it was decorated by several statues mimicking the beast.

The gloomy atmosphere only seemed to make me more nervous.

"And? Where's the mural the heroes supposedly left?" (Naofumi) On the wall were several works with old writing, and murals of what looked to be from the Mayan civilization. I can't tell which one it's supposed to be.

I feel like I'm being given a tour of a strange attraction rather than a monument.

"It's this one."

We were led to the deepest part of the temple, where we found a large... fresco.

But... It's dark. I can't see the whole picture.

"It's dark. 「Faust Glow Fire」."

The Queen lights the dark room.

What was before us truly was a depiction of Houou.

I don't know if it was done by Heroes, but what's shown are two large birds, surrounded by a sea of fire.

Just from its looks, I guess it attacks by using its wings, dropping fire, and using its claws.

The birds themselves seem to be like peafowls, with scales on their bodies.

Its tail feathers fanned out to form a... fish-like tail?

It wasn't red, but a collage of various colors. It was quite different from what I imagined.

One stayed in the center displaying its vibrant colors, while the other circled around it with opposing colors.

But perhaps due to its age, the damage to the mural is severe.

It seems that it's been preserved well, though.

Its method of attacks were made apparent by the mural.

The first bird would fly to a high altitude, and bombard the ground below with magic and fire. The second would fly low, and attack with claws, and breaths of flame. They coordinated attacks like that.

Of course, this could just be a work of fiction, or an over dramatization. But that's what was shown.

"It sure has some troublesome attacks."

It clothes everything around it in flames, and turns the scorched corpses into zombies...

The Spirit Turtle had a similar ability.

Also, the feathers that are produced from its wings can give birth to familiars.

Just how versatile is this monster?

But based on its depiction, and comparing it to the buildings in the background, I don't think it's as big as the Spirit Turtle.

Though it probably is of considerable size.

One was slightly bigger than parent Gaelion pre-mortem.

And we have to fight two.

"Ren, was you Houou similar?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, mostly... But it didn't have a breath attack." (Ren) "There are a few attacks I don't know of as well. Mine never used its wings to stir up wind. But this one seems to create whirlwinds, and summon tornadoes." (Itsuki) "Father-in-Law, the ability I don't know of is its ability to summon familiars." (Motoyasu) So the games were different from reality.

Even so, I think this every time, but why are all the depictions and the other hero's information full of holes?

They have half-assed info, but with that, it seems anyone would make the mistake.

If I had information like them, perhaps I would have mistakenly challenged the Spirit Turtle as well.

...? Something's bugging me, but... I can't tell what it is.

It's like something's stuck in my throat.

But it feels like the sort of thing I won't figure out if I keep thinking about it.

Chapter 299: The Last of the Seven Stars

And well, it was preserved decently, but the bottom of the mural was completely weathered away.

They probably thought it was just a pattern in the picture, but it was honest-to-goodness Japanese Just like this... there...

There's barely any that I can read. Again, what's the meaning of this?

But there was something amazing in the list of Houou's attacks...

The picture depicted the first one falling, and the second one swelling up.

After that, the next pictogram depicted the remaining one exploding, leaving nothing but scorched earth.

After taking this attack once, the heroes retreated.

At least, according to this record.

Didn't they beat it?

I thought for a second, but looking closely at the exploding bird, I saw that it was dividing in two.

I guess this attack happens whenever you beat one of them.

And after the remaining one explodes, both of them revive, and the cycle repeats.

... This is like the Spirit Turtle.

Just by stopping the heart, you can't beat it. Just by severing the head, it lives on.

But this time, if you defeat one individually, the other releases a powerful counterattack.

Someone nicely sketched some stars around Houou.

It looks like these were added in later.

After that, the remaining drawings were too cracked for us to make out

anything more. But I did learn that we have to defeat them at the same time.

“With the Spirit Turtle, you had to destroy both the head and heart to defeat it. Most likely, we’ll have to do the same with the two birds. Upon failure, the remaining one uses a powerful self-destructing attack, and both are revived.” (Naofumi) “As I thought... The game was different. In the game, both Houous shared an HP bar, and if you beat one, both of them fell.” (Ren) “Self Destruction... while reviving at the same time. How troublesome.” (Itsuki) Once more, Itsuki reads in a monotone with an expressionless face. I feel no motivation from him.

But by his words, he’s earnestly analyzing the fresco.

“What’s more, as one flies higher, we’d naturally have to concentrate our attacks on the lower one.”

“That means a bomb will explode from above...”

With added revival.

According to Ren and the others, Houou was quite strong, but it looks like someone upped the difficulty.

“Then how bout me and Itsuki-kun attack the higher one, and Father-in-Law and Ren-kun concentrate on the lower one?” (Motoyasu) “Well, I guess that’s how it’ll turn out. From her weapon properties, Rishia should help Itsuki with the higher one.” (Naofumi) “What should I have the army do?” (Queen)

It would be nice if we could defeat it with only the Heroes, but I’m not really sure.

If the allied armies want to participate, then I should make use of them.

That means...

“Get everyone who can use long range magic. I guess the others will be using bows. The people skilled in magic should target the higher one, and everyone else, the lower. I’ll leave you in charge of the precise organization and strategy.” (Naofumi) Well, we have four heroes

strengthened to their fullest here. I want to end this one as painlessly as possible.

I don't want to run into some unknown factor later.

And this time, we have a slight grasp of their attack pattern, so creating countermeasures shouldn't be too difficult.

Of course, it's not certain that the words of the past are completely true, so we should proceed with caution.

"Understood. How should we ask them to train until the day?" (Queen)
"Let's see... If we have a flying target, it should work out if they just practice on it." (Naofumi) Should we leave that to the Dragon knights?

No, both Firo and Gaelion can fly, so we can get them to imitate the supposed attack pattern, and train on that.

The flames and breaths can probably reproduced with magic, I bet.

"I understand. Then from here on out, the allied army forces will begin training to combat Houou. I hope the Heroes will assist as well." (Queen)
"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Leave it to me." (Ren)

"I'll try my best." (Itsuki)

I mean, isn't that why we're here?

Our main goal is to get the casualty count as close to zero as possible.

I'd like to avoid battles like what we've had until now. Battles without preparation.

I'll put my all into this.

"Then shall we look over the other temple we passed by once more."
(Queen) After we finish looking over the Houou Mural, the Queen and the man from this country guide us.

"Is there something over there?" (Naofumi)

"At the moment, that is the only one of the Seven Star Weapons that has yet to select a wielder." (Queen) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

That piques my interest.

Honestly, we have absolutely no idea what sort of weapon the seven stars are.

It seems that the strange weapon in Rishia's hands is something else, and I've never seen Trash holding a cane.

"Why is there such a line behind it?" (Naofumi) "Can't the Heroes understand?"

Well... It's not that hard.

The legendary weapons can be used by those of this world as well.

Of course, from that previous journal, it seems that otherworlders can use them too.

Thinking that they were worthy of it, they lined up to see if they would be chosen by the weapon.

With this many people, I think this would be a good chance for business.

Something like one silver coin to test your worth, or something.

... This world seems to worship Heroes, so I think such practices will breed animosity.

The long line parts for us, and we enter the temple.

In front of the line was... the center of the temple, in which there was a lone wall. No, in this case, it was a block of stone with the weapon embedded into it.

It appears that people are testing whether they can take it out.

"Gununu..."

An army soldier's face turns red as he desperately pulls at it.

"Yes, next person step up."

The soldier drops his shoulders, and stumbles down the path he came from.

... Is getting chosen that happy of an event?

Being selected as the Hero of the Shield was nothing but suffering for me.

Aren't these guys lucky? If I said that, these guys might think me prideful and selfish.

I think, as I gaze at the weapon.

... It's a gauntlet.

The Hero that sealed Houou apparently had a gauntlet. It's not strange for the weapon to be here... or is it?

By that logic, one would be in the Spirit Turtle village as well.

"Hey, Queen, why is this gauntlet here? Is there a reason Faubley doesn't come to collect it?" (Naofumi) "Long ago, this country experienced great prosperity. By the legend of the Hero of the Gauntlet. It's one of this country's treasures." (Queen) "Then what about the Spirit Turtle?" (Naofumi)

"It seems that it was sealed by a hero of a foreign country." (Queen) "So it's like that." (Naofumi)

Does that make Houou a newer legend?

It's not like I have to investigate it thoroughly. I mean, that sounds like a pain.

... From what I see, it's of quite a simple design. You could also just call it a glove.

It's a basic shape like that of the Small Shield.

In the middle of the gauntlet, there was a single gem embedded.

Is there one of these in all of the Heroes' weapons?

I guess this is the first form of the weapon.

"This is the last Seven Star?" (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Queen)

This is the first time I've seen a real one... but I think I've seen something similar, somewhere. I wonder why.

Rishia's weapon remains semi-transparent, and I get a different feeling from it.

When I look at this one closely, I sense... a greater power.

"So it's waiting for a new wielder here?" (Naofumi) "That's right. Most of the people visiting this country have come to test their mettle, and obtain this weapon." (Queen) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

I'll have the slaves from my place try for it as well.

It would be nice if Atlas obtained it.

Her talent is high, so it actually sounds highly likely...

But this line is way too long.

"When do you think this line will clear?" (Naofumi) "I think it'll remain throughout the day." (Queen) Wow... just how popular is this attraction?

"Well, with times as they are, many adventurers are challenging the weapon as well." (Queen) "Well then, this may be an unreasonable request, but can you let my places fighters try it as well?" (Naofumi) "I'll try negotiating for it. Until training starts, the Heroes and their party members are free to act as they wish." (Queen) Following the scholar of the country, the Queen headed towards the castle.

The result: when night fell, my slaves were given special permission to challenge the Gauntlet.

I'd like to see those results.

Chapter 300: A Seven Star Weapon

After that, we started training based on our assumptions of Houou.

“Why does Firo have to cooperate with Gaelion...?” (Firo) With a frankly reluctant face, Firo complains. But following my orders, she flaps her wings, and releases fake attacks.

She’s responsible for the lower altitude one.

The real one should be much bigger, but this is just practice, so there’s no helping it.

“Kyua!”

Gaelion is happily flying at a high altitude. He deployed a complicated magic aria to seal the other Gaelion. Of course, he’s emulating the higher one’s magic bombardments from above.

When I asked Adult Gaelion later, the younger was overly happy at being asked a favor by me.

“As I thought, there’s a problem with dealing with the higher one’s attacks.” (Itsuki) After training ended, Itsuki stated as such.

“I see.” (Nafoumi)

When sparring with Firo, and the other Flying Dragons that took on the role of the lower ones, we concentrated too much on avoiding their attacks, and not those of the higher foe.

Of course, since the real one has the resolve to blow itself up, its attacks should be more vicious.

... I ride on Firo’s back, to get a sense of Houou’s field of vision.

If I deploy my Meteor Shield, I should be able to block out the weaker attack. Deploying Float Shields should create good footholds too.

Ren is the vanguard this time. Since Firo or Gaelion might get injured if he were serious, he’s holding back.

Getting back to the previous conversation, regulating the damage on the

higher seems difficult.

Itsuki's arrows are able to hit anything, so he does have an advantage, though.

He's also holding back, so Gaelion can intercept the arrows, but I wonder what would happen if he were serious...

Rishia's also using her throwing weapon.

That's fine, but the problem is everyone else.

Motoyasu is using multiple long-range skills, but his accuracy is nowhere near Itsuki's.

Houou seems large, so perhaps that won't be that large of a problem.

But the Army is the one with the greater problem.

Their bow and magic attacks are weaker than I thought they would be. I'm not sure if I should say it, but I don't think they'll contribute too much.

The slaves I have that are skilled in magic have paid their squads a visit, but I'm not sure we'll be able to use them well.

Sadina and the Queen have ordered them to use long-range support magic. The orca's good at Choral Magic, and group synthesis magic for some reason. The Queen is the same. When someone skilled at it leads it, the output really increases.

Since we're landlocked, Sadina's power output has decreased... but still, I'd like her on the front lines.

But I was worried about the back line's power, so I assigned her there.

We're just practicing based on assumptions, but the damage on the lower one always turns out too high, and I don't have the confidence that we can take them out at the same time.

Of course, if it were an enemy that the Heroes and their companions could beat alone, then we wouldn't have to prepare to this extent.

But caution is important, so we should prepare whatever we can. If it's

stronger than our assumptions, I'm not sure if we'll be able to deal with it.

If that were the case I would have no idea what to do.

I hope we'll be able to beat it alone. However, if that's not the case, we need to prepare for that too.

... I'm not placing much expectations on the allied army.

It's good that they're dabbling in a few things to get stronger. The problem is if they get conceited, and bite back at us.

If we just mildly regulate them, they may become like Itsuki's subordinates.

That's a troublesome problem.

—

The training finished, and night came.

I took the slaves from my village, and brought them to the temple with the Seven Star Gauntlet.

"Hmm... So this is the Seven Star Gauntlet, Nii-chan?" (Kiel) Kiel seems somewhat excited as she gazes at the glove in the stone.

"Apparently." (Naofumi)

"There was a long line of people here during the day." (Raphtalia)
Raphtalia was watching as well?

People who want to be heroes exist in all worlds, I guess.

I mean, everyone loves them. And right here's a convenient sword in a stone.

Of course, I won't say I hate such situations either.

"Will you challenge it too, Raphtalia?" (Naofumi)

"If that reduces the burden on Naofumi-sama from the world, then I'll happily do it." (Raphtalia) "Right..." (Naofumi)

I don't really want to see the sword-wielding Raphtalia beat up

monsters with her fists, though. It would make me feel quite uncomfortable.

“Even if you’re chosen, can you fight? Your weapon will deviate from your specialty.” (Naofumi) But as I said it, I remembered.

Hengen Musou doesn’t have a specified weapon.

“Yes, I think I will be fine.” (Raphtalia)

“I sense a power like the one from Naofumi-sama’s Shield.” (Atlas) Both Atlas and Fohl are facing the weapon as well.

These two are my top choices, for obvious reasons.

Out of the slaves, they have the highest probability of being chosen.

“I see. Then I guess it’s real.” (Naofumi)

If it’s just an objet d’art, I pity those who have tried for it.

They depressed themselves over nothing.

But shouting something like, ‘This piece of trash didn’t select me, it must be a fake!’ would be futile regardless.

“Anyways, to let you guys try your hands at it, I got a slot at night, when it’s usually sealed. Everyone should try it.” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Slaves)

At least their responses are energetic.

I’m not expecting much.

“Then let’s start with Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“Me!?” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I get the feeling that Grappler Raphtalia would be a sight to see, but I kinda don’t want to see it, but still...

It’s that. She can use her illusion magic to create afterimages.

And maybe she’ll be able to shoot beams out of her fists.

Wait, Atlas and Fohl are already doing similar things.

“What about Firo?” (Firo)

“If you think you can fight with gloves, then try your hand at it.”
(Naofumi) She basically fights with kicks.

Will she stay in human form, and pummel the crap out of her enemies?

... That actually seems likely. It's quite scary.

At the moment, Midori is the only Filo Rial that fights in Human form.
He swings an axe.

“I'll try~” (Firo)

The slaves started forming a line.

By the way, Ren, Itsuki and Rishia are already resting in the Inn.

Motoyasu arbitrarily followed us. No, he arbitrarily followed Firo.

“Now then, everyone form an orderly line~” (Sadina)

... Sadina's really acting like these slave's parents.

If a harpoon user like her got selected, how would she fight?

She does look kinda like a fighter, but something's off.

I get the feeling she would appear on the fighter training game.

“Gauntlets, is it...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia touches the gloves, and try to pull them out of the wall.

But the gauntlets show no change.

If someone gets selected, I expect a flashy light show, or something of the sort.

Do you have to defeat a powerful guardian monster to get accepted by it?

Eventually, Raphtalia gives up, and returns to me.

“It's not possible for me.” (Raphtalia)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

“Firo's turn!” (Firo)

Next was Firo, but the gauntlets didn't react to her either.

She tries to pull the gloves out of the stone with all of her might.

Hey, don't transform. Don't use your feet. The stone will be the one breaking.

Luckily, nothing moved at all.

"They won't summon a Hero for it in times like this?" (Naofumi) I posed this question to the Queen. Why doesn't this weapon have a wielder yet?

I heard before that because the world was experiencing such a calamity, the four heroes were summoned at once.

That means it isn't strange for them to summon another to be the Hero of the Gauntlet either.

It seems that besides the Gauntlet, the other seven are already gathered.

So summoning another otherworlder doesn't sound that bad of an option.

Though I'm worried that a harem bastard like the one who wrote that journal may be summoned.

"It appears that they performed the ritual to summon one again and again, but the results were none to favorable." (Queen) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

The Last of the Seven Stars. The weapon that won't call anyone from another world.

But its criteria for selection should be looser than that of the four.

The four apparently have to be otherworlders, but the Seven can be selected from this world as well. What's more, they can be otherworlders as well.

"Ah, right. I have absolutely no idea what sort of weapons the Seven Star Weapons are." (Naofumi) "Is that so? I was sure Melty told you already." (Queen) Nope, didn't hear anything from her.

She seemed to think that four heroes was enough. I'm not sure she had

any interest in the seven.

I've only really talked to her about the village's management, Filo Rials, peddling, and other business matters as of late.

She's a kid. She needs to dream more.

No, have her dreams already been fulfilled?

She's friends with the Filo Rial queens, Fitoria and Firo.

"Gloves are weapons... right? In the beginning, I had to beat up monsters with my fist, so I kinda understand." (Naofumi) "You sure did that..." (Raphtalia)

When Raphtalia became my slave, I mostly did that to relieve stress.

"The Gauntlets are closer to your Shield, Iwatani-sama. If I had to say, they are a Seven Star Weapon that focuses on defense." (Queen) "I see." (Naofumi)

My Shield does have something on its back that covers my hand.

I think the categories are overlapping here. What does this mean?

It's like my Frisbee Shield, and Rishia's strange weapon.

By the way, Rishia can produce a throwing spear like Motoyasu's.

"On the contrary, a Hero of the Claw also exists, you know." (Queen) "... Oy, oy, oy." (Naofumi)

Aren't those pretty much the same?

Please tell me the difference between a Gauntlet and a claw.

I really wanted to shout out, but I endured it.

... For now, let's ask about the Seven Stars as a whole "What weapons are there among the Seven Star Weapons?" (Naofumi) "That's right. I guess I should start from there." (Queen) The Queen began speaking in detail about the Seven Stars..

"First is the Cane." (Queen)

The one in Trash's possession.

For the Queen to start with this, I guess she still does care about the man.

Wait, when I first met him, perhaps he was holding something like that.

Trash is... I look around. He's sitting in a corner, silently staring.

Who is he looking at?

I thought it would be Atlas, but his gaze is off.

... Why is he staring at Fohl?

"Iwatani-sama?" (Queen)

"A-ah, please continue." (Naofumi)

"Next is the Hammer, the Projectile, the Gauntlets, the Claws, the Axe, and the Whip." (Queen) It's a peculiar line up.

But the Four Heroes took the basics, so I guess the rest is a mismatched potpourri.

Especially the last one.

"Whip..." (Naofumi)

That's quite a strange weapon.

Where would you attach the Gem?

The Handle?

It may be strange for the Shield to be saying this, but it sounds a little weak.

But in a game I know of, it's the strongest weapon. (TL: Perhaps Castlevania)

Chapter 301: The Eve of Houou

“According to legend, it could turn into chains. It even changed into a flail.” (Queen) “That’s really not that different, is it...?” (Naofumi) I mean, they’re all blunt weapons.

The boundaries between the Seven Star weapons seem quite vague. I’m jealous.

“The greatest difference would be that the Whip can draw out the power of monsters.” (Queen) A scene of the Queen whipping a monster and forcing it into submission floats in my mind.

Do you mean like that? The Queen in front of me... does she do that to Trash?

No, I really, really don’t care.

“The Hammer and Axe are similar as well.” (Naofumi) It’s not like there are... no differences between a set of claws and gauntlets.

“Is that so?” (Queen)

So she wasn’t questioning it at all.

Since she was taught as such from the beginning, she doesn’t find it strange at all.

For now, let’s think of the difference between claws and gauntlets.

I look over at Firo, and noticed.

I see. The gauntlets are exclusive to hands, but claws can go on feet as well.

Having Firo accepted as a Hero would be troublesome, but I get the feeling that it would feel natural.

Thinking along that vein, Hammers and Axes are weapons you lower on enemies, but they have different purpose.

“I don’t think I’ve met any of the Seven Stars besides Trash.” (Naofumi) “I heard that they will be participating in the Houou campaign, but we

have been unable to make contact with them. They're also quite busy, so we hope they'll be able to arrive on time." (Queen) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

Will I finally see them? The Seven Star Heroes?

They were being managed by Faubley, right?

There's Trash, and this Gauntlet here, so there should be five more in this world.

"By the way, how many otherworlders are among them?" (Naofumi) "I believe that three of them were summoned." (Queen) That means two of them are of this world.

If I meet them, we should talk.

Like about what weapons they have, and how they strengthen them.

But perhaps only the Four Legendary Weapons adapt to strengthening. Should I ask Trash?

... No, I'll leave him be.

I haven't seen him wield his cane.

If he does step forward, perhaps, he will be KIA.

If that happens, I guess a new Cane Hero will be selected.

As I lost myself in thought, the slaves proceeded, and finally, it was Atlas's turn.

She puts her hands on the gauntlet, and tries to pull it out, but... it doesn't move an inch.

"I was no good." (Atlas)

She easily gives up, and returns to my side.

I think she should try a little harder.

"I used my Chi to analyze it, but it appears that I am insufficient." (Atlas) "You can find out things like that?" (Naofumi)

"Somehow." (Atlas)

"I see..." (Naofumi)

Next is Fohl.

He doesn't seem particularly interested as he approaches it.

"Hmm? ... Go for it, Onii-sama. If it's you, you'll definitely be able to pull it out!" (Atlas) "Yeah! Gunununununu!" (Fohl) (TL: Sound of putting effort) Suddenly overflowing with power, Fohl pulls with all his might.

As he puts his hand on the Gantlet, Atlas starts shouting.

"What was that?" (Naofumi)

It's rare for Atlas to cheer on her brother like that.

There must be a reason.

"I felt something different from when I went up to it... but it may be my imagination. I thought Onii-sama would be able to pull it out, but that was disappointing." (Atlas) "Atlas!?" (Fohl)

How cruel. It's the carrot and the stick.

I think, as I watch over the rest of the procession, but no one could take it out.

"Heave! Ho!"

They've started grabbing onto one another, and tried to yank it out as if it were a game of tug of war.

I was supposed to be watching them, but when I wasn't paying attention, all of the slaves started working together to yank the glove from the stone.

For it to remain firm despite this. I guess it won't move until it finds someone worthy.

Anyways, a new hero was not born that day.

—

Like that, the day ended.

Reinforcements from other countries poured in by the day, so our numbers are considerable.

Our luck came with the force from Silt Welt.

Their battle abilities seemed naturally high, and their movements were nice.

Tomorrow's the day when Houou's seal will break.

That night.

After attending a strategy meeting, I ran into Atlas and Firo.

"What? What's up?" (Naofumi)

"What's wrong?" (Raphtalia)

After talking with Raphtalia, something started bothering me about our troop deployment.

"Why are you letting Atlas be on the vanguard as well?" (Fohl) "I must always be with Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"... Fohl, do you want to be deployed with Atlas?" (Naofumi) It will increase his motivation, and let him get a greater grasp of Atlas's strength. But I guess he doesn't want his sisters on the front lines, even if she's beside him.

Well, I'm also going to be defending on the front-most line, but also, she won't have much of a role in the back.

"Atlas, by that logic, you'll have to be sent to the very front." (Naofumi) "Yep, that's what I want." (Atlas)

"No! Atlas needs to be deployed in a safer station." (Fohl) "Onii-sama? Then I would just be a tag-along. Would you be satisfied if you were deployed to the rear supports?" (Atlas) "Uu..." (Fohl)

Why is he already making the sound of defeat?

Even so, a problem with deployment, is it?

"Naofumi-sama, I've said it before, right? I want to become the Shield that protects you." (Atlas) "Well, you see..." (Naofumi)

What do you want to do by taking my job?

And just how noisy will Fohl be if you do something like that?

“That’s why I compromised, and stationed you a little behind me, but if you want to be in front of me, then there’s no point in me being there. Raphtalia-, you understand that, right?” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia nods.

There’s a time and place for everything.

And if you try and protect me, the opponent this time is too strong.

I’d like this girl to learn some restraint.

“... Understood.” (Atlas)

Atlas reluctantly nods.

“Even so, I want to protect Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “... I think this every time, but why are you so obstinate on trying to protect Naofumi-sama, Atlas-san? You seem strangely fixated on it.” (Raphtalia) “I think the same. I believe... well, I don’t think I should be saying this, that unreliable guy over there, why must you try and protect him so?” (Fohl) “Raphtalia-san and Onii-sama can’t understand it?” (Atlas) Atlas furrows her brows in an irritated fashion.

“I can’t be spoiled by Naofumi-sama’s kindness forever. Just by imagining the sight of Naofumi-sama standing in front, and taking damage in place of everyone else... shatters my heart.” (Atlas) I want to tell her not to deny my *raison d’être*, but a part of my heart finds affirmation in her words.

At the very least, her words don’t make me feel bad.

Even if she denies the existence of the Hero of the Shield.

“... No, I’m mincing words here. I want to be by his side, not as a party member of a Hero, but as the one next to the Human, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) Not the Hero?

I don’t really get it, but it’s an Atlas-like explanation.

“What are you saying!?” (Raphtalia)

“Right Atlas!? Why this guy of all people!?” (Fohl) Hmm? ...Wait, wasn't that a love confession just now?

I didn't notice.

She says something similar every time, so I let it slide.

“Naofumi-sama?” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“I have been drawn to your deep-rooted kind nature. I don't want you risking your life trying to protect everyone.” (Atlas) You'll say something like that to someone who can do nothing but defend?

“Ah, yes, yes. I understand that. I understand what you're trying to say, but I'm a coward, you see. I'm leaving whatever I cannot do to everyone else. So in exchange, I'll do what I can.” (Naofumi) “Then, Naofumi-sama, if you were granted the power to slaughter enemies with your own hands, where would you stand on the battlefield?” (Atlas) Fumu... If I could attack like a normal person, where would I stand?

An interesting question.

... In the end, I think I would still be at the front.

Though I don't know if I would still be relying on slaves.

If, at that time, I had offensive capabilities, I would go level by myself without buying any slaves.

“Naofumi-sama, please remember. Please don't believe that it's... natural for you to get hurt. Your true nature is one where you are always devoting what you have to others... but if you continue like this, who will heal you? Who will devote themselves to you?” (Atlas) Atlas directs a sad gaze to Raphtalia.

What's she so bitter about?

“Naofumi-sama... if in a future battle, someone were to lose their life, please don't blame yourself for it. Those that live off your protection, those who can only take from you are miserable and rotten. They'll merely decay to nothingness, without even realizing their own corruption.

I don't... want to feel like that again." (Atlas) "... That's right." (Naofumi)

What she's saying isn't wrong.

Last time, and the time before that, and even before, there were many that died.

I want to save whoever I can, but I don't deny what I can't do.

But if Atlas continues agreeing with whatever I say, she's sure to rot as well.

If you praise my every action, you'll rot in a different way.

Is what I think, but this isn't an atmosphere where I can voice such opinions, so I stay quiet.

"Onii-sama... I don't want to be someone who does nothing but take from you anymore. Like you and Naofumi-sama, I want to protect everyone." (Atlas) "Atlas, do you know what you're..." (Fohl)

"Onii-sama, aren't you thinking that as long as I'm safe, it doesn't matter who gets injured?" (Atlas) "___!?" (Fohl)

Fohl is at a loss for words.

But there are some times when I think he cares for nothing but Atlas.

"I don't want to see Onii-sama act like that. Oh... this isn't something I should be saying. I'll be on my way." (Atlas) And Atlas departed with a sorrowful expression.

What's with this?

"I... Think of nothing but Atlas? Then the real reason I got angry whenever I saw Atlas clinging to that guy was..." (Fohl) "What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

I wave my hand at the dumbfound Fohl, when he comes to his senses, he returns a sullen face. Maintaining the same expression the entire time, he leaves the area.

"Should I keep the troop deployment as is?" (Naofumi) Without answering my questions... those two left.

Really, what's with everyone?

"Naofumi-sama's kindness..." (Raphtalia)

Even Raphtalia's brooding over something. Is there really a problem that needs everyone's concern – The Next Day.

The blue hourglass icon in my field of vision enlarged.

00:12

There's only 12 minutes left.

It's something I've experienced time and time again, but my heart beats erratically.

Just like always... no, I just have to perform better than always. I understand it, but I can't accustom myself to this feeling.

The people have already been evacuated. Left are the Heroes and their subordinates, and the allied armies.

It's not a sudden development like with the Spirit Turtle, so evacuations proceeded without a hitch.

We made sure to give ample warning for people to stay away from this area.

The Queen and the other strategists are in the rear, and they're the ones giving orders.

This is the battlefield of Heroes.

... Though Trash is still in the rear.

Right, right. Perhaps they were running late, but the other Seven Stars never came.

To not make it despite having all that time... how useless.

If I ever have the chance to meet them, I'd like to offer a complaint or two.

"It's been a long time since we had a serious battle. We've done what we could. Everyone, we need to reduce casualties to a minimum, so fight to

survive.” (Naofumi) I stand at the front, and give an ultimatum.

“YEAH!”

With my order, the slaves and armies let out their voices as one.

Along with them are Ren and Motoyasu, Itsuki and Rishia.

... It's been a long time.

Originally, we would constantly have to challenge these waves, but why did it take this long?

I earnestly ponder the thought as I direct my eyes to the location of Houou's seal.

Based on prior investigation, halfway up the mountain was a temple with a stone monument that fit the bill.

A dubious statue of a distorted Houou.

We confirmed that the statue radiated its own heat.

By the way, through careful examination, the researchers were able to confirm that it would awaken by the time on the hourglass.

That's where Houou will appear.

To make it easier to fight, we're challenging it on a barren plain at the base of the mountain.

We've grasped for plenty means to fight it.

Like using the Gravity Field effects from the Spirit Turtle equipment to drop the higher one.

The problem is the skill's range.... It's relatively small, so we'll need to test it on Houou to see if it'll work or not.

I'll have ride Firo or Gaelion, and board that Houou to see if it does anything.

And if I use a shield with Gravity Field while riding a flying opponent, it's not like I'll fly. I'll fall.

Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki have similar weapons, but we have no idea

about the extent of their effects “Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s do our best.” (Raphtalia)

“Yep, let’s.” (Naofumi)

I nod at Raphtalia’s words.

And Atlas also called out to me.

“Around us, a blazing chi is... gathering. Naofumi-sama, please proceed with caution.” (Atlas) “I understand.” (Naofumi)

The hourglass drops to three.

“This time, I’ll...”

“Yes...”

“I’ll definitely do it this time.”

Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu confirm their determinations, and tighten their grips on their weapons.

Ah... right. Beating Houou is just part of our job. Even if we do beat it, it’s not like our future fights will get any easier.

The four heroes are combining their powers. Why don’t we end this one without any death?

00:01

The last minute.

I concentrate, and chant magic.

「All Revelation Aura」!

I pour in my Magic and Chi, and make my area of effect as large as possible. I cast the super buff I used on Firo on everyone in the front line.

Like with Firo that time, we’re now a squad of super-humans.

00:00

Ping. A sound like breaking glass, one I’ve heard before, enters my ear.

Last I heard it, I received a huge impact.

A pillar of fire rises out of the mountain, and two large birds show themselves.

Their forms were exactly that depicted on the Mural. The two Houous.

“KYU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

A loud shriek echoes through the air.

It was the sound signaling the start of our battle with the beast.

Chapter 302: Vs. Houou

Just as I thought, like the Spirit Turtle, Houou also headed for the area with the densest population. It headed straight for our vast army.

The number 『8』 floats in my field of vision.

I assume this is meant to be the 8th wave.

“You guys, don’t make a mistake and land the killing blow too early.”
(Noafumi) “We know!” (Ren)

Ren is near the front. He faces the low altitude Houou, and begins releasing various attacks at it.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

The higher Houou starts flapping its wings at us, raining feathers and fire down at us.

「Meteor Shield」!

I used my chi to raise its defense and scope quite a bit.

With this, I can protect the entire front line, but my powers are insufficient to cover the rest.

This battle is still within expectations.

“You all understand, right?” (Naofumi)

I turn around, and find my slaves, and the army nodding.

I don’t have the confidence to protect this large of a group.

But I need to scheme to protect as many as I can.

With Atlas’s help, I used a technique that wasn’t a skill. I deploy Collect at the raining fire.

As if it were draining down a large funnel, the rain gathers, and heads towards me.

Based on how strong this attack is, I’ll change the battle plans.

In that time, the Heroes began concentrating attacks on the Lower

Altitude bird that rushed at us.

The rain of fire comes into contact with my shield, and stops.

It just feels like a normal rain hitting the top of an umbrella.

What I currently have equipped is a reinforced Spirit Turtle Shell.

—

Spirit Turtle Shell (Awakened) +8 70/70 SR

Ability Bonus:

...

Equipment Bonus:

Skill 「S Float Shield」, 「Reflect Shield」

Special Ability:

Gravity Field

C Soul Recovery

C Magic Snatch

C Gravity Shot

Tenacity Enhancement

Magic Defense (Large)

Lightning Resistance

SP Drain Null

Growing Power

Proficiency Level 100

Item Enchant Level 8 Defense 10% Up

Dragon Spirit Defense 50 Fire Resistance Up Status Enchant Magic 30+

—

Anticipating Houou's attacks, I enchanted my weapon perfectly.

With this, I can greatly reduce fire-based attacks.

My Barbarian Armor also has Flame Resistance, so normal attacks shouldn't harm me at all.

At the moment, the attacks coming down on me aren't doing anything.

However, the scale of the attack is too big, so I can't guard the entire army for long.

But that was also to be expected.

「All Zveit Resist Fire」 !

The rear support forces cast Fire Resistance magic on the army.

With this, we'll be able to ignore the rain, and concentrate on attacking.

Hmm?

When the feathers Houou spread come into contact with the ground, a monster called Houou Familiar (Vassal Type) comes into being.

Just as the mural said.

The vanguard immediately rushes forward to annihilate the familiars.

Good!

“Rafu~!”

Rat's monster Mii-kun changes shape so something like a carpet. He catches all the feathers I fail to block.

He's good at changing shape, so he's useful in times like this.

“Let's go!” (Taniko)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Firo, Gaelion and Taniko fly towards the higher level Houou.

“Tei!”

“Kyua!”

“Yesh, let's go!”

Let me go into an explanation of the weaknesses of Firo's new-found flight.

By flying, she sacrifices a few of her abilities.

According to the bird herself, I explained it before, but she uses magic to fly. So flying greatly diminishes her magic supply.

What's more, she can't put as much power into her feet as when on land, so her kicking power decreases. The power in her beak and claws also decreases.

Also, because she has to concentrate on flight, using magic like Quick and Spiral Strike is difficult.

In that aspect, Gaelion, who could fly from the beginning, doesn't have too many weaknesses.

Breath is his basic attack, and he can use his claws fine.

Because of his leveling, he even learned how to make and shoot homing arrows of fire.

Houou is more skilled in fire, so so if Gaelion doesn't change the attributes of his attacks, he won't do any damage, though.

But I guess a bird of fire has to have good fire resistance.

「Wing Tornado」

Flapping her wings strongly, Firo rotates her body as she rushes at Houou.

It looks like her Spiral Strike, but it isn't nearly as fast.

“Tei!”

And after she lands on the high Houou, she delivers a strong kick to it.

Ah, I guess like that, her kick power doesn't drop.

“Gaelion, let's do this.” (Taniko)

“Kyua!”

『I lead the power of Gaelion, and desire its incarnation. Earth Pulse, grant me power.』

『KYUAKYUAKYUA』!

「High wing Slash」!

Gaelion's wings begin emitting light, and by flapping them, he creates blades of wind.

Those blades pierce the higher Houou.

“KYUIIIIIII!?”

They're fighting well.

I need to concentrate on the enemy before me as well.

“HAAH!”

I grab Houou's foot, and create an opening for Raphtalia, Atlas and Fohl's attacks to land.

「Bagua Karma Blade Second Stroke」!

「Tiger Break」!

“Here I come!” (Atlas)

Raphtalia's blade pierces Houou's shoulder, and Fohl's fist hits its abdomen. Upon Atlas's thrust, part of its body bursts open.

“I can't be losing to them! 「Gravity Blade」!” (Ren) “Yeah! I'll work hard for Niichan! Woof! Woof!”

Ren jumps at the lower Houou's head, and stabs it multiple times, while releasing a skill.

Kiel also turns into Kielberus, and sinks her teeth into the bird.

Oh... like a knife through butter, Ren's blade goes through Houou.

Kiel's attacks aren't to be messed with either.

However...

Houou was a being like the Spirit Turtle. A being similar to a spirit or ghost. Whenever it got injured, flames gushed out of the wounds, and the injuries healed themselves.

“Ku... what vitality!”

Even if you cut it, you can't inflict any deep wounds.

How troublesome...

But by what I've seen, it's not like it isn't taking any damage.

Just like in our simulations, even if it blows itself up, it will be able to revive as if nothing happened. We can't frivolously kill it. We'll have to use tactics here.

But we prepared for these attacks. We don't get any damage from its wings or its breath.

There's no sign that the lower one will perform any SP draining attacks like the Spirit Turtle.

But just in case, I have re-strengthened the Wrath Shield that dropped due to Gaelion's meddling. It doesn't look like I'll have to use it, though/

The Spirit Turtle's Shell has high stats, but Wrath is also catching up.

The Shell doesn't seem to be evolving soon.

But it's impossible to predict everything.

Perhaps an attack like that is coming soon...

As I grasped the lower Houou to prevent it from escaping, I turned my eyes to the higher one.

I see Motoyasu, Itsuki and Rishia, Sadina, and the Queen releasing various long range attacks at the Higher Houou.

"Firo-tan, be careful! 「Brionac」!" (Motoyasu) 「Bird Hunting」! (Itsuki)

「Tornado Throw」! (Rishia)

"Choral Magic! 「Water and Lightning Fusion」!" (Sadina) "High Class Covenant Magic! 「Rain Storm」!" (Queen) Motoyasu throws a spear of light at the beast.

And wait, where are his three followers?

There, I remembered. They're cooperating with the Filo Rial squad, and fighting on this front.

Itsuki's arrow divides, and rains down on Houou. Rishia's tornado of thrown goods spin around it. Finally, Sadina's pre-prepared Choral Magic lands.

By the look of it, though, it's not taking as much damage as the lower one.

Firo, Gaelion, the Dragoons, and the other flying monsters... are those Gryphons? Anyways, the soldiers riding them are dealing good damage, but still, we're dealing too much to the lower Houou.

At this rate, taking them out together will be difficult.

"Hold back a bit more. Or else, we'll kill it first! We need to match our timings as best as possible!" (Naofumi) "Got it!" (Ren)

"Yes!" (Raphtalia)

I caution the people on the front line, as I deploy my First and Second Float Shields to block its attacks, as I continue pinning it down.

We just have to contain our DPS, and accumulate damage on the High Altitude one.

"!? Naofumi-sama, Houou's Stamina is recovering." (Atlas) "Ku... how troublesome." (Naofumi)

If it's Atlas's perception, then she's definitely right.

if we hold back, it just recovers.

Even so, we can't go at it seriously.

Management is difficult.

But this isn't an enemy we can't beat.

At that moment, I felt a great heat.

The leg I had grabbed slipped through my arms.

Houou converted its whole body into fire.

"Everyone get behind me! 「First Shield」! 「Second Shield」!" (Naofumi) IS this an attack that was too faded on the mural to read?

I hold my Shield out front, and prepare myself.

[illegible]

Surrounded by a whirlwind of fire, Houou rushes at us.

It's a rush attack like Firo's Spiral Break.

Though this bird is clad in fire.

“Ku...”

It looks like I can't get out of this one unharmed.

I feel the skin on my body being grilled.

“Are you alright!?”

Because I took Houou's rush head-on, the people behind me are unharmed.

But because of the familiars and raining attacks, it's not like the front line troops aren't damaged at all. We've avoided anything fatal, though.

I felt an abnormality in my own Status.

My magic is being sucked out.

... I have a bad feeling about this,

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

「Meteor Shield」!

The Higher Altitude Houou takes in a deep breath of air, and lets out a breath like a red laser.

Just before it hits, I deploy my Meteor Shield barrier with me at the center.

“Wah!” (Firo)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

The people fighting it up close barely manage to avoid it. The breath was directed at us below.

“UWAAAAAAAAAH!”

A whole unit is blown away as if they were merely toys.

Damn... it was hiding an attack like that.

“It sucked my magic! The attack the lower one just used sucked the magic of the ground squadron, and the higher one used it to power its attack!”

But he made a grave mistake.

My Spirit Turtle Shell has C Magic Snatch.

After withstanding the blast, a bullet of magic flies out of my Shield towards the lower Houou.

But... before coming into contact, the bullet vanishes.

Getting back magic from it is impossible?

And I was able to tell when I was holding it, but Gravity Field doesn't work either.

How much will you trouble me?

“Uu...”

“To those who took damage, get treated immediately! 「All Zveit Heal」! If you die, you'll get controlled by the enemy! Rear Supports, we need assistance.” (NAofumi) On my order, the support squad runs forward, and provides relief to those that survived the impact.

Chapter 303: An Unforgivable Flash

As always, the problem is his absorption ability.

The Spirit Turtle Shell cannot stop the drain of MP.

The Barbarian Armor has Absorb Resist (Medium), so luckily, my magic didn't fall to zero.

... I can't deny the possibility that he can absorb SP as well.

I could change to the Soul Eater Shield with Drain Null, but then my defense would drop.

It's not that I wouldn't be able to manage, but I think my Spirit Turtle Shell was just barely able to take that last attack.

I don't have to rely on Wrath yet... but I don't know what option to choose.

Hmm?

The Lower Level Houou has regenerated itself. Its damage is gone.

Oy... could it be that whenever this attack is released, its recovery hastens?

I turn my eyes to the higher one.

That one seems that it'll take a while longer before it fully recovers, but this is an annoying ability.

"Cut at it before it can heal itself!"

"Yeah!"

"I'll try." (Itsuki)

On my orders, the attacks resume.

Everyone releases their strongest attacks, and the Houou in front of my eyes gets visibly weaker.

There's a large difference between the Spirit Turtle battle, and this one.

That one took forever, but this one doesn't seem that it'll take too long.

That troublesome attack is... dangerous, but I'll try withstanding it with my Soul Eater Shield.

I instruct the supports to cast Fire Resistance periodically.

Good, I hold down Houou, as I pop a Lucor Fruit in my mouth to recover my magic.

And I cast All Revelation Aura once more after it wore off.

"Master~" (Firo)

Firo looks upon me from above.

"I need more power~" (Firo)

"Got it, come down!" (NAofumi)

"Yeah!" (Firo)

I control the Filo Rial Familia parasiting off of my body, and toss one at Firo.

The thrown ball of fluff sticks to Firo.

And it transfers its power to Firo.

"Thank you~" (Firo)

Firo spreads out her feathers, and rushes at the Higher Houou.

... Right.

Can't I do this to the Filo Rials supporting us in the rear?

By what I've seen, Filo's followers like... Piyo, was it... are in the back casting support, so if I give them these Familia... their output should increase. But that's only if it works.

"Pii!"

As if sensing my intent, the Familia exit my body, and run towards Piyo at a high speed.

After a while, an Icon besides Firo's popped up in my vision.

Good, this one's for regulating magic.

Now it should get a little easier.

Next is... Should I use Come on, Raph?

I slowly look at Raphtalia.

“What is it, Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Come on Raph...” (Naofumi)

“Didn’t you already bring them with you!?” (Raphtalia) Yeah, that’s right.

There’s no point in increasing their numbers at this point. And My SP will go down.

What’s more, I can’t have those guys get killed off for no reason.

Do I have anything to deal a finishing blow?

... yeah.

“Gaelion!” (Naofumi)

“Kyua?”

“Grab Ren, and go attack the higher altitude one.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, are you sure?” (Ren)

“We have enough firepower here. Go assist in weakening that one. Once you think that one’s about done for, release a skill in this direction.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Ren)

In accordance with my words, Gaelion and Taniko descend.

I hope this leads to a quicker resolution.

Its recovery is annoying, but taking care of the higher one is tougher.

The lower one has a higher recovery rate, but it’s not that strong, it seems.

Ren hops on Gaelion, and flies off.

And wait... The higher one has powerful magic, so perhaps it’s weak to physical attacks.

The Queen and Sadina's large scale magics didn't have much of an effect, so that's likely the case.

In this case, there's the chance that the one below is weaker to magic.

Perhaps she sensed that I thought of something. Shadow appears before me.

"By the Queen's analysis, we wish to try hitting this one with covenant magic-gojaru."

Oh? If it isn't the one I know. Where did she go?

But I can figure that out later.

"Got it! Everyone separate from me! A large Scale Magic is headed this way." (Naofumi) "What about you!?" (Atlas)

I hear Atlas's voice, and turn to it.

"I can stand it. When the magic is over, we'll continue attacking again." (Naofumi) "But-" (Atlas)

"I'll be fine. More importantly, hurry and get away." (Naofumi)
"Understood. Atlas-san, let's go." (Raphtalia) "... Why are you always like that?" (Atlas)

Fohl has a fed-up expression, as he drags Atlas away, with Raphtalia.

After confirming that the forces had retreated, the Queen and Sadina face me and Houou, and activate their magics.

A tornado made of water comes down on me from the sky.

Gu... I can stand it, and it doesn't hurt or anything. But I can't breath.

"KYUIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!?"

The high-pressurized whirlpool lasted around 30 seconds, but I wonder if Houou took any substantial damage.

It's sorrowful that the attack wasn't near Ren's level of power, but it was around the level of a light barrage from Raphtalia and Fohl.

As I thought, the lower one was weak to magic.

For now, I think I can see the ending.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIIIII!”

The lower one changes its body to fire, and tries rushing again.

I change my shield to the Soul Eater Shield, and stop the attack.

The attack scorches bits and pieces of my body, and I feel that I’m going to lose consciousness.

It’s a hard attack to take from the front.

And even with this, I have fire resistance cast on myself, so I wonder just how hot theses flames are.

After the rush ends, I take a deep breath, and wait for the supports to cast recovery magic on me.

And I check whether or not the higher one is going to fire his laser.

... Yeah. It seems that if the lower one doesn’t take any magic, he can’t use it.

His mouth lets off a few sparks, but nothing happens.

The problem is that the lower altitude one’s recovery didn’t stop, though. I guess that was unrelated.

We can do this. At this rate, we should be able to kill him.

If we just whittle down the lower one, and crush them together, we’ll win.

“Okay! It’ll be over soon!”

It was at the same moment I declared that.

... I would never forget the events that unfolded.

-From the very back lines, a long stream of light... something pierced the greatly weakened higher Houou.

“Wha-“

We should have waited to inflict a fatal blow, I mean, the lower one had just recovered HP, so why...

I look towards the source of the light.

It was farther back than our armies extended. Way in the distance.

What the hell was that!?

Houou's hidden skill? Or perhaps...

No, now's not the time for that.

“KYUIIIIIIIIIII”

As if it had burned away to nothingness, the higher Houou vanishes, leaving nothing but its feathers.

The remaining feathers flutter in the wind, and scatter over the land.

This is bad...

The rear magicians had just finished chanting a large scale covenant magic.

Even though we know the lower one is weak to magic, we can't take it out immediately.

Having regained our senses, we turn our eyes to the remaining Houou.

“KYU-”

It suddenly stopped moving altogether.

And...

Gobo...

A distorted and peculiar sound reverberated through the air.

Little by little, the Houou's form distorted onto itself, and expanded.

Magic and heat condensed around it.

“Everyone attack it at once! Quickly, we need to kill him as quickly as possible!”

We don't even have the time to retreat. It'll blow up in seconds.

We have to kill it before that, or the area will become a sea of flame.

「Meteor Sword」! 「Gravity Blade」! 「Hundred Sword」!

「Meteor Spear」! 「Brionac」! 「First Javelin」! 「Second Javelin」!

「Meteor Bow」! 「Bird Hunting」! 「Spread Arrow」!

Without even taking a breath, the heroes let out consecutive skills.

「Erst Throw」! 「Zweit Throw」! 「Dritte Throw」! 「Tornado Throw」!

「Bagua Karma Blade Consecutive Blows」! 「First Stroke」! 「Second Stroke」! 「Third Stroke」!

「Tiger Break」!

「High Quick」! 「Spiral Strike」!

“Naofumi-sama! We have to kill it quickly! Tei!”

Atlas quickly starts pricking Houou’s vital points.

We’re truly desperate! I raise Gaelion’s abilities by equipping my Wrath Shield.

Eroding my Heart? Like I care!

Giant Dragon Gaelion seems to understand the situation. He shoots a magic breath at Houou 「Prominence Dark Nova」!

With Taniko’s assistance, he immediately releases his strongest breath.

“Pierce through! 「Shield Prison」! 「Change Shield (Attack)」! 「Iron Maiden」!”

Right after Gaelion’s breath hits him, I bind him in my Shield Prison.

Of course, I strengthened it with my SP and EP, but that is only temporary.

And using all of my remaining SP, I summon an Iron Maiden. It shatters the chains of my Prison, and eats Houou whole.

“Haa... hah... ha...” (Naofumi)

I take out and drink some Spirit Water just in case. I wait for the Iron Maiden to wear off.

“D-did we do it?”

“S-somehow.”

Everyone is out of breath after that extreme barrage.

I even ended up using my Wrath Shield.

With this...

Snap...

Just before the Iron Maiden was about to wear off, the maiden of steel burst.

Inside was a swelling Houou, that had gotten too large to contain.

Gu... the cooldown time is...

“Damn! We can’t be killed off here.”

In order to prevent further casualty, I’ll stain my hands with the move that I was still recovering from.

「Blutopfer」!

I immediately chant, and release my Curse Skill.

Gu... blood spouts from all over my body.

“Naofumi-sama!?” (Atlas)

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki didn’t have the confidence to use their curse skills without getting swallowed by their curses.

They’re forbidden skills we can never get used to using, andthere’s no time to think of something new on the fly.

Then I just have to do it myself.

I took heavy damage, as I release my Blutopfer at the expanding Houou.

Good!

From the ground, a tiger trap that resembled the mouth of a raging dragon emerged, and closed on...

“Wha!?”

With a bang, Houou burst!

Losing its target, the trap gets enveloped by the flames.

I sway back and forth, as I step in front of everyone. In order to contain the explosion, I use the skill I thought up with Atlas, Collect.

At the moment, if we get hit by this, everyone besides me will probably die.

Perhaps the Heroes will be able to stand it, but the Army and the Slaves are here too.

I can't stand down.

Where Houou was standing, is now a ball of fire as brilliant as the sun.

And it's still expanding. The ground below it scorches and melts. Nothing is left in its path.

At the same time, far, far away... the flames could be seen, even from Melromark.

Chapter 304: A Price Too Great

I step in front of the bursting Houou. To protect Raptalia. To protect the Heroes, and the slaves, and the Allied Armies. I stand against the flames scorching the ground before me.

I have no time to worry about the damage from Blutopfer.

I can only count on the Wrath Shield's defense power.

Perhaps the Spirit Turtle Shell would work as well, but this one has higher defense at the moment.

“UWWWWOOOOOOOOHHH!”

I let out my voice, as I go forward, step by step, to push away the flames coming at us.

Besides the area I defend, everything is charred black.

Gu... It's gotten past my Shield's defenses, and I feel the excruciatingly hot flames eating at my flesh.

The sense of feeling in my arms disappears, along with the pain.

My instincts scream that my body is in danger.

Should I switch to the Spirit Turtle Shell?

It has high fire resistance. I imagine it changing in my mind.

And, from the Shield... I feel something screaming out.

If I change to that shield, I still won't be able to stand this.

「Change Shield」!

I change one of my Float Shields to the Spirit Turtle Shell.

... It was burned to a crisp in no time! I deploy the Shield again in front of me to buy some time.

Even with the Wrath Shield, I'm taking this much damage.

If this attack gets past me, those behind me will be reduced to nothing but cinders.

I feel the world around me slowing down.

I guess this is the sensation you get when your life is in peril. I think I read about it in a book somewhere, once. When humans sense their lives are in great danger, their thought process hastens, and time seems to pass slower.

The merciless flames from Houou keep attacking me. In order to turn everything into ash.

Barely... I'm barely containing it, but I get the feeling that only 5 seconds have passed in real time.

How long will I have to do this?

I deployed Meteor Shield long ago, and it was instantly destroyed.

There's no point in using a reflecting Shield, and my Float Shields are already out.

But by deploying my floats one after the other, I'm just barely getting through this.

What do I do?

「Dreifach Resist Fire!」

Something from behind me... is it Ren? A magic that increases my fire resistance flies at me.

I guess it isn't Revelation level because there wasn't enough time.

A wise decision.

I feel that the damage I'm taking has reduced ever-so-slightly.

But that's merely delaying the inevitable.

!?

Houou's fire's output increased.

As if to tell me there was more to come, the fire power suddenly jumps up. The flames burn through me.

The heat seeps through the cracks forming on my Shield. My shoulder

is now a nicely baked entrée.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

“Naofumi!” (Ren)

“Gu...”

Raphtalia and the others call out to me.

A few of them cast recovery and support magic on me. I’m impressed they were able to muster that up in this short amount of time.

But it’s still not enough to handle Houou’s inferno.

Gugu...

I frantically put all of my strength to keeping my Shield arm steady.

The force hitting me seems like it’ll blow me away at any moment. My limbs are turning into charcoal. The HP bar on my status is unsteadily teetering into the critical zone, and I guess I’ll be burned away to nothing at this rate.

I’m impressed that the past Seven Star Hero was able to take on this monster.

Looking back, isn’t this explosion more powerful than the one on the mural?

Ku...

In ten seconds or so, I’ll be blown away, won’t I?

No, there’s a single way.

If I use that, I’ll save everyone’s life.

But if I do, I’ll definitely die...

But...

“I just have to do it!”

It happened at the same time as my scream.

Next to me, a single little girl stood.

“It’s fine. I’ll protect... I’ll fulfill Naofumi-sama’s wish.” (Atlas)
“What!?”

Me and... that girl’s brother cry out.

The girl firmly nods... she holds out her hands as she jumps forwards.
I can’t let her challenge the impossible. I immediately reach out my hand to grab her.

But my outstretched hand never reached Atlas.

Having studied defense under me, that girl... uses one of the attacks we made together. 『Collect』. She directs all of the flames towards her, and collects them. She creates a Wall to redirect them, and sends them in a direction devoid of human life.

“Atlas!”

In response to my voice, the girl’s mouth forms a kind smile.

She’s letting off an immeasurable amount of sweat... the meat on her arms has been burnt to a crisp, yet still, she uses her chi to redirect the flames... And in response to her great will, the flames obeyed.

What came next was an explosive sound strong enough to destroy my ears, and a flash too loud for me to keep my eyes open.

When I open them, the smoke prevents me from seeing anything.

“Geho, Geho! Atlas!” (TL: Sound of coughing) I wave my arm as if to brush away the smoke. I shout out.

And I turn and ask a question.

“Are you okay! Is everyone safe!?”

The smoke clears, and behind me, I see everyone standing.

It seems that we managed to change the direction of Houou’s flames, but the flames we missed came into contact with the army, and caused large casualties.

There are corpses all around. Many have collapsed on the ground.

More importantly, Atlas.

She ran in front of me, into the flames. I look for the young girl who took drastic measures to save us.

And... I look up.

And I realized the fact that something was falling down from the sky.

I hold out my arms to catch it.

“Ah...”

Heavy emotions run through my head, yet the item in my hands is so light... that thing, that item... was a girl missing an arm, with both of her legs turned to charcoal. It took me several seconds to realize that I had found Atlas.

“Atlas!”

Fohl runs over

"KYU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

At the same time, the shadows of two large birds cover us.

“Naofumi! We have to retreat!” (Ren)

Ren shouts at me.

“Ah... bu-but...”

“The current you can’t fight! We have to heal your wounds! And... We need to hurry up and treat that child! There are many injured people. This is the time where... the best healer among us should step forward. This is the time for you to act!” (Ren) No words can come out of my mouth... what do I do? What can I do!?

“Quickly! Leave this place to us!” (Ren)

“U-understood.” (Naofumi)

“Raphtalia-san, hurry and get those two out of here! Fohl, you get back too!” (Ren) “Y-yes! Firo!” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah!” (Firo)

In response to Ren's stern words, I was brought to the back lines. My mind was still blank.

"Ah... ah..."

I still can't form any words.

Atlas is on the verge of death.

Looking closely, it isn't just her legs that have turned to charcoal. Everything under her stomach has been burned to a crisp.

It's amazing that she's still alive.

"Hah... ha... hah..."

I leave her to rest in a temporary medical tent, and go around treating those on the verge of death with the rest of the medics.

But the most severely wounded is Atlas.

The rest are... only those that survived made it here.

In my blank mind, I look over everything I saw and heard once more.

"Atlas! Get a grip!" (Fohl)

Fohl grips Atlas's remaining arm, and desperately starts talking to her.

Atlas responds in a whisper.

Don't waver...

What I have to do now is treat the wounded.

I need to save as many lives as I can.

I'm a hero. I'm the Hero of the Shield.

Defense, Support, and Recovery. I'm perhaps the best in the world in those aspects.

... I can't concentrate.

Even so... I can't let anybody... I can't let Atlas die.

Calm down. Concentrate, and cast the highest level healing you can.

「Revelation Heal」!

The glow of my recovery magic envelops Atlas.

But... it didn't bring back her missing limbs.

"W-why!?" (Naofumi)

Healing Magic is all-purpose, right!?

Ah, right, when I got back, the magic they cast on me healed my wounds, but it didn't seem to have an effect on Atlas.

No... It's probably healing her, but her wounds are too severe...?

Then... I take out Yggdrasil medicine from my Shield, and apply it to Atlas.

It works as an ointment, and if drunk, it can save patients on the verge of death. If I use it in all ways possible, she should get better.

But...

"WHY!?"

There's no sign of Atlas healing.

I take out my anger on a nearby healer.

"Why won't she heal!?" (Naofumi)

... She's crossed the line where healing is possible."

Rat came forward, and muttered this.

"What... do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"The fact that Atlas-chan is even living is something close to a miracle. Starting with the healers, and the Marquis's magic and medicines, keeping her alive is the best we can do. Also..." (Rat) "Rafu..."

Under Rat's arm, Mii-kun's core cried out.

"This child also had her body destroyed as he protected everyone. He did this much..." (Rat) "Rat-san. Is there any way you can save Atlas?" (Raphtalia) "Can't you do anything!? Can we give her life like that Mii-kun in your hands?" (Naofumi) "Monsters and Demi-Humans are different. If we used homunculus technology, then perhaps we could get

her arms and legs to move, but that girl's also burnt up most of her organs. Alchemy isn't omnipotent." (Rat) "This can't be..." (Raphthalia)

"Even by replacing parts, it's not enough. No matter what we do, she won't be saved." (Rat) "That's a lie!"

I won't believe it! Never! There has to be a way!

Where!? Where is the Shield that can save Atlas's life? There has to be one.

What the hell is the Hero of the Shield? What the hell is with this hero that had to sacrifice a little girl to survive...

"Naofumi..... sama..." (Atlas)

I turn to Atlas.

"Did we protect everyone?" (Atlas)

"Yeah, but more importantly, you-" (Fohl)

"Onii-sama... please bring Naofumi-sama here..." (Atlas) "... Okay." (Fohl)

Fohl grabs me, and drags me next to Atlas.

"... I know. I have no time left, right?" (Atlas) "What are you saying? You have as much time as there's time in the world." (Naofumi) On my answer, Atlas, weakly shakes her head.

"Naofumi-sama... It's fine already. Don't worry about me." (Atlas) "Of course I would worry about you!" (Naofumi) Right. If one Yggdrasil medicine was no good, then if I use more, I should be able to save a single life.

But my supply is limited to two. But if I just get more, then definitely.

I signal the healer to come closer, and order him to bring some Yggdrasil medicine.

"Quit it already, Marquis! I just said it, but she's past the limit." (Rat) "We won't know if it works until we try!" (Naofumi) "And I'm telling you because we do know!" (Rat) I ignore Rat, and apply the second vial to

Atlas.

First, rub it on the wounds...

But as I touched her skin, I noticed.

The parts that had become charcoal wouldn't come off no matter what.

"Sorry, Atlas!"

I took a knife meant for medical use, and cut off the charcoal portions.

But... still, there's no sign of her healing.

"Hah... hah..."

It seems she can do nothing but breathe. She puts her remaining hand on mine.

"Please... stop already." (Atlas)

"Never!" (Naofumi)

Don't say such things in front of me!

No matter what happened, I never gave up.

Even when I was betrayed by those I trusted, even when I was called a devil, even when I was almost killed, I never gave up.

Even so... I can't give up in the face of this... this unreasonable turn of events!

"Naofumi... sama. Please understand... I can't be saved anymore. I'm the one who understands that best. Every second, part of my chi, my life force leaves my body, so... I understand." (Atlas) "But ,even so-"

Water scatters from my eyes, which I thought had withered long ago.

"With Naofumi-sama's miraculous power, I am... here talking to you. Please... calm yourself." (Atlas) Weakly, as if her body would crumble at any second, Atlas stroked my face.

"Hah... hah..." (Atlas)

"..."

I close my mouth, and Atlas smiles. It's a smile like one a mother would give to comfort a crying child. Using her hand, she wipes away my tears.

"Naofumi-sama, I love you more than anyone else in this world. And I said this before, right? I wanted to become your shield." (Atlas) "... Yeah." (Naofumi)

And that means you'll accept a fate like this!?

If you died because you acted as someone's shield, do you understand just what sort of emotions the person you protected would experience!?

When I was thinking that, I understood what Atlas was trying to tell me.

What she did was exactly what I was trying to do.

Using Collect to gather the flames, and release them somewhere else.

If put into practice, what would happen? I was the one who understood that best.

If Atlas didn't step in front first... I would be where she is now.

"Even so.. this..." (Naofumi)

I can't muster up anything but a cracked voice from my throat.

"I am... satisfied. Like this, I was able to use the life you saved to save yours." (Atlas) "No, you can't die. You can't die from protecting someone like me." (Naofumi) That was something that I should have been doing.

It's not like I wanted to die.

If it was me, I may have survived it.

"Naofumi-sama... I don't think I can... answer that request." (Atlas)
"Why!?" (Naofumi)

I know! I already Know.

But can't I pray for a miracle too?

Someone. Anyone is fine. God, I pray to you.

I don't believe in anyone, but I'll pray to you!

I'm well aware that this is a selfish request.

Even if the God of this world is the Four Heroes, even if I go against myself, if you can save the girl before my eyes, then... I...

"Naofumi-sama, please... listen to my last bit of selfishness." (Atlas)
"What? What is it? I'll definitely grant it. That's why you can't do anything like dying!" (Naofumi) "... I wished to become your Shield. That wish hasn't changed... and... I don't want to return my blood, flesh, or soul to the earth." (Atlas) "Eh?" (Naofumi)

The hand grasping mine moved to my Shield.

"I knew from the start I could never become Naofumi-sama's number one." (Atlas) "What are you..." (Naofumi)

"But still, I wished for it. If at least this body can be closer to yours than anyone else..." (Atlas) I remember the Atlas that came to my room every night.

She always wanted to be by my side.

"Even if I lose my form, please let... me be with you." (Atlas) At this girl's goal... I trembled.

Chapter 305: The Girl Who Became a Shield

“Quit joking around!”

I understand what Atlas is trying to tell me.

And I shake my head at it.

“Do you understand the meaning behind your words!?” (Naofumi) “Yes... I’m well aware. And still, I ask it of you.” (Atlas) Her face isn’t one of someone telling a joke.

I look towards Fohl.

He’s... standing still, and glaring at me.

Even when I want him to speak up here, he stays silent.

He’s gripping his fists so strongly that they’re starting to bleed, but why...

“And please allow me one more bout of selfishness.” (Atlas) “Wha-” (Naofumi)

I return my gaze to Atlas from Fohl, and see her mustering her power to get up. She gives me... A kiss on my lips.

The first kiss I ever got from a girl... tasted like blood.

As if her power supply had run out, Atlas falls to the floor.

“I always wanted this. My wish has finally been granted.” (Atlas) “Why are you acting love-struck in a time like this...” (Naofumi) “Raphtalia-san.” (Atlas)

“Y-yes?” (Raphtalia)

Atlas calls out to Raphtalia, who had been watching over the exchange silently the whole time.

“The battle that I promised would definitely continue forever... It seems that it’s finally over.” (Atlas) “No, it will still... continue forever!”

(Raphtalia) “Ufufu... for Raphtalia-san of all people to say something like that, I’m kind of happy. I think you understand, but I was always envious of you. No matter how hard I tried, I could never become Naofumi-sama’s number one. I knew.” (Atlas) “That isn’t certain yet! Your competition with me will still... go on... and on...” (Raphtalia) Atlas smiles upon seeing Raphtalia shed large drops of tears.

And she made a speech as if she had foreseen this outcome.

“You sure are kind, Raphtalia-san. I understand why he likes you, but please listen to these words.” (Atlas) “Not just these ones, I’ll listen to whatever words you have to offer. I’m fine with yielding Naofumi-sama once or twice, so please continue.” (Raphtalia) “Raphtalia-san, Naofumi-sama... likes girls more than you think. He’s a normal boy. That’s why it’s fine if you... watch over him a little more.” (Atlas) “... I know. But you’re the same, aren’t you? You can’t give up here!” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia desperately pleads with her, but Atlas is already so weakened that she can’t even tell where she is anymore. She can no longer sense the chi in the air.

That’s just how little time she had left... the cold reality was approaching.

Eventually, as if she just noticed something, Atlas lets out words not directed at anyone in particular.

“Ah... that was right. Perhaps it would have been nice if I could spend my time with Raphtalia-san and Naofumi-sama together. Why didn’t I realize such a simple thing? ... Thinking about it, I guess I’ve gotten another wish that will never be granted.” (Atlas) “You’ll live! If it’s Naofumi-sama, you can definitely be saved!” (Raphtalia) “Thanks.” (Atlas)

Atlas slowly shakes her head, more weakly than before.

“Naofumi-sama... please notice.” (Atlas)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“I was always doing my best to become number one in your heart. But...

that wish was never granted.” (Atlas) “What are you...” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, you yourself... probably didn’t think about it due to the wounds you bore on your heart. But become aware of it. Raphtalia-san... likes you as a member of the opposite sex. Just like me.” (Atlas) “What are you saying at a time like this!” (Raphtalia) “If it... weren’t a time like this, I know that Naofumi-sama would never lend his ears. Please believe... geho.” (Atlas) I feel Atlas getting even weaker.

Ku... If I just use more Yggdrasil Medicine, and Revelation magic, then...

“Please... promise. I do nothing but ask things of you, so let this be my last request. Please... Naofumi-sama, please realize that there are people who like you. And please answer them. It’s a... promise.” (Atlas) “Yeah! I understand! I get it, so don’t push yourself any further!” (Naofumi) God in heaven... please! Please save the people who believed in me.

Even from the moment I was born, I never wished for a miracle.

I never made a wish, even when Witch tricked me, and I wasn’t allowed a voice in this world.

“It’s a... promise. Though I already asked for quite a bit...” (Atlas) “I get it... I’ll think about it, so...” (Naofumi) “Ufufu... for me to be this precious to Naofumi-sama... I... was... hap...” (Atlas) Atlas goes silent.

“At... las...?”

I frantically shake her, but she doesn’t move at all. Her expression is frozen in a kind smile.

“Atlas-san!” (Raphtalia)

“ATLAAAAAAAAAAAAASSSS!”

My scream... finds no answer...

I have no idea how peaceful her mind was in the end.

Raphtalia is shedding tear after tear. Fohl just continues staring at me silently.

“...”

Atlas's life is no longer here.

What's lying here is...

I mutter at Fohl.

"Hate... me." (Naofumi)

The sister he valued more than his own life died protecting me, and I couldn't even save her... He has enough reason to hate me.

But the second the words exited my mouth, Fohl grabbed my collar, and stopped his clenched fist in front of my face.

"As if I could hate you! As if I could put your mind at ease by hating you!" (Fohl) "Wha..." (Naofumi)

"Atlas, you see, until the end, she loved you! For your sake, she chose to sacrifice herself! Then I cannot... hate or resent you. I wasn't able to save her either. If at the time, I had just stopped her, it would have never come to this!" (Fohl) "But..."

Hypothetical possibilities floated in my mind.

At that time, if I stopped her, Atlas wouldn't have died.

At that time, why couldn't I answer to her feelings?

"At that time, if we had never met, Atlas... wouldn't have died."
(Naofumi) My field of vision took a 90 degree turn, and I was sent flying.

It was only after I hit the ground that I realized Fohl had hit me.

"Don't say such things, even by mistake!" (Fohl) "But that's the truth-"
(Naofumi)

"If she didn't meet you at that time, Atlas would be dead! I was never able to raise the money necessary for the medicine to prolong her life. The next time she had a spasm, she would have died! And still... the one who let us walk freely was you! I won't permit you to say things like that."
(Fohl) "Even so... something like this..." (Naofumi) "Don't taint Atlas's pride any further!" (Fohl) Fohl turns his back to me.

Blood drips from his hanging hands.

He hit me, and I'm supposed to be harder than steel. He should be in pain.

The blood slowly drops on the ground.

"Atlas said it. She told me to think of the kids at the village like her, and to protect them. I have to honor her will! You are... the person I would have called my brother in law! I won't let myself hate yoooooooouuuuuuuu!" (Fohl) Fohl's outburst echoes.

That voice... I'm not sure what power it held, but a bright light flew at him from the direction of the temple, and spun around him.

For a moment, a flash strong enough to make me close my eyes lighted the room, but it went out in an instant... On Fohl's hands were a pair of Gauntlets.

"These are..."

They were familiar pieces of equipment...

What answered Fohl's cry was the legendary weapon.

By scheme, or coincidence? The me of yesterday would have scoffed at this development.

But the current me doesn't have the heart.

It's already too late...

"I'll definitely keep my promises to Atlas! I am... I am going to protect the villagers!" (Fohl) Fohl ran off with tears flowing from his eyes.

To protect those on the battlefield.

I am... I am...

I sooth the sobbing Raphtalia, and... I think over the will left by the young girl that loved me.

"Please leave me alone for a moment." (Naofumi) I hold up the empty shell that was Atlas, and I... plead to Raphtalia, Rat, and the healers.

"... Understood. But don't forget that the battle rages on." (Rat) "Yeah, I know."

Raphthalia and Rat nod, and depart.

With a dim mind, I think about my my memories with this girl.

That night when she first came to my room.

“Because I am the Hero of the Shield, The only thing this world lets me do is defend.”

I scorned my own role as I spoke to her.

“... I know. When I look at this village, I see that everyone is being protected under Naofumi-sama’s wings.”

“Wings...”

“If all you do is protect, everyone will someday leave your nest.”

“Anyone that wants to leave can leave, and still I will protect this village.”

“But then... Who will protect Naofumi-sama?”

“Wha?”

“This is what I think. If Rafatalia is Naofumi-sama’s sword, then perhaps I could become Naofumi-sama’s shield.”

“Shield... That’s not as easy as it sounds, you know.”

(TL: This is chapter 173)

That wish was granted at the cost of her life.

That means I have to honor her last will.

If I, who can do nothing but protect, can’t grant a wish as simple as this... I would never be able to forgive myself.

Right... No matter who scorns me, no matter who abuses me, I, who was unable to protect this girl will honor my promise with her...!

“.....!”

Now, I will commit a taboo.

I bought this girl’s life, exploited her, worked her to death, and now I

was going to torment her even afterwards. Why must a criminal like me feel this guilt?

I gaze at Atlas's body.

This is a girl who liked someone like me.

she unconditionally accepted everything in me.

I'm going to absorb that girl into my shield.

Panic. Fear. Despair. Lamentation.

Various emotions swirl around my head.

I can't stop the shaking in my body.

Even so, it's something I must do.

If praying that much won't bring about a miracle, if he is going to see this irrationality, and turn a blind eye... then god must not exist.

No, he's an existence that can't exist.

Like I'd let him exist!

If a god that permits this exists, I'll never forgive him.

No matter what happens, I'll kill him.

I mean, isn't it strange!?

Everything was working smoothly.

I gave ample warning.

We were going to return home without any casualties!

If that light didn't exist, Atlas wouldn't have died.

To hell with Heroes.

To hell with God.

To hell with the Wave.

To hell with...

Why the hell should I... for this unreasonable world...

“Atlas... I think I kinda understand the reason you don’t want to return to the earth of this world.” (Naofumi) The body of the girl who wouldn’t speak again was way too light.

But I will honor my promises.

I’ll never break them.

I won’t let her go to the heaven or hell of this shitty world.

“Ku...!”

The girl’s body disappears into my Shield.

It was the exact same light as when the Shield absorbed a monster or an object.

—

Curse Series. Wrath Shield, Blessing!

Blessed Series. You have unlocked the Shield of Compassion!

You have fulfilled the conditions to unlock the Soul Shield!

You have unlocked the Demi-Human Series! Series Completed!

You have completed the Slave User Series!

You have unlocked the Comrade Series! Series Completed!

You have dispelled the Curse of Blutopfer!

『Blessed Series』

The Blessed Series is a series granted only to those who have overcome their curses. A powerful series of weapons.

There is a default form, and it can evolve to other shapes.

The Equipment Bonuses are based on the Shield it changes to.

Bless Series

Shield of Compassion

Ability Bonus:

...

Equipment Bonus:

Skill 「Change Shield (Attack)」 「Iron Maiden」 「Meteor Wall」

Special Ability:

Benevolent Temptation

Enchant

Blessing

All Resist

Spell Support

Along with the blind girl's disappearance... the Shield of Compassion was born in my heart.

Chapter 306: Vs. Houou Finale

The shield was very simple but it felt as warm and tender as the sunlight.

Its stats are the highest of any of my unlocked shields.

On top of that, this shield's effect has the ability to give enchantments.

My defence is rising endlessly.

And... the Slave, Demi-human and Companion series have all been completely unsealed.

This includes all of their bonuses.

In other words, all of my slaves and companions had all their abilities dramatically increased.

I change to my usual Spirit Turtle Shell.

Growing Power has been activated by Growth Up!

Spirit Turtle Shell had changed!

Increasing it any further is unnecessary.

Right now I can't afford to wait and see if it grants any bonuses.

Everyone here had miraculously finished their treatment.

The Healers are all treating it like a miracle.

...But.

As I leave the tent I look to the sky, and see the pests.

"Kyuuuuuu!"

What an annoying pest.

Right now I don't feel like dealing with it.

But because it is still here, the fight won't end and there won't be any peace.

Then there is only one thing I can do.

Naofumi: "Firo!"

I call Firo who was dealing with the pests with another party.

Firo: "Yes?..."

Taking a look at my face, Firo who was worried about Atlas' condition came down with a sad look.

Until now, I never realized how kind Firo was.

I wasn't sure if it was due to Atlas or the Shield of Compassion.

It wasn't just hate, there was also feelings of kindness... both emotions were conflicting within my heart.

But I don't believe what I'm feeling now is due to the shield's effect.

Naofumi: "Take me up higher than that bastard"

Firo: "Okay...I can do that"

Naofumi: "Ah, Lets hurry up and end this!"

Riding on Firo's back, we fly through the vermin while maintaining a high altitude.

Naofumi: "Firo, time this just right"

Firo: "Yes"

"Kyuuiiiiiii"

The pests notice us and come to attack us with their claws.

To remain calm and collected would be best.

To hate the enemy in front of me, would just cloud my judgement.

However I understand the pain.

I can see how unreasonable this world is.

The wounds that were suffered... and the sorrow for the lives that were lost.

But even though I know this, I mustn't get angry.

Naofumi: "Too noisy"

I catch the pests by their talons and throw them towards the ground.

“Kyuiii!?”

As we gain altitude the pests turn towards to swarms us.

Naofumi: “Firo, kick them”

Firo: “Y-yes”

Following my instructions, Firo lands a hit and the pests fall straight down.

It made a great noise.

Shortly after, I jump off Firo towards the pests.

Firo: “Master!?”

Naofumi:”Firo, I’m fine, but get ready to catch me when I fall”

Firo: “Y-yes”

I give Firo those instructions as I activate Gravity Field.

Before it wasn’t that effective, but as it is now I can use it.

“Kyu...Kyuiii!”

The pests desperately try to remain airborne but under the new weight there was no way they could maintain altitude.

I begin to fall towards the pests that are at a lower altitude.

Naofumi:”Firo!”

I jump before I hit the ground, and was caught by Firo.

I grab two pests as I reach the battlefield and make a declaration.

Naofumi: “Everyone! Let do this!”

Fohl: “Nao-Naofumi!?”

Naofumi: “What are you doing? Lets hurry up and kill it”

Fohl: “I understand! Tiger Break!”

It was Fohl who acted first.

I expected as much.

Right now I can understand his feelings more than anyone else...as well as his thoughts.

Of course I don't know what it is like to lose a family member.

But, I knew what kind of girl Atlas was.

Naofumi: "Don't worry about me. Let us finish this as soon as possible. Soon we will kill it!"

Everyone: "OHH!"

The Party, who was surprised at my words, stated to unleash their special attacks.

Ren: "Naofumi, how is Atlas..."

Ren came to ask me in-between attacks.

Naofumi: "..."

I look away in silence.

Right now, I don't want to think about it.

Naofumi: "Kuh..."

Though unintentional, I let out a pained voice.

Along with the power from the Sword, we strengthen the forces.

Kiel: "My body feels...so light!"

Kiel rushes out and bites through the pests.

Kiel: "Yes. It seems like my speed is different than before."

There is a visible difference in the movement of my slaves and the military forces, as well as their attacks.

It must be due to the bonuses of the completed Slave and Companion series.

I didn't check it but there must have been a huge boost.

And, it was all thanks to Atlas.

Naofumi: "Hurry. Lets end it quickly. For all of the pain and sorrow it has caused... we need to destroy it, even by a single second faster."

The two pests try to attack me but it doesn't hurt or bother me.

Their claws and bites are pointless.

If all the enemies are gathered in one place, they can all be eliminated easily.

Ren: "Gravity Sword!"

Motoyasu: "Brionac!"

Itsuki: "Bird Hunting!"

Rishia: "Tornado Throw!"

Raphtalia: "Bagua Karma Blade"

Firo: "Spiral Strike!"

The swarm of pests are hit by the sheer power of their special attacks.

"Kyuuiiiiiii!"

As one lets out its death cry, the other begins to make a strange noise.

So it is going to self-destruct.

Of course, you won't have the chance to use it.

Fohl: "Tiger Rampage!"

With Fohl's deadly strike, the enemy was wiped out leaving nothing but a pile of feathers.

Everyone: "OOOOHHHHHHH!"

The roar of victory echoed throughout the area.

Feathers float down like snow and calmly settle.

Naofumi: "Atlas...we did it"

I raise up my Shield to signal our victory.

The truth is that we should have won without any sacrifices.

I will never... never forgive that guy.

Naofumi: "Ren! You understand what's next, right?"

Ren: "Ah!"

Naofumi: "Inform the Queen. I need to make that bastard pay! I can never forgive him!"

It is very likely that he was a Seven Star Hero.

I have to find out who was responsible!

I called Firo and left to look for the source of that flash of light.

Ren also came along while riding Gaelion.

But even though we searched all day, we could not find the culprit of that attack.

Naofumi: "Damn it! Where did he disappear to!"

Ren: "Looking for him anymore is pointless. Naofumi please go on ahead and rest."

Ren came and told me this.

Naofumi: "What are you saying!"

Ren: "I'll call you if I find something. So please bear with it for now."

Naofumi: "But-"

Ren: "Please..."

Before I could argue, Ren pleaded with me.

His expression was mixed with both sadness and anger.

Ren: "Naofumi, you are are not the only one who is mad. I am also filled with rage"

Naofumi: "...I see"

Ren: "Naofumi you are the only one I have told this to. Earlier I unsealed the Sword of Rage, of course I haven't used it, since at that time I was surprised at how you were behaving."

Naofumi: "..."

Ren: "I don't intent to forgive the culprit either. But, you need some time to calm down."

It true...I need time to calm down.

I was under the illusion that I was calm but in reality I was filled with anger.

What I am feeling right now...can't easily be described.

When I was betrayed by Witch, my head was filled with anger.

Right now I should rest for a bit.

I need to calm down so I can differentiate who my enemies are and who it is I should protect.

Yes, I need to calm down the feelings in heart.

Naofumi: "...I understand. I will leave the rest to you."

I sit down at the temple as the day was ending.

The search is still ongoing.

While I was resting, like Ren asked me to, I became aware of how angry I was.

By changing to the Shield of Compassion, my anger begins to fade.

But even so it was something I could not forgive.

That is because I can understand it...the unreasonable sorrow and suffering.

After the feelings of anger had calmed down, a sense of loss had filled my heart and dominated my mind.

Raphtalia stood by me before I could notice.

Raphtalia: "Atlas-san... that was unfair. I wanted to have Naofumi-sama turn around with my own power..."

Naofumi: "I see...but right now..."

Raphtalia: "I know. I understand completely...so it is okay for you to cry"

But, Raphtalia is probably the one who wants to cry the most.

The pain of losing someone, such a feeling was represented by tears.

Naofumi: "I am not going to cry"

I noticed something along my cheeks when I said that.

Is this...tears?

Since I had left the tent, I was unaware of it, but I was crying.

And...everyone else may have noticed.

I was crying.

Naofumi: "Uuh..."

Once I became aware of it, it was the only thing I could think about.

Raphtalia: "Naofumi-sama..."

I had unconsciously hugged Raphtalia and burst into tears.

After my duel at the castle, I decided to stop crying.

The tears won't stop.

My tears start to overflow when I try to stop.

This was the pain and sorrow of losing someone, that I knew.

It wasn't something shameful, I realize this now.

More than anything... for the feelings of the girl who became my shield...I just wanted to silently cry.

Chapter 307: Funeral

The next day.

After we both tired ourselves out with lamentation, I slept with Raphtalia.

(TL: No, not like that)

“These are the heroes that risked their lives to win this battle... Salute!”

In front of the castle on the land where Houou was sealed, a funeral service was being held.

Those who were lost in the battle were respectfully buried.

We had to part with several people from my village as well.

I raised them to be my pawns for war... but I wanted all of them to return alive.

Should I... stop deploying them in waves?

If I'll have to feel like this every time, then I don't want to send them into battle.

I quietly stood in front of Atlas's casket.

It's empty. Her body is... inside my Shield.

I gently place a flower on top.

Fohl follows my lead, and places one as well.

“...”

For some reason, Trash also silently garnishes the casket with flowers.

His expression is dark.

He says nothing to either me or Fohl.

But I knew.

When I retreated with Atlas to the back lines, Trash stood outside the tent the entire time.

Even though he wasn't able to help at all, what does he plan to do at this point in time!?

But taking my anger out on Trash won't accomplish anything.

Getting angry is pointless. It won't bring anything.

... I couldn't do anything either.

And I learned that Trash wasn't the culprit.

He was with the Queen issuing orders when it happened. Many attested to that.

More importantly, Trash had little reason to do it.

Based on Atlas's positioning, she would have been brought into the explosion regardless, unless I did something about it.

"... I'm going to fight it. The wave." (Fohl)

Fohl declares this at me.

"Running away... will just lead to more of the villagers dying." (Fohl) "... I see."

So that's Fohl's answer.

If I was in his position, I bet I would fight the Waves.

For everyone's sake. For Atlas's sake.

"Niichan..."

Kiel is quite worn out. She cries as she places a flower on the coffin.

"I'll... fight too!" (Kiel)

"But-" (Naofumi)

On hearing my voice, Kiel directs eyes filled with determination at me.

"Niichan always said it! That it was a fight where we could die, that it wasn't a game. Everyone was well aware of that when they chose to fight for you! I can't just pull back because it's dangerous!" (Kiel) "Is what she says." (Fohl)

Fohl continues after Kiel.

“Everyone in that village fought out of love for you... Aniki. They decided to fight for you. You can’t stop them anymore. Take... responsibility for what you’ve done.” (Fohl) “... Got it.” (Naofumi)

But I don’t want to have them die.

Every time I remember Atlas’s words, my heart shakes.

What was I making these people do?

I never thought I was the one who didn’t realize it.

In order not to have any more regrets, I...

Raphtalia just silently stands in front of Atlas’s coffin.

Atlas told me that Raphtalia was in love with me.

I had pushed it out of my mind. It’s not that I never considered the possibility, but I deluded myself into thinking she was just a diligent child working for me.

Atlas’s will tightens around my heart.

I have nothing but regrets. They won’t leave me.

She once said that she might die any day.

Then... so I don’t have to feel like this anymore, should I answer those that say they love me?

What did I do for Atlas?

I took away her illness, but what else did I ever do for her?

I should have been able to give her more happiness.

... I’ll stop it. This train of thought.

I’ll leave if for after I do what I must. For after I know the world is safe.

—

The funeral concludes, and I address the Queen.

“Though this occasion may have given rise to many sacrifices, I am

thankful for your efforts towards destroying Houou, Iwatani-sama.”

(Queen) “Spare me your pleasantries. I just want to see if you’ve identified the bastard who shot that unnecessary attack.” (Naofumi) “... No, we have heard nothing of the culprit.” (Queen) “What about the Seven Star Heroes that were supposed to come running here? They’re the greatest suspects.” (Naofumi) “... I’m truly sorry, but we still have yet to get into contact with them.” (Queen) “You sure are useless!” (Naofumi)

I’m getting pissed off.

I understand the Queen has done nothing wrong, but I can’t do anything about my emotions.

“Another important matter we have to attend to is the next of the four beasts. What do you think about it?” (Queen) “Meaning?” (Naofumi)

On my question, the Queen lets out a small sound of surprise.

“Have you not heard from the other heroes about the timing of the next wave?” (Queen) I confirm the blue hourglass in my field of vision.

... 2 Days and 18 Hours.

Short! We have no time left!

I’m at a loss for words.

Oy, oy. The next of the Four Good Omens is... Kirin, was it?

The place it’s sealed... I never asked anyone!

“According to the Hero of the Sword-sama, the beast is set to appear around Faubley.” (Queen) Faubley... Are we going to drag our current forces all the way to Faubley to prepare for it?

In less than three days?

If Firo wanted to run straight without food or rest, I think it would take two days to get to Melromark from here.

How far away is Faubley?

“And wait, where was Houou’s blue Hourglass?” (Naofumi) “It manifested in the center of the city. According to witness reports, it just

glowed blue, and there was no sand, though.” (Queen) Fumu... a sand less, blue Hourglass appeared.

That sure sounds strange.

Houou gave three months of long rest, but Kirin, only three days.

Both the turtle and the Bird moved to destroy as many life-forms as possible.

... The Four Good Omens.

The only answer I can think of right now is that the amount of lives they take extends the time to the next wave.

Those beasts were supposed to bring happiness and fortune.

So looking at the world as a whole, is this extension the fortune they bring?

Sacrifices... thinking about Atlas, and the others, I want to deny the possibility.

No, I should be denying it.

It may just be that the seal was going to break now by coincidence.

But more importantly.

“What will we do about Kirin? No, I should call Ren.” (Naofumi) I raise my voice, and call for the Sword.

After a while, Ren answers my call, and comes towards me.

“What?” (Ren)

“What sort of enemy is Kirin?” (Naofumi)

“A monster on equal footing with Houou.” (Ren) Kirin... I believe it was a set of two beasts, like Houou. Ki and Rin.

Is the Kirin sealed in Houou the same one I know of? The ones that would appear before kings of good virtue?

But Faubley’s under that Pig King, right?

That really doesn’t seem to be the case.

Perhaps the first time it manifested, the king was coincidentally a capable one.

But with only three days to spare, what will we do with the armies?

They were equipped to travel from the beginning, but there's no time for weapon maintenance, and war conferences.

And what's with this time limit? There's no time to prepare or anything!

It isn't even a distance easily trekked in three days, and even if we wanted to warp there, Motoyasu already erased it from his saved warp locations, so we can't.

Is the only option to travel by land?

Dammit all.

"At the very least, the heroes should set out. With three days, I'm not sure if even Firo will be able to make it, but we have to go." (Naofumi) As it is, it's a powerful monster.

Even if we can't make it, we have to go.

Fauley is this world's largest country, so its population should be massive.

If a monster that hunted life appeared in such a place, what would happen?

The answer is clear.

I have to reduce the casualties as much as possible.

Perhaps... we can beat it with just the Heroes.

It doesn't matter if I'm getting full of myself. We can only try.

If that's the case, the villagers won't have to become sacrifices.

"For now, let's warp back to the village, and set out." (Naofumi) But we took all of the Filo Rials here to assist in the Army's transportation.

Do I have to make use of the monsters I turned into Raphs?

They do have some stamina, but they're not as fast as Filo Rials.

“Who should we take?”

“The Allied Armies have suffered heavy casualties, and moving them will be difficult. Queen, what will you do?”

“... I understand. I will accompany you with my Trash. I'll negotiate cooperation with Faubley's army.” (Queen) Fumu, she really is Melty's mother.

At times like this, she takes the initiative, and steps forward.

The Queen went to talk to the other army commanders.

It ended up that the Silt Welt generals would take charge of the Armies, and have them steadily proceed towards Faubley.

Chapter 308: Kirin

After returning to the village by Portal, we immediately set out for Faubley.

“Firo’s carriage...”

“We had to leave it. There’s no helping it.”

“Uu...”

I can’t warp while taking something of that size along.

So Firo will have to use one of the cheap carriages in the village.

One of the other Filo Rials will carry her’s back to the village later.

“Let’s do our best.”

“Yeah”

I took whoever had high combat abilities with me.

The heroes were a given, and Fohl was included in that category now.

Raphtalia, Firo, Rishia, Kiel, Sadina, Taniko, Gaelion, and that Granny, whose combat experience is high (She apparently performed quite a bit in the previous battle, but I never saw it). Motoyasu’s three, and Female Knight were also brought along.

There’s also the Queen, and Trash. I don’t care about the latter, but the Queen will be useful in negotiating with their government.

“What sort of enemy is Kirin?” (Naofumi) “I have knowledge of it from the game, but I can’t guarantee its accuracy....” (Ren) Right... Ren’s right.

In the Houou battle, everyone’s info differed, and the real one was also different from all of them.

“Do you know anything, Queen?” (Naofumi) “The tales describing Kirin? I’m knowledgeable of the legends, but... was it supposed to be in Faubley...?” (Queen) “It wasn’t?”

The Queen is a lover of legends, right? At least from what I’ve seen.

Why doesn't she know about it?

Perhaps the country of Faubley intentionally concealed the fact. It's possible.

It's a country made of the blood of Heroes.

There's no way they didn't know.

"Faubley's gone through a long period of political upheaval, so I can't deny the possibility of the information dying out. They also claim to be investigating the four beasts, so you may find something in their large national library." (Queen) National Library. I believe Melty was able to remember a bit of info from a book, but what book was it?

Ah, there were a lot of Seven Stars in Faubley, right?

I may end up fighting alongside them here.

... There may be the person who caused the incident mixed in as well.

If I find them out by how they attack, I may end up killing them.

What's more, if there are Seven Star Heroes summoned from another world, I may be able to ask it from them.

Not that I'm expecting anything great.

Our carriages proceeded at full speed, but...

The time came, and the hourglass in my vision enlarged.

This time, it displayed a 『9』.

But that doesn't really matter.

The problem is what came afterwards.

I guess it was after about an hour.

Firo was surpassing her limits, and running at breakneck speed. We were storming down the streets of the country neighboring Faubley.

Suddenly... the number vanished.

I stopped the carriage, and called out to the Queen, and the heroes.

“What’s this about?” (Naofumi)

“What happened?” (Queen)

“Yeah, the hourglass vanished. As if the beast had already been defeated.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, mine’s gone too.” (Ren)

“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Faubleigh has their own heroes.

So it’s not impossible.

How many of them are there right now?

Um... Trash and Fohl are Seven Stars... what about Rishia?

Unlike Fohl’s, hers has settled into a translucent state.

I really don’t think it’s a Legendary Weapon, so what exactly is it?

Anyways, there are five more of the Seven Stars, so it’s not that strange if they were able to beat Kirin.

Then why would people with that sort of power refrain from participating in the Houou battle? It’s strange no matter how you look at it.

“Queen, does Faubleigh have all of the other Seven Star Heroes?” (Naofumi) “I’ve heard that five of them mainly operate from their lands. Of course, they also visit other countries.” (Queen) So Faubleigh has all of the rest.

And Trash and the Four Summoned are centered in Melromark.

It appears we were equal in numbers.

There’s someone among them that I can never forgive.

The enemies summoned in the wave... It’s possible that someone like Glass appeared there as well.

If that’s the case, they might be trying to get the Heroes to kill each other.

But I won’t stand by false charges.

I'll deliver retribution unto the true culprit.

But...

There's one large problem.

The number on the blue hourglass is gone.

No, the blue hourglass Icon itself is gone.

In its place is the normal Red Hourglass, counting down time to the next wave.

One Week.

It's certain that something defeated the wave, be it the Seven Star Heroes, or something else. Then where did Ouryuu go?

I turn my eyes to Gaelion.

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

Taniko's cuddling with him.

I want to somehow call true Gaelion out, but...

From the start, he doesn't come out before Ren or Taniko.

... Kirin's gone. Ouryuu's left.

Even if he is set to appear, I have no idea where it'll be.

It would be troublesome if he appeared with little warning like this time.

I need to ask for the location.

"Ren, Itsuki, Motoyasu, where does Ouryuu revive?" (Naofumi) "Over there." (Ren)

"Here." (Itsuki)

"That way, Father-in-Law." (Motoyasu)

They each point in different directions altogether.

They're all over the place...

We can't determine its location. I never expected this.

“I-it seems we don’t know Ouryuu’s location.” (Ren) Ren seems to be bewildered.

Yeah.

I mean, everyone’s disagreeing here.

There’s no choice.

We’ll put Ouryuu off ‘til later. I’ll get what I can from Gaelion.

“I’m going to ride Gaelion, and observe Faubley’s situation from the sky.” (Naofumi) “What about Firo?” (Firo)

“You can come along if you want. Along with Gaelion.” (Naofumi) Perhaps that was a bit forced. But since Ren and Taniko are with us, we’ll have to fly up high to speak.

Taniko tries to get on him, but Gaelion rejects her, and begins beating his wings.

I straddle Firo, and we lift off.

“... And? Tell me everything you know about Ouryuu.” (Naofumi) “Sorry. I know nothing.” (Gaelion)

I look towards Faubley from up high.

I see something like a speck in the distance... Is that it?

I can’t tell what’s going down there.

“So you aren’t the dragon?” (Naofumi)

“It may be an assimilation of the Dragon Emperor cores...” (Gaelion) Fumu... because Ouryuu’s seal isn’t breaking, the blue hourglass didn’t appear. Can I look at it like that?

—

After I conversed with Gaelion, we stopped by a small country.

To easily cross Faubley’s border, the Queen stopped by the castle of said country, and came out quickly.

“Iwatani-sama, I have found out what became of Kirin.” (Queen) Well,

it's not like I didn't hear any gossip on the city's streets, but hearing the Queen's, and Shadow's information is for the best.

"The Heroes in Faubley led the army, and managed to subjugate it. The damage caused was 0. Absolutely none." (Queen) "I see... that's good."

Still, the one who killed off Atlas, and our armies may be there.

Just by thinking that, I feel I need to get there immediately, and make him taste the same, no an even greater pain than that he inflicted on Atlas.

"And? How many of their Seven Star Heroes participated?" (Naofumi) "That's the strange thing. Apparently, it was only one." (Queen) "One...?" (Naofumi)

One, is it? There seems to be a capable person among them.

But what the hell were the other heroes doing?

They didn't even go help out with Houou. They didn't fight the Kirin that appeared right next to them.

It's as if they're useless.

"We're still going to confirm the truth. For Atlas, and the other's sake as well." (Naofumi) "I understand. I've already sent messengers ahead to grant us an audience with Faubley immediately." (Queen) On the Queen's orders, the country we stopped in sent messengers to Faubley.

They were on flying dragons, so they shouldn't take long.

The problem is if we're setting out yet or not...

"Should we rush there?" (Queen)

"Fue..." (Firo)

Firo's collapsed on her own carriage.

She's just fought a series of battles.

Though she claims she's fine, she must be pushing herself.

We should rest, if only for a bit.

I bet Faubley will take a while to gather their Heroes as well, so we should rest when we have the chance.

“No, let’s rest, and recover our strength.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Queen)

Like that, the third of the four beasts was defeated, and the wave’s hourglass turned red once more.

Chapter 309: Straying Off Course

We'll head to Faubley after Firo and the others rest for a night.

Right now, we're staying in an Inn of the neighboring country. Raptalia left to bathe in the public bath.

Tomorrow, will we have a meeting with the Seven Stars?

There may only be one there, but we still need to go in protest.

The King seems to have taken a liking to me, and he should have at least enough political power to gather the Seven Star Heroes.

The Queen already sent a quick messenger, so they might be gathered by the time we get there.

The message also contained a form of my request.

He keeps sending over those disgusting videos one after the other, so I don't think he'll deny me so easily.

But... really, who is the culprit?

That one hero who defeated Kirin probably knows of the others.

I also can't deny the possibility of someone like Glass being behind the curtain. Whatever the case, we can't let the guy who tried to take out the entire continental army get away unharmed.

Even so... I need to think of Firo, and our other beasts of burden's stamina.

Even though we're only staying a night, I feel that all of my time is being wasted. I'm irritated.

Another emotion seems to have emerged in my heart. When I'm left alone in a room, I get depressed for some reason.

I guess this is what exists between the me who only plots for revenge, and the me who can do nothing but cry tears of grief.

"What's up, Aniki?"

Fohl finished his shopping, and enters the room.

... He's Atlas's brother.

We've slept in the same bed before, though.

"Fohl?" (Naofumi)

"What?" (Fohl)

"Are you going to sleep yet?" (Naofumi)

"... Let's see. I'm a bit tired, so I guess I'll turn in early." (Fohl) "I see. Fohl? Do you like me?" (Naofumi)

"What!?" (Fohl)

Fohl raises a strange voice as he stares at me.

... I guess he doesn't.

I mean, I'm the one who couldn't protect his precious sister.

"... I don't hate you. I promised myself that I would never hate the one Atlas loved." (Fohl) "Then... sleep here." (Naofumi)

I point to a bed.

"Really, what's with you?" (Fohl)

Fohl makes a grandiose gesture of spreading himself over the bed.

I gently sat down on the bed Fohl was lying on, and put my hand on his back.

Ah, he smells kinda like Atlas... I think.

"HII!" (Fohl)

Fohl suddenly jumps up.

"W-what the hell do you think you're doing?" (Fohl) "I thought I would sleep with you." (Naofumi)

For some reason, I see that girl's facial features in his.

It's makes me feel as if all that never happened.

"You bastard! Wait!" (Fohl)

Fohl's face turns pale, and he runs out of the room.

“Naofumi-chan?” (Sadina)

“...What?” (Naofumi)

I’m not sure if she returned earlier, but Sadina comes into the room with a Sake bottle in one hand.

“I heard from Fohl-chan... drink this, and regain a bit of your spirit.” (Sadina) “I’m sorry... Alcohol just doesn’t do it for me.” (Naofumi) “Ah, that’s right...” (Sadina)

Before her, others have come to try and cheer me up.

I guess it doesn’t matter what world you’re in. People will offer alcohol to you when you’re depressed.

If I was able to get drunk, I think that I would be drinking right now.

“Then will you do something fun with Onee-san?” (Sadina) “... That’s right.” (Naofumi)

Atlas said she wanted me to answer to those that said they loved me...

Then I need to answer this woman who always said she harbored feelings for me.

“Naofumi-chan?” (Sadina)

“Sadina, do you like me?” (Naofumi)

“Oh my, you’re asking quite an embarrassing thing. That’s right. I love Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) She wriggles her body and acts embarrassed as she answers.

“I see... then change to human form, take off your loincloth, and lie there.” (Naofumi) “... Naofumi-chan?” (Sadina)

Sadina tilts her head, as she sits on the bed.

“Hey, human form, I said.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, yes.” (Sadina)

Sadina dispels her transformation, and changes to her Demi-Human form.

I lower my pant, grab her shoulders, unfasten her loincloth, and...

“Wait, Naofumi-chan, STOP!” (Sadina)

I was pushed away.

“Naofumi-chan, what were you trying to do right now?” (Sadina) “I mean, wasn’t I doing what you wanted me to do?” (Naofumi) “... Wait a second, Naofumi-chan. Sit down there.” (Sadina) “If I sit on the ground, we can’t do it, you know.” (Naofumi) “That’s fine, just sit down already!” (Sadina) What?

I feel that Sadina’s mood is getting worse.

“I’ll ask first, but you know there’s things like atmosphere and foreplay and a lot of other things you have to take care of first, right?” (Sadina) “Yes, I know. And?” (Naofumi)

I mean, I’ve dabbled my hands in plenty of Eroge.

There’s no way I don’t know.

Honestly, I know a lot of amazing things Sadina’s probably never even heard of.

... Not that I’m trying to brag.

“Even so, you mechanically try to do it with me. Raphtalia-chan’s going to get angry.” (Sadina) “... Perhaps. But Atlas wished that I answer to you.” (Naofumi) “You see, Naofumi-chan, everyone loves you a lot. But I don’t think you should go around doing that.” (Sadina) “... Really?” (Naofumi)

She gives a serious answer for once.

With someone like Sadina scolding me about my actions, I was able to regain some composure, and understand what she was trying to say.

“Naofumi-chan, I’m the same. If you wish to have fun with me, and love me, then I’ll accept. If you find things too sad to bear, then I’ll comfort you as a woman. But the current you doesn’t seem to have any of those feelings. Though I don’t think you’ll go after Raphtalia because of your promise with me.” (Sadina) “Um... I think I’ll wait to give Raphtalia an

answer.” (Naofumi) “Hmm... It seems you have some resolution there. Good. But I’m different, right? It seems you tried to do something to Fohl-chan, but you understand what I’m saying right?” (Sadina) “Probably.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-chan, right now, you were thinking of nothing but making children with me. Isn’t there something a little different with Raphtalia?” (Sadina) “... Different? Fohl is... well...” (Naofumi)

Was what Atlas wished for... something else?

Didn’t she want the children of the Hero of the Shield... or something? Though I think I kinda understand.

I don’t have any homosexual tendencies, but Fohl seems to have slight leanings, so I tried to push him a bit.

“You see, Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina)

Sadina smiles, and puts pressure on me as she grasps both of my shoulders.

I think she’s acting similar to Raphtalia.

They aren’t related by blood, but I guess she really is a sort of sister.

“Having children is supposed to be the result of love; the result, and not the goal. The journey is important. I think I would enjoy it if me and Naofumi-chan loved each other. Perhaps if you wanted me to comfort you, I wouldn’t mind if I got pregnant as a result.” (Sadina) “Fumu... now that you mention it, that makes sense.” (Naofumi) “Even if you hate it, you think that as long as you can make the other party happy, you’ll offer yourself, right now, right?” (Sadina) “... Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Truthfully... I’m quite sure Atlas-chan didn’t wish for something like that. So calm yourself.” (Sadina) My head clears from her words.

Even when I haven’t found my enemy, I strayed off path to make sure not to leave any regrets.

I lost myself in the ideal of... ‘As long as Sadina wishes for it.’

... That's right. Sadina's a human too, for argument's sake. Just as my heart wasn't in it, as long as her heart wasn't prepared, and she didn't ask for it, it was wrong of me to make a move.

I'm more than well aware that rape is a crime.

I was going to pledge myself to her, but as I was not the usual me, she refused. I wonder what the real me wants.

Then... what... should I do?

"I understand that you'll take responsibility, but if I accepted the current Naofumi-chan, the future Naofumi-chan would only have more regrets. That's why Onee-san will reject you for now." (Sadina) "... I see." (Naofumi)

"I'll warn Raphtalia-chan and the other children, so think over what you have to do again. Make sure you reflect on trying to do things to me indiscriminately." (Sadina) "..."

By Sadina's warning, my thoughts began wandering once more.

Right now, I'm no good... I understand that well.

Sadina warned me out of worry for my future.

So I don't have any regrets, I can't lay hands on those that love me.

Or the me of the future will repent.

I regretted not doing it, so she directed harsh words at me.

I could have given Atlas more happiness, and yet...

Instead of regretting not doing it, it's better to do it and regret... no, that's no good, right?

"Naofumi-chan, it may be impossible for you to smile now. But slowly get back on your feet.... And once you have the resolve to live trying to find out Atlas's intentions, with me, Raphtalia, or the village children... Even Fohl. You can give us your answer. Your current determination is no good at all. I love you, so being embraced by you like this would disgrace me as a woman." (Sadina) She gently strokes my face, and leaves the

room.

... I am... Where am I right now?

Taking responsibility... resolve...

Various thoughts spin around my head.

I am... what exactly do I want to do?

Kill the one who did this to Atlas, defeat the wave, and bring peace to the world... Then what?

I have no intentions of being buried in this world.

That feeling hasn't changed from the start

This is probably what Sadina was warning me about.

With such half-assed resolve, what's more, with the intention of impregnating my partner... I'm scum. I didn't even wish for it myself.

Something like that won't make anyone happy.

She didn't want me to be treated like a breeding horse, I think.

When I realize just how much she was thinking about me, my mood worsens again.

Something was wrong with me back there. There's no way Fohl is homo...

And I can never replace Atlas.

Though I'd like to think they didn't have any twisted sibling love.

"... Yeah, that's right." (Naofumi)

I can't impose my selfishness on the villagers.

I have to live up to the expectations of those that believe in me.

But for that, I have to have the resolve to carry their lives on my back.

Now, Atlas is lending me her power as my shield.

Then when I return to my world... what'll happen to her?

I don't know, but... I guess that would be good bye.

My thoughts of going back home, and my thoughts of staying with everyone, and answering to their feelings, intersect.

Without me reaching an answer, the night came and went.

Chapter 310: Firearms

It happened a little before we warped to the village to set out.

On the island I once used as my base when I turned strange, it awakened.

It was sealed deeply underground, along with all equipment. Little by little, the machines worked on it autonomously, and as if it were a butterfly breaking out of a cocoon, it opened its eyes. It slowly dug its way up, and breathed its first breath of fresh air.

After shaking off the dirt that coated its body, it jumped into the sea, and swam out.

As if it knew where it was supposed to be... it eventually arrived at the village I knew all too well...

“We need to get to Faubley quickly! Get out the carriages!” (Naofumi)
“Eh?... Firo has to pull this carriage?” (Firo) “Deal with it! Now everyone, hurry! Motoyasu, have your three pull carriages as well! Gaelion, you too!” (Naofumi) “Yes, Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Upon hearing my voice, it immediately ran to my carriage...

—

The next day. (TL: I think from the story, not from the events listed above) “Do you think we’ll be able to get an audience in Faubley today?” (Naofumi) “Most likely.” (Queen)

Us who had been resting in the inn met up with the Queen, who was staying in the castle.

“The other side also says they’ve finished their preparations to greet us, so there shouldn’t be any problems.” (Queen) “I see. So they managed to gather the Heroes.” (Naofumi) By what command do they move?

Only one participated against Kirin. I don’t get how they work.

Aren’t they supposed to be fighting for the world?

The carriage bounced up and down as we proceeded forward. The roads changed to stone pavement at some point in time, but that doesn't really matter.

"Ren, what do you think the otherworlders like us are thinking? Apparently, they didn't participate against Kirin." (Naofumi) Itsuki's silently and expressionlessly staring in the carriage, and Motoyasu only looks at birds, so conversations like this won't get through.

So I tried asking Ren

"There are a few possibilities." (Ren)

"Well, yeah." (Naofumi)

"The first is that they don't care about the wave, and that they abandoned their mission." (Ren) "I really sympathize with that one." (Naofumi) If I was only thinking about myself, then that wouldn't be a bad move.

It isn't strange for someone to drop out of protecting this crappy world and go into retirement.

Honestly, I also think it would be best off falling to ruin.

But thinking of it as Raphtalia and Atlas's world makes me protect it a bit more.

"Next is they thought the Hero they sent to Kirin to be capable enough, and just left the problem to him..." (Ren) "If they can just push their problems onto that guy like that, I have a bad premonition of what's to come." (Naofumi) I don't think someone who was happily summoned to this game-like world would let an event like this go.

Is it that? They really place their faith in one single person that much?

"Hmm... there's also the possibility that they were too focused on level-grinding to care." (Ren) "Ah..." (Naofumi)

I guess there are players who focus on their levels, and ignore events as well.

They seclude themselves in remote areas, or something.

If that's the case, it would be exceedingly troublesome. For the world.
But if I look at these heroes gathered here, I guess it's not impossible.
"Rafu~..."

Hmm?

I hear a familiar voice calling me from afar.

"Did you just hear something?" (Naofumi)

"No, nothing." (Ren)

"Firo." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Firo)

"Stop the carriage." (Naofumi)

"Okay, got it." (Firo)

We stop, and I strain my ears.

"Ta~li~"

There's really something here.

Ah!

When I checked the bottom of the carriage, I found a single Raph holding onto the axel.

When our eyes meet, the Raph seems to give up his grip, and fall to the ground. It crept out from underneath the carriage.

I don't know why, but it was hiding.

"Did something happen?" (Raphtalia)

I hear Raphtalia dismount from the carriage.

"I heard a Raph."

"I'm surprised you could hear that. So..." (Raphtalia) I hold up the Raph, and show it to Raphtalia.

"Did it follow us here?" (Raphtalia)

“Seems like it... wait...!?” (Naofumi)

When I was patting it, I realized.

“Who is this? He isn’t one of the ones from the villiage.” (Naofumi)

“You can tell them apart!?” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah, from their feel, and their cries.” (Naofumi) “When did you develop such an...” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia stares at me with a questioning expression.

Isn’t it fine? They all have childish cuteness.

It’s like they’re a large litter of kittens born of the same mother.

If you live around them long enough, you should at least be able to tell them apart.

Anyways, the Raph looks at Raphtalia.

“Fa...”

I shut him up before he could finish.

It’s not that Raphtlaia was pressuring me to or anything.

I just didn’t want him to say it, okay?

“But what should we do?” (Naofumi)

“Should we portal it back?” (Raphtalia)

“Hmm...” (Naofumi)

It followed us quite a distance, so sending it back is a bit of a pain.

If we confront the Seven Stars and fail to find the culprit, we’ll be going back anyways.

“Rafu?”

“It’s not registered as one of my monsters either.” (Naofumi) “Rafu.”

The Raph nods, and releases some sort of magic at me.

A monster seal appears on it... It arbitrarily registered itself.

There are a few things I’d like to retort right now, but I check its status

anyways.

... It's surprisingly high.

Among the Raphs in my place, this one's the highest.

Specifically, it's at level 80.

What is this one?

Did a Raph venture into the wild, train itself, and choose to join me now?

It was a monster made by the strange me, so perhaps it's just easy to register them.

"Hmm?" (Firo)

Firo brings her face close to the unfamiliar Raph.

"Don't eat it." (Naofumi)

"Why does master say that whenever Firo does this?" (Firo) "I think this is the first." (Naofumi)

"No, you said it!" (Firo)

Fumu, perhaps it was the strange me again.

"And? What's up?" (Naofumi)

"Let's see. This child is the one closest to Raphta-" (Firo) "Rafu~."

The Raph in my hands uses its tail to block Firo's mouth.

"It's a secret?" (Firo)

"Rafu~."

"I see." (Firo)

It seems that these beasts have come to an understanding.

But... its fur feels really good.

It may be the best of all the Raphs I've held 'til now.

They're monsters based off of Raphtalia, so they feel similar to Raphtalia's tail.

But this one's feel is similar but slightly different. It's strangely nice.

... What is it? Perhaps this is my ideal-

"Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"You appear to be forming strange ideas as you're patting it."

(Raphtalia) Fumu. I got off track there.

Now should I bring it, or not. I believe that was the predicament.

"For now, there's no problems in taking it. I mean, its abilities are relatively high." (Naofumi) "Rafu~"

"... I see. I understand." (Raphtalia)

"Nice meeting you, small Onee-chan. Or perhaps it should be... Raph Princess?" (Firo) "Please don't call it that. Why princess!?" (Raphtalia) "So princess is no good. Then how about Raphtalia MKII? Or how about Raph Queen?" (Naofumi) "Why!? What's that supposed to mean?" (Raphtalia) "Really? Then I guess Raph-chan is fine." (Sadina) Sadina gets off the carriage, and names it.

Raph-chan...

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

"Well, I guess that's fine." (Naofumi)

"... Understood. I have gotten an insight into Firo's and Naofumi-sama's naming sense." (Raphtalia) Her reactions a bit unexpected.

"Rafu~" (Raph-chan)

Pat. Pat. Pat.

"Make sure not to pat it too much." (Raphtalia) "Yes, yes." (Naofumi)

"Tali~" (Raph-chan)

But what's the deal with this one?

Its cries differ from time to time.

"Riya?" (Raph-chan)

We get on the carriage, and I continue to pat Raph-chan. The city scenery around me grows more and more modern as we progress. The Cityscape gradually steals my attention.

Ah, by the way, the 『Chan』 isn't a suffix. It's part of his name.

I guess if you were to call him properly, it would be Raph-chan-chan.

No, no, no...

“What?”

I'm a bit curious about the city's prosperity, and... I guess you would call it Steampunk. I see various car-like things running on what looks like steam-based engines.

What's lined in the shop are... guns?

It looks like Faubley is quite a modern place.

Motoyasu said he saw a car in this world before, but the technological growth here far exceeded my imagination.

Ah, there's a genuine car. It looks old fashioned.

It gives off the feeling of one driven by a famous novel's detective, or something of the sort.

“Guns. It looks like being shot with one of those is no joke.” (Naofumi)
“Does Iwatani-sama have an interest in guns?” (Queen) “It's not like I don't... I was just thinking of how different this place was to Melromark. I think that you would lose if we waged war.” (Naofumi) “Against the guns?” (Queen)

The Queen looks over at the weapon shop, and turns her eyes back to me.

What is she so curious about?

Guns are quite fatal where I come from.

“Isn't that right? I mean, won't bows lose against them?” (Naofumi) “I don't think guns are that powerful weapons.” (Queen) “... Really?”

(Naofumi)

“Yes. Quite a few summoned heroes propose them as weapons, but most of their attempts failed.” (Queen) So some otherworld Heroes thought they would use their advanced knowledge to cheat?

Or something like that?

“Why?” (Naofumi)

“I think that Hero of the Bow-sama over there understands.” (Queen) I call out the spaced-out Itsuki from the carriage.

“Itsuki, what do you think about guns?” (Naofumi) “Meaning?” (Itsuki)

“The Queen is telling me that they aren’t that powerful of a weapon.” (Naofumi) “Let’s see... if someone of high level uses one, it would be troublesome... I think.” (Itsuki) ???

I don’t get what he’s saying.

“Naofumi-san, while this is reality, we also have something called Status, right?” (Itsuki) ... Hmm?

“The conclusion is that firearms probably aren’t as powerful as they were in the Heroes world.” (Queen) “Bullet speed is also effected by Status, and there are various problems involving reloading, and regulating gunpowder, and the like.” (Itsuki) The Queen nods at Itsuki’s answer.

“Yes, there’s the danger of the enemy discharging the bullets with magic, and even if you get to fire, you can’t rely too much on the firepower unless your level is high.” (Queen) Ah, I see.

I neglected taking Status Magic into account, and simply assumed they were stronger.

According to Itsuki, the momentum of bullets is also effected by Status.

Guns are good because they’re supposed to have the same firepower regardless of the wielder.

If you take away that point, I guess they aren’t as useful as in my world.

Hmm, they’re letting people practice over there.

A child is holding a gun, and aiming at a target.

Perhaps she noticed me concentrating my attention. Firo stopped walking.

The trigger was pulled.

With a bang, the gunpowder burst, and a familiar and unique sound entered my ear. The child threw his arms up from the recoil.

... Why is the bullet so slow?

I can see it moving. Perhaps at around the same speed as an arrow.

From my experience, isn't it supposed to impact almost immediately following the shot?

"Using gunpowder, you can definitely accelerate bullets, but the damage isn't particularly high. In comparison to a bow, its maintenance and ammunition costs are higher, so they aren't really used outside of Faubley." (Queen) "So that's how it is." (Naofumi)

"And since fire magic can discharge the shells, if you want to attack at long distance, most would use a bow, magic, or a throwing weapon." (Queen) "This is based on my game knowledge, but if you train, you can get quite strong. But I wouldn't call it the strongest weapon or anything." (Itsuki) Itsuki answers without any visible interest.

Well, in the Net Games I've played, the treatment of Guns has always been a bit strange.

Most of them have the attack power of them fall far behind the sword.

Even though this is reality, it is also a Fantasy World. I'm once again reminded of that fact.

So bows also have the merit of being easy to restock ammo.

And because of all this, gun technology doesn't improve.

"So even firearms are subject to status." (Naofumi) "Yes, range is also... if you shoot from too far away, the output drastically drops." (Itsuki) "Does artillery work by the same principle?" (Naofumi) "Yeah, there is

research underway towards the development of magic-firing cannons, but it would be much simpler, and quicker, to just cast the magic yourself.”
(Queen) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Artillery and catapults can have quite a bit of output if they’re used by people with high levels, so they’re often brought forth in war, though.”
(Queen) They’re dependent on user ability.

So if a class-upped high-level general were to light the fuse on a cannon, its output would drastically increase.

And if Itsuki used one, would it be strong?

I think it falls under the bow category.

I don’t see where Status starts and stops. What’s effected by it, and what isn’t?

It seems a bit complicated.

I’ve been participating in waves as if it were natural, but I never found it strange.

Then Bows and other weapons also take effects from Status.

... Of course.

However the outputs of Bows and Guns don’t differ greatly.

Since Itsuki’s the Hero of the Bow, can he not use firearms?

He should be able to use crossbows... I’ll have him try it out.

As if he sensed my intention, Itsuki nodded, and left for the Weapon Store.

With this, I hope he gets a bit stronger.

Chapter 311: Genius

Itsuki finished his copying, and returned.

Well, it's not like he can put those weapons to use yet. He'll have to strengthen them.

As we keep the carriage on course, we slowly draw near a castle much larger than the one in Melromark.

White dove-like monsters fly in the airspace above the structure, giving it a resolute fantasy-ish feeling.

If I had been summoned here, I would have been greatly moved by this scene.

It's more grandiose than Melromark, and it seems that living here isn't too bad.

If you think about it, this world is more medieval-ish than it is medieval.

In those days, large cities like this one would have terrible sanitation. I've heard that waste matter was simply dumped out windows back then.

High heels were apparently created to avoid stepping in such matter, but I wonder if that's true.

Unlike that, I don't see any lack of hygiene here.

Plumbing seems to have already been perfected here.

Though I guess the villages on the edges of the country should still be rural.

This area's been made with the knowledge of different worlds.

Zeltburg seemed to have bad public order, but this one seems more like a modern metropolis, or more like...

"Now that I think about it... it seems there's less of a difference in treatment between Demi-Humans and Humans here." (Naofumi) Because of our efforts, Melromark is currently working to rid itself of Demi-

Human discrimination.

But it's not like it'll settle in immediately, and I don't feel that any of the Demi-Human adventurers or merchants in Melromark are aiming to take permanent residence there.

Of course, there are plenty of Demi-Humans in the village on my territory, but Faubley truly seems to have... no discrimination.

I rarely see Demi-Human and Human children playing together, so the sight is quite fresh.

"That's right. I'd like to follow their example." (Queen) The Queen looks over the scene.

Because of me, the country's Demi-Human conditions are gradually improving, but Demi-Humans in my territory have started discriminating against Humans too.

Oh?

We just passed by a large church.

It had an impressive emblem displaying four weapons out front.

I guess it's a Four Hero Church.

The churches near my place also have that emblem.

Next to it is another building, with clock-like circular plate hanging over the door. Around the edge of the clock, the shapes of various weapons are carved.

"That one is a Seven Star Church." (Queen)

The Queen points to both churches.

"Its altar contains various devices from past heroes. The proof of their existence is enshrined there." (Queen) "Was that the stuff the Three Hero Church used?" (Naofumi) "Yes, it seems they secretly swapped out fake items, and took the real ones from here." (Queen) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

After the audience, perhaps I'll pay a visit.

Though I might not get a chance depending on what I find out there.

“See, you can see it even from here.” (Queen)

“Eh?” (Naofumi)

Saying that, the Queen points her finger towards the stained glass above the emblem.

When I concentrate my eyes, I can make out four glass symbols above the first emblem, and seven above the second.

Each symbol glows with a strange light.

But the Seven Star stained glass is... a little strange, isn't it?

There's a single area that's heavily chipped...

How should I say this? It looks like Paoman, where only a single segment's been chipped away.

Still, the seven symbols shine brilliantly.

“Until recently, only six of them were lit, but as the Hero of the Gauntlet was selected, the seventh one finally appeared.” (Queen) Scholar-like people in front of the church are offering prayers as their eyes dart towards us.

They embarrassingly turn their gazes to the heroes inside of the carriage before breaking eye contact.

Motoyasu is in another vehicle, but it seems nothing's happening to him.

If the fact that we were heroes came to light, I think that these people would jostle us around, so I keep quiet.

“Heroes... Faubley has five of them, right? I'm surprised Silt Welt and the other countries permitted that.” (Naofumi) “Strictly speaking, they don't own them, but are merely being aided by them. So I guess you could say their allied to this area.” (Queen) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“Silt Welt also has a Seven Star weapon, you know. That would be the Legendary Claw. The weilder is a Demi-Human native to this world.” (Queen) Three were summoned, so two of the Heroes in this country

should be native to this world.

“And the Cane is Melromark’s?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Queen)

The Queen pokes Trash.

He quietly nods, and looks over at me and Fohl.

I don’t sense any motivation or ambition from him.

“In the past... The previous Hero of the Cane fought to the death with Trash for the right to wield it, though.” (Queen) “No, I don’t really care.” (Naofumi)

I have no need for Trash’s backstory.

I’ve heard more than enough about him.

“Because of Iwatani-sama, I was able to get all sorts of information about the Hero’s legends from the generals of the Silt Welt army.” (Queen) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“First, you understand that their country worships the Hero of the Shield, right?” (Queen) “Well, yeah...” (Naofumi)

I mean, people do come over to pay tribute to me.

I seem to be the only hero that gets that high of a treatment.

“Anyways, I heard their legends, and realized a certain something.” (Queen) “That being?” (Naofumi)

I know that legends are apparently this Queen’s hobby.

Melty also likes to talk of them.

And her love of Filo Rials apparently stems from the Queen telling her of their legends.

Forest of Illusions, was it? (TL: Chapter 65)

“Of the Four Heroes, the ones who were active in their country were the Bow and the Shield. Similarly, I also heard of the Seven Star Legends they knew of. Specifically, the Whip, Claw, and Hammer.” (Queen) Hearsay, is

it?

Well, the Shield and the bow do have fundamentally good compatibility. And the claw is currently residing in their country.

“What I realized from reading into their legends was that Humans rarely ever made an appearance.” (Queen) “Well, it’s a Demi-Human country, right?” (Naofumi)

“That’s true, but the older the legends, the fewer humans, besides the summoned heroes, make an appearance.” (Queen) The older they are?

“Then the newer stories have more human interaction?” (Naofumi) “Yes. I think that finding the meaning behind this fact may prove to be interesting.” (queen) Fumu... Old Demi-Human tales are devoid of Human characters.

By that same logic, perhaps old human ones don’t have Demi-Humans.

The Human side mainly has tales of the Spear and the Sword, I guess.

“A similar phenomena takes place in Melromark. Strictly speaking, in the books left by the country that would one day become Melromark. The farther in time you go back, the less you hear of Demi-Humans.” (Queen) “Are they mostly stories of the Spear and Sword?” (Naofumi) “Yes, the opposite of Silt Welt. Inversely, the legends we have of the Bow and Shield are few in number.” (Queen) It truly is strange.

It’s not like Melromark and Silt Welt are separated by Sea, River, or Desert.

Could it just be that they had little cultural exchange?

I mean, in truth, the country of humans, and the country of Demi-Humans have a language barrier right now.

Because of the legendary weapons, the Heroes can understand all speech, but in the past, Raphtalia was troubled because she didn’t speak the language of Demi-Humans.

In my world, I heard that the language barrier during the Meiji Restoration turned out to be quite troublesome too.

Because of that, Japan was tricked into signing an unfavorable treaty, or something. At least, according to history.

Was it Middle School, or High school? Where did I learn it? I don't really remember.

"Isn't it just a difference in their cultural sphere? They didn't expand, so they never met, or something?" (Naofumi) "That is the current established theory. Anyways, both sides appeared in this world around the same time, and lived Neolithic lifestyles constantly fearing attacking monsters. In our country, Demi-Humans were categorized as monsters, and in theirs, Humans were treated similarly." (Queen) Until they could come to understand one another, they each thought the other was a race of monsters. So they didn't include them in their stories.

That sounds possible.

"But... the rest is just my speculation, so please wait a little bit for me to find concrete backing for it." (Queen) "You've already made me curious. What is it?" (Naofumi) "Even if you tell me that... just wait a while, okay?" (Queen) I follow the Queen's eyes, and find that we're in front of the castle.

I guess we don't have the time for a long story.

"Then let's finish the entry procedures." (Naofumi)

The queen nods, and calls out to the gatekeeper.

"You're the Queen of Melromark, and the Heroes, correct? I've already heard... go ahead!"

We already declared we were coming, so the gatekeeper easily lets us through.

"...?"

Fohl looks over the scene, and tilts his head.

"What's wrong?" (Naofumi)

"No..." (Fohl)

I look back to the gatekeeper.

He's seeing us off with a smile? What's wrong with this scene?

"Is it my imagination? I sensed something was off somewhere." (Fohl)
"Really?" (Naofumi)

The keeper happily beckons us in.

I do find it suspicious, but if I'm too doubtful, I won't be able to get anything done.

The carriage enters the castle, and the gate closes behind us.

"Should we park Firo in the stables before we proceed?" (Naofumi) "You can just leave the carriage in the courtyard."

"I see." (Naofumi)

We stop the carriage, and enter the interior of the palace.

Oh, it's grander than Melromark's, and it gives off more of a dignified feel. The difference in the width of the passages is quite great.

It isn't this world's most powerful country for nothing...

A red carpet extends endlessly in every direction, and before us is a flight of stairs.

I feel we'll get lost if we stray.

There also seems to be a path to the basement, but I guess that one's to the dungeon.

Melromark has one too.

We're guided as a large group as we climb the castle.

"Oh, right. What sort of people are these Seven Stars?" (Naofumi) I may be able to tell their personalities if I meet them, but I should at least know of their rumors.

It would have been best to ask earlier, but I don't have another chance anyways.

"Then shall I speak of the Hero of the Whip, the one who participated

in the Kirin battle?” (Queen) “Is the Whip from this world?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Queen)

The Queen starts explaining as we walk.

“First, the Hero of the Whip was born into this world a rare super geniuses.” (Queen) “Born as a genius?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, around once per generation, special people come around who greatly reform this world’s technology, commerce, magic, and many other fields.” (Queen) “Hmm... what a peculiar phenomenon.” (Naofumi)

“He was born into a noble family that served the Faubley royal family, and he managed to master the art of magic at the young age of three.” (Queen) ... I guess geniuses exist in every world.

So someone like that was selected as a Hero.

Wait, wasn’t Trash supposed to be some sort of master strategist in the past, or something?

Fohl is also... Among Demi-Humans, his battle prowess is top notch, and he’s a member of one of the strongest Demi-Human races.

Is that sort of strength a criterion for selection?

“And when he was five, he reformed our process of making paper, and he rapidly revived the industry for book-making in this world.” (Queen) Five?

Well that’s something.

... Itsuki matches the Queen’s pace, and starts walking next to her.

Well Itsuki was born into an Esper world with half-assed abilities, so he may have a few things to say about a super genius.

“Because of his overwhelming talent, he was constantly surrounded by praise. At seven, it was alchemy. He absorbed the knowledge of mechanics, and various magical fields, he graduated at the top of Faubley’s best academy, and left to be an adventurer. He quickly made his name as an S Rank, he won the martial arts tournament in Shield Frieden.

Finally, just before the wave hit, he was selected as the Hero of the Whip.” (Queen) “A stereotypical genius, I guess.” (Naofumi)

“Currently, he is researching transportation, I hear.” (Queen) The Queen points out of a window in the corridor.

Hmm? Something’s flying this way.

I thought it was a dragon, or some sort of flying beast, but... is that an Airplane?

“He made that?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, a design left by past Heroes. A way to fly without using Dragons, Gryphons, or any sort of Magic. He’s doing research to put that technology to practical use.” (Queen) Yep, that’s a genius alright.

... What is this? For some reason, this sounds quite familiar.

But where did I hear it before?

I think it was a long time ago.

Even before I came to this world... no, that’s impossible.

But still, I feel that someone told me something similar before.

Hmm...

I feel irritated, as if something were stuck in my teeth.

Chapter 312: Stolen Power

“A genius, you say? I can’t say I like the sound of that.”

The Granny uses this opportunity to enter the conversation.

First Itsuki, and then this old woman. These people sure love listening in on other’s conversations.

But why does the Hengen Musou Granny hate geniuses?

“...Why?” (Naofumi)

“The Hengen Musou style was brought to ruin through internal discord caused by such a genius.” (Granny) “Is that so?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. There was a certain talented individual who came under the impression that he was the one worthy of ruling the world, and our teachings forbid such ways of thought.” (Granny) “Hmm...”

I guess you can find them everywhere.

This is a bit late, but are there any decent people in this world?

With the way things are going, I don’t have high expectations of the Whip Hero.

“It’s said that geniuses govern the prosperity and decay of civilization. There’s always one or two present at the turning points of history. The Hero of the Whip has to shoulder everyone’s expectations and worry as he does his work.” (Queen) And as we were talking, we reached the audience hall.

Is that pig king here?

I really don’t want to meet him, though.

Saying, ‘Oh, Hero of the Shield-san, we finally meet,’ he’d close in with his greasy body, and... I’m getting goosebumps.

... I turn my eyes to the throne, and see a young man I’ve never seen before sitting atop the throne. He has a crown on his head.

If I were to describe him in one word, I guess it would have to be

‘Bishonen.’ His face is well built. I think that his looks are in order, at least.

His hair is gold, and his eyes are blue. He looks like a stereotypical foreigner, but... the impression his eyes give off is a little strange.

It’s unpleasant, or should I say, they’re emitting a peculiar something that I haven’t felt from anyone else in this world.

He closely resembles the old Motoyasu. Under his calm and refreshing atmosphere, I sense some deep ulterior motives.

And like that, he looks down on all of us. Something’s pissing me off. I don’t know what, but for some reason, my mind starts to wonder whether or not he’s an enemy.

His clothing consists of a rough jacket and pants.

Since the city is quite modern, it doesn’t seem too out of place, but isn’t something off?

Under his crown is a bandana. It doesn’t fit the look at all.

His hair is cut short.

“Good job leading them here.”

“Sir!”

The soldiers who led us here close the door behind us.

I’m also reminded of the old Itsuki. Is it the look in the soldier’s eyes...?

“Kyua?”

Gaelion, who’s wrapped in Taniko’s arms, lifts his head up and looks around.

“Hmm?”

At the same time, Firo tilts her head.

“If it isn’t the Hero of the Whip, Tact-sama. Where is the king?”
(Queen) So his name’s Tact?

This is the super genius... I can’t judge him by his appearance.

I thought he would look more studious, but, he's without a doubt, a Bishonen.

"The King? Ah, that guy. Yeah, I already killed him." (Tact) The Hero of the Whip speaks with a nonchalant tone.

Even the Queen loses her calm composure. Her face is colored with confusion.

"... Could it be that I misheard? Please repeat that." (Queen) "That trash had no right to live, so I had him disappear from the world. The only thing he had going for him was his craftiness, so dealing with him was a bit of a challenge." (Tact) On his words, everyone, including me, raises their guard.

"... An insurrection? This is the first I'm hearing of it, though." (Queen) "Of course it is. I ordered the people of the castle into silence. And now, Melromark's Vixen, you're also not needed in this world!" (Tact) Tact's hand lets out a strange light.

He's going to release something!

I immediately step in front of the Queen and hold up my Shield.

「Vanzin Claw」!

Claw!?

Yes, in Tact's hand, an ominous, black claw settles into place.

And a familiar light shoots out, collides with my Shield, and... pierces straight through it.

"Wha-"

It continued in a straight line through my left shoulder, and finally, it pierces through the Queen behind me.

Immediately following, an intense pain flows through my body, and blood flows out of my wound.

"Gu..."

Everything's happening in slow motion. I turn my eyes to my Shield...

and the Queen.

It seems his attack only hit the two of us.

-I perceive everything changing around me.

The first to move are Raphtalia, Fohl, and Female Knight. They concentrate Chi in their legs and run towards their enemy.

Next is Firo, Gaelion, and the Granny.

Finally, Raph-chan, Kiel, Sadina, and Taniko make their move.

Everyone enters a fighting stance.

The Granny lowers her hips, and Fohl follows suit.

Raph-chan rushes over to me.

The ones who are late to act are Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Rishia.

No, they prepared for battle at the same time as the Granny, but... the moment they saw the weapon in Tact's hands, they froze.

"You-! You... Atlas-"

Tact dodges Fohl's attack... no, before that, a blue shadow appears in front of Fohl, blocking him.

Standing there is a Demi-human woman. She seems to be a cross between a human and a Blue Oriental dragon.

Her hair color is blue, and it is long. Her eyes are amber, as if they are the incarnation of the harvest moon.

"Oh, what are you trying to do to Tact-sama?"

"That's right. What are you trying to do to our Tact?"

At the same time, in front of Raphtalia... a young girl with a fox-like tail stands with magic concentrated in both of her hands.

Her hair is black and glossy. Her clothes are that of a shrine maiden.

Her face did not lose to Raphtalia's despite her age.

"Hakuko brat."

“Aotatsu, move over!” (Fohl)

“Raccoon wench.”

“You’re in the way!” (Raphtalia)

“How rude are you being to the ones fighting for the world... base woman... Let’s go, Raphtlalia! We cannot allow such wickedness!”
(Female Knight) Raphtalia and Female Knight coordinate their attacks and let loose lightning-like swordplay.

“The place reeks of dog. Let’s take them out quickly.”

“Luka race... being on dry land like this must make you want to die.”

Interrupting Kiel and Sadina’s charge is a woman in a red hood, and a sharp-eyed woman with pointed teeth and ears that looked somewhat like the fins of a fish.

“What are you trying to do to Niichan!?” (Kiel)

“Ara...” (Sadina)

Trash embraces the fallen Queen and stares blankly into space.

“Ah...”

His shaking hands are stained with blood, but they maintain a firm grip on her.

“Anyone!? Someone, please cast healing magic on my wife! Quickly!”
(Trash) Motoyasu’s three answer his call, and Midori starts chanting healing magic for me and the Queen.

“What are you doing all of a sudden!?”

Ren unsheathes his blade, Motoyasu begins casting a skill, and Itsuki pulls back his bow.

Since the situation came so suddenly, perhaps she was acting on pure instinct, but Risha threw her weapon at the curtain behind the throne, dividing the room.

I had found my hated enemy. My bloodlust begins to surge.

Injuries? Like I care.

I'm not going to fall here anyways.

I put my strength into my left foot, and forcefully raise my broken body.
I glare at the bastard.

Him... because of him, Atlas... everyone...

I'll kill him. I'll definitely kill him!

Wrath Shield III has evolved!

It has changed to the Wrath Shield IV!

Wrath Shield IV has evolved!

It has changed to the Wrath Shield V!

Because of the Shield of Compassion, I can't change my Shield to Wrath, but... To hell with compassion. I'll change it anyways!

Even if it costs me my life, I'll take out that man.

Wrath...

W-what? System Warning?

The Shield Icon seems to be getting smaller...

Ping!

A high pitched sound rings out, and... cracks spread across the Shield.
The Shield attached permanently to my arm falls to pieces.

"What!?"

Isn't the Legendary Shield impossible to break!?

But more importantly, that man succeeded in breaking through my defenses and attacking the Queen behind me.

Just who the hell is he!?

My Shield withstood even Houou's flames, but he easily pierced it!

"Ah... the Shield, is it? I really don't need it, but I guess having it is better than not." (Tact) "What are you..."

I prevent myself from toppling over, and cast healing on myself.

「Zveit Heal!」

It starts taking effect immediately.

But, it won't recover my lost blood.

“Naofumi-sama!? Are you alright!?” (Raphtalia)

“Don't mind it! More importantly, that guy is Atlas's killer! Kill him!”
(Naofumi) I give an order with an angry voice.

Right.

That guy. The attack he used was without a doubt, the flash that took out Houou.

Its output was quite something, and as I look behind me, I see that it burned a hole through the door and continued to precede forward.

“Understood, Niichan!”

Kiel changes to her dog form and rushes at Tact.

But Itsuki stops him.

“Wait!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki grabs her by the scruff of the neck and holds her up.

“What are you doing!?” (Kiel)

“He was able to pierce through Naofumi-san's shield. If you attack him carelessly, you'll be taken out immediately! And with him being the Hero of the Whip, aren't you wondering how he pulled out the Claw!? Think before you act!” (Itsuki) No, I know that.

I take one step forward.

But I can't get any power into my body.

I look at my wound.

I already cast healing magic, but it's not healing at all.

Why!?

Move. Move, and kill that guy.

“Ah, I thought you were all nothing but trash, so I thought to eliminate you all by exploding the bird, but I’m surprised you all survived. But, well, you were able to grant me some power, so I guess this outcome works too.” (Tact) “Cut the crap!” (Fohl)

Fohl puts the Aotatsu woman into a judo lock, kicks off of the ground, and flies at Tact.

“Oh, my. Did you think that’s enough to beat me? I sure am being underestimated here.” (Tact) “Acho!” (Granny)

At the same time, the Granny’s chi is sent flying at Tact.

He easily dodges and raises his hand. And a new enemy emerges from the curtain Rishia threw her weapon at.

The hidden women take out what seem to be assault rifles and point them here.

Oy... guns are dependent on Status, right?

「Meteor Shield」!

I swiftly deploy my useful Meteor Shield.

But nothing happens. Nothing changes.

「Hundred Sword」!

「Brionac」!

「Piercing Shot」!

「Erst Throw」!

The heroes counteract with their skills, but...

“What? Shield... Prison?”

A large cage appears around Tact and blocks everyone’s attacks.

“Wha-”

「High Quick」!

「High Quick」!

A large shadow appears from behind the curtain and runs at Firo.

Something collides with her at high speed.

「Fire Breath」!

「KYUA」!

「Freeze Breath」!

Gaelion and Taniko also try casting their breath, but just as with Firo, something behind the curtain neutralizes their attack.

“I won’t let you get in Tact’s way.”

A Gryphon shouts out in human tongue and grapples with Firo.

A woman with a dragon’s tail and wings, with large breasts like Rat and a pipe in hand, comes out and opposes Gaelion and Taniko.

It appears that she’s the one who used Freeze Breath earlier.

“Right. I don’t like you, but I agree.”

“KYUA!”

The lizard woman who spewed out a breath lets out killing intent from every pore in her body and glares at Gaelion.

“Hmm. You’re also a Dragon Emperor... then I can’t really let you go here.”

And my hated enemy, Tact, calls out to his female army.

“Everyone, don’t kill the women and children. They’re just being used, you see.” (Tact) “Don’t make light of us, we understand.”

“Yes, if they come to know Tact, they’ll understand.”

“Fire———!”

The gun-toting women pull their triggers at us.

Gunshots ring through the air.

Gu... ga... uu...

“Gu... ugu...”

“Ga... agu!”

“Ow...”

My body was pierced from every angle.

Why!?

I’m supposed to have the highest defense, so why am I taking this much damage?

“How does it taste? The assault of an army with the minimum level of 250?” (Tact) What... 250!?

So he even knows how to break the level limit.

No wonder he was able to easily take out Kirin.

He’s essentially twice me... no, he said that was the minimum.

He probably has three times my level.

Motoyasu’s three stood in front of Trash and the Queen, so they didn’t take any damage, but everyone else is ridden with bullet holes.

Even Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu have taken great damage.

But as he said, the women and children... Raphtalia, Rishia, Female Knight, and Taniko, aren’t that greatly injured.

You hypocrite!

You’re going to slaughter the men, leave the women, and conveniently act like the gentle protagonist, aren’t you.

At the moment, Fohl, Firo, Gaelion, Sadina, the Three Filo Rials, and the Granny have taken heavy gun damage.

Kiel, who’s currently a dog, and who looked like a man beforehand anyways, is also included in the count.

I remember this style of fighting.

Before he became strange... I remember Motoyasu, when he had his ulterior motives clearly displayed on his face.

And everyone here's asserting themselves as if they believe their actions are in the right.

Of course, they're mainly targeting us heroes.

But perhaps that's for the best.

If everyone were dealt that sort of damage, they would have died had they not been heroes.

Even so, this is bad... we'll all die at this rate.

Is my Shield gone? Broken?

And Ren, Itsuki, and Motoyasu have four methods of strengthening here.

Normal attacks shouldn't bother them at all!

Tact looks at me and gives a broad grin.

"It's just that your levels are all way too low. Just quietly get beaten by the level 350 me." (Tact) "N-Naofumi-sama, look!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia points to Tact with her shaking hand.

I lose my voice.

On Tact's arm is... a very familiar Shield.

"Ah, you'll probably hate dying with all of these questions on your mind, so I'll tell you. I have the power to steal the power of the legendary weapons." (Tact)

Chapter 313: Retreat

“What!?”

The power to steal... Legendary Weapons!?

What’s with that abnormal ability?

Wait a second.

The Hero of the Whip has the Claw because... he stole it?

“Yeah, the guy who called himself the Hero of the Claw had a rotten personality, so I already sent him to hell.” (Tact) Again, Tact said it as if it were a matter of course.

Dead?

If you kill a hero, isn’t the world supposed to be in trouble... So this is why the wave came so fast!?

No, it isn’t just the Hero of the Whip.

Perhaps the same became of all the Seven Star Heroes we can’t come into contact with.

I don’t know when they were killed, but we haven’t heard anything of them in the past two months.

So that means that the Seven Stars have been dead for a few months...

“And, all of the heroes always have totally twisted personalities, you know. They never listen to what I’m trying to say.” (Tact) Who would want to listen to a guy like this?

I sure as hell wouldn’t!

Anger is clouding the thoughts in my head.

Each and every one of them. Are all of the bastards that get selected as heroes people like this!?

“I’m going to be saving the world here, so all you guys have to do is die and hand over your weapons.” (Tact) “As expected of Tact-sama. You plan on saving the legendary weapons from the clutches of those vile heroes

over there.”

“What!?”

Upon hearing that voice, all of my comrades let out their voices before going silent.

Even Trash.

“H-how... Why are you here!? Aren’t you supposed to be dead!?”
(Naofumi) Witch, whom we had presumed dead, showed herself from behind a pillar. She leans her body against my hated enemy and looks down at us as if she were looking down at piles of trash.

“And as you can see, I’m obviously not dead, Shield.” (Witch) I can’t believe what I’m seeing.

She truly should have been dead.

In the frozen casket Faubley sent back, her corpse was definitely there.

And her death snuff tape couldn’t have been faked.

“On my face, and my body. I won’t forgive you for giving me these wounds. I’ll give you a slow death after making you experience a world of pain! Right, Tact-sama?” (Witch) There is a scar on her arm, as if it had been rejoined at the joint. Over one of her eyes hangs an eyepatch.

There’s a similar mark on her leg.

If my memory serves me well, those are definitely the places the Pig King severed.

So how is she alive!?

... Alchemy?

I heard that the Hero of the Whip also partook in that.

I see. The Hero who reported Rat was probably him.

In the past, I’ve heard Rat speak about homunculi.

But creating a fake that is indistinguishable from the real article is ridiculously difficult. When did they have a chance to swap them out?

No, more importantly, Witch is alive. That's all I have to know.

Hero of the Whip... Genius. Head of his class. Faubley's academy.
Witch's loss of virginity...

I see. So that's where he comes into play. (TL: I wonder if you all remember that) Someone who I can't let live-Witch... And Atlas's murderer, Tact.

Even though my Shield's been stolen, an unquenchable rage sears through my body.

It's not related to the Curse of Wrath.

I just hate him. I just want to kill him.

"Yeah, the one who sent Malty to that pig must be quite a villain. If it's her fault that a lot of people died, then she'll have to make up for it with her life. But I'll make sure to put her through a world of pain first!" (Tact)
"And that's how it is, Mama. How dare you sell me to that Pig King. Now die for your sins. Papa shares the crime too." (Bitch) "M-Malty..." (Trash)

Trash holds the Queen in his arms and stares in silence. His eyes are full of disbelief. He opens his mouth again and again, but no words come out.

Tact turns his Claws to Fohl, who was nearby, and thrusts.

"As if an attack like that will-!?" (Fohl)

He's fast!

Fohl's only become a Hero recently.

He can't follow those movements.

But Fohl emerges without a scratch.

"Hmm? If I have this shield out, my attack power disappears. How useless." (Tact) He makes the Shield disappear, and equips a claw on one hand and a small dagger on the other.

The dagger greatly resembles the one Rishia holds.

So that's how it is.

Rishia's mysterious weapon... No, the reason why her Seven Star Weapon is translucent is because its wielder was killed, and its powers were stolen.

And the weapon itself doesn't accept Tact as its wielder.

Perhaps it selected Rishia to rebel against him.

「Erst Throw」!

With a throwing motion, Tact embeds the dagger in Ren's shoulder.

It seems that Ren won't be able to use his sword anymore.

“Gu!”

“Don't try anything funny. When you think about Heroes, it's gotta be swords, right? Hand it over already.” (Tact) We've already suffered heavy damage from gunfire. We're at an extreme disadvantage.

I can't let him take the other legendary weapons too.

My body won't move, but I strain every muscle in my body. I fill myself with killing intent I won't let him take anything else from me!

“Go to hell!” (Naofumi)

I forcefully encircle my body with chi and magic. I use every bit of power I have left and kick the ground.

Just a second is enough.

Enough time for everyone to run...!

“Wha-”

Tact blocked the unexpected attack by materializing his stolen shield.

My fist impacts his body.

“Hah, how weak. Gufu!?” (Tact)

My magic and chi explode within his body, and he spits up blood as he's sent flying all the way behind the throne.

“Tact!?”

The gun-toting women all turn their eyes to him, creating a large chance.

And the heroes don't miss it.

“Now! 「Flashing Sword」!” (Ren)

「Shining Lance」!

「Flash Arrow」!

They let out their flashing skills to blind the remaining women.

“What are you doing!? Hurry up and shoot those guys to death!” (Bitch) Witch screams out, but Ren had already kicked down the door.

“「Transfer Sword」! ... As I thought, it's no good.” (Ren) 「All Dreifach Heal」!

Through healing magic, the people who had been immobilized through injury somehow find the strength to escape into the castle.

Ren and Motoyasu lead the way, while Granny and Raphtalia keep the rear.

Anyways, everyone got over their injuries, but that doesn't mean they recovered their energy.

The Queen's wounds are the deepest.

The clothes she was wearing have turned black from the oxidized blood covering them.

If we don't do something fast, we won't make it.

And I can say the same about myself.

My head is spinning from the pain.

I don't know why healing magic won't work on me.

It's a miracle I was even able to stand back there..

“Mirellia! Stay with me!” (Trash)

Trash calls out to the Queen. He holds her on his back as he runs behind me.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

“Niichan! Keep yourself together!” (Kiel)

I’m slumped over on Firo’s back.

My body won’t move at all.

The Shield’s Icon has long since vanished from my vision.

“Naofumi-san, do you understand? Your anger is completely justified, but shall we not retreat for now?” (Itsuki) Itsuki quietly orders me.

He’s right.

If we fight in an enemy fortress where we don’t know who’s waiting to ambush us, the other heroes will have their weapons taken.

And what the hell is with his Cheat?

“Itsuki-sama?” (Rishia)

“... Yes, let’s quickly retreat from here. Ren-san, how is it? Do you think you can at least transfer the Queen and Naofumi-san somewhere safe?” (Itsuki) “It’s impossible... My Transfer Sword won’t activate. Something’s interfering with it.” (Ren) “KYUA!”

As if telling us to leave it to him, Gaelion chants magic.

It’s Dragon Sanctuary.

They’ve probably cast a magic similar to that on this castle.

In the past, Firo and Gaelion fought for turf, and when their fields clashed, they were both nullified.

『KYUAAA』!

I feel something pass through my body.

“I’m not letting you get away!”

I hear a voice from further down the hallway.

「Dragon Sanctuary」!

Ku... as I thought, that Lizard Woman was a dragon.

And she said she was an emperor like Gaelion.

“Fi...ro” (Naofumi)

I desperately let out my voice, and call out to Firo.

“Leave it to me.” (Firo)

Firo keeps running as she begins casting magic as well.

「Sanctuary」! (Firo)

“Nope, 「Bird Sanctuary」!”

Ku... the Gryphon-like one chants too.

The moment one’s nullified, another is deployed.

There’s no way we can use it.

If we do get to Portal, well need to select the members to evacuate as well.

In the brief moment when the field is nullified, it’ll be hard to use the skill.

The front line is also starting to get noisy.

We’re met by soldiers ahead.

「Gravity Blade」!

「Brionac」!

「Piercing Shot」!

By the sound of it, the standard soldiers aren’t particularly strong.

It seems that only a fraction of their forces have broken the level cap.

It’s safe to assume that all the women we met in that area have received the ability to do so.

But the support fire coming at us from the rear is troublesome.

“Acho!”

“Hah!”

“Tei!”

The Granny, Raphtalia, and Fohl concentrate their chi on a single point and stop the bullets in midair. But, it seems that it drains a lot of stamina.

“Again.” (Taniko)

Taniko rides on Gaelion and assists him in casting a spell.

It looks like Sadina is helping as well.

“Uu... Woof!” (Kiel)

Kiel changes to Kielberus and bites at the soldiers up front.

But it seems the soldiers aren't to be laughed at. Or maybe it's because My Shield was stolen. Anyways, she's not able to inflict any serious injuries.

Because the Shield's gone, the Ability Correction skill isn't in effect.

And because of that, Faubley's soldiers won't fall so easily...?

No, even if there's something rotten in Faubley, it's the most powerful country. They're probably elite soldiers with relatively high levels.

We can't crush them one-sidedly.

Luckily, they're much weaker than Tact's harem.

They're at most level 100.

Of course, those women are coming at us from behind as well.

If Tact uses that skill that breached through my defenses, we won't get away unharmed.

I think it's probably on cooldown, or perhaps he doesn't want to damage his own castle too much.

“Have you dispelled their anti-teleport field yet!?” (Ren) “I'm trying!” (Firo)

Firo impatiently answers

“Ren, don't worry about us! Anything is better than letting those fiends get their hands on another legendary weapon! Just think about yourself

and run!” (Female Knight) “As if I could do that!” (Ren)

Ren quickly refutes Female Knight’s words.

Damn... If we can’t teleport, I guess we get irritated.

I can’t move, and my consciousness is hazy, so I can only think and observe.

“If we could just get outside, we could escape on Gaelion, but...” (Itsuki)
“They probably have something ready to intercept us.” (Ren) “Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu runs up to my bloodstained body.

If you have time to talk to me, go fight!

We continue our escape, but soldiers block our path, and eventually, we’re led to a dead end.

「Meteor Sword」!

We break the wall, and run down the corridor beyond.

Ren’s ability to take action is worthy of praise.

“Leave the rear guard to me. Saint-sama, quickly run away!” (Granny)
Granny takes Raphtalia, Fohl, and Female Knight. In order to stop those pursuing us, they stay behind.

“No...” (Naofumi)

I reach out my hand.

That role is the one I’m supposed to be filling.

“Naofumi-sama, leave it to me!” (Raphtalia) But as if they had expected this, the ones who kinda stood out–the red hooded woman, and the Aotatsu woman–are standing in front of us.

“As Tact-sama said, you came here.”

“Ku...”

As I look around, I see more of the people who were around the throne.

“Kyua!”

Gaelion deploys his second sanctuary.

“It’s useless.”

The enemy Dragon merely deploys her’s too.

It’ll just be an infinite loop.

Even so, we’ll have to teleport if we want any hope of escape.

The castle is crawling with enemy forces, and even if we reach the gate, this is their country... the civilians may even raise their arms against us.

If it was me, that’s what I would do.

Regardless of where we go, the Hero of the Whip is sure to follow.

Since we’ve already suffered injury and loss, we have no way to defend ourselves.

「Sanctuary」!

「Bird Sanctuary」!

“Bu-!” (Firo)

Firo stomps her foot, and impatiently cries out.

「I who... source... gufu」

I try to chant magic, but the wounds from Tact are deep, and I can’t concentrate.

That attack... no, that weapon must be cursed.

My wounds won’t heal with magic.

As if he cast a negative status effect, I can’t hold onto my conscience.

“Master!” (Firo)

Firo calls out to me, who had just failed in casting magic.

I can hear Tact shouting from the rear, where Raphtalia and the Granny are fighting.

“Just give up already, you trash.” (Tact)

“Ku... who the hell would give up! You were tempted by that Witch, you

intentionally stepped into our fight with Houou, and everyone... You even killed the Seven Star Heroes!” (Ren) Ren prepares himself to bear the brunt of Tact’s advance and declares as such.

“No matter what, the ones who handed Maltz to that pig and revived the Spirit Turtle have no Justice. Just lay down quietly and die!” (Tact) Tact readies his claw to strike, and...

“RAFU~~~~~!” (Raph-chan)

I feel the anti-teleport field dispel all at once.

Raph-chan’s tail expands greatly, and she releases magic.

“Wha-”

The unexpected development creates an opening.

They probably thought that since Firo and Gaelion had already deployed their sanctuaries, they would be safe for a while.

But Raph-chan was an anomaly. Because of him, the heroes were able to use their transfer skills.

“Now!”

Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki clench their weapons and chant their skills.

「Transfer Sword」!

「Portal Spear」!

「Transfer Bow」!

“You’re not going anywhere!” (Tact)

Tact finally takes out a whip.

And he swings it at Granny, Raphtalia, and Fohl, who were in the rear.

「Bind Whip」!

The whip expands as if it were a live snake. It thrusts forwards as if to intertwine itself around Fohl.

“I won’t let you!” (Raphtalia)

Sword meets Whip. Raphtalia halts the Whip's advance.

"Firo, Fohl-kun, Eclair-san." (Raphtalia)

"Aneki..." (Fohl)

"Raphtalia..." (Female Knight)

"If something happens to me... I leave Naofumi-sama to you."

(Raphtalia) Yes, as if she was fully aware of her fate, Raphtalia speaks to Fohl. She smiles at me, who can do nothing but watch.

"Ra...ph...a"

When I try to speak, I hear an ominous sound from my lungs.

Move. Or else... I don't want to lose anything else! Quickly, dammit!

"There's no need for that, Saint-sama!" (Granny) "Eh?"

The Granny kicks Raphtalia away, and sends her flying at me.

Raphtalia rolls on the ground dumbfounded.

"Run away quickly!" (Granny)

"But we don't know if the Transfer will-" (Ren) "If you don't do anything, you'll all die! Now, quickly!" (Granny) Ren quickly nods at the Granny's words, and activates his skill.

"Saint-sama... I'm leaving the world, and everyone, to you and my disciples!" (Granny) "W-what are..."

"My style existed to make one stronger and to punish evil. Even if my body were to crumble, as long as I know there are ones to carry it on, then my life was not wasted!" (Granny) She declares that as she runs in the opposite direction from us.

"MASTEEEEEEER!"

Raphtalia, and Rishia, Female Knight, and Fohl's screams echoed.

After that, the scenery in front of my eyes changes, and at the same time, for me, the world gets darker and farther away.

I bet the transfer was successful.

The same goes for Motoyasu and Itsuki.

But... The Granny didn't come with us. We were only able to confirm that after we warped away...

Chapter 314: Will

My body's light; it feels as if I'm floating.

I shouldn't even be here, but I saw them—the various events, and the actions of various people.

Through Ren's portal, the Queen and I were sent to Melromark. And we were immediately rushed to the largest medical facility there.

Both of our wounds are serious, and our consciousness faint.

I'm hurt so seriously that if I were to merely look at myself, I wouldn't be able to bear it.

"This is terrible... a severe curse has been inflicted. Start the preparations for the ritual magic!"

A healer shouts out, and priests are called from the Four Hero Church.

They're probably going to attempt everything they can.

"Please get a hold of yourself, Naofumi-sama!"

"Yeah, Aniki!"

"Master!"

"Rafu~"

Having had their wounds fully healed, the other heroes, Taniko, Sadina, and Kiel are resting in another room.

Good. Their injuries are comparatively light.

At this rate, they should be able to move around just fine.

"We'll be starting treatment now. Everyone else should rest and heal their wounds as well."

Raphtalia, Firo, and Fohl kept on calling out to me until the end.

And I was once again shrouded in darkness.

What I saw next are the Queen and Trash.

Her wounds are severe, and everyone could plainly see the god of death

lingering over her.

“...Goho!” (TL: Coughing sound)

Trash’s hand trembles as he grasps the Queen’s hand and prays.

Luckily, he had escaped without injury, so he was permitted to stay with her.

“We’ll begin administering the Yggdrasil extract. We’ll simultaneously use our highest forms of healing magic, and our highest class of holy water. On top of that, ritual magic...”

The Healer gives out directions like a doctor as he begins casting healing magic on her wounds.

She’s undergoing extensive, heavy treatment.

But nothing seems to be eliciting any reaction from her.

“What a curse... It’s comparable to the one cast on the Hero of the Shield-sama over there.”

“Mirellia.” (Trash)

As if she was reacting to Trash’s words, the Queen slowly opens her eyes and looks at him.

“Your voice... your exchange... I heard it.” (Queen)

“You can’t speak right now, Queen-sama!”

The healer warns her as he continues the treatment.

But the Queen slowly lays her head sideways, and answers.

“I know... there’s nothing you can do to prolong my life, right?” (Queen)
“T-that is...”

The healer stumbles over his words, before he glares at Trash and stands back.

“What are you doing!? The one you’re treating is the Queen of this country! If you call yourself a healer, then you have to put your life on the line and heal her no matter what!” (Trash) “You can’t... give your people

impossible orders, dear.” (Queen) The Queen weakly warns him.

It feels weird for me to come to an understanding with Trash, but I could empathize with him.

The situation is similar to how I lost Atlas.

The sadness of losing one dear.

The despair felt in one’s own incompetence.

The hatred felt against the cause.

All of those mix together, and make it so you can’t think anything anymore.

“B-but...” (Trash)

“This is... perhaps it’s heavenly retribution. My ineptitude... caused me to sacrifice my own daughter. My obsession with protecting this country, the world...” (Queen) “Wrong! That’s definitely wrong!” (Trash)

Trash desperately refutes the Queen’s words.

“... Is that true? I get the feeling that it’s all my fault. My daughter... Malty grew to be such a child, because she emulated my own incompetence. Because of my lukewarm decisions, everything... turned out like this.” (Queen) “That is... me... my...” (Trash)

Perhaps Trash is blaming himself for the loss of the Queen. His voice shakes.

But the Queen speaks to him once more.

“Likely, the Hero of the Whip... no, invaders will come and invade this country.” (Queen) “...” (Trash)

“Right now, Melromark is in a dire situation. Luckily, Iwatani-sama and the heroes, as well as their comrades are here.” (Queen) “Then, the Hero of the Shield is...!” (Trash)

“You... realize it already, don’t you? Throw away your past grudges. You have to move forward.” (Queen) A trickle of tears runs down Trash’s face.

He acts the same as I did when I wished, and Fohl did when he prayed.

I don't know what he's asking god for, but I felt something warm, as if I could hold it in my hand.

"Lucia... Mirellia..." (Trash)

And he lightly calls Atlas's name as well.

"If it was the Wise King of Melromark... if it was Luge Lancerose, then our hopes would be answered." (Queen) "But... the Cane no longer answers to my call...!" (Trash) "You're wrong. The cane lent you power, not because you were a Hero. It was because you were different from the rest. More courageous than them all, and much wiser." (Queen) "..."
(Trash)

"I believe. To turn around this disadvantageous situation... to save Melromark from its imminent collapse, we need your..." (Queen) "I am... I am..." (Trash)

"Fufu... you have so many pieces this time around. Now what move will the Wise King make to surprise me today?" (Queen) "... Mirellia." (Trash)

"Let me entrust this country's future to you. Please save the world... with Iwatani-sama. As the Hero of the Cane, and as my beloved..." (Queen)
Blood runs down her mouth as she smiles at Trash.

"You used your resourcefulness to make your enemies dance. You put awe into the hearts of all that opposed you... Go let the world know your name..." (Queen) At the same time... the Queen ran out of whatever energy she had left.

"Queen-sama!"

The door slammed open, and a country leader came in.

"Faubleigh has declared war on the entire world! Under the creed of uniting the world as one under their flag."

The situation.... Came faster than Trash expected. And people were already pleading to him for answers.

The next scene I see is two days later.

"Why the hell is Faubleigh messing around with World Domination at a

time like this!?”

Having finished treatment, Ren and the others arrived at the castle to participate in an allied army meeting, and they shouted out upon hearing the information.

Everyone present has a grim face.

Fauble's military might was just that high.

And they have individuals triple our level. We knew their power first hand.

It's not like the army didn't want to stop them. They just didn't have the means.

“They've sure done it. That cowardly Hero... When the wave's going on, does he seriously believe he has the time to go around conquering the world!?” (Ren) “... No, I actually think he does.” (Itsuki)

“He hurt Father-in-Law and Firo-tan, and on top of that, he hurt everyone else. I definitely won't forgive him!” (Motoyasu) The army is in agreement with the three Heroes' words.

The events that transpired in Fauble were relayed to all.

Those from Silt Welt are also present.

That Genmu guy, and the Shusaku as well.

“Naofumi's being treated... and we're going to war with Fauble...” (Ren)
“Yes. Right now, Fauble is mobilizing their entire army. The first place they'll attack is Melromark, then they'll move on to my country. The countries on the way will be forced to submit to its might...Due to bombardments from their new weapon, the 'Airplane,' many have already raised a white flag.”

“Is there a reason why they have admitted defeat so quickly?”

“Yes. They tried engaging them in dogfights with flying monsters, but they didn't have the means to counterattack...”

“Meaning the people riding the planes must be of quite a high level.”

(Itsuki) “Fuee...” (Rishia)

As Rishia lets out her speech habit, Itsuki starts patting her head.

Ren bangs his hand on the table.

“Naofumi’s wounds were severe... how is he doing?” (Ren) “It’s not looking favorable. We’ve repeatedly tried extensive treatment on him, but...”

“Naofumi-san...” (Itauki)

“That Tact bastard, just who is he!? How does he have the ability to steal legendary weapons?” (Ren) Just as Ren was complaining.

A soldier ran into the meeting room.

“New information! Shield Freiden has formed an alliance with Faubley!”

“What!?”

“And the Seven Star Hero, Tact Althaulan Faubley, proclaimed to his people that he was a child of god. That his possession of numerous legendary weapons proved his own divinity!”

The people taking part in the meeting stood up from their seats. There are expressions of shock all around.

It was quite a safe measure for him to take.

Showing his possession of many of the weapons of heroes would either prove that he went against god, or that god loved him.

Since Divine Weapon worship is prevalent in this world, he’ll be treated as a special existence regardless.

Even if he’s the one who killed the heroes.

“What’s more, he stated he would be the one to save the world, the four summoned were evil imposters, and that he would use all his might to destroy them. Also, that he had already purged four of the ‘Evil’ Seven Star Heroes. He declared it to many of the world’s nations!”

“Does he think he’ll get away with spouting such nonsense!?”

“The upper echelon of Faubley’s Church accepted his statements, but the ones on the outskirts of the country faced numerous rebellions. But those that received his power already went to subjugate and quell the revolts. It seems he made quite a bit of preparations beforehand.”

At the same time, a Shadow-like person appears, and whispers into the Genmu’s ears.

I bet it isn’t anything good.

“... My country is also divided on which side to join.” (Genmu) The situation is... taking a bad turn.

“What does the Hero of the Gauntlet think of this?” (Genmu) Though they weren’t really acquaintances, even Fohl could understand that it had to do with his origin. That it would affect his fate.

“Should I answer as a member of the Hakuko Race? Or would you prefer me be the Hero of the Gauntlet?” (Fohl) “You are not a pure-blood Demi-Human. I’m asking you as a subordinate of the Shield, and as a Hero. Or will you stand by my country as the descendant of Tai Ran Ga Feon?” (Genmu) Fohl shakes his head.

And he gives words filled with certainty.

“I am the Hero of the Gauntlet, the protector of the village built by the Hero of the Shield. Lineage is of no importance to me, and I don’t plan on doing anything foolish by throwing around my grandfather’s name.” (Fohl) “Of course. No matter what fate awaits you, my dear, Demi-Humans will always stand by the true Hero of the Shield. Blood has nothing to do with it!” (Genmu) The Genmu Old Man looks to Fohl with blazing eyes.

“That spirit is enough for me to ascertain your standing. It is my belief that we of Silt Welt should be lending you our power.” (Genmu) His words were continued by the Shusaku.

“Yes! The Hero-dono shed tears at the loss of our comrades, and displayed his anger for our cause. Our pride and our faith will not allow us to side with the one who caused the calamity that claimed the lives of

many of our people. It would pollute the name of our entire race!”
(Shusaku) All the Demi-Humans present nod.

There’s no way they would permit it.

He’s the root of evil that killed the ones they fought alongside.

I’m not the only one wishing for vengeance.

For all that fell against Houou, there’s no way we can forgive him.

That will remained in everyone’s hearts

“ ... ”

Fohl merely quietly gazes over the meeting.

According to the Genmu, his calm composure... overlapped with that of his grandfather.

“Now, what move should we make... Wise King of Melromark? We’ve already decided the path we must tread. How will you act on your beloved wife’s dying will?” (Genmu) “ ... ”

Trash remains quiet, with a strained expression on his face.

“In the first place. From his personal history isn’t there... isn’t something off? Just how much of a genius is he? Airplanes and Bombs... it’s as if he’s a soldier from our world.” (Ren) Ren voices his complaints to the meeting hall.

And Itsuki quietly raises his hand.

“What’s up?” (Ren)

“This is just a hypothesis, but may I continue?” (Itsuki) “Yeah.” (Ren)

“Ren-san, upon hearing his history, you didn’t notice it? No, perhaps you did, but you just weren’t able to piece it together.” (Itsuki) “What?” (Ren)

“What about you, Motoyasu-san?” (Itsuki)

“What could you be talking about?” (Motoyasu)

Itsuki takes a deep breath, and and continues.

“... Most likely, it exists in both of your worlds, if you search for it. It’s a

common story.” (Itsuki) Ren and Motoyasu tilt their heads.

“Naofumi-san seemed to have a vague idea, so it’s probably right.”
(Itsuki) “What is it? Just say it already.” (Ren)

Well, it’s not like I was oblivious.

But because I was sure that this wasn’t the world of Manga and Games, I didn’t want to deny the man’s personal effort.

But this incident is just too much.

Assault Rifles.

Planes.

Mastering magic at three.

All of his actions point to a single possibility.

Right, he’s...

“Yes. Most likely, that Tact, the Hero born of this world, was... reincarnated. He’s an otherworlder who was reborn into this world with his memories intact. At least, that’s my theory.” (Itsuki) “Reincarnation... that thing? Samsara? The cycle of life?” (Ren) “Yes. There are a few novels about that in my world.” (Itsuki) “I really only play games, so... I may have read one or two, but I don’t really remember. The only thing I remember is that Game Over = Death, and respawn. With this being a world close to that of a game, it didn’t cross my mind.” (Ren) “Oh, oh, me too!” (Motoyasu)

Ren and Motoyasu start thinking over the concept of Reincarnation.

I don’t know of the affairs of their worlds, but I’ve read books about that.

A reincarnated protagonist is born into a world of magic... a fantasy world just like this one.

And he becomes immersed in a world far off from the reality he knew.

This time, I’ll do it right. I’ll get status, and money, and women. I’ll get everything.

“So I confirmed it. In books of that genre, the first things most protagonists do is learn magic at a young age, and get higher marks than other people. Also things like using modern knowledge to invent, and other stuff that stands out.” (Itsuki) “Something like that... I have a feeling I’ve heard about it before. One of my friends on the net spoke fervently about it.” (Ren) “Right. I don’t think we’ll be able to get any definite proof from the individual, but something dubious is oozing out of his story.” (Itsuki) “That means that he was summoned from another world, like us?” (Ren) “It’s a possibility, but... what he plans to do, what he’s thinking. Do you think you can understand a little more of it now, Ren-san?” (Itsuki) Ren crosses his arms and starts thinking.

“He’s thinking like I did before I broke the Spirit Turtle’s seal.” (Ren) “I don’t look back to the past! I’m buried in my memories of Firo-tan!” (Motoyasu) “... Someone get Motoyasu-san out of here. He’s in the way.” (Itsuki) “Yes!” (Three)

“Ah, Kuu-san, Marin-san, and Midori-san, was it? I’ll leave it to you. Go keep him busy for a whil. You can even go play. I’ll personally explain it to Naofumi-san later.” (Itsuki) “Got it!” (Three)

“Nwah! My angels! Where do you plan on taking me!?” (Motoyasu) And, carrying Motoyasu, the Three Filo Rials leave the meeting hall.

I have no idea why they were there in the first place.

“To summarize, he’s thinking like the old us... that the monarchy of this world was corrupt, and had to be destroyed.” (Ren) “Yes, then things start to make sense.” (Itsuki)

“Then what’s that power he has to steal legendary weapons?” (Ren) “Perhaps it’s an ESPer ability like one from my world. A power like that wasn’t uncommon in books from my world. Something like stealing the power of others to strengthen yourself.” (Itsuki) “I see. If Itsuki says it, then it’s a possibility.” (Ren) “The reason his power didn’t become famous must be because he kept it hidden, and he didn’t use it in front of others. Like how I acted before.” (Itsuki) With a bitter expression, Itsuki started explaining to Ren.

I guess that's possible.

Even in things I've read, when protagonists are granted too great of a power, they live while hiding it for the most part.

Usually, it gets exposed due to various unfortunate incidents, but Itsuki is living proof that it's possible.

"Having it known that he could steal legendary weapons would greatly hinder his actions. But now that the die's already been cast, he's using it to its full extent... I guess." (Itsuki) "The fact that all of his comrades are women kinda reminds me of the past Motoyasu, too. So things have come together. I see." (Ren) Ren nods, as if his questions were all answered.

In contrast, Itsuki seems to be lost in thought.

"What's strange is the lack of information... it's odd.... No, we need to decode what to do now. In our fight with Faubley..." (Itsuki) And the meeting continued.

And my dislodged conscience floated elsewhere once more.

Now I'm not anywhere. An empty space of flickering lights, looping in an endless pattern.

In that space, was me, and ____...

Chapter 315: Spirit

Where am I?

I understand that someone had appeared to explain why I had seen those scenes before my eyes.

But upon seeing the form of my benefactor, I was at a loss for words.

“Atlas...?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Atlas)

The Dead Atlas was floating in the air in front of me.

I needed to... confirm whether she was real or not, so I hugged her.

“Ah... my ambition... my life’s goal...” (Atlas)

Yep, it’s the real one.

Even so, even death didn’t change her.

No, perhaps she’s an illusion created from my memory.

“Is this the afterlife, or something?” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, hug me more.” (Atlas)

“Enough of that. Please tell me!” (Naofumi)

Maybe my soul wandered around, and saw those dialogues.

I still feel that I haven’t died, but my injuries may have rendered my brain-dead, or something.

How unpleasant. I left the world a loser.

To finally die after being beaten to this extent isn’t something I wish for.

I thought I was surely bound for hell with my lifestyle, but is this really all there is to the world of the dead?

This strange space can’t be heaven.

“About your question as to whether this is the underworld. To put it frankly, it’s not.” (Atlas) Atlas smiles brightly as she answers.

Ah, so I jumped to conclusions.

If this is neither heaven nor hell, perhaps I'm deep in my own unconscious. No, it may be a space created by the legendary weapon, or something like that.

I mean, that sort of scene appeared in a manga I read a while ago.

"I see. Atlas, are you in any pain?" (Naofumi) "Nope, I don't feel anything." (Atlas)

"And where is this?" (Naofumi)

"If I had to say, it would be the world of Naofumi-sama's Shield... no, that's wrong. I guess it's the world of the Legendary Weapons." (Atlas)
"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

Now that I think about it, all of the scenes I saw were centered around the heroes.

Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, Fohl, Rishia, and Trash.

Everyone was selected by their weapons.

"Can I also look at that Hero of the Whip? Though it's stolen goods, he does have my shield." (Naofumi) "Yes, but your Shield hasn't been stolen, you know." (Atlas) "Hah? No, I definitely saw him take it." (Naofumi)
"With just that much power, it's impossible to completely take away one of the Four Great Weapons. He can only maintain its appearance, and a minimal amount of its power. He won't be able to tap into its full potential." (Atlas) Atlas forms a ring with her arms, and when I peer in, I see the Whip... guy calmly looking over a battlefield with a smile on his face.

He's happily conversing with Witch.

After that, another woman came and talked to him, and Witch made an unpleasant expression. But her face quickly changed to the smile that she used to scheme.

It's truly an irritating scenario.

"I don't really think I want to observe this one." (Naofumi) "That's

right.” (Atlas)

“And? Why am I in a place like this?” (Naofumi) “The Spirit of the Shield, who’s been lending you power all this time, called you here.”

(Atlas) “I see... from that accursed Shield.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, from that accursed Shield.” (Atlas)

Next to Atlas, a ball of light bobbed up and down.

Is this the spirit of the Shield?

What an unreliable appearance it has there.

As if it had read my mind, the ball’s bobbing amplitude increased.

“It’s making an honest apology.” (Atlas)

“Oh, I see. Let me punch it.” (Naofumi)

Here’s your retribution for summoning me randomly without consent.

The Spirit of the Shield quickly slipped behind Atlas.

It appears to be shaking.

To hide behind a little girl...

“I understand how you feel, but apart from the first generation of Heroes, Naofumi-sama is the first one to ever make it here.” (Atlas) “Ah, I see. And what does that spirit over there want with me?” (Naofumi) “It wants Naofumi-sama to make a decision.” (Atlas) Around me, balls of light similar to the Spirit of the Shield gather.

These are likely the spirits of the other weapons.

One, two, three... Why are there twelve of them?

Among them, including the Shield, four of them are differently colored.

There are eight left.

If there are seven stars, what’s the last one?

“Me?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. Honestly speaking, the Spirit of the Shield-sama has made a

decision to abandon the world to its fate.” (Atlas) “... Abandon?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. So the Spirit of the Shield has called you here to ask if you want to be compensated for your services ahead of time.” (Atlas)

“Compensation...” (Naofumi)

“It’s a reward given to Heroes who have saved the world, or to those that overcame the wave. A reward from the Legendary Weapons.” (Atlas)

After asking a few questions to the floating orbs, she speaks to me.

A reward for saving the world...

You should have started out with that line.

“The first option: a return to your original world. In this case, you can get three wishes on that side. They can be for anything.” (Atlas)

“Anything, you say...” (Naofumi)

“Are you worried about the law of cause and effect in your world? That can be tampered with to some extent... you can become rich, get a good job, and live your whole life without trouble without negative consequences. But things like immortality aren’t possible, he says.” (Atlas) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“Since he’s abandoning the world anyways, he can’t grant you anything that lasts forever. The most is being able to bring the girl you like with you.” (Atlas) “Atlas, what about you?” (Naofumi)

“I am always with Naofumi-sama. So I am not included in the count. I will follow you to your world.” (Atlas) Hmm... it’s not bad for a reward.

I truly do wish to return to my world, and there isn’t much else I want.

“You can take Raphtalia-san and return to your world, forget about the battles, and live a peaceful life. At least, the Spirit of the Shield proposes as such. Of course, he’ll make it so that that nothing bad will befall her from living in your world.” (Atlas) “... Why Raphtalia?” (Naofumi)

“Wait, so you guys aren’t like that? The Spirit of the Shield asks as such.” (Atlas) “Well...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia can come to my world, and we can live our lives together... it's not a bad option.

Of course, Raphtalia's feelings are important as well, but she did say that she loved me.

We do have a bit of an age difference, but her appearance is that of an adult, and the Spirit of the Shield said nothing bad would happen to her.

Yes, as a reward for my work up 'til now... it's not bad.

"Tell me the other options." (Naofumi)

Atlas continues speaking.

"Option two: stay in this world, and be revered as a Hero for the rest of your life. Most heroes chose this options, apparently." (Atlas) I don't really get it, but I guess a Hero who performed his duty normally would choose it.

In truth, as long as they averted their eyes from the crappy reality of the Fantasy World, it would be heaven.

"That doesn't sound like a reward to me." (Naofumi) "Fight for the people, make your own standing, and make the world you saved with your own hands shine brilliantly. Rise up in the world. Says the Spirit of the Shield." (Atlas) "And that's supposed to sound good!?" (Naofumi) How laid back is this Shield!?

For the love of god... Humans aren't built well to be satisfied by an explanation like that.

"The third option is to be sent back to your original world, but to be given the right to return back to this one." (Atlas) "Is there any meaning in that?" (Naofumi)

"No idea..." (Atlas)

Ah... but if you were able to come and go as you pleased, it might be nice.

Once you finish what you have to do in one world, you set up a home in the other.

It's not like I don't see where they're coming from. But this world is rotten, so I refuse.

For a moment, the smiles of my villagers pop up in my mind.

I do want to return.

But...

"...There are plenty of things I want to ask." (Naofumi) The Spirit of the Shield bobs lightly, and conveys its will to Atlas.

"What is it?" (Atlas)

"Do I have to decide now?" (Naofumi)

"... Yes, that seems to be the case. If you wait, the Spirit won't have the time. IF the world isn't at peace, it can't do anything." (Atlas) So I can return here.

What's more, I can bring along Raphtalia.

I'm in the middle of treatment, and my conscious won't return. Raphtalia is desperately calling out to me, trying to return me to the world.

"Why? Why has he come to say this now?" (Naofumi) When I was silenced, when I went through hard times, when I was about to die, why did he never call out to me?

What meaning is there in him offering me these proposals now?

"To tell you the truth... Naofumi-sama's life as the Shield has been crueler than any of those past, according to the spirit." (Atlas) The Spirit of the Shield, and the orbs of the same color begin spinning in a circle.

Well. I'm quite honored.

So I'm the only goodie-two-shoes who had the misfortune to meet a vixen like Bitch.

Though Ren and the others were deceived as well.

"By the end of this, us legendary weapons will have been so drained by the enemy's hand, that we may be unable to fight any longer. So from this

crumbling world, we need to at least save the heroes we forcefully summoned to it... The Spirits are saying as such.” (Atlas) “Really? You’re a bit late on that one.” (Naofumi) “The fact that you’re on the verge of death is another factor, apparently. They’ll also approach the Sword, Bow, and Spear, if they ever come this close to death, they say.” (Atlas) “If I were to return here, the people from my village, and this country... what will happen to the world?” (Naofumi) “It will likely... fall to ruin. Says the Spirit of the Shield.” (Atlas) I can’t take them all.

That means in my world... there will only be Raphtalia.

If I made her abandon this world, and part with everyone, what would she say? What sort of face would she make?

And... I am...

I remember the words Atlas imparted unto me before her death.

“I... won’t return yet. I’ll go after I’ve saved the world. I’ll return once I’m satisfied with the result.” (Naofumi) I truly wanted to return.

But the current me has things that I have to protect.

People I can’t forgive. People that I have to defeat.

So until I’m satisfied, I have to stay.

More importantly, I don’t even know if they’re telling the truth.

If I said I wanted to return at once, I may achieve the, ‘You’re no Hero, now die!’ bad end.

I’ve really been playing too many video games, haven’t I...

I push these unnecessary thoughts to the back of my mind, and see the place the Shield was glowing brightly.

Does this mean the Shield Spirit thingy is happy?

“... Are you certain? Your decision here may spell your doom. Are you sure you won’t regret it?” (Atlas) “If you ask me if I regret it, I’m sure I will. But instead of returning, and wallowing in my regret, I’ll regret while I’m here. I have too many burdens I have to carry... Unless I drop them

where they're supposed to be, I cannot return." (Naofumi) Instead of dropping out of the race, I select the good end where everyone has their own set of wheels.

Then I can load up my own emotional baggage, and drive away with ease.

If I can bring Raphtalia with me, then she'll have to choose that for herself.

And once I make that village happy, I'll go home.

I really have picked up too many troublesome things...

But for some reason, I don't feel bad about it.

Chapter 316: The True Enemy

“... As expected of the Hero chosen by the Spirit of the Shield. The other sprits are praising him.” (Atlas) “Yes, yes, that’s all fine, and dandy. Now in exchange, reimburse me with information.” (Naofumi) I’ll bombard this spirit with all the questions that have been circling my mind.

It’s as if this world itself is intentionally hiding information from me.

“First is... right. Why was I summoned?” (Naofumi)

“That’s probably because Naofumi-sama had the qualifications to be a Hero. 『No matter the trouble, even if you’re vomiting up blood, you’ll still proceed forward. Choosing you was no mistake on my part.』 says the Spirit of the Shield in Hind-sight.” (Atlas) The four spirits are trying to appeal to me.

And among them, the Spirit of the Shield seems to be inflating itself, and acting cocky.

“Vomiting blood... Whose fault do you think that is!?” (Naofumi)
Dammit...

Even so, the qualifications for a Hero...

Putting it that way doesn’t make me feel bad, but still, I definitely think there’s some ulterior motives here. With this mindset, am I really qualified to be a Hero?

“The Sword, Spear, and Bow spirits are complaining, 『Why the hell is it that you’re always the one to pick the best Hero candidate, you glorious bastard』.” (Atlas) “By that phrasing, what are the others?” (Naofumi)
What do you mean best?

It’s as if it was some sort of examination.

“Fumufumu... The other three have their ups and downs.” (Atlas) Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki are... still taking the test.

I can’t bring this up to the humans.

And wait, the biggest problem is me being selected as the best. Are

these spirits right in the head?

No, perhaps their expectations aren't that high to begin with.

And that's none of their concern, anyways.

"Even though he often summons the one with the most potential, they usually die quickly. So there's no real point in the title." (Atlas) Oh, right. There was the possibility of me getting involved in a political struggle in Silt Welt.

I don't really have any expectations for them, and since there are some Heroes that drop dead right off the bat, I guess there's no real meaning in candidate ranking.

In that aspect, Ren did live up to this point, so perhaps they're not too bad.

"The other three have ample qualifications to be heroes, but they each have their own set of problems." (Atlas) "Ah, I see... and?" (Naofumi)

"As an obligatory reward, they'll at least be able to escape death this time around." (Atlas) Well, those guys did die before they came here, so I guess that condition is essential.

Even if they struggle to save this world, it's no joke if they were to die the second they got back.

"By that logic, I think I also have my share of problems." (Naofumi) On my response, the Spirit of the Shield bobs up and down again.

What is it? For some reason, I think he's making a fool out of me.

"『There's no way the Spirit of the Shield, whose duty is to defend others, would allow any harm to come to you. Interference was out of the question.』 He says." (Atlas) Interference?

He's speaking as if he knows the source of this.

I need to ask that too.

"It seems you do not understand, but Naofumi-sama was specially selected to be the Hero of the Shield. You can be proud of this." (Atlas)

“No, I get that. I have something else I need to know. Tell me.” (Naofumi)
“Anyways, the Legendary weapons don’t seem to know much about things that don’t pertain to their duty, but will you still ask? He says.” (Atlas)
“Yes, that’s fine. What do you mean by interference?” (Naofumi)
“Interference from the enemy the Legendary Weapons are supposed to oppose.” (Atlas) “And who’s that?” (Naofumi)

“Unknown. At the very least, it’s someone who’s trying to destroy the world from the outside, apparently.” (Atlas) One who’s trying to bring an end to the world.

There’s definitely some plotting and conspiracies at foot here.

But just who could it be?

The first one that came to mind was the woman born of the wave, Glass.

“Was it... Glass, the Human-Shaped enemy from the wave?” (Naofumi)
The Spirit of the Shield starts spinning vertically.

“It seems that that is not the case. She came to fight and fulfill a duty similar to theirs: to protect the world. She’s one who brought power to this world.” (Atlas) Atlas shouldn’t know about Glass.

But perhaps the Spirit of the shield taught her.

Even so, to protect the world...

That makes it harder to fight her.

“Next. What... is the wave, exactly?” (Naofumi)

“The wave is _____” (Atlas)

(TL: __, we meet again, my little friend)

What!? ... The Spirit of the Shield’s words, translated through Atlas, put me at a loss for words.

“I-is that true? It’s not a misunderstanding, or something like that?” (Naofumi) “There’s been no mistake.” (Atlas)

How could this be.

So that's why... The Four Legendary Weapons... that's why people came to call and revere them as such.

Perhaps this is the theory the Queen was going to present.

There, I remembered the conversation between Glass and Raphtalia.

Glass... despite being an enemy, she was surprisingly honest.

So this is why.

(TL: This is chapter 52)

"I apologize, but you can't be any more incorrect about her being my companion." (Naoflashbackumi) "Doesn't matter, what you are doing is unjust." (Glass) "Speaking of unjust, this bitch has done far crueler acts. I have quite a grudge." (Naofumi) "Master is like a villain~" (Firo)

"Shut up." (Naofumi)

"I do not have an argument to offer to an enemy..." (Raphtalia) Why was Raphtalia able to understand Glass's words?

I was able to because my Shield acted as a translator.

But Raphtalia's different.

We've already proven that languages differ across worlds.

Raphtalia can't even understand the language of Silt Welt.

But she could understand that woman just fine.

That means that what the Spirit of the Shield is saying isn't wrong.

... Why is such a thing happening?

This is definitely related to the one causing interference.

"The enemies you've fought so far have been but the vanguard. The Heroes of the past used the technology of those long gone, and to make sure these powers would fade away one day, someone schemed. Time was meaningless to them. They kept on sending enemies, no matter how many decades, or centuries..." (Atlas) As I thought.

In this world, geniuses are the apostles of social growth and decay, but

in truth, someone was actually reincarnating people from another world, and controlling them. To take away the means to fight against the wave.

I did find it strange.

The way to fight Houou and the Spirit Turtle. How to break the Level Cap. The destruction of the Hengen Musou School.

Also, various pieces of information were conveniently eaten away by the ages.

Thinking back, the uselessness of the information Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki brought to this world all lead back to that.

That means, our true 『Enemy』 is...

“Next question. My Shield is gone. What should I do?” (Naofumi)
“There is no problem. The only thing he managed to take was the outer layer.” (Atlas) “I see...” (Naofumi)

The Spirit of the Shield sways back and forth in the air.

“His last attack was able to incapacitate you for a while, but if you were to wish for it... the Spirit of the shield would be able to answer to your resolve. An attack like that would be no problem. No, a small fry like him wouldn’t be able to lay a hand on you.” (Atlas) “Even if you tell me that...” (Naofumi)

In front of the Spirit of the Shield, another Spirit asserted its presence.

“Naofumi-sama, in regards to that fake, do you want to deal with him personally?” (Atlas) “Well, if it’s within my ability.” (Naofumi)

“This spirit says that it wishes to lend you its power temporarily. In that case, the Spirit of the Shield’s functions will be put on hold until you call for it again.” (Atlas) “Meaning... I can fight with a weapon apart from the Shield?” (Naofumi) “Yes, but you can call back the Shield when you wish. Until then, as long as Naofumi-sama has the permission of the Wielder, you should be able to use any of the Seven Star Weapons.” (Atlas) “It’s just that in order to use their full power, you’ll have to retrieve the stolen portions from that thief.”

The eight other balls of light begin shining brightly, and one of them flies at me.

After being enveloped by its power, I was able to understand what sort of weapon it was.

And that Hero of the Whip... no.

That foreign invader. I know how I can defeat him.

I see. So this is how I can beat him head-on.

Yep, I can win with this.

No, it was because the loss of Atlas had blinded me that I was unable to do anything before.

But now...

“It’s asking you to 『Get its Wielder back on track』.” (Atlas) “... I know. But I’ll only be able to do it my way. Don’t expect anything great.”

(Naofumi) “They are no longer the Four Divine, and the Seven Stars. Please release their five brethren from the clutches of that small fry.”

(Atlas) “I understand. And I know how. Last is... what is the Four Holy Weapons Manual I read before I was transported to this world?”

(Naofumi) “A vague record of a predicted future, and the gateway to another world, apparently. Though it seems its predictions were quite off the mark.” (Atlas) Atlas starts rising into the air with the Spirits. She smiles.

“Remember that I am always with you, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) “Atlas... I couldn’t protect you.” (Naofumi)

“It’s alright. I’m always with Naofumi-sama. And Onii-sama, and Raphtalia-san, and everyone in the village. Please hold them all dear.”

(Atlas) “Sure.” (Naofumi)

I hold up my hand... and our fingers wrap around each other.

Upon feeling her skin, tears start forming in my eyes. I’m not even sad, so why?

“Will we meet again?” (Naofumi)

“We’ve never parted.” (Atlas)

“... That’s right.” (Naofumi)

Atlas’s body changes into light, and disperses.

I watch over the scene, and head off to reality.

Chapter 317: The Hero of the Cane

“Gu...” (Naofumi)

As soon as I awoke, waves of pain shot around my body.

“Naofumi-sama!” (Raphtalia)

I open my eyes, and raise my body. Raphtalia, who had been asleep in a chair by my side, sprung to life.

“I’m fine.” (Naofumi)

It’s likely that if I didn’t have the Shield, I would be unable to hold a conversation, but the Shield is... even if it isn’t with me in form, it’s still lending me power.

I overcome my pain, and stand up.

I feel the throbbing sensation in my body stabilize a bit.

“Are Ren and the others in the middle of a meeting?” (Naofumi) “Yes... after that, we were able to escape, but master was...” (Raphtalia) “I know.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan appears from under the bed, and leaps at me.

I started patting him, and offering him sweet words.

“Good boy. It’s because of you we were able to get out.” (Naofumi)
“Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Even when my consciousness was gone, I was able to perceive the outside world through my weapon. I have a general grasp of the situation. The Queen is... already... right?” (Naofumi) “... Yes. Two days after we left Faubley... the treatment bore no fruits.” (Raphtalia) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Right now, Melty-chan and Firo-chan are performing the funeral services.” (Raphtalia) “...” (Naofumi)

“What will you do now?” (Raphtalia)

“I’ll awaken the last Hero The Star who refuses to open his eyes.”

(Naofumi) In the country-wide funeral, the populace shed their tears.

Of course, it's impossible to tell whether those tears were genuine, or not.

But during the events of the past half year, the Queen's been conducting large scale reform.

From her work, some gained, and some lost.

After the funeral... a single figure stood quietly in front of the equally quiet Queen's casket.

Behind him, Melty is looking down with red eyes. She's holding Firo's hand.

"Melty." (Naofumi)

"Ah, Naofumi!" (Melty)

Melty rushes over to me with teary eyes.

"Mother was... she...!" (Melty)

"I'm sorry... I couldn't protect her." (Naofumi)

"No... don't worry about it. Naofumi risked his life to try and protect mother. Firo-chan, Raphtalia-san... a lot of people told me that. And I also saw the extent of your wounds." (Melty) "Even so, I failed." (Naofumi)

Right, I couldn't protect her.

The Queen put all of her efforts into assisting me.

Without any deception, she lent me her power. She moved the country for my cause.

"Melty, you don't have to hold back. Since I couldn't do anything... it's alright if you hate me." (Naofumi) "U-

UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" (Melty)

Large teardrops fall from Melty's eyes, as she begins punching me.

I don't have the Shield's protection, so it kinda hurts.

But this is a feeling I have to accept.

Lured in by Melty's tears, Firo also begins crying.

After a while, I'm able to pacify the two.

"I'm sorry, Naofumi." (Melty)

"It's fine. If this made you feel a little better, then I'm fine with it."
(Naofumi) "... Thank you." (Melty)

Melty stands up, and moves to leave the church.

"Are you sure you don't have to stay?" (Naofumi)

"I've already finished saying farewell to mother. Right now, I need to help make preparations for war." (Melty) "I see... You sure are strong."
(Naofumi)

"Firo-chan!" (Melty)

"Yeah!" (Firo)

Melty boarded Firo, and they ran off. They're probably going to attend the meeting Ren, and the other Heroes, are at.

"Now then..." (Naofumi)

I approach the one frozen in front of the Queen's coffin... I approach Trash.

The Queen's face sure is beautiful.

It's as if she would wake up at any second.

Trash silently stares at the empty shell that was once his wife.

Despite their differences, he loved her. The Legendary Weapon showed me that.

Perhaps he noticed my approach, but he continued to stare at the Queen.

"... Did you come to laugh at me? I, the fool Trash who couldn't protect anything dear to me?" (Trash) "No." (Naofumi)

I place a flower in the Queen's coffin.

Even though it's such a simple action, sad feeling flow through my

heart.

The Queen would always lend me power.

And that's why I answered her requests to some extent.

If she hadn't been there, I would have crossed over to Silt Welt, and instigated them to go to war with Melromark.

But because of the Queen's continued efforts, Melromark and Silt Welt never went to war.

Now, I understand.

I understand just how hard that must have been.

The nobles of the country, and the religion seems to hate me by principle.

Various negotiations must have been carried out when I wasn't watching.

Or else, I would have never been able to live the peaceful life I had in that village.

She worked so hard for this country, for the world. But her work was left unrequited.

She tried again, and again to correct her daughter's behavior. I bet a lot happened even before I got here.

But her daughter's heart never opened. She should simply continue to kick people to the ground, and laugh at their disgrace.

I understand why she was so desperate to curry my favor, before letting me deal with her family.

If at that time, I were to order their deaths, rumors would have spread across the world, and I would never have gotten to where I am now.

But none of that good will ever came back to her.

Her daughter trampled on her maternal love, and even went as far as to take her life.

Her husband, Trash, was only able to watch as she committed such acts of brutality.

“Hero of the shield. Take care of this country... I cannot fight.” (Trash) I angrily grab at Trash’s collar.

“Did your wife tell you to leave the country to me!? What the hell did you think she said!? You can’t even understand something as simple as that!?” (Naofumi) Upon my questions, Trash displayed an expression of anger for a brief moment.

But that quickly vanished, and he averted his gaze.

“Then what do you expect me to do? I am...” (Trash)

“If you stand there moping, will the Queen come back to life? If I keep on praying, will Atlas return? If we all keep wishing for a miracle, do you think the world will be at peace!?” (Naofumi) “Shut up! What... what do you under-” (Trash)

Trash exposes his anger, and aims a blow.

I easily dodge it, and he glares at me. As if he had found someone to take his anger out on.

“Do you think I’m completely oblivious?” (Naofumi)

“...” (Trash)

I... quietly bring a picture of Atlas up in my mind.

Inside my shield, the girl who constantly clung to me exists. She’s no longer in this world.

In order to protect us, she sacrificed her body.

“I will take revenge for Atlas. I plan to execute your Bitch of a Daughter while I’m at it. She’ll definitely bring harm to this country if we let her go.” (Naofumi) I’ll just give it to him frankly. See my acting at work.

Spirit of the Cane, if this doesn’t work, I’m abandoning him.

“If that happens, Melromark will become mine. No, even Faubley will fall into my possession, and the world will be mine.” (Naofumi) “What!?”

(Trash)

“Silt Welt is a country that equates the Hero of the Shield to a god. I’ll bet they’ll happily submit to my rule. Melromark is already mine for the taking, and next is Faubley... I’ll gain control of all the biggest countries, shall I not? Hahaha, this is the establishment of a new empire.”

(Naofumi) “Ku...” (Trash)

“If that happens, Trash, your execution is the first thing on the menu. As a useless Hero. Perhaps I’ll make Melty next. She seems to be under the misinterpretation that I’m some sort of good person, so I think I’ll be able to see quite a scene. Perhaps I’ll even keep her around as a sex slave, just as your wife wished.” (Naofumi) If Melty heard that, I think she would kill me.

Since I don’t have my Shield, her magic should hurt quite a bit. It’s a good thing she left.

But with this much, Trash should snap.

“I won’t let you do such a thing!” (Trash)

Trash clenches his teeth, and thrusts his fist at me.

I... peacefully take the blow.

I don’t know just how high his level is supposed to be.

Maybe he’s weakened with the passage of time, but I never asked, nor do I care.

Anyways, since the Shield was in hibernation, I began to taste blood in my mouth.

“I am... the one who will protect the Melromark that Mirellia loved! As if I’d let it get taken away by the likes of you!” (Trash) “... That’s right. This is how it should be. You can do it if you try.” (Naofumi) “Wha...” (Trash)

Trash falls silent at my reply.

“Let me ask you once more. Did your wife tell you to leave the country to me? The answer is no. She left it to you! The Hero of the Cane, and the

King of Wisdom! You... need to honor the will of the woman you loved more than anything!" (Naofumi) Trash opens his eyes wide, and takes a step back.

And he wipes away his tears.

"That's right... my eyes had been clouded. I lost myself, and refused to open my eyes, under the pretense of drowning in the grief caused by the loss of a loved one. And you, Shield... Iwatani-dono, I forced my old grudges onto you." (Trash) In Trash's eyes, I see the spark he had when he opposed me before the Queen came... no, something even greater has been born.

"My wife left this country to me. Then my duty is to uphold her will. I won't ask you to forgive me. But will you fight with me to protect this country? No, please help me fight!" (Trash) Trash bows down, and pleads to me.

"Raise your head. There's no need for that now... I'm going to honor my own promise to the Queen. I have no idea what comes after that."
(Naofumi) The Queen asked me to lend her power to protect the country.

For that purpose, I'll assist with what I can.

For the Queen, who protected this land to her death, I'll have to work a bit myself.

Fauley's become a nest of the garbage of this world. In order to sweep out the true trash, I'll work with the Trash before me.

"I won't raise it! When I remember all I've done to Iwatani-dono, I know there's no way that I will be forgiven. By my own incompetence, my wife... There's no way I can compensate for her loss!" (Trash) "... That's right. Even in a situation like this, when I remember what you've put me through, I can't forgive you... but..." (Naofumi) Like Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki changed, and like I changed myself, this man can change as well.

Even if it's something he can never be forgiven for, he can still redeem himself.

For the Queen's sake, I'll at least offer him an opportunity.

“You’re going to change from here on out, right? Then not in words, show it through your actions.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Trash)

“Then what are you doing? Get off your ass, and go save this country!” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Trash)

Trash stands up, and with a stiff expression, he saluted.

As if in response to my orders, a shining rod manifested before Trash.

“This is...” (Trash)

“So you finally get it.” (Naofumi)

Yes, the Seven Star Cane was waiting for this moment.

For this rotten Trash... no, for Aultcray Melromark to open his eyes.

Trash grips the cane.

And the light around it fades. He was selected as a Hero once more.

Spirit of the Cane.

I’ve upheld my side of the bargain

“... Let us go, Iwatani-dono.” (Trash)

“Yes, Wise King of Melromark.” (Naofumi)

“No, I was unable to do anything to protect my beloved. For a fool like me, there is no name more appropriate than Trash.” (Trash) “...” (Naofumi)

“I am Trash. Everything that has befallen me has been the result of my own actions. Please continue calling me Trash from now on.” (Trash) It’s as if he’s a completely different person.

It’s been said that nothing good comes out of a guy who calls himself a genius, but what will come out of a man who calls himself Trash?

At the very least, he’s more decent than he was before.

“... Got it. Trash, I leave the plan to you. I have some expectations for the Wise King inside of your head.” (Naofumi) “Leave it to me. I’ll completely slaughter the enemy with the minimum amount of

casualties.” (Trash) We turned our backs to the Queen’s coffin, and quietly... started walking forward.

Chapter 318: Strategy Meeting

We came all the way to the inside of the castle. To the room where Ren and the others were holding a meeting.

On the way, Motoyasu, Who was playing with his three, joined us.

“My, my. It’s the Hero of the Shield, and...”

Following me was Raphtalia and Trash, whose aura had changed beyond recognition.

The soldiers of the castle seemed to sense this too, and they swallow their spit.

For everyone to realize it so easily, I’m beginning to wonder if he’s truly the same person.

He definitely seems like someone else.

I felt it the first time I met him. This sort of... overwhelming Charisma circling around him.

“King-sama.”

The soldier carefully chooses his words as he speaks.

“Yes, I want to speak with the Heroes, and the Allied Forces. Won’t you open the way?” (Trash) “Yes Sir!”

The soldiers salute as they open the door.

And like that, we entered the conference room.

“Naofumi!” (Ren)

Ren sees, me, and stands up from his seat. He runs over.

“Are your wounds alright?” (Ren)

“For now.” (Naofumi)

It’s not like I’m in enough pain to knock me out, and I’m gradually recovering.

I have the blessing of the Shield, and I should recover enough by the

time I confront that bastard.

“Next is...” (Ren)

Ren looks at Trash, and hangs his mouth open.

“Hey, is that...” (Ren)

“Yeah, it’s the same person. Even I was surprised.” (Naofumi) Trash looks over the ones in attendance with an intelligent smile. He displays the cane in his hand.

Who the hell is he?

“Hmm... so Melromark’s Hero of the Cane has finally gotten the motivation to fight. Are you sure you aren’t too late?” (Genmu) The Genmu Grampa begins provoking Trash.

The Shusaku has a similar expression, and they’re giving off an irritating impression.

“That’s right. My eyes had been clouded, but now it’s different. My wife... The Queen’s will will be upheld. I must protect this country.” (Trash) The past Trash would have been enraged by those words. He would have been driven out of the room after throwing it into disorder.

But the current one honestly admits his shortcomings.

“Melty.” (Trash)

“Y-yes?” (Melty)

Trash points at Melty, and she suddenly straightens her back.

To her, this man should be her father, but her face clearly shows that something is off.

“Won’t you continue the meeting? Iwatani-dono and I wish to partake in it.” (Trash) “Understood.” (Melty)

Trash pulls back a chair for me, and sits down in the one next to it.

For some reason, with that simple action, everyone takes a deep breath.

The others must think that he’s completely forgotten his past grudges.

He's even treating me with respect.

Even I find it amazing.

He had an extremely diligent expression as he pulled a chair for me, but something feels really wrong.

Is it that?

When someone who acted as a fool shows his mettle, the gap makes him seem exceedingly cool?

Now let's see just how far he exceeds our low expectations.

"What are you doing? Hurry and start it up again. We don't have much time remaining, correct?" (Trash) "U-understood!" (Melty)

Melty takes out a document, and sticks them onto a board fastened to the wall.

'According to the Heroes, Tact is also an Otherworlder' Is written on the front.

The evidence is his personal history, and his inventions.

And the battle looks hopeless.

It seems that Tact is proceeding directly from Faubley to Melromark in a straight line.

He's making all of the countries along the way surrender, and he gains control of their land as he progresses. His progress is way too fast.

In a few days, his army will reach Melromark.

The enemy's new weapon... no, it's not really new, but the Airplane has been implemented for practical usage. Its dramatic appearance on the battle field spelled the defeat of a few nations already.

That's how the situation looks.

"It seems that the Heroes of the Sword, Spear, and Bow won't be put on the defensive line." (Trash) Trash asks.

Melty and the Genmu raise their hands, and respond.

“It’s due to Faubley’s hero’s miraculous ability. As long as he’s there, we can’t carelessly deploy them, even if it means putting them on standby.” (Melly) “Fumu... a prudent decision. Airplanes... I have a vague idea of the kind of weapon they are, but are they truly that formidable?” (Trash) “Yes. The one acting as their main base deploys soldiers by parachute, and it mows down all that approach it by machine gun. The high-leveled dragoons of the other countries have tried challenging their planes to dogfights, but it appears that their pilots levels exceed ours by too great of a margin...” (Melly) Because of the large level gap, it’s impossible to approach.

It’s a simple advantage, but its simplicity makes for a firm groundwork.

Dropping the planes with long-range magic and weapons seems possible, but their high levels buffer defense and speed. I’m not sure if we’ll be able to hit them.

“What numbers are they coming in?” (Naofumi)

“They’re attacking with only five planes. They board and stock away from the battlefield, and subjugate countries by raining soldiers down on their cities from above.” (Melly) It’s likely that those five pilots are high leveled, and the rest are standard soldiers.

I don’t know about Tact’s Harem, but their general soldiers didn’t seem to be too high leveled.

That means they’re focusing their plans around their limited supply of pilots.

“... Hero-samas, I’d like to hear whatever information you have about Airplanes.” (Trash) “Even if you ask that, I’m pretty sure we only have general knowledge. We may be able to implement one, but it’ll just barely be able to fly.” (Ren) “In your worlds, by what concept did they move, and how were they handled in war? Also, what sort of functions did they hold?” (Trash) “Is that stuff really important?” (Ren)

“Yes, if I don’t get whatever information we have, I can’t formulate a plan.” (Trash) And Trash thoroughly absorbed whatever information we knew pertaining to planes. I wonder if most of it was actually necessary.

Also about firearms... in that field, Itsuki proved to be quite knowledgeable. He even explained the part names, and their applications.

You're telling me that he not only not only comes from an ESPer world, he's also a military otaku?

But he was useful, anyways, so I didn't say anything.

Well, thinking about it, someone with 『Accuracy』 as an ability would need projectiles like guns and bows for battle, so perhaps it was inevitable.

“...It's still not enough.” (Trash)

“Hah?”

“There's still something bothering me.” (Trash)

Even after his incessant, inquisition, he still presses us for more information.

At first, we looked at him with dubious eyes, but the military heads of the other countries, particularly the ones closer in age to Trash, looked on the scene in silence. They had confident smiles on their faces.

“Oy, do you know anything about that?” (Naofumi)

“That's proof that the Wise King has revived. He'll continue searching for information until he has enough of it to put together. But the answer he comes to is always correct. By doing that, he was able to make all of us taste defeat. He's nothing less than reliable.”

“I see...” (Naofumi)

“Since he hasn't settled on a plan yet, that means that he hasn't been given the necessary information yet. Please cooperate with him.”

I don't know where this trust is coming from, but this is the first time I've seen Trash like that.

“Iwatani-dono.” (Trash)

“W-what?” (Naofumi)

It's already strange that he's stopped calling me, 'Shield'.

And his eyes are shimmering. I feel that I might get sucked into his pace, and start speaking everything.

“About their... Hero. I’ll leave him to Iwatani-dono. Is that alright with you?” (Trash) “Yes, I’ll knock him off his high horse.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi, are you sure? Didn’t you have your Shield taken?” (Ren) “It’s fine. Ah, right...” (Naofumi)

At the same time I remembered my meeting with the Spirits.

The weapons of the other Heroes in the area began emitting a faint light.

Light seeps out of the Sword, Spear, Bow, and the place my Shield used to be. And flows towards Trash and Fohl’s weapons.

“What? Convert...?”

“Strengthening method unlocked?”

They let out such words, as they seemed to be reading an invisible screen with their eyes.

And Trash held out his cane to me.

“The Cane has suggested that it be offered to you temporarily as a special case. It wants to lend you power. Please take it.” (Trash) “... Will you be fine?” (Naofumi)

“My focus is on strategy. It’s not that essential.” (Trash) “I see.” (Naofumi)

I grasp Trash’s cane.

A similar Icon to the one I saw when I had the Shield appeared.

As an exception, the use of this weapon by the Hero of the Shield has been permitted!

Special Weapon Unlocked!

You have completed the conditions to unlock the Fenrir Rod!

(TL: Fenrir is a wolf, and Loki’s son. He kills Odin at Ragnarok.) – Fenrir

Rod 0/90 C

Awakening Impossible

...

Equipment Bonus:

Fenrir Force

Ability Bonus:

Gleipnir Rope

Rebellion Against God

Proficiency Level: 0

—

(TL: Gleipnir is the Red Thread used to bind Fenrir. It will snap during Ragnarok) A status message appeared, and I checked my stats.

Comparing it to the Stats I had before, Quite a bit has changed.

I guess I'll have to change how I fight to match.

The cane changed shape to that of a staff with a wolf ornament on top. The wolf's mouth was biting down on the body of the staff.

There are chains wrapped around the base, and it's a bit hard to hold.

Looking at the weapon book, quite a few weapons have been unlocked.

The method the Seven Stars used to unlock weapons probably converted, and appeared in a form friendly to the Four Summoned.

With just this, my abilities have risen by a bit.

But... the numbers are lower than the ones I'm familiar with.

Is this because the Seven Star weapons are ranked lower than the four?

I open the screen to strengthen the staff.

"Fohl, read out the strengthening methods written in your Help Screen. We'll also tell you ours, and then, we'll apply them." (Naofumi) "S-sure."
(Fohl)

“Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, you understand, right? Strengthening is all about belief. Believe in the strengthening method from Fohl Gauntlets, and from Trash’s cane.” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Ren)

“Understood!” (Motoyasu)

“Yes.” (Itsuki)

And we shared the strengthening methods in our help screens.

“Wait a second, that strengthening method. Isn’t that what we tried before, but failed in?” (Ren) “It was used in one of the Seven Star Weapons. Unless the Heroes cooperate, I don’t think it’ll work.” (Naofumi) “... At this point, that just sounds like a pain.” (Ren) Ren complains. I agree.

But his complaints are on the mark.

Most likely, the enemy from the wave did some sort of interference... no, that doesn’t sound right...

But despite the differences between the Cane and the Gauntlet, their strengthening methods were the same. How ironic.

I immediately strengthened the Fenrir rod in various ways.

My Status improved greatly.

Even so, it doesn’t compare to the Spirit Turtle Shell.

No, that one received a boost from the Shield of Compassion Atlas unlocked, so it would be rude to compare them.

“I managed to awaken it, but I can’t get any equipment bonuses.” (Fohl) Fohl reports as such to me.

“We don’t have much time, but go do it. You can get materials from around the country, and you can take whatever you want from my warehouse.” (Naofumi) “Got it.” (Fohl)

“Have the Heroes finished their discussion Then let’s get back to planning.” (Trash) Trash sits down again, and restarts the meeting.

After that, Trash wrung us dry of all the information we had of our

world.

So much that I think he would be able to make some groundbreaking technological progress here. By the time I noticed it, the sun had already sunk.

“Is there still anything more you need?” (Naofumi)

“... I’ll need to revise it a bit, but I guess this is enough information for one day.” (Trash) Trash began scribbling away on the board.

And the soldiers of the Castle copied down his words.

Apparently, the Genmu ordered them to do so.

After seeing the content, we nodded. He figured out how to possibly turn their weapon against them. How frightening.

What does this man plan to start with the information we gave him?

“Now then, does this sound fine for a draft of the plan?” (Trash) There are proposals numbered one through twenty. Trash orders his soldiers to make the initial preparations for each one.

“Y-yeah.” (Naofumi)

“I’ll have the Heroes work individually in their own squadrons.” (Trash)
“I understand that, but...” (Naofumi)

I look at Trash’s writing, and see the date he put for the day Tact was going to attack.

“Is the attack really coming on that day?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. Faubley’s hero will choose this day without a doubt. If I were on his side, I would choose it as well.” (Trash) Yes, I truly would be at a disadvantage if he chose that day.

Right... the day the wave would come.

This truly was the most effective day for them.

Us Heroes are registered at Melromark’s Dragon Hourglass.

According to Ren, and the others, the last one they registered at was

Melromark's as well.

"How are the other countries dealing with the wave?" (Naofumi) "The waves appear to be centered mostly around Melromark. The others still have time to prepare." (Trash) "I see..." (Naofumi)

This is exceedingly troublesome.

We'll get called to some far off location when we're in the middle of the war with Faubley.

Even so, it's not as if we can neglect the wave.

That means we'll have to split our forces.

"And so, Heroes, please make preparations beforehand. If possible, act as swiftly as you can with your fastest Filo Rial." (Trash) "Understood! Now, let us be off, my angels!" (Motoyasu) Motoyasu randomly runs off atop his three.

Where the hell does he think he's going!?

"Then I'll assign the Hero of the Spear-sama to this brigade." (Trash) And so, we were assigned our positions.

"Right, Trash. There's someone I'd like to introduce as a source of information." (Naofumi) "Understood. Who is this individual?" (Trash)

(TL: I'd like to remind you all that Japanese Pronouns are gender Neutral) It's quite a simple source

She does have quite a grudge, so I'm sure she'll assist me.

What's more, she's my slave. So she doesn't have the right to refuse.

The other one, no, that... it would be quicker to just bring him there.

Trash's probably seen her before, but he shouldn't know about her ability.

"Getting them here now is... impossible. Come with me." (Naofumi) I walked away to introduce her to Trash.

Chapter 319: Glamour vs. Loli

The sun's already set, but time is precious, so I ended up showing Trash my village's situation... specifically the ones there that would make for good manpower.

For argument's sake, he was with the Queen when we challenged Houou, so he should know, but I don't think he has a definite grasp of my forces.

"Ah, Niichan." (Kiel)

We used Ren's portal to return, and Kiel found us.

"Are you already okay?" (Kiel)

"Well, yeah. More importantly, have there been any problems on your side?" (Naofumi) "None. By the way, I believe that person was the one who was always next to Queen-sama." (Kiel) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

"This is the first time we've spoken. My name is known throughout the country, so I think you've at least heard it, though." (Trash) "I think it was..." (Kiel)

Kiel hesitates in giving her answer.

I mean, when I changed his name, there was a national uproar.

It's become a bit of a famous story.

"Hey, try saying my name." (Trash)

"Niichan, are you sure it's alright?" (Kiel)

"The individual wishes for it, so go ahead." (Naofumi) What sort of torture is this. Stop taking away our time.

Isn't this kinda rude?

Did Trash act docile in order to accomplish this?

But the guy's face is quite serious.

"Um... King-sama?" (Kiel)

“I’m Trash. Remember the name.” (Trash)

“Um...” (Kiel)

“Don’t act so troubled!” (Naofumi)

Is he a masochist?

Do all the Heroes turn out like this?

“I also think this is harassment.” (Ren)

No, it feels like the amount of Rens has merely multiplied.

But I don’t really feel like scolding him.

(TL: As in, Trash’s change was similar to Ren’s)

“I agree... Why did it turn out like this?” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia’s carrying her head in her hands.

I think so as well, but Trash himself accepts the name, so there’s no helping it.

It was fun to use it to harass him, but when he says it with such a serious face, I’m the one that feels offended.

“What’s wrong, Iwatani-dono? Hurry and tell me your forces.” (Trash) If he were just acting, it would be fine, but the current Trash is being 100% genuine.

If you wonder why I understand this, it’s because my intuition has been sharpened from being in this world.

I’m especially good at seeing through merchants.

Anyways, my senses are telling me that Trash isn’t lying. His personality is just twisted.

But for him to force the Demi-Humans who he looked down upon to call him Trash...

If he tries pledging loyalty to me, then I won’t mind it, but I feel that’s not happening.

“Kiel, don’t think too hard about it... Just say it as if it’s a foreigner’s

name.” (Naofumi) “Got it, Niichan. Good luck, Trash-san.” (Kiel)

“Yes!” (Trash)

...

This Trash seems to be more enervating than ever before.

Motoyasu doesn't listen to a word you say, so you can say anything. Trash listens to all arguments, and incorporates them into his own.

It's dangerous to mess around with him.

“Then... come with me. Ren, go give an explanation to the villagers.”
(Naofumi) “Understood.” (Ren)

I bring Trash over to the place of the one I wanted to introduce him to.

“Ara? Marquis, are your wounds healed?”

“For the most part.” (Naofumi)

I dragged Trash to Rat's lab.

Inside of a large culture tank... something is floating.

It looks like a carriage.

“Where's Mii-kun?” (Naofumi)

“In order to repair the body you made when you were out of it, he went off hunting.” (Rat) “Hunting?” (Naofumi)

“He spread out his body to cover everyone from Houou's self-destruction, so much of it was blown away. In order to regenerate, he'll have to supplement those lost parts.” (Rat) “... Supplement.” (Naofumi)

“Fumu... I hypothesize that it's something similar to the theory of how Slimes grow. Am I correct?” (Trash) “Yes, correct. He'll hunt monsters, and absorb their parts until he had enough matter to regenerate.” (Rat) I want to block my ears.

Just what sort of dangerous lifeform did I make!?

He seems likely to appear in some B Class Horror Film.

“Well, it'll take a while for him to completely regrow. Restructuring the

genetic construction of his prey is quite a difficult task.” (Rat) “Yes, yes, I get it... Rat, you understand the relation between the previous incident, and the war, right?” (Naofumi) “Right... that Seven Star Hero in Faubley was the one who gave you those severe wounds, right?” (Rat) “Was he the one who exiled you?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, with the support of my rival Alchemist. Our areas of study clashed, so it was quite a trial.” (Rat) I’ve heard something similar before.

I heard a lot that time, but I never thought they would become enemies.

But it’s beneficial for someone with information on the enemy to be an ally.

And it would be a poor move to ignore someone with skills similar to Rat.

“So there’s an alchemist there too?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. One with the appearance of a child.” (Rat)

“Is he specialized in mechanics?” (Naofumi)

“No, that’s the Hero? Anyways, I thought she had died, but they managed to revive this country’s former princess, right? It’s definitely that girl’s work. She’s good at making Homunculus that imitate others. It’s difficult to tell them apart from the real thing.” (Rat) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“From my perspective, she’s an exceedingly normal Alchemist. She’s a bit more knowledgeable on artificial life than most, but not on my level. Though I do happen to specialize in monsters.” (Rat) An alchemist with the body of a child, and an alchemist with the body of a slutty onee-san.

Now, legendary Hero, who will you choose?

And in the end, that Hero chose the Loli.

I do get the feeling that there were several little kids around him.

That man was a Lolicon... He’s a complete criminal.

No... I’m also a bit past that line.

Despite Raphtalia's appearance, she's a child in age.

And there's also Atlas, so I can't really complain about him.

"Did you not get along with her?" (Naofumi)

"If I were to choose, I'd have to say that the Hero drove me out because his research and mine contradicted one another. Airplanes, was it? I remember objecting to his ideas, and asking why he couldn't just use Flying Beasts, or Gryphons." (Rat) "I think there was also something called a 'Tank' on Faubley's front line." (Trash) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

And Here, Rat has a similar Carriage-type Monster.

This monster should have some long distance magic capabilities.

Their research areas truly do overlap.

Here, we have lifeforms, and there, they have machines.

It's uncertain how large of a gap this will create, but how about looking at it from Level?

The machines are based on the driver's level. Their flaw is that if they get too damaged, they'll have to be changed out.

With Monsters, you can simply cast healing magic on them, so prolonged fighting is possible.

For reasons such as this, Tact may have driven his theoretic rival out of Faubley.

"That woman always had a strange set of priorities. Even now, I find it irritating. She got smitten with that fool, and thus fell behind me in research!" (Rat) Perhaps when Tact couldn't get Rat to fall for him, he got rid of her.

Because for Rat, Mii-kun is the most important.

"This is?" (Naofumi)

I point at the carriage-like thing inside of the tank.

"It's something I set up before we set off to fight Houou. It's the monster the Marquis designed. I tried to make it." (Rat) "We'll soon be

drawn into war. Do you think you'll make it?" (Naofumi) "Just barely. I plan to have Mii-kun ride it as its core, we'll probably have to go ahead without any practice, so I don't really want to deploy it." (Rat) That's quite a bit of progress for a few days.

"I need to thank you for the versatility of the body you made." (Rat) "So that's it..." (Naofumi)

A function of the body that version of me made.

"I see. If we were able to use this in battle, it would decrease the danger of the plan." (Trash) Trash nods to himself, as he begins asking Rat various questions.

"Can it take in magic from the outside, and release it similar to the theory of Ritual Magic?" (Trash) "An interesting thought. I'll test it out, but I ask you not to expect too much." (Rat) On Trash's proposition, Rat takes out a diagram.

I'll have to pray that this will increase our forces however much it may...

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

Oh? Raph-chan found me, and ran over.

Why can I tell? His voice is the one most similar to Raphtalia's.

Though it's a bit more childish.

I guess it's like the voice of Raphtalia when I got her long ago.

"Ta~li~?" (Raph-chan)

He seems to be worried about my injuries.

"I'm fine. Don't worry about it. You're the one who set up the barrier magic, so I thank you." (Naofumi) "Li~ya!" (Raph-chan)

"... Naofumi-sama... please don't play around too much." (Raphtalia) As I began petting Raph-chan all over, Raphtalia cautions me with an embarrassed expression.

Her reaction is interesting, so I want to continue, but since Raphtalia's

saying it, I really should stop.

“Ah, right. Trash, This is one of the things I wanted to show you. Do you think you can use it?” (Naofumi) “Yes, my wife told me it was a monster you created.” (Trash) “It’s called a Raph. When I was possessed by a cursed Shield, I created it as a completely new breed of monster.”

(Naofumi) “I’ve seen it on the previous battlefield, There are a few variations of it, right?” (Trash) “Yeah, the monsters of my village

personally asked for modifications. They became new sorts of Raphs.”

(Naofumi) “I see...” (Trash)

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“He also wants to be used in battle. If you’re lacking manpower, go ahead and make use of them.” (Naofumi) Honestly, the levels of Melromark’s soldiers are low in comparison to Faubley’s.

In close quarters, they would be at quite a disadvantage.

Of course, I intend to take applicants from my village as well, but we definitely don’t have large enough numbers.

So I think it’s time to deploy a new kind of monster.

Chapter 320: Raph-chan

“Then what sort of ability do these children possess?” (Trash) I turn my eyes to Rat.

“Their individual powers are all over the place. But... each one specializes in Illusion Magic.” (Rat) Well they were modeled after Raptalia.

And her specialty is illusions.

The specific category is apparently light and darkness, but she can become invisible, and affect enemy perception to lead them astray.

Raptalia herself doesn't use magic too much, though. She mainly focuses on sword skills.

“Users of Illusion Magic... I think I'll be able to use them. And it looks like I can also depend on their strength.” (Trash) “By the way, Marquis, about this child.” (Rat) “What about him?” (Naofumi)

She speaks while pointing to Raph-chan.

“From what I see, that one seems a little different from the rest, but do you know anything about that?” (Rat) “I'm not that knowledgeable either. He was hidden on the bottom of my carriage when we were going to Faubley. His level is also quite high.” (Naofumi) I look over his stats again.

... Why has it risen? It's 90 now.

“Can I give it a quick examination? I don't think it'll let me hold it.” (Rat) “Sure. Stay still for a bit.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Rat begins performing light palpations on Raph-chan.

“Its fur, and its reaction to magic is different than the rest. I guess I should compare it to a Filo Rial's mutation to royalty.” (Rat) “Mutation, like Firo.” (Naofumi)

So something influenced one of the Raphs I knew, and caused it to

undergo a drastic change?

“What exactly is he?” (Naofumi)

“No idea...” (Rat)

“Hey, where did you come from?” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

He points in the direction of the sea.

In that direction is Sadina’s secret base.

No, I understand that that’s where you were made, but...

“It gives a proper response when asked. It seems quite smart.” (Rat)

“Can you understand what it’s trying to tell us?” (Naofumi) “I can understand Mii-kun, and a portion of the monsters, but the Raphs you made purely from scratch are incomprehensible to me.” (Rat) “Rafu~.” (Raph)

Raph-chan’s making various gestures to illustrate its origin, but I don’t believe the message is getting through.

However, I do hope that he never learns to speak like the Filo Rials.

“Well, it doesn’t really matter. Can you do anything special? Are you the same as the rest? Is there a reason that you could use barrier magic back there?” (Naofumi) I try asking.

Raph-chan tilts its head to one side, and begins thinking. He stands up on his hind legs, and crosses his front ones.

Uwah. That pose is cute.

Unlike a certain bird, he’s not showing an excess amount of pushiness.

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

For some reason, Raph-chan points to Raphtalia, and starts walking towards her.

“Me?” (Raphtalia)

As he approaches, he swells his tail, and begins activating a skill.

All of the fur on its body stands on end...

With a poof... he transformed.

“Wha-”

Standing there, was a Raphtalia, much like she was when I first met her.

How nostalgic.

I had forgotten that she looked like this.

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan raises both of his arms, as if to ask me to praise him...

But that’s not the problem.

“Why are you naked!?” (Naofumi)

I avert my gaze.

“Is this a form of illusion magic?” (Rat)

Rat covers Raph-chan’s body with her lab-coat. Raphtalia begins calming her down.

“For now, learn how to wear clothes, and how to walk around in them.” (Naofumi) “Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Smoke surrounds her body, and clothes much like the ones Raphtalia is currently wearing appear.

Is this also an illusion?

Rat tries touching Raph-chan’s face.

“Let’s see. Is this an illusion so advanced that it can even deceive the sense of touch?” (Rat) “Rafu~...” (Raph-chan)

As Rat continually pokes her body, Raph-chan lets out a sound indicating her dislike of it.

“Amazing. It’s as if she’s really there.” (Rat) “Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

The mystery has deepened!

Just who is Raph-chan supposed to be?

His specs are much higher than any of the Raphs I know.

Rat may be correct in saying he's a special variant like Firo.

"Ara? The quality of the clothing illusion isn't that high. It's as if I'm touching his skin." (Rat) "Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

It looks like it tickles. Raph-chan in Raphtalia (Little Girl) form runs, and hides behind me.

"Arara, he ran away." (Rat)

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

"Do you have any other abilities?" (Naofumi)

Raph-chan looks at Raphtalia again.

"I don't know why, but I'm getting a bad feeling about this..." (Raphtalia) "Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

This time, she transforms to be identical to Raphtalia.

Amazing. His height and posture are identical to hers.

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

I get the feeling that Raph-chan's form is a bit less defined than hers.

Well, Tanukis are supposed to be good at transforming, so perhaps this is supposed to be normal.

But I don't really like him taking on human form.

As if he had read my mind, Raph-chan changes back to Raph form.

Good boy. Unlike a certain bird over there, he can read the mood.

"So you can change into various things?" (Naofumi) "Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

He gives a firm nod.

"I bet he's making it look like that with magic." (Rat) Raph-chan turns his head, as if to deny the claim.

“Eh? Then you can actually transform?” (Naofumi) Raph-chan shakes his head up and down.

Ku... that’s right. The other me conducted strange experiments to try to reproduce Raphtalia.

So Raph-chan might actually have the ability to become her.

If he also got the ability to talk, it would be the birth of a new type of Filo Rial.

... What is it? I have a really bad premonition.

I get the feeling that they’re going to be revered as divine beasts in the future.

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan sticks out his chest with pride, but I really hope he continues speaking like that.

“Anything else?” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

On my request, Raph-chan begins thinking again.

“Can you grow like Mii-kun?” (Rat)

“Don’t put in impossible requests.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

On Rat’s inquiry, Raph-chan transformed.

Oy... he turned into a bear-like Raph.

I think I saw a Raph like that in the village.

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

To put it clearly, he did not have any slime-like functions like Mii-kun. Raph-chan continued to gesture.

“Hmm...” (Naofumi)

I feel that I would be able to ride his back.

I actually like this one better.

If Firo stopped talking, I feel that I would be able to lean on her, and take a nice nap. Now this one can take that role.

This form looks like your friendly neighborhood youkai. (TL: Specifically, a certain Totoro) At least, he gives off a feeling like that.

“How versatile.” (Rat)

“Right.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

“...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia has a strange expression, and she hangs her head.

I mean, this monster was modelled after her, and heavily modified.

I kinda understand her feelings, but I don’t hate this Raph.

“It seems he has quite a few abilities.” (Trash) Trash, who had been quiet up until now, spoke up.

“Yep.” (Naofumi)

“Then would he be able to do something like this as well?” (Trash) Trash offers a proposal to Raph-chan. I was also in agreement with the contents.

If all goes well, Raphtalia and Raph-chan will become significant players in this battle.

The problem is that that Raphtalia’s expression seemed doubtful on hearing the plan.

If I were to be put in Raphtalia’s place, I think I would feel the same.

No, since Raph-chan is good with illusions, perhaps I can take her place.

“Are we really doing that?” (Raphtalia)

“If we succeed, won’t it be useful?” (Naofumi) “Well, that’s true.” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~.” (Raph-can)

This Raph doesn’t seem to call Rahtalia a fake.

Though he sometimes seem to come close to saying it.

After we practiced executing the plan, and managed to pull it off easily, Raphtalia’s expression became even more depressed.

If we had just done it without practice, it probably would have been fine.

“Next is my village’s fighting power. If you need anything built for the war, my Lemos should be able to make them.” (Naofumi) I would put in a request to Imya and her uncle.

They’re skillful, and they’re trustful of me.

“If we get them to work with those at the castle... understood. Iwatani-dono, your forces will be taken into account.” (Trash) “That helps. We’re all counting on your strategy.” (Naofumi) “Leave it to me. Then after seeing your available combatants, let’s go to the castle once more, and put our ideas together.” (Trash) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

Like that, Trash began selecting forces from my village to participate in the war.

Since we would be fighting humans, Trash said that there were quite a few people who shouldn’t participate even if they wanted to.

Since they did wish it, I went through some trouble calming them down.

But just as Trash said, many of their hands shook when it came down to it.

They’re fine with fighting monsters, but many people understood that they didn’t have it in them to commit murder.

And I once again had to sooth the ones who couldn’t go to war.

Looking at statistics, a large portion of our forces were unable to participate.

The ratio of women in out village was high to begin with.

And while the night was drawing on, we used Ren to return to the castle.

Chapter 321: Jealousy

“Ah, Naofumi-chan. Are your wounds healed already?”

I left today's work to Trash, and went to rest early due to my recent injuries. But as I was back to my place, Sadina appeared from the ocean.

Why is that the first line everyone says when they see me?

I don't really know myself, but were my wounds really that serious?

I was incapacitated for a few days, so I guess there's no helping it.

“For the most part. And? Did you have some business with me?”

(Naofumi) “We're going to war, right? This Oneesan wanted to make herself a bit more useful, so I went out to raise my level.” (Sadina) “I see.”

(Naofumi)

In the sea, she's unmatched.

And when it comes down to war, she'll make for excellent manpower.

What's more, she seems to have anti-personnel battle experience, so I have a bit of confidence in her.

“So what level have you reached?” (Naofumi)

“95. I was able to venture deep into foreign, untamed regions!” (Sadina)

“Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

“And so...” (Sadina)

Sadina playfully approaches me, and speaks in my ear so Raphtalia won't hear.

Why must she do something to purposely irritate her?

Well, she was kinda that sort of person anyways.

“Have your doubts cleared a bit?” (Sadina)

“... A little.” (Naofumi)

“I see. Ah, also, there's something I'd like to report.” (Sadina) “What”

“We'll have to go to my secret island base. Oh, and bring a Lemo along.”

(Sadina) Ah, right... Raph-chan did indicate that direction.

I'm a bit curious.

That structure named the Castle Plant...

It would be troublesome if it began acting on its own.

I'll need to check it just in case.

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

"Got it. There's little time to spare, so lead the way." (Naofumi) "Then, Naofumi-chan." (Sadina)

Sadina looks in Raphtalia's direction, and gives a hand signal to me.

"Go on a date with me." (Sadina)

By the way, the sky is already pitch black.

Raphtalia's mostly oblivious of the content of our conversation.

This is bound to spring up some misunderstandings...

"Where do you plan on taking him?" (Raphtalia)

"Oh, my... What are you trying to make me say, Raphtalia-chan?"
(Sadina) "Naofumi-sama!" (Raphtalia)

Fumu... Raphtalia's behavior is... jealousy... right?

It's strange how that fact can make her actions seem kinda cute.

From the start, I did accept the fact that she was a bishojo, but I mean this in a different way.

The fact that I find teasing her like this fun may be because she's like my daughter.

"That's right. Ah, can you go ask Imya if she wants to join us?"
(Naofumi) The conversation follows Sadina's flow.

... For some reason, this pattern seems nostalgic.

Before I came to this world, I remember that I would often hop on board when other people were messing around.

Thinking back now, I wonder what I was trying to accomplish.

Haha... I can't laugh at the past Motoyasu anymore.

"Naofumi-sama!?" (Raphtalia)

"What?" (Naofumi)

"No... um... Where do you plan on going with Sadina-oneesan?"

(Raphtalia) Now how should I answer?

Just a month ago, I would have simply tilted my head, and answered, 'The Island'.

But now, I have a vague grasp of Raphtalia's feelings.

Since I have a bit of leeway, let's show a bit of appeal.

"On a date, right?" (Naofumi)

"Ara? You're taking me and Imya-chan out at the same time?" (Sadina)

"Yeah, let's bring Raph-chan along too." (Naofumi) "Oh my. This sure is turning out to be quite the banquet of lust." (Sadina) There's no end to this train.

Raphtalia firmly grasps my shoulder, starts releasing killing intent, and gives off a dangerous smile.

So I'm the one who's at fault here?

"Naofumi-sama? Can we have a little talk?" (Raphtalia) "Well..." (Naofumi)

I'm not oblivious of her female heart.

But since Raphtalia became jealous, there were a few things that I wanted to test out.

I admit that it did feel mean.

"Raphtalia." (Naofumi)

"What could it be?" (Raphtalia)

"You... once the world is at peace, what will you do?" (Naofumi)

"Meaning?" (Raphtalia)

“You see, when I was on the line between life and death, I met some people. I met Atlas, and one who claimed to be the Spirit of my Shield.” (Naofumi) I summed up my experiences before I regained consciousness to those present.

I was a bit embarrassed about my reason for deciding to stay, so I omitted it.

“So, when I return to my own world, I can take someone from herewith me.” (Naofumi) “I-is that true?” (Raphtalia)

Water is welling up in Raphtalia’s eyes.

As I thought.

I don’t know too much about the Legends of the past Heroes, but I bet there were a few that went to their home worlds.

I’m no exception. When I feel it’s time to leave, I’ll take her if she wants to go.

“So Raphtalia, what do you want to do?” (Naofumi) “Ara...” (Sadina)

Sadina’s eyes are showing clear signs of happiness.

She’s having fun watching this scene.

The past me would have gotten angry at her. Definitely.

“Well... Um...” (Raphtalia)

“Will you stay in this world, and spend your days in peace here?” (Naofumi) “...” (Raphtalia)

“Or will you follow me to my world, and live in a completely foreign land? I just wanted to ask that.” (Naofumi) “So the only option for Naofumi-chan is to return.” (Sadina) “Yeah. But if I left something unfinished, it would leave a bad taste in my mouth.” (Naofumi) “I...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia puts her hand on her chest, and takes a step forward.

“I believe that I want to stay by Naofumi-sama’s side for however long I can.” (Raphtalia) “... I see.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia musters her courage, and answers.

“Understood.” (Naofumi)

“Thank you.” (Raphtalia)

“Then you can’t really say anything against my outing with Sadina.”
(Naofumi) “...?” (Raphtalia)

“I mean, isn’t that right? What’s the legal age in this world?” (Naofumi)
“What?” (Raphtalia)

“Sadina, do you know?” (Naofumi)

“As soon as your parents or guardians recognize you as an adult, you will be treated as such. It also varies by the country, but Naofumi-chan’s the lord here. What do you want to do with the village’s law?” (Sadina) “I banned love, but I’ll loosen the regulations a bit.” (Naofumi) “Ara, how nice.” (Sadina)

“And so, Raphtalia!” (Naofumi)

“Y-yes?” (Raphtalia)

“In my world, the legal age is 18 for men, and 16 for women. If you plan on coming to my world, you have to keep that in mind. Or else I’ll get arrested.” (Naofumi) “...?” (Raphtalia)

It seems that it didn’t hit home with her.

I guess the differences in worlds is like this. I went through some trouble when I came here too.

But if Raphtalia wants to accompany me to my world, she’ll experience many things like this.

We’ll need to practice beforehand.

“And in my world, I’m no Hero. Just a civilian. Life will be difficult, and I think we’ll go through quite a few trials before we can establish a stable home and income.” (Naofumi) “N-Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“In that place, getting permission to marry a minor, and building a family will be difficult.” (Naofumi) Raphtalia’s face is getting paler by

the minute.

But remember this. This is really important.

First and foremost, Raphtalia doesn't have any family register documents, and I have no idea what to do about her ears and tail.

I can't have her hide them with magic forever, so it'll be quite a task.

Even if the Shield adapts the world a bit, that won't do anything to affect her actual age.

Though we may be able to use its power to make life a bit easier.

"To summarize, Raphtalia, your age is a hurdle if you want to marry me in my world." (Naofumi) "T-that can't be!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia loses her words, and takes a step back.

Even if she looks like an adult Bishojo, she really is a kid.

But if I subtract from her estimated age, she'll only have to wait for 5-6 years.

If it's just that much, I'll wait for her.

I also want to see her wearing a school uniform.

I'll bet the Shield will grant at least this much.

"But for those that aren't coming to my world, they're already treated as adults here. It's 100% legal for me to date them, and I also have Atlas's will. I've started to believe that I'll have to answer their feelings a bit. Thinking about the future, this isn't the same as what the Queen wanted, but it isn't bad, is it?" (Naofumi) If she gives birth to the child of the Hero, the country will guarantee her at least the most basic of rights.

That's something the people who said they liked me will have to consider down the road.

I'm not ecstatic about it, but I don't have the discomfort I felt before.

"B-but..." (Raphtalia)

"And so, Naofumi-chan is everyone's. I'm going to go on a date, and

then do some fun things with him.” (Sadina) “N-no... Naofumi-sama!”
(Raphtalia)

I guess I’ll leave it at this.

Raphtalia looks like she’s about to cry, and her hand is shaking as she extends it towards me.

“By the way, that was a joke.” (Naofumi)

“... What?” (Raphtalia)

“It seems Sadina found something on her secret base, so we’re taking Imya and Raph-chan to investigate it.” (Naofumi) Yes. I think I’ve gained a greater understanding of the psychology of popular boys.

Those three idiots that got stuck up in the fact that they were heroes. I think I understand their thoughts a bit more.

But even though I said such things to Raphtalia, I don’t think she’s enjoying it.

I had quite a bit of fun, though.

I mean, for the sake of the people in the village, doing something like this might make for a better result down the road.

I stroke Raphtalia’s face.

“But you need to be conscious of it as well, Raphtalia. It really is difficult to live in my world... no. If you compare it to this world, holding onto your life is but a simple task. But there are so many systems and institutions that there’s little room to breathe. So many that a large majority of the Heroes chose to live their lives in this world. You may regret it, you know.” (Naofumi) “... Even so, I want to live with you.” (Raphtalia) “Yeah. I’ve always told you that I don’t intend on staying in this world.” (Naofumi) It’s not as if I don’t have any attachment, but my will to return is strong.

If Raphtalia were to stay by my side, I would be able to return to my world without hesitation.

“Yes, I’ve a good understanding of the extent of Naofumi-sama’s

resolve.” (Raphtalia) “And so, I need to think of all the ones in the village we’ll leave behind. What I have to do, you understand right? Though this time, it was a joke.” (Naofumi) “... Yes. I thought I had already understood it from Atlas-san’s words.” (Raphtalia) “So please be a little open-minded. The time will come someday.” (Naofumi) “Understood. By the way, is it true that there’s a problem with my age?” (Raphtalia) “That’s right. Until it actually comes down to it, I’m not really sure. The Shield might make accommodations for it.” (Naofumi) On my answer, Raphtalia gives an expression of relief, and she drops her hand from her chest.

“Raphtalia, if you’re bothered by it, do you want to follow us here?” (Naofumi) “I wouldn’t recommend it, Naofumi-chan, I mean, we’ll be doing something fun afterwards.” (Sadina) I drive Sadina away by flicking my hand, and ask Raphtalia once more.

“Yes, let’s go.” (Raphtalia)

“Got it.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia prepares herself, and I go to get Imya.

We walk to the small boat anchored at the coast.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

I continue thinking as I rub Raph-chan.

He can change shape to be identical to Raphtalia, right?

In the future, will I be doing various indecent things with Raphtalia?

What should I do if she tells me I’m no good at it? I pause my hand on Raph-chan’s head.

Should I... gain experience with the villagers?

Just thinking it makes me want to kill myself.

“Ta~li~?” (Raph-chan)

In that respect, an identical model may make for a good test subject.

Raphtalia’s weak points are...

“... Naofumi-sama? What are you thinking as you pat Raph-chan?”

(Raphtalia) Raphtalia grabs my shoulder.

The top half of her face is covered in shadows for some reason. My spine is giving way. The muscles in my body turn to ice.

“Rafuu...” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan has both of his hands on his face. He looks down in embarrassment.

Are my thoughts really that easy to read?

Well, they were usually quite vile, so there's no helping if she gets angry with me.

Anyways, we reached the island.

As always the sight of the ruins I built is poison to my eyes.

Honestly, the island's unrecognizable from the time I first came here.

Sadina leads us to a hilly area.

“Here is it.” (Sadina)

What was there, was a small hole... but it was strangely deep.

It's size is around...

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Yep, just enough to fit Raph-chan, and its depth is.. it's too dark to tell.

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, yes.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia creates a light with magic, and drops it down the hole.

... I saw a portion of the tunnel, but it extends much further.

Just how far does it go?

I see, so this is why we needed a Lemo.

Normally, I would have ignored this, but this might be the result of the other me's research.

I can't have some strange creature popping up, and causing havoc.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“Imya, can you dig around for a bit?” (Naofumi)

“Y-yes!” (Imya)

Imya responds twice to my question, and nods. She begins casting magic.

『I, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth be read forth once more. Grant me the power to rend the earth.』

「Earth Blow」

Magic solidifies around the nails on both of Imya’s hands.

“Then I’ll be going.” (Imya)

She starts digging out the ground.

“The more magic I put in, the easier it is to dig.” (Imya) Imya seems proud as she digs.

Amazing. The earth is breaking like pudding before her.

As expected, you should call a specialist for a special job. I was right to ask a mole-like Demi-Human After a bit of digging, Imya popped out of the hole.

“Um, something seems to be buried really deep down.” (Imya) “Can you bring it up?” (Naofumi)

“It’s too big... and it seems its of plant origin, so it’s already decaying.” (Imya) “I see.” (Naofumi)

So it was made of Bioplant.

Do we have any hints as to its use?

“Ah, but I picked up the magical device that seemed to be its core.” (Imya) Imya hands me a fragment of a stone.

This is... part of a stone tablet, right?

I remember the one Rat tapped on.

“Thanks.” (Naofumi)

I praise Imya as she gets out of the hole, and brushes the dirt off of her body. Imya scratches her head in embarrassment.

“No, it wasn’t much.” (Imya)

“Imya, is there anyone you like?” (Naofumi)

“Eh? N-no...” (Imya)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

I’ll have to circle the village, and ask slowly.

“Ta~li~?” (Raph-chan)

“So where did you come from?” (Naofumi)

I ask Raph-chan once more.

... He’s pointing to the hole. But it was quite obvious.

“I guess this is all we’ll find out today.” (Naofumi) In a few days, we’ll be fighting.

This may be a... waste of time, but I’ll have Rat investigate it. We may find something useful.

Chapter 322: The Eighth Generation

I immediately returned to the village with the Cane's portal, and went to Rat, who was busy constructing her Carriage-type body for Mii-kun. It would be nice if I got some good info out of this.

"There is a strange stone embedded in it. Do you understand anything about it, Marquis?" (Rat) "I can't understand anything about the time I turned strange." (Naofumi) Apparently, I was really smart, but that doesn't matter.

And wait, if I was able to grasp something about this, it would actually be amazing.

"Rafu~?" (Raph-chan)

"Do you know anything?" (Naofumi)

I ask Raph-chan, but there's no way he'll give an answer.

Is what I thought, but he let out a meek voice, and nodded.

"Rafu~." (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan jumps on top of the tablet we were analyzing, and beckons Raphtalia to come closer.

"This again... Why do I have such a bad premonition..." (Raphtalia)

"Even if you say that, it's best if we investigated it, right?" (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Raphtalia)

Raph-chan makes Raphtalia touch the tablet, and the rock around the stone begins to recede. The stone is on its way out.

The scene was quite Sci-fi.

"Oh."

With his tail held high, Raph-chan puts his hands in the newly-made hole, and begins decoding something, but after a while, a large X mark popped up, and it seems that he can't make any more progress with it.

"To get it out, we may need Raphtalia-san's DNA. Next is... the part

Raph-chan managed to decrypt himself.” (Rat) To see what RAph-chan was stuck on, Rat started violently tapping on the keyboard.

“Ara. It’s asking for a password. What’s more, its protecting the most vital information.” (Rat) Password... I never thought I would hear such a word in this Fantasy Parrallel World.

But will we be able to crack the code?

It would be nice if there was a hint somewhere...

“Do you think ou can crack it?” (Naofumi)

“I think it would be simple if Mii-kun returned. You did make him so he was able to freely alter things like this.” (Rat) “Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan shakes his head left and right.

“He says it won’t work.” (Naofumi)

“Really... Ah, I see the system Mii-kun’s equipped with installed here. This is an artificial lifeform in the shape of a stone tablet. I guess it won’t work.” (Rat) “That so?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. It’s something made of the same design as Mii-kun. A conscious Fire-Wall system.” (Rat) Net terms are starting to pop up in this Fantasy. Andit’s of the same type as mii-kun... I guess we’re out of our area of expertise.

“If we engaged it and won, that would be nice, but it may be designed to self-destruct upon death.” (Rat) “So force won’t work...” (Naofumi)

After getting all the way here, going any further is impossible...

For it to be protected this carefully, it must be hiding something extremely important.

“You get three tries at the password. Marquis is the one who made it, so do you have any ideas?” (Rat) “Even if you ask me... Wouldn’t it just be ‘Raphtalia’, or something?” (Naofumi) “It would be nice it it was something simple like that.” (Rat) Rat enters Raphtalia’s name into the tablet.

The board beeps, and gives a warning sound.

“Yes, first try failed.” (Rat)

“What should we do...” (Naofumi)

“We have two left.” (Rat)

We’ll give do all or nothing bet, and have Mii-kun try to access it anyways when we’re down to one.

Now about the strange me... He made this when he thought Raphtalia was dead.

If I looked from that perspective...

Until recently, I was quite dense.

I thought of Raphtalia as my daughter, so perhaps that Password’s in that direction.

“Try inputting, ‘To my beloved daughter’.” (Naofumi)

“What’s with that phrase!? Who is whose father!?” (Raphtalia)
Raphtalia’s retort was on the mark.

But that’s what came to mind, so there’s no helping it.

“... It worked...” (Rat)

“Naofumi-sama...!” (Raphtalia)

“Nope, not my fault.” (Naofumi)

Daughter... she is my skillful right hand man, and she doesn’t have any parents, so sometimes I do think I’m acting as their replacement.

There’s no mistake.

Looking at the information that was displayed, Rat nodded.

“Fumufumu... It seems you had the Bioplant continue the research for the Eighth Generation of Raphs. You prepared it just in case you were to perish.” (Rat) “Rafu?” (Raph-chan)

“This child’s existence in itself is a sort of black box. His directive is unknown.” (Rat) “You weren’t able to decode it?” (Naofumi)

“You need a higher authority than Mii-kun to control this one. If we tried to touch the stone, it would have fallen to pieces. It seems this child knew that.” (Rat) “And? Just what is he?” (Naofumi)

“A completed sample of the Eighth Generation. The Raphtalia that you were trying to bring to this world. Or perhaps he would be the threshold between Raphtalia and Raph.” (Rat) “Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

As if he’s saying, ‘What do ‘ya think about me now?’ Raph-chan sticks out his chest with pride.

Ah, yes, yes.

I know that you’re amazing.

There’s no helping it, si I start patting his head.

“The Eighth Generation...” (Raphtalia)

“His specs are in a different dimension from the Seventh Generation.” (Rat) “Really?” (Naofumi)

“The time it took you to make the first through the seventh generations was only a week, you know. If this plant were to continue that research without rest for all this time... what do you think would happen?” (Rat) Let’s see. I was defeated at Raphtalia’s hands, and about two and a half weeks passed before I met Raph-chan...

“Though the continuation was conducted by AI, it had quite a bit of success. It also seems that if the Raphs naturally carried on the cycle of life, one like this would be born someday.” (Rat) It somehow... sounds like a manga I read a while ago.

A researcher was killed by his own test subject, but a computer continued to finish his research.

Anyways, regardless of the outcome, an Eighth Generation would have been born...

“Uwah...” (Rat)

“What’s up?” (Naofumi)

“It looks like all of the Raphs are connected. When greater power is required, they can pool their abilities, and the EXP they get is redistributed to this one... you’re also included in that EXP pool, Marquis.” (Rat) Is it that?

When the curse was taking away my gained EXP, it was flowing to Raph-chan along with the other Raphs?

The reason Raph-chan’s level was so high, and why it arbitrarily continued to rise, was because he was getting EXP from the other Raphs.

“If he wanted to speak human tongue, I think he could. I mean, with these specs, it’s more than possible.” (Rat) “Rafu?” (Raph-chan)

“Can you speak?” (Rat)

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

He’s tilting his head.

Is he playing dumb...? No, it doesn’t seem that way.

“It appears to understand your situation... does it really not have speech capability?” (Rat) Since he sensed that I don’t really like talking monsters, he decided not to develop speech?

The reason he fit a lot of my preferences was this?

“So if I taught him, he could?” (Naofumi)

“It’s a possibility.” (Rat)

Rat continues to read off the deciphered information.

“It seems you spliced some Filo Rial data into here too. You used their shape changing function as reference.” (Rat) “Ah, so that’s why he can change form.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, him changing form to Raphtalia was something like that. And that was your goal in the first place, so it goes without saying.” (Rat) Well, I did have a vague idea that it was something like that.

I mean, the research was intended to replicate and revive her.

“... Why did I take such a roundabout path, without making a

Homunculus?” (Naofumi) “That’s a mystery. But as a fellow alchemist, it’s not like I don’t understand what you were trying to do.” (Rat) “How so?” (Naofumi)

“I told you why I stopped considering remaking Mii-kun as a Homunculus, right? By that Marquis’s logic, a Homunculus is but a Homunculus. He wanted to make the real one, so he couldn’t do that.” (Rat) “And so... Isn’t this the same thing?” (Naofumi)

“Then let’s do an experiment. Raph-chan, where did you first meet the count? 1. Near this village, 2. Somewhere else.” (Rat) Rat randomly picks up some stones, and lines them into a row of 1, and a row of 2.

Raph-chan goes and sits down by Row 2.

“Well... that’s true.” (Naofumi)

I mean, he’s right.

“You probably continued to correct your research as you strove to create the real one. This should have led him to have some fabricated memories and experiences in his body.” (Rat) “That Naofumi-sama... thought about it that much.” (Raphtalia) “...” (Naofumi)

I have no idea what I was thinking back then, but I guess that’s true.

And wait, just how much did I like Raphtaila?

Did I plan to take the organism I created myself, and make it my girlfriend?

Even so, the password was, ‘To my beloved daughter’.

“It’s good that Raph-chan understands, but if handled poorly, there was a chance he could have swapped places with the original.” (Rat)

Chapter 323: Change Raph

“Eh...” (Raphtalia)

Ah, Raphtalia’s smile became stiff.

Well it would be eerie if a creature that looked exactly like you were to put on a pretense and take your place.

It’s that. It’s similar to a doppelgänger.

When I think about it like that, it seems like a creepy being so it’s quite bizarre.

However there’s a distinction. They feel different.

Somehow the real Raphtalia differs a little from my ideal, and it feels better to pet Raph-chan.

In the end, there’s a gap between my ideal and the real Raphtalia.

“I can tell them apart when I pet them though.” (Naofumi) “To pet Raphtalia enough to distinguish between them, you say~ even Onee-san is getting embarrassed~” (Sadina) “That’s right... the reason I can tell the difference is because I’ve been travelling with Raphtalia until now.”

(Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama, that conversation is getting...” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia’s face turned red.

As usual, it seems that she’s not good with this subject.

“Then Raph-chan can become Raphtalia-chan’s body double, right~” (Sadina) Sadina said some unnecessary... well, it might be good to consider that.

To even reproduce Raphtalia’s memories.... certainly, that may be more advanced than just making a homunculus.

That route is wrong though.

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

“Geh.. she’s even compatible with Mii-kun’s body. The affinity is the worst... she can possess Mii-kun.” (Rat) [T/N: I’m going with female

because Raph-chan is Raphtalia's clone.. kinda]

"Don't you dare hurt her." (Naofumi)

"I won't. However, I won't let it go if she does possess Mii-kun." (Rat)
"Ria~" (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan nodded once, as if she understood Rat's threat.

Somehow she seems to have good perceptiveness.

"On that note, I'm having you finish making that carriage-type body, but she seems to be helpful. (Naofumi) "Yes, she can even activate the cells so the efficiency of my work should be increased." (Rat) "That's good. Even if it's just that, it's productive." (Naofumi) "Ah, Marquis, if you're going to raise that child then you should Class her up properly. She should almost be at her limit." (Rat) "Got it." (Naofumi)

Nevertheless, to Class Up at Level 90, huh.

I originally thought this in Gaelion's case as well, but what's the principle behind transcending the Class Up limit?

...What comes to mind is that it's because the one being leeched off has had a Class Up maybe? [T/N: Wrath dragon stole Firo's exp and levels but Gaelion didn't Class Up until afterwards]

Like this, Raph-chan's identity was established.

So she's the legacy of the crazy me.

I didn't expect anything other than combat.

By the way, this is something I learned later, but the Raphs with a higher ranked position have power, just like the Filorials. [T/N: Raph Queens (/Kings)]

It looks like the low ranked Raph obey them.

"Ah, I discovered an interesting project." (Rat) "What is it?" (Naofumi)

"Marquis, you had Filorial familiars if I'm not mistaken." (Rat) "Yeah, they come out even though I don't call them." (Naofumi) ""Pii!" (Filorial Familiars)

They appeared as if they were called.

“Try giving one to Raph-chan.” (Rat)

“Hm?” (Naofumi)

When I transfer one over, Raph-chan held the little Filorial with both hands.

Just like a raccoon.

“Rafu~” (Raph-chan)

....What the hell?

“Pii.” (Filorial familiar)

And then a short while later it turned into a little Raph.

....Huh?

“Let’s see....” (Rat)

Familiar: Raph was learnt.

Mode Change: Raph was learnt.

Familiar Change was learnt.

“As I expected, it looks like it worked.” (Rat) “What is this?” (Naofumi)

“Rafu!” (Familiar)

The little Raph started dancing with the Filorial familiar.

It’s slightly bigger than the familiar.

“To summarise, this is the Expanding the Marquis’s Abilities Plan? It seems there’s a variety of things that are possible like the Filorials.” (Rat)

“Ah.. I see.” (Naofumi)

“If you wanted to restore it.... it seems like you can use something to change it back but do you know, Marquis?” (Rat) “For the time being.”

I try using Familiar Change.

The familiar that turned into a Raph became a Filorial.

I see, so Raphs can also change into Filorials depending on the situation

it's used in....

It's quite elaborate.

I haven't finished analysing it but it's something like this." (Rat) "What kind of creature Raph-chan is.... I've also learnt a lot." (Naofumi) "Rafu~" (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan bows her head.

Is that slate your instruction manual or something.

"What's the danger of a second or third Raph-chan being born?" (Naofumi) "There's none here but...." (Rat)

It's not safe.... while thinking that, I leave the laboratory with Raphtalia.

Ah, Sadina and Raph-chan are also with us.

After this is.... there's someone I need to speak to alone.

"Come to think of it, Granny's son... where is he?" (Naofumi) "He's training with everyone."

Right, Granny had a son.

He had been captivated by Granny's fancy movements.

However, I mustn't forget.

Granny's death is unconfirmed at present.... but the party formation is already....

"I want to speak to him alone. Please don't follow me." (Naofumi) "Understood." (Raphtalia)

I suppose Raphtalia, the Female Knight and Fohl have conversed with him.

It's getting considerably late. It's time for the villagers to finish training and head to bed.

At this time of day, many of the older slaves, like Sadina, and the soldiers staying in the village would be having a drink in the Dining Hall.

I make my way to the Dining hall, if he wasn't there then I'd head to the house I assigned to Granny.

Luckily, Granny's son was drinking alcohol.

"Is this taken?" (Naofumi)

I point to the seat beside the Granny's son.

"...Go ahead." (Son)

Granny's son nodded so I sat down.

"....."

Silence rules the surroundings.

"I'm sorry I couldn't protect your mother." (Naofumi) I break the silence and apologise.

When I do, Granny's son puts down his glass and looks downward, absorbed in thought.

"No..." (Son)

Granny's son sinks into silence.

The silence is heavy.

"I heard from Raphtalia and the others. I think mother would be satisfied." (Son) "But.." (Naofumi)

Before I could reply, Granny's son intercepts me with a gentle smile.

"My mother didn't originally plan to leave behind the Hengen Musou style. Apparently a lot of things happened when she was younger." (Son)
"I also heard about that." (Naofumi)

"However... she wanted to personally help with the Hero of the Shield-sama's efforts and made the decision to let someone succeed the school that she didn't even teach me." (Son) "Come to think of it... I didn't see you fighting that much." (Naofumi) He's dressed like what might not be normally understood as a soldier.

At first, I had thought he was a villager.

“Yeah... and I didn’t even know that my mother was such a famous person.” (Son) “Speaking of which... what about your father?” (Naofumi) From what I’ve seen, Granny and her son look as distant as grandmother and grandson, rather than parent and child.

“I’m an orphan. So I’m not related to my mother by blood.” (Son) “I see...” (Naofumi)

“Hero of the Shield-sama.” (Son)

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“The Hero of the Shield-sama saved my mother’s life. And so she said she wouldn’t have any regrets no matter when she was to die, because the Hero of the Shield-sama bestowed her time.”

This is.... tough.

Fohl is also the same, but I never thought there would be times where I’d consider it better to be hated.

“Because she met the Hero of the Shield-sama, my mother shined the brightest I’ve ever seen. That’s why I only feel gratitude towards the Hero of the Shield-sama. If my mother sacrificed herself to let everyone escape and so the Hero of the Shield-sama could live, then...” (Son) “.....” (Naofumi)

“We spent all our savings to purchase Yggdrasil medicine to extend her life but... if it was just me, I’m sure mother wouldn’t have been able to live as long as she did. The time was increased, I was taught to fight and got stronger because of the Hero of the Shield-sama’s miracle.” (Son) Fohl also said something similar.

Yggdrasil medicine, that medicine.... it gave me a bitter duty.

It’s karma.

“Hengen Musou is a style that exists for weak people to destroy the evil. My mother didn’t die in vain. Hero of the Shield-sama, please, my mother’s will.... let us succeed it. So if you’re troubled, take a step forward, you don’t have to worry about me.” (Son) “But...” (Naofumi)

“I have a dream. The part of the Hengen Musou style that was lost when my mother was lost, that part... I believe it will be resurrected if it's here. So, Hero-sama... Please let me join you in fighting to protect the world. For my mother's sake as well.” (Son) “....I understand. I don't know when you might die though? Are you still fine with that?” (Naofumi) “The Hengen Musou style will live on through this village. Even if I end up dying, it won't be a complete death.” (Son) “Is that so, you're strong.” (Naofumi)

In that case, I will live up to her wishes.

I will defeat Tact with the Hengen Musou style.

After that, I exchanged a few drinks with Granny's son and then retired to bed.

In a few days, the war and wave will come.

The preparations are complete. I've done all that I need to.

And thus, the war began.

Chapter 324: The King of Wisdom

“Are the preparations in order?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Iwatani-dono.” (Trash)

The wave is coming... and at the same time, Faubley will attack. I’m speaking to Trash in the castle.

“You sure are good at thinking up plans.” (Naofumi) From the day after the meeting, we’ve been meeting with Trash, and preparing for his operations.

Of course, we also train ourselves when we’re free.

Even if Heroes have no level limit, it’s impossible for us to overtake the level 350 Tact in the time we have.

But we have our own trump card.

Using the knowledge I gained, Trash, and Fohl’s Seven Star weapon, we’ve put our final plan together.

The country’s Dragon Hourglass is almost empty.

If you look over the walls of Melromark’s castle town, you can see Faubley’s army encroaching from the distance.

Yesterday, one of Melromark’s forts fell into their hands.

It’s likely that they’re using it as their base of operations right now.

But that was within Trash’s predictions.

Me, Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki memorized the plan, and practiced to adapt it depending on the situation.

By the way, the ones who will be confronting Tact’s army are me and Ren. The other two will deal with the wave.

Trash is responsible for giving orders for the battles on both fronts.

Ah, Fohl’s with my team.

Rishia is going off with Itsuki.

The Heroes have divided in half to combat two forces.

Raphtalia and Firo, Raph-chan, Gaelion, and Sadina are going to go with my team.

Kiel and the other villagers are participating too. Those who can't bring themselves to combat human being are going to the wave.

The Filo Rials have been distributed as needed.

The Raph Squad will be moving as a detached corp.

The rest is up to you, Trash.

I can only pray that the measures in the sky will go well "Iwatani-dono, at most, this will..." (Trash)

"I know." (Naofumi)

I had made light of Trash, but with this much, I can go into battle with some confidence.

At the very least, the success rate is a bit higher than my estimate.

It's best to leave this planning to those specialized in it.

As long as everyone does their part, I can at least say the result won't be a bad one.

No, I won't let us reach a bad ending.

"It's almost time." (Trash)

"Yeah..." (Naofumi)

With the meeting over, I lightly swing the cane in my hand. And I proceeded forward.

—

A few hours later.

Tact looked down on Melromark from a terrace on the fort he had captured.

A black smoke was rising above the castle town.

“Status Update!” (Soldier)

He was surrounded by women, as he looked upon the battlefield.

His expression completely portrayed his foreseen victory.

He knew that the status report would be in his favor. And in reality, it was.

“Through the application of Tact-sama’s new weapon, and plan, Melromark’s capital has successfully been occupied by our soldiers. Their command structure is in chaos. It appears that all of their heroes were transported away to fight a wave. A few of them abandoned the wave, and desperately rushed back, and they are engaging with your forces, but they are severely outnumbered. It’s only a matter of time before this war draws to its conclusion.” (Soldier) “Fufufu, as I thought. This formation has yet to see failure. They’re no exception: this is their limit.” (Tact) “As expected of Tact-sama!”

“Amazing!” (Bitch)

“There’s no army in this world that can withstand that fusillade!”

“They cannot raise a hand to the aerial bombardment and troop deployment that Tact-sama proposed.”

“Don’t praise me so much. This is also for the world; for the people. Let’s end this war swiftly, and bring an end to that country governed by nothing but Trash.” (Tact) A slight smile surfaces on Tact’s face as he declares this.

“Yes, I want to see those Heroes’ executions already.” (Bitch) “I understand, Malty. There’s no way I’d let the people who put you through such horrors live in this world.” (Tact) “Ah, Tact-sama.” (Bitch)

“But it’s not interesting if everything goes this smoothly. I guess there’s fun to be found in a certain victory too. Especially if it was based on my plan.” (Tact) “Yes.”

“Exactly.” (Bitch)

“Hahahaha!” (Tact)

His loud laugh echoed through the empty halls.

“... Oh, right. That was a lie.” (Soldier)

“What?” (Tact)

Tact halts his laughter, and turns to the soldiers that came to report...
no, he turns to us.

His security... was a joke.

To be more specific, we had already registered this building as a destination for our portal.

We easily infiltrated, and got all the way here by simply pretending to be scouts.

We got a few sets of Faubley Scout uniforms from our connections to the Dark Guild.

Faubley's a country with a bit of history, so goods like that circulate easily.

“Are you an idiot? Do you think messengers come in groups like this?”
(Naofumi) Tact is taken aback as we remove the illusion surrounding us.

Firo, Gaelion and Sadina are already in their battle forms.

Raph-chan... is as he is.

He managed to hide us with magic easily.

He's riding hidden on Raphtalia's back.

With Raphtalia and Raph-chan working together, they were able to cast illusion magic strong enough to even mask scent.

Illusions aren't just something of the eyes.

And it seems that Tact's sharp nosed Harem Members didn't even sense us.

“You seem to be laughing quite happily. I'm sorry, but that smoke you see over there is the result of your plane being turned into a ball of fire.”
(Naofumi) “That can't be! What about Lurina!?” (Tact)

Right, by Trash's idea, Tact's deployed airplanes should have been shot down.

I mean, I'm just saying what Trash told me to say here. I had no time to check Melromark.

Anyways, the report turned from fortune to disaster.

No... it's our fortune.

Right now, the planes should be colliding with the large collection of Graweick ore Trash set above Melromark's airspace.

(TL: See Chapter 292)

An early airplane's demerit is that it can't make sudden turns.

So with those in place, the bombarding became impossible.

Rocks that fly in this world aren't exactly rare, so they were probably trained to avoid them. But that's where the Raphs came in.

Their ability to conceal things is unusually high.

Using something like Choral Magic, they amplified their abilities, and made it so that nothing could be seen in Melromark's skies.

Luckily, today's weather is nice.

At a glance, it looks like the perfect day for a flight.

If only there weren't any giant invisible rocks floating everywhere.

Of course, there's plans for if that's not enough to stop them.

If they still try dropping soldiers from the ore, we have all of Melromark's mages ready with wind and Gravity magic.

Because Parachutes are as the look.

If the unfolded part gets damaged beyond use, you fall, and die.

They probably do implement a form of wind magic to slow their descent, but the gravity magic increases their terminal velocity beyond a controllable point.

What's more, our side is still bombarding them with magic and arrows,

so even if they do survive, they won't get off unharmed.

The factor we were worried about, the flying Demi-Humans... and Tact's Gryphon. They're all here.

Which means that there are few troublesome opponents on Trash's side.

The easy victories we let him face on Melromark territory made him negligent.

For once, the wind is blowing in our favor.

"H-how!?" (Tact)

"I have no intentions of explaining my plan to you. If I had to say, then it's because you forgot about our renowned King of Wisdom." (Naofumi)

"Damn!" (Tact)

Tact's followers take out guns, and prepare themselves.

"According to that king, your plan was the lowest of the low. Your decisions were also the worst." (Naofumi) Apparently, this right here was the most foolish thought on Tact's part.

The idea that we would never make it this far... he said.

The most dangerous possibility I saw was Tact himself standing at the vanguard of his forces but Trash said it would also be poorly planned out.

Well, our plan was to use the Heroes to round up all their dangerous ones at once, so it's not anything amazing.

And before the battle started, Trash said as such: 『He's chosen the most foolish choice of the ones I surmised... It's as if he's just asking you to take his important pieces. Is he trying to lure us in? No, perhaps he's just perhaps he's underestimating us... okay, if it turns out to be a trap, then pretend to be caught, and observe his attitude. If it's not, then it'll end with this move.』 (Trash) Or something like that, but I wonder if that move will show its effects soon.

But that's fine.

I just have to do what I've been assigned to do.

I'll entrust the rest of the battlefield to Trash.

Since we've come this far, then at the very least, we won't go down without a fight.

Chapter 325: Provocation

Now then, if you're wondering how we got here so fast, we left the matter of the wave completely to Motoyasu and Itsuki. The other Heroes went and registered at Zeltburg's hourglass.

Their dragon hourglass is managed by the country, but with Itsuki's membership in the Dark Guild, and the Slave Dealer's connections, we managed to get through.

And Heroes get a free pass to things like this.

The Hero in Zeltburg was killed a while ago, and the upper echelon of their government had their pride, so they happily cooperated.

The country's mercenary guild was also happy to help, and talking them over was too easy.

Apparently the murder of their hero was like smearing dirt on the name of mercenaries everywhere.

I guess that's what you get from the Hero of the land of Hired Swords.

I must offer my thanks to the late Hero of Zeltburg.

If you have money, you can make any sort of contract. That's where Tact's world domination plot falls short.

My side had the Slave Dealer from the start, and even the influential Accessory Merchant.

I also met the Swindler after a long time, and he seems to be raking in quite a bit.

Also, the noble Elena Haven-sama (lol) was led by her father to help Trash in the battlefield.

The individual herself seemed really reluctant, but if she does well, she'll get promoted, and she'll get more money. (TL: The lol is in the original text) 『If I get promoted, you're just going to push more troublesome matters onto me, so I refuse.』

Is what she said.

I'm not doing troublesome things like being a Hero or a Lord because I like it.

But as a merchant, Elena is supporting the country, so if the country comes out on top, the amount of troublesome work for her will increase.

Not that I care about her...

Anyways, this is the limit of suppression by force... Tact never had the resolve to set forth alongside death.

Right now, I have my doubts, but that's what I was doing.

My villagers are participating in this war, and those from Silt Welt as well.

But it seems they have their own matters to settle, and some bad blood with Shield Freiden.

They're applying numerous tactics.

The Gramps who was commanding Silt Welt's army had a strange smile on his face as he saw Trash at work.

『I never even dreamed that my sworn enemy, the King of Wisdom, would become my ally. We truly were fighting quite a monster.』

He muttered to himself.

By the way, their forces are great at close quarters.

Due to the danger of an information leak, Trash didn't reveal much of his planning.

He said something about using a special system of communications to command the battle.

All we have to do is focus on taking down the enemy general.

If you beat Tact earlier than expected, go off and reinforce the Anti-Wave force, or so I was told.

I'm not sure if he's looking down on his enemy, or he knows something I don't.

For all further questions, go ask Trash's brain.

Is he supposed to be some sort of literary genius tactician?

When things go this well, I'm wondering if he's some sort of Esper.

"Then all I have to do is step on the battlefield, and slaughter everyone."
(Tact) "Oh, I can't have you forgetting about us." (Naofumi)

Tact pulls out the Claw. It seems he'll rush off at any moment I'll stop him. I'm here to defeat him in the first place.

And an army without orders is nothing more than a useless gathering.

For Trash to be able to do this much... Well, I haven't actually looked at the war situation, so I don't know about that.

"Do you think that people of your caliber will be able to do anything against me?" (Tact) "Isn't it obvious? This is the Bad End Event that your life's led you to. All that's left is for you to contemplate which selection you made wrong as you wait for your Game Over." (Naofumi) He appears to be acting calm, but it's become interesting seeing just how warped his expression is.

It's not like we came here with no plan at all.

We're here because we have an ample chance of victory.

"What are you saying? How splendid. You all came here in order to give your powers to me, right? I'll at least play with you." (Tact) A clicking sound rings out as Tact's harems point and load their guns at us.

"And? You're going to do something as unfair as weakening us with a firing brigade before you go in for the kill?" (Naofumi) That line was Trash's proposal.

Tact seems offended as he furrows his brow.

"It may sound nice if you label it as something like resourcefulness, but it's cowardliness in its essence." (Naofumi) It's not like I don't have countermeasures for it, though.

"... Very well. I'm more than enough for people of your level. The level

350 me.” (Tact) Fumu. The provocation worked.

It seems he has a sense of fairness like an average person.

Or perhaps he’s just an idiot with a large amount of pride.

This is my enemy, so I’ll be the one to slay them! It seems he would say something like that.

Being the Hero of the Shield, it’s a line that I’d usually never be able to say.

But today is different.

Anyways, Trash’s Anti-Tact plan went into phase 2.

This part is up to me. Trash won’t have any input.

It would be laughable if I were to fall here of all places.

“Hmm? That should be my line. Why do you think it was that we didn’t initiate a cowardly sneak attack like you? Do you understand?” (Naofumi)
“Because such things won’t work on me.” (Tact)

“I wonder. I’m merely fighting you head on, so I can destroy every last thing you’ve built up for yourself.” (Naofumi) The reason I didn’t end this from the start was because of Granny’s will. The will of Hengen Musou, and my personal grudge.

I wanted verification of those.

“There was an old woman who fought to let us escape, right?”
(Naofumi) “Ah, her? Though she was just a weakling, she went on a rampage like an idiot. It took an unexpectedly long time to kill her.”
(Tact) “... Then that person will be the one to drag you into your grave.”
(Naofumi) Now then, enough with this nonsense.

“Fake Hero, I’m more than enough for someone of your level.”
(Naofumi) “Aniki!?” (Fohl)

“I’m sorry, Fohl. Bear with it.” (Naofumi)

“But...!” (Fohl)

I ignore Fohl, take a step forward, and put my cane over my shoulder to

show it off to Tact.

“My... that cane is...” (Tact)

“Yeah, it’s one of the Seven Star Weapons you desire. Right now, I’m its wielder.” (Naofumi) “Then luck is upon me. I’ll just have to take another weapon from you, like I did with your Shield.” (Tact) “If you can, then try it.” (Naofumi)

Tact and I glare at each other.

While that was happening, a few women step forward, and offer proposals to Tact.

“Tact-sama.”

“There is an opponent here I would like to engage.”

We’ve encountered these ones before. It’s the Kitsune-like one that fought Raphtalia, and the Aotatsu Woman that fought Fohl Also the fish-like onewoman who opposed Sadina The other two... There’s the lizard woman, and a woman with wings on her back like Firo.

They each lock eyes with Firo and Gaelion

“Tulna, Nellisen, Shatte, Lurdia, and Ashiel. I got it. It would be more effective than if you just watched. Let’s show them the difference in our power. The real Hero will be the one to come out on top.” (Tact) “What do you mean by real!? You perpetrated a farce like this, and only listen to that Witch’s words. There’s no way that you’re a Hero!” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia shouts out and the Kitsune woman responds. Her name seems to be Tulna.

“It seems that this even this Raccoon wench’s heart is covered in mud. I’ve lived hundreds of years, and you say that the one I chose to follow isn’t a Hero? Are your eyes rotten?” (Tulna) “You’re Atlas’s murderer!” (Fohl)

“Wait right there, Hakuko Brat! I’ll show you just how amazing a person you’re making an enemy of. It’s because they followed the Hero of the Shield that the Hakuko, and the whole of Silt Welt is declining!”

“Move, mob character!” (Fohl)

“Fohl.” (Naofumi)

“What?” (Fohl)

“Once you beat her, you can participate in my fight with Tact. That is if I haven’t beaten him up yet.” (Naofumi) “... Got it. I’ll be over in a jiffy, Aniki! I’ll leave him to you for now!” (Fohl) Fohl and the Aotatsu... Nellisen lock eyes.

It’s not time for Fohl to jump into my battle yet.

“Then are you the one this Onee-san will fight?” (Sadina) “Luka woman... you’re still alive. I won’t forgive you!”

The mermaid-like woman transformed.

She’s now a fish-like Beastman.

“Are you a mix blood of the Noid and Kusha race? What grudge do you have with me?” (Sadina) “How shameless! You Luka are always looking down at the lot of us!”

“Um, I don’t really know what you’re talking about, but if you want to fight, then I’ll accept.” (Sadina) So there are people that carry grudges within races.

It’s of no concern to me.

But it seems Sadina is troubled with having a grudge she has no knowledge about stuck on her.

And wait, I’m pretty sure Sadina isn’t even a Luka.

“You’re one who possesses a fragment of the dragon emperor, I see. To personally come out to see me, are you just asking to be stolen away?”

“KYUA!”

“Fu... I’ll teach a brittle fragment the true power of a Dragon Emperor.”

A snapping sound echoes as the lizard woman changes shape to that of a Dragon.

She's really big. Even bigger than Adult Gaelion.

The pressure she releases is overwhelming.

I wonder what it is. I feel something from that dragon reminiscent of the Spirit Turtle and Houou.

Honestly, to defeat Tact, I don't understand why I had to take Ren along as well.

But Trash said he had a bad premonition, so he grouped me and Ren together just in case.

This may have been the reason.

The next woman, the one with wings, also changes.

She becomes a Gryphon.

"Miniscule fragment. Tact said to spare the women, so you're a different matter."

"Oh, I can't have you forgetting about me." (Ren)

Ren stands next to Gaelion with his sword drawn.

"Naofumi, who should I be fighting?" (Ren)

"The Dragon seems to be the stronger of the two. Work with Gaelion to beat her." (Naofumi) "Got it." (Ren)

Ren nods, and jumps aboard Gaelion, who had grown to full size.

How ironic is it... for him to be fighting atop the Dragon, whose life he cut short himself?

But that's a line for Adult Gaelion to say.

"Did you think that the Four Heroes were enough to take us on!?"

"Reldia, do you think you can beat a Hero?" (Tact)

"Who do you think I am, Tact. If you leave it to me, I won't let a single soul past." (Reldia) And Firo ends up dealing with the Gryphon.

"Filo Rial. My old enemy, cursed to grawl atop the earth. I will be the one to choke the life out of that accursed Queen's descendents."

“Wah, are you a bird? A cat? Whichever, Firo will beat you.” (Firo) And, as always, she seems relaxed.

For argument’s sake, she should be much higher than Firo in level, but... Firo keeps her composure.

“Now then, let’s start this bad play. The battle to bring an end to this farce.” (Naofumi) When I say as such, Tact completely falls for my provocations.

“Of course! Let’s start the battle we were certain to win from the start!” (Tact) And everyone started their own battles.

Chapter 326: X

As one would expect (maybe because it was too cramped), Tact, our followers minus the women who couldn't be found, and I descended from the terrace and started our respective battles.

Gaelion, Ren and Firo's battles were in the sky.

"Hahaha, do you really think you, who possess only a single Seven Star Weapon, can win against me, who possesses five Seven Star Weapons and one of the Four Saint Weapons, a total of Six?" (Tact) "That power was obtained unfairly, after all. A fake can't win against the real deal." (Naofumi) ".....You're all talk." (Tact)

"What are you spitting at the sky for?" (Naofumi) [T/N: Proverb: to invite disaster onto oneself. If you spit up at the sky, it'll fall back down and land on your face.]

"Huh? What are you saying?" (Tact)

"Then I'll make it easier for an idiot like you to understand. Will you get it if I said to think of a Boomerang?" (Naofumi) "What did you say!?" (Tact)

I immediately grip the Cane with both hands and start casting a spell. [T/N: Why is it cane? It can also be translated as Staff/Wand...]

This is the original ability of the Seven Star Cane.

It's an ability the Cane was endowed with, and it shortens the chant of a spell.

If it's mastered to perfection, Trash said it might not even need a chant but that's probably impossible for me.

Apart from that, it also allowed someone to learn magic they had no aptitude for.

This was really exceptional so I was surprised.

I reflect on how difficult the shield is to use, as I grasp the Cane tightly with appreciation.

I'm a little reluctant to return it to Trash.

I cast magic on all my allies here whilst combining my SP and Magic.

This spell needs an absurd amount of time to cast, but it was greatly reduced because of the Cane.

It's like a puzzle with five parts, which must be fully solved before it can be invoked, becoming something with only two simple ones.

And thus.... I invoked the strengthening technique contained in the Seven Star Cane.

<I, the true hero, command the heavens and earth, remove and connect the principles, and expel the pus. Oh, Force of the Dragon Pulse. Build up my strength along with my magic and hero's might, I command you as the true hero who is worthy of the origin of power. I once more read and understand everything in nature, bestow everything unto thy subjects.>

"All Revelation Aura X!" (Naofumi)

Right, this was the Cane's strengthening technique.

To put it simply, it's of the Skill Acquisition class.

It's similar to how someone can raise the abilities of their favourite skills and magic by distributing points they earn from leveling up in net games.

Ren spoke about it in the past.

That Brave Star Online uses a system with Skill Points.

In other words, it's that sort of thing.

Raising your level and distributing the Skill Points to learn skills.

It's a standard system in many of the online games I know.

That was the strengthening technique of the Cane and Gauntlets.

The Cane could assign points to magic, and skills for the Gauntlets. Acquiring points from my current level and distributing them to my Magic and Skills respectively.

Well, if one were to focus on a single Spell, it would consume a

comparable amount of points.

But apparently they can be reassigned if there's an issue, which is a relief.

The required materials and the enchantment points inside the weapon.... in this case, using the Proficiency Points that Ren taught us about seems to be the most convenient thing to do, but I can reassign the points after waiting one-day for the cooldown.

I think it's a befitting ability.

And the spell I just cast was an exceptional supporting spell that raises one's full capacity: Aura.

Furthermore, it was the Revelation Aura class that only heroes can cast.

To explain the magnitude of this spell that was boosted by the strengthening technique of the Cane..

"Take this!" (Tact)

Tact set out and fired his Vanzin Claw or something in my direction.

I dodged it by a paper-thin margin.

Why was I able to dodge it?

Tact's attack was awfully slow.

And honestly, it attacked in a straight line so I could actually see the beam that appeared.

Of course, it wasn't that the beam itself was slow but if I had to say, I suppose it was like a low-powered pea-shooter?

The beam looked like an orb traveling at a slow speed.

If I had been paying attention, Tact's words from before, the "Take this!" would have sounded more like "Ttttttaaaaaakkkkkkkkeeeeee Thhhhiiiiisssss!"

Tact's attack flew past me.

Like this, our abilities have risen to an abnormal level.

The Net Game that Ren played wasn't like this, but each grade resulted in a big boost.

Not only for the effects, but for the duration and additional effects as well.

In other words, strong spells like All Revelation Aura needed a lot of points, but the effect also increased a lot.

It varied depending on the Spell or Skill.

There's the possibility that the complicated spells or skills from until now may transform.

This is the power of the Cane and Gauntlets.

With the intent of protecting this world... the Spirits have lent me all of their strength.

"You avoided it?" (Tact)

"What's wrong? You only have the certain-kill technique you always use?" (Naofumi) It seems Tact couldn't see my movements.

It was nothing more than my support magic's ability being improved to that extent though.

Or rather, to be surprised if someone suddenly dodges your special move.... just which titan of light is that special move from. [T/N: Ultra Beam! (Ultraman) maybe?]

I wonder why I'm holding back, but I've thought badly of guys who fire from the onset.

I see, so if it's avoided then it becomes this sort of situation.

"Hmph. I missed on purpose. It's not fun otherwise." (Tact) "Yes, Yes. So you say." (Naofumi)

I grasp the Cane tightly and fill it with power.

The Cane also has other skills.

Gamers might understand if I say it has a Charge Skill.

“Let’s play a little.” (Tact)

Saying that, Tact brandished his claw towards me.

I saw through it all and completely avoided it.

First I ducked, then I leapt, using Tact himself as a foothold.

The current me is not the Hero of the Shield.

I’m borrowing the defense from the Seven Star Weapons, and it’s lower than Ren and the other Four Saints’ defense.

It’ll hurt if I get hit and will definitely be an inexcusable attack.

In addition, I might have my weapon stolen if I engage in a direct duel.

Just what martial art knowledge does he have? I feel like he’s refined the stance and movements.

However, the opponents I always sparred with were prodigies. [T/N: Atla/Raphtalia]

Always laboring, revealing attacks that surpass my expectations.

I fought that kind of prodigy so it wasn’t enough.

It was disappointing, but none of his attacks exceeded my expectations.

Continuously using feints, trying to kill me—

“Erst Slash!” (Tact)

He fired a skill but his feints were obvious, so it was lacking.

I delayed the timing of my dodge, and while watching the self-confident Tact’s face..

“Yotto.” (Naofumi)

I dodge it nimbly.

“Ku.... well looks like the former Hero of the Shield, who couldn’t do anything but defend, isn’t bad.” (Tact) He’s extremely boring.

What I’m seeing through are just simple attacks.

“...You seem to be misunderstanding something so I’ll explain.

Defending is more complicated than attacking. Like needing to shift the impact of an opponent's attack to reduce its power and such." (Naofumi)
"Now! Second Slash!" (Tact)

I stabbed Tact's arm with the tip of the Cane and averted his Claw Slash.

Because of that, the skill Tact fired, Second Slash, didn't have sufficient power and vanished.

"I wouldn't say that's an opportunity." (Naofumi)

"Gu...." (Tact)

"Try firing your skill however much you want. I'll immediately destroy its power. This is how I fight as the Hero of the Shield." (Naofumi) The Hero of the Shield has no need to receive all the opponents' attacks.

To elude the attack, I can make it so the power doesn't come out in advance.

It's precisely for this that I've been continuously practicing since coming to this world, and I know techniques to interfere with the opponents' attacks.

After that there were various things, like a barrage of attacks, but right now Tact was only focused on me so there's no problem.

Like this, it seems like I have some room to spare.

I should pay a little attention to Raphtalia and the others.

Otherwise it might be dangerous.

I have to support them if anything happens.

I decided not to lose anyone a second time.

Chapter 327: Looking Aside

Raphtalia and the Kitsune woman are exchanging stares.

From what I see, the Kitsune is but a little girl.

However, her speech pattern reeks of old age.

Is she that Loli-baba thing that's all the rage these days?

(TL: Loli = Loli, Baba = Baba, I.E. Shiroyasha)

"Raccoon Wench, do you think you stand a chance of victory with me as your opponent?"

"I don't really know. From what I see, you're a mix between a Fox Race, and a Zveal Race, but what sort of grudge do you hold against me?"

(Raphtalia) "Foolish Raccoon, who knows not your place, don't get cocky because you tricked me once before!"

"... I think I've heard a story about that, but you're looking too far back there," (Raphtalia) There is a Demi-Human legend about something like that.

I looked it up because I wanted to see what sort of Race Raphtalia's was.

Apparently, the Raccoons used their magic to... seal a great Youkai of the Fox race through deception. There's a legend like that.

They're still stuck up on that?

The amount of Tails on the Kitsune woman began increasing.

Eh? So she's a nine tailed fox. How grand.

"That humiliation... I definitely won't forgive you!"

"That's a false accusation, but you made an enemy of Naofumi-sama, and sided with that egotistic sunnavabitch. I won't hold back."

(Raphtalia) The Kitsune takes out a slender sword, and gets into position.

The air resounds with the sound of metal hitting metal. Raphtalia and the Kitsune Woman... Tulna, I think... they use illusions to make clones,

and use a wide variety of magic as they exchange blows.

It would be accurate to call it a battle of deception.

The moment it looked like Raphtalia had pierced her, Tulna's sword had gone through her heart.

Of course, in the end, it was but an illusion, and none of those events actually happened.

It will be difficult for her to force her way through this fight.

We managed to cover the level gap with extreme Support Magic, but this woman seems skillful.

With this, neither side can concentrate on anything but the enemy before them.

“Rafu~”

Now then... I wonder if that Kitsune Woman's noticed that a single animal had snuck onto the battlefield.

—

Next is Fohl.

“If you surrender immediately, I don't mind forgiving you, Aotatsu woman.” (Fohl) “What do you think you're saying to the strongest head of the Aotatsu Tribe? Hakuko... No, from your smell, are you a mix blood? How idiotic.”

“Like I care. I have no interest in my roots.” (Fohl) Fohl changes to beast form, and holds his front paws out before him.

I'm worried about just how much of a gap exists between the Four and Seven, but from the look in Fohl's eyes, it seems that he'll be alright.

“Let me show you the true terror of the Aotatsu race.”

The woman opposing Fohl... Nellishen's Silhouette gradually expands in size.

“ ... ”

Eventually, Nellishen changed shape into a large oriental dragon.

“Throughout our long history, the ones who could take on this form were named chief! Can a Hakuko Mutt keep up with me?”

“Worthless. Even if I had a form like that, I wouldn’t use it against the likes of you.” (Fohl) He hits his fists together, and provokes the dragon.

“Now, Hakuko Hero of the Gauntlet! Let’s put an end to this long cycle of fate! The Aotatsu are the strongest race in the world!”

Nellishen chants water magic, and smashes it at Fohl.

Fohl lightly dodges it, and instantly closes in on her. He lands a kick in the center of her face.

“Were you trying to do something?” (Fohl)

“DON’T LOOK DOWN ON MEEEEEEE!”

Thunder roars, as bolts of electricity begin raining down on Fohl.

A race that can use water and wind together... apparently.

「Erst Rush V」!

“Uguh!”

Fohl implants his fist into Nellishen’s abdomen.

“Ah, ga... gu...”

Fohl isn’t just some Hakuko kid. He’s the Hero of the Gauntlet.

I’m doubtful that the Aotatsu chief is a match for the current Fohl.

With a storming sky as the backdrop, Sadina and that Shatte person exchanged murderous looks.

From the magic that Nellishen used, the area was now covered in a layer of water.

Shatte had assumed her battle form, in which she looked like a shark Beastman.

“Die!”

Shatte rushed straight forward, and launched an attack. In response, Sadina...

“You see, this Oneesan is never around when the important things are happening. But I’m glad that this time is different...” (Sadina) Sadina takes the tail thrust from Shatte head on, and bends backwards to absorb the impact.

“Because I couldn’t protect anyone. Because I found my hated enemy.” (Sadina) “Just how long will you be able to stay on your high horse!?”

Sadina spits up some blood, and glares at Shatte.

“Even if it’s me, I’ll never forgive Atlas-chan’s enemy. So please step aside this instant. If you do... you’ll live a little longer.” (Sadina) Sadina firmly grasped the harpoon in Shatte’s possession with one hand.

“So before you start regretting standing before me, Noid Kusha halfbreed...” (Sadina) Even though her skin was that of a shark, I saw what looked like goosebumps appearing on Shatte. She took a large step back.

“What will you do?” (Sadina)

“D... don’t look down on me!”

Shatte snaps, and swings her harpoon high above her head. She releases a magic attack.

「Maelstrom Spear」!

The attack leaves behind swirling trails in the air as it heads towards Sadina.

“Ah, right. You seemed to be misunderstanding something.” (Sadina) Sadina casts her favorite lightning magic, and absorbs it into her Harpoon.

Seeing sparks come from the weapon in Sadina’s hands, Shatte seems dumbfounded.

“Wha... A Luka... used lightning!?”

“Onesasan never said she was a Luka, you know. I may be closely related, but... please don't group me with those weaklings.” (Sadina) Sadina's lightning impaler, I think it was called, easily pierces through Shatte's attack.

“You see, I'm a little angry right now. How long will you stand... as a target for me to take my anger out on? I'm going to fight seriously here.” (Sadina) Sparks fly around her, and... Sadina does another level of transformation.

There are plenty of things I'd like to retort here. I was even pretty sure she hadn't undergone a full recovery yet.

“Let's see just how powerful the power Naofumi-sama gave me is.” (Sadina) She looks like a sea lion. She's changed into a brown colored monster.

—

Last is the mid-air battle.

That's the front Ren's on.

IT would be a bit dangerous for Gaelion alone, but now they don't have a chance of failure.

That's just how great the difference in power is... with Heroes.

“I'll pound the terror of a Dragon Emperor into your body!”

The giant dragon Reldia spews out a fire breath much more powerful than the one Adult Gaelion can cast.

「Mega Prominence Nova」!

Ren held his sword up high, and cast magic.

「Revelation Magic Enchant X」!

The sure-death flames start flowing into Ren's sword.

I believe magic enchant was able to absorb magic attacks, and augment their abilities into the sword.

It appears that dragon breath is included in the attacks it works on.

「High Quick~」

「High Quick」!

Around that battle, zoomed a pair of shadows. It was Firo, and the Gryphon.

Firo seems to be having an easier time.

“A flying Filo Rial... They should have died out in the war! How did you survive!?”

R-really?

The Gryphons caused the extinction of flying Filo Rials...?

That’s the first true revelation I’ve had upon coming here.

Though I think they should just start fighting already.

“Wrong~” (Firo)

As they exchange various questions, Firo and the Gryphon circle around each other, and release various attacks.

「Dreifach Tornado」!

「Spiral Strike」! (Firo)

「Screw Strike」!

And in another area of the sky, Gaelion started inhaling air, as he prepared to release his breath.

「KYUAAAAAAAAAAAAA」!

It was white.

I think older Gaelion said something about that.

About practicing a special sort of breath attack.

What was it? Something about a difficult attack involving interference, or something.

Yep, that’s probably what it is.

“Gu... What!?”

Reldia seems short of breath as she cries out.

“Next’s my turn!” (Ren)

Ren declares as such, and points his sword.

The blades edge was basked in a red light.

「Flame Edge, Meteor Sword X」!

A dark crimson shockwave shot towards the giant Dragon Emperess.

Yeah, no one here seems to need my help.

Chapter 328: Fenrir Force

“Where the hell do you think you’re looking!?” (Tact) “Ah, sorry, sorry. My bad.” (Naofumi)

Now then, I should stop showing off.

Raphtalia and the others are alright.

It’s about time I take this battle seriously.

“Everyone, cast support! If we combine our power, we should easily be able to crush this guy!” (Tact) Oy... the rules have changed, dude.

Didn’t you say you would be enough alone?

「Zveit Boost」!

「Zveit Magic」!

... etc.

And like that, various support magics were cast, but it doesn’t feel like anything’s changed that much.

In comparison, Revelation Aura X’s effects are amazing.

It was able to raise our basic abilities enough for me to stand on even ground with one thrice my level.

But it’s not like this guy’s a Hero, and if I didn’t distribute points into the skill, it wouldn’t have been this effective.

“Good, we can win with this!” (Tact)

“Hey, are you sure you’re alright?” (Naofumi) “Just because you got a bit stronger, don’t be so conceited!” (Tact) “That’s something I don’t want to hear from you.” (Naofumi) “This is that last time you’ll be able to laugh. Now feel the power of my magic, after I’ve been given strength by everyone!” (Tact) No, I’m not laughing. I’m just fed up...

As I was thinking that, Tact begins a magic chant.

For argument’s sake... he’s casting quite fast.

『I, the True Hero who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth once more be read forth. Let tempests of flame burn all that he owns』!

「Dreifach Firestorm」!

“Dreifach!?” (Naofumi)

Wait a second.

He was supposed to have mastered magic, yet it's only Dreifach.

What a joke.

But if you think about it, Revelation is a magic specific to Heroes.

Looking at it from the rest of the world's standard, I guess Dreifach is the strongest level.

In truth, this is the fastest casting that I've ever seen.

“Take this!” (Tact)

Tact has a smile on his face as he activates his magic.

A tornado of flames starts up and begins flying in my direction.

『I, an ordinary Hero who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth once more be read forth. Clear the tempests of flame that burns all before him』!

「Anti Dreifach Firestorm」

I analyze the magic Tact chanted, and activate one to nullify it.

And as if it had never existed in the first place, the twister of flames dispersed.

Even with the time lag in my cast, I was able to completely nullify it, you know.

“I can't say I'm impressed. You... did you really master magic? Just how many years did you live in this world again?” (Naofumi) “Wha-” (Tact)

Upon having his special magic easily nullified, the man is speechless.

It appeared to be an AoE spell, so is that what he used to level grind?

“So this is the power of the Cane... I’ll definitely make it mine!” (Tact)
“Wrong, fool...” (Naofumi)

What a misunderstanding. This isn’t anything from the Cane.

I remember the old Ren... It’s been a while since I’ve heard bullshit like this.

Well, I was able to analyze it quite quickly, but reading magic was the result of my own research.

“And wait, you have a Dragon Emperor following you, right? Shouldn’t you know the Dragon Pulse Law? The one that lets you easily interfere with others!?” (Naofumi) I’m really fed up.

Where’s his mastery of magic?

It’s true that his casting was quick.

It took him less than five seconds to cast Dreifach.

But I’m able to chant even faster than that with ease.

Though, that power is the result of Trash’s Cane.

From my conjecture, this one... No, I can think about that later.

Hmm?

I turn to the presence of magic.

I see Bitch chanting magic in my direction. She hasn’t learned a thing.

She’s probably trying to create an opening for Tact to attack or something of the sort.

Like I’d let you.

I’ll blow all of you away at the same time.

「Zweit Wing Blo-」

「Fenrir Force X」!

I weave in my chi, and get Tact and Witch in a line before releasing a skill.

I'll have my connection with you come to an end here, Bitch!

The Cane shines, and the clamped wolf head ornament opened its mouth. A beam of light fires out of the Jewel portion.

“Uo!”

A thick, lazer-esque beam shoots out and flies at Witch.

Or it should have, but my timing was off.

Even Tact, who was at point blank range, was able to dodge it.

His reflexes are just naturally good.

I guess it took 3 seconds to cast.

Since it missed, I cancelled it out. But the SP expenditure was high.

Ah... After I shot it, I realized it.

I kinda have to make them go through more pain before killing them.

Or my rage will never clear.

In that aspect, perhaps this was for the best.

“Damn! I missed.” (Naofumi)

A few meters from the beam's impact point, Witch's legs had given out on her.

Since I completely missed my mark, I hit someone I wasn't aiming for.

From what I remember, it was a human woman wearing maid clothing.

There was nothing left where she stood.

But she was pointing a rifle at me, so I don't care what happened to her.

Does this count as murder?

I don't have a sense of guilt welling up in me.

These people would have shot me to death if a chance ever came.

It's legitimate self-defense.

She was doing the same thing as Witch.

“Ah...” (Tact)

Tact is in a daze, as he stared at the scarf that belonged to the woman fluttering in the wind.

“The next one won’t miss.” (Naofumi)

But the cooldown time is quite long.

I grip the cane and start charging it.

“YOU BASTAAAAAAAAAARD!” (Tact)

In a rage like the old Trash, Tact begins swinging around his weapons randomly.

Claws. Whip. Axe. Hammer. Projectiles.

But I dodge them all.

“You! You killed Eri! I definitely won’t forgive you! I’ll brutally murder you!” (Tact) “KYAAAAAAAAAAA!”

Tact’s Harem squad raises a scream after they realize the situation.

But because of the rage, Tact’s movements are monotonous.

You often see anger changing to strength in anime, but I guess this is how reality works.

This brings to mind the scene of Female Knight fighting the cursed Ren.

I bet it felt like this when she was dodging his attacks.

I may be contradicting myself, but he needs to get angry in a calm manner.

Get angry while thinking about what to do to your enemy.

Like I am right now.

“Do you understand what you’ve done!? Eri was... my childhood friend who’s followed me around since I was young. My first partner, and the one who accepted me. And you... you don’t even have the qualifications to kill someone as precious as her!” (Tact) “Like I care! If you step onto the battlefield, you have to be prepared to die. Did you ever think of the ones

you killed yourself!? Did you ever listen to them if they said the same!?”
(Naofumi) What naivety.

Sending his precious onto the battlefield and hoping they won't die as he kills the enemy.

If you don't want them to die, then you have to be prepared to sacrifice yourself to protect them.

Atlas was... always telling me that.

That I might die in a place, even without war.

That since I was precious, she always had to be there to protect me.

When I held up my staff, what did he do?

He didn't even try to move to protect someone.

No, it's because he dodged that the attack went off course.

If she's that special, then at least stand in front of her, if you think the attack is that powerful. He even has my Shield.

“Though I killed her, let me say as such: It's your fault for not protecting her.” (Naofumi) No, I don't care about logic.

This war was a battle between murderers.

If he didn't want to bring about any casualties, then he should have bet his own life.

There were plenty of methods.

He truly lacks the resolve to jump into the flames.

Ah... this is irritating.

「First Float Mirror, Second Float Mirror」

I deploy the Cane's version of the Float Shields, and have them circle around Tact.

“Kunu! Damn! Don't run away!” (Tact)

“And why do I have to stand and take your attacks? The Shield has its own way of fighting.” (Naofumi) It's not like my reflexes are bad.

I can't keep up with people who have amazing reflexes, but with this much support magic cast on me, dodging these is a simple matter.

This wouldn't change even if I had the Shield.

It's just that I usually opt not to dodge.

If the Shield dodges, what will happen?

My job is to stop the enemy's movement.

"I'm going to shoot some magic, so try taking it." (Naofumi) "As if I would!" (Tact)

I'll use one with a fast chant.

「Zveit Fire」!

「Zveit Water」!

By the way, these are the only attribute magics I've learned so far.

I couldn't use them from the beginning.

Since I borrowed the Cane, I can cast them, but there isn't really a need for me to learn them.

"An attack like that-" (Tact)

My magic flew slowly in a straight line, so Tact easily dodges it.

But that wasn't my goal.

The dodged magic hits Tact from behind.

"Gu!? What did you do!?" (Tact)

"You can at least understand that much, right?" (Naofumi) It's Float Mirror's ability. If you angle them right, you can reflect some skills and magics.

"Then let me show it so you can understand." (Naofumi) 「Erst Blast」!

I grip the Cane in my hand and release a skill.

My magic shoots out like a beam.

Tact merely dodges it again, but the mirrors that moved by my will

reflect it, and let the beam circle around Tact.

I'm not trying to hit him. I'm really just playing around.

But this is surprisingly easy.

I move the mirrors continuously to create a cage out of the blast.

Ah, it seems I unlocked a combo.

So it can do things like this as well.

The mirrors are now moving by themselves.

How convenient.

Can Trash control them like this?

... He probably can.

I get the feeling that will be troubling later.

It appears that each and every weapon requires a different aptitude.

Trash should be able to use it better than me.

He said he could use quite a few high ranking skills.

Apparently, he can make angled structures out of the mirrors to split reflections and hit simultaneously from all sides or hit in a wide scope.

Its strong point is that it can hit behind defenses.

There's the chance that it may hit an ally, but he said it works out if you calculate it right. It's impossible for me.

The best I can do is move these flat mirrors to my will.

And that's because of my experience using the Float Shields.

Ah... I truly am the Hero of the Shield.

「Blast Prison」!

When I shout the skill name, the prison made of my blast skill explodes.

“Guhah!” (Tact)

The explosion sends Tact flying.

His followers raise various screams.

A few of them get over the shock and point their rifles at me.

“Not yet! I’m... not hurt at all. T-this is... but a scratch.” (Tact) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

He’s being Stoic... as he says that, the surrounding women begin casting recovery magic.

Some even begin casting support magic.

Does his pride allow that? Did his anger override it?

“Do you hate having your women die that much? Then if I target them, will you focus on protecting them?” (Naofumi) Tact’s face turns pale. He turns his eyes to the women around him.

Those women were looking at me and shaking.

What is it... I really do feel like a villain right now.

It feels quite nice.

For revenge to feel this refreshing... this is the first I learned of it.

Because my weapon’s been the Shield up until now, I could only hurt enemies indirectly.

Who was it that said that Revenge doesn’t bring anything?

If the target of your revenge doesn’t plan on repenting at all, isn’t it better to kill them?

Isn’t that right, Witch?

But these thoughts are dangerous.

If I go too far, I’ll get devoured by a curse, so I should stop.

Chapter 329: Gleipnir Rope

“Well, I don’t hate that kind of rotten behaviour, but it’ll lessen the entertainment so I’ll stop with the hostages. Be grateful.” (Naofumi) I feel a little refreshed but I’ll enjoy that later.

Otherwise it just stinks of villainy.

“Besides, I also feel like I should get serious soon.” (Naofumi) As expected, it’s quite useful.

Although I wasn’t able to use it seriously when Ren and the others were my opponents.

I invoke the Fenrir Rod’s special ability, Gleipnir Rope.

Chains manifest from the ground, with Witch as their designated target.

“Sto—” (Tact)

I bind up Tact as well, who was still putting on an act.

It might be that the damage from before hadn’t quite faded, but I was able to bind him easily.

“Argh... my power..” (Tact)

“Ah, I don’t think those chains will come apart so easily.” (Naofumi)
The effect duration of Gleipnir Rope depended on the users’ magic.

In my world, these chains were used to bind the famous god-killing wolf. [T/N: In Norse mythology, Gleipnir is a dwarven-made chain used to bind Fenrir]

It’d be a disgrace if it was easily torn apart.

“Ku... how about this!” (Tact)

Tact deployed the shield he stole from me with a frustrated countenance.

The shield was, judging from its appearance, the Wrath Shield.

I suppose he should be angry enough towards me.

I'll have to be wary of Blutopfer and Iron Maiden.

I don't know if he'll get any negative effects, but I suppose I'd have the advantage if he does use them?

No, dominating him with attacks would be safer.

"Right, I'll make an allowance then. Take it.... properly. Otherwise it'll hit the women behind you, you know?" (Naofumi) Tact turned towards the women who couldn't move due to fear, and then glared at me with eyes full of frantic determination to protect them.

Right right, that's the expression I wanted to see.

You – who stole the lives of Atla, the Queen, Granny, the villages, the Allied forces and the other people I have a relationship with – your face stained with hatred.

"Don't glare like that. You still haven't suffered enough." (Naofumi) I finished charging and fired my Skill again.

"Fenrir Force V!" (Naofumi)

This time I foresaw the recoil, and without putting my spirit into it, I anticipated that he would probably be able to endure it and fired.

A thick beam fired towards the tied up Tact from the tip of the cane.

"Gu...." (Tact)

Oh, that's only to be expected of the shield stolen from me.

It seems the women behind Tact haven't received any damage at all.

But how was Tact, who had to bear the full brunt of it all?

"Uguuuu....." (Tact)

"Ah, I forgot. The legendary cane I'm holding is called Fenrir Rod. Its special ability is something called Rebellion Against God. Its effects are..." (Naofumi) This is something that was established when I first obtained the cane and sparred with Ren and the others.

Fohl had a measure for my attack and didn't take much damage but Ren and the others were different.

I was told it hurt more than they anticipated.

Rebellion Against God's effect must be that when a Seven Star Weapon attacked a Four Saint Weapon, the power increases.

Well thinking about it normally, a weapon whose ability rises when against the Four Saints is impossible based on the laws of the world.

There wasn't any other weapon with the same skill, and the Spirit of the Cane might have lent the power to fight against the stolen shield.

In other words, I felt it was like a special, only for now kind of thing.

In reality, the Fenrir rod was a item.

"You probably used the shield because you anticipated its high defense but the damage you incur will rise with that shield, you know?"

(Naofumi) Of course, the shield itself has a high defense so there would be no problem if it was me.

The beam shot for 5 seconds and stopped.

There, emitting smoke throughout his body, was a worn-out Tact who was out of breath and barely managed to stand.

It seems Tact incurred a befitting amount of damage for taking Fenrir Force's beam.

"Gu....u..." (Tact)

"Oi, oi. Don't collapse yet. I'm still not satisfied yet, and we've got to continue playing until Fohl comes." (Naofumi) It kind of feels like bullying.

But I feel like doing what I like so it can't be helped.

Because I've been eagerly awaiting this moment since the day we fought Houou and lost Atla.

"P-protect Tact! Everyone!" (Woman)

The women came to their senses and at a earnest-looking, different coloured female knight-like fellow's supreme command, they readied their rifles.

Is that it, or rather, is there nothing else?

Or so I thought, but they also started casting ritual magic.

It looked like they were thinking somewhat.

With me alone, you can't stop me no matter how much you try.

Of course, this sort of thing was part of our expectations.

I feel quite nostalgic, but I experienced pain firsthand when I first had that duel with Motoyasu.

When this sort of fellow gets in a pinch, he composedly pulls off a cowardly attack despite in a fair and square fight.

So naturally we have considered the enemy's followers attacking and supporting.

We only provoked Tact to begin with, so we've assembled tactics with the assumption it'd be few vs many.

Fortunately, the ones high leveled enough to be a threat are fighting Raphalia and the others so I can take it easy.

I feel like some of them could be reliable allies.

"SHOOT-!" (Woman)

The women aim their rifles at me and pull the trigger.

Gunshots resound throughout the surroundings.

But.... in the middle of that, I deployed the defensive measures I had planned.

In an instant, lead balls came flying towards me.

Because it's the marksmanship of rifles fired by level 250 guys, they demonstrated an ability that wouldn't even lose to the rifles from my world.

Well... I've never seen an actual gun in my own world though.

The women probably believed their attacks hit me.

In reality, they showed a face of trying to protect their comrade mixed

with a hint of impatience.

I wondered why they didn't understand if they could show this kind of expression, but it's not something I care about.

I'll trample over that kind of thinking.

The bullets that tried to penetrate me.

...Those bullets all hit Tact.

"Guhaa!" (Tact)

"Wha—" (Woman)

The women became speechless and dropped their rifles.

"Wh-why..." (Woman)

"Oh dear... what are you doing. You guys are merciless." (Naofumi) I rile them up with a smile.

"Why did our bullets hit Tact!?" (Woman)

Right, I... used the techniques I thought out with Atla, [Collect] and [Wall], to change the trajectory of the bullets the women fired and deliver them to Tact.

Originally [Collect] was very effective for formless attacks such as magic attacks.

Solid bullets were difficult. However, the current me can do it.

After that I made use of [Wall] and had the bullets ricochet to hit Tact.

"How is it, Tact? The taste of the bullets fired by your own women, some of whom are even level 250." (Naofumi) "H-how dare you! How dare you make us shoot Tact!" (Woman) The woman repeatedly hurled abuse at me while in a rage.

I'm in a good mood.

...For me to be in a good mood with this kind of thing, I've also changed.

If the old me was flooded by women screaming jeers in my original

world, it probably wouldn't be strange for me to want to cry.

It can also be taken as me getting stronger but it's questionable about whether it's a good or bad thing.

"As if I care. Or rather, what are you preaching about justice for when you guys used the cowardly tactic of outnumbering us?" (Naofumi) At my reply, the woman was taken aback and sank into silence as if she came to her senses.

As expected, she probably understood that she had been lacking reason.

"I'm nice so I'll cast recovery magic on Tact. Dreifach Heal." (Naofumi) Casting Revelation is a pain.

My Heal must have been effective, Tact's glare strengthened and he bit his lips.

"Now then, we're still continuing. Try putting up with it." (Naofumi) In the middle of talking, lightning rained down from the sky.

If I'm not mistaken, it was the ritual magic, Judgement.

With their levels all above 250 and enough people to cast Choral Magic, they fired.

They converged the power of Judgement so that it wouldn't hit Tact.

"You're pretty obstinate." (Naofumi)

Half mixed with a sigh, I deploy my mirrors in the sky.

"Sto—" (Woman)

Oh? There were several people who realised.

But it's too late.

"Go to hell with this!" (Woman)

Thunder roared and Judgement rained down towards me.

and adjusted the angle of reflection.

Ah.... as I expected, the strength is high.

One of the mirrors broke.

However the second one was fine, and successfully reflected in accordance with my predictions.

“Guhaa!” (Tact)

“Tact!?” (Woman)

“What are you doing! This guy... seems to have... the power to direct all our attacks to hit Tact.” (Woman) The women stared at the tattered Tact while lost for words.

Among them were some who tried to run up and stop it.

“Hmm... how is it? The taste of the magic your own comrades fired.” (Naofumi) Even if it’s bad, I have no obligation to take it.

Or rather, who am I fighting?

I was meant to be fighting Tact but I’m fighting his followers before I know it.

As far as it goes, Tact had prepared the shield so it seems he didn’t receive that much damage but even so, it’s only at this level, huh?

Chapter 330: An Ordinary Person

“Damn you! You made everyone’s attacks hit me!” (Tact) “You devil!” (Follower)

The women hopped on board and started insulting me.

Devil, huh.... It’s been a while since I’ve been called that.

“Then I will be a devil. I am the Devil of the Shield, after all. Anyway, is making use of the enemy’s attacks a bad thing? Rather than that, it’s bad to be butting into someone else’s one-on-one fight. Well, it’s no fun if you collapse at this level. I’ll heal you.” (Naofumi) I cast recovery magic on Tact again.

Soon my magic and SP will have been depleted.

I took out the recovery item that was the Luquor Fruit from my pocket and— [T/N: I know it was Lukor, but liquor -> luquor :D]

“As if I’d let you!” (Follower)

One of Tact’s followers suddenly appeared and tried to snatch the Luquor fruit I was holding.

Somehow she was in a ninja-like outfit.

Was she one of Faubley’s Shadows?

Ah, I had grasped it with all my strength so it got crushed.

This was expensive. What a waste.

“Ahh!” (Ninja)

A drop of the Luquor fruit splashed on the assaulting woman’s face I heard this once before but apparently that’s undiluted alcohol, you know?

“Melris!” (Tact)

“S-so alcoholic! Uu....” (Ninja)

Oh, she already started swaying drunkenly.

Apparently it’s poison to everyone but me.

At any rate, it's the thing that Motoyasu consumed on Calmira Island which caused him to sleep for a whole day afterwards, despite spitting it out immediately.

"Don't interfere with my magic recovery." (Naofumi)

I kicked it away gently, tossing it towards the followers.

Then I retrieved another Luquor fruit and put it in my mouth.

The followers seemed to be able to tell what I put in my mouth.

Half laughed mockingly, the other half turned pale.

Witch turned pale, I guess she knew about my constitution to some extent.

Tact inclined his head in bewilderment, with a provoking look in his eyes.

"Suicide by eating a Luquor Fruit directly? You probably thought that, but unfortunately you're wrong." (Naofumi) "In that case, you.... were blessed with an ability!?" (Tact) "What are you talking about? (Naofumi)

Who would I get the blessing from?

It was easy to imagine though.

"I was born with this constitution. It seems you were blessed by something though. That's the difference between you and me." (Naofumi) My magic and SP have both recovered so let's continue.

Hm? Tact's glare got increasingly stronger.

Is it that? Despite being blessed with a special ability yourself, you can't forgive the fact that I was born with it?

How far will your superiority complex go.

"Now then, there were a few unnecessary hindrances but let's continue." (Naofumi) I finished charging and once again aimed the Cane towards Tact.

He won't be able to endure it completely. But I suppose he knows that the women will die if he avoids it.

Tact concentrated on the shield and frantically put all his strength into it.

Well, good luck.

“Fenrir Force VI!” (Naofumi)

Incidentally, I incorporated the refined Hengen Musou technique with the thick beam.

“Guu... guuuu...gu... ridiculous.... it hurts so much.... more than before.... What is this attack.” (Tact) “Haven’t you experienced it before? I applied the concepts of the style from that Granny you killed. Realise the power of those you’ve killed!” (Naofumi) Oh! After taking consecutive hits, I could hear the sound of Tact having received damage.

As expected, Hengen Musou is harsh on the shield.

“Uwaaaahh!” (Tact)

Soon, Tact became unable to bear it and fell with a spin.

Well, let’s leave it at this much. I can even make it so the women in the rear are blasted away though.

With a thud, Tact collapsed on the ground.

“Tact-sama!” (Follower)

“Tact!” (Follower)

“TACT!” (Follower)

His followers tried to support him frantically.

Well, it seemed they didn’t realise that they couldn’t do anything to overturn the situation.

Nevertheless, Tact received their aid and stood up.

The followers didn’t learn their lesson and cast recovery magic on Tact again.

“Hey you guys, don’t just cast recovery magic, cast some spells to recover fatigue as well.” (Naofumi) Stamina is important, right?

He probably won't be able to win if he's so worn-out when he gets revived.

No? Can he win?

Speaking of which, wouldn't now be the time for a miracle to occur if it were to happen?

If there was something behind him, now would probably be the time to show his true colours.

And so I looked around, but there were no signs of anything happening.

"Not yet.... You.. you're the only one I won't forgive." (Tact) "That's my line. You're the only one so incredibly brutal, I've decided to make you regret being born in the world. And I'm not the only one. The whole of Melromark feels the same." (Naofumi) Or rather, this isn't even my decision.

With their Queen having been killed, this war is a challenge of vengeance for Melromark.

As their sworn enemy, these guys can't be forgiven with just my private lynching.

It's because I feel the same that I'm beating the mastermind, Tact, until he's worn out and crushing his spirits.

Atla, the Queen, Granny and the villagers.

At the very least, there was this many people close to me who died.

If I consider all the lives lost in the war, that's not the extent of it.

The revival of the Spirit Turtle.

Ren and the others caused so many victims unintentionally, but they reflected on it and were making up for their sins for the sake of everyone who became victims.

That was achieved in the form of saving the world.

However, Tact was different.

He made light of the waves, killed the Heroes and annihilated the Allied

Forces.

Furthermore, he created wars and tried to rule the world.

While I had no intention of offering him respite, it might have been possible if he showed signs of reflection.

Nevertheless, I must punish him for recklessly giving rise to the flames of war.

“I will..... kill you!” (Tact)

Tact declared, putting his hand on the Shield.

I’m afraid he might intend on firing a Curse Skill.

But..... it was too late.

I raised the Cane with one hand, and the surrounding magic and SP.... I gathered the energy scattered in the surroundings.

And then I invoked Gleipnir Rope and bound Tact.

“Fenrir Force and Hengen Musou’s application skill.” (Naofumi) The name of my next skill floated into my field of vision.

This kind of application provides the effect of an amazing energy boost.

Glowing like the light of a firefly, the surrounding magic condensed and collected in my cane, just like.... some sort of special skill from an anime.

“Now, try to take this!” (Naofumi)

I called out the name of the Combo Skill that floated in my vision.

Well, it was troublesome having to moderate it so that it wouldn’t kill.

That’s why I won’t fully charge it. If I did charge it, he’d be blown away and then I wouldn’t be satisfied.

“Blutopfer!” (Tact)

“Ragnarok.... Blaster!” (Naofumi)

Fenrir Force’s evolved skill.

The charging took quite a bit of time.

Until Tact stood up, being unable to move was for that reason, and the magic recovery was also for the sake of firing this.

As expected, a concentrated beam that didn't quite compare with Fenrir Force blasted Blutopfer away in an instant and flew towards Tact.

“GYAAAAHH!” (Tact)

What a terrible scream.

Tact was unable to withstand it completely, and was pushed by Ragnarok Blaster and thrown into the sky.

As far as it goes, I shifted the trajectory so the women weren't hit.

It would've been fine even if they had been hit, but I wanted to save that pleasure for later.

Ragnarok Blaster pierced through Tact's whole body and he flew all the way into the atmosphere while shaking.

Incidentally, he was caught up in the battle between Gaelion and the Dragon Emperor he was fighting.

“Wha— Guuaaaahh!” (Dragon Emperor)

The Dragon Emperor cried out in surprise at the sudden attack.

Well, it looks like the burnt Dragon Emperor was finished when he passed through though.

“Now!” (Ren)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Using Gaelion as a foothold, Ren jumped and slashed at the Dragon Emperor.

“Phoenix Gale Sword!” (Ren)

“Kyuaaa!” (Gaelion)

Ren's sword shone red and a tempest of flames passed by, together with a phoenix of fire made from energy.

Gaelion also charged forward, clad in flames.

It looked just like two phoenixes had pierced through the Dragon Emperor.

“Gu... for this diminutive fragment and the Hero of the Sword to....!”
(Dragon Emperor) Oh, so receiving such an attack was not enough to be considered a fatal wound.

He's not half bad.

And while thinking that, I turned my attention to Tact who fell before my eyes just at that moment.

“Oi~, are you still alive?” (Naofumi)

He was practically like run-down junk.

It's not like my attack was proportionate to his defence so I think he wouldn't be dead, and I moderated the power so he should be fine.

“Ku.....” (Tact)

“Oh~” (Naofumi)

I clapped while watching Tact as he barely managed to stand up.

After being beaten up so much, you should think about withdrawing.

I won't let you though.

For that reason, I brought Gaelion, Firo, Sadina and Raph-chan. Land, sea, or air, you won't be able to escape no matter where you run.

Moreover, this guy personally cast a barrier preventing escape.

It was like being locked up in a cage you made yourself.

Well, I would cast another one if he released his barrier anyway.

“Did you think I'd let you escape? It's still insufficient.” (Naofumi)
That's enough, I'm sick of this one-sided game already.

“Getting so carried away..... Cut it out already!” (Tact) Oh? It seems like Tact wasn't cursed from Blutopfer.

How much of a cheat is that.

I had also included that in my calculations and lowered the strength,

but it seems that that was unnecessary assistance.

“Now then, you already died once with this attack. You hate me as much as I do you, but you won’t attain the upper hand, I will end the acting Hero of the Cane.” (Tact) Trash..... in reality, he probably wanted to avenge the Queen with his own hands.

I wouldn’t be satisfied if it were me, but I will defeat Tact as the Hero of the Cane in your place.

Next is revenge for Atla and Granny, the Allied Forces who shouldn’t have died by all rights, and the villagers.

“Uooooohh!” (Tact)

Tact mustered up his remaining strength, and attacked with a yell.

Tact changed his weapon to the Claw, and I purposely exchanged attacks with him for fun.

Ah, as expected, an idiot doesn’t have any firepower.

There’s no sign of him enduring it completely.

I promptly take my distance and then Tact lets his smile show.

“A trap! You could steal the Cane like this!” (Naofumi) [T/N: That sarcasm....]

At my words, Tact nods with a smile.

I don’t know if they understood the situation, but his followers also displayed composure.

“That’s right. The cause of your defeat is underestimating me. You’re going to lose.” (Tact) Well, from ancient times there have been strong people who have underestimated their opponents and despite expecting them to be weak, end up suffering a severe injury with just one attack.

It’s a common pattern.

And I like that kind of manga too.

But in this case, that’s definitely impossible.

“Hey~ you seem to be getting unnecessarily cocky so I’ll tell you, but there’s too much of a gap when I fight with the Cane and it gets boring so I’m letting you have it on purpose, you know?” (Naofumi) Rising and lowering by another name. [T/N: Help: またの名を上げて下げるである。]

Because it’s not difficult to go from being elated to getting beat up.

Before long, Tact invokes his ability and the Cane sparks.

The Cane glows and flies into Tact’s hand.

Tact grasps the Cane and smiles with confidence in his victory.

“Your grinning is disgusting. Are you really that happy about obtaining the Cane?” (Naofumi) “It doesn’t matter what you say, you’re just a poor loser. I’m going to brutally kill you so prepare yourself!” (Tact) “I’ve said this so many times. That’s my line.” (Naofumi) I turn towards Ren.

Ren, having perceived the situation, takes out a sword from his back – one which was different from the Four Saints Sword he was holding – and throws it into the air towards me.

Raising my right hand, I catch the sword that Ren sent over.

“I... your pride, dignity and valuables.... I’m here to brutally destroy all of those. First I’ll leisurely destroy half of your pride. Then the remaining half. You, the fake hero who obtained six of the Seven Star Weapons and the Four Saints Weapons’ shield. Know the reality of being defeated by an ordinary person who doesn’t possess a legendary weapon!” (Naofumi) ✕
There is a rule about the characters who call out “Uoooh!” not meeting satisfaction in this work.

(Protagonist inclusive)

Chapter 331: The Strongest Seven Star Hero

I draw my sword from its scabbard. I have no experience with sword fighting. However, I have taken Ren, Raphtalia and the Female Knight's sword techniques countless times. That's why I can use them somewhat.

This sword is something the Old Man from the Weapon Shop and Imia's Uncle whipped up for me, and it uses materials from Houou as its base. Apparently the materials have some of the characteristics of the Spirit Turtle's materials but the two experienced men easily dealt with them and made it. Its name was also Phoenix Sword. There were various effects but being unable to appraise them with a mediocre Judgement skill was similar to the Spirit Turtle Sword.

The 'Phoenix Gale Sword' that Ren fired earlier is a skill that appeared after copying this sword. It seems its base stats don't differ much from Ren's Spirit Turtle Sabre's base values. Its special ability, the growing power, is the issue.

"I'll teach you that the Heroes' Weapons are more than just a toy. Bring it on." (Naofumi)

I declared, to crush Tact's Pride. It was probably at this time. There was a thud and I turn towards the sound. That was the exact moment that the dragon had her head blown off and collapsed. Of course, the one who blew her head off was no other than Fohl.

"I've kept you waiting, Aniki." (Fohl) "You're so slow, Fohl. I don't know how many times I could've killed this guy already. He was so weak I had to let him borrow the Cane." (Naofumi) "This guy flew away so I was delayed in taking her down." (Fohl)

I hurled insults at Fohl while I wait for him to come over. Tact looked over and then shouted with disbelief.

"Nellisen!" (Tact)

But the dragon was already dead and couldn't reply.

“Even you!” (Tact)

Tact ran towards Fohl, with an expression like he was crying tears of blood.

“Whoops.” (Fohl) “Ugh—” (Tact)

Fohl avoided all of Tact’s attacks and spells, and kicks Tact’s face.

“What are you doing all of a sudden.” (Fohl) “I’m angry because you killed my precious companion. You killed her so cruelly, you know?”

(Tact) “That’s what I should be saying. All your women put together don’t even measure up to Atla’s life.” (Fohl)

With a kick, Fohl even uses his body weight to trample over Tact and come to me.

“So? Aniki, even the Cane was taken by him?” (Fohl) “Yeah, because I have to drive him into hopelessness. The necessities of a hero.... I thought I should teach him about perseverance.” (Naofumi) “I see, then I won’t be a hero, but one of the Hakuko.... I want to fight as Atla’s brother.” (Fohl)

I see.... so Fohl has the same feelings as I do. Then I will also fight as a human being instead of a hero.... I will fight as Naofumi Iwatani.

“Unforgivable.... I will definitely kill you guys!” (Tact)

Not learning his lesson, Tact brandishes the Cane and approaches Fohl. When Fohl used his Gauntlets to parry the attack, he cackled with laughter. Sure enough, the Gauntlets shine and separate from Fohl, transferring onto Tact’s arms.

Didn’t Tact hear our conversation just now? Even though Fohl said he wouldn’t be fighting as a hero in order to avenge Atla.... Or was he so enraged that he didn’t even understand that? Even if that’s the case, we were the same.

“With this, I’ve obtained all of the Seven Star Weapons! I’ve become the sole and strongest Seven Star Hero in the world. You guys no longer have any chances of winning! Obediently.... DIE!” (Tact)

At those words, his followers also raised a commotion. And yet they had

huddled together until now, as if they had been watching a scene from Hell.

Even so, the world's sole and strongest Seven Star Hero.... what's with that awful phrase. And I suppose he'd also be the strongest hero in history if he adds all the Four Saint Weapons to that, huh. Such foolishness.

"Ah yes, yes. It's just that your weapons have increased, don't get carried away. There's no meaning in it if you don't win." (Naofumi)

Female Knight said so in the past. What will you do after becoming the strongest, or something. [T/N: Female Knight asked Ren during his cursed-by-greed phase.] At the very least, it's something I can't understand.

"Now then, Mister Strongest Seven Star Hero..... let's start the second round, shall we." (Naofumi)

Holding my sword in front, I focus my senses. Fohl also did the same.

"Musou Kassei!" (Fohl & Naofumi) [T/N: Peerless Activity]

Unlike Fohl, I learned this by watching others. Even so, I learnt the concept completely so I guess it's not impossible. It's not like I have a high disposition for it like Rishia and Atla so I don't really know how much of it I have though.

"Dreifach Boost III! Huh!? I can't use the same magic as that guy!?" (Tact)

That's because the Cane and Revelation are unrelated. Above all, the Cane isn't really lending him power so it seems he can't strengthen it to the maximum. Even if he could, I still have a trump card.

"Erst Slash!" (Tact)

Tact tries to slash at us horizontally. I dodge that by an evidently paper-thin margin and approach. When I received his attack earlier it was also like that, but it's not like I can't see it. However, the Hero of the Shield shouldn't be avoiding his enemy's attacks so that time was nothing more

than stopping his attack. Aura's duration time still hasn't run out.

"Vanzin Claw!" (Tact) "It couldn't be!" (Naofumi)

Anyway, this guy likes the Claw too much. Is he a speed maniac? It seems it's the fastest among the Seven Star Weapons he possesses.

As expected, he's faster than when I had the Cane. Even so, it's not like I can't avoid it.

"Er.... is the Magic Sword something like this?" (Naofumi)

I support the tip of the sword with my hand, endue it with Zweite Decay and thrust with all my strength. Of course, I took into account the defence-attack proportion. The Decay spell falls under the category of a recovery magic.... attack.

This magic causes decay. [T/N: The spell uses the English pronunciation and this explanation is in Japanese.] In other words, its effect is corroding the target's cells. Originally it didn't have such power. It was a spell that caused a delay in recovery.

"Gaha....." (Tact)

I must take care so it doesn't break. The Old Man and Imia's Uncle took the effort to make this sword, so I plan to give this to Raphtalia later. Let's treat it with care.

"Gu.... Have a taste of my true terror! Dreifach Elemental!" (Tact)

Tact casts a spell while brandishing the cane. Ah, so he can reproduce it to that level.

"It's useless." (Naofumi)

Elemental. If I remember correctly, it should be the multi-attribute spell that was Rishia was good at. Fohl and I concentrated and used Atla's forte, Collect, to assemble the magic Tact fired and shot it back as a ball. Of course, it's power was high so it couldn't be helped if he died.

"Wha—" (Tact)

A white flash flew towards Tact and he was blown away as expected.

His followers were dumbfounded and couldn't do anything in that time.

“Whoops, he was blown away so easily.” (Fohl)

Fohl kicked Tact away and he flew over towards me.

“Gu... even though you're just a level 100 small fry, you managed to get me with an attack!?” (Tact) “Haven't you forgotten who it was that received plenty of attacks and was in a pinch just before?” (Naofumi)

With all my strength, I use my sword to stab Tact, who had come flying over. Naturally, I used a sword technique that I had learned through watching others.

“Fake Multilayered Crumble Attack!” (Naofumi) “Uu.... Gu.....ga....ugu.....” (Tact)

I wonder what kind of face the Female Knight would make if she saw this. Even so, he's stubborn. It might be because I've been using the Hero's Cane until now, I still don't understand very well. [T/N: The cane boosted his attack] So Raphtalia and the others used such low firepower to fight, huh. I guess the birth of the Hengen Musou school was inevitable.

“Tiger Rampage!” (Fohl)

While I was wholeheartedly striking, Fohl came running and started hitting with all his strength. I also slashed with the Phoenix Sword to match him.

“More, more!” (Naofumi)

Bombarding him with attacks, I repeatedly struck Tact with consecutive attacks. Honestly, my power wasn't enough at all. I had no choice but to increase the number of hits, making good use of my spirit and magic. Luckily Fohl was here so the attacks were plenty. It felt just like a Combo Game.

“STOP IT!” (Follower)

Tact's followers couldn't bear it and ran over with their weapons in one hand. Fohl sent one of the women flying and they were all knocked down,

just like bowling pins. And then I cut down the guys near me with no argument. It's questionable that the current me, who was just an ordinary person, has the power to kill level 250 guys, but I'm concerned about if doing so was wrong.

"Don't think you can influence me as I am now! If you don't want to die then shut up and watch!" (Naofumi)

I was subjected to a fury that caused my blood to boil. It may be because I don't have much combat experience with the exception of defence, or because the opponent was a hated enemy who I couldn't forgive, I couldn't tell. Either way, my emotions were so exposed that even I felt like the current me was a completely different person.

In the past I've read manga where characters would get a huge adrenaline rush during a battle which would enhance their fighting spirit, but it's probably similar to that. Just like that, I resume pursuit of Tact and stab him repeatedly.

"Is this the level of someone with all the Seven Star Weapons? Don't get carried away with the jokes." (Naofumi) "Aniki, are we still going? I want to finish him off soon." (Fohl) "Sorry, Fohl. We still have to make this guy suffer more. The world won't forgive him. No, even if the world forgives him, I won't. More.... We have to kill him more brutally." (Naofumi) "Alright!" (Fohl)

I further besiege the prostrating Tact with attacks from my sword, and Fohl continues trampling on him.

"Hey, look! Suffer more. The people you killed didn't just undergo this level of pain!" (Naofumi)

Do you even understand the pain of your whole body being reduced to charcoal! Do you understand the despair of a dying person, who's suffered an incurable fatal wound, being looked after by their most beloved person! Do you understand the feelings of someone who understands what it means to die but chooses to sacrifice themselves for another person's sake!

"Aniki, if we don't stop holding back on him soon then we'll be making

it too easy for him!” (Fohl) “Haa....haa... that’s true.” (Naofumi)

I thrust with all my strength, to the point of running out of breath. Because the Cane had been a ranged weapon, and it had firepower. There was a chip in my composure.

However.... even without a legendary weapon, I can still do quite a lot. His movements are obvious. Is he really level 350 with a total of eight legendary weapons, his strength is doubtful.

“D-don’t underestimate meeeee! Lightning Whip!” (Tact)

Maybe because he was too caught up in the moment, Tact took out his whip and fired an AOE skill. We both dodged, ducking and jumping respectively, and then Fohl did a dropkick while I used my hand to support the sword to pierce Tact’s shoulder.

“GYAAAAA!” (Tact)

Ah, as I expected it’s tougher than stabbing with the Cane..... Is it because it’s not the Shield which I can operate effectively?

“This is for the Hengen Musou school’s Granny who you killed. And this is for the Queen! And next is for the villagers! For the Allied Forces who fought with us!” (Naofumi)

I unfasten the clasp adorning the sword handle. I employ the mechanism splitting the Phoenix Sword into two, just like its namesake. What will happen when I separate the two pieces while they’re still stuck in him? In addition to that, the sword blades shine with a red light and burn Tact’s flesh.

“UGUUUUUUUU!” (Tact)

I’ve never tried the Nitouryuu style, and I’m not confident that I can pull it off well. [T/N: Nitouryuu = two-swords style (think Kirito)] Even so, I slice at Tact’s chest with the swords crossed like scissors.

“And this is—” (Naofumi) “For Atla!” (Fohl)

Returning the swords to a single blade, I coordinate with Fohl and slash at Tact’s whole body mercilessly. Tact’s clothes are already in tatters and

his whole body is bloody. This is the strongest Seven Star Hero, haha, it makes me laugh. And finally, the finishing blow.

“Dreifach Decay! That’s right... Decay Sword!” (Naofumi) “Dragon Slayerz Blazing Fist! (Fohl) [T/N: 滅竜烈火拳]

I endow the Phoenix sword with Decay Magic which had my magic and spirit combined with it, and I use it to tear him to pieces. At the same time came Fohl’s non-stop consecutive attacks. And then both mine and Fohl’s blows intersected, as if resonating with each other.

“Guwaaahhhh!” (Tact)

I could see the wounds fester where I cut him. It’s pretty nasty.... this attack. However, this means its power was high.

Because that attack fully encompasses the concepts of the Hengen Musou style. It approaches the limits of an ordinary person but it can probably be called an attack equal to the limitless heroes.

Fohl’s attack was the same. The technique Fohl fired was a reproduction of the Gauntlet’s skill. He also used it when he blasted the dragon and killed her.

“Ka..... Ha.....” (Tact)

Tact collapsed from Fohl and my Two Platon attack. [T/N: ツープラトン攻撃] [ED: It’s a proper Japanese phrase along the lines of double-teaming. Pronounced how it sounds, derived from “Two platoons”.]

Chapter 332: A Kitsune has Seven Forms, and a Tanuki, Eight

(TL: This is a Japanese saying that just says the Tanuki is more skilled in deception, but has less malicious intent) “Hmm... now my anger is a little... no, it hasn’t cleared at all.” (Naofumi) I kick the fallen Tact as I spit out these words.

“Exactly. I think we should just kill him already.” (Fohl) “Don’t be that way. This man needs to face greater despair. For the crime of killing Atlas, the Queen, and my villagers, this isn’t nearly enough.” (Naofumi) “... Understood, Aniki.”

Now then, I look around.

I wonder how Raphtalia and the others are faring.

First, Raphtalia is... before I can turn my eyes to her, lightning surges, and I turn my attention to that.

“Oy, wait. This onee-san isn’t satisfied at all, yet...” (Sadina) Sadina is lifting up her enemy, who now looks like nothing but a grilled piece of fish, while she continues to discharge electricity.

When I remember what I did to Tact, I don’t think I’m in a place to say this, but I think she’s going a bit too far.

So Sadina was someone this vicious... No, perhaps she channeled my rage.

Her opponent is... dead already, right?

Death by electrocution doesn’t sound too nice.

“Naofumi-chan, this onee-san hasn’t rampaged enough yet.” (Sadina) “You’ve done enough.” (Naofumi)

“When I’m in this form, it makes me feel mildly drunk. It’s not a bad feeling~” (Sadina) “Just turn back already.” (Naofumi)

“Ara, he got mad at me.” (Sadina)

Sadina follows my orders and turns back to her Orca form.

Now then, to lecture her... no, I'll leave that for another time.

“And wait, you still haven't recovered?” (Naofumi) “Oh my, Naofumi-chan saw the colors he dyed me.” (Sadina) (TL: as in her brown form)

She makes an annoying embarrassed pose as she messes around, but her actions are no joke.

“She went and mistook me for a Luka, and I was still quite pissed off because of Atlas-chan and Naofumi-chan. That was quite refreshing.” (Sadina) She says, as she points her harpoon at Tact and starts releasing electricity at him.

Her tone heavily implies that her stress is still built up. She's definitely angry.

She's the type that acts flippant when she's really angry, I guess.

I mean... She is the oldest one in the village, and the one's who's like everyone's older sister.

There's no way she isn't mad about Atlas.

“So after Fohl is Sadina, and...” (Naofumi)

Sadina points her harpoon at the remaining women, who were moving to do something.

“If you move around, you may become like this child, so stay still.” (Sadina) “Hii!” (Women) (TL: Sound of fear)

After seeing the end of the one who challenged Sadina, it seems these women won't make a move against her.

Tact's wrung out like a wet rag, the Aotatsu women had her head blown off, and finally we have electrocution.

Honestly, I don't think I would make a move if I was in their position.

“DERYAAAAAAAAAH!”

“KYUAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

“AAAAAAAAAH!”

Hmm? I hear Ren and Gaelion’s voices shouting out.

When I looked up, I saw the moment when the giant body of the Dragon Empress colliding with the fortress.

Gaelion had his mouth clamped on the giant’s throat, and Ren had his sword on her core.

A large tremor radiates from the building.

“KUUUUAH!”

Gaelion cries out in a muffled voice.

“Don’t screw with me! Give you my Dragon Emperor Core!? A minor fragment like you, who needed a hero’s assistance to challenge me shouldn’t get so high and mighty!”

When it looks like the dragon is going to act up again, Ren applies force to his sword, and she roars.

The end is clear.

“Even if I perish, you shall not obtain it!”

“... Gyau.”

She flipped a switch. That one is the Adult Gaelion.

Likely, they had switched places numerous times in battle as they assisted Ren.

And this is the time when he offers his words of parting to his fellow fragment.

An ominous sound rings through the air.

“Gufu...”

It was the sound of Gaelion piercing through the empress’s throat.

The giant body convulses and stops moving. Ren lifts his sword and skillfully uses the blocks of the fortress wall to climb up it.

“Is it over?” (Ren)

“For argument’s sake.” (Naofumi)

I place my foot on Tact as I declare this.

What is Gaelion doing?

Uu...

He appears to be in the middle of a meal.

Blood is gushing out like a fountain, and Gaelion digs around the inside of the Dragon Empress’s body.

I’ve seen Firo feast on wild monsters before, but this scene is much more grotesque.

Ren covers his mouth with his hand as he witnesses the scene.

He’s definitely stomaching his urge to throw up.

“W-what is... he doing?” (Ren)

“The enemy dragon spoke of minor fragments and Dragon Emperor Fragments, right?” (Naofumi) “Yeah.” (Ren)

“The entity called the Dragon Emperor was split into thousands of Fragments, and their parts compete to complete the whole. Something about collecting past memories...” (Naofumi) “I don’t really get it, but pretty much, Gaelion has a fragment, and he’s claiming one from that Giant Dragon?” (Ren) “Apparently. And since the opponent didn’t submit, he killed her and is manually trying to take it.” (Naofumi) The fragments were supposed to gather when the world was in peril. I thought that Gaelion didn’t seem to have the instinct to collect them all, but he went and hunted Tact’s Dragon.

Gaelion greedily gnaws on the Enemy Dragon’s heart.

I’ll bet the fragment is kept somewhere around there.

“He’ll likely gain the knowledge of how to breach level 100. If all goes well, Gaelion’ll be able to bestow that power too.” (Naofumi) “I see! So we’ll be able to make the villagers and the people of the country stronger!” (Ren) “It’s only a possibility.” (Naofumi)

But considering that, I can't really kill Tact yet.

If I don't get the knowledge of how to breach 100 from him, the future looks grim.

Looking at the air, Firo is still fighting the enemy Gryphon.

"You're quite... skillful."

"Firo won't lose!" (Firo)

But I can tell at a glance who has the better prospects of victory.

Firo's movements are sharper.

The Gryphon's already taken hits here and there, and she's on the verge of collapse.

The end will eventually come.

I should really get to Raphtalia already.

I concentrate my attention on her battle.

Raphtalia and Raph-chan continue their illusionary battle with the Kitsune woman.

"You're good for a Raccoon. I remember... the Raccoon who sealed me carried a scent like yours!"

"I don't know what you're talking about, nor do I have any interest."
(Raphtalia) It really is a battle of delusion.

Fire rains, and water wells up. The surrounding landscape is warping.

Was Raphtalia that great of a mage?

Or is this just an illusion?

Raphtalia's ability to see through illusions is high.

I bet that's why she can keep up with that Kitsune's blows.

Affinity is important.

It's good that Tact didn't cooperate with that woman.

If I were to challenge her without the Cane, it would probably be

impossible.

Well, if that were the case, I would need Raphtalia's help to dispel her illusions.

"Rafu~" (Raph-chan)

"Hmm, duplication magic, is it? Do you truly think I am unable to see through it?"

Raph-chan changes to a form identical to Raphtalia and stands next to her.

Oy... she didn't notice?

Ah, I see. This was what Raphtalia was training for.

If that's the case, this might prove to be an effective weapon.

Though, I feel this is a bit too light for a decisive blow.

"Raphtalia! Catch!" (Naofumi)

I throw the Houou Sword at Raphtalia.

"Rafu~!"

But Raph-chan jumps up high and catches the sword I threw.

Eh? Raph-chan's taking it?

And wait, there's a problem more important than that. Can Raph-chan even use weapons?

"So that one's the real one!"

Raph-chan uses the sword to deflect a blow aimed at him.

Ah, so that was his intention when he intercepted it.

Despite his cute appearance, he has a surprisingly good head on his shoulders.

"Hahaha, Raccoon wench. To think you thought an illusion of this level would -gufu!?"

The real Raphtalia stabs the smiling Kitsune woman in the back.

She really was deceived.

It seems Raphtalia was more skillful.

“Unfortunately, you were wrong.” (Raphtalia) “Rafu~.” (Raph-chan)

“Impossible... an illusion with physical substance!? Even its scent is the same!”

“I have no reason to tell you the truth of the matter. Isn’t it a battle of deception? Anyways... what did you think this child was supposed to be?” (Raphtalia) “Raccoon wench... so it wasn’t you who used an illusion to breach the Dragon Emperor and the Gryphon’s sanctuary...”

So Tact’s side thought it was Raphtalia who used the sanctuary.

Even their most skilled illusionist was deceived, so I guess they thought Raph-chan was merely a part of her.

In truth, he was created with her genes, so even his scent is the same.

His voice and feel are different, though. I’ll investigate it later.

“Unfortunately, no.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia pulls out her sword, and starts a coordinated attack with Raph-chan.

Right, this attack was the one that Trash proposed.

Using one of them as bait, and making an opening for the other. And Raphtalia, and Raph-chan...

“Here we go! Make sure to keep up with me!” (Raphtalia) “Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

Raphtalia starts unleashing sword strikes at a high speed.

“Na-... gu-... u...”

Slash, thrust, rest, Karma Blade, kick, First Stroke, Second Stroke, Third Stroke, followed by a stream of Hengen Musou sword skills.

And Raph-chan imitates that as if a mirror was placed on the other side of the Kitsune’s body.

This brings to mind a famous attack from a fighting game. I believe it was the attack of a Demon of Dreams.

The combo ended with them lifting their swords together, turning their backs to the Kitsune, and swinging downward to wipe off the blood.

「Illusion Mirror」!

「Rafu~」!

Raph-chan returns to his Tanuki form.

“I have... yet to... fall.”

Though she should have collapsed, the Kitsune woman stands while covered in blood.

No matter how you look at it, it's her loss... the woman's form gradually begins to change.

... As if her transformation had been dispelled, her shape becomes that of a giant fox.

Is this the time for me to offer assistance?

When I took a step in their direction...

“Not... yet.”

Tact's consciousness returns, and he suddenly stands up.

Chapter 333: The Hero of the Shield

Commands

“I... haven’t lost yet!” (Tact)

Tact staggers to his feet as he directs his hostility towards us.

The black miasma begins to fill the area.

Is he going to use a Curse Series?

Well, I did kill his women out of revenge.

It’s not strange for him to awaken a curse or two.

“I’ll never forgive... you all! Eri, Nellisen, Shatte, Reldia, you killed them all! I, the strongest Hero... will definitely kill you!” (Tact) Tact turns his eyes to Ren.

It appears that he believes that he will have a chance if he steals the Legendary Sword.

How nice.

For him to be able to stand after all of our beatings, is it the power of the Seven Stars?

No, it may be one of those main character powers like will-power or determination.

That’s splendid and all, but it would be nice if he were to give up soon.

I hope he realizes that he won’t be able to beat us no matter how hard he struggles.

“You’ll still fight? Self-proclaimed hero, who couldn’t even beat a civilian like me, your life is already at its end.” (Naofumi) “Cut the crap! I am... still standing! As long as I have these legendary weapons... if I don’t have enough power, I simply have to steal it!” (Tact) “Tact! Don’t lose!”

The women get lively as they start cheering for Tact.

If Tact truly had the power of Narrative Causality on his side, I bet we

would be at a disadvantage.

Some miracle would happen, and he would awaken to some new power or something.

“I see, I see. So the fact that you’re a legendary hero is embedded this deep in your psyche.” (Naofumi) This is also just as planned.

And that’s why I’ll... steal away his last hope.

“Unfortunately, the current you won’t be able to beat Ren.” (Naofumi) “I won’t know if I don’t try!” (Tact)

Tact takes out the Claw and prepares to release a Vanzin Claw at him.

“Just understand it already. The Seven Stars can’t beat the Four Legendary. And Ren won’t... no, I won’t let you.” (Naofumi) I put my hand on the area where my shield once hung, and concentrate.

「... I, who has understood the origin of power, a simple civilian and an average Hero, the Hero of the Shield commands.」

Just like how the body needs a soul to complete itself...

Just like how a Legendary Weapon needs a Hero...

We’re bound by a single thread. I search for the point that connects me.

To counter this separation, that was supposed to be impossible, I need to form a stronger bond.

The body was made for the soul, and the soul was forged for the body.

「Let the truth be unraveled once more. My Shield is...」

Tact’s weapon flashes, and a single light flies from his hand to mine.

A strong light fills the area and blinds everyone present.

And in my field of vision, the nostalgic Shield Icon manifests.

“Wha-Impossible!”

Before using Vanzin, Tact turns to me.

And I prepare to take his attack head-on.

“Hmph!”

Using my Shield, I repel and nullify his signature move.

Now that our lost bond has been strengthened, this attack is nothing to me.

My status has returned to that of when I had the Shield before... no, it's risen several levels.

Though my attack power is the same as always.

“What's wrong? Is your theft ability not working?” (Naofumi)
“Impossible! How absurd! How were you able to take back the Shield!?”
(Tact) “I said it, didn't I? You have no way of beating me. You're already in checkmate.” (Naofumi) Having seen a scene he had never expected to see in his life, Tact opens and closes his mouth again and again.

But, even so... he still has the will to fight.

“I can't help it. I just want to see your face colored by despair, time and time again.” (Naofumi) “Aniki, you're making the face of a complete villain again.” (Fohl) “Naofumi sure seems used to this.” (Ren)

“But that's where Naofumi-chan's charm lies.” (Sadina) On Sadina's words, Ren and Fohl avert their gaze.

Yes, I can understand their feelings.

Though it seems that everyone has accepted that I look like a villain.

“Really? I think Aniki should be a bit more...” (Fohl) “I think you're wrong. I think it's how he's good at looking after others.” (Ren) “Ara? Onee-san likes this Naofumi-chan too~♥” (Sadina) The peanut gallery should shut up.

I don't care what you find good about me.

“Now then, your final hope... let me steal it from you.” (Naofumi) I put my hand on my Shield, and use the trump card Atlas and the Spirit of the Shield showed me.

In truth, if I had used this from the battle's onset, the fight would

already be over.

The events up until now have been but light entertainment.

Had I used it, we wouldn't even have had to fight.

「The Hero of the Shield commands. My brethren, heed my words. Undo the foolish restraints that bind you, and awaken.」

The Claw in Tact's hand gives off a soft light.

After confirming that, I continue.

「-Strip him of the Qualifications to command you!」

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven.

It's not just the Claw. All of the weapons in his body begin to glow.

“W-what!? What's happening!? Gu... my power is flowing out!” (Tact)
Tact can't hide his shock from the abnormality of the situation.

In the first place, it's wrong for a single person to assert his control over a large number of legendary weapons.

The Four and the Seven weren't made to work like that from the beginning.

「Find wielders worthy of thine own glory!」

The seven lights from Tact... flow out, rise high into the sky, and start falling to the earth.

It's like those wish-granting balls in a popular manga.

Oh? There's a light flying in this direction.

Oh right, Fohl was the Hero selected by the Gauntlet, so that's natural.

... Wait? There's two too many.

“Eh? Ah, kya!”

“Wah? What is it?”

Light rains down on Raphtalia and Firo.

“This is... a Hammer?” (Raphtalia)

“What’s this? Claws~?” (Firo)

Yes. It seems that Raphtalia and Firo were selected by those I called my brethren.

Their names vanish from the list of slaves and monsters under my control.

“W-what foolishness is this!? To steal a weapon from Tact!? Return it at once!” (Kitsune Woman) “Who would return such a thing!?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia lifts the large hammer up high and swings it downwards at the Kitsune Woman, who took up the form of a nine-tailed fox.

“Let’s see... 「Thor Hammer」!” (Raphtalia)

The second Raphtalia’s hammer hits the nine-tails, lightning strikes down.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Along with the Kitsune woman’s scream, I heard a splattering sound.

“Uwah...”

It appears that Raphtalia has smashed that woman’s head.

“Rafu~.”

Raph-chan, who had been covering his ears from the monstrous sound, made a pose of victory.

I believe the other end happened at the same time.

“Die! Filo Rial Queen Candidate!”

“Whoah.” (Firo)

Firo suddenly... deployed something?

It only appeared for an instant, but isn’t that the Wall that Atlas and I use?

Why is she able to use it?

No, well, Firo did train with us quite often, so...

“Eh? Ah?”

The gryphon crashes head-first into the wall.

Firo doesn't let the chance go. She puts her foot on the Gryphon's neck and...

「Erste Claw」?

An ominous sound echoes through the air.

And just like that, the Gryphon crashes to the ground.

Firo flaps her wings a few times and lands.

Over her feet are the Seven Star Claws.

“These are really light! Firo accidentally overdid it!” (Firo) “Turna! Ashiel! You... even took the Seven Stars from me!? What the hell is happening!?” (Tact) Tact is trembling with fear, but I don't feel any pity in myself for him.

“From the start, we were merely playing around with you. Did you think that you were all that, you small fry?” (Naofumi) “Go to hell!” (Tact)

Even so, without accepting reality, Tact was already moving to punch me.

A loud sound rings out as his hand collides with my face.

But I don't feel anything.

“Uu... ah... ah.” (Tact)

“With this, you aren't a Hero, or anything more. Just try and turn around this situation.” (Naofumi) Having lost his Hero Status, we can execute Tact without having any negative influence on the world.

Of course, quite a few problems will pop up because of the Heroes he's killed himself...

“You get it? This is the difference between a real Hero, and a wannabe. You contented yourself with your transient power, but now your age is over. Your crime of playing with the world, make up for it with your body!” (Naofumi) 「Shield Prison! → Change Shield (Attack)」

A cage made of Shields surrounds Tact, and through my Change Shield, they all become Shields furnished with spikes.

I'm holding back to an extent where it won't kill him, so there are no problems.

I really do want to kill him now, but there's a reason I can't.

At the very least, as long as the possibility exists that he's a reincarnated individual, I can't kill him so easily.

I need to know what god or demon is backing this bastard.

Chapter 334: Two Thirds

“Now then, with this, we’ve pretty much finished cleaning up his forces. Go shoot some light magic.” (Naofumi) As per Trash’s order, I give the command. Sadina raises her harpoon into the sky and chants magic.

Well, the Cane should have flown to the man, so he should already know the conclusion.

“Hmm? Wha-”

When I look towards the battlefield, I find myself at a loss for words. It’s fine that smoke’s rising from the castle town.

I mean, the fires seem to have subsided greatly.

The problem is the area close to the fortress.

The remnants of about half the Faublian army come running... seemingly after suffering heavy damage.

“Naofumi.” (Ren)

Ren points to the battlefield.

At that moment, something glows, and a beam of light shoots through the Faublian army.

“Do you know what’s happening?” (Ren)

“... Probably.” (Naofumi)

It was fired from Melromark’s side, and based on the marks left behind, I think it’s heavy artillery.

(TL: How would you translate 四射目?)

After that, a thick laser-like beam pierces the sky.

“I think it’s Rat’s new weapon... and Trash’s skill.” (Naofumi) A carriage-type... no, Tank-type Mii-kun is probably letting loose the armaments equipped on him.

Like a swarm of baby spiders, half of the Faublian army scatters and

flees in this direction. The rest appear to have surrendered. There's no sign of movement from them.

"More importantly. We should arrest Tact and his followers already, and go fight the wave." (Naofumi) "Yeah." (Ren)

I don't know if any force will come to assist him, so I wonder what I should do.

"Witch... don't think you can escape." (Raphtalia) With hammer in hand, Raphtalia stands before Witch, who was quietly trying to escape. She glares at her.

Remembering the events up until now, there's not a single person who will let that bitch go.

Just how many things had to become sacrifices because of her?

"Ku..."

"Your life is already over. It's time for you to prepare for your painful execution." (Naofumi) I point my thumb towards the ground and look to Sadina.

"Arara. 「Dreifach Thunderbolt」!" (Sadina)

As if she guessed my intention, Sadina casts lightning magic to prevent Witch's escape.

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!" (Witch)

It was quite a cry.

"KYAAAAAAAAAH!"

Seeing the tempest of lightning dancing before them, Tact's women raise up some screams.

It's paralysis. Moving will be impossible for her.

We definitely have no intention of letting her escape.

"Even if she's rotten, her level is unnecessarily high. Firo, look over her. If she tries anything strange, kill her without hesitation." (Naofumi)

"What about Master?" (Firo)

“I’ll head to the wave with Gaelion.” (Naofumi) “Eh? Firo wants to be on that side.” (Firo)

“Deal with it. Helping out here will help Melty out in the long run.” (Naofumi) “Really? Then Firo will do it.” (Firo)

For Firo, Melty’s a precious friend.

I’ll bet that having her look after the source of all of this world’s evil will prove beneficial to her reputation.

“Gaelion, how long are you going to dig around in that? Let’s go already.” (Naofumi) “...Kyua...” (Gaelion)

Hmm? Gaelion’s acting strange.

He flies to me in his child mode.

Oy, don’t touch me when you’re covered in blood.

Though, the blood on my body (Tact’s) isn’t something to laugh at either.

“Kyua.” (Gaelion)

Gaelion chants water magic to wash his body.

... He could use something like that?

He gets on my shoulder and speaks in a soft voice.

“I’ve gathered a majority of the fragments. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say I’ve remembered mostly everything.” (Gaelion) “I see. Even on how to breach the level limit?” (Naofumi) “Yeah, something like that is of no trouble to me. More importantly, there was a piece of important information in that woman’s fragments.” (Gaelion) What? I’ve already heard about the wave from the spirits, and Trash was able to deduce a bit from the memos left by the Queen.

“It’s about the Four Good Omens. You were talking about the wave earlier, right?” (Gaelion) “Yes, and?” (Naofumi)

“The Four omens offer their souls to protect the world from the wave, and they hold the power to prevent it. That’s why the legendary weapon

wielders, and their brethren, aren't transferred to combat them when they appear." (Gaelion) I see. I did think it was something like that, but this clinches it.

It was something I thought up quite a while ago.

The Four Omens were definitely our enemies, but perhaps they were allies of the world.

That means...

"I am... No, if Ouryuu, who's sealed within the Dragon Emperor Fragments were to be released, then he would sacrifice an estimated two thirds of the world's population, and the wave will..." (Gaelion) -Stop.

At that moment, my attention turns to the Dragon Hourglass icon in my field of vision.

Since I registered at Zeltburg's hourglass, what's displayed is the time until Zeltburg's wave.

Numbers representing the remaining time appear, and a world map with the indicated location pops up.

What's more, a window with 『Will you heed this summon?』 and the choices 『Yes / No』 float before me.

This may be quite a dire situation.

The location is close to Melromark's... southwest border.

It appears I can teleport there, but if the Heroes were to warp, then Tact and Witch would get away.

"Firo, Sadina, and Ren, you watch over these people. We'll respond to these summons." (Naofumi) "Got it." (Ren)

"Leave it to onee-san." (Sadina)

"Firo too." (Firo)

With those three on guard, I don't think they can run.

Ren's become able to use a bit of support magic, so the 250-level gap shouldn't hold too much meaning.

They don't seem to have any growth corrections or status boosts, so our base power is different.

"Let's go." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia calls out to me.

Her raised hand is clamping around a ridiculously large mallet.

A Seven Star Weapon... no, a brethren of the four holy weapons.

"Are you fine with that weapon?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. Hengen Musou doesn't restrict itself to a single weapon."

(Raphtalia) "Ah, that's true. Fohl, we'll have to put off harassing that man to a later date. You understand?" (Naofumi) "...Yeah." (Fohl)

He seems reluctant, but he nods anyways.

And Raph-chan jumps towards me.

He grabs onto the surface of my Shield.

"Rafu~" (Raph-chan)

"You want to come too?" (Naofumi)

"Rafu~!" (Raph-chan)

I'd like it if he stopped swinging that sword around in his Tanuki mode... but he seems to have the motivation to fight, so I'll bring him along.

I turn back to Gaelion.

"So, the wave... will stop. Will you do it?" (Gaelion) Sacrificing about two thirds of the population to ensure the longevity of the world?

With the end result taken into consideration, I guess it's not a bad hand to play.

Thinking about the true enemy we have to fight, it's quite a difficult problem.

But, the cost is too great for me to make the choice.

"Yep, let's leave that as a final option." (Naofumi) "... As it should be.

The Dragon Emperor asked the Heroes of the Past to seal him. In order to prepare for an event like this. It's beneficial to us that that Fake Hero was unable to bring himself to kill that dragon and instead kept it close.”
(Gaelion) No, I think that's just because she was a Bishoujo when in Human form. But I won't say it.

I pick 『Yes』 from the options floating in the air.

At that moment, all those in my party and I were sent flying to the wave.

This wave has both Itsuki and Motoyasu fighting in it.

What could be happening?

We have to check the situation.

The scene I witness upon teleportation leaves me dumbfounded.

A large fissure has spread throughout the sky, and on the other side... was but another world.

And right now, the fissure gradually begins to increase in size.

The Apocalypse... the word crosses my mind.

It was a scene bizarre enough to warrant such a thought.

Even though I heard most of it from the spirits, I'm still this disturbed.

Raphtalia and the others might be looking at fear itself.

I look around.

The villagers were frantically repelling the raging monsters of the wave.

There was also an unfamiliar flock of Filo Rials and a Queen pulling a carriage resembling Rat's tank.

“KUEEEEEEEEEEE!”

In answer to the Filo Rial's scream, light gathers around the barrel of the mounted cannon. It releases a beam that cuts through the rampaging monsters.

「Energy Blaster」!

Itsuki changes his Bow to a Rifle and uses a skill.

The Legendary Bow sure encompasses quite a few categories.

Even firearms are allowed... I'm jealous.

But now's not the time to think about it.

I call out to Itsuki, who was concentrating on the monsters emerging from the sky.

"Itsuki! Reinforcements have arrived!" (Naofumi) "Naofumi-san! You came at a good time! Quickly, the Wave..." (Itsuki) "Y-yeah!" (Naofumi)

When I nod, the people I brought with me begin running towards the source.

Thinking about it, what should we do about the origin of the wave?

"Quickly, the enemy that... came from the wave. Please beat it with Motoyasu-san!" (Itsuki) "U-understood! 「All Revelation Aura X」!" (Naofumi) Upon receiving my support magic, we start off towards the boss monster.

The Aura Spell, All Revelation Aura, casts a status buff on all those I consider an ally within a limited area.

"It's about time the first will wear off. 「All Revelation Down X」!" (Itsuki) Ah, I forgot to mention it.

The magic Itsuki learned on Cal Mira was Down.

You can probably guess by the name, but it's a debuff that's the exact opposite of Aura.

It lowers all stats.

When used on an enemy, their abilities fall considerably.

With my Aura and Itsuki's Down, the battle should... become easier!

When I look at those who were fighting before we got here, their movements have gotten better. Their skills have risen, but the amount of enemies isn't decreasing.

It looks like monsters are appearing from areas outside of the fissure.
It's like they respawn the moment they're cut down.

Chapter 335: United Front

“Just what the hell is happening!?” (Naofumi) I ask Itsuki once more.

“Report the situation!” (Naofumi)

“Understood!” (Itsuki)

In the face of a raging wave monsters, I deploy Meteor Shield X and protect the villagers.

Then, Itsuki raises his voice and begins his report.

Next to him, Rishia throws her weapon to take out the monsters outside the barrier.

Her weapon has changed from transparent to solid.

Well, just as the Spirit of the Shield and Atlas said, because the Seven Star Weapons were released, Rishia’s been formally recognized as the Hero of the Projectile.

I don’t know the situation about the wave itself, but the battlefield is quite wide and is enlarging as we speak.

What’s happening at the center of this wave?

It seems that Motoyasu and his three Filo Rials are fighting there, but it’s quite far, and the sheer amount of monsters in our way make it difficult to make them out.

“We participated in the wave from the start, but the monsters that appeared had very high levels, so it is a close battle. That is the situation.” (Itsuki) I confirm the levels of the monsters exiting the void.

Interdimensional Bird of Ruin Level 220

“220!? It seems their levels suddenly spiked.” (Naofumi) With numbers this high, I can see it being quite a struggle.

No, with 100 as the limit, they’re treading in dangerous waters!

Well, with support magic, I guess it’s not too bad.

Right now, everyone’s relying on Itsuki’s support magic to narrowly

avoid defeat.

“That isn’t all, right?” (Naofumi)

The air whistles, and behind us, Trash appears, Cane in hand.

It seems he’s brought some Melromark and Allied soldiers with him.

“T-this is...” (Trash)

“Good timing! Trash, I leave the command to you. Make sure we don’t run out of support magic.” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Trash)

Trash is the Hero of the Cane, so he can use most forms of magic.

That includes the Magic of Heroes.

I went to the Magic Store and learned how to transcribe spells before teaching them to Trash.

Well, I only taught him the fundamentals, so I don’t suppose he can use Revelation, but he should be able to manage a Dreifach.

“How does the other battlefield look?” (Naofumi) “It was Melromark’s complete victory, and the Faublian Army has surrendered. It seems something happened here, so I took your people who were fighting with us, and all those of the allied army who could still fight and came here.” (Trash) With him are Kiel and Taniko. Also, Rat and Miikun.

“Niichan! I worked hard!” (Kiel)

“I see. Good job.” (Naofumi)

I offer thankful words to Kiel.

The fact that she’s this energetic means that she must have contributed a lot to the war.

Hmm? Looking closely, Taniko’s carrying a whip I’ve never seen before.

C-could it be... she...

No, she does love monsters, so perhaps she has the proper affinity.

“It seems that this child has been selected as the next Hero of the Whip.” (Trash) “KYUAAAAA!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion leaps in Taniko's direction.

You do realize we're in the middle of a battlefield, right!?

"I see. Then I'll leave it to you!" (Naofumi) "No... It's not me..." (Taniko)

Taniko shakes as she answers me.

"That old woman! When the light came flying over, she used me as a shield!" (Taniko) "What are you talking about? The legendary Whip chose you." (Rat) "You're definitely wrong!" (Taniko)

"Rafu~" (Mii-kun)

Tank-model Mii-kun calls out to calm both sides.

At the same time, Gaelion stands between them.

What the hell are these people doing...

"I definitely don't want to be a Hero! I'm just a researcher!" (Rat) "It's not that I don't want to fight, but I don't want a Hero's power!" (Taniko) (TL: Whip-kun is sad. Noone wants him.)

The whip lets off a faint light, as it bounces back and forth between the two.

It still hasn't made a decision?

As long as it adds to our forces, I don't really care who gets it.

The Spirit seems troubled as well.

"You people... Just go fight already! The Whip chose someone right!?" (Naofumi) Well, both of them are skilled at support, and from what I've seen, the Whip has high support capabilities.

Is it that they don't want to stand out?

Neither of them have particularly good perceptions of Heroes either.

The Hero of the Whip chased Rat out of the country, and Taniko's surrogate father was killed off by a Hero.

I bet it's something like that.

And, the Whip holds an affinity with those that use monsters.

Both of them have the qualifications.

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

Gaelion puts Taniko on his back, and starts flying towards the center of the wave.

Don't worry. The Gaelion you're riding isn't the Gaelion of the past.

After stealing the fragment of Faubley's Dragon Emperess, he's now the Dragon Emperor with the highest amount of Fragments in the world.

“Go! Gaelion!” (Naofumi)

“KYUAAAAA!” (Gaelion)

Following my order, Gaelion changes to his giant dragon form and bathes the battleground in flames.

Oh my. This is quite a powerup.

It seems that Taniko's using the Whip's power to cast support skills on him too.

I'll have to teach her about her weapon later.

Raphtalia and Firo as well.

“And? Itsuki, what's happening?” (Naofumi)

We move our mouths as we fight.

That's just how pressed for time we are.

“Yes. The monster's have become stronger as a start... and the enemy Naofumi-san encountered at the last red hourglass, Glass, appeared.”

(Itsuki) “As I thought... and?” (Naofumi)

“After that, the monsters went out of control, and we're currently dividing and conquering. Next... you'll have to hear it from Motoyasu-san and his Filo Rials, who're fighting at the source!” (Itsuki) “Got it!” (Naofumi)

So Itsuki and Rishia don't know the whole situation themselves.

The remaining time on the Hourglass has dwindled quite a bit.

Then, like a warning alarm, the hourglass begins flashing, alerting us of the danger.

“Raphtalia! Fohl! We’re going to rush right through to the source of the wave! Follow me!” (Naofumi) “Got it!” (Fohl)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~!” (Raphchan)

As if she understood my order, the Filo Rial drawing the tank-like carriage begins clearing the way for us.

That’s... probably Fitoria.

That Tank is... no, it doesn’t matter. I’ll save that for later.

I shrug off the high leveled monsters with my Shield as we rush to the center.

“DERYAAAAAAH!”

“Ku... That Shield... you’re Naofumi! Finally, a real one has arrived.”

There, for some reason, Motoyasu and Glass were combining their powers to shoot skills towards the crack in the sky.

Protecting the two, Midori was at the front slaughtering the monsters headed in their direction. He was toting an unfamiliar axe.

“Why are... you fighting with Motoyasu’s group?” (Naofumi) “At the start, I came to oppose him... but now’s not the time for such things! If we don’t contain the wave quickly, calamity will come!” (Glass) “Yes... I know. But I don’t have any means of attack. So.. I came here to protect everyone.” (Naofumi) The Shield told me just what sort of phenomenon the Wave was.

If it was telling the truth... then I guess I can understand why Glass would ally with us here.

This time, they’re directly attacking the crack itself.

This was something outside of Itsuki’s knowledge.

I concentrate my attention on the Shield, put in my Chi... and release.

「Meteor Wall X」!

This was a skill from the Shield of Compassion Atlas bestowed upon me.

It's ability is... deploying a Meteor Shield around all those I recognize as an ally. A high-class skill.

What's more, when the group enters a close formation, its area of effect grows.

Right now, all of those at the Wave's origin point, starting with Motoyasu, Glass, and Midori, all get covered in a large barrier.

Of course, it also has its flaws.

I have to shoulder a portion of the damage dealt to the Meteor Wall.

But only if they're able to overcome my defense.

“This is...” (Glass)

Glass seems surprised at the barrier I deployed.

“If this is up, then... 「Rinbu Mu: Musou」!” (Glass) (TL: Glass has been shown so far to use two styles, Rinbu Mu (Circle Dance of Nothingness) 輪舞無, and Rinbu Ha (Circle Dance of Rupture) 輪舞破) (TL again: The Kanji used for Musou, the skill name, is 無想(Blank Mind). It a different kanji from the one in Musou Kassei and Hengen Musou, which is 無双(Peerless). I'm not sure if I should translate these, or leave them as is) In an instant, Glass's body vanishes, and in the next moment, a large impact sound rings out from the crack.

I only witnessed it for a split-second, but she appeared in front of the crevice, as if teleporting, and proceeded to unleash a consecutive stream of blows on it.

I was only able to follow that speed with my senses heightened by Revelation Aura.

As expected of one who protects the world?

I don't know what's to come, but for now, she's an ally.

And while I was thinking that, the Meteor Wall surrounding Glass shatters.

It was probably the effect of her skill.

In truth, I did take a small amount of damage.

From Glass's attitude, it must have been some double-edged sword skill.

I recast the Meteor wall and re-erect our defensive wall.

“Now! As fast as possible! Suppress the wave!” (Naofumi) “Understood, Father-in-Law! 「Brionac X」!” (Motoyasu) “Got it! 「Rinbu Sen: Samidare」!” (Glass)

(TL: Rinbe Sen (Flashing Circle Dance) Samidare (Early Summer Rain))
「Thor Hammer」!

「Rafu~」

「KYUAAAA!」

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」!

(TL: 滅竜烈火拳 X)

「Accel Smash」!

「Lightning Whip」!

All of my comrades who had reached the center release their ultimate attacks.

Large shockwaves collide with the crevice, and some explosion-like attacks hit it as well.

But without any change, the fissure continues to expand.

“Ku...”

The Meteor Wall is protecting everyone from the normal monsters' attacks, but it's becoming a bit difficult.

Even if they're like this, they're still monsters over level 200.

They have powers equal to or greater than Tact's Harem.

If it was one on one, I think we could handle it, but these numbers are a pain.

It's good that the wall has yet to fall.

Because of the influence of the Shield of Compassion, I can't use my Wrath Shield or Blutopfer.

I feel like I could do something about it if I was in the condition I had when I was beating up Tact, but it's currently impossible for me.

I also order around my first and second Float Shields to blow away the approaching enemies and cover the allies they're focusing their attacks on.

「Heaven's Judgement X」!

「KWEH」!

Support fire flies from the rear as well.

All of the Heroes are working together.

Because of that, the wave's expansion... slows down, and stops.

“Good!” (Naofumi)

With this, it should end.

And...

A snapping sound resounds through the world.

A white light begins flooding out of the source of the wave, forcing us to close our eyes.

“It seems we've barely managed to prevent the worst from happening, but...” (Glass) Glass's words enter my ears.

And after the light abates... I was able to confirm what the wave had done. I was able to confirm that the voices from the Spirit of the Shield had been telling the truth.

Chapter 336: The Eighth

“The land...? What’s happening?”

I definitely told him about it before, but Itsuki raises his voice.

But even if he did know, there was no way he could remain silent.

The Time Icon in our vision reverts to the normal hourglass... Zeltburg’s hourglass, but now’s not the time to think about that.

“Quite spacing out! Right now... we have to concentrate on the monsters the wave left behind. What do you think would happen if monsters of that level were let loose on the populace!?” (Naofumi) “Y-yes!” (Itsuki)

Including Itsuki, everybody was thinking about it.

It was... the expanse of unknown land stretching out before us.

Because the wave had died down, no new monsters were spawning, but it left quite a severe mark behind.

“Rebuild the formation, and kill as many monsters as you can! Keep the casualties to a minimum! Understand!?” (Naofumi) My voice snaps everyone back to reality, and they nod.

Glass runs off towards the unknown land, and begins helping sweep up the monsters.

A few hours passed.

We finally killed every last monster from the wave.

“What is happening?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki comes, and poses the question to me.

“I talked a bit about it, didn’t I? Looking at what was on the other side of the crack, it’s quite clear, isn’t it?” (Naofumi) “But still...” (Itsuki)

“I want to confirm it too. Gaelion.” (Naofumi)

“Kyua!” (Gaelion)

Small mode Gaelion lets me hop aboard, and he changes to his giant

form.

Taniko... isn't here.

Gaelion unfolds his wings, and begins lifting himself into the air.

The ground below us gets smaller, and smaller, and the clouds grow in size.

I concentrate on the changed earth below.

From the Shield, I bring out a map of the country, and survey the land I can see.

From here, I can't do a thorough investigation... at the very least, by looking down from above, I can see the new expanse of land.

"Fumu... the worst outcome didn't come about, but it came ridiculously close. We have to prepare ourselves." (Gaelion) Gaelion seems to have a grasp of the situation.

"If I were to compare it to a cup, it's already got cracks running down the middle... just how long is it before the water bursts out?" (Gaelion) "I don't know. It's not like we don't have emergency measures, but..." (Naofumi) What should we do?

If I didn't hold Tact back, the situation would become even worse, so I wasn't able to prioritize one over the other.

I may be looking in hindsight here, but it's good that I didn't treat Glass as a complete enemy back when I first met her.

Well... it's not certain that she's our ally, and even if she's an enemy, it'll just be an extension of the wave.

"I decided to save the world. I'll just do what I can." (Naofumi) "That's quite some wishful thinking you've got there. But I'd like to believe the same." (Gaelion) After our conversation ended, we descended back down to the ground.

"..."

With the Wave's monsters gone, we approach Glass, and her comrades;

a group that looked like a form of army.

This is quite a critical situation... isn't it?

I can't let down my guard.

Of course. These people were our enemies up until now.

"First, I'd like to create some space for a discussion. Would that be alright with you?" (Glass) "Understood. There are a few things I'd like to ask you as well." (Naofumi) Me and Trash act as representatives to stand before Glass.

I mean, with the King of Wisdom on our side, I think the conversation should head somewhere for the better.

"Let's see. What's become of the Heroes of your world? How about your followers?" (Naofumi) "Yes. That world's four heroes have all but been reduced to one... the other three have perished." (Glass) ... This is quite troubling.

It's not my problem, but it's quite a dire situation.

"That's why, I alone, to prolong the life of the world, attacked this world with my life on the line. Without the opportunity to beat a single person here, I ran out of time, and this situation came to pass." (Glass) Glass hangs her head.

Well, it's something I already knew.

And we did barely manage to contain it.

"It was a way to preserve your world, so there's no helping it. Since it's come to this, we have to think of how to bring the situation under control." (Trash) Trash soothes Glass as he responds.

"Naofumi-san, what does this all mean?" (Itsuki)

"I did tell you before, right?" (Naofumi)

I mean, before the battle, I talked with all the heroes.

About just what sort of purpose the Heroes' weapons originally held.

"That's right, but I'd like to confirm it." (Itsuki)

“Got it. Glass, I’d like to confirm the difference in our worlds. Can I ask?” (Naofumi) “Of course, though there are few differences to speak of.” (Glass) So everyone can hear, I reaffirm the truth.

“Then please listen. Originally, the four legendary heroes were... the keystone the world held in opposing the wave. If all the Heroes are to die in the middle of a wave... the world will fall to ruin. Of course, there are also vassals to uphold their banner, so it won’t fall immediately.” (Naofumi) The Allied Armies begin talking amongst themselves.

I approached the representative of the Filo Rials, the one pulling the carriage... Fitoria.

“And It isn’t... Seven Stars. Eight vassals existed to offer support to the Four Heroes.” (Naofumi) “Eight? There are Eight Seven Stars?” (Trash)

“That’s right. It’s likely that that Filo Rial is the Eighth one.” (Naofumi) “Kue.” (Fitoria)

“A Filo Rial is?” (Trash)

“Is that strange? Right now, the Axe and Claw have both selected Filo Rials, you know.” (Naofumi) Trash crosses his arms, and gets lost in thought. He turns to the army, and speaks.

“It was written in my wife’s memos. That there might be an eighth. And the reason why the legend of the eighth died out is... probably because they rarely interacted with humans.” (Trash) That’s how it is.

Even if it was once common knowledge that there were eight, if no one knew where it was, or what it was doing, the legend would eventually become but a rumor in the wind.

I don’t really know why Fitoria acted in such a manner, but...

“You’re Fitoria, right?” (Naofumi)

“Kue.” (Fitoria?)

“Why were you providing support fire this wave? You’re strong, aren’t you?” (Naofumi) She may even have every single strengthening method of the ancient Heroes.

I don't believe her skills have dulled with age, but how is it?

"Kue." (Fitoria)

... Oy.

"If you're going to respond, please do it in a language I understand."
(Naofumi) "Kue, kue." (Fitoria)

"Umm, she says that a Hero of the past told her to avoid speaking in human tongue, apparently."

Midori steps forward as an interpreter.

... I tell Firo not to speak too, but it seems a past Hero did the same.

"Cooperation is important, so she decided to at least offer some support. It takes a long time to re-awaken her legendary item, so she isn't particularly strong, she says." (Midori) I see. It's been too long, so her weapon has gone into a cycle of activity and hibernation.

So she only has strength around our current level... How troublesome.

"Got it. Then is there any information you can hand down?" (Naofumi)
"Kue?" (Fitoria)

...Yep.

I totally got that.

"Apparently, she doesn't really remember. It's just that hourglasses far removed from human habitation have been placed under the providence of Fitoria and the Filo Rials." (Midori) ... So there's a place like that too.

That means there are other hourglasses in places we don't know of.

When you think about it, we've never been to Silt Welt, or Shield Freiden, or any of the other major countries with them.

Large mountain ranges, and vast forests... there are countless places we haven't even thought of exploring.

It seems that Fitoria's team was taking care of the wave in places like that.

To protect the world unbenounced to the populace. What sort of Ally of Justice is she trying to become?

Though it appears that her brain itself is around Firo's level.

"FUOOOOOOOH! Giant Filo Rial-sama!"

"KUEEEEEEEE!?" (Fitoria)

Motoyasu notices Fitoria, and drops whatever he's doing. He goes on the offense.

He shouts countless words of affection in her direction, and sends her running.

Amazing. It looks like she's truly running for her life there.

Does she really hate him that much?

Motoyasu is also hated by Firo. Is he releasing some anti-Filo Rial pheromones?

No, he's built up a favorable relationship with a number of them, so it must be an issue with his actions.

"Midori, I permit it. Go silence Motoyasu." (Naofumi)

"Eh, ah, yes! EI!" (Midori)

"Fugu-"

Now possessing a legendary item, Midori thrusts his axe into Motoyasu from behind.

And with that, Motoyasu falls forward, never to speak again.

No, even if he's like that, he's a Hero. He isn't injured at all.

Even so, Fitoria's also bad at dealing with that man.

There's no doubt she's the one who put Firo in heat.

"We're continuing the conversation."

Motoyasu is quiet, so Fitoria regains her composure, and returns.

For the love of god, that man really needs to read the mood more.

Chapter 337: World Assimilation

“And? Am I right in assuming your weapon is that carriage?” (Naofumi)
“Kue.” (Fitoria)

Fitoria firmly nods.

“Last we met, you were able to detach it, right?” (Naofumi) “Kue, kue.”
(Fitoria)

“If you use your weapon long enough, you’ll eventually be able to take it off temporarily, she says.” (Midori) How envious.

I want to learn to do that too, but perhaps the Vassals and Heroes work on different systems...

The Shield did go into dormancy for a while, but it would be nice if I could do that consciously.

“Did you copy the Tank-type body Rat made? Is that also counted as a carriage?” (Naofumi) “Kue.” (Fitoria)

“Yes. I got the feeling that could be copied, so I went and made use of it, apparently.” (Midori) “I see.” (Naofumi)

I don’t know if there’s a gap in power output, but it’s amazing that she could copy Rat’s Tank-type monster.

With this, we may be able to advance Rat’s plans in weapon-shaped monster-making. Well, that doesn’t matter right now.

But... is a Tank really a carriage?

It’s more like a vehicle, or something like that.

“To summarize, originally, there were four weapons that could be called legendary. Each one was able to select two vassals, making for eight in total. All together, that means there are 12 holy weapons circulating in this world. Glass, how was it in your world?” (Naofumi) “Let’s see. In our world, there also existed twelve weapons. From them, I was selected as the vassal of the 『Fan』.” (Glass) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“This world... hasn’t experienced any particular damage. What

happened to its guardian beasts?” (Glass) “Guardian Beasts?” (Trash)

When the conversation had just gotten back on track, Trash posed a question to Glass.

I just learned about their duty from Gaelion a little while ago.

But perceptive people like Trash may have already picked up on it.

“In order to prevent the wave... the assimilation of worlds, there exist certain beasts. In order to protect the world, they collect the souls of its inhabitants. It may be a cruel method, but...” (Glass) “So you mean the four spirits?” (Trash)

“That’s right. In this world, three have already been eliminated. It seems that the descriptions of their nature and other explanations passed down by the past heroes were all destroyed by someone’s hand.” (Naofumi) “... My world’s have all been eliminated already. The only method left to me was to... kill all the heroes of this world.” (Glass) Glass puts her hand on her chest with a relieved expression.

It’s not like she’s attacking because she wants to.

At least, that’s what I get by watching her.

It may seem selfish from our point of view, but the same can be said in reverse.

I mean, if we don’t use the power of the Four Beasts, we’ll have to eliminate Glass’s world.

“It may be just a little, but the worlds have assimilated in some parts. At the moment, my world’s inhabitants are now slightly closer to becoming yours, something like that.” (Glass) “I guess that’s how it is. And what do your people wish for?” (Naofumi) “To suppress the assimilation to as great an extent as possible. If possible, we also don’t wish for any more sacrifices from our side.” (Glass) Sacrifices...

So Glass’s world isn’t completely gone, but the assimilation has taken most of it away.

Because of that, Glass came to seek aid from us.

“We hope that you will offer at least half of your lives to your guardian beasts.” (Glass) “... Are you sane?” (Naofumi)

Since Glass is on the asking side, there's no helping it, but asking us to sacrifice half our population...

She doesn't seem happy about proposing it either.

It's easy to imagine just how hard of a choice it is for her.

It's that. In an old Sci-Fi novel, I've read something like this The world became too polluted for human inhabitation, so a small fraction of the population set out for the stars to find a new place to call home. I think.

I do believe that it is strange that the current fantasy situation overlaps with Sci-Fi though.

But, Glass's world seems to have been cornered quite far.

Of course, the situation is the same for us.

If we just stand back and watch, our world will definitely fall to ruin.

To save the many or the few. Such a choice has been imposed on us...

In that sense, those of Glass's world, who've already reached their decision, have a better grasp of the situation than us.

“I know. It's our final option. But since part of this world has already been eaten away, in order to ensure the survival of the races that live on your world, it isn't the worst option. Of course, if you have a better one, then it's a different story.” (Glass) If we had something like that, we would already be working on it.

But those sacrifices aren't just going to say, “Go ahead,” and let themselves be killed.

-but it may be something we have to do.

I can tell since I've survived up until now.

In this world, pretty words aren't enough to bring an end to anything.

Whenever someone gains, someone loses.

Having all parties benefit rarely ever happens.

In order to ensure a third survives, we kill the other two thirds.

This truly is... a shitty world.

Even so, we have to make a choice.

Of course, that truly is a final option.

“... What about your world?” (Naofumi)

Glass averts her gaze.

“The vanguard of the enemy forces, one with memories of another world, left our world in chaos. Suspicion raged on about who the reincarnated one was, and when the world was in grave peril, my comrades began killing one another... you can laugh if you want.” (Glass)
It appears that a reincarnated like Tact caused the death of the Four Heroes and all but one of their vassals.

It's scary that with one wrong step, the same could have happened to us.

“I do feel like bursting into laughter, but we're on the same boat. How about you crack a smile?” (Naofumi) The Seven Stars were assassinated.

Tact schemed.

Faubleigh went to war.

Really, he did a perfect job of making a mess of things.

An idiot like that thought he could save the world? That's too much even for a joke.

“Now then, let's leave that behind, and see what information we have left.” (Naofumi) Info on the world we're opposing.

Looking at Glass's attitude, we aren't much different.

“Our world was left with information on what the wave was, but everything else was lost over time... just how many times... did we fight with other worlds to save our own?” (Glass) “I see... Glass, your world's wave... what number is it?” (Naofumi) This was the worst possibility I

thought of.

Even if their world comes to a close, will their battle ever end?

If it was to be in a hundred years, it would be fine.

If it was in decades, we would still be prepared to make a bitter decision.

But what if it were in a few years, a few months, a few weeks?

Will we simply be fighting an endless battle?

No, if it will continue no matter what...

“We’ve fought a countless number of battles. At the start, we fought your world, but sometimes, a different world would appear in our sky.

Perhaps it was because of the power of your world’s Guardian Beasts.”

(Glass) “Ah, I see... Our first meeting was... four months ago.” (Naofumi)

“At that time, the only thing I knew was the nature of the wave. There’s a world of difference between the me of back then and the me of now.”

(Glass) Yes the current us would easily be able to defeat Glass when she fought us back then.

And the same goes for Glass now.

In our joint battle, she displayed quite a bit of strength.

“Um, Naofumi-san, why is it that we cannot let the worlds to assimilate anymore?” (Itsuki) Itsuki asks a question.

Ah, that’s right. I explained what the wave was, but never why it had to be stopped no matter the cost.

“To put it simply... think of the world as a soap bubble floating in the wind.” (Naofumi) “I... see...” (Itsuki)

“This bubble floats, collides with, and gets stuck to four others of similar size. But it has its limit. The next bubble to hit it will cause it to burst. You get it?” (Naofumi) “... Somewhat...” (Itsuki)

“I see... The wave is a phenomenon where worlds assimilate, and while the other Heroes were able to survive through it, they were unable to

prevent the phenomenon itself. This fits with my wife's notes." (Trash)
Trash picks up what I really want to talk about.

"From the start, the world had one holy weapon and two vassals. Another world got stuck on, and it became two and four... and in the previous wave-" (Trash) "Yeah, we now have four holy weapons and eight vassals." (Itsuki) "To summarize, the stories of the past where Demi-Humans don't seem to exist are those that were passed down before the wave, and by the collision of worlds, we became bound to the Demi-Human world? Naofumi-dono and Kawasumi-dono's Shield and bow are... those of the Demi-Human side. That's why they're looked down upon within my country." (Trash) "Me too? I didn't feel that I got that bad of a reception compared to Naofumi-san." (Itsuki) "In our long history, perhaps the Bow performed some feat and got accepted by the church. But the Shield..." (Trash) "I'll bet the original weapon of the Demi-Human world was the Shield. The weapon probably had close ties to their land, so he probably didn't work near Melromark." (Itsuki) These people are sharp.

Even without me saying anything, they reached their own conclusion.

You're incomparable to how you were at the beginning, Trash.

"The details are unclear, but in the waves before these ones, our world became tied to the Demi-human's, and this time, we've established a link with Glass's. Is that correct?" (Trash) "Yes, your hypothesis isn't wrong." (Glass)

"But... why does the wave require so much time? Though my wife wrote not of it, I have my own theories." (Trash) "Speak." (Naofumi)

"Fumu... First, it's because of the one controlling the one with memories of a life past. The ringleader of this incident." (Trash) Trash crosses his arms and gets lost in thought.

"Another possibility is... the assimilation-prevention measures the four beasts perform happen every time the wave comes around, and as if waiting for a fruit to ripen, the ringleader waits for them to collect... but that would make this ringleader much too long lived." (Trash) "No, you

may be onto something. Try expanding your thoughts.” (Naofumi) “... Understood. The one behind this must reap some profit by sending the world into ruin. That’s why he causes waves to happen and worlds to go to war, eventually destroying them... Of course, the Four Spirits prevent such things, so they reincarnate someone to go dispose of them. But... this train of thought leaves too many things unclear.” (Trash) “That’s right.” (Naofumi)

Why doesn’t this ringleader get involved himself?

It’s safe to consider that they have some reason not to.

Even if these deductions are correct, what they lead us to is...

“That ringleader cannot come to this world, or perhaps... it’s a magical or spiritual phenomenon. Like an automatic system to control the world’s population...” (Trash) “Itsuki, do you have any ideas? You were able to tell Tact was a reincarnated, right?” (Naofumi) “That’s right, but in my world, it would be explained as a power they were unable to awaken to in life, or something... I’ve got nothing.” (Itsuki) In my world, the books I’ve read with this theme have been quite varied.

So my thoughts may be way off the mark.

But I’ve seen a situation similar to this.

“In the stories of my world, there’s a certain someone who mediates reincarnations like these.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 338: One who Claimed to be God

“There’s a troublesome guy like that? Who could it be?” (Fohl)

Fohl bears a repulsed expression on his face that seems to stem from the depths of his heart.

Troublesome... is it?

Otherworlders in themselves are quite a troublesome existence too.

They’re arbitrarily summoned, so they can’t complain, and they end up in situations like ours.

Before coming to this world, I did look up to epic otherworldly fight sequences, so it’s a strange feeling.

(TL: Because this world reveres otherworldly heroes)

Reincarnation, the existence you meet before you’re born anew-that is...

“It’s God.” (Naofumi)

“God... I see, so there are stories like that in Naofumi-san’s world. There was an NPC like that in a few games, but I was unable to connect the dots.” (Itsuki) “Well, you probably get it already, but I’ll talk. To be more specific, it’s usually something that claims to be a god, I guess. Something like that.” (Naofumi) If someone were to die in a tragic accident... like Ren, Itsuki, or Motoyasu, he would call out to them.

To those who faced such misfortune, he would say, 『Here, you died an unfortunate death, so shall I give you life once more in another world?』 He would whisper in their ears and tempt them.

Since they’re dead, there’s no way they can refuse.

If they decline, it’s 『Oh, I’ve developed a liking for you! How about I throw in a Cheat ability as well?』 forcing them to agree either way.

There’s also the possibility of forceful reincarnation without any interaction.

I’ve read novels like that time and time again.

If the one God chose was... someone like Tact, then what would happen?

He was probably a man from some world somewhere out there who played a game that resembled this world.

Or perhaps the game itself was his own creation.

Perhaps Ren, Itsuki, and Motoyasu were merely following his lead.

Then this leads to a single answer.

All God had to do was reincarnate a playing piece he could move to his will, to put those fighting the wave in an unfavorable position.

The Queen and the Granny said it.

Geniuses control the prosperity and decay of society.

Hengen Musou... What would happen if this style were to be spread around the world?

It would definitely become a threat to the operation of the Wave.

So he sent a reincarnated and cut off its lineage.

There's no way we can confirm or deny whether someone perpetuating these events exists.

The fact that the various information about the wave spread around the world has all vanished is more proof than anything.

"God... Thinking back, I've heard that a religion worshipping something like that existed in the past. I see." (Trash) Trash seems to have some sort of idea.

This is a world that has handed down tales of the heroes for generations.

But, other religions must also exist.

They didn't gain traction due to the Four Heroes and the Seven Stars.

... But, there must have been one who started it. Perhaps the Hero who became the base for the brainwashing daggers.

The God that the Hero publicized... may be our enemy.

Trash proposed the idea of it being an autonomous system, but I think it's something else.

I spoke my mind.

"It appears my theory conflicts with Iwatani-dono's. But judging by the situation, Iwatani-dono's seems more accurate." (Trash) With my proposal, Trash immediately topples his own System idea.

Well, I wouldn't say it's impossible, but... there are way too many things that theory fails to explain.

I mean, what system would make a world where they would have to outsource to destroy it?

I'm a bit concerned about the Holy Weapons.

What? The Sacred weapons preserve the world, and God destroys it. Does that make it a malign deity?

No, no... perhaps it's just too much work.

In the first place, what's going to happen to him after the world falls to ruin?

"Glass, do you happen to know anything... about the worlds that have fallen?" (Naofumi) "... We have witnessed the fall of two worlds. The first had looked as if it had the life of every lifeform sucked out of it, and it was transformed to a deserted wasteland. In the second one, the whole world vanished, as if it were never there before." (Glass) In order to prolong her own world, Glass has experienced having to destroy others. Her words carry much weight.

Both situations seem hopeless.

Will we destroy Glass's world, or use Ouryuu... Gaelion to stop it. We have two options.

"So you've never experienced complete world assimilation?" (Naofumi)
"That's right. But I've heard of it in legend." (Glass)

Before it became so serious... I guess she took some measures.

When I first came to this world, we had too little information on the wave.

Even so, we knew it was strong.

However, we didn't think we would be unable to overcome it.

But with internal discord... with a reincarnated's intervention, Glass's world was turned inside out.

"If your world were to end, how much time would you have left?" (Naofumi) "At the moment, I would say we have a month at most. Though, if we had the Sacred Heroes and their vassals all gathered, it wouldn't be limited to that." (Glass) "How many holy heroes and vassals do you have that can still fight?" (Naofumi) Glass raises three fingers.

Three... I guess that's rough.

(TL: Gender neutral pronouns here, so don't quote me on it)

"What about the holy weapon holder?" (Naofumi)

"He was captured by the reincarnated, and my instincts tell me he's being held somewhere. When a wave hits, it may be possible to rescue him, but that's just wishful thinking." (Glass) Yep, this is serious. I can see why Glass came to a conclusion so quickly.

But, does that reincarnated have absolutely no intentions of fighting for the sake of the world?

Is he relying only on his own greed and ignoring all of the other heroes' words?

... So people like that can get selected for reincarnation.

It depends on a god's abilities, but regardless of the time, place, or world, there are always one or two people with a few screws loose.

I won't say I'm a moral, upstanding human being, but I've seen too many people with something messed up in their heads.

If you gather up people like that and reincarnate them all, the world

will definitely go into chaos.

There's also the idea that there's a form of brainwashing at work.

It may just be that God thought that the wave wasn't enough to destroy the world.

And, that this was but a trivial thing.

... No, I've experienced it.

I'm not sure when, but when Ren and the others didn't die when they lost, they ranted on about it being some sort of Event Battle.

I'm not planning to pin all of that on the enemy, but they may have ingrained an idea like that.

"Of course, he isn't someone who won't listen to reason if you talk to him... but for some reason, that reincarnated is hostile towards everyone, and he doesn't find satisfaction unless he's the leader." (Glass) Ahh... what a pain.

A man like that is moving the world at his will... In order not to stand out, did Glass leave the world with her vassal weapon? This isn't something to laugh at.

But... is the wave truly a battle without end?

"He stains others in blood, and himself with their blood. He even turned his madness towards his own child... Perhaps even if we were to triumph here, our world would simply fall by that man's hand..." (Glass) She's given up.

I can feel such emotion from Glass.

From what I see, Glass isn't a human brought from a world like ours. She was born in her world.

What sort of feeling is it, to give up on the world you were born in?

I won't swing a flag back and forth saying my world was a wonderful one, but...

"I beg of you. Your Guardian Beast still lives, and while our worlds have

been connected, yours isn't on the verge of collapse. Please grant permission for those of my world to take up residence in this one. For that, I'll gladly cooperate, even in bringing an end to my own world." (Glass) She speaks as she lowers her head to the ground.

I understand where she's coming from, but her idea is madness in itself.

Of course, it's an answer she's reached after a lifetime of hardships.

In my eyes, I see Glass acting out of madness. She isn't acting out of any desire for self-preservation.

But anyways, I should ask.

"Are you sane?" (Naofumi)

"Of course. We've all lost it. We've gone mad over there. But there are still some things we've built up; some things we'd like to save." (Glass) Now that she's accepted her madness, there's something she has to do.

I've done something similar.

No, my rage is but foolishness compared to Glass's insanity derived from failing to save others.

Even so, I can more or less understand her.

And, even if it's for the world's longevity, someone who can ask for the sacrifice of two thirds of the world with a straight face can't be sane.

But among the Heroes, there was never a decent person to begin with.

Among our world, and her's.

"I believe it is overly hasty for us to make that decision here and now. Until the next wave, we should clean up. Will your group lend a hand in our efforts?" (Trash) "I thank you for your swift judgement. I swear that I won't let this reach a bad conclusion." (Glass) On Trash's words, Glass declares as such. Everyone present nods.

With the Allied forces at the lead, we first spread the information of Faubley facing an absolute crushing defeat against Melromark.

Of course, the matter of the guardian beasts was put to absolute

secrecy.

As if we could spread information like that.

And so, because we have plenty of Legendary Heroes and Vassals at work here, it seems we've been given a bit of an extension on the time until the next wave, based on the time recorded on Melromark's hourglass.

We'll have to set out to deal with other countries' waves, but there are plenty of things we'll have to do first.

We learn that some even more troublesome things are lying around less than half a day after we transfer back to the castle.

Chapter 339: Enhancement Methods

[Beginning]

“There’s trouble! The monsters throughout the world have increased in activity, and there’s also been a sudden rise in levels! The villages and towns in the country are in trouble!” (Soldier) An injured soldier came into the throne room and reported frantically.

We’re still in the meeting. Ren and the others have performed a Level Reset at the hourglass and admitted Tact into the country’s jail so he couldn’t escape for the time being, and then joined us.

They couldn’t hide their astonishment about Glass joining us or the appearance of new land.

The conversation with Glass still continues. It was at that point.

“S-speaking of which.” (Soldier)

Gaelion had said the monsters would have an increase in activity after each wave.

So the thing about the wave conditions becoming more severe was pointing to this sort of situation!

“What is it?” (Glass)

“According to the adventurers who just managed to crush them, just by defeating them.... they managed to acquire more experience than they did on Calmira Island.” (Soldier) Ha... An ordinary adventurer would go no further than 40 at best, and even soldiers could only reach 100.

That aside, the citizens might be in danger.

“Release the Hourglass of the Dragon’s Era. Let those who want to Class Up freely do so!” (Naofumi) We don’t have the time to choose our personnel.

Rather, if we don’t raise the levels of all the citizens, they’ll die.

At the lowest, 100 is the baseline.

Well, we have Gaelion here so we should manage the country before that.

How much time would be needed to re-establish the Seven Stars is the issue, but more than that, we first need to measure how much of Glass's world has assimilated.

Starting with the after-effects of the battle with Faubley, we'll be pressed to deal with the waves.

"What should we do about the waves throughout the world?" (Naofumi)
"Kue." (Fitoria)

Fitoria shrinks her carriage.

And then opens the carriage's doors for us.

Various scenes were reflected there.

It's a tool I've seen before somewhere. Oi. [T/N: "Don't rip off a certain robotic cat!" (Naofumi)]

"Er, Fitoria-sama said the Vassal's carriage has the ability to transport and warp, so it can be used to deal with the waves throughout the world." (Midori) "...How convenient." (Naofumi)

I won't say we should have done that from the start.

This is probably one of the abilities of the Vassal of the Carriage.

Is it a reduction of the Portal Skill's range expansion and transfer scope....?

"How long until the next wave?" (Naofumi)

"About five days."

...There are less days than I thought.

However, we have things to do until then.

"... Instruct the Allied Forces and the troops throughout the world to try raise at least one level before the time limit so they don't die and to protect the people of their country." (Trash) Trash gave instructions to the soldier.

What we need to do concerns the one calling himself God, but in order to stop letting him do as he pleases we must be aware about how fast the waves will descend.

“Glass. What will happen with the next wave?” (Naofumi) “The monsters appearing because of the wave are the other world’s screams when the worlds fuse or so I’ve been told. The monsters’ strength won’t lessen but as long as this world’s Saint weapons and Vassals exist, we can buy time.” (Glass) “Your world is....” (Naofumi)

Even now, the Four Saints and Vassals of Glass’s world were in a damaged state.

“I am.... past being resolved. For example, another world might assimilate while we’re trying to hinder the assimilation with this world.... We might be destroyed by some opposing world in the end. I will.... take advantage of the wave and return though.” (Glass) “You’re not going to stay in this world and fight?” (Naofumi) “Because I am a Vassal of that world. Until I accomplish my mission at least.” (Glass) “I see... by the way, it’s been on my mind but are you going to continually repeat these fights with no end?” (Naofumi) Honestly, I can’t see any sign of salvation for them.

The spirit of the shield sounded like there was an end and that there was salvation.

Of course, I only managed to get it to tell me the outline of what the waves were but since there’s a reward, there should be an end.

“I also don’t know the details of that. Just that the spirit of the fan told me. That an end will come eventually for this fight as well. And that even the being pretending to be God has limits.” (Glass) Until the enemy runs out of patience, we’ll continue to hinder the assimilation.

No.... Perhaps just like in a siege, the waves might be a fight to wait for allies against an assaulting enemy.

Like this, we solidified the plan of action against the waves.

Next is the issue regarding the Saint Weapons and Vassal weapons.

If we don't power up all the Saint Weapons and Vassal Weapons, we probably won't be able to overcome the waves.

"Can Glass's fan and our weapons be connected through enhancement methods?" (Naofumi) "...It seems like it's impossible. They're incompatible in regards to enhancing." (Glass) "I see. Then Raphtalia, Firo, the other heroes newly chosen by the vassal weapons, and Fitoria. Check each of your enhancement methods in the help manual and explain them." (Naofumi) "Y-yes!" (Raphtalia)

Beginning with Raphtalia, they each check their own status and help manuals.

Our weapons had mutual compatibility to convert those processes and operate them.

With this the Four Saints should unlock the parts released by the Vassal weapons.

There's quite a lot but if we don't listen and test them all we won't become stronger so it can't be helped.

"I suppose I'm first." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia raises her hand and explains.

"Er, the mallet's enhancement method written in the manual is weapon synthesis." (Raphtalia) "Weapon synthesis...." (Naofumi)

Somehow it has something I can imagine.

How many will be able to apply this?

"Apparently it's about conferring the weapon tree's most characteristic special ability onto other weapons." (Raphtalia) For the time being, let's go ahead with the enhancement and try experimenting on the Spirit Turtle Shell Shield.

Spirit Turtle Shell Shield (Awakened) +8 70/70 SR Blessed (Compassion) Ability released.... Equipment bonus, Skills [S Float Shield] [Reflect Shield]

Special Abilities: Gravity Field, C Soul Recovery, C Magic Snatch, C

Gravity Shot, Vitality Up, Magic Defence (Large), Lightning Resistance, SP Drain Nullification Growing Ability

Proficiency 100

Item Enchant Lv8: Defence 10% Up

Dragon Spirit: Defence 50, Fire resistance up

Status Enchant: Magic Power 30+

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

When I checked, ○ icons appeared at the bottom.

Incidentally, what the Blessed series' Shield of compassion does to the other shields.... seems to be in a different category to Enchant or Synthesis.

The Blessed Series can't enhance but it assimilates with the normal shield and manifests its abilities.

No matter how weak of a shield it may be, it's fine to think of it being endowed with a part of the Shield of Compassion.

For the time being, let's try endowing this shield with the Soul Eater Shield.

Ah, the Shield of Compassion has the special ability Spell Support but that has a weaker ability than Trash's cane.

But I've gone off topic.

Synthesize the Soul Eater Shield!

Spirit Turtle Shell Shield (Awakened) +10 70/70 SR+ Blessed (Compassion) Ability released.... Equipment bonus, Skills [S Float Shield] [Reflect Shield]

Special Abilities: Gravity Field, C Soul Recovery, C Magic Snatch, C Gravity Shot, Vitality Up, Magic Defence (Large), Lightning Resistance, SP Drain Nullification Growing Ability

Proficiency 100

Item Enchant Lv8: Defence 10% Up

Dragon Spirit: Defence 50, Fire resistance up

Status Enchant: Magic Power 30+

Soul Eater ○ ○ ○ ○

So it also increases the Enhancement value and Rarity?

Ah, Soul Eater Shield's Enhancement value and Rarity have been reset....

As a test, I tried synthesizing other shields which had been enhanced but whether it will increase or not depended on the weapon's strength, and it seemed there were limits.

So it won't go that well....

Or I should say, with this my skill, Reflect Shield, seems like it's turned into a dead skill but....

Well, it can still be put to practical use so it's fine?

"Naofumi." (Ren)

"What?" (Naofumi)

Ren enhanced his weapon many times and then came to address me.

"It seems there's a limit to how many times the material weapons can be synthesized like this." (Ren) "Is that so?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah, after using it three times the weapon book entry turned dark. It's also impossible to alter it." (Ren) "....Is it alright?" (Naofumi)

"It seems I can relight it again as long as I have the materials so there's no problem. Also, I unlocked a sword because of this." (Ren) "Well, I guess it was possible." (Naofumi)

An image of entrusting a fully enhanced blade to a blacksmith and receiving a famous roguelike weapon comes to mind.

Or rather, did synthesizing to a specific rule turn it into the strongest sword?

"So it's one week of synthesis as I expected?" (Naofumi?) "What are you

talking about?” (Ren)

“No, it was on Monday or Tuesday..” (Naofumi?)

“The sword I experimented on was the one that appeared when I combined the Dragon slaying sword.” (Ren) “Ah, that one?” (Naofumi)

Ren showed the transformed sword he was experimenting with.

Oh, there was an incredibly pretty ornament added on the sword. A dragon scale glittered, it looked cool.

“The disappointing part is its basic attack power is lower than the spirit turtle sword and my fighting partner, Gaelion seems to hate it.” (Ren)
Taniko glared with all her heart. She’s angry since he possessed the sword that killed her father, huh.

“You might be able to use it after raising its level so isn’t it fine?” (Naofumi) “Well....I guess.” (Ren)

Let’s not go into why he synthesized together only swords that were effective against dragons.

I see, so the mallet was a vassal weapon with a smithing aspect.

.....I wonder why it chose Raphtalia?

“What’s wrong?” (Raphtalia)

A mallet for Raphtalia.... A hammer, huh.

I wonder if Raphtalia would get angry and change it to a 1 tonne hammer and hit me with it if I went on a date with the villagers.

“You’re thinking about something strange again.” (Raphtalia) “Don’t hit me with that.” (Naofumi)

“Why must I be hitting Naofumi-sama with the mallet! Or will you be doing something that I would hit you for?” (Raphtalia) “I thought it might be possible in the middle of doing various things with the villagers or Melty.” (Naofumi) “I won’t! Haven’t we spoken properly about this!” (Raphtalia) “Well, I suppose so.” (Naofumi)

I’m thinking too much, huh.

Or I should say, it probably fits Raphtalia perfectly, her having a straight-man disposition.

Let's have Imia's Uncle make the PikoPiko Hammer and let her copy it.
[T/N: Squeaky Hammer]

Then... it probably won't hurt, and I'll be careful to never let her turn it into a 1 tonne hammer.

"You're still thinking something...." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia completely suspects me.

"Now then~ let's move on!" (Naofumi)

It would be bothersome in various ways so I diverted the conversation.

Chapter 340: Enhancement Methods

[Middle]

“Next, let’s continue with large weapons. Midori, you’re up.” (Naofumi)
“Ah, yes. The Axe’s enhancement is... let’s see, it seems to be Body Modification.” (Midori) “What’s that?” (Naofumi)

“According to the Help, besides weapon bonuses, you can distribute points freely to your own status.” (Midori) So it has nothing to do with weapons. The Vassal Enhancement methods sure are broad.

I confirm my Status with magic.

There it is... around the stats portion.

More specifically, around Defense, Agility, and Magic, an arrow mark appeared.

When I slowly concentrate on it, a window pops up.

‘Will you distribute Stat Points?’

I have quite a bit of points saved up. It’s like those old games where you can distribute stats to your liking.

This is... can’t I increase my attack so that I can fling myself at enemies!?

Thinking that, I try to distribute points into Attack.

But there is no arrow next to the Attack stat...

I fell to my knees, and took on the pose of despair.

(TL: Zetsuboushita!)(ED: Orz)

Shield... why must you crumble my hopes so?

Thinking about how badly Tact failed to use the Shield when we were beating him up, I realize that I must have been forced into playing on lunatic mode!

It seems that Agility would be useful, but I wonder what I should do.

Ah, it seems resetting is possible.

But like the Cane and Gauntlets, there's a certain cooldown time.

This one is long. It takes three days before you can reset again.

“Is that it?” (Naofumi)

“No... it seems there's something else there.” (Midori) “Eh?” (Naofumi)

When I tried to exit out of the point allocation screen, something resembling a grid work appears.

□□□□□

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What is this?

As I thought that, the points I input takes physical shape on the board.

■ ■

■

Could it be that I'm supposed to mess with the points on this board? It's a puzzle!

As expected, if I don't make the correct shape with the inputted points, the strengthening won't take effect.

“Father-in-Law!” (Motoyasu)

“What is it, Motoyasu?” (Naofumi)

“I want to distribute all my points en masse, but should I?” (Motoyasu)
“... I can't guarantee that you won't die, but knock yourself out.”
(Naofumi) Oh right, I think that in Motoyasu's game knowledge, weapons were but ornaments and status determined everything.

“Understood. Then I'll maintain some balance in stats.” (Motoyasu) “I

recommend raising Agility so you can execute countermeasures for enemies more easily.”

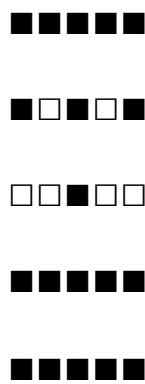
It’s a longstanding custom for agility to be the focus of strategy.

Of course, increasing Vitality is also important. Especially when working solo.

The problem is that neglecting agility will make it so that I won’t make it to defend in time.

This will require some research and experimentation.

By the way, thinking about what would happen if I drastically invested points...



Most of the Grid Panels were filled up. This strengthening seems to be based on Cellphone Games.

“As expected of Father-in-Law! You pick things up quickly!” (Motoyasu)
“No, I think anyone would be able to pick this up.” (Naofumi) But... it’s a plainer enhancement method than expected... right?

And wait, I’m getting more bonuses than what I inputted.

It seems the arrangement can create some effects. What’s more, alongside stats, there are also resistance bonuses and special effects.

This may be a higher priority than equipment bonuses.

“Midori.” (Naofumi)

“What is it, Master?” (Midori)

(TL: Midori uses Goshujinsama in Katakana) “Make sure you don’t put everything into attack. You’ll end up killing Motoyasu.” (Naofumi) “Why

would I be doing such a thing!?” (Midori) “I mean, you’re...” (Naofumi)

One of Motoyasu’s three stalkers.

Ah, Stalker 1 and Stalker 2 are glaring at Midori with envy.

“Why does only Midori get a weapon?”

“Mokkun is all of ours!”

Midori’s broken into a cold sweat.

He’s worried about getting alienated from his group.

They always fought together, but because of this weapon, they’re going their separate ways.

What will happen from now on... I’m a little anxious.

Kuu is a Filo Rial Queen who uses Kicks and breathes fire, right?

Marin throws her feathers like darts and uses long-ranged magic.

Midori swings around an axe in human form and uses magic.

Having the Axe Vassal weapon fly to Midori is an inevitable result.

Isn’t it just that there wasn’t an axe wielder besides Midori around at the moment?

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

Skillfully sitting on top of Raphtalia’s hammer, Raph-chan tilts his head to observe the scene.

What’s with his reaction?

A few glances were exchanged, but nothing really happened, so the conversation continued.

“Now then... Firo.” (Naofumi)

“What~?” (Firo)

“It’s your turn.” (Naofumi)

“Ah, I see. Um, you know... My skills you see~! They get rea~lly strong!”
(Firo) Yep, you’ve lost me.

I was an idiot for asking Firo.

What should I do... I don't get what the claw does at all.

The only one who can have a genuine conversation with Firo is Melty, I guess.

No, does Raphtalia work too?

"Raphtalia, ask Firo about her enhancement method." (Naofumi) "Understood. Firo?" (Raphtalia)

"Yes~?" (Firo)

"Can you explain it a little better?" (Raphtalia) "Hmm? If you do it again and again, then Bang!" (Firo) "Someone, anyone!? Call Melty over!" (Naofumi) This isn't getting anywhere.

After a while, Melty appears, and she speaks with Firo a number of times, after which, she arrives at a conclusion.

"Putting together Firo's words, apparently, Skills that can only be used by Heroes, as well as Magic, are given a proficiency level, and they can get stronger with continued usage." (Melty) "Oh... how amazing. I'm surprised you were able to get that much out of the girl." (Naofumi) I truly admire how she was able to understand that much from the conversation.

As expected of Firo's best friend, and lover.

No... I have a slight hunch, but Melty... No, is that just my imagination?

"Naofumi, why are you fantasizing about something strange?" (Melty) "No, well Melty, are you-" (Naofumi)

When I was about to ask, Motoyasu interjects.

"Gununu... I have no choice but to accept it. Your qualifications of being Firo-tan's fiancé!" (Motoyasu) "You can stay silent!" (Melty)

Melty shut Motoyasu up with a single phrase.

But that's fine. The result is advantageous.

I truly applaud her efforts.

I confirm my skill list.

... Besides the Gauntlet and Staff's strengthening icon, a new bar with a % sign appears. Next to it is a number indicating skill level.

This number will probably rise with continued use.

If I increase the level of my Float Shields, would the shields get bigger?

I won't know until I test it out.

"Next is..."

Going in turn, I turn my eyes to Rishia.

She changed from the possessor of a ephemeral armament to the true possessor of the Projectile.

I guess the weapon had used the legendary bow as a medium, through which, it analyzed her compatibility.

But because Tact existed, it was only able to grant half its power, so it was left in a form like that.

"Rishia." (Naofumi)

"Y-yes. My Help menu mentions something about using up money to do something called Over Custom!" (Rishia) An excited voice escapes from her mouth. Even though she's climbed her way up to being a Hero, she still doesn't have it all together.

I'm a bit worried about leaving her as Itsuki's guardian.

But Itsuki himself has become calm and collected.

"..."

"And what exactly is that supposed to mean?" (Naofumi) "Well... I don't have the slightest idea, but... I can use physical currency to strengthen myself. But apparently, it holds no meaning if I don't know any other enhancement methods..." (Rishia) "So it's a unique, yet generic method... is it not?" (Itsuki) "Fumu, as expected of a Jack of all Trades..." (Naofumi) It matches Rishia's way of life.

I see, I kinda get it.

“That’s right.” (Itsuki)

“Fuee... why are you all nodding to yourselves?” (Rishia) Money...

Right, I don’t think I’ve ever put any money into the Shield.

I slowly insert a single copper coin.

A clinging sound echoes through my head, and an icon displaying ‘1G’ appears in my vision.

... Let’s try silver.

The same sound comes, and the icon changes to ‘101G’.

I bring up the Axe’s strengthening screen.

The grid’s sides are a pain.

■□

■■

Is there nothing I can do to extend it?

‘Do you want to invest some money?’

Ah, a window pops up.

... I reluctantly press ‘yes’.

A bar appears, requesting the amount, and I input 101.

■■

... Well, I didn’t really input that much, so while the shape changed, that’s about it.

It’ll probably work on other enhancement methods as well.

I found it out later, but the Whip’s Strengthening method, Synthesis Measure, is able to increase the amount of o’s on weapon synthesis.

How convenient.

Next is... Protector, a method that eliminates the chance of failure for the Refining method of the Four Heroes. It seems a bit redundant.

The amount of money we waste is tremendous!

Screw this, you bourgeoisie!

Though it's useful, this isn't some goddamn Freemium.

Chapter 341: Enhancement Methods [End]

“Next!” (Naofumi)

Is Taniko...

When I look over at Taniko, she turns her head away and shows an expression indicating that she doesn’t want to speak.

I’ll bet it’s because she didn’t want to be a Hero.

What’s more, she’s that Tact’s successor.

“ ... ”

“Say something.” (Naofumi)

“Kyua?” (Gaelion)

“Um, according to the Help screen, it’s Growth Elevation.” (Taniko)
“You mean something like the Slave User Series and the Monster User Series?” (Naofumi) “Yes. You can set a specific parameter you want to improve when leveling, it seems. Also, it isn’t limited to its user. As long as you have their permission, its effect extends to your comrades as well.” (Taniko) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

That’s a useful one.

It further increases the stats gained during a level up.

“But when you activate it, your level will drop proportional to the extent of the growth elevations you want, so you have to use it with planning in mind.” (Taniko) It’s still kind useful.

It sacrifices level to increase potential, and when you level up again, you can use it once more for even greater elevation.

And now that the world’s monsters are running rampant and distributing monstrous sums of EXP, leveling up is relatively easy.

The Whip has a strong image of being used alongside monsters.

When I concentrate on bringing up the screen for it, it appears easily enough.

Let's try increasing Vitality for now.

How many levels will you use up?

An icon pops up.

... I'll put it on hold for now.

If my level falls too far to fight these monsters, there would be no point.

"And... last is..." (Naofumi)

"Gua?"

There's no consistency in her cries; the current Queen of the Filo Rials...

"Midori." (Naofumi)

Melty's eyes are sparkling as she celebrates her reunion. While that's happening, I call Midori to translate.

It appears that this bird really likes to talk.

But it's more of a pain to persuade her to start talking.

She's the same as a certain bird I know! But I can't really voice my complaints.

"Gua, gua." (Fitoria)

"Um, Fitoria-sama says-" (Midori)

"NUOOOOOOOH!"

"GUAAAAAAAAA!?"

"Firo!"

"Yeah!"

"Hau! I'm so happy to have received Firo-tan's kick!"

For the love of all things holy, this damn spear needs to get his shit together.

Having received the kick of the Hero of the Claw, Motoyasu squirms on the ground in ecstasy and agony, but let's get back on track.

"Continue." (Naofumi)

“Motoyasu-san... Um, if the amount of a certain type of item stored in your weapon crosses a certain point, you can get various status bonuses and abilities, she says.” (Midori) “Regardless of the weapon you have equipped, right?” (Naofumi) “Yes. It’s called Item Book, it seems.” (Midori)

Having heard the information, I confirm it on my weapon.

It definitely appeared.

I do make a habit of diligently putting materials in, so many entries in the encyclopedia-like window are filled in.

The bonuses are quite moderate, and there are some things like a % damage resistance against a specific monster, or like raising the effectiveness of healing magic. There are many abilities apart from status bonuses.

It even registers items obtained by dismantling larger items. How convenient.

The problem is that you can no longer sell monster items if you use it.

And it doesn’t look like you can freely choose the bonuses you get.

It’s really plain and simple.

But it can’t be underestimated, this system.

Portal Skill Scope Up, Monster Drop Chance Up, Money Acquired Up, there are many skill bonuses I’ve never seen before.

But I guess the Carriage’s power is... useful in itself?

Whenever Fitoria opens her carriage, it links to another location... it seems.

It’s like a magnified version of the portal. There doesn’t seem to be many restrictions, and she says she’s recorded the locations of multiple Dragon Hourglasses world-wide.

What’s more, inside the carriage, your Vitality, MP, SP, and Stamina recover faster. She says that even Healing Magic is more effective.

It's like the Tent from a game of the past.

Through Midori, she explained that inside, your body requires lower amounts of sleep. And let me say it.

What sort of Delivery Service is this!?

(TL: this seems to be a reference that I do not get.) Like that, the Vassal Enhancement Methods were spread.

The so-called Seven Star Weapon Enhancement Methods can be summed up as follows.

Axe: Body Modification

Hammer: Weapon Synthesis

Gauntlet: Skill Enhancement

Cane: Magic Enhancement

Claw: Magic and Skill Proficiency Level

Whip: Growth Elevation

Projectile: Strengthening by Money

Carriage: Item Encyclopedia Bonus

First is the Axe's Body Modification.

Using an energy stored up besides EXP, you can additional points to your Stats.

It's like doping. Like in some RPGs, how certain seeds and other items can permanently raise a stat.

It seems plain at first, but the amount of points you can distribute is high.

Its main advantage is that you can get an additional bonus on top of those for the weapon you have equipped.

Next is the Hammer. This one allows you to transfer special abilities from one weapon to another.

To put it simply, if Ren had a Sword that was highly effective against

Dragons, he could transfer that ability to one with higher stats.

Ren seems to have developed an interest in the system, and his curiosity has proven that new weapons can be unlocked using it as well.

Like, gathering all Dragon-Based skills on a single weapon will unlock something.

By the way, the amount of syntheses that can be performed depends on the weapon.

The Cane and Gauntlet need no further explanation.

You can distribute skill points onto Magic and Skills to increase their output.

The Claw is the growing form of that.

By using the same skill again and again, a point value separate from the Gauntlet's skill points are stored up, and the output and ease of use increases.

The one that's really easy to understand, but hard to use, is the Projectile. Strengthening by Money is, as it sounds, using money to break the limitations of the Enhancement Methods we already know, apparently.

If the item you're modifying is of low ability, the amount you need is low, but it costs a fortune to modify high level stuff. Before awakening an item, you can even pay to unlock their hidden abilities.

The Whip is troublesome in another way.

Increasing Growth Potential may seem convenient at first, but it's a little different.

While it may increase the innate amount of stats gained during a level without affecting weapons, it decreases the level of the person it's used on in proportion.

That person will have to level up all over again.

But by the time they've reached the same level, their stats will have

become much different than they were before.

The projectile's cost is too high.

By expending your wealth, you increase the bonuses brought by other weapons.

I've tried it on the Axe and Hammer, but based on the sum I spent, I can also increase the rate of proficiency gain for the Claw, and the amount of growth gain from the Whip.

Is the fact that it's practically useless if its user doesn't know the other strengthening methods based on the personality of the current user?

No, perhaps the fact that it cost money is based on the fact that projectiles were originally expendable items.

Whatever the case, now that I know all the strengthening methods, I can have grand expectations for the results.

Finally, the Carriage's Item Encyclopedia increases stats based on how much of a certain type of item has been placed into the weapon. It's quite a pain.

But as I've already put in quite a bit, I think I can expect something of it.

Putting together our conversations...

Just what sort of RPG is this?

Well, enhancement methods were just like that from the start.

"Mu... this is hard."

Firo is holding her head in her hands as she desperately tries to memorize the Enhancement Methods.

"Let's go over it again." (Raphtalia)

On the other side, Raphtalia was quick to pick it up.

Now that I think about it, Raphtalia's memory is quite something. It must be a sort of talent for her to have been able to recite Imya's whole name after hearing it once.

“Firo-san, as I was saying...” (Midori)

Even though he’s also a Filo Rial, Midori has the capacity to remember it.

For him to remain in Human form while swinging an axe around, Midori is a bit...

“Kue?”

Fitoria is... yeah. Is she smarter than Firo?

I’d like to believe that she’s at least trying out the Enhancement Methods.

“In the time we have until the wave, let’s raise our levels as high as possible. It’s important that we work to the best of our abilities.” (Itsuki)
“Yes, Itsuki-sama. And about that, where do you think would be a nice place to go to level?” (Rishia) “Let’s see. Ren-san, Motoyasu-san-” (Itsuki)

Rishia’s been quite quiet lately, but she happily discussed the new methods with Itsuki.

As one of the Four Heroes, I need to find out just how high I can raise my level in the few days left. I participate in the conversation of where to find easy-to-beat monsters.

We have Fitoria’s large-scale Portal Carriage, so we can go anywhere in the world to find easy prey. We need to concentrate on leveling.

Ah, right. From the forest Fitoria used as her base of operations, she brought back some armor made by a Hero of the past.

Well, as they’re quite old, I get the feeling that there are plenty of modern ones out there with better abilities.

Magic Armor is definitely useful, but it’s strange that there isn’t much of a difference between it and the armor made out of the Four Beasts’ materials.

I can’t offer enough thanks to the Old Man and Imya’s Uncle’s skill with metal.

I usually just copy whatever shield I come across and have everyone use whatever defensive gear they can find.

I'd like to have those two take our armors apart and modify them soon.

I'll have to give something to the more powerful ones of my village.

Trash, Fohl, and Taniko were listening to our conversations, and they manage to implement the methods successfully.

The problem is Trash, I guess.

It's not that he can't fight, but his long hiatus may have lowered his senses.

Another thing I was able to determine was that, while it's true that the Four Heroes repel one another, and they don't get EXP when fighting together, the same does not apply to vassals.

But if it's only Vassals alone, some problems may crop up.

It may have something to do with the system on which the weapons were made, but a party of a single Holy Hero and two vassals gains EXP as normal. The law works like that.

So we go and distribute the vassals among the Heroes.

I'm with Raphtalia and Firo.

This was already set in stone, or everyone just kinda went along with it. It's the same formation as always.

Raphtalia's gained a giant weapon in the form of the Hammer, so I'm a little worried, but she'll probably be fine. Occasionally, Raph-chan stands on top of the Hammer and makes various poses. I wonder why.

Next is Motoyasu. He's bringing along Midori and Trash.

He has a habit of charging the enemy. Midori is similar, so it's ideal if Trash were there to offer as much support magic as possible.

Next is Itsuki with Rishia and Fohl.

Both Itsuki and Rishia are long ranged, so I thought the close-ranged Fohl would be nice.

In truth, Trash seems to have an affinity with Fohl, so I thought about putting them in the same formation, but Fohl declined.

What's left is Ren with Taniko and... I guess he's in charge of Fitoria as well.

Well, this is just the initial result.

Since Gaelion comes as a set with Taniko, it looks like there'll be some infighting there.

Ren seems to pay special attention to Taniko.

I think he's still trying to take responsibility for his actions.

But Taniko herself has an extremely sullen expression on her face whenever he tries to do so.

There's no helping it now that she's become the Hero of the Whip.

The Whip's ability is to raise the ability of monsters, so having more monsters in the formation is beneficial.

Despite how he looks, the current Gaelion is a Dragon Emperor. In a different Time Period, he may have even been called a Demon Lord.

It's a formation incorporating the Sword, which carries the strongest image of a Hero, and a Dragon, who carries the strongest form of a Demon.

The bad part of this party is that they don't seem to get along too well.

True Gaelion seems to hate Ren, but child Gaelion doesn't seem to be affected by that.

"Well, I guess that just about does it. Everyone set out to maintain public order and raise your levels in order to defeat the wave." (Naofumi)

Chapter 342: Interworldly Exchange

“Now then, I’ve got things I have to do too.” (Naofumi)

We want to make the battles of the wave as short as we can.

Because of Tact, the time between Waves has decreased, and I don’t know how to reset it.

... No one knows just how many waves we’ll have to survive before an end is in sight.

For the next few days, we all put our best efforts towards raising our levels and preparing for the wave with our parties.

Because we are able to utilize all the enhancement methods, despite the fact that all the hunting grounds had a huge level spike, we reach a state where could manage somehow.

Well, the problem is... the civilians.

After exiting the castle, even the mob Balloons are over Level 40... My peddling has also become quite a trial.

Normal people won’t just get away with a few injuries. Even veteran adventurers are struggling.

Our saving grace is that the amount of EXP received upon their defeat is massive.

And so, a long line forms outside the Dragon Hourglass every day.

At night, I receive a report at the castle and find myself overcome with emotion.

“Balloons... how nostalgic.” (Naofumi)

“Iwatani-dono... I humbly apologize for my actions at that time.”
(Trash) “I have no intentions of forgiving you, but don’t mind it for now. So even the Balloons are Level 40... how troublesome. That place is swarming with Balloons.” (Naofumi) “What?” (Trash)

Trash tilts his head to one side.

What's with that? It's as if I said something strange.

I mean, aren't they plentiful around here?

I have a feeling it was quite a while ago, but I spent a whole two weeks out there.

There's no way I'm wrong.

"Even now, the Balloons that populate the Castle Town's Plains are reported to be quite low in numbers." (Trash) "What are you talking about? I set those plains as my base and camped out every night. Whenever I woke up in the morning, my entire body was covered with Balloons biting at me." (Naofumi) "That's strange..." (Trash)

Trash inclines his head once more.

Did I really say something that strange?

I thought their encounter rate would just be high around the starting town, but perhaps I was thinking of this as a Net Game.

"What's wrong~?" (Firo)

Firo barges into the conversation.

"No, well, I've just been told that the plains surrounding the city don't contain very many Balloons." (Naofumi) "Yeah, there aren't too many. So?" (Firo)

... Yes?

Even Firo concurs with Trash.

"Now that I think about it, whenever I'm with master, I see a lot more monsters." (Firo) "... Is that true?" (Naofumi)

I turn my eyes to Raphtalia.

I mean, she did spend a long time training in the mountains, so she should be knowledgeable about it.

"Yes. We encounter them quite frequently when we're around Naofumi-sama. Now that I think about it, it's actually quite rare to encounter that many monsters on the highways." (Raphtalia) (TL: And that's pretty

much the only place Naofumi trains)

What is this?

I have an exceedingly bad premonition.

“But didn’t Firo encounter loads of monsters when she went to level up the villagers?” (Naofumi) “Firo goes to places where a lot of them live. But, I think I would be able to find more if Master was there.” (Firo) Well, she does run through the mountains, and she does go through their natural habitats... Was encountering so many monsters while peddling due to my own bad luck?

No, my sales and threats turned out to be quite effective at that time.

“How about we go and test it out?” (Raphtalia)

“I don’t really want to...” (Naofumi)

Stuff like that should be fate and luck. It must be a coincidence.

Is what I keep telling myself.

If the entire world doesn’t begin raising its average level, even living will soon become difficult.

The reason monsters don’t appear on the highway is because Humans are just that troublesome of an existence to them.

But now, even those roads experience frequent attacks.

That’s the current state of affairs, apparently.

We suppressed Zeltburg’s wave, and overcame another one from yet another country.

By the way, we’ve been able to handle these waves without too much of a problem.

I was a tad bit disappointed.

It’s true that the monsters have become visibly stronger, but with all the Heroes working together, it was surprisingly easy to bring them to an end.

Nothing special to speak of... it was easier than the first wave we faced.
It's as if it's become just another job.

I was waiting for whoever was naming themselves as God to do some form of divine intervention, but nothing happened.

Glass went back to her side once and returned yesterday to give a report.

As the Heroes on that side cannot muster enough power to fight, their situation is taking a turn for the worst.

Because we're quickly dealing with it over here, the casualties from the wave are... well, they're few in number, but there's still a substantial amount of damage being caused.

Glass's world's vassals are being pressured into strenuous battles.

They were lamenting that it would all come to an end soon.

The fact that the war with Faubley was completely over and the fact that Faubley had declared its defeat are ringing around the world.

The end result is that Melromark became recognized as the world's greatest Superpower.

The true identity of the wave seems to have become known throughout our neighboring countries.

There was also an investigation conducted to see just how much assimilation had come about as a result of the wave worldwide.

Apparently, around half of Melromark's land had been assimilated.

The races of Glass's world seem to be... accepting the situation.

Because of the differences in language and writing, there's still some disorder, but as the Heroes are standing beside them, we're facilitating them in deepening their understanding with one another.

For that, today we ended up in a meeting with the representative of Glass's vanishing world.

"Hey, Glass." (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Glass)

“What sort of races does your world have?” (Naofumi)

“Meaning?” (Glass)

“Well... are there Humans like me, and is there anything different between them and the people of this world?” (Naofumi) Honestly, I’m thinking Glass is of a different race than the people of this world.

In truth, her body occasionally becomes somewhat transparent, so I don’t think she’s quite human.

If I were to give it a name, I guess it would be ‘half-spirit.’

There may be some ancient legend about a country where humans and ghosts lived alongside one another or something like that.

“Now that I think about it, I never spoke about it, did I? Yes. My world also contains Humans. And I am a Spirit... A race called the Soul People.” (Glass) (TL: Naofumi thinks about the Japanese word for Spirit(霊), while Glass says her race is Spirit with an English Pronunciation(スピリット). Her people are called (魂人) Soul People) “Spirit?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, unlike humans, we can get stronger through Status Magic.” (Glass) “I’ll ask for argument’s sake, but what do you mean?” (Naofumi) “First, to put it simply... the Vitality, Magic, and Spirit Power that exist in humans exist in us as one Stat. We also don’t have levels.” (Glass) Spirit Power?

I don’t really get it, but it may be a term for EP and SP.

“No Level? Then how do you get stronger?” (Naofumi)

“Soul People measure their strength in something called Energy. That constitutes our Vitality, Magic, Spirit, and Level.” (Glass) “... Then when you use magic, you use up just as much Stamina and Vitality as you do MP... You mean?” (Naofumi) “Something like that. It also influences our Attack and Defense. If there’s too little energy, we will get weaker.” (Glass) I see.

That’s why when we first fought her, we were able to defeat her after

she had dealt with the other Heroes.

Or else, there would be no way we would be able to beat the enemy who made a fool out of Ren.

“By defeating monsters, does something change?” (Naofumi)

“When we defeat monsters, the Energy of the Land stored inside them... in Human terms, I guess it would be EXP, is absorbed into us as Energy. Well, if we use too much, we can go into negative Energy point values.” (Glass) “That sounds like quite a troublesome race.” (Naofumi)

“It’s not too bad. It automatically recovers itself every minute, you know.” (Glass) “Then with time, does your ‘Level’ rise as well?” (Naofumi) “For that, I would have to increase the maximum capacity. The amount gained when defeating a monster is able to exceed the maximum capacity I can reach by automatic recovery.” (Glass) “Fumu, what happens if you use recovery magic?” (Naofumi)

If Energy is what’s being restored, then the Shield sounds useful for a race like that.

We could gather healers from around the globe and supercharge people of Glass’s race.

“Human Magic cannot heal us. Though, we can receive energy from others of our Clan.” (Glass) “I see... Then...” (Naofumi)

Well, it doesn’t look like it’ll work out that well.

I take out Spirit Water from the Shield and toss it at Glass.

“This water restores something called SP in this world. What happens when you drink it?” (Naofumi) “I wonder. Let’s test it.” (Glass)

Glass begins drinking down the liquid.

“... My energy increased by quite a high amount. This is quite a convenient drink.” (Glass) “I see.” (Naofumi)

Mass producing Spirit Water is difficult, but it seems that it can strengthen Glass.

I'll have all the Heroes start making some later.

"In exchange, this is a gem from my world. Please accept it." (Glass)
This time, Glass takes out a red crystal and hands it to me.

"What is this?" (Naofumi)

"It's called a Crystal of the Earth in my world. It's known to recover Magic. Try gripping it tightly." (Glass) As I was told, I squeeze the gem in my hand.

'You have accessed the Dragon Pulse! You have gained 3000 EXP!'

A window like the one that appears after defeating a monster floats before me.

3000... I guess it's not a number to be laughed at.

"I got a bit of EXP." (Naofumi)

"It seems that different tools have different purposes across worlds. To put it bluntly, that drink from before was truly splendid." (Glass) "If I can get EXP just by gripping a Gem, then I'm fine with trading." (Naofumi) ... It isn't foreign exchange, but through otherworldly exchange, we can get some items we both want. It may be necessary to overcome the wave.

In this world, it was a simple SP recovery item, but in Glass's World, it lets her acquire Energy.

In Glass's World, it was just a magic recovery item, but here, it can give you EXP.

I'll have to have the Old Man analyze it, but I feel that a wide range of possibilities sleep within these gems.

"Okay, I understand what Spirits are. Are Spirits and Humans all that inhabit your world?" (Naofumi) "No, there are also the People of Crystal, a race of people with gems at their cores called the Jewels." (Glass)

"What sort of race is that?" (Naofumi)

I've played some games with similar races in them.

They had a setting where they were targeted and hunted by people for

the rare gems that made them.

From what Glass's saying, they have equal citizenship, but I wonder.

"If I had to say... certain gems that collected power gained their own will and wished to be human. As they're a bit hard to label as Human, they received some discrimination in the past." (Glass) "Hmm... Spirits too?" (Naofumi)

"Yes... in the past, Humans labelled Spirits as Ghosts lingering in the world. There were times when people called to purge them." (Glass) "And you're not?" (Naofumi)

I feel that Spirits and Ghosts are quite the same.

Souls and Crystals, they have quite a spiritual feel surrounding them.

"Spirits are not left by Human souls. We may have similar natures, but we are fundamentally different." (Glass) "I see." (Naofumi)

"Returning to topic, Jewels eat gems, and based on the minerals they eat, they can change the abilities they possess. Their status magic is the same as Humans, though." (Glass) "I see... Hmm? How do they reproduce? I don't know their body structure, but..." (Naofumi) "They can spontaneously generate from nature, but they can propagate just like humans, you know?" (Glass) Stones multiply... I can't imagine that at all.

"There are some coming in the meeting, so confirm it for yourself." (Glass) "I got it. Spirits and Jewels." (Naofumi)

"Also, there's some of the race that also exist in this world, Demi-Humans, though they're quite scarce." (Glass) "Fumu." (Naofumi)

By the way, the Demi-Humans Glass was talking about were Elves and Dwarfs.

Since the ones I know of all have fluffy animal ears, it's rare to see a human subspecies.

Would the past me have been overly excited over this?

Chapter 343: Execution

Author Note: As noted in the tags, this chapter contains excessive and cruel depictions.

But I thought it necessary for the sake of the story.

(TL: You cannot see the tags here. So sorry)

*

After that, Glass spoke of a representative of several small countries in the peace talks to come.

The ones who were to become new residents of our world seemed a little bit lost, but having understood the situation, they had no choice but to accept it.

“Then to protect the world from the wave, let us take each other’s hands and proceed forward.” (Trash) Trash acts as our rep, as he shakes Glass’s hand. Negotiations ended without a hitch.

Well, due to differences in language, I don’t think we’ll be getting along too well, but that’s no different for us.

This and that happened, and we solved some peace-related problems.

Next is...

“S-STOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOP!”

The day after the peace talks, the one who declared the World his own property, the Fake Hero who plotted for World Domination, Tact, and his conspirators, were scheduled to have their public execution.

Due to the prestige of the Four Heroes, and the fact that we had all the vassals gathered to start with, it ended up that we were all forced to watch.

The Dark Guild of Zeltburg, which was experienced in putting on showy executions, offered to carry it out... but it ended up so that it was carried out by our allied nations.

The method itself was proposed by Zeltburg, and it received approval among the other country's leaders.

I flip through the document to see what sort of method it was as well.

Trash is... sporting a face that seems it will break out into tears in at any moment. Despite how rotten she is, he's still being forced to watch his own daughter's execution.

When I caution him, he loosens his clenched fist and sullenly nods.

"Iwatani-dono... you have no need for worry. I won't use my authority to halt the execution." (Trash) I find the sight of him silently consenting to his daughter's death with a pale face to be quite pitiful.

Now then, about the method...

After he was defeated by me, Tact had his level reset at the Hourglass before he could regain consciousness.

Of course, his harem included.

It seems that the young women fought in protest, but Ren, Sadina, and Firo were able to arrest them.

The result: the squad with the lowest at level 250 was brought down to a pitiful group of Level 1s. They can barely even move.

Well, there seems to have been a few militaristic-type women among them, so a few of them might be able to perform some action.

There's also... we also smoked out any women in Faubley who would rise up for Tact's sake.

Faubley has lost to Melromark!

Before we spread that information, we proclaimed Tact's victory and invited all of Tact's Harem to come to Melromark to celebrate. And they sure did gather.

It seems that we captured Rat's rival, the little girl in a lab coat, as well.

Just how many did we gather?

Just in case, I put Motoyasu in charge of apprehending them.

“There were so many pigs. How filthy.” (Motoyasu)

Is what he said.

It’s hard to imagine that there was a time when he would flirt with any woman he met.

And what sort of method did Zeltburg devise...

Tact’s head and arms have been locked in a strong board so can do nothing but walk, and in order to bind his movement, he has shackles carefully attached to his feet.

The only part of his body he can control is his eyes.

It may be a bit severe, but as long as we don’t know what strange powers he possesses, we have to be careful.

“KYAAAAAAAAAAAH-”

And in front of the immobile Tact, we display various executions one by one, starting with burning at the stake. Then water torture, hanging, guillotine, the Phalaris Bull, shooting brigade, drawn and quartered, being run over.

Death by various forms of Magic, administration of lethal poison, mauling by monsters, the scenery repeats over and over again, from dawn to dusk.

Sadina’s Lightning Magic was amazing.

She seemed proficient with it, and without killing them, she skillfully put her targets on the borderline between life and death.

From the beginning, the country carried out the will of the church. As Tact besmirched the name of all Heroes, his crimes were quite heavy.

And while all of that was happening, the citizens were lugging rocks at Tact’s static body.

The concept was to kill Tact after his heart had been completely broken.

And that’s what was happening.

Well, he did plot to overturn the world, and on top of killing Heroes, he proclaimed to have been the chosen one after parading around his stolen Holy Weapon, which was found out to be a fake.

In this world, where the Hero Faith runs so deep, he had become a target for a lot of pent up aggression.

And the one they believed in turned out to be a fake, so...

While remaining powerless, Tact desperately calls out to the women heading to the gallows. He calls their names one at a time.

From his neck, elbows, and ankles, blood flows from his attempts to break free.

“Gu-...u... please... stop! If you need to kill someone, then aren’t I enough!? Why must they be killed-” (Tact) Hahh... (TL: No, this is not a laugh)

I let out a sigh of depression. Again and again.

“How many times must I say it!? Your crimes aren’t so light that they can be made up for by killing someone like you!”

The Executor in front of Tact declares as such.

And he hits Tact’s face with his bludgeon before casting recovery magic on him.

Keeping him alive with healing magic as they torture him. It’s a method only possible in a parallel world.

Though I shouldn’t be saying anything, as I did it to the man as well.

“... It really isn’t something good for the eyes.”

As I was sitting in the chair specially made for me at the Execution Ground, Glass calls out to me.

I understand how she feels.

Even if he’s Atlas’s killer, having a stranger conduct such a cruel execution on him is... I guess when I’m the observer, it feels like this.

I thought this during the coup d’état performed by the Three Hero

Church as well.

I guess this just means I'm still a man of the modern era.

I can't look at execution scenes with pleasure. I must still be soft.

"That's right... but, the responsibility of making a toy out of the world is too much to push on him alone." (Naofumi) Tact's parents, starting with his mother, and all of his relatives were executed.

His father... did he not have one?

I don't really know, but it seems he's already dead.

The one who was just killed was his sister.

『Please save me, Onii-ch-』

It was impalement this time.

I didn't want to watch, and if I heard her death throes, it would merely give me nightmares.

I can't understand having this shown as entertainment, but my world apparently had a time where this was popular, so I can't really criticize.

More importantly, I have no obligation to save them.

"I do understand it in my head, but not my heart. In order to protect my own world, I have caused the collapse of others..." (Glass) "If you were able to look upon this scene as something natural, then you truly would be insane. I guess you're still normal. And if you think too hard about it, it will affect you in battles to come." (Naofumi) "... That is... true." (Glass)

By the way, Glass is also assisting in the executions.

What exactly she's assisting in will be made clear shortly.

Tact turned his eyes filled with hatred towards me countless times today.

I stand up and approach him.

"Were you under the belief that prisoners of war were to be handled with care?" (Naofumi) "Of course! There's no way a Hero would be able to

forgive something like this! You fake, who's stolen all my weapons!" (Tact) "I was wondering what you would say... don't you know? Of the people you've killed, the most distinguished one was the Queen of Melromark. That means Melromark's acting to restore their honor." (Naofumi) "What are you talking about?" (Tact)

Tact tilts his head, with an expression implying that he's being made fun of.

He better choose his words carefully...

Well, it's fine, is it not? Shall I teach this pitiful reincarnated?

"You and your followers are the detested enemy of this country, so is it not natural that they would want to execute you all? Being a Hero isn't relevant to any of it. Especially not to a prisoner of war." (Naofumi) To put it bluntly, this is an era where the representative of the losing party and his cabinet get killed.

Melromark ain't a republic. It's a monarchy.

It has a Pyramid-like organization of power.

And he killed the top.

It's easy to imagine what would happen if he lost a war against this country.

"Were you thinking the world was getting freed from oppression through your actions? For that selfish ideal, just how much blood did you get on your hands? As long as you were satisfied, you didn't care what it was you got your hands in. It's time for you to pay the bill. It's your punishment for readily calling the world yours for the taking." (Naofumi) "I'll kill you! Even if I'm reduced to nothing but my head! Even if all that remains is my soul, I'll kill you!" (Tact) "... Let me give you the words of a literary strategist from my world. 『Those who are allowed to shoot are only those with the resolve to get shot』. Just how many people died by your hand? Were killed by the firearms you built with your own hands? Is it possible that you don't have the resolve to take on the resentment of those that got involved in your schemes and died?" (Naofumi) (TL: This

line is given by Philip Marlowe, but the Japanese translation is used by Lelouch Vi Britannia in episode 1 (21:28) before he orders the troops to kill themselves. The original line is 'Take my tip-don't shoot [guns] at people, unless you get to be a better shot,' but the people who translated it gave it a different connotation. (Source: Moto-neta)) If I ever were to lose, then I'll lose everything, starting with Raphtalia.

Well, since this Fake Hero is the way he is, he'd probably spare any woman with a nice face... and brainwash them after violating them, but there definitely would have been a massacre like this from his side.

I understood that from the start, and I had the resolve to kill.

And, I swore it to Atlas... and to all the villagers who lost their lives.

I'd definitely take revenge.

I came here prepared to do anything, no matter how cowardly or vile it was.

I'm sure they never wished for such a thing, but still, I have no intention of stopping.

I may be extremely caught up in my own pride... but it's not like I'm standing here alone.

If this cruel execution is to be my crime, then I'll go to hell, or wherever, once it's over.

At the very least, I don't think I'm bound for heaven...

And wait, I need to go pick a fight with that bastard up there.

Heaven must be hell too.

"You're just facing the punishment for your selfish crimes. Accept it. If you win, you're the exalted new order. If you lose, you're the filthy rebel scum." (Naofumi) "DON'T SCREW WITH ME!" (Tact)

"Shut up!"

The executioner gags Tact with a rag.

Tact's eyes are losing their color. It looks like he's about to shed tears of

blood.

No, his tears are already stained with a hint of red. I think his tear glands are broken.

So humans can withstand this much without breaking.

These thoughts run through my mind.

Well, I'm also fed up with the piercing cries echoing behind me.

"A...ah..."

Oh? It's the lab coat little girl. Yep, she fits the description to the point.

I can only see her as a kid playing at being a doctor.

So they brought her along... but what's that? That culture tank beside her?

A stairway had been built, and she was forcefully herded to the top.

"S-sto-"

When she was pushed forward, the lab coat girl drops into the tank.

"Gaboboboboboooooboooho-"

A large amount of bubbles build up.

A sulfuric acid dive?

I step backwards.

The one proposing these seems to be Zeltburg, but... I don't really want to get involved with that country.

It's a shitty country that earns money by putting on these shows as entertainment.

"N_____!" (Tact)

Tact tries to call out.

Eventually...

Yeah, no. It's probably best not to talk about it.

If I had to say something, she got the magical creature bad end.

“Now then, the next event is...”

When I was sick of it all, a special program that caught my interest comes up.

What is it, you ask?

Witch, and a few women, enter the stage.

(TL: I dunno, I’m just a lowly translator you know.)

Chapter 344: Soul Eater

Witch and her women leisurely walk forward.

Ah, she's definitely under the impression that she won't be executed.

I mean, she's definitely looking towards me, trying to provoke me.

Should I kill her here and now?

Well, I know what's in the program, so I stay silent.

"Malty!" (Tact)

The gag on Tact's mouth is lifted.

"Oh, my. If it isn't the fake. 'Tis a pity your women were killed off."

(Witch) "M-Malty!?" (Tact)

"Don't call my name so easily!" (Witch)

Witch plants a kick in Tact's face.

"Fugu-W-what are you-" (Tact)

"Because you deceived me, just how much grief do you think I suffered!?" (Malty) The other woman follow suit, offering blows to his head, appendages, and nether regions while laughing.

It's truly the worst sight of all.

The one who thought of this one must be completely insane.

"I-I see! As long as you beat me up, then you guys will be..." (Tact) "I'm telling you to stay quiet, you foul man!" (Witch) Watching Witch kick him so seriously, even Tact can't seem to hide his doubt.

And Tact's doubt isn't wrong.

Maybe around half of it isn't.

"Ma... lty?" (Tact)

"And didn't I say it? Someone as low as you shouldn't be speaking to me. My papa is now the head of the world's strongest army, you know. And what about you, you fake? The leader of a ruined country. Do you get the

difference?" (Witch) "T-this can't be." (Tact)

Witch glances over at Trash and speaks.

"How dare you trick me." (Witch)

"When you're just a fake, you acted so high and mighty..." (Woman)

"Everyone died because they believed in you!" (Another Woman) "You pretended to care about the world, when you were only ever working for yourself! You heartless bastard!" (Woman) "Pervert! Fiend!" (Another)

"Because of you, how many people died?" (Witch) I don't want to hear that from you, Witch!

A sudden urge to shout out wells up within me.

The woman continue to throw abusive words at Tact.

Since I know what comes next, even I feel some discomfort.

"We were merely tricked by you. So... we hold no crimes on our heads. As evidence, here we are rebuking you." (Witch) Witch laughs to herself as she and several of Tact's other followers continue to torture him.

They order the executioner to break his fingers one by one and laugh like madmen.

You damn garbage.

"Gu... ii... you devil... when I... you..." (Tact)

Tact seems to understand Witch is coming at him for real. His eyes are dead in a different way than before.

"T-this must be..."

Ah... I think I know what he's trying to say.

This must be a dream. And he glares at me having gotten caught up in that possibility.

And he cries out.

"This wasn't how it was supposed to be! There's no way this could ever happen. It has to be a dream! If it isn't then... Oy! You're listening, right!?"

I demand a redo! I'll definitely be born anew and deliver revenge on these bastards!" (Tact) All the heroes look upon the execution grounds. As Trash, Glass, and I expected, Tact proclaims this loudly.

... It's about time.

"Unfortunately, even if you die, there will be nothing left for you."

Glass stands up and speaks.

"What?" (Tact)

"I haven't the slightest idea what sort of person your God is. But my side will be troubled if you and your companions were to be recycled by him."
(Glass) The way Glass speaks seems to change by the situation.

But that doesn't matter.

It's time.

I gave instructions to those below the platform.

Carrying the chain of a certain monster in hand, an executioner from Glass's world comes forth.

The monster's name was Soul Eater. (TL: If you remember, it's the second wave boss) Just as the name implies, it's a monster that feasts on souls.

In Glass's world, where the concept of the transmigration of souls is believed in, it is used to prevent the process. It's a vicious beast that eats souls, though this one has been domesticated.

If we fought it and lost, our souls would have been eaten.

That's a bit of a scary thought.

I never fought it directly, but according to Ren, its face was blue.

This seems to be a different species than the Soul Eater they fought in the Wave.

"GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!" (Soul Eater)

By the way, there are several Soul Eaters within this area.

And their orders are to eat the souls of anyone killed within the execution grounds.

“If you die and get your soul eaten by this monster... will you be able to reincarnate?” (Glass) Tact’s expression gets paler and paler.

I mean, it’s natural.

This must be a dream. If not, I can do it over again. Or perhaps I can meet God and get the power to deliver vengeance on those people. His thoughts were too naïve.

But what will happen if we use him as food for this monster that devours souls?

It destroys his hope that there’s a second chance.

“Now then.” (Glass)

“S-stop!” (Tact)

It’s finally Tact’s turn. For real this time.

U, what was it again? Sustain his life with healing magic, as he goes through the execution of all the women before him.

Just how much do these people want him to suffer?

But as I lynched him, I can’t really say anything.

It’s no longer my revenge alone.

There’s the Allied Army, who had its forces disappear against Houou without any reason.

There’s the Hero of Zeltburg and his honor that he killed.

There’s the many Heroes he killed, whose names I don’t even know, and the people who supported them. The countries he destroyed.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! UGUUUUUUUUUAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaa!”

And Tact’s execution begins.

After he had been beaten to a pitiful state, the Soul Eater closes in on him. Like a fish, it floats and circles the air above him.

“Good bye. I am but a little thankful for having met you, but you treated people as property, and you were much too condescending. Because you gave such a fate to the women around you, it was all wasted.” (Witch) For some reason, Witch is wrapping things up.

What a waste.

The little pity I had for him after seeing his end has all disappeared.

“Aaaaa...”

He can no longer form words, and his eyes are dilated. Finally, the priests of the Four Hero Church activate their ritual magic, and Tact departs from the world.

“Good Bye.”

It was the ritual magic 『Judgement』 and 『Baptism by Flames』. Tact disappears from the world without leaving a single trace behind.

“Now then, where is that Faker’s soul?” (Naofumi) If I equipped the Soul Eater Shield, I think I could see it, but I ask Glass anyways.

“Over there.” (Glass)

Where Glass points, the Soul Eaters converge. They seem to be greedily devouring something.

Hmm... so that’s where it is.

But even his soul became monster food. This world is scary.

“And now I assisted in dealing with that fake. Hurry and release me!”

As soon as that was over, Witch and her women cry out.

“Yeah, I guess you’re right. .. do it!” (Naofumi) As I call out, Witch is singled out from the women, and surrounded by a rain of magic arrows.

“KYAAAAAAAAAA!”

“Wha, what are you doing?” (Witch)

“Oy, Bitch... did you seriously believe your existence would be forgiven before my eyes?” (Naofumi) Right, as for why Witch betrayed Tact, we

have to go a bit back.

A few hours before the Execution, we gathered all of Tact's Harem in one place and asked: "Were all of you really in good relations with the Fake who called himself a Hero, Tact?"

All of his loyal women nodded at once. Others gave vague responses.

It's not like all of those beside Tact were blindly obedient to him.

"I wasn't!"

The first one to break her allegiance was the bitch called Witch.

"My mama was... killed by that fake. And my papa was the one who was able to destroy all of his new weapons, the great King of Wisdom!"

(Witch) "You traitor!" (Woman)

"Know you no shame!?" (Woman)

"You repay his good will with scorn!" (Woman)

Witch was alienated from the group.

Of course, I was shown this scene later.

Her way of living truly is the lowest, this Witch.

"Hmm... then, you merely have to declare that when your time for execution comes about. If you're not his comrade, then perhaps you'll live."

The executioner stated what was asked of him, word for word.

At first, the women spoke ill of Witch, but a few of them sided with her to protect themselves. They spoke ill of Tact to preserve their lives.

The ones who were executed before were the ones who never betrayed to the end.

"Papa! I'm not bad. I was merely being used! Just when I thought I had been freed from that accursed Pig King, that fiendish fake Hero apprehended me. That's all!" (Witch) Witch puts on an act and lets loose crocodile tears. She makes a play towards Trash.

Trash overlooks the scene with heartrending emotions. His hands begin to shake.

If we did something like sparing her here, nothing good will come of it.

None of those who have been involved with the battles surrounding her can forgive this wench.

And more importantly, I cannot forgive her.

This time, we won't let her escape.

Unlike with the Pig King, we won't be negligent.

In front of all of our eyes, we will promptly confirm Witch's demise.

He seems to have mustered up his resolve. He stands.

"Kill that shameless woman at once! That one speaks praise of our late beloved Queen, yet sides with the man who killed her! She is but a traitor we cannot forgive!" (Trash) Trash utters his last words of farewell.

Witch is held down by the executioners and is crucified on a large cross. Below her, a bonfire is built.

"No, it's hot. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Gradually, the fire grows larger, and Witch bears the brunt of its force. She cries out.

Fu... this was quite an unsettling event, but Witch's screams make me feel refreshed.

This must be the proof of my own madness.

Witch's body is burned away, and her soul is offered to the Soul Eaters.

And like that, before my very eyes, Witch utters her true final breath.

Chapter 345: Bitchology... I mean Remorse.

“... As I thought, I’m ‘Trash.’”

While watching the Witch burn, Trash murmurs under his breath.

I silently watch the scene beside him.

“My lack of control over my daughter’s actions, everything that has happened was brought about by my deeds.” (Trash) “That may be true. But you still have work you have to do.” (Naofumi) “I know.” (Trash)

His beloved daughter Witch used the world as her toy and put on a crude play up ‘til the very end.

Why can she use humans so well...

I do believe Trash to be a terrible person. But, there has to be another source.

I’ve begun to think of him differently than I think of Witch.

Trash’s life gave him ample reason to hate the Hero of the Shield.

The Hero was the bane of his very existence.

His parents and his beloved sister were taken by the men singing praise for their beloved Shield. By Silt Welt.

I’ve never had any direct relations with them, but it isn’t a story I can’t comprehend.

There are many a protagonist with backstories like that.

“My wife... tried to correct my daughter again and again... but I never thought too much of it at the time. And this is the result.” (Trash) “...”

It would be easy to affirm his statements.

But a large question hangs above my head.

It’s true that the daughter of Trash and the Queen, Witch, is an unredeemable devil of a woman.

The Queen lamented that Witch had inherited the worst traits from both of them, and she did much to try and correct her.

Even so, when looking at Trash and the Queen, I see too much of a disparity between them and that bitch.

The Queen was apparently skilled enough at negotiations that she was called the Vixen of Melromark.

But she acted for the country's sake by principle.

Even if she commits evil, she puts the country first, and she conducts them calmly while acknowledging the malice behind them.

Her evil deeds carry a greater goal.

For the Queen to do them knowingly suggests that she has a bit of a personality problem, but you can also say she cares for her people.

Next is Trash.

He's called the Great King of Wisdom, and there isn't a better man at scheming, it seems.

That may sound nice from afar, but when you're the target of his plans, it isn't something to laugh about.

But, you can say that that's standard practice in wars and conflicts, and if you don't plan, you can lose against enemies you could have easily defeated.

For the weaker side, it's natural for them to have to use scheming to take down the strong.

And here's the big question.

Trash... he does a good job of using his knowledge for those dear to him.

In the recent war, he did his best to fulfill his wife's will and protect the country.

But... what about Witch?

For what purpose did she find pleasure from getting people to fall for her traps?

I can only think she's acting for herself.

It's a bit rash to think the child of those two would only act for her own sake, is it not?

Am I thinking too much? Of course, Trash has gone senile after getting that child.

But looking at Melty makes me wonder.

Despite what she says, Melty treasures friendship.

When Firo was in trouble, she took the initiative, and she assists in the managing of my land.

Is it the influence of her growing environment... that's all I can think of.

But still, she was born to royalty.

And her birth mother, the Queen, spent her time trying to correct her.

For her to have turned out like that regardless of her environment, it must have something to do with her base personality.

Looking at the parent's personalities, I can see how someone like Melty could result.

Well, Witch's past isn't of any interest to me, and perhaps Trash merely pampered her too much.

I've thought about it a few times, but Witch truly seems cut off from the rest of that family.

If it was just the selfishness, I could point to Trash and nod, but she has no feelings for her family.

I'm not sure about the Queen, but I'm pretty sure she had as much familial affection as everyone else.

I mean, Trash's lineage is connected to Faubley, and with the blood of past heroes flowing in her, I guess it isn't unthinkable for her to end up on an evil path.

... Could it be that like Tact, there was a reincarnator among the Heroes of the past?

Or could it be that one of the ones summoned to this world had a twisted personality?

Honestly, I'm no saint.

The Spirit of the Shield called me the First Candidate, but I wonder how much of its words were true.

My thoughts are straying. Back to Witch's personality.

It's as if she existed merely to harm the world; merely to put the Heroes through pain.

I wonder whether she's a reincarnator herself, but judging from her actions, the possibility is slim.

But... it's scary that I can't deny it.

Could this be it...? The scary thing Glass said about reincarnators?

Including those at my place, I can't say there isn't a reincarnated individual among us.

Of course, I would know if they took flashy action like Tact.

But if someone was truly skilled at hiding it, then there would be no way for me to tell.

The people I trusted until now may betray me at the last minute. It's nothing to laugh at.

I can understand how Glass's world fell into the trap of suspicion.

Raphtalia was really a reincarnator, and in the last moments, she would attack me... If something like that happened, my heart would break.

But it's also hard to deny it. I pray that it isn't true, but I can't say it isn't with certainty.

From her statements and actions, there are too many things I have to analyze.

If I could read people's hearts, then all of this may be resolved, but that one calling himself god seems to be able to give some strange powers.

If I could, and they had the ability to block it, then I would be certain in my judgement, and that would be the end.

Well, it's more fun to try and find the reason that God didn't help out Tact.

To protect our sanity, we had all the Heroes assembled here just in case, but it was quite a letdown.

I got to see the execution, but... quite a few of us retired part-way through.

I mean, it wasn't a good sight.

At the very end, Trash, Glass, and I stayed as representatives.

"I'll accept any work... This is my crime." (Trash)

Having lost his wife and having the one who prompted it be his daughter. Having the one his daughter was with be the one who destroyed the memento left by his sister. If I were in his position, perhaps my heart would break.

The current Trash has admirable ability and decisiveness.

Honestly, I see why the Queen put her faith in this man.

His strength of heart... If it were me, I don't think I would be able to imitate him.

For the first time, I sympathized with Trash. For the first time, I thought that perhaps I should stop calling him Trash.

But, because the individual himself wishes to condemn himself, I must continue to refer to him as such.

"I thought that that child should live as freely as she could. She responded to my parental love, and I often was too soft on her. For it to reach a conclusion like this..." (Trash) "I'll bet it was the freedom. Where the hell did she learn to take pleasure from looking down on others?" (Naofumi) "I have no answer... even so, when that child proposed the idea of accepting the Three Hero Church and summoning the Four Heroes, I felt I had awoken to my mission." (Trash) "What?" (Naofumi)

Witch was the one who proposed the idea of summoning us?

Well, we aren't the only Heroes, and she already had the experience of looking down on everyone by a Hero's side.

But, I'm starting to understand Witch's motives less and less.

Was Trash's foolish state her doing as well?

She's good at getting others to pamper her, and looking at all the Heroes, me included, she's a master of having people fall into depravity.

Perhaps if Tact never associated with her, he would be a bit more decent of a Human Being.

The first time they came into contact was the Academy at Faubley.

This is just speculation, but Witch probably gave her first to him.

"You know how Witch studied abroad in Faubley, right?" (Naofumi)
"Yes, well, to some extent." (Trash)

"Then did you know Witch's first partner?" (Naofumi)

"No... but I learned it from my Wife's memos. It seems that child was trying to hide it." (Trash) "I see." (Naofumi)

The Queen did say quite a bit.

Like how Motoyasu was far from being her first.

She created friction among the Heroes and kicked them down to the ground whenever she wanted. Up to the Spirit Turtle Incident, the Queen looked over her actions out of benevolence.

But after that?

If she was too scared to do anything, all would be solved if she came before the Queen. But instead, she seduced Ren and placed false charges on Motoyasu. After stealing Ren's belongings, she ran. After that, she took the Three Hero Church Remnants, and Itsuki, and started her upheaval.

No matter how angry she thought the Queen would be at her deserting the battlefield, I don't think she would have been executed, or sent to the

Pig King at that point, at least.

When Motoyasu honestly admitted his fault, he only received minimal punishment.

Her mental state may have been affected by the bounty on her head, but though her status wouldn't have been what it was before, she would have been able to make up for it.

... Did she hate the rumors and hardships that much?

That was enough for a Coup d'état? She did proclaim she was the one worthy of being Queen.

Just how much was she acting for her own self-satisfaction?

Did Trash teach her to hate the Shield from a young age, and so she started emulating his worst parts?

"Did you ever teach her that the Hero of the Shield was the God of the Enemy and an existence to be hated?" (Naofumi) "I didn't. Though it was in the country's policy." (Trash)

Well, she did seem to participate in their religion, so would her being a devout follower of the Three Hero Church constitute a proper reason?

But... her moves are a bit erratic for her to be a believer.

She did take advantage of them, but I don't think she had any firm belief.

Honestly, it just doesn't fit her.

Religions like that seem to prohibit excess luxury in all worlds, so it doesn't fit the Witch's character.

It was quite obvious she was using them, and the Pope was enraged when he figured that out.

If she was a devout believer, she would have been accepted there.

Her objective is too unclear.

In the end, the fact that Witch was the one whose mischief dropped the world into chaos is undeniable.

Did she receive some interference or objective from the one naming themselves as God?

An answer probably won't come. Even if we tortured her, she would probably stay silent.

"It's all my fault." (Trash)

That day, Trash's back looked so narrow.

We were in a hate-hate relationship, but even scum like me feels like I should cheer him up a little.

Chapter 346: Breaking the Limit

“Now then, Gaelion. I’m leaving the limit breaking Class Up to you.”

“KYUA!”

Because Raphtalia and Firo were selected by the legendary vassals, it’s unnecessary for them. But those unchosen ones still need it.

We ended up getting permission to use the Dragon Hourglass at night.

Gaelion jumped on top of the Hourglass, and cried out.

By the way... it seems that a vassal or legendary weapon is required to break the limit.

『Let us start.』

After getting a large portion of the fragments, True Gaelion became able to use something like telepathy.

He still won’t use it on Ren, or Taniko, though. He refuses to interact with them.

“Then first is onee-san!”

Sadina skips forward as she announces her candidacy.

But it’s a valid choice.

She’s top class in the village, and her base abilities are high.

And she hasn’t even been taught Hengen Musou.

Recently, she’s been watching the Granny’s son, and her disciples training, and she’s picked a little up.

Just how high are her specs?

“Well, that’s about right. You’ve been helping out with quite a bit lately, and you are acting as a test subject here.” (Naofumi) “That’s right~ onee-san’s been dyed with Naofumi’s colors.” (Sadina) Sadina seems to be in high spirits as she uses both hands to cover her face in embarrassment.

By the way, there’s a reason why we didn’t perform the Class Up as

soon as Gaelion got hold of the Fragments.

It was because of the Growth Elevation from the Whip.

It was a useful enhancement that could be granted onto people other than the possessor of it.

It truly is the Whip... it may be a bit cruel to say, but it's perfect for Slaves and Animals... In this case, I guess it's the perfect method for one who raises monsters.

But there's a large flaw in this method.

For people who aren't Heroes, they can only level down within the scope of their Class Ups. In this case, it would be from 1-40, 40-100, or 100+.

Heroes have no concept of classing up.

So we can sacrifice our levels, and downgrade ourselves to level 1.

And proportional to our sacrifice, our growth will increase.

But if we fall too low, with the monsters around the world experiencing a spike in level, it's exceptionally dangerous and inefficient.

Apparently, Class Ups in themselves can be divided into those that magnify stats, and those that amplify certain possibilities.

The first one does something like doubling one's current stats, while the latter lets you add a percent modifier onto a certain stats.

In the former, it's the stats right after the class up that are important, while in the latter, it amplifies for times to come, so they balance out.

In order to figure this out, I have to do some experimentation.

The Class Up at 40 was the latter.

So I think it will turn out fine, but just in case...

The Level 100 Class Up being the former sounds likely.

If we mess up, it's not like we're going to do something complicated like starting over from level 1. We don't have too much time.

We have to quell the waves worldwide.

Though we're able to buy a bit of time with all the Legendary Weapons and vassals gathered.

The Test Subjects were to be Firo and Sadina.

These two were the ones in the village with the quickest level growth.

Of course, their battle abilities are also high.

But Firo became the Hero of the Claw, so Sadina became our main testee.

We do have the consent of the individual.

"Take responsibility~." (Sadina)

"Ah, yes, yes. When must I do that?" (Naofumi)

Refusing her has gotten to be a pain, so I just go with the flow of her conversation.

"Let's see~. Then tonight, won't you do something fun with me?"
(Sadina) I get the feeling that Raphtalia is looking upon the situation with envious eyes.

Perhaps Sadina realized this. She grabbed and wrapped herself around my arm.

She's definitely playing around here...

"Do you mean something 18+? Or do you mean drinking?" (Naofumi)
"Let's see... Which one would you prefer, Raphtalia-chan?" (Sadina) "Why are you asking me?" (Raphtalia)

"Because it's fun." (Sadina)

"I will get angry." (Raphtalia)

"Ahaha, it's a joke~." (Sadina)

She sure likes teasing the girl.

Though I do believe Raphtalia's good reactions are the cause of it all.

If I were asked if I were an appealing person, I would deny it.

But for Sadina, who treasures the village, she's thinking about the

future. Perhaps she's merely pretending to be smitten with me.

She is one of the people I have to answer eventually.

... I put my hand on Sadina's face.

"Ahn, Naofumi-chan. Save that for when we return to the village."

(Sadina) "Hah..." (Naofumi)

It's really hard to tell whether she's being serious or not.

Sadina closes in on my ear, and whispers.

"If you've cleared up your doubts, and you still seek me, I will be nothing but happy, you know. This isn't a lie, or a joke, or anything." (Sadina) This whale woman is...

Let's return to topic.

Recently, I've been going with her to raise my level in the sea.

Me, and the other Heroes are helping raise the villagers' levels. We're also patrolling, and visiting various places.

And I was left in charge of the coast. It's not like I was forced into the job, or anything.

It was quite an efficient place, and I was interested in Sadina's way of levelling. Under the pretense of patrolling we went to level grind.

The amount of aquatic Demi-Humans in my village isn't a small one.

There are ones like Dolphins and Octopii.

I'm had them level with Sadina, but according to them, Sadina was strong, so it was too easy... apparently.

If you ignored Hengen Musou, perhaps she's the strongest in the village.

Atlas couldn't see, but she could fight by sensing Chi.

And Hengen Musou is a style that trains people to sense things the same way. To hit pressure points where Chi is lax.

On the Contrary, like Firo, Sadina specializes in overpowering the enemy.

Well, Firo was able to do Hengen Musou's Mussou Kassei.

There seems to be a difference between being able to do is consciously or unconsciously... but Sadina can't grasp it at all.

In simple fighting power, in a battle without bluffs, she falls into Firo's category.

Probably, if Fohl wasn't recruited by that old woman, he would grow into a style like hers.

Another reason I'm leveling in the sea is because Fitoria notified us that there was a high chance the next wave would be happening over the ocean.

According to the convenient teleporter that is Fitoria's carriage, in an underwater temple, there's a single hourglass overgrown with moss.

Of course, its surroundings are underwater as well

We can probably combat it above water, but if the boss remained under, then we'd have to beat it to end the wave.

Now that I think about it... Ren's face was a bit pale, but could it be that he can't swim?

I'll have him spit it out later.

Fitoria prepared some underwater fighting equipment, and among them was a certain penguin suit.

What's more, its stats were higher than the one in my possession, and its color was different.

I really didn't want to, but when I trained underwater with Sadina, I was forced to wear it.

Yeah. It was a world of difference fighting with or without it.

But I'd really like to do something about its appearance.

And I'm digressing again.

In fights underwater, the physics were different, and I was pressed into a difficult stream of battles.

I mean, as if I were flying in the sky, I had to defend from attacks both above, and below.

And I had to go up for air at regular intervals.

Luckily, the special equipment let me breath in water to some extent, but it still requires regular resurfacing.

Additionally, water wraps around my body, making my body feel much heavier.

Many times, I could only stick to Sadina, and deploy something like Meteor Wall X.

I understand the importance of the Harpoon. I'll bet Motoyasu will be the most capable of the Four Heroes in this field.

Next would be Itsuki. He seems to have a special bow, and bow-gun.

"Sadina sure has grown."

When the wave caused the increase in monster levels worldwide, she went into the sea as a test run, and still easily came out victorious.

I think she fought... level 150 monsters. Monsters like that frequently appear about the coast.

Even if she had some support magic on her, I think she's way too strong.

"At that time, when you asked me to drop you to level 40, I thought you had a death wish." (Naofumi) "Ara~? You worried about this onee-san?" (Sadina)

"I shouldn't?" (Naofumi)

I'd like to teach her the concept of recklessness.

Heroes have their own forms of strengthening, so we can manage against Level Gaps to some extent. It's too much a responsibility for one who isn't a Hero like her.

I cautioned her time and time again, she would shout, 'It's alright~, follow me!' and I would reluctantly move forward.

When it got too hard, I planned to have us flee through the portal, and level aboveground.

But... Level 40 Sadina with support magic beat a level 150 monster.

The fight lasted around three minutes.

What the hell is with this?

“Oh my, I’m happy.” (Sadina)

She acts lax, but now that we’ve lost Atlas, the strongest slave in the village is definitely her.

After that fight, Sadina dragged me all over the ocean, and we encountered plenty of monsters.

I’ve heard that some aquatic mammals use sound waves to get a feel for their surroundings, but Sadina was able to sense the presense of monsters from a long ways away.

Well, it’s no different from Firo on Land.

And while she was only level 40, she was able to get up to 70 while fighting with me.

The next day, she reached 90, and had me give her Growth Increases again.

When we dived down real deep... the monsters were all 200.

But with support magic, they came down relatively easily, and our levels rose higher, and higher.

The ones with us were Raphtalia, and Firo. Also Raph-chan. It seems Raph-chan can swim. But if you think about it, he swam all the way from that island to the village.

Right now, I also dropped my levels to raise my abilities. I dropped to 80.

The increase from Growth Elevation... can’t be laughed at.

And the villagers also have my growth corrections, so their growth is even higher.

In general, Sadina's stats are... past what could be called human.

Even after rising that high, Sadina said, 'I still don't think I can beat that monster I encountered last I went salvaging~.' These waters sure are dangerous.

Just how high is this world's max level?

Are the monsters outside of Human reach entering levels humanity can never surpass?

Are Dragons okay?

I also have to raise Gaelion's level.

It would be humiliating if he got attacked by another Dragon, and died.

And after repeating Growth Elevation a few times, Sadina's Status became something amazing.

She was ready to break the level 100 limit.

"Then let's start~." (Sadina)

"KYUA!" (Gaelion)

Sadina touches the Dragon Hourglass, and Gaelion begins chanting magic.

『Here... to save this world alongside the legendary Heroes, let us awaken the warrior of this world to their duty. Oh, world, oh Dragon Pulse, oh manifested destiny. Release the power stored within him !』

Through Telepathy, only I heard the incantation.

In truth, he did nothing but call out GyauGyau over and over again.

When I thought the chant was over, the gems raining down inside the Dragon Hourglass let out a single beam of light that extends out to my Shield before glittering to show their confirmation.

And as always, the display asking which route to take appeared before me.

Are there no special Class magnifications here?

I think as I look through the options before me.

... Um, raise her abilities in Human form, or raise her abilities in Beast Form. These are quite restrictive.

There are also options to grant her special abilities.

It differs greatly from when the villagers chose not to use Gaelion or Firo on their first Class Up.

Those were small changes in status. Of course, special abilities were included.

But this time is different.

The scopes are much larger.

Shouldn't it be the other way around? Is what I think... but perhaps Gaelion's divine intervention is the cause of all this.

"I pass on the right to decide to Sadina.

"Ara~? I wonder what I should pick. Which one do you like, Naofumi-chan?" (Sadina) "It's your choice." (Naofumi)

"Hmph. Listen here, sometimes women like to have things picked out for them by the person they like." (Sadina) "Is that how it is?" (Naofumi)

I look towards Raphtalia.

"Hmm... yes." (Raphtalia)

"so it was true." (Naofumi)

Even so... can I really choose Sadina's future like this?

"Otherwise, I'll choose the option that produces plenty of children when I do something fun with Naofumi-chan." (Sadina) "For realz!?" (Naofumi)

This is bad. I don't want to to bear that much responsibility.

No, just how serious is she?

And wait, am I really doing it with her after this?

Honestly, I can't really imagine the two of us doing that sort of thing, you know...

“Sadina-onee-san? Please don’t trouble Naofumi-sama too much.”
(Raphtalia) “I know. I was just teasing him a little.” (Sadina)

She chuckles to herself.

Ah, for the love of all that is divine... please don’t play around with me.

“Hmph!” (Naofumi)

“I wanted Naofumi-chan to choose, but I guess there’s no helping it.”
(Sadina) Sadina picked her choice, and the hourglass began emitting light. The light slowly soaks into her.

Eventually, the radiance dies down to reveal Sadina smiling.

“Well, I guess that’s about it. Naofumi-chan, please confirm my status.”
(Sadina) “Sure.” (Naofumi)

I bring up her Status screen.

Uu... it’s elevated to an even higher level.

Her basic stats are many times greater than mine. Of course, I’ll bet there will be a bit of a gap between us when factoring in the power of the legendary weapon, but it’s the highest status I’ve ever seen.

It’s twice that of Firo’s when she grew with my growth corrections.

The stat amplification of the level 100 Class Up seems to be... percent based. I don’t really know what Sadina chose, but her evenly distributed stats are now all over the place.

Of course, it may just be brought about by the path she chose.

“What did you choose?” (Naofumi)

“Agility and Strength, also Magic.” (Sadina)

“I see.” (Naofumi)

If she mastered Hengen Musou like this, then she truly would have entered the realm of true monsters.

I learned later, but apparently above level 100, the Whip’s Elevation can sacrifice level for special abilities as well.

In Sadina's case, she had me grant Magic Enhancement, and Underwater Activity Time Up.

Transformation... are the modifications the strange me left behind still active?

That's how it went.

Honestly, we're becoming quite strong.

It seems I can count on our non-hero forces as well.

Chapter 347: Coronation

“Your majesty, Queen Melty!”

Having come out victorious against Faubley, Melromark essentially became the world’s strongest country.

Having built up a favorable relationship with the Hero of the Shield, their relationship with Silt Welt improved, and Silt Welt’s evaluation of the new Queen was quite high.

The two countries formed an alliance as if their long years spent lashing at one another had been but a dream.

However, neither side made any changes to their slave policies.

Under the pretense that things would change someday, the two were merely in a union to rid themselves of the wave.

Having gained Faubley’s land, it was unavoidable that things like this would happen to Melromark. It became an unbelievably large country by the standards of the time.

Because of Tact’s influence, the royals that defied him had already been sent to hang.

The remaining ones, who hung onto their lives by clinging to him, experienced a sharp drop in power.

The result was that Melromark was able to take control without much issue.

Well, in a world with deep-rooted belief in the Heroes, there’s no way anyone would wage a war with the country holding all of them.

Because of the wave strengthening monsters, everyone’s in a panic trying to maintain public order as it is.

Ah, right. It’s about Shield Freiden, but after they learned that Tact had experienced defeat, they had a sudden change of heart and a bit of a shuffling of leadership.

They placed all the blame for siding with Faubley on a representative.

It's an amazingly liberal country. When they feel the direction of the wind change, they take measures like this.

I guess all's well that ends well.

Normally, their actions would provoke further conflict, but Trash proclaimed that now wasn't the time for petty squabbles, and we hopped on his bandwagon.

Power is needed everywhere right now, it seems.

It's just that we shouldn't place too much confidence in them.

It's not hard to see the path Shield Freiden will tread down in the near future.

By the way, while the relations between Silt Welt and Melromark were being built, a lot of money was collected from all over the place in the name of world peace.

After peace is achieved, I can see quite a few places making excuses to reclaim it.

And like that, the various actions of various countries were shaken up by Melromark's victory.

For the general populace, it's just that the head has changed.

Even though he technically held the blood of Faublian Royalty, Trash immediately gave up his right to the throne upon attaining it.

He proclaimed that he would work to support the country as a Hero.

As a result, the one who bore the brunt of the responsibility was his daughter, the new Queen Melty.

"Long Live Queen Melty!"

The Grand coronation of the new Queen, that takes place in Melromark, involves not only those of the country, but all the allied forces as well.

The enemy of the country, Silt Welt's Genmu Gramps messenger claps his hands and congratulates her.

Perhaps the past Queen's wishes have been granted, but Melty herself

is...

The coronation takes place on the castle terrace that overlooks the city plaza.

As a Hero, I am also present.

Trash acts as a representative, and he stands next to the throne, crown in hand, waiting for Melty's arrival.

"From here, we will begin the coronation ceremony for Melromark's Queen."

Wearing an extravagant dress that seemed ridiculously hard to walk in, Melty promenades over to Trash.

She stands in front of the throne and lowers her head to Trash in front of her.

"Now then, Melty Melromark." (Trash)

"Yes." (Melty)

We have consulted the girl for argument's sake. She accepted the position.

She was raised as the future Queen to begin with, so she had no reason to refuse.

"Up until now, you have been working to maintain order in the land governed by the Hero of the Shield. Through your efforts, the land that had once been left to rot has become prosperous once more. It is not a simple feat. With momentum like that, I hope that you will govern our country of Melromark."

The crowd begins raising its voices.

"From this day forth, you will accept the Duties of Melromark's Queen and gain the title in its entirety. Henceforth, you will be known as Melty Q. Melromark."

"I accept it graciously." (Melty)

"Then please take the crown."

Trash balances the crown on Melty's head before taking a step back.

"I hereby recognize Melty Q. Melromark's rise to the throne."

There is a moment of applause.

That goes without saying, as it is the moment a new Queen was born in Melromark.

And Melty departs from the Terrace to the plaza in order to let the populace get a better look at her. She waves her hand the whole way through.

"Long Live New Queen Melty!"

"Long Live the Queen!"

"Everlasting Prosperity to Melromark!"

The people shout out their various wishes at her.

Though she's but a small girl, she smiles as she receives the hopes of the people all at once.

"Everyone! I am the one who has been crowned the New Queen of the country, Melty Q. Melromark. From here on, for the country and the world, let us fight together!" (Melty) "Yeah!"

"Currently, the world is forming itself into a single lump in order to combat the menace that is the wave. The previous Queen, my predecessor, wished for this, and I am also in agreement. I hereby declare that we will succeed her will!" (Melty) Deafening applause sounds out once more.

Well, that's how the coronation went. To put it bluntly, we were done showing the girl off to the people.

"Fuuu..."

In the throne room within the castle, Melty falls back into the throne. She seems exhausted.

The Heroes, the leaders of the country, and the representatives of the allied forces got together to congratulate her.

Her fatigue is understandable.

“Mel-chan is pretty~. Everyone was cheering for you.” (Firo)

Firo stands next to her, praising her.

In the honest way that a friend would.

“Thank you, Firo-chan.” (Melty)

“You’ve sure made your way up, Melty. For the princess of a small country to become the ruler of the world’s largest must be quite a promotion. You rose up quite a way.” (Naofumi) I offer some cynical words of praise to Melty.

“What’s with your attitude?” (Melty)

“Nothing really. I was just thinking of the sort of deeds Your Majesty, Queen Melty, would perform as the ruler of the world’s greatest power.” (Naofumi) “Good grief... why must I go through something like this...” (Melty) Melty unpleasantly grumbles to herself.

As always, her ambition is quite weak, even though her sister wanted so much power.

But, it’s not my problem.

“It’s going to get hectic from here on out. You’ll have to do quite a few pain-in-the-ass jobs for the people, the world... etc.” (Naofumi) “Isn’t that the same for you, Naofumi!” (Melty)

“My term’s ‘til the wave’s over, while you have a life sentence. What’s more, unlike me, who just has to do well in battle, you have to do the work behind the scenes. Man, Heroes sure have it easy.” (Naofumi) “Mu... I’ll have you eat those words. Just watch me!” (Melty)

With a stiff expression, Melty stands, raises both hands above her head, and declares.

“For his efforts in the previous war, I hereby grant the Hero of the Shield, Naofumi Iwatani, the title of Archduke!” (Melty) Wha-

“You bastard!” (Naofumi)

“Ahahahahaha! You won’t get away with trying to push all the troublesome stuff onto me!” (Melty) “I don’t want it even if it kills me! Hurry up and retract it!” (Naofumi) “As if I would! This is an imperial command! Oh, I’ll add on some more.” (Melty) Oh god!

The allied forces representatives begin clapping their hands.

Why is it? She’s acting so lax, and taking on a childish attitude, but no one tries to caution her!

“Then shall I award some of the Faublian Land we gained during this war to Iwatani-dono? Currently, with the monster problems, they’re facing a bit of trouble, but you should be able to levy a tax of some sort.” (Trash) From the Shadows, Trash appears with a map, and Melty fills in the areas to be given to me.

Status is status, but this is quite a bit of land.

If I did end up staying in this world, I think I would be able to play around for the next 100 years with this much.

“Don’t proceed the conversation without me!” (Naofumi)

“But Iwatani-dono, it is a fact that your efforts led us to victory in the war. If I do not award you with some form of reward, my country’s honor will be affected.” (Trash) “Trash! That goes for you as well!” (Naofumi)

In fact, the biggest contributor should be him.

Without holding any heroic title, he commanded the battlefield.

“I merely acted as a representative of this country. My role hasn’t changed before, or now.” (Trash) Trash’s standing is a fact, and he’s the next most important person next to the Queen... so I guess he’s something like a manager.

But I’m still not satisfied with this.

“There are plenty of things I have for you to do, Archduke Naofumi!” (Melty) “Shut up! Don’t push your troubles onto me! Screw being an Archduke!” (Naofumi) “It’s not like I want to be Queen either!” (Melty)

“Um... both of you don’t have to be that angry at getting promotions...”

(Raphtalia) Raphtalia is holding her hand out towards us with an apologetic expression.

No idea what she's talking about.

Originally, I only wanted land so that Raphtalia would have a place to spend her days in peace once I was gone.

So why is it that I have to deal with so many stacks of paper?

I guess it's the same for Melty.

She was already fighting with the dreadful stacks at my place, but now that she's Queen, the amount of work will increase without end. It's easy to imagine.

I truly wonder why Witch wanted the position so much.

Did she plan to push all the work onto her retainers and party?

That sounds likely.

But reality isn't so generous.

"How did the Pig King manage the country anyways?" (Naofumi)

Not much time has passed since Tact took office, so I can't really look to him.

I'll bet he entrusted it to the competent women of his harem.

"Besides crucial decisions, he left it to his subordinates." (Trash) Trash explains.

He did live in Faubley's Royal Palace before, so I guess he has some knowledge about it.

"But a capable king who truly cares about the country and its people should take the initiative in tackling the country's problems. Like my wife did..." (Trash) Trash stares out into the distance, and Melty goes quiet.

Well, I'll bet she spent a long time watching her mother.

"Is it hard, Mel-chan?" (Firo)

The future Queen of Filo Rials seems to be completely at ease...

“Yeah, a bit. Firo, you have to make sure to support Melty properly.”
(Naofumi) “Sure! Firo will cheer for her.” (Firo)

“Firo-chan, thank you...” (Melty)

For having lost her mother, and having her sister, the direct cause of her mother’s death, be executed, she’s behaving all prim and proper, but Melty’s gone through a lot.

Trash has become decent, and he’s supporting her, but I’ll bet she’ll feel a bit lighter with Firo by her side.

“However, for you to award Iwatani-dono with the title of Archduke... as expected of Melty. I’m proud of you.” (Trash) “Eh? Ah!” (Melty)

Melty’s making an ‘Oh Crap!’ face as she looks at me.

I believe that Archduke is the highest rank among nobles.

Well, I’m not too sure about its level within this world.

“I’m not sure if Iwatani-dono understands or not, so let me explain. In this country, an Archduke is the one whose importance is only second to the Queen. A rank denoting one’s position as the future king.” (Trash)
Um... but Melromark is Matriarchal, right?

Trash was a representative when he acted as King.

“Yes, in the past, I held the title of Archduke as I acted as representative ruler.” (Trash) “What?” (Naofumi)

“You still do not understand? To summarize, our majesty, Queen Melty has just acknowledged Iwatani-dono to be her fiancé.” (Trash) “Ge!”
(Naofumi)

Melty is covering her face and mumbling.

Her posture is screaming, ‘ah, right. I forgot.’

“Due to your position as the Hero of the Shield, we’ll need permission from Silt Welt now that we’ve formed an alliance, but... there shouldn’t be any problems, right?” (Trash) On Trash’s proposal, the Silt Welt representatives nod.

“There is no problem. As long as your side agrees to let a few of ours get married to him as well.”

Chance!

If I put Melromark at a disadvantageous situation politically, we can pretend this never happened.

“I refuse!” (Naofumi)

“Is what I thought he would say, so could you, by any chance, adopt the Demi-Humans from his village, or their children—when they come around—into your royal families? We’ll permit that.” (Trash) “I refuse!” (Naofumi)

“Let’s do that after we overcome the wave. I’ll leave it down to the Hero of the Shield’s generosity when the time comes.”

Uu... this is like when I was teasing Raphtalia with Sadina.

Thinking about the future, if I want to keep the village alive for as long as possible... something like that.

I have no plans of refusing at this point.

Thinking about what’s to come, the villagers, and my... when I think about it, my face turns red.

“This conversation is-” (Melty)

Just when Melty is about to bring an end to it...

“But there is an individual I would like to recommend if the marriage of Iwatani-dono and Queen Melty falls through.” (Trash) Trash starts staring at Fohl.

Why is it Fohl?

“Eh!?” (Fohl)

A chill runs down Fohl’s back, and he throws his head backwards.

So he doesn’t want to. Well, I guess that’s obvious.

Seeing the scene, the Genmu Gramps nodded.

“Yes, if it’s the Hakuko’s lost memento, the Hero of the Gauntlet, I’ll bet there will be a few takers, and it will help bridge the gap between our countries.” (Genmu) “Wait, wait, wait. Wasn’t it that the Hakuko had lost their power in your country?” (Naofumi) “Taking into account the Hero of the Gauntlet’s deeds, I don’t believe it to be a bad move. Even though he contains mixed blood, it’s not that his lineage is bad or anything... also, his position of following the Hero of the Shield no matter what will gain him some acceptance.” (Genmu) “Aniki!” (Fohl)

Fohl’s eyes are asking me for help.

Don’t look at me with those eyes. What sort of commercial is this?

(TL: I’m not sure of the reference, but I imagine a general humane society Ad here) Fohl is starting to look like a kitten on the verge of tears.

“Naofumi!” (Melty)

Eh... if I refuse the marriage, then it looks like those two will be forcefully paired together.

But Melty will probably just keep it up in image alone, and their relationship won’t be that good.

I’m not sure if Trash wants to treasure the keepsake of his little sister, but he seems to be going out of his way for Fohl.

“Then Fohl-dono, since you worked alongside Iwatani-dono, I’ll have to award you with a title as well. In the unlikely case that something happens to me, I have to give you a position high enough that you will be able to pull this country together-” (Trash) “Aniki! I’m seriously begging you! Please!” (Fohl)

“Naofumi!” (Melty)

Ah, I guess there’s no choice.

“I get it, so calm down, okay? There’s Queen Melty’s age to consider, and her body can’t deliver children yet, correct?” (Naofumi) “Wha-” (Melty)

Melty’s really glaring at me now.

There’s no helping it, right? If I don’t put it like this, they’re going to

find some excuse to get us hitched.

“Please do not worry about that. Melty has already developed a body capable of the feat.” (Trash) “Why would father know!?” (Melty)

“There was plenty written about Melty in my late wife’s memos...” (Trash) Oy, he’s trying to end this on a melancholic note.

And wait, that Queen knew about Witch’s virginity, and she knows about Melty as well?

Just how much surveillance does she have?

No, before that, why is she leaving things like that to future generations?

With one wrong step, she could embarrass them for ages to come.

“N-no, thinking about Melty’s body, I would like to put it off for a while. By my standards, she’s still too wet behind the ears. She’s just a child.” (Naofumi) I’ll leave it vague, and pretend it never happened after I return to my world.

“What did you say!? I’m already plenty an adult already!” (Melty) “Idiot! Be quiet!” (Naofumi)

It was then that I remembered the standards through which people were recognized as adults around here.

As long as the parents recognized them as such, they were treated as adults.

A smile full of good intention floats on Trash’s face.

“Then there are no problems. As she has expressed her opinion, it appears that we can treat Queen Melty as a bonafide adult. And so... Iwatani-dono, I leave Melty to you. I really want to see the face of my grandchildren soon.” (Trash) “Someone please save me!” (Melty)

When she’s the one who instigated it, why is she crying out for help?

“Mel-chan, do you want to run?” (Firo)

Melty’s scream reaches everyone but the oblivious bird beside her.

Chapter 348: Love Consultation

After Melty's coronation finished, we return to the village.

Stuff's been happening, and we've been busy lately.

It's the familiar village that puts my mind most at ease.

Hmm?

Ren's with Female Knight.

Come to mention it, he follows her around a lot.

As Melty's personal guard, it was decided that she would be promoted and stationed in the castle from here on out.

But to protect the country from the monsters that had been overly active due to the Wave, she went out with Ren to level.

"How are things going on your side?" (Naofumi)

"I guess it's going smoothly. It would be helpful if our levels rose faster, though." (Ren) "I see... what about you, Female Knight?" (Naofumi) "Iwatani-dono, can't you learn my name already!?" (Female Knight) "Um, was it éclair?" (Naofumi)

"Is she supposed to be some sort of dessert?" (Ren) Ren's retort was quite sharp.

Though I'm not sure if she knows about the dessert, Raphtalia often cautions me to call her Eclair-san.

(TL: Female Knight's name is エクレール(Ekure-ru) while the desert is エクレア(Ekurea)) I know. It was intentional.

"Even though you said you would pound a lot of training into Ren, it looks like you're the one being taught now. I thank you for the work you did up to your Class Up." (Naofumi) "Why are you acting so self-important, Iwatani-dono!?" (Female Knight) "Because I am. I don't really like getting status, but for some reason, I'm now an Archduke. I truly am important." (Naofumi) "You got promoted again? Despite that, you don't look too happy." (Ren) "Yeah, it was against my will. And thinking about

what happens after the world's at peace, it's best if you treat me befitting of my title." (Naofumi) "Mu... you're right." (Female Knight)

She's started to imitate me. She's really straying from her path, this one.

What was she doing before this?

I think... she was in Trash's encampment during the war, repelling Faublian invaders.

"And? Did you learn how to manage land yet?" (Naofumi) "Looking at Iwatani-dono and the Queen, as well as the King, I'm starting to see it." (Female Knight) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

In the end, Female Knight aims to be a lord of some sorts.

I guess you can call Melty and Trash her ideal.

"Eclair-san..." (Raphtalia)

"I'll bet that if we lost that battle, we all would have been labelled as Evil. Justice is... I must learn its true form." (Female Knight) "Isn't it Justice as long as you win?" (Naofumi) "You can say that. But is there justice in a land ruled by a strong lord? A country is made of its people. It is not based around its king... is what I want to believe." (Female Knight) "Eclair is always looking ahead. I'd like to learn to do that too." (Ren)
Ren looks to Female Knight in praise.

In the end, he does look up to her, and he tries to look after Taniko.

That hasn't changed.

Though Taniko really seems to hate it.

I signal Ren to come closer and whisper in his ear.

"Did you confess yet?" (Naofumi)

"Wha... it's not like that!" (Ren)

"Ah, so you prefer little girls?" (Naofumi)

"T-that is..." (Ren)

Ren seems to want to say something, but he holds it in.

Was he trying to say I'm the one into them? Unfortunately, he's wrong.
No, is he?

Just a little earlier, I got engaged to Melty, so if I play this poorly, I'll be labelled a Lolicon.

And the ones who surround me, despite having larger physiques, are mostly young in age.

Raphtalia, Atlas, Firo, Kiel, and the others.

Thinking about it like that makes me feel a bit conflicted...

"Right... Naofumi is... never mind." (Ren)

"You seem to want to say something. Spit it out." (Naofumi) "No... um..." (Ren)

Ren looks towards Fohl, who's lecturing the slaves training their skills.

Why is it Fohl again?

"What sort of misunderstanding are you getting?" (Naofumi) "Eh? I mean, don't you swing-" (Ren)

"I get it so just shut up!" (Naofumi)

What sort of misunderstanding is this?

While it's true that I sleep with Fohl on occasion, there are a few things wrong with his assumption.

Well, it's a bit rough, but the feel of Fohl's fur isn't bad.

"Love is free, right? Recently I learned that." (Naofumi) It isn't just about Atlas's will. So that I don't have any regrets, I decided it was necessary for me to learn to love.

To regret because I wasn't able to do anything is too much to bear.

"Ren." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Ren)

"After we restore peace to the world, what do you want to do?" (Naofumi) "... Let's see." (Ren)

Ren signals for me to infer his meaning as he shifts his gaze to the village.

The Holy Weapon will probably ask him whether he wants to return to his old world, or remain in this one.

I plan to return, but it's not a bad option if Ren and the others choose to stay.

"Will you remain here?" (Naofumi)

"I don't know. What do you think I should do, Eclair?" (Ren) "Me? I don't know why you're asking me, but you have a place you have to return to, right?" (Female Knight) "Yeah... I have my own world. Since this world was my ideal, I kinda forgot about it when I came here." (Ren) "What you do is your choice, so I can't say anything by principle. But if you have lingering feelings for that place, then it's better that you return. If you save the world, I won't be able to declare whether you've atoned for your sins or not, but working for others is-" (Female Knight) "Working for others is my path to atonement, right? I know." (Ren) They've been together for quite a bit, these two. Can they sense what the other is implying?

"Female Knight." (Naofumi)

"And remember my name already!" (Female Knight)

"What do you think of Ren? No, if I ask like this, I have the feeling you'll just say, 'A trusted comrade!' or something, so let me get to the point. What do you think about him as a member of the opposite sex?" (Naofumi) I ask her with the slight intention of teasing her.

"I told you before, did I not? As a member of the opposite sex, I can say that he is not my type. Ren also dislikes matters like that, correct?" (Female Knight) "... R-right..." (Ren)

Ah, a critical hit to Ren's heart.

I guess Ren has a long path ahead of him.

"Well, I'll say it once, Ren." (Naofumi)

“... What is it?” (Ren)

“Naofumi-sama, please restrain yourself.” (Raphtalia) I ignore Raphtalia’s warning and proceed.

“How about making do with Taniko?” (Naofumi)

“GYAU!?”

My words elicit quite a glare from Gaelion.

Ah, so he really does hate it.

As if I would hand my daughter over to you! Something like that.

“Wyndia is... just someone I’d like to take responsibility for...” (Ren) So their relationship hasn’t improved.

Looks like he has it rough.

“Naofumi-cha~n. I’ll be waiting for you in your room~.” (Sadina) From afar, I see Sadina waving her hand, inviting me.

Why the hell is that the first thing she says? Read the mood!

“So this is the gap between me and Naofumi...” (Ren) “Hey... it’s just that the people you’re with are no good. Don’t you have plenty of people close to you as well?” (Naofumi) Female Knight and Taniko... neither of them have any interest in love, so I don’t think Ren’s at fault.

“What are you doing, Niichan?” (Kiel)

A wild Kiel appears.

Through everything happening, she’s become quite strong.

But she has yet to pick up Hengen Musou. I think she’ll manage somehow as Kielberos, though.

She’s been placed in Itsuki’s group with Fohl.

“Kiel, what about you? How is your party faring?” (Naofumi) I was dragged along with Sadina to level, and Kiel was in a different group.

But she seems to like swimming, so she arbitrarily followed us anyways.

It seems her parents were fishermen, so did she pick it up at home?

“I’ve gotten strong! I want to go with Niichan, but I’m having fun here too!” (Kiel) Kielberos has a lot of weaknesses, but the form is strong.

Even so, for her to find battle fun, she’s becoming like Firo.

“So what were you talking about?” (Kiel)

It was about love, right?

No, about the people from the village close to Ren.

“It was about whether there were any people interested in Ren in the village.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, please don’t try to force the information out. I don’t think my heart can take it.” (Ren) It’s my duty to harass people!

Is what I want to do, but I think the current Ren will be fine.

“First there’s Imya’s Uncle, right? And there’s Wyndia and Eclair-san. Also...” (Kiel) Kiel fluidly starts listing the people in the village interested in Ren.

“So there are quite a lot. Did you think you were hated? I don’t think you have to worry about it.” (Naofumi) “T-thanks...” (Ren)

Well, Imya’s Uncle is teaching him smithing, and they often work together. Though, they’re of the same gender.

But Kiel... doesn’t seem to be in love with anyone. She’s fallen for the crepe tree.

And Ren’s affections lie with the people who defeated him: Female Knight and Taniko.

“Are you worried about people’s opinions of you?” (Kiel) “... It’s not like that. During battle, things like that may become important.” (Ren) “I see, the mental aspect of battle is also crucial. It’s when the people you want to protect are by your side, that you can manifest your true power. At least, that’s what I’ve heard.” (Female Knight) It seems Female Knight’s finally caught onto the topic of our discussion.

Is it my job to give them a push here?

“Female Knight, what would you do if someone were to tell you they loved you?” (Naofumi) “I think I would honestly be happy at their sentiments. But, unfortunately, I have no free time to indulge in love. I’ll have to politely decline them.” (Female Knight) “Even if it’s Ren?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Female Knight)

Ah... Ren seems really depressed.

He’s quietly admitting defeat even before the battle.

While he says quite a bit, in the end, I think he still likes her.

But I don’t think it’s over here.

It would be terrible if his broken heart affected his morale in battle.

“Ren.” (Naofumi)

“... What?” (Ren)

“People like her are probably just uninterested when it comes to love itself. When it actually comes down to it, her heart may waver. If you have luck on your side, then perhaps she’ll begin to develop an interest in the opposite sex when you confess, so it’s too early to give up.” (Naofumi) “U-understood.” (Ren)

“However, read the mood. If you confess now, I highly doubt she’ll accept. After you’ve grown stronger, and shown her your strength, I think the time will be right. Let’s see... Right after we save the world, it may be good to try making use of the feel of exhilaration.” (Naofumi) “Y... yeah!” (Ren)

On my words, Ren energetically nods. He’s surprisingly simple.

Well, I only have knowledge about this sort of thing from Galge, so my words may not be the best to follow.

This would normally be the time for Motoyasu to shine, but with him as he is right now...

By the way, I made sure to include ‘maybe’, and ‘I think’ so I have no

responsibility if he meets failure.

“Then I will go with Ren to take up my post at the Castle. Iwatani-dono, I’ll definitely repay you for all the things you’ve taught me. Now then.”
(Female Knight) And Female Knight uses Ren’s portal to teleport to the castle.

Chapter 349: The Graveyard of Life

(TL: I'm so sorry, Life. RIP in peace.)

“Kiel.” (Naofumi)

After I confirm Ren and Female Knight had left, I call out to Kiel.

“What is it, Niichan?” (Kiel)

“Do you have anyone you like?” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama, you plan on continuing that topic?” (Raphtalia) “Let's see. I guess I like Imya-chan.” (Kiel)

“Imya?” (Naofumi)

She's of the same gender. I guess it's hard for Imya as well. She'll have to go through the same troubles as Melty.

Kiel was there to witness our lecture to Firo, so she should know.

And wait, I think Kiel's 'like' is as a friend.

“Did you call for me?”

Imya, who was chatting with others in the dining hall, came at the sound of Kiel's voice.

... Should I ask?

If I don't confirm it here and now, there will be a bit of trouble in the future.

If I try to instigate them so to leave behind any regret, there's a risk that I'll damage their relationship.

Yes, I'll proceed with care.

“Naofumi-sama, you seem to be planning something again.” (Raphtalia) “Just think of it as me awakening to my responsibility as the Lord here.” (Naofumi) “Is it really that grand of a problem?” (Raphtalia)

No, I'm probably wrong.

But still, I won't stop.

I need to take responsibility for my villagers.

I have to think of what happens when I leave... and there's also the matter left hanging at the castle.

"Kiel likes Imya despite being of the same gender. Well, Kiel is aiming to be an honorable man of the sea, so perhaps she'll make for a good husband." (Naofumi) "Eh!?" (Imya)

"W-wrong! I didn't think you meant it that way when you asked, Niichan!" (Kiel) "What did you think I meant?" (Naofumi)

"Since it was you, I thought you were asking about who I got along best with in the village! By not regret, I thought you meant not to get into fights with them." (Kiel) Ah, as I thought.

But, she should learn to follow the flow of the conversation.

"Then among the boys, who do you like? No, who do you like based on whatever sexual preferences you have?" (Naofumi) Even now, subjects like these make me feel a little sick, but I have to consider the future.

Or else...

Ah, I am aware that I'm dragging out my own problems.

Even so, I don't plan on torturing myself by waiting until the end.

"W-what are you asking all of a sudden?" (Imya)

"Well, just in case. The world's on the brink of ruin, so I have to warn you all to live without regrets." (Naofumi) "Niichan's changed." (Kiel)

"Right..." (Naofumi)

I think so too.

I did ban love not too long ago, and I rejected Atlas's advances.

It's all Witch's fault. And mine.

"That's right... Niichan gets along well with Raphtalia..." (Kiel)
Raphtalia responds to Kiel's suspicious glance with a questionable expression.

“Well, I like Niichan most, but I guess next is Fohl-Niichan.” (Kiel)
“Fohl?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah! I mean Fohl-niichan is cool, right?” (Kiel)

Thinking back, Kiel did call Fohl’s beast form cool.

Fumu, perhaps Kiel’s energetic attitude can fill the gap left in Fohl’s heart after losing Atlas.

“Naofumi-sama, isn’t it time to bring an end to this topic? I have a bit of a bad feeling about where this is headed.” (Raphtalia) “Okay Kiel! I’ll permit it. Go sleep together with Fohl! He’s a lonely man. Go heal his loneliness!” (Naofumi) “Understood, Niichan!” (Kiel)

Kiel runs up to Fohl in dog form.

Her innocence is really something. She has a charm similar to Firo’s.

“Ah... it seems we’ve made yet another needless misunderstanding.” (Raphtalia) “I’d like Fohl to regain his spirit.” (Naofumi)

That’s my wish.

As I couldn’t protect Atlas, at the very least, I have a duty to make Fohl happy.

He’s made protecting the village his mission, but he’s focusing too much on it and forgetting his own happiness in the process. I’m not sure if he’d be able to face Atlas like this.

He doesn’t seem worried about his possible engagement, but as it’s with Melty, I guess there’s no helping it.

“Regardless of what comes of this, I won’t hold any responsibility.” (Raphtalia) “I’ll be the one taking responsibility.” (Naofumi)

I’d like for Fohl to find a special someone in this village he wants to protect, like he did with Atlas.

“Next is Imya.” (Naofumi)

I’ll have to confirm it with all the villagers anyways.

She’s not like Sadina, but eventually... she’ll like someone, right?

“W-what is it?” (Imya)

“Do you have anyone you like, Imya?” (Naofumi)

“Um... that is...” (Imya)

Her face is dyed red as she holds both arms together, and looks at the ground.

Eh? Could it possibly be me?

She arrived in the village in the same manner as Raphtalia, so perhaps it isn't too strange.

What's more, we do sleep in the same bed in regular intervals.

Like with Firo, I kept her around because she was fluffy, but she seemed strangely conscious of it.

“Well... that is... um...” (Imya)

“Hero of the Shield-sama, what seems to be the problem?”

It seems people are coming up to me one after the other today.

When I look up, I see Imya's Uncle.

“Well, I asked Imya if she liked anyone, and Imya, by your reaction, am I supposed to take that as affirmation? It seems that I cannot give myself to a single person, and in the end I plan on returning to my world, but even so, does your answer remain the same?” (Naofumi) “Um... yes.” (Imya)

Even with her face colored a deep shade of red, Imya nods.

And having sensed the situation, Imya's Uncle claps his hands in good humor.

“I see, I see! You've become a fine woman, Imya. I'm proud of you.” (Imya's Uncle) “By the way, you're quite popular in the village. Do you have any intentions of marriage?” (Naofumi) On my question, Imya's Uncle's expression stiffens. He slowly turns his head to look at me.

His eyes are screaming, ‘What the hell are you talking about?’

“What? I’m just asking about your future plans.” (Naofumi) I know. I had hid and learned the village’s popularity ranking. Imya’s Uncle was within the higher part of the list. (TL: This was right before the Hououin Kyoufumi Arc) “I have absolutely no idea what you’re talking about, and I don’t know why you’re bringing marriage up!” (Imya’s Uncle) “Even so, you apparently have high popularity, man. It seems some people have become smitten by watching your smithing.” (Naofumi) “Eh!?” (Imya’s Uncle)

“Is that true?” (Imya)

Imya puts her hands together and asks.

“I’ll have to give out a few rewards to you all as well. If you ask for freedom, I’ll happily grant it to you.” (Naofumi) He’s done enough work deserving of such a thing.

Be it weapons or armor or anything else, this guy’s the one who makes most of the things in the village.

“If you have a missing wife somewhere in the world, I could search for her.” (Naofumi) “Uncle, I don’t remember you having someone like that, right? Even though your looks are good.” (Imya) “I-I live for my work and a-as long as everyone’s happy with that-” (Imya’s Uncle) So he isn’t aware of it? Perhaps he’s actually relatively dense.

Is he the type of person that spends so much time helping others that he passes his prime alone?

It’s that. People’s impression of him don’t go further than, ‘He’s a good person.’

“Imya, do you know anyone for him?” (Naofumi)

“No...” (Imya)

Why is it that this mole is so popular?

It’s probably for the same reason as me.

I make the food... and he makes the weapons.

The reason I wasn’t on the popularity poll was probably because

cooking is more of a domestic chore.

Does it have to do with his appearance? By Imya and the other Demi-Human's standards, it seems his face is on the nicer side.

Among the villagers, he's quite old.

Just like Sadina, it's like he's looked up to as a reliable adult.

And wait, just how old is he?

It seems he learned smithery with the Old Man.

By the looks of it, the Weapon Shop Old Man's in the latter half of his thirties, I guess.

This guy should be around the same, so he has a few years under his belt.

"Well, this is only a concern after the wave, so don't get too conscious of it... I guess. But still, I'm slackening the regulations on love in the village. Please pass on the message." (Naofumi) "... Understood."

Imya's Uncle nods.

"Or is it that you're... gay?" (Naofumi)

"N-no, I'm not!" (Imya's Uncle)

Is he going to say Blacksmithery is the world of men?

When he was in a village of his own race, it seems he ran a metal goods shop... and it's true that he's good at making saucepans.

I believe I've heard him say raising kids was dreadful, or something.

He must have been part of a large family. That's why, instead of his own love, he tends to focus on the needs of others, I guess.

Through slave hunting, his clan was dispersed, and he made his way to my village, which is like a large family in itself. I guess he didn't have much free time.

"Anyways, just take it easy." (Naofumi)

"It seems that any and everything is meddled with by the Hero of the

Shield.” (Imya’s Uncle) “Don’t mind it. From now on, the amount of things I’ll ask from you will only increase. Ah, after this, it doesn’t matter who, but go tag along with a Hero to level. If you level, won’t your work become easier?” (Naofumi) We’ve been able to make new equipment from the materials of the new, higher-level monsters.

As I thought, the higher the level, the better quality of the drops gained. And we have to do a complete reformation of the villager’s equipment.

Right now, Imya’s Uncle’s level is at 40. He kept saying any more wasn’t necessary and refused to level, but in the grand scheme of things, his level’s in the danger zone.

What’s more, his job requires power. I’ll bet a higher level will be beneficial. I wonder why he put it off.

“I’ll be counting on you. Keep working hard.” (Naofumi) “Y-yes! For the Hero of the Shield-sama, I will do my best.” (Imya’s Uncle) “M-me too!” (Imya)

It helps that the Lemo Race is one of stubborn hard workers.

Recently, Imya’s started making armor that doesn’t lose to those from the Old Man’s creations.

Is it partly because I taught her how to make and enchant accessories?

Right now, we have to prepare for war to the best of our ability.

“Now then.”

The amount of times I’ve stopped by the Old Man’s shop has decreased, and he’s been earning mostly from local orders. He also has requests from the country, so I sometimes meet him in the castle as well.

But his good nature hasn’t changed from the start.

Right now, he’s working to use the Spirit Turtle and Houou’s materials to make weapons for the Heroes.

There’s now 12 of us, so he’s been busy.

I’ll bet Kirin’s materials will reach him soon, so it’ll only get harder and

harder.

Sometime soon, I'll have to stop by to come to an agreement on the costs.

Ah, right. Through the carriage's enhancement method, I fed monster drops into the Shield to unlock temporary money acquisition raises, but I barely managed to get the value of what I put into it.

I didn't gain as much money as expected, and I barely broke even.

I also tried to cheat by placing a freshly minted silver coin into the Shield, but it only got registered as the material Silver.

It seems that money has to have been put into market circulation before it can be used in enhancements.

How troublesome.

"Aniki-!"

While I was lost in thought, Fohl burst into my house with Kiel under his arm.

"W-what happened?" (Naofumi)

"I heard it. You told her that I was lonely, so she had to sleep with me!" (Fohl) "Pretty much." (Naofumi)

"Niichan, Fohl-niichan's gotten a lot more energetic!" (Kiel) How's that for ya?

And wait, why is Kiel being carried like that?

It's quite an interesting scene.

"Ah, as I thought, it ended up like this." (Raphtalia) "Rafu?" (Raph-chan)

Firo's supporting Melty at the castle, so she isn't in the village.

I'll have to build a room for Raph-chan soon too.

"Fohl-niichan really is cool. Please transform again!" (Kiel) "Perhaps another time." (Fohl)

“Eh? Even when it’s so cool?” (Kiel)

“Please just be quiet for a second!” (Fohl)

Kiel sure is hyper... Seeing her obliviously tease Fohl out of good will makes for a foolish back and forth.

Could it be that these two are surprisingly fitting for one another?

“Fohl.” (Naofumi)

“What!?” (Fohl)

“You have the right to be happy. It’s because Trash thought that as well that he proposed a marriage with Melty. You just have to show him there’s someone you like to be with.” (Naofumi) I’m stooping to fooling the man.

“Show him?” (Fohl)

“Otherwise, he’ll meddle with your life a bit. It’s probably for that reason that he’s going out of his way for both of us...” (Naofumi) Fohl’s face goes pale.

Is he no good at dealing with Trash?

Yeah, well they’re likeminded people, so they repel one another. Or perhaps when someone approaches him so affectionately, he finds it scary.

It’s like your aunt bringing a photo of a girl she wants to introduce to you. That sort of fear.

And wait, it may be my fault, but the male slaves in my village seem to be under the impression that marriage is the graveyard of life.

... Ah, maybe it’s because I spoke of my experience with Witch with much zeal.

Be careful of women. You can’t put confidence in those close to you, lest the life you know comes to an end.

Even if they’re nobles, if they marry, they become slaves to their wives... I taught them quite a bit.

Since this is another world, I guessed that it was centered on men.

Is what I thought, but Melromark is matriarchal.

But I do feel that there are a lot more males among the nobles. In my village, we rarely come across those of such high status.

I think the most exposure we've had was some idle banter with them while peddling... but I made sure to teach them that other people are existences to make use of.

... Isn't this kinda bad?

Yeah. I'll need to provide some re-education.

Well, I'll just leave it to Kiel, Raphtalia, and Sadina.

"What's wrong, my good Niichans?" (Kiel)

"Wah!" (Fohl)

Fohl accidentally drops the dog he was carrying.

He doesn't have to be that scared.

"A-Atlas isn't like that. She can't be like this! She wasn't like this! The Atlas I knew used whatever she could and never wasted anything!" (Fohl)

"... No, she kinda did." (Naofumi)

Onii-sama, please don't get so close to me, she would often say.

Even though we both bought her medicine, she fawned over me so much, while she gave Fohl harsh treatment.

Ah, did he subconsciously look over that side of her and develop a fear of women as a result?

"Fohl." (Naofumi)

"What!?" (Fohl)

"I pray that you'll start a happy family." (Naofumi) "Naofumi-sama, please decide whether you're supporting him or striking fear into his heart." (Raphtalia) And like always, Raphtalia offers a retort.

Chapter 350: Idealism

It made me slightly relieved that Fohl was acting so energetic.

So I left Raphtalia in the house and decided to take a quick night walk around the village. I step outside.

And there, I find Itsuki sitting in front of the Bioplant House looking up at the night sky.

“What are you doing, so late at night?” (Naofumi)

I ask the lone man.

Is Rishia asleep?

She should be the one looking over him... but from his actions up until now, I guess we can trust Itsuki just a little bit more.

“Ah, is that you, Naofumi-san?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki shifts his gaze from the stars to me as he answers.

He’s a bit... well, the recent Itsuki’s been so quiet it seems a bit eerie.

It may sound nice if you call him obedient, but I can’t tell what he’s thinking behind that façade.

“I just thought the moon was pretty, so I wanted to watch it.” (Itsuki) “I see.” (Naofumi)

Even in another world, there’s a moon.

Well, this is a world with werewolves, and with Fohl and Kiel, there are Demi-Humans that can transform as well.

... Why only the wolf race is translated as ‘Werewolves’ by the Shield is a mystery to me.

(TL: Werewolf/ wolf man is written in Kanji, while the rest are katakana [Blank] Race) When I was shown one by the slave dealer, at least, that’s how its name showed up.

Is it that once it’s heard like that, the Shield will always translate it as such?

Thinking back to the status displayed back then, I'll bet it was my fault.

It's probable that when the Slave Dealer introduced me, he used a tool to display information in a way that could be read by anyone. It used my understanding from my own world.

But it only used it for a certain set of words

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Silence surrounds me and Itsuki.

Should I leave?

When I think that, Itsuki breaks the silence of his own accord. He begins speaking.

“Naofumi-san, you know about it, right?” (Itsuki)

“About what?” (Naofumi)

“My... curse has mostly been lifted already.” (Itsuki)

“... Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I'm no fool.

There's no way I wouldn't suspect Itsuki, who continued to stand beside Rishia without asserting his presence.

“So you knew...” (Itsuki)

“Of course.” (Naofumi)

What's more, he's even stopped being a Yes Man as of late.

Though I don't think that's so bad in itself.

Even so, for him to answer my questions honestly despite that, I wonder what sort of change has happened within him.

“A little while ago, when you were talking about the wave, and the reincarnated, do you remember?” (Itsuki) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“I... couldn't think of an answer. And what I did remember was an NPC

from a game who said similar things..." (Itsuki) Come to think about it, Itsuki said something like that.

I think it's a cheat system the developer intentionally put into the game, or something like that.

"If you ask why I remain here even though my curse has been broken..." (Itsuki) He suddenly changes the topic.

I don't think he's fully recovered yet.

"... I was wrong. Naofumi-san was right... it's just that I never had the courage to say it, is what I thought." (Itsuki) "And now you think differently?" (Naofumi)

I did consider that possibility.

Itsuki's party instigated a rebellion against the state, and they were all executed.

They even conspired with Witch. He should have heard from Rishia about how he used an ability to brainwash others.

Because of his curse, he was forced to listen to and accept what others told him.

"Right now, because I'm like this... I can... muster my courage." (Itsuki) "Ah, I see." (Naofumi)

"But, please... you definitely cannot trust me." (Itsuki)

"I never trusted you from the start. That's why you're under Rishia's protection." (Naofumi) And there's also that promise with Rishia.

"Then you don't have to believe it, but please listen to what I have to say." (Itsuki) "Got it. And? What is it you want to talk about?" (Naofumi)

"First... about the progression of my curse." (Itsuki)

"It isn't cured?" (Naofumi)

"I cannot say. While I think it has been lifted, I can find plenty of places where it's still in effect." (Itsuki) Well, his curse is something like the loss of individuality.

If something's off, those surrounding him can't tell, but I guess the individual himself can notice.

"My judgement and my will, I've lost various things to this curse. But... it seems that my memory was included as well." (Itsuki) "What?" (Naofumi)

"I still... cannot remember the faces of my family in the other world, and there are parts of the game, and novels I've read online, that I cannot recall at all." (Itsuki) "You never said anything about that." (Naofumi)

"It's not like I didn't want to... I didn't notice. I was able to recall a brief outline of things when I didn't have my sense of judgement, though." (Itsuki) "..."

"When Naofumi-san spoke of the novels of your world, I merely thought, 'so there are stories like that too,' but when I used Cal Mira's Onsen today... I remembered my world had them too." (Itsuki) "I... see." (Naofumi)

He has partial amnesia, and he lacks the ability to feel anything was off?

"But why?" (Naofumi)

It's strange for him not to have noticed until now.

"Isn't forgetting your parents something serious?" (Naofumi)

"It's not that I can't remember. I can look back and see what sort of people they were, and what sort of things they did, but it's like I have slight lapses in memory in some places. I just can't remember them no matter what." (Itsuki) "But isn't that just natural? What's the problem?" (Naofumi)

"It appears in my gaming knowledge as well. I talked about the game Dimension Wave from my world, correct?" (Itsuki) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Isn't it strange? If there was a sequel or continuation on the market, then shouldn't I have at least researched the information on it or something?" (Itsuki) Well... he's right.

No matter how hooked he was on it, if he knew there was a sequel to his favorite game, he would at least look up an overview of the story.

But Itsuki didn't do any searching. He didn't read anything.

No, he didn't speak about anything?

"Of course, the information about what the wave was... probably wasn't in the game. But, what sort of waves there were, or what sort of new battle systems were in place would definitely be out there." (Itsuki) "T-that's right." (Naofumi)

"Well, I remember visiting the country that Silt Welt currently occupies and the areas I didn't get to visit. But that isn't all." (Itsuki) "What?" (Naofumi)

He's going around the main topic. I don't get what he's trying to accomplish.

It's just that I understand this will transition into something important.

"The Sequel's wave... After defeating Ouryuu, Dimension Wave had the expansion... Let's Go to the New World linked by the Wave! A system like that. I remember... I was waiting for it to come." (Itsuki) "That means..." (Naofumi)

"Yes... it was already too late to save that world." (Itsuki)

Every wave, Glass slowly leads her people here.

So what happens to the people here?

I'll have to ask later.

"No matter how you look at it, that's way too late." (Naofumi) "... I know. But... as if intentionally, the information about the wave was... deleted. Is this also the enemy's meddling?" (Itsuki) "No clue." (Naofumi)

The Cursed Weapon Itsuki got his hands on was one a Hero of the Past took in hand to try to conquer the world, it seems.

If that hero got the weapon from whatever god's up there, and Itsuki received its influence, then there's a possibility that whoever's running

this took away any memories that would prove disadvantageous.

“And so, I am... perhaps I’m being used by the enemy. I can’t even tell whether or not the curse has been completely lifted or not.” (Itsuki) Ah... so he was always thinking about something like that.

“So if I ever do something that would hurt you and the others... please strike me down without hesitation.” (Itsuki) “I can’t do it, so can I leave that to others?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I know this is something I should be confiding with Rishia-san... but I don’t think that girl will be able to do something so heartless.” (Itsuki) “Understood. I’ll make a promise with you.” (Naofumi)

With Ren and Itsuki, if this was a story, then they’d be raising so many death flags right now.

While I was thinking that, Itsuki turns back to the village.

“This is a good village. It’s a place I envy, a place Naofumi-san built from scratch.” (Itsuki) “Well, it isn’t a bad place to live.” (Naofumi)

It’s next to the sea, and Bioplant fruits are plentiful. You won’t have problems with food supply.

The Crepe Tree is... questionable, but it’s a nice place to live.

“I can understand now. Naofumi-san isn’t evil... if you just arbitrarily gather the worst information, even the greatest of saints can become but another villain.” (Itsuki) “No, I am a villain.” (Naofumi)

... I look towards the village to condemn myself

It’s a place I built. A place the villagers will happily lay down their lives for. A place where I trained everyone to happily march off to war.

I learned that in business, you can make the most profit when you make the other side happy to buy your merchandise.

But I can’t think the one who made a place where people happily sacrifice themselves to war can be a good person.

“I never taught the people here the futility and tragedy brought by

battle.” (Naofumi) “But... you’re always protecting them so they don’t have to experience it.” (Itsuki) “... I couldn’t protect them.” (Naofumi)

I couldn’t protect my own villagers.

Starting with Atlas, we had plenty of victims in the Houou battle.

In the war with Faubley, the amount of casualties on our side was unbelievably low, but that doesn’t mean there were none.

“The past me would have chastised you for your lack of responsibility... but now, I can understand. Rather than a village without the means to fight, one that exists only to be protected by the Hero of the Shield, one filled with people who want to fight together with Naofumi-san and lend their power to him, shines much brighter.” (Itsuki) “That’s just lip service.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, it sure is. That’s why Rishia-san, and Ren-san, and Naofumi-san are working so desperately. That’s what I understand.” (Itsuki) “So I can continue working the villagers like slaves!?” (Naofumi) I keep saying I’m not working hard, but two people have given me this speech already.

Now and then, I’ve never felt this conflicted before in my life.

“Us Heroes are... we can’t just work for our own self-satisfaction. Because Naofumi-san had many things we were lacking in, he was able to solve the problems we caused. In truth... like Naofumi-san, we wanted to make the people truly happy, without leaving them to rot.” (Itsuki) “Rot?” (Naofumi)

“Let’s liken this to a person who knows danger is approaching. If they are merely protected, they will eventually think it natural to get protected, and eventually, they’ll even... forget their thanks.” (Itsuki) ... It’s not something I don’t understand.

That’s what the world of normality lives on.

It’s only when the unsung heroes disappear that we notice.

In this case, it’s again, much too late.

“That’s why, even if Naofumi-san returns to his own world, the village

he made will definitely live on. He was just making a place like that.”
(Itsuki) “It was just my way of thanking a slave, Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)
“Even so. Everyone is being protected, but by protecting them, you show them the difficulty of protecting, and the meaning of strength. And that’s exactly why this village is a good place.” (Itsuki) “... Power’s all about how you use it.” (Naofumi)

Even if I make them strong, there’s no meaning if they use it for robbery or revenge.

This village can’t be devoid of people with feelings like that.

Grief is followed by Hatred, and Hatred is followed by Strife... and what if someone gained strength to fulfill these means?

The answer is simple.

They become like me.

This might be plain self-satisfaction, but that’s a fate I’ll never wish upon those guys.

“That is... looking at Ren-san and Wyndia-san, everyone’s learning how to deal with it as well.” (Itsuki) Ren and Taniko?

I think all the villagers know about it.

About how she gets along with the one who killed her father.

And it seems Taniko’s resolved herself not to act in revenge.

“Also... everyone’s learned that the world isn’t filled with bad people. Peddling was your way of getting them to deepen their understanding of people, right?” (Itsuki) No, I just wanted money.

Is what I think, but I see.

The people grew to understand Demi-Humans, despite being hated by the country, through their peddling under the popular Hero of the Shield’s banner.

For the villagers who had their parents killed by humans, and who were oppressed as slaves, they were able to learn, through peddling, that the

human race had good people as well.

But, I don't get what's to celebrate.

Misunderstanding paving the way to war is a common story.

Well, Demi-human countries often go to war, so they should have some oppressed slaves themselves.

I guess it's a good thing for that system to gradually become obsolete.

Right now, Melromark and Silt Welt have an alliance.

Looking at the wars they waged in the past, I guess it's a wondrous outcome.

"If it were me... I'd definitely label the ones who mistreated Demi-humans to be an evil to defeat. I even delivered punishment onto humans back then." (Itsuki) "There are true villains out there too. Don't look to me as an ironclad law." (Naofumi) "Things can't be decided by the ideals of a single person... I knew. Perhaps I would have turned out like that reincarnator. I think I need to talk more with those I see as evil. Or else history will merely repeat itself." (Itsuki) "Then... what would you do if the one calling himself god has his own reasons?" (Naofumi) "... If he has something grand enough to require the deaths of so many people, then I'd definitely like to hear it. In order to read it out at his funeral." (Itsuki) The reason for destroying the world...

I don't think it can be anything good.

"You mean of how, to save the world from the wave, we have to sacrifice two thirds of the population? For him, there may be a certain reason he has to do such a thing." (Naofumi) "Each and every world has its limit, and worlds that are no longer necessary must be destroyed. If it was something like that I could understand, but I do not think it offers any respite to those that died as a result. I want him to find a better way, no, it's his duty to find one. Or else we will go against him." (Itsuki) Fumu... it's idealism, but it doesn't sound bad.

Of course, in the end, we may have to bring about some victims ourselves.

And it's us who have to make that choice.

But in the very end, we're going to oppose him.

"Rishia-san said it. It takes a good amount of courage to say someone else is wrong, but pushing justice onto another is something else entirely. Probably." (Itsuki) "Sure sounds like her." (Naofumi)

For Rishia to be able to say such things to Itsuki makes it sound like her pitiful start was but a lie.

The "probably" at the end really fits, though.

But, I can't think of her as the one who screamed "FUEEEEE" whilst trying to drown herself.

Hmm? Did she shout something like that when she jumped? I can't remember.

But even now, Rishia continues to "FUEEEEEEEE" loudly as her ideals develop further.

"In order to fulfill one's own desire, to take from people you hate is evil. But how about taking from those you hate to protect the weak? If not to satisfy his own lust, but to save someone, a man took the wealth a nobleman had earned himself, would that be right?" (Itsuki) "It's a hard problem." (Naofumi)

What sort of person is the noble he loathes? Why must he steal in order to gain the ability to protect the weak?

Additional factors pop up.

In the end, it's best to uphold the established rules.

But rules themselves are created by humans, and they need to adapt to the times.

"And so, I am... without going forward on a single ideal, I think I need to talk with the person I am to oppose and come to a conclusion afterwards. Up until now, I was merely ignoring them while they shouted at me. It was merely because they were of lower standing that I believed the weak to be the ones I had to protect." (Itsuki) "Itsuki, I don't think you'll reach

an answer like that.” (Naofumi) The person will definitely hide any inconvenient information.

And there are plenty of cases where conversations don’t lead anywhere.

Or perhaps... there are cases where both sides are rotten beyond repair.

“... I’ll bet. But if I were to go back to the start of it all, then I’d like to hear what both you and Witch-san had to say. I’d like to confirm the truth. Gender doesn’t matter. Why did that happen, and if Witch-san was the one to fool Naofumi-san, then why did she do such a thing? I want to think carefully after asking all of that.” (Itsuki) “I see. If someone like that had been there at the time, then perhaps things would have gone in a slightly better direction.” (Naofumi) But it’s already passed.

Noticing he was wrong, it seems Itsuki’s trying to say he wants to save the me of the past.

I guess I’ll just take those feelings.

Well... if it’s just words, he could just be bullshitting the hell out of me, but is it my bad for thinking it?

“In truth, justice was... something as difficult as this. But I got drunk off the feeling of convicting others...” (Itsuki) “Then what do you plan on doing once the wave is over?” (Naofumi) “I think I want to stay in this world, and go on a journey.” (Itsuki) “A journey... where do you plan on going? And wait, what do you plan on doing?” (Naofumi) “I want to lend my power to those in need of help.” (Itsuki)

“Using your arrogant justice again?” (Naofumi)

“Perhaps... but this time, I want to try hard so that I’m not the only one satisfied by the conclusion. A path where I won’t have any more lingering regrets. And if in the end of all of it, I have rocks thrown at me once more, I won’t offer any excuses.” (Itsuki) This is an illness. It’s the return of the Justice Virus.

But, I feel he’ll offer a bit less self-justification than the Itsuki of the past.

I'd like to hope that he's made some progress.

With Itsuki's actions, there were definitely a lot of problems, but I guess there were people who were saved as a result as well.

Rishia's a representative case. Though his aftercare of her was the worst.

"I haven't told her yet, but when the time comes, if I make a mistake once more, please tell Rishia to stop me again." (Itsuki) "Dude... that's quite a Death Flag, isn't it?" (Naofumi)

"Death Flag, is it? Now that you mention it, you're right." (Itsuki) "Well, I'd like to believe such things hold no meaning in reality. Even so, it's ominous, so watch the way you phrase things. Ren even said something along the lines of, 'once this battle's over...' though I have the feeling I instigated that one." (Naofumi) "Then I'll go tell Ren to avoid his imminent demise." (Itsuki) "No, can you intentionally avoid Death Flags...?" (Naofumi)

Just as before, Itsuki is still a bit strange.

But either way, he has changed.

Eventually, he'll wander into a battle where there's no right answer, but he's resolved himself to search for one.

Will he find happiness on the end of his path? I can only pray.

Chapter 351: The Holy Land of Filo Rials

A few days passed.

About the wave in the ocean... well, I'll just report that it ended smoothly.

Ren turned out to be like a hammer in water and humiliated himself greatly, and against the large whale-shaped wave boss, Sadina performed magnificently.

I learned once more the Hero of the Cane's, Trash's, strength.

Using the cane's power, he can use most all forms of magic.

While he can only use up to Dreifach, even Aura and Down are fair game to him. I wonder if there's anything he can't cast.

I'm in the middle of teaching him how to cast Revelation.

"However..." (Naofumi)

"Gua?"

"Don't you guys have any concept of cleanliness!?" (Naofumi) Right now, we were in Fitoria's carriage, headed to a temple that was supposed to be the Holy Land of the Filo Rials.

Fitoria brought us various items used by Heroes of the past, but among them were items that seemed to be no different from garbage.

So all the Heroes decided it was necessary to go to the Filo Rial Holy Land itself and sort through her equipment.

Trash is absent on this voyage. It seems that he's busy with supporting Melty.

Gaelion and Taniko also refused to come.

And... we arrived at some ancient ruins...?

We were surrounded by a forest, and there were the remains of what seemed to a village. Nearby was a slight open area with a temple-like building in the center.

I think Melty said something about it.

Within the Filo Rial legends, there appeared a Forest of Illusions in which people would find themselves lost if they were to wander in.

This is probably the center of it.

“FUOOOOOH! Let’s make this holy land our paradise!” (Motoyasu)
“GUAAAAAAH!”

Motoyasu was sent flying by Fitoria’s kick.

“Fubu! This isn’t enough to stop-!” (Motoyasu)

But, he didn’t take any significant damage and immediately stood up once more. He begins a one sided game of tag with Fitoria.

Again and again. Just how many times does he plan on repeating this scene?

Ignoring Motoyasu, we begin examining the inside of the ruins.

And the reason I voiced my opinion on sanitation was because the narrow passages of the abandoned temple were littered with trash-like items.

Is the abundance of shiny items among them because these guys are birds?

I remember the pile of goods Firo collected in the past and labeled as her treasure.

“Wa~ It’s sparkl~y” (Firo)

Yep, this place has gone to the birds. It’s pretty much the same.

This appears to be Fitoria’s nest.

The miscellaneous shiny items range from rare gems to cheap crystals.

“Anyways, we’ll be organizing this.” (Naofumi)

But... just how much junk is collected here?

This ruin is supposed to be a temple, but... I’m not sure if I should be saying this, but it lacks taste.

I was imagining something like finding treasure in a dungeon, but it is completely different.

Like trash, precious artifacts are casually tossed aside.

What's more, bird feathers are peppered everywhere. It's filthy.

"In this case, should we just burn away the feathers?" (Naofumi) "But what if something important here is flammable?" (Raphtalia) Raphtalia's warning is on the mark.

So that idea is rejected.

Anyways, from Fitoria's many years of inhabiting this nest, it's become a castle of trash.

It's sad to imagine the rare items sleeping here.

If we find anything nice, we'll have to recover it and analyze it, so we have to go about organizing this place.

"Then, let's split up and start cleaning!"

I really should have taken the villagers with me.

Well, we started cleaning Fitoria's nest, and this and that happens.

"This is~? It's shiny, and pretty, you know. Was it called a crystal?" (Firo) "It's trash! What's more, it's already been used up." (Naofumi) "Um, was this a rare gem? Naofumi, what should I do with it?" (Ren) "Keep it. We'll sort through them later." (Naofumi) "Why are there swords just lying around!? Ren-san, what should we do with this?" (Rishia) "Hmm? Wait... this is a sword I've never seen. Um... Ascalon? What's this? It's extremely effective against dragons." (Ren) I get the feeling I just heard the name of a familiar powerful sword, but we'll continue working.

(TL: Ascalon is the name given to the lance Saint George used to slay a dragon. It has become a sword in popular culture.) And wait, it's good that Gaelion didn't tag along.

"There's a spear wrapped in cloth and hung high up. Motoyasu-san, please go get it. You can leave feather collecting and sniffing for later."

(Itsuki) “Understood sir! Funu! I can’t get it down.” (Motoyasu) “Then how about you try copying it?” (Itsuki)

“That’s right! Cursed Beast Spear? Oh, this one can move by itself, how convenient.” (Motoyasu) I feel that we’re finding some dangerous artifacts here. But I’ll leave it be.

And like that, we arrange the various rare items and trash.

The shed feathers... yep, they’re the same as my bird’s back home.

I’ll have the bird deal with them herself.

“There were also dragon bones lying around... for now, let’s just collect them.” (Naofumi) There are even weathered bones... just how much history has been discarded here?

What’s more, it would be nice if they were intact, but due to the lack of protection from wind and storm, they’re all in terrible shape.

“This...”

In a ruined room lies the weapon the pope used against us.

This... is a replica, right?

Why is even something like this here?

I thought about reusing it... but that would probably be difficult.

It needs a large input of magic. I guess I’ll take it to the castle and have the old man analyze it.

By the way, I tried to copy it, but an unrelated shield popped out.

Something called Ancient Shield.

Its abilities... aren’t particularly high.

It only really increases magical defense.

Ren and the others also unlocked the Ancient Series from it.

Apparently, theirs were able to inflict a status ailment called Magic Jamming.

If you call it convenient, I guess it is, but it only works against

individuals.

“Good grief... there’s way too much garbage. How does it look deeper in?”

We continue to proceed towards the heart of the temple.

Eventually, we reached an area that seemed to be an altar.

Garbage hasn’t been spread this far in.

On the ground, a stone-made clock-like gear system was installed.

“It seems gloomy here.” (Itsuki)

“That’s right.” (Ren)

“Goodness gracious, there are so many wonders in Filo Rial-sama’s house.” (Motoyasu) “Motoyasu, don’t go wandering forward without us.” (Naofumi) Motoyasu walks to the center of the clock and sticks his spear into the ground.

And something clicks into place.

...

An ominous rumbling starts to come from below us...

“Motoyasu!” (Naofumi)

“W-what could be happening?” (Motoyasu)

“How should I know! 「Meteor Wall」!” (Naofumi)

Just in case, I cast Meteor Wall and deploy a barrier to protect everyone but Motoyasu and his following Filo Rials.

“Fitoria, do you know anything about this?” (Naofumi) “Gua?” (Fitoria)

Don’t tilt your head like that.

She really is unreliable!

“Oh? Oh? Oooooo...” (Motoyasu)

Light starts pouring out of the hole Motoyasu had stuck his spear into.

And... while leaving a faint afterglow behind, the light is sucked into the

shaft.

...

“F-fuee... w-what just happened?” (Rishia)

“No idea.” (Naofumi)

It doesn't look like anything else is happening.

“Motoyasu, did anything change?” (Naofumi)

“Let's see... a spear called the Dragon Era Minute Hand was unlocked.”
(Motoyasu) Motoyasu changes the shape of his spear.

It's quite slender.

It looks like quite a simple design.... Like the weapon name indicated, it looks like the hand of an old clock.

“Then if we stick our weapon into that hole, we can fulfill the conditions to unlock a weapon?” (Naofumi) As a test, I searched for the hole Motoyasu thrust his spear into and tried inserting my Shield.

But there was no signs of anything happening.

“Could it be that it's limited to one person?” (Ren) Ren asks as he tries as well.

“Motoyasu!” (Naofumi)

“I-I don't know anything about it!” (Motoyasi)

Well, sticking his weapon into strange places... we would have never figured out it would unlock anything unless he tried it in the first place...

“Hah... it doesn't matter anymore. For now, let's proceed forward.”
(Naofumi) There doesn't seem to be any monsters.

And wait, this is the Filo Rials' turf, and since the leader, Fitoria, is here, I don't think we run the risk of encountering any.

Though, there are a few traps.

Like the old classic rolling rocks... and needles raining down from the ceiling. Most of it could just be dealt with with Meteor Wall, so it seems

traps are powerless before a Hero.

Once a giant rolling rock came into contact with the Meteor Wall and just stopped. I almost burst into laughter.

Well, it would be useless against things like puzzle solving, but it doesn't seem they installed anything like that.

At the end of the ruins was... a stone room suspended in the air by magic.

A floating stone... is it made out of Graweik Ore?

I climb the floating staircase and take note of the inside of the room.

... What is this? The atmosphere feels very heavy in here. It's somewhat oppressing.

I also feel a large quantity of magic hanging in the air.

"And? There has to be something special in an ominous place like this."
(Naofumi) In the depths of Fitoria's house, the ruins, was... a small bottle suspended in the air. Behind it was... what is that?

The form of a cat-like being with feathers protruding from it? There was a mural like that covering the wall.

There are also depictions of the sacred weapons... and the vassals are there as well. They glow faintly, and light dances around them.

When I reach my hand out to grasp the bottle, it regains its sense of gravity and falls into my hand.

Inside is a blood-like red fluid.

When I tested its smell, it smelled... like blood?

What is this?

"Is this supposed to be the Holy Grail, or something?" (Naofumi) It's something that could appear in a fantasy like this.

A container with the blood of a saint of the past, or something of the sort.

“Gua.” (Fitoria)

“It’s not, she says.” (Midori)

Midori starts acting as a translator.

“Then, what is this?” (Naofumi)

“Gua, gua.” (Fitoria)

“Um... apparently, she doesn’t know, but it’s apparently poisonous. In the past, when Fitoria-sama was ordered to drink it by a Hero, she was suddenly overcome with pain.” (Midori) Poison... just by looking at it, I can’t deduce anything “At that time, the Hero said, ‘the first sip is eternal pain, the second, eternal solitude, and the third... a dreadful end.’”

(Midori) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

Anyways, I don’t need a poison like that.

And why was such a powerful poison left in such a place?

Fitoria’s taken a sip before, right?

“GUA GUA!” (Fitoria)

“Ah, I remember. I was told to put a drop of it into my weapon as a material.” (Midori) “The poison?” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Midori)

Well... it’s a strange mixture left by a Hero of the past.

I want to discard it, but that seems like a bad idea no matter how I look at it.

“Motoyasu.” (Naofumi)

“What could it be?” (Motoyasu)

“It’s punishment for before. Try putting some in your weapon.” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Motoyasu)

I tilt the bottle, and let a single drop of it fall on Motoyasu’s spear.

The liquid is thick, and the fact that I was easily able to let but a single drop fall might be the influence of some form of magic.

“Oh? The Spear of Ø appeared.” (Motoyasu)

Ø?

As in the number Ø?

Motoyasu definitely said Ø, right?

“What sort of abilities does it have?” (Naofumi) “Its special ability is Arbitrator of Truth and The Hand that Protects the World. There’s also a skill. It’s just the Spear of Ø.” (Motoyasu) ???

So what sort of spear is it?

“How are its stats?” (Naofumi)

“All Ø!” (Motoyasu)

“Excuse me?” (Naofumi)

“Just as it sounds, it provides no additional stats, Father-in-Law.”
(Motoyasu) “Um... is it cursed or anything?” (Naofumi)

“It doesn’t seem to be part of the Curse Series.” (Motoyasu) Fumu... by testing it on Motoyasu, it seems safe.

I let a drop run down my Shield as well.

You have cleared the conditions to unlock the Shield of Ø!

—

Shield of Ø (Awakened) O/O –

Ability Bonus:

...

Equipment Bonus:

Skill 『Shield of Ø』

Special Ability: Arbitrator of Truth, The Hand that Protects the World.

Proficiency Level: O

—

Fumu, a Shield just as Motoyasu described is unlocked.

And as he said, all its stats are 0. It's worse than the initial Small Shield.

What's this?

Let's try changing to it.

Its appearance is exactly that of the Small Shield.

「Shield of ∅」

The moment I use a skill, the Shield starts emitting light.

Oh... it sure looks cool. I'll try it out later.

It doesn't seem to have any strange effects, so there's no problem.

The Shield itself is too weak to be of any use, but its abilities may be useful.

There are games where weapons like these make their appearance as well.

"Well, if Fitoria's okay with it, it's probably best to feed it to all of our weapons." (Naofumi) And so, the contents of the bottle are depleted drop by drop.

Everyone unlocks the same ∅ weapon with the exact same abilities.

"Firo, wanna try drinking it?" (Naofumi)

"Eh? ... Isn't it poison? No." (Firo)

"Well, that's true." (Naofumi)

Why did the Hero of the Past feed it to Fitoria despite knowing it was poison?

Could it be this bird was actually hated?

Though, I'm just as guilty for trying to feed it to Firo.

"GUA!" (Fitoria)

"Eh? ... don't wanna." (Firo)

"What was that?" (Naofumi)

“Um, you see, Fitoria says Firo has to drink it when Firo succeeds her.”
(Firo) Drink the poison?

Is this some custom, or ceremony of succession?

I'll stay silent here.

We finish cleaning up and return, but Gaelion refuses to come near me when I hold the bottle.

“KYUA!” (Gaelion)

“What’s wrong?” (Naofumi)

When I step forward, he follows suit and steps back.

『D-d-don't come any closer! From thy being, I feel something ominous. Something that causes the muscles along my spine to turn to ice! 』

I hand the bottle to Raphtalia and try approaching the dragon once more.

And Gaelion stops drawing back.

It seems the poison's a natural Dragon Repellent.

It's an interesting tool, Fitoria said to return it after giving it to all of the Heroes, so I'll have to give it back later.

And now to report on the Shield of Ø's abilities, or more like the abilities of the whole series.

It is a joke skill just meant to show off.

After unlocking it, I try using it to take on monster attacks, but nothing happens, and I can't defend against them.

It shatters instantly.

Raphtalia's 『Hammer of Ø』 and Firo's 『Claw of Ø』...

They look flashy, but they can't inflict a single point of damage against monsters.

It doesn't have anything to do with holding back. The skill literally does 0 damage.

Raphtalia's surrounds hers with light... and displays a special effect cool enough to make one want to shout out the skill name with great emotion...

Its Cooldown time is 0, and its SP cost is 0. It really is a joke.

Was there a necessity to spread something like this around all of the Heroes?

Well, like that, we cleaned up Fitoria's house, and finished excavating the ancient ruins left by past Heroes.

As a result, we found some good equipment, so I won't offer any complaints.

Chapter 352: Hammer the Nail that Sticks Out

We've pretty much set quelling the waves worldwide to be our goal.

In the past, we could just do the ones around Melromark about once per month, but now, a wave happens every few days.

But by regularly fighting the waves, it seems we'll be able to reduce the pace to one wave per week.

It's just that when the Holy Weapons and Vassals are in a damaged state, the waves get more and more severe.

If you do something about that, you can go about the Waves with more leisure.

That was the main point of Glass's speech.

"Did you manage to take care of it?" (Glass)

After calming the wave, we meet up with Glass again.

We're in the middle of investigating whether any problems occurred around the area where the wave hit.

Once this finishes, we'll end it by portalling back.

"How about your side?" (Naofumi)

Glass periodically enters and exits the rift made by the wave.

The world connected is generally Glass's... apparently.

She occasionally finds herself in an unfamiliar one and immediately returns, though.

The last time that happened was the wave in the sea.

And wait, that doesn't matter. I need to find out the situation in Glass's world.

"If the world on your side loses the wave, then what happens?"

(Naofumi) "Well, the vassals I worked with and I somehow managed to

quell it this time. If the world on this side quickly contains it, then the monsters on the other side will continue rampaging for a while... and eventually die down by themselves... is how it is.” (Glass) “It doesn’t look like your situation is very favorable.” (Naofumi) “Yes... as always, the reincarnators just run around with their weapons without helping in anything.” (Glass) “How troublesome.” (Naofumi)

It’s even becoming doubtful whether or not these reincarnators were ever the legitimate possessor of a weapon in the first place...

“I’m jealous of your team.” (Glass)

“Once you gather yourselves, you’re going to crush him, right?” (Naofumi) “... Of course. Though I don’t know what’s there to celebrate.” (Glass) “Do you even have time for celebration?” (Naofumi)

To keep just a sprinkle of hope in her pot of misery, Glass is cooperating with this world.

If she truly had any fortune, it would never have come down to this.

“However... pertaining to the World Assimilation, what do you think about the reincarnator?” (Naofumi) “Mostly, why must he interfere with us? Is my main question. He said it was something like apdeit,... or something that made absolutely no sense to me.” (Glass) Update... the wave is?

So he’s also functioning on his gamer instincts.

Well, by destroying his comrades, his enemies get stronger, and he gets new equipment. He’s not exactly wrong, but this and that are separate issues.

“How deplorable.” (Naofumi)

“Exactly my sentiment. Are there not many reincarnators within this world?” (Glass) “If I were to answer honestly, I don’t really know.” (Naofumi)

I mean, if they said it outright, or took actions that stood out, we could tell, but just by looking at the people and their histories, it’s difficult to

determine.

It's just that, to pick the bad sprouts before they grow, Trash has put surveillance on all those that stand out strangely in the world.

Starting with Melromark, various countries are keeping their eyes on their capable individuals.

Nobles, and people of royal descent, especially those that made groundbreaking discoveries with inadequate research in related fields. Those who didn't register with the country, yet still managed to break the level limit. Also those who were witnessed using powers that had never been seen before. All sorts of people were secretly detained.

But it's more troublesome than anything, since it's impossible to say whether they're guilty or not.

Before they were noticed, most would conceal their own ability.

And if they were truly skilled at deceit, then even more so. Apparently, a few individuals stayed conspicuous, so it wasn't... that hard.

"For now, we're keeping the existence of reincarnators a secret. If we do anything that stands out and causes unnecessary accusations, it will only get harder for us." (Naofumi) They're at least skilled in avoiding danger, I'll bet.

The problem is if there are any hidden in our ranks.

"I'm in the middle of strengthening those I think are probably innocent." (Naofumi) Right now, those that stand out from the slaves in my place are but a small fraction, and it's mostly those who haven't tried finding groundbreaking ways to get strong.

Like this, if there's a reincarnator among them, it will only serve to strengthen my forces.

We've been together for a long time, so I hope... there won't be any problems.

Since Sadina seemed to be way too skilled, I looked at her with suspicious eyes, and she pushed me down once...

“Why are you staring at this Onee-san like that? I guess there’s no helping it. It’s time to do it in front of all the village children. Oh Naofumi-chan, how bold of you. Onee-san will try her best.” (Sadina)
“Stop it! Hey, get off of me! Don’t strip me! Uwah! R-r-Raphtalia, stop her!” (Naofumi) “Sadina-neesan!” (Raphtalia)

That part’s burned into my memory.

That really was dangerous. She actually pushed me down.

But she’s probably fine.

She’s a woman, and she doesn’t seem like a gamer at all.

Most female Reincarnators I’ve read about aren’t that militaristic.

If she was a man before reincarnating, then her brain is rotten.

Accepting that she’s a woman now, she pushes down a modern person of Otaku heritage?

She also seems to have some connection to Raphtalia’s parents, and she values the world.

If she was hiding and plotting against me, then her concealment skills are way too high.

Well, I can’t deny the possibility completely.

Anyways, those challenging the wave besides the Heroes are being treated with a certain level of caution.

I’d like to believe we’re alright.

It’s the nobles and adventurers that Trash’s investigating that are more suspicious.

I just remembered them, but they’re being processed behind closed doors.

Recently, they’ve been quietly... a number of them have suddenly vanished.

Perhaps the ones competing with Tact were sensible fellows, but in Faubley, his political rivals were disposed of.

Is this good luck for us?

The prodigious and capable nobles of the country have been lessened to some extent...what an ironic conclusion.

“There’s also completely unrelated adventurers, but adventurers are managed by the guild, and we really don’t have to watch them so closely.” (Naofumi) I’ve never used it, but apparently, the Guild records Level and things like that.

So they can distinguish special people at a glance.

People who suddenly managed to take down powerful monsters are put under their high priority surveillance.

Right now, we have a monopoly on limit breaking, so the Adventurer Guild is also troubled with the world’s disastrous situation... or so they’re acting to smoke out troublemakers.

We’ll, I guess that’s just how it goes.

The nail that sticks up gets hammered down. The ones that stay down are ignored.

We’ve left no space for a reincarnator to go out of control.

If they try anything, the Heroes will converge and deal with them.

It’s scary that we don’t know what sort of abilities they possess... but they won’t be able to use weapon-snatching abilities like Tact’s anymore.

“I see, so there are some here as well.” (Glass)

“We only have our suspicions. They’ll continue to live in the dark forever. They’ll have no part in this.” (Naofumi) They’re more like people who would neglect the wave.

For them to interfere to make the wave expand further seems... impossible at this point.

Because the world’s become desperate to stop it.

“Glass, how is your world? How’s the movement to take care of the wave?” (Naofumi) “It’s not that there isn’t one, but now that a certain

man's taken control of half the world, there's a large portion of the population who are convinced the world isn't going to ruin, and..." (Glass)
"In that respect... this side is better, I guess." (Naofumi)

Before he could flaunt his power any further, we took measures against him.

It is our small salvation that we noticed Tact as quickly as we did.

Well, it also brought about much casualty.

"The disposal of the reincarnator... it would be nice if we could do it. By the way, I'm a bit curious." (Glass) "About what?" (Naofumi)

"The young woman who was burned at the stake after rebuking the false hero; she was one who traveled with you Heroes, correct? Did something happen?" (Glass) Glass did fight with Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and their parties.

They had all been beaten up, and Witch was among the fallen.

That was quite refreshing.

I was able to step on Witch's head all I wanted.

"That bitch is..." (Naofumi)

I began speaking of the tracks of evil Witch had been leading.

She was born to Trash as a princess, and raised with ample pride. In Faubley, she met Tact, and during the Four Hero Summoning, she involved herself with me and threw me to the wolves. She did whatever possible to bask in all the luxury she could, and whenever the wind took a bad turn, she would flee the scene. She made off with Ren, conspired with Itsuki, and tried to overturn the state.

After her arrest, she became a political scapegoat, but Tact saved her on the brink of life, and together, they plotted her mother's death and the instigation of world war.

She was merely executed for those crimes.

"I see." (Glass)

The next... words that came out of Glass's mouth had nothing but sympathy behind them, and yet...

“So people like that exist, no matter which world you're in.” (Glass)

Chapter 353: Cheat

“What?” (Naofumi)

There are other bitches like Witch?

That’s no joke. As if I’d let multiple versions of that woman exist.

No, in my world, I’ve also heard of countries falling due to the work of evil vixens.

Meaning it isn’t all that rare.

“In my world... there are three whose stories resemble yours. She was accepted by the Sacred Weapon wielders, but those heroes fell into her traps, and faced the consequences. Right now, I guess you can say she act as sort mistresses to some of the other Vassal Weapon possessors...”

(Glass) “A-and you’re alright with that?” (Naofumi)

“Well, they’re members of enemy countries... and since the reincarnators continues to neglect the wave anyways...” (Glass) “I have the feeling you’re going to be opposing them in the near future.”

(Naofumi) “That women isn’t directly taking any action to corrupt their hearts or interfere, so as long as we keep tabs on her, it should be fine.”

(Glass) “Well, I guess that’s best for a woman like that. Even so, just what is the situation in your world? At least tell me about those you think to be reincarnators.” (Naofumi) I’m really starting to lose my grasp of her situation.

What the hell are they doing when there isn’t a wave going on?

“There are two countries led by Reincarnators at war, and it’s merely a scuffle of a large number of people who do nothing but aim to be the strongest every day.” (Glass) Uwah... and Glass was acquainted with three who fell for the wiles of a Witch-like woman.

I have nothing but my utmost sympathy.

Well, thinking about the past heroes of this world, and Tact, I can’t say it isn’t my problem.

“Right now, my world is moving to locate our last Sacred Weapon Wielder. During the wave... I’m sorry, but if he’s killed... then that will be the end. I really wanted to save that world, though.” (Glass) “I see.” (Naofumi)

They exist in every world.

Even if I can’t stand her very being, I learned there are plenty of women like that bitch.

It may be people like that who ruined the world.

But something’s bugging me about these women.

It would be easy to conclude that there are corrupt women with power no matter what world you’re in, but it would be too hasty to bring the topic to a conclusion like that.

In this world, could it be... were the heartless ones among Tact’s followers like that?

This can only fall into the category of supposition.

There’s no way an answer will come.

And like that, in our battle to stop the wave, since this one was over, the next one was set to be in Melromark, in a week’s time.

00:10

“Once this wave is over, will it get a little more peaceful?” (Glass) We have a tad more than a week until the next wave.

In that time, we’ll do whatever we can to strengthen our forces.

“That’s right...” (Naofumi)

My level rose alongside Sadina’s so I was able to rise to 150.

40 through 100 was surprisingly easy when I tagged along with her, but as we crossed 100, the amount of EXP required suddenly jumped.

It’s good to overwhelm enemies with a gap in level, but with our Growth Elevation, we’re able to handle it as we are.

We'll have to fight stronger monsters, and level higher. I'll bet the waves will only get harder from here.

I learned that the Ocean is full of monsters, making grinding easy.

Raphtalia is 146, and Firo 155.

Firo occasionally makes mistakes in the enhancement methods, so it's quite a trial to teach her.

The others are in a similar position.

Just how many years would it take to get to 350?

Since he reincarnated, he had much more time to battle and strengthen himself. I'm honestly jealous.

Well, I can only say this after he's gone.

Anyways, thinking about Tact's level leaves me a bit anxious.

It's only been about two weeks and a bit since we fought and beat him, and wishing for more time is just my form of selfishness.

In these two weeks, we've challenged the wave again, and again.

There were even days where we had to fight twice.

Goodness... it only worked out because the Heroes were all gathered...

The sea battle was troublesome because we barely had anyone who could fight there.

"Rafu~?"

Raph-chan's the same level as Raphtalia.

It would be nice if his strength was around the same as well.

By the way, his specialty is versatility.

Illusion Magic, and Transformation, right? He can also control the Bioplant to a certain extent.

My research with Rat gave birth to an ability raising accessory in the form of a leaf on his head.

We were able to give the Bioplant the power to raise some abilities.

We used Raph-chan's DNA, and the concept of Firo's Ahoge.

But half of it was only possible because of Rat.

With this, Raph-chan's abilities will increase even further... it seems.

The layer of foliage that bobs up and down on Raph-chan's head is somehow quite cute.

And Raph-chan generally fights in a combination with Raphtalia.

Like a mirror image, he usually performs pincer attacks with her.

I guess his weakness is that he's can't go as far as to reproduce skills. But he can copy most things besides that.

"After today, our free time will increase. And we'll be able to make more preparations." (Naofumi) "Finally. I was getting tired of the consecutive battles." (Raphtalia) "Firo only had time to sleep, talk to Mel-chan, and fight." (Firo) "That's right... we'll have to put in more effort." (Raphtalia) The equipment made by Imya, and her uncle, as well as the Weapon Shop's Old Man isn't arriving in fast enough.

Should I allot more manpower to that field?

But time is of the essence.

Anyways... once this finishes, we'll be able to do something about it.

Now, we can only wait.

"Let's go!" (Naofumi)

On my cry, the heroes nod.

00:00

The Hourglass runs dry, and we were all summoned to the place the wave would take place.

And right after that, the counter appeared in our fields of vision.

01:30

"What!?"

Short!

No matter how you look at it, it's too short.

In the waves up until now, we never encountered a situation like this.

No, the one that happened while we were fighting Tact eventually devolved down to this, but in waves besides that this is the first. What's more, the time limit is already flashing when the wave's only started.

"Let's hurry!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's voice brings me to my senses, and we rush forward.

In the the sky, a wine-red crevice is... spread out wide.

We must end this as soon as possible.

"Everyone, hurry!"

"Yeah!"

Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Raphtalia... the villagers, and the allied armies, and the Filo Rial Brigade with Gaelion follow.

01:25

Eh? Wait a goddamn second! 5 minutes haven't passed yet!

As I watch, the Wave's crevice gets filled with the shadows of humans.

"!?"

Glass runs out in front of all of us.

And shills showing us her back... she begins talking to those that appeared.

"You people! Why are you on this side?" (Glass) "The Vassal Holders and reincarnators have... overcome the wave..."

Looking at them, they were quite beat up.

"What?" (Naofumi)

I look at the enemy the Wave had manifested.

Who are they? There are plenty of humans, but there are also Demi-

Humans and People of Soul mixed in.

“So this is the world the update added.”

“Let’s start it already.”

“I know.”

As if performing menial labor, their vanguard forces prepare for battle. Those in the rear place their hands on the crack in the sky, and... manually start wrenching it open.

01:10

“This new power the goddess gave me is so totally a cheat.”

(TL: Lit. Megami-sama)

A really annoying voice rang out.

What’s this with cheats? Don’t screw with me.

Even so, is what they’re doing shortening the remaining time?

“Stop them as quickly as possible!”

“I know!”

I concentrate, and cast Revelation Aura X.

At the same time, Itsuki begins chanting Revelation Down X.

The rest of us prepare our attack skills, and magic.

“Oh, my.”

The reincarnated(?) man standing at the front held his hand out front.

And a Meteor Shield-esque barrier manifested.

“Hurry up. Even if it’s an absolute defense, I can’t keep it up for long.”

What the hell is up with that!

“Damn! That is... the reincarnator’s special power.” (Glass) “A time-limited absolute defensive wall!? There was a power like that in my world too.” (Itsuki) Glass supplements some information, leaving Itsuki speechless.

There are many worlds, and many possible possibilities, or perhaps it's a gift from that goddess he mentioned.

"What sort of power is it!?"

"You couldn't catch it? It's the creation of a wall that cannot be destroyed no matter what. As long as that exists, our attacks will not get through." (Itsuki) "Ku... so it's come to that." (Naofumi)

They sure have quite a convenient ability on their hands.

Is he someone from Itsuki's world?

No, he may be a case like Tact's.

It may be a power he received by the one proclaiming to be God.

And they did say Goddess-sama~ just earlier.

"Its fault lies in the fact that they cannot attack either, I guess. In my world, it was one of the higher class skills. The highest level form allows for perpetual deployment." (Itsuki) "Ku..." (Naofumi)

One by one, the wave's monsters start appearing.

But in order to get to them, do we have no choice but to fight Glass's world's reincarnators!?

Is it our saving grace that that guy's ability isn't of the highest class?

No, anyways, if we don't bypass that wall, the remaining wave time will keep being chipped away.

If that happens, this world is done for.

"Now, Ciel-sama! It's time for us to seek new powers in this brand new world. Let's work together!"

And behind that reincarnator, the voice of a woman sounded out. For some reason, that voice pissed me off.

The figure of the one approaching the apparent reincarnator... it overlapped with the one who betrayed me for Motoyasu, the Witch of that time.

“Glass, is that the woman you spoke of before?” (Naofumi) “Yes!”
(Glass)

Her face isn't anywhere near the same. Her voice is also different.

Her stature, physique, and pretty much everything else was different. In fact, I think it's a completely different person.

And yet... my instincts scream out.

That woman gives off a similar feeling to Witch.

Basking in luxury, moving the world to her pleasure, thinking of men as nothing more than tools to be used, an aura conveying these feelings emanated from her.

01:01

Ku... every second, more and more is shaved off.

Chapter 354: A Sky Dyed Crimson

“Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki! Go all out!” (Naofumi) “Sure! 「Phoenix Gale Sword X」!” (Ren)

Ren’s skill flies at the reincarnator’s barrier.

It takes the shape of a bird made out of the flames of hell.

But as it comes into contact with an invisible wall, the bird cries out as the flames die down. It was no use.

「Brionac X」!

Motoyasu releases Brionac, the skill that’s becoming his signature.

A spear of light shoots off from his own.

But as expected, the barrier intercepts it.

「Full Buster X」!

Itsuki changes his bow to a gun before activating an attack.

The Bow is quite a versatile category, and its repertoire even encompasses guns... I’m jealous.

The Skill: Full Buster... I’d like to think it’s a skill that fires off a thick beam from the muzzle of the gun.

The skills fired off by the four heroes merge, and try to destroy the barrier, but even so, the result is unfavorable...

These were all powerful skills, you know.

We’re using all of the strengthening methods of the Heroes and Vassals here, you know.

“Gu...”

But even while the wall holds, the person invoking it has gone pale.

Is it hard to stand?

“Oh, I thought they were just pests, but it seems I can’t leave it to you alone!”

“Kya, how cool~!”

To help the one standing at the forefront of the wave, another holds his hand aloft and deploys another barrier.

And for some reason, the skills stray from their path.

“Ku... that was dangerous.”

“It seems their attacks are quite heavy.”

While their side looks a bit impatient, we are unable to destroy their defense.

“Why are you trying to expand the wave!?”

“That’s right. Are you ignorant of what will come to pass?”

“You can’t just listen to an enemy’s words so easily!”

Witch MKII interrupts us.

She’s ridiculously annoying. If our attacks could get through, she would be the first one to die.

“Be quiet. You, woman, shut up!”

I shout at Witch MKII.

By this woman’s behavior, there’s no doubt about it.

“You, do you know what exactly expanding the wave means?” (Naofumi)
“Of course. It means leading the world down the right path, though this is just something like a side expansion update.”

“Wrong! If you do this, then both your world and ours will become ones where not a single blade of grass can grow!” (Naofumi) “There’s no way that’s true. The goddess granted me power and asked a favor of me. This is something necessary for the world.”

It’s no good. Just like with Tact, words aren’t enough.

There’s no need to hold back. To protect the world, we’ll have to dispose of them.

Anyways, we’ll have to continue our volley of attacks.

“Everyone, have at it!” (Naofumi)

“Yeah!”

「Heaven’s Judgement X」!

「Gungnir X」!

「Thor Hammer X」!

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」!

Etc...

All the heroes of the vassal weapons release their skills, and from the rear, support fire rains down.

Perhaps because the weapons were made to protect the world, their attacks have good synergy, and they combine to form a large stream of power.

A large explosion surrounds the enemy and drags them in.

“Gu... so you’re not all talk.”

00:49

Someone blows away the resultant smoke cloud with magic. Because we don’t have the time to wait for it to clear.

Cracks are spreading across the barrier.

At this rate, we’ll make it. I’ll have to do what I can too.

「Shield Prison」!

Oh? I succeeded in locking away just the one forming the barrier.

Is it because I can control where it manifests?

“I see!”

Ren approaches the enemy barrier as close as he can.

「Float Sword」!

The sword version of the Float Shield activates.

According to Ren, it's hard to control, and the output isn't that great, so he couldn't master it.

Anyways, he lets the floating sword run rampant within the confines of the barrier.

“As if!”

A reincarnator-ish person locks down Ren's sword with his own.

“Gugugu...”

It's not like it's his strong point, and because of the barrier, it's hard to control.

I guess he can only bring out about half of its original power.

It's all of nothing. Let's try setting up Iron Maiden!

「Change Shield (Attack)」!

Something clicks into place, as thorns sprout from the shields surrounding the one making the barrier.

I immediately transition to the next skill.

「Iron Maiden X」!

A giant Woman of Iron appears, dealing the finishing blow.

But the output shouldn't be more than half the original.

Of course, with the enemies being who they are, there's a possibility it didn't work.

We'll have to move again immediately.

“Hah... hah...”

I take some Spirit Water out of my Shield to restore my SP.

“T-that was dangerous.”

Dammit... I couldn't inflict anything fatal.

It seems that in order to protect himself, he deployed another small protective wall around himself.

But as his movements are sealed, he is in a bit of a panic.

“Why are you getting beat up so one-sidedly?”

00:38

This time, a man steps forward with a large scythe in hand. From within the barrier, he releases a skill.

Wait a second. Wasn't the barrier supposed to prevent their side from attacking as well?

“Take this! 「Aerial Grand Swing」!”

His energy-charged scythe flies at us like a wheel.

I stand at the front and take the attack.

Mu... it isn't actually that powerful.

If it's just this much, then...!

“Tei!”

I knock down the energy-filled scythe.

“Hyuu... he seems quite strong.”

It seems Mr. Scythe is a bit impressed.

Does he not have that many strengthening methods learned?

No, I'm not even sure what he's holding is a vassal weapon.

“Glass, is he the Wielder of a Vassal?” (Naofumi) “Yes... he's the Vassal of the Scythe.” (Glass) I see.

But... for him to bypass the barrier, what does it mean?

The weapon's ability... no, that doesn't seem to be it.

Is it an ability given to him by some god-ish person like Tact's?

I mean, he did say something about Goddess-sama, so that's probably it.

For her to give her pieces the ability to cheat their way to victory, just what is she thinking?

00:18

Time's running out!

"Ah..."

The enemy's barrier finally shatters.

All of my comrades don't let this chance go to waste. We hold up our weapons.

"Hold them off for a bit! I'll be deploying it again!"

Good! If we want to attack, now's the chance!

"Anyways, stop the ones behind them!"

On my call, everyone answers by running forward.

"As if I'd let you!"

「Rinbu Mu: Musou」!

(TL: Rinbu means something like Circle Dance of Nothingness. Musou is Blank Mind.) Glass releases a skill at the enemies rushing towards us.

"Quickly! As fast as you can! 「Rinbu Mu: Renge」! 「Rinbu Mu: Reido」! 「Rinbu Mu: Mugetsu」!"

(TL: Renge = Lotus Flower, Reido = Absolute Zero, Mugetsu = Moonless Sky) Without giving herself a chance to breath, Glass consecutively fires off her skills.

I believe she's of a race where the more skills she uses, the weaker she gets.

She's prepared for that, as she continues to stack skills on top of each other.

Then we'll have to fully exert ourselves too.

This is the world that's made a hell out of our lives, but it's still the one we need to protect.

We won't let it end in a half-assed way like this.

"Let's go!"

As I run towards him, the Scythe guy slashes at me.

I take his attack with the Shield and force him back.

“Don’t get in the way! If we clear this mission, then we’ll be granted a new power.”

“Granted?” (Naofumi)

“What, you don’t know? We’ll be able to unlock our new signature moves.”

I don’t know what the hell he’s saying, but I have no time to waste on him!

I can’t be anything good. It must be something self-centered.

“Move! You guys have no idea just what it is you’re trying to accomplish!” (Naofumi) “Nah, we all know. In a dream, all of us who had memories of a life past were given our orders. By the goddess.”

Goddess... so that’s the one behind all of this.

I thought she may have just been a concept they followed, but this settles it. She’s a sentient being.

“If we don’t let the wave be released, the world will fall to ruin. Please help me, she said! Aren’t you the ones trying to destroy our world!?”

“Don’t screw with me! Why would someone with that much power have to rely on the likes of you? Are you guys really worth that much? Unfortunately, you guys are just being used!”

00:10

Crap! There’s no time left.

Dammit... this isn’t the time to be having a conversation!

“Move!” (Naofumi)

I rush through, fully prepared to take damage.

「Shield Bash」!

“Ugu...”

Good, it seems that was a good hit. His eyes are upturned.

His footing is also unsteady.

00:06

“Everyone! Take them out!”

We approach the reincarnator-esque people in the rear.

And we began releasing our various attacks.

「Meteor Sword X」!

「Meteor Spear X」!

「Meteor Bow X」!

With the Heroes at the forefront, the attacks all hit their mark.

“UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAH—”

The attacks fall like rain and reduce them to cinders.

00:03

Ku... quickly, we have to quell the wave, or else...

When I look behind, I see Trash and Fitoria, Gaelion and Taniko, and Rat and Mii-kun working together to take down the giant monster that had just appeared from the wave... a Cyclops-like monster.

Good! With this—

“Not yet! In our world, there’s—”

With Glass’s words, I look inside of the crevice.

On the other side, I see multiple human-like figures.

They’re also on our opponent’s side!

“There’s no time to rest, attack the ones inside the crack as well!”

“Yeah!”

Everyone present comes forward as one and shoots the most powerful attack they can muster.

Various wills, hearts, feelings... They overlap many times and form a great power. They merge and form a single straight beam.

The flash embodying our power hits the wine-red sky and explodes.
Everyone works together. It truly is the strongest attack I've ever seen.
But...

00:00

The Wine colored sky changes to the crimson hue of blood, and, like a door, the sky starts to swing open.

"No... the world is..."

So the world will end... in a place like this!?

The earth rumbles before us as the entire world begins to shake.

Chapter 355: The Goddess Descends

The air reverberates as if the entire world is trembling. All clouds in the sky are blown away.

Hearing the rumbling, I promptly stand in front of everyone to protect them from what's to come.

Just doing this won't save anyone from a crumbling world, but even so, I've...

"No one step in front of me!"

I've decided to protect them.

Even through the inevitable collapse of the world as we know it.

No matter what happens, until my body erodes away.

The crack fills with light, and everyone shuts their eyes.

Ku... I wonder what sort of thing the collapse of the world is.

Like Glass said, will all life be sucked away, leaving this world an empty shell?

Or it could just be darkness... a black hole-like thing could appear to reduce everything to nothingness.

Anyways, right now... I'll just have to pray for a miracle.

As I think that, strong blasts of wind hit my body... I continue to stand before the blinding light.

Eventually...

The earthquake stops, and I focus my eyes.

"Wha..."

Before me is an unfamiliar land; an assimilated world stretches across the landscape.

But, perhaps you can say I've seen it once before.

"This is-"

Glass is dumbfound.

Right... without the world falling to ruin, the assimilation ends.

“See? The wave wasn’t going to destroy the world!”

The reincarnators hold their weapons out at us and direct their hostility.

What does this mean?

We take on our battle formation as we glare at our enemies.

The Hourglass in my vision has stopped moving. It’s completely silent.

“Now, it’s time for the Goddess to come down!”

One of the reincarnators shouts out, and Witch MKII begins releasing a faint light.

“Eh?”

Witch MKII closes her eyes, and without the light showing any signs of dying down, she starts to float.

And the light converges... as if radiance is being gathered from every corner of the globe.

“Ah!?”

Glass raises her voice.

“What’s wrong!?” (Naofumi)

“All the Soul Eater monsters under my control have mysteriously perished!” (Glass) What!?

When I look to the sky... various clumps of light arrive and surround Witch MKII.

Eventually, many balls of dazzling light have gathered, and MKII disappears into a mass of light herself.

“Mary!”

The reincarnators call out her name.

Soon, the gathered light disperses... Standing there, is a familiar, yet unfamiliar... woman. She floats in space.

“Oh... my Goddess.”

“Everyone, I offer you my deepest thanks. Because of all of your efforts, I can finally return to this land.”

The reincarnators and their comrades silently look upon the scene.

... It's that. The atmosphere where a powerful person joins your party.

Does that make this the birth of an ultimate enemy for us?

This may have become a heated scene in Manga or Games, but since we're on the enemy side, the only thing that really comes to mind is, 'what sort of bullshittery is this?'

“For Mary to be the Goddess...”

“Did I surprise you? In order to assist you, I let fragments of my soul be born into this world. They had not my memory, but I truly was close to all of you.”

“!?”

Fragments...?

I have an exceedingly bad feeling about this.

The one before us who proclaims herself a Goddess... I could guess just what sort of being existed as her foundation.

No... perhaps it would be better to say that everything was connected.

The discomfort I've been feeling until now was all caused by this.

The Goddess turns to us and greets us.

“It's a pleasure to meet you. No, perhaps I should say we've met many times before? I am Medea Pideth Machina. You are the ones who put one of my fragments, Malty, through quite a uncomfortable time, are you not?”

“M-Malty!?” (Trash)

Trash's voice resounds out.

Right, when you look closely, the woman who calls herself Medea resembles Witch to some extent.

"Trash, calm down!" (Naofumi)

"Y-yes!" (Trash)

"Ah, how cowardly were these people when they used their cruelest methods to torture a fragment of my being, only to execute her in the end. How pitiful an end." (Medea) In a manner that showed she was making a play for sympathy, Medea weeps to the reincarnators while pointing her finger at us.

"I definitely cannot offer salvation unto you. For people like you, I cannot offer forgiveness as one who holds the title of god."

... Her eyes are laughing.

My memories whisper to me. Those are the eyes Witch made whenever she tried to fool someone.

I see. So Witch's true identity was a fragment of a Goddess's soul.

So that's why she developed a personality unbecoming of the child of the Queen and Trash.

From the start, she was merely the being trying to lead the world to ruin. No matter how hard you tried to fix her, she wouldn't change.

Perhaps the order engraved on her heart was to torment the Heroes, or to covet luxury and cause the declination of the world.

"Trash... please understand. The person who was once your daughter is now the enemy of the world. Don't forget it." (Naofumi) "Papa, I'm over here!" (Medea)

With a perfect imitation of Witch's voice, Medea calls out to Trash.

"How dare you order my execution. Even though you were my father! I definitely won't forgive you."

"A-ah..."

Trash begins trembling.

The fear of having the daughter he killed come back... Is it?

For Trash, who cares deeply for his family, this must be torture.

“Trash! Get yourself together! What about the country your beloved Queen left behind.. and what do you think will become of Melty!?”
(Naofumi) “...!”

Having regained his senses, Trash begins glaring at Medea.

“Now, everyone! Let us defeat the enemy of the world!” (Medea)
“Yeah~!”

The reincarnators raise a loud cry, as they point their varied weapons at us.

Behind them, lending them power, is an army from Glass’s World.

Is this... an All-Out War!?

Damn! Having come all the way here, we get wrapped up in this pointless battle.

But, I can’t be swayed here.

I just have to play my part. The Leader of my army. A Hero. Whatever works best. Just play the part.

Or else, we really will lose.

“We’re intercepting them!”

“Understood!”

We also raise our voices and begin our clash with the opposing army.

One runs ahead of everyone, capturing his enemy’s attention...

“Die! You heartless Heroes!”

A reincarnator... one holding a katana rushes at us.

“There!” (Naofumi)

I grab the blade with one hand to stop it.

“W-what!?”

“What sort of half-assed strengthening are you using?” (Naofumi) Can we win like this?

Even if the Enemy’s general went out of her way to appear, that doesn’t mean they got any stronger.

“Motoyasu!” (Naofumi)

“I know! 『Brionac X』!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu’s spear of life pierces the reincarnator.

“GUHAAAAAAAAAH!”

Damn... he isn’t dying.

I believe there is a guy who specialized in defense among them.

“Dammit, they’re closing in!”

“Ren, Raphtalia! Go pincer them!” (Naofumi)

“Got it!” (Ren)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

Ren and Raphtalia, and also Raph-chan, draw closer to them and unleash consecutive attacks on their members.

“Ugu—gu...”

“Trash, from the rear, prepare ritual magic and continuous support fire!” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Trash)

By my order, Trash prepares the rear forces to use Ritual Magic and loads the magic into Fitoria’s Vassal weapon tank.

Of course, the original she copied it off of, Mii-kun, is there too.

『Lightening Impact Whip X』!

『KYUAAAAAAAAA』!

A flexible whip coated in electricity repeatedly snaps at the enemy, and

to match her, Gaelion breathes flames to envelop them.

Taniko and Gaelion's combination is in good shape.

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」!

The ones that approach Firo are relentlessly mowed down by her spiraling claw motions, and those that dodge are pummeled down by Fohl's fist.

Good, the enemy's formation isn't complete.

I'll bet they never met to discuss their strengthening methods.

"Arara... then I guess there's no helping it." (Medea) Medea gently raises her hand and snaps her finger.

「Eternal Blessing」

The reincarnators and their allies are covered in a rain of light.

And right after that—

"Gu..."

The attacks I take suddenly become exponentially heavier.

Is it support magic?

But what I've cast on us is Revelation Aura X, you know.

Up until now, we've always had some room for leisure, but right now, the most I can do is endure it.

That means Ren and the other Heroes, as well as those in the rear, won't be able to take these attacks.

"I offer my deepest thanks, Goddess!"

The Reincarnator turns to Medea, and offers thanks before glaring at me.

"Take this! 「Cold Steel Vital Wave」!"

"Too soft!" (Naofumi)

From his katana, a wind-themed blade of light comes flying.

I take his attack and redirect it... towards the one who is fighting Ren.

Ren's always made a habit of observing his surroundings. Noticing the sword wave flying towards him, he jumps back.

And the sharp edge tears the one who could make absolute defense barriers to shreds.

"Guhah!?"

Uwah. His legs are sent flying...

Just how high is his power output?

But the legs soon reattach themselves... As if time itself was rewinding itself, the man returns to his initial state.

"That was your fault for not dodging!"

"The hell you say!?"

In anger, the barrier guy seals the katana guy in his wall.

Oy, they're fighting each other.

Just how uncooperative are these guys?

... No, I can't really say anything against them.

Looking at the past selves of us heroes makes my head hurt.

Actually, I don't think Ren and the others would ever get into a fight before an enemy.

Though, they would call each other names afterwards.

"Don't think my absolute barrier can only be used for defense!"

When the barrier guy clenches his fist tightly, the barrier surrounding the katana guy begins to shrink.

"Gu... stoop..."

A cracking sound rings out as the Katana bastard is forced into a box much smaller than his own body.

Isn't this overkill?

There's a limit to not getting along.

... Could it be that they were trying to murder one another from the start?

I mean, Glass did say that some countries of reincarnators were at war, or something.

"Stop your fighting!"

Medea calls out to them, but the two aren't listening.

Eventually, the barrier breaks, and the Katana Bastard starts attacking the barrier maker.

There's no camaraderie here.

They're all solo players who claim to be the ace of the team.

Are those following these reincarnators party members? Women are cheering them on, and some rush forward to join the fray.

"It looks like they'll need a capable commander... Ahaha, I found an interesting soul floating around." (Medea) Medea starts chuckling... she opens her hand.

What? The world stopped?

Only Trash, Medea, and I can still move.

"Come out." (Medea)

In the area above Medea's hand, a black, glass-like ball manifests... the person that emerges from it puts both Trash and I at a loss for words.

"That's—"

Everyone else is the same.

The deceased Queen stands there, holding up a folding fan to cover her mouth.

Chapter 356: Levelling

“Oh, great Queen of Melromark!” (Medea)

“..”

The Queen indifferently surveys the area around her.

“M-Mirellia, is that you?” (Trash)

“...”

The Queen doesn't give an answer to Trash's question.

“Now, take lead of this army, and destroy those that oppose us.”

(Medea) “Understood!”

As she saluted, the Queen was teleported, perhaps through Medea's magic, to an area much further back.

And from that moment forth, the coordination of those offering support in the back suddenly improved.

Is this betrayal? Could it be that she never actually died, and was but a pawn of the Goddess?

“Trash!” (Naofumi)

Was your wife a traitor?

Before I can ask, Trash shakes his head.

“That's not possible! That is... that is!” (Trash) Trash angrily scowls at Medea.

“Yes, I dragged her soul out and revived her to make her one of my pieces. Right now, she can only move by my will. Ara? Would it be best if I didn't tell you that?” (Medea) “DAMMMN YOOOOOOOOOOOU!” (Trash)

Trash's enraged voice echoes.

So that means... the Queen is forcefully being controlled.

... Right. There's no way that Queen would ever turn coat.

Just how much manga have you read, and how many games have you

played, Iwatani Naofumi?

When the dead are brought back, they're usually being controlled, or zombies.

Just how low can she go, this one!?

Thinking about it, she can manage reincarnation.

That's ample evidence that she can revive the dead.

What's more, the Queen's become her marionette.

Damn! She'll be exceedingly hard to deal with.

And wait, the reincarnators aren't the slightest bit put off by her actions?

Perhaps she made up a story to them, or perhaps... we were the only ones aware of that scene?

「Arrow Rain」! Quickly! The ring leader... the enemy!" (Itsuki) Itsuki unleashes a rain of arrows on those duking it out with Motoyasu.

Ah, that's right.

If we defeat Witch's origin point, Medea, then perhaps everything will be resolved.

From what I've seen, her forces have strong Support Magic cast on them, but since they have no cooperation, they're ridden with friendly fire.

... Okay.

"Let's go!"

"Yeah!"

Us, the Heroes at the front, will probably have to be the ones to take charge.

Or else the ones behind us won't follow!

「Phoenix Gale Sword X」!

「Brionac X」!

「Full Buster X」!

「Shield Prison→ Change Shield(Attack)→ Iron Maiden X」!

We all release our most powerful skills at Medea.

The bird of fire envelops the spear of light, which absorbs the beam fired from the gun. The combination collides with Medea, and the resulting explosion is contained within the Shield Prison. The shields change to ones laden with spikes, and an Iron Maiden envelops it all.

Did that do any damage!?

“... You guys aren’t any fun.”

Medea stood there with a sullen expression, as if nothing had happened to her.

It looks like she deployed a sturdy barrier.

Ku... even the combination of our strongest attacks isn’t enough to scratch her.

We’ll have to get Raphtalia and the others to help us before trying again.

But they’re busy with the Reincarnators, and Glass’s world’s army. The situation is quite severe.

Luckily, the enemy’s looking down on us, and floating annoyingly nearby.

“Naofumi.”

Ren glances at me.

I know.

An enemy this strong, and the weapons we’ve collected up until now. Within our skills...

Ren nods.

It seems everyone else understands as well.

“Let’s go!”

We ignore the entire army for a single moment. No...

「Meteor Wall X」!

The skill I use surrounds us, and everyone... chants a skill at Medea.

「... of Ø」

Right, it seemed too strange for a skill to do absolutely nothing.

I thought it odd that they mocked us with a skill meant for nothing but showing off, so me, Ren and Itsuki consulted one another.

If we ever encountered an enemy too strong, we would leave the possibility open to use it to see if it did anything.

I never thought a chance to use it would present itself so soon.

“Wha-”

Medea, who had continuously showed us her lax impression, suddenly got into a panic.

So it's true...

The Ø skills glow as they shoot off towards her.

“Goddess!?”

The warring reincarnators and their armies stop moving.

“Good!”

So we can beat her with this.

“Keep...”

Before I could finish my sentence, a single beam of light passed by me.

No, I couldn't even follow what happened with my eyes.

Something went through, and I merely looked in its direction by instinct.

“Guhaaaaah!?”

What I saw was the moment when Motoyasu, who was standing in the middle of the battlefield, collapsed. He had been pierced by something.

“Eh...?” (Motoyasu)

“M-Motoyasu-san!”

“Mokkun!”

“Mo-chan!”

His party members rush over to him.

“...”

But Motoyasu’s body isn’t moving in the slightest.

“How dare you place an injury on my body!”

... The only wound left on Medea was a small scratch on her hand.

“M-Motoyasu...?”

Seeing his limp, motionless body, I couldn’t muster any words.

Eventually.

“Ah—”

Motoyasu’s body glowed gold, and dispersed into the air.

As if no one had been lying there to start with.

“That was a bit surprising. I didn’t think... you were this good. But how unfortunate for you. I’m not so fragile as to fall from something like this.” (Medea) Medea surveys the area, and scrunches her eyebrows, as she starts counting us.

“One... two... three... Eleven in total? That’s quite a bit. With this much, it feels a bit unbalanced. There are still three holy weapons left, and Vassals, was it? Even though I did so much, there’s still eight left. This is the worst.” (Medea) She glares at me.

“Just how far did you intend to get in my way, despite being but a measly shield?”

“Like I care! Don’t advance the conversation by yourself!”

What’s the source of all of this trying to say?

Motoyasu just died! But I can't lose it here.

Ren and Itsuki probably get it as well.

They contain their rage as they calmly consider ways to defeat her.

"Just what is your objective!? For what purpose did you cause something like the wave!?" (Naofumi) "Fufufu, you wanna know?" (Medea)

Looking down on all of us, Medea laughs.

"If I had to say, I guess it's to make myself stronger. If I had to put it in your boorish words, then I wanted to raise my level." (Medea) "How... for something as petty as that... you started all this unproductive violence!?" (Itsuki) Itsuki screams out as he clenches his bow.

Me too... no, all of the ones who heard her words share the sentiment.

Raising her level, you say!?

For something as worthless as that, we lived through our days of hell!?

Through the wave, many lost their lives, and many lost their loved ones. Even so, we kept fighting on to bring an end to it all. And yet the enemy's goal was merely leveling.

Don't fuck with me...

"Say what you will. Now then, let's slay the evil heroes!" (Medea)
Medea's words send the enemy rushing forward at once.

Their powers seem to have been raised to a strange extent, and even for me, the most I can do is block them.

Gu...

"Ah, right, right. You guys are a bit too strong, so I'm going to have to kill a few of your Heroes to give us a handicap, kay?" (Medea) Medea holds her hand in front of her, and a half-transparent sword made out of energy appears in it. She points it at us.

"Good bye." (Medea)

I immediately spring forward, and protect Ren, Raphtalia, Firo, Fohl, Midori, and all the heroes who were on the front lines.

「Shield of Ø」!

If the others had enough output to overcome a god's defense... then I should be able to withstand it with this.

“Ah, how sad.” (Medea)

For me, it felt as if the world had just stopped.

And in that stagnant world, Medea was the only one moving.

“With defense of your level, it's impossible.” (Medea) _____!

“Let's see. 100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, 『Infinity Destroyer』. Yep, you're dead.” (Medea) (TL: Deadly Aim is the ESPer skill that's a level above Itsuki's described in chapter 261) White, and black. Red was also mixed in. An infinite amount of lines circle.

They merge into a single narrow beam, and fly towards me.

Just like with the attack that killed Motoyasu, I can't follow it with my eyes.

Yes... I guess you could call it death.

It's like she materialized the concept of death itself. That's the sort of feeling I got.

I don't know why I was able to see it.

In truth, Medea's attack was much faster than my own sense of perception, so there's no way I should have been able to see it.

It's as if she had bypassed the entire effect animation, leaving only the message 『Enemy has been Killed』 behind. A patchwork of time that left only the result.

W-what is... this!?

By luck, or miracle, I... block the attack with my Shield.

It felt as if I had successfully blocked it.

I also had confidence in the fact that I hadn't died yet.

But...

“Ara? You blocked it? For you to be able to take an attack whose speed surpassed infinity, you must be quite the lucky one.” (Medea) Speed that surpasses infinity?

Is this one alright in the head? Her words are going all over the place.

No, it was true that I was unable to understand the enemy's attack.

The fact that I was able to block it was truly just a miracle. It's like she had merely sent the blast flying to the area where my Shield was fastened.

If she shoots again... I'm dead.

“Then how about this? It wastes a needless amount of power, so I don't like using it, but I guess there's no choice.” (Medea) ... The moment after Medea said that, I died.

“Eh...?”

As if a switch had been turned off. As if the power had been cut, my consciousness was instantly sent adrift.

I truly did not understand just what it was that Medea did.

“You'd probably hate dying without even knowing the reason, so let me tell you. Your past, present future. I directed an attack on all of the yous in all parallel and divergent worlds in existence.” (Medea) By the time I was aware of my surroundings once more, I was in the air.

In no time at all, the HP bar on my Status had reached 0.

Ren was the same, and...

“Naofumi-sama-”

Raphtalia immediately reached her hand out to me.

I try to answer her warmth by raising my arm, but I can't put any power in.

“In the name of god, just vanish into oblivion!” (Medea) My body's been torn to pieces, but still, she continues to attack...

“Now fall into the rift between dimensions! AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Medea's painful laugh echoes through my ears endlessly.

Not yet... move, my body!

I'm in the middle of being blown away!

When I looked down, what I was... was my torso being minced into miniscule pieces.

"Ara? The Hammer Wench got mixed in too? Well I guess that's enough to balance the odds, right? I've kept you waiting for a while, but it's finally time to start the game." (Medea) When I thought I had finally been freed from her laugh, my field of vision warped, and my mind went far away.

... So my end comes like this. Randomly killed for reasons I don't even get?

Up until now, I've tried so hard. I've desperately battled my way here, and without being able to save... to protect everyone, I'm going to die like a dog?

Then what the hell have we been doing up until now?

Was the reason they were all born simply to build up EXP?

Don't fuck with me... as if I'd let that be reality.

Move.

At least let me offer some resistance.

But for the current me, that wish was impossible to grant.

If I close my eyes here, I'll definitely be dead.

... No, I'm quite sure I already am.

I don't know why, but I recognize the fact that I'm dead.

Ah... so that's it.

So I'm... already dead.

Then this is the revolving lantern.

My memories start to revive, and spin around before me.

It really was a crappy life.

I immersed myself in Manga and Games at a whim, and after complained about my world all the time. Then I was summoned here.

In this terrible alternate world, I tried my best, and met Raphtalia.

I met Firo. I met Melty. I cleared my name of my false crimes.

I defeated a giant enemy, and I met Atlas. I met Fohl, and I met the villagers. I made up with Ren, the other Heroes, and Trash, whom I had made out to be my enemies.

And from here on, it was supposed to have gotten better...

Why, why must it be so unfair....

No matter how hard I struggled, no matter what sad things I faced, in the end... the Hero is supposed to beat the Demon King. He's supposed to bring peace to the world. He's supposed to make everyone happy...

Can't I get an ending like that?

Haha... In the end, I'm just the same as all of them. So I was just being dragged along by my optimistic ideals stemming from my game knowledge...

... I know. From that day, and all the days up until now, I've had the fact pounded in me enough to make me vomit.

It isn't that easy.

No matter what you do, it's always unfair, and there's despair you have no ways of fighting against. That's reality.

Raphtalia... Atlas... everyone.

If I can't move a single finger on my hands anymore, at the very least, let me move my heart.

Why I'm saying this, even I don't know... Ah, so that's how it is.

What's with this? While I kept saying this and that, didn't I actually like this world quite a bit?

“Everyone. My power was barely able to banish three of the Evil Heroes from this world, and to the gap between dimensions...”

And Like that, I dies meaninglessly. I was ripped appart without even leaving anything to bury.

— —
— — — —
— — — — — — —

After sinking into deep darkness, my conscious resurfaced.

My mind was faint, as if I had just become a ghost.

The sound of pages flipping, and a slight dusty scent.

It was so quiet, and yet so nostalgic, I began to remember all I had forgotten.

This is...

“___!”

Eh?

My voice works.

What is this? My eyes had been closed.

Then all I have to do is open then. Isn't that obvious? I open my eyelids... and lost my voice once more.

— I was in a familiar library.

While sitting in one of their installed chairs, I got up, as if I had merely dozed off.

I turn my eyes to the calendar and clock on the reception desk.

... Since I read the Holy Weapons Manual, and was sent to another world, only 30 minutes have passed.

I... confirm the cover of the book in my hands.

The Four Holy Weapon's Manual.

And this time, the Hero of the Shield's accomplishments were recorded as well.

It was... a recording of the tracks I followed. An outline of my story.

And like that, the Hero of the Shield was defeated by the enemy of the world, the Goddess Medea.

The remaining bow, and his companions continued to fight on...

The next page was blank.

I turn back, and start reading from the beginning.

It appears the contents of the book have changed quite a bit from the first time I read it.

In the start, the Hero of the Shield was set up to meet the Princess and the King, and his relationship with the other Heroes wasn't the best. Oh my, how kind of you to put it like that.

What does this mean?

A dream... like hell!

That's impossible.

There's no way that all of it could have been a dream.

I confirm my own appearance once more.

My garments were those I wore before being sent away.

Look closer. There's no way that was a dream!

Something, there has to be something! Like I'd let all of that be written off as a dream!

"Oww..."

"Hmm?"

I turn around to confirm the source of that voice.

And there...

"A-are you alright, Naofumi-sama?"

“Wha... Raph... talia?”

Raphtalia held one of her hands on her head, as she woke up.

“T-this is...?”

Without any words escaping my lips, I froze up.

There’s no way I would let it end as a dream, but I never thought I’d find Raphtalia as my proof.

“Hmm? Naofumi-sama, your clothes are... mine too...”

Raphtalia tilts her head at the clothes she’s wearing.

Just what happened?

I look at the place my Shield used to hang.

And there, was a pitiful strap made of chains, with a familiar jewel in the center. My Shield.

(TL: This is the original ending. The rest was written because people complained too much. It’s text has been altered somewhat from its first publication upon the decision to continue the story.) (TL Note 2: I think you guys are interpreting the word original wrong here.)

Chapter 357: Undesired Return

Raphtalia is here.

I look around the area once more.

Yep, this isn't another world. It's the library of my reality.

"Um, Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"Shh! This is a place where you have to be quiet. I don't get what's going on either, so let me think for a second."

I tell Raphtalia as such, and look through the Four Holy Weapon's Manual again.

... I notice the pages that were once blank start to revise themselves.

—Having the Hero of the Sword, Spear and Shield, as well as the Hammer Vassal defeated left the Hero of the Bow and his party in despair.

In the end of the battle, they all faced utmost defeat.

While the battle raged on, Medea raised a high laugh as she withdrew her forces, who destroyed in the name of fun.

By the whim of the enemy, their lives had been spared, but those left behind were unable to feel any joy at this fact.

The losses they faced had been too great.

It seems that Goddess showed off her advantage by drawing back.

I wonder what sort of vile development awaits.

It's a truly unpleasant feeling. Having that annoying face pop up in my head makes me want to punch something.

...

"Oy, what does this mean?" (Naofumi)

I try talking to the book.

But the book shows absolutely no signs of action.

Ku... what should I do?

“N-Naofumi-sama?”

“Y-yeah...”

The book and the bracelet showed no reaction. I tried fiddling with them, but nothing happened.

Perhaps if I continue doing this in silence, nothing will activate.

“We won’t be able to talk much here. Let’s move. Follow me. I’ll explain where we are on the way.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Raphtalia)

... How should I explain Raphtalia’s tail and ears?

Well, I guess I can just say it’s cosplay... right?

I take the Four Holy Weapons’ Manual in hand, and lead Raphtala to the reception desk.

Wait a second, can I even borrow this book in the first place?

I lift the cover, and check all around it.

Yep, there isn’t a security chip embedded anywhere in it.

But still, should I try?

I take out my library card, as well as a random book that was close, before placing them both on the counter. I silently pass them over to the receptionist.

“Um... this book is...?”

The receptionist looks all over the book before tilting his head.

It seems it’s not anything registered to this library.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I forgot I brought that one from home.” (Naofumi) I casually take the book back, and successfully finish the borrowing procedure.

After that, I shoved it into the bag I had brought to the library with me, with all of the other books I borrowed. I led Raphtalia out of the building by the hand.

After leaving the Library, Raphtalia observes the area with wide eyes.

The building was in a relatively urban area, so there are many bars and department stores around.

What's more, cars and traffic lights... there are plenty of things she wouldn't have seen over there. Her reaction is natural.

"Naofumi-sama, where exactly are we?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah, it seems... we're in my world." (Naofumi)

"Eh!?" (Raphtalia)

What was reflected in my eyes was the usual cityscape surrounding the library.

Is it just my imagination that the quality of air seems to have gotten worse?

I guess the air over there was clearer.

It's the familiar world I longed for, but...

"For some reason, Raphtalia, I've returned to this world with you. In order to organize the situation, please just quietly follow me." (Naofumi)
"Y-yes! So this is Naofumi-sama's world." (Raphtalia) She restlessly looks around as she walks behind me.

Random passersby are taking quick glances at her.

So her ears and tail really do stand out?

No, more importantly, Raphtalia's face may be what they're focusing on.

That's Japan's good point. Even if something looks strange, they just let it pass.

(TL: You can pretty much explain anything away by, 'Because Japan')
As I think that, I notice my stomach is empty.

... There's money in my wallet.

I crave Junk Food.

I've heard that once you go overseas, you begin to crave the taste of home, but perhaps this is the same.

It's because the food over there didn't have much taste.

I used to prefer foods with thick flavor, but I simply didn't have the necessary spices.

"Okay!" (Naofumi)

Let's go to a restaurant.

I drag Raphtalia along with me as I step into a family restaurant.

Perhaps I should have taken her to the ones in the mall to see her reaction.

This time, I just brought us to a Chain Restaurant called Storm.

"Welcome, how many will we be serving today?"

"Two." (Naofumi)

"Two, is it? Then this way please."

The host leads us, and we take our seats.

Raphtalia seems to be restless, but she doesn't seem all too shocked.

"Um, what sort of store is this?" (Raphtalia)

"Can't you tell?" (Naofumi)

"No, I understand it's a show that sells food, but you told me to silently follow you, and it ended up being for lunch..." (Raphtalia) "That's right... even so, I need time to think. I'm also hungry, so I thought we would stop by for food." (Naofumi) "Understood. I'd like to try the food of your world." (Raphtalia) "Then here's a menu. Order whatever you want." (Naofumi) "Ah, yes! Wow, is there a slim projection crystal stuck onto it?" (Raphtalia) Fumu... now that I think about it, that world had quite strange technological advancements.

Projection Crystals would be equated to something like 3D Holograms here, right?

Well, the immobile ones are just pictures, so... no, perhaps a painting?

“You won’t call it a simple drawing?” (Naofumi)

“Hmm? But isn’t it really detailed? There was a painter among the Lemos, but I feel there’s something fundamentally different about this one...” (Raphtalia) Ah, so it’s like that.

In that world there were oil and water based paints, as well as magic ways of coloring. There were plenty of ways to make an image.

It’s not as if they didn’t have a realist movement, but those weren’t that high in numbers...

More than a painting, it’s quicker to just call it a photo. And for that purpose, a Projection Crystal fits best.

“Then this one.” (Raphtalia)

“Can you read the name?” (Naofumi)

“No...” (Raphtalia)

So she can’t read the language.

Spoken words will get taken care of through her vassal, but writing is a bit...

And wait, if that was possible, I wouldn’t have had so much trouble in that world.

I press the button to call the waiter, and make my order.

“You just pushed a button to call him, right? Is this a high class eatery?” (Raphtalia) If you think about it, Raphtalia’s been to local restaurants countless times in that world, so she isn’t giving that much of a reaction.

And it’s not like there weren’t any places where you had to ring a bell to call the server.

Though we rarely ever went into restaurants of that high a class.

“This is normal, even for my world’s commoners.” (Naofumi) “Is that so? T-that’s quite amazing...” (Raphtalia) Well, I wonder if Raphtalia’s reaction is wrong.

“Outside, cars like the ones in Faubley are going at speeds faster than Firo.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia expresses her thoughts as she gazes at the street outside the window.

Well, it’s true that a car’s speed is faster than Firo.

But that bird’s full speed is much higher.

When she’s boosted with Aura, it goes even further, and on curved and uneven roads, she can continue without dropping speed.

In that sense, the bird is more versatile than the car.

We should install one Filo Rial Queen per house.

“The bigger ones can even carry more things than her.” (Naofumi) “Wow.” (Raphtalia)

“Well, it’s a matter of carrying capacity, so if we do something about the size, Firo should be able to carry it.” (Naofumi) And while we were engaging in pointless conversation, the food came.

That was fast.

No... here, this was normal.

Raphtalia was also startled at the speed of the food.

“Thank you for waiting~.”

The waiter puts the items we ordered on the table.

What’s laid out before me is the nostalgic taste of my world.

Ah... just how many times have you appeared in my dreams? I begin eating with knife and fork.

“Thank you for the food. Um, I believe the food Naofumi-sama makes is better.” (Raphtalia) “I don’t need the flattery.” (Naofumi)

“That’s not what I meant... I think that this food is tasty, but the flavor is too deep.” (Raphtalia) I mean, it’s not like I used to many spices in that world.

I’ve been told that foods with unfamiliar tastes are good.

But there was nothing I could do about the simple flavor.

In truth, I hear that many of the younger generation of this world cares not for nutrition.

But for me, that's irrelevant.

As I think upon those lines, the taste of hamburger fills my mouth.

“ ... ”

To be honest, it wasn't really that good.

But for some reason, the first hamburger steak I had in half a year was the best I'd ever tasted.

We finish filling our stomachs, and leave.

... As I was leaving the family restaurant, a burger joint caught my eye.

“Okay, let's go there too.” (Naofumi)

“You plan to eat more?” (Raphtalia)

“I'm just savoring the taste of my home.” (Naofumi) I was full, but the nostalgia whetted my appetite.

And with ¥500, you can eat quite a bit.

Right now's not the time to think about my financial situation, and if it's just that much, I can spend it.

“Now onwards, Raphtalia!” (Naofumi)

“Y-yes!” (Raphtalia)

And so I ate burgers, and whatever looked interesting until I was satisfied...

I ate too much... I feel sick.

“So this is the taste of Naofumi-sama's home town.” (Raphtalia) “Pretty much.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia would say it was tasty every time, but in the end, she concluded the taste was too thick.

I don't think there's anything I can do about it, but is it really that bad?

My saving grace came in the fact that there were many things Raphtalia said she liked in what we ordered.

She'll have to get used to the culinary culture over here, so if there isn't anything she likes, it will be rough.

Well, take out having a thick flavor is something natural.

I randomly select a park bench to lower myself onto, before taking the Four Holy Weapons' Manual out of my Knapsack, and look at it again.

"Is that the book you read before you were summoned?" (Raphtalia)
"Yeah, I just flipped through it earlier, but what we've done is recorded as well." (Naofumi) ... But nothing was written after what I read before leaving the library.

It seems the enemy retreated, but in that world, the only Legendary Hero left is Itsuki.

There's Trash, and the other Vassals, as well as Glass, but this will be a hard battle.

The last scene I saw in that world flashes back in my head.

No... Even if we remained there, winning would be difficult.

Honestly, I can't imagine a scenario where we would stand triumphantly above them.

Because even now, I don't understand what it was that caused my loss.

"U...mu..."

Even so, I can't get a grasp of what I should do now.

I never thought I would find it strange that my status wasn't in my field of vision.

And wait, when I had felt something was off earlier, it was the feel of the air. Something's different.

It's like... something that was supposed to be there naturally had completely vanished.

What should I compare it to? I can only say it's a peculiarity in that world's air.

"Naofumi-sama..."

Raphtalia's looking at me with a worried expression.

In order to prevent her from standing out, her clothing consists of a shirt and jeans.

You can call it boyish if you want.

Raphtalia's hair is long, and her figure isn't bad, so I think she looks good in them.

"I don't have the slightest idea of what the cause was, but we lost. No, it's more accurate to say we died. By the time I noticed it, we woke up here, in the world I originated from." (Naofumi) I show Raphtalia my Shield, which had been converted into a simple strap.

And in return, Raphtalia showed me her strap-turned hammer.

"A possibility is that the Hammer and Shield let us escape here as an emergency measure." (Naofumi) "But that doesn't sound correct." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia flicks the strap on her arm as she answers.

Right. It hasn't been giving any sort of reaction.

"Well, there's no point in worrying about it, so let's continue the conversation. We've come to my world, and I don't know any way to get back." (Naofumi) "Yes... because we lost..." (Raphtalia)

"Yes, it annoys me to no end that we went out like that. So here is a single problem." (Naofumi) "What is it?" (Raphtalia)

"Raphtalia, it's about your life here. I told you that living in my world would be troublesome, right?" (Naofumi) I mean, she is an otherworlder here.

She doesn't have an entry in the family registry, and she'll have problems finding a place to live.

No matter what happens, I'll shelter her, but I don't know how long I'll be able to do that.

"Also, it doesn't seem like anybody said anything about your tail and ears, but if they get found out, it may be dangerous." (Naofumi) If they figure out she's from another world, they may bring her in for investigation.

I doubt they'll just go Oh, how wonderful~~. There's a high chance she'll be shipped to some research facility somewhere.

We'll have to avoid that as best we can.

"Y-yes." (Raphtalia)

"Oh, right. Can you use magic? Try to conceal them as best you can."
(Naofumi) I concentrate my mind, and test to see if I can still use magic.

... I think Revelation will be impossible.

『I, The Hero of the Shield, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the legend be read forth once more, and grant all unto him』

「Zveit Aura」

Oh? Aura activated.

A target floats faintly in my field of vision.

Raphtalia also tries.

『I, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth be read forth once more, let balls of light come forth』

「Fast Light」

In Raphtalia's outstretched hand, a faint ball of light appeared.

But it was quite a feeble light. It looked as if it would go out at any moment.

With this, a lighter from the ¥100 would be more reliable.

"Uu... how should I put it, controlling it has become really difficult."

(Raphtalia) The light immediately vanished.

Fumu... I can't use the Dragon Pulse Order at all, and normal magic's effect is faint.

It would be quite romantic to be able to use the magic of another world, but the output is really low.

It's probably because the magic power comes from within our bodies, so we can use a little of it. That sounds possible.

I don't know if I'll be able to replenish our internal magic in the first place.

But mulling over it doesn't accomplish anything.

"Anyways, for now..."

Just think about it.

There's nothing I can do. Neither the Four Holy Weapons' Manual nor the Shield react to my words.

Just what do you want me to do?

"Let's go to my house." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama's house?" (Raphtalia)

"Ah..." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama? What's wrong?" (Raphtalia)

For a bishojo to be adding -sama to my name... isn't this a bit bad?

She said it again and again in the restaurant, but now that I think about it, it's embarrassing.

I guess this is the proof that we've returned to the world of my reality.

"Raphtalia, while we're in this world, please don't call me -sama."

(Naofumi) "Huh? U-understood." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia nodded.

"N-Naofumi... sa-" (Raphtalia)

She suddenly cuts herself off as her face is died a deep red.

“Naofumi-san.” (Raphtalia)

“Yep, that’s fine. Next, it’s about you...” (Naofumi) It would be nice if people thought of Raphtalia-san as her nickname, or pen name, or something...

What sort of name should I... I glance over at Raphtalia.

Her face make seems quite foreign, and her hair is brown.

Is she within the range where I can talk people into thinking she’s Japanese?

No, it’s not like saying she’s a half won’t work, but it’ll be a bit tricky.

“Should I call you by a fake name, Shigaraki Tanuko, or something?” (Naofumi) “Are you sure you’re alright with calling me that?” (Raphtalia) Alright with that name? Me?

Of course not.

In the first place, Shigaraki just comes from the fact that she’s a Tanuki girl.

And wait, Tanuko is insulting, isn’t it?

Though I’m the one who proposed it.

Ponko, Rafuko... there’s already a Raph-chan.

“If we get troubled, we’ll think of one. Right now, I think Raphtalia’s fine. Then let’s go.” (Naofumi) “Y-yes.” (Raphtalia)

We walk through the town before arriving at my house.

Chapter 358: Returning Home

Now then, let me offer a bit of explanation about my house.

To put it bluntly, it's a detached house that lies in a relatively quiet neighborhood near the city.

It has a yard, attached, and my parents bought it on a loan.

I slide the key into the door, and timidly look around as I enter.

"N-Naofumi-sa... n. What's wrong?" (Raphtalia)

It seems there's some resistance to her calling me -san as she asks me a question out of pure curiosity.

"Ah, no, if we ran into my parents here, it would pave the way to a mountain of misunderstandings." (Naofumi) "Naofumi-sa... n's Father and Mother?" (Raphtalia) Raphtalia puts her hand over her heart, and takes a deep breath.

"Ah, it seems you don't have to worry. My mom's out at the moment." (Naofumi) After confirming no one was home, I opened the house door, and invited Raphtalia in.

"So this is Naofumi-sa, n's House?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

I thought I would bring her here once the world was at peace, but I never thought we would end up here like this.

I guess that just goes to show you never know what's going to happen in life.

"Make sure to take off your shoes before coming in." (Naofumi)

"Understood." (Raphtalia)

As told, Raphtalia takes her shoes off before entering the house.

Now then, my room is on the second floor. To organize the information on hand, it's best we go there, but... Here, I noticed something.

I'm an Otaku. An Otaku who invited a girl into his home, and is ready to show her his room.

The stereotypical development that comes with this situation is...
... Isn't this bad? I have quite a few embarrassing things displayed there.

"Raphtalia, please wait here." (Naofumi)

I stop Raphtalia, and lead her to the living room.

"Is something the matter?" (Raphtalia)

... Right now, I'm stuck between two big life choices.

I could take Raphtalia to my room now, without care for my hobbies.

But the Galge posters, the figures and the various character goods are out in the open.

It's not like I plan to hide the fact that I'm an Otaku at this point. I'm actually curious to see what Raphtalia will think of it.

But in that world, I continued to proclaim that love was useless and unnecessary.

If a guy like that's room was filled with books of women, and figures, just what would she think?

Is it not right to stop her for now?

Okay! First of all, let's clean the room!

"Please wait a second." (Naofumi)

"Ah, sure." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia sat down on the living room sofa as I quickly ran up the steps to my room.

And what I found was my nostalgic castle.

Just how many times have I dreamed of returning here?

But that isn't important right now.

Right now, Raphtalia's going to come here.

How about I just openly display this embarrassing side of me?

I'll stop that with all my might!

I stuff all the figures and Galge packages into the closet, and peel off the posters.

Oh? I had left my PC on the whole time, and Net Game Item I've put on the market has been sold.

... I'll close it for now.

Next is—

“I'm home~.”

Geh! My brother has returned.

That goddam Riajuu, why must he return at a time like this?

(TL: Riajuu can be translated to something like Realer, the people of the world beyond, 3DPD... etc, but I'll stick with Riajuu here) If that little brother of mine comes into contact with Raphtalia, it's going to get complicated!

I quickly leave the room, and run down the stairs.

“What's up, Nii-san?”

He had taken off his shoes in the entrance, and put his hand on the living room door when I called out to him.

“Wait, wait. Why don't we have a little chat?” (Naofumi) “Did something happen? The look in your eyes are a bit strange...?”

Is my face really that weird?

“More importantly, Niisan. Can't you make some food?”

“Why?”

“What do you mean? Mom doesn't seem to be home, so I thought I would ask you. I mean, I'm busy with my studies.”

“Just go to the convenience store. I'll give you some money.” (Naofumi)
“Eh.... Nii-san's food is much better than the ones at the store.”

This is strange. Did my brother really like my home-made food that

much?

No, well, I've always helped my parents out with the house chores, and I did it willingly to give off a good impression to them.

I've cooked for him whenever our parents weren't home.

But even so, did he ever say anything so Kiel-like?

Is this déjà vu?

"Didn't I ask you this morning? You totally said yes back then."

Come to think of it... I get the feeling I made some sort of promise like that.

I mean, to me, it's been more than half a year, so there's no way I really remember it.

"And Nii-san, you know, if you ever have trouble getting a job when ya graduate, you should try cooking school. Don't go off wasting your talent like that, dude."

Mu... this one, I do have a recollection of.

I remember. Whenever something happens, my brother is someone who asks me to go cook.

Unlike me, he doesn't really enjoy eating out.

Something about nutrition, and sodium, it's like he's a girl going through puberty.

"Anyways, today I have something to do. So go buy it at the convenience store." (Naofumi) "Is it a promise with your Net Game friends again? How about you just stop playing around with those guys, and start taking stuff seriously, man?"

And as he said that, he opened and walked through the living room door.

"W-wait." (Naofumi)

"—I mean, you have someone like Raphtalia-san with ya, right?"

What...?

My mind can't keep up with what my brother's saying.

"Ah, Raphtalia-san. I'm home."

"Ah...?"

Raphtalia's gaze shifts between my face, and my brother's. A worried expression comes on her face as she inclines her head to one side.

I mean, it's true, isn't it? Raphtalia's never met this guy before.

I mean, we never went back far enough for the two to have had a chance to meet.

"What's wrong?"

"No, I was just wondering why you knew about Raphtalia." (Naofumi) I mean, he greeted her quite naturally, just now.

"What do you mean by why?"

As if he thought I was mocking him, my brother makes a sullen expression.

"For argument's sake, you see." (Naofumi)

"Hah? Nii-san, are you going senile? Are you having premature dementia?"

"Shut up. Just tell me." (Naofumi)

"When you're just Nii-chan, you're trying to give me orders?"

This is the hierarchy of the Iwatani Household.

It may be a bit late, but that's quite a line he threw out there.

Since I went to that world, I get the feeling I've been harrassed by a lot of strange people, but it was like that from the start?

But that's not the problem.

"Like I care." (Naofumi)

"Seriously, what's wrong, Nii-san? Your usual loose eloquence and

bullshittery is gone, man.”

Who has loose eloquence!?

I always kinda wanted to return, but I shed tears upon receiving this treatment upon my return.

Why must my own younger brother wring me out like this?

“Don’t worry about it, just speak.” (Naofumi)

“Have you finally awoken to your role as the eldest son? How out of character of you.”

“Why are your eyes sparkling at that? You’ve always just had to add on that one extra sentence, haven’t you.” (Naofumi) “If it’s against Nii-san, then I won’t lose!”

My younger brother suddenly takes up a fighting pose.

Despite how he looks, this guy practices Kendo, I think.

He also did Karate.

Oy, there’s a world out there in need of a Hero.

Ah, don’t make a mistake and get hit by a truck, or anything.

I have a personal grudge against reincarnations at the moment.

“I didn’t intend to get into fisticuffs with you!” (Naofumi) “Now, be more and more willful! I’ll take on your challenge anytime!”

What’s with him?

Did he have this sort of personality?

“Just answer the question already!” (Naofumi)

“I-I got it...”

With a bit of sadness, but a lot more joy, my younger brother begins to speak.

Was he merely joking around?

“When Nii-san entered college, Raphtalia-san came to our house to

homestay as a foreign exchange student.”

“... Foreign exchange student. Homestay, is it?” (Naofumi) “Wasn’t she your friend on the net, Nii-san? You spoke to mom and dad, and she came over to our house, and just like that, she became your girlfriend, didn’t she, Nii-san?”

Okay, let’s organize this information.

It seems that here, Raphtalia is treated as a foreign exchange student staying in this house, under the same roof as me?

And she’s my girlfriend. What’s more, with parental recognition?

Just what sort of romcom is this?

“What country did Raphtalia come from again?” (Naofumi) “I don’t know that. I think you told me before, though. What was it again?”

Brother makes a tantalizing expression as he tries to recall the country name.

No, I don’t think even Raphtalia knows the country she’s supposed to be from.

It’s that. Should I just say Melromark in another world?

Her nationality is otherworlder. That phrase pops up in my head.

No, I really can’t laugh at that.

“Ah, Nii-san sure has it nice. Having someone like Raphtalia-san as your girlfriend.”

“G-girlfriend...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia embarrassingly touches her hands to her reddening face.

Her reaction is top notch.

“But you have one too, don’t you?” (Naofumi)

In the past, he said something like『Unlike me, the girlfriend-less Nii-san is pitiful. Do you plan on becoming a wizard or something?』 to provoke me.

Though I just laughed it off back then.

Thinking back now, it really pisses me off.

“Yeah, but compared to Raphtalia-san... I’m jealous of Nii-san! Raphtalia-san, can you forget Nii-san, and transfer to someone with better future prospects like me?”

“Not happening.” (Raphtalia)

That was fast.

Raphtalia’s quick and natural answer frightened me a bit.

It’s a mixture of happiness and embarrassment. A strange feeling.

... Let’s continue the conversation.

Lil’ brother continues to speak fluidly while nodding.

Aren’t you the one with the loose eloquence?

“As I thought.”

“I’m definitely tattling to your girlfriend later.” (Naofumi) “S-stop! If strange rumors get around, I’ll be troubled.”

Well, he’s a girlfriend-holding Riajuu in his third year of high school.

But if his girlfriend heard that line, I think he would be smacked the hell out of.

Just what sort of Galge heroine is he supposed to be?

“Anyways, don’t going around saying strange things.”

“That depends on your attitude.” (Naofumi)

“Nii-san, what’s wrong? You’re much colder than before.”

“I thought I would have to be stricter from here on.” (Naofumi) Is what I’ll answer for now.

I see my long time spent in another world has changed me enough for people to notice.

“I see, yep. It looks like Nii-san has gotten just a bit cooler. In the past,

you were kind, or how should I put it, too soft, so I like the atmosphere you're giving off right now. Good luck with that, Nii-san."

Is what I thought, but my brother takes the change positively.

"More importantly, you." (Naofumi)

I'll take this chance to gather some information.

I point to Raphtalia's ears.

"What do you think of these?" (Naofumi)

"Meaning?"

"No, I mean..." (Naofumi)

"What?"

... I lightly poke the ears.

Raphtalia reluctantly twitches them back and forth.

"I mean these." (Naofumi)

"And again, what?"

... Can he not see them?

I gently lift up the tail.

"Ah..."

Raphtalia lets out an embarrassed moan.

It is quite a sensitive spot, it seems. I'm a bit sorry, but there's no helping it.

"Next is this." (Naofumi)

"I have no idea what you've been trying to show me for a while. Are you bragging?"

Fumu... Raphtalia's ears and tail aren't being recognized by his senses.

Then what people were looking at when we walked down the street was simply her beauty.

"Now then, Nii-san. Food, please."

... Why does he want my food so much?

Is he supposed to be some loin-clothed dog?

“Can’t you just wait until mom comes home?” (Naofumi) “You promised!”

Ah, for the love of god! Even when I’m supposed to be busy!

“Naofumi-sa, n, how about you make it for him?” (Raphtalia) “Ah, see? Raphtalia-san gets it~!”

Little brother’s tension rises.

In the end... I ended up making dinner.

Why is the first thing I do upon returning from another world making dinner for my brother?

What’s more, while I was in the kitchen, mom came home. She walked to the living room, and started chatting with Raphtalia as if it were natural while munching on senbei.

(TL: Senbei are Japanese rice crackers)

She seems unnaturally close to Raphtalia, contrarily making my discomfort grow to massive proportions.

Well, the individual herself seems to be uncomfortable as well.

“Raphtalia-san, in the end, what did Naofumi-san do all day?”

“Umm...” (Raphtalia)

He went to another world, and ended up getting killed by a goddess.

Is something we can’t say.

“He was playing games again, right? You need to get him to pull himself together.”

From my experience over there, I’d like to offer a complaint or two.

But here... it seems my day = gaming.

In truth, it really was like that before I went to that world, but it grates my nerves when they actually say it.

“Y-yes.” (Raphtalia)

Being troubled with an answer, Raphtalia gives a response as not to cause any trouble.

After that, for some reason, I ended up making enough food for the whole family, and finally, I headed for my room with Raphtalia.

Well, it's not like I didn't do chores whenever I felt like it, but...

And for some reason, Raphtalia's room was on the second floor as well.

If memories serves right, that should have been a storage room, or something of the sort.

“What do you think has happened?” (Raphtalia)

“A place for you in this world has been made... the Spirit of the Shield did say he could tamper with cause and effect to some extent so that I could bring someone along.” (Naofumi) It's likely that this is the tampered world.

Just how thorough was he?

Anyways, after finishing the menial labor, I led Raphtalia, and returned to my room.

I didn't notice it because I was depressed over being forced to cook, but I had casually brought Raphtalia into the room.

“It's a bit narrow, isn't it?” (Raphtalia)

Well, compared to the house in the village, of course my room is narrow.

I thought my room would make her draw back, but it seems that's not the case.

If I had to decide I would assume she just didn't know what anything there was.

“T-that's right.” (Naofumi)

“So this is Naofumi-sa, n's room?” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia restlessly surveys the inside.

The posters and figures are in the closet.

There's only Manga left around.

"Are these books?" (Raphtalia)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Is it alright if I read them?" (Raphtalia)

"Can you read them?" (Naofumi)

She doesn't know the lettering system.

But if you think about it, you can understand some manga just by the art.

Raphtalia pulls a volume of Manga out of the bookshelf, and opens it.

Its contents were of a normal high school boy and girl's club activities. It was a typical romcom.

"/is this about the place nobles go to study?" (Raphtalia) "Well, it's a characteristic of our culture, per say, if I were to put it simply..." (Naofumi) "This resembles the art from the Hero of the Spear, and the Tailor." (Raphtalia) Yep... those two did it.

It was actually quite popular in the village.

The Tailor did look like someone who would draw Doujinshi. And yes, she did end up drawing them.

Motoyasu's were ero-doujins. They were mainly of steamy love with Firo.

But those were just him venting out his emotions.

In that sense, Manga existed in that world.

Though the genre was a bit biased.

I truly had absolutely no interest, so I didn't really remember it.

"Ah, right. Raphtalia, please remember this." (Naofumi) "What could it be?" (Raphtalia)

"In this world, in the country I live in, almost all of the people around

our age attends school. You're probably going to be treated as if you're attending as well." (Naofumi) "M-me too? To study for nobility?" (Raphtalia) The place for nobles to study... It seems I'll have to offer a bit of explanation.

Well, I'll put that matter aside for now. As long as she understands that.

"Yeah, so until we figure something out, we'll have to live our lives here. And so, let's try hard to get you to fit in here." (Naofumi) "Y-yes.." (Raphtalia)

First, I'll have to teach her how to read and write.

Hmm.

By the way, I checked the Four Holy Weapons' Manual after that, and it showed absolutely no change.

Chapter 359: Frustration

One week passed since then.

The Four Saint Weapons book had its contents updated little by little.

While wondering if there was anything we could do, we tried tampering with our straps at first and going to the library many times but there was no development.

The days passed with us worrying endlessly about what we should do. [T/N: I wonder what would happen if they were to try writing in the book and changing the story.... Does that not work?]

“I’ll be going to practice with your little brother.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia started sword practice in the garden with my little brother.

It was only with Shinai though. [T/N: bamboo sword used for kendo]

My little brother was beaten black and blue by Raphtalia and was frustrated.

Kendo was different in many ways, but Raphtalia was still at an expert level.

Or I should say, she ended up being on the instructing side.

I think if I was in my little brothers position, I would parry lightly.

The weapons in our possession were currently in an idle state.

In one week, there were many incidents of cultural friction from Raphtalia coming to my world.

Being surprised by the television and home appliances was a given but.... she adapted quicker than I imagined.

Well, everything could be settled with magic. In that world, that was.

It seems she thought the television was similar to recording crystals, which she had seen normally.

Although, she did show an interest in the program contents.

Movies and such were also.... I considered being indiscrete at this kind

of time but we did go see them.

I hoped she would mistakenly believe the movies were real, but it seems the Raphtalia with comprehension watched the movies and thought them to be fictional stories, or otherwise records of people who were summoned into another world like I was.

So she didn't make such a fuss.

Our courses were different but she also showed up at university like me, just in case.

In any case, everyone recognised Raphtalia as an obvious existence.

So in reality the reaction was this kind of thing.....

Right now is the result of helping my mother with the housework. Raphtalia was helping with the laundry and cleaning.

I was cooking meals every day for some reason though.

“Um.. What is this?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia brought a little Shigaraki ornament from the room and asks me.

I was informed by my little brother that it was something I gave Raphtalia.

To give Shigaraki ware to a girlfriend as a present, what kind of taste was that.

“Shigaraki ware.” (Naofumi)

“Huh.... Doesn't it kind of look like Raph-chan? Naofumi-sa..n gave Raph-chan this kind of appearance in the past.” (Raphtalia) “I think it doesn't resemble him much, although I guess it's true that it looks that way.” (Naofumi) Raph-chan has way more charm and fanciness.

I guess it's rude to confuse plushies and ornaments.

“So.....why....” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia had trouble verbalising her words.

I knew what she was referring to.

“Ah.....yeah.” (Naofumi)

Shigaraki ware has, you know... that stands out. [T/N: He’s talking about balls.]

Incidentally, although I haven’t seen them, there are female ones apparently.

“I think because they’re tanuki, maybe.” (Naofumi)

“Tanuki....” (Raphtalia)

“In my world, they’re also called Raccoon Dogs.” (Naofumi) While I was informing her, Raphtalia made a really sullen face.

Well, it’s because they’re not really a popular animal.

In reality, there aren’t many personified-tanuki heroines in manga or light novels, and they’re not very famous.

“In other words, Naofumi-sa..n thinks I am like this?” (Raphtalia) “No, I didn’t say that much. There’s also an animal with a similar name, the Raccoon. They’re also called Araiguma though.” (Naofumi) [T/N: lit. Washing Bear, the Japanese name for Raccoon.]

I used the computer to show Raphtalia.

When I tried searching, they appeared quite sufficiently.

“I feel like I know what Naofumi-sa..n is thinking when he sometimes looks at me.” (Raphtalia) Oh? I have a hunch that a strange misunderstanding has arisen.

Well, it’s also true though.

“And so you pictured this when you were giving me an alias, I see.” (Raphtalia) [T/N: Shigaraki Tanuko]

“Don’t be like that.” (Naofumi)

“Hmph.....” (Raphtalia)

Ah, Raphtalia was sulking.

That is, it is quite rude to be compared to Shigaraki ware.

“It couldn’t be helped. Because there was an animal that resembled a Demi-human.” (Naofumi) “Sigh.... I understand. I understand but it’s hard to accept it.” (Raphtalia) “And so, this is.... It looks like a piggybank.” (Naofumi) “It seems so. There’s a hole at the back for inserting money.” (Raphtalia) With sounds of jingling, Raphtalia shook the Shigaraki piggybank.

I wonder where it was bought?

“.....Father wasn’t this big though?” (Raphtalia)

“Huh?”

“Nothing!” (Raphtalia)

There was even something like that.

Apart from that, Raphtalia, who had been learning the alphabet little by little, tampered with my computer while I was in the toilet and was astonished at my playing of dating sims.

In the end, Raphtalia with an erotic scene reflected in her gaze was terrifying.

Well, I suppose it’s similar to the slate terminal and keyboard in Rat’s laboratory so it’s not like she wouldn’t know how to use it.

“R-raphtalia?” (Naofumi)

She clicked with the mouse as if she didn’t hear me, her face bright red.

I was worried she would decide nothing else mattered and kill time for a while.

However, Raphtalia was also of the appropriate age.... No, based on her actual age, isn’t this no good?

She was the same age as me in our census though.

“This is....” (Raphtalia)

“He~y.” (Naofumi)

“Hyau!” (Raphtalia)

Surprised, Raphtalia stiffened and then fell off her chair with a thud.

She appeared extremely flustered and panicked.

I understand her feelings.

If someone came up to me when I was reading an erotic book, I’d probably feel considerably shaken.

“Ah, Naofumi-sa..n.” (Raphtalia)

“I’d rather you didn’t touch other people’s computers that much but.....”
(Naofumi) “S-sorry.” (Raphtalia)

I have a hunch that it was too late, because Raphtalia had already quite a few of the manga in my room.

There were times where she’d read somewhat enthusiastically.

She had seemed embarrassed to ask me what was written. Moreover, going to my little brother and asking.

She was often seen with an erotic doujin that she got from somewhere.

When I speculated, it was established that she borrowed it from my little brother.

Despite telling others to buy doujinshi for him, what was my little brother planning by showing them to the pure-hearted Raphtalia.

And yet he goes and lends out doujinshi and dating sims from other people’s rooms as if it were natural.

And well.... Various things happened.

I remember my dark history.

I think Raphtalia did well but....

“Naofumi-sa..n..... Come over here.” (Raphtalia)

I’d prefer it if she didn’t copy those dating sim characters and lie on the bed while saying that sort of thing.

Being influenced by a game and doing the same actions is just like

someone from another world, huh.

One way or another, getting influenced by fictional works can't be helped.

Because that's how pure she was.

Even so, I have to caution her when she's mistaken.

"It's fine if it's just fiction but I'll get weak in reality. In Sadina's case.... Well, she does it as a joke but Raphtalia is fine as you are now."

(Naofumi) "I-is that so....." (Raphtalia)

She seems somewhat disappointed.

Raphtalia was relatively active though.....

She probably researched because she thought I'd be pleased by this.

In reality, I do feel a little happy but this course is wrong.

I kind of felt like Raphtalia is being contaminated by modern society.

I wonder if it's alright?

And that.... Let's think about that later.

Right now is the Four Saint Weapons book.

I think I should talk about the continuation.

Itsuki and the others who were left behind had sunken into despair at losing us, but they couldn't cry forever.

It seems the Goddess commandeered the resurrected Queen and invaded Melromark together with the Reincarnates.

They used the Queen, who was well versed in Trash's tactics, and because the opponent was the resurrected Queen, Trash was in a bad condition and wasn't able to seriously refine their tactics, putting Melromark at a disadvantage.

The Vassals were certainly strong, but the Reincarnates became strong due to being granted various abilities by Medea, and so apparently they had a handicap.

The story referred to them as the Hero of the Bow or the Hero of the Cane and such though.

The Four Saint Weapons book had written that Itsuki was fighting at the frontlines along with the people that the Hero of the Shield left behind.

Within that were also descriptions which seemed to refer to Sadina, Kiel, Raph-chan and Gaelion.

Gaelion was treated as the Dragon Emperor.

In the text, there was an explanation saying that the unsealed Ouryuu was useless as the worlds had already assimilated completely.

Damn.... So it's saying we erred in regards to when to release our final measure.

But.. As if we could sacrifice two thirds of the world population.

I could infer from the text, that every day was leading to ruin.

Scenes in which Firo tried hard and played an active role were also mentioned.

She had been the one who mourned the most at our deaths.

It seems Melty somehow encouraged her.

Right now, Melty was proceeding to the frontline as a commander.

It seemed they were somehow trying to find a way out.

Even then, the result was poor, now was certainly when the collapse of the frontline commenced.

It was a scene in which showed the Reincarnates facing Melty.

We couldn't do anything.

It was extremely frustrating. It's like saying dead people can't do anything.

It looks like there haven't been any more casualties among the heroes since then but I don't know how long that will last.

I'm in the real world that I had longed to return to for ages, but when I see this kind of thing, I'm not sure what to do.

So far, we've been spending our days looking for a solution, wondering if there was anything we could do.

The Net Games aren't linked from that point anyway.... if we were able to return, I'd procure weapons from modern society for everyone and—.. or so I considered.

I guess swords, spears, and small arms are probably things I can't obtain in Japan.

And so I bought various weapon encyclopedias from the bookstore as a substitute idea.

Because it seems like we could make some ground-breaking arms if I show them to the Old Man at the Weapon Shop.

In addition, I went to places like the hardware store and bought meaningless items that looked as if they could be absorbed into our weapons.

There were drills and such, but a Drill Spear?

If I had to say then it seems like they'll become Itsuki's equipment based on their shape though.

I wonder if Ren will be like us and do something in his own world?

Because his world is a Sci-Fi world.

If we could meet again, it seems like he'd bring some amazing weapons.

Meeting again.... I wonder if it's possible.

At this rate, won't we just stay in the real world without being able to do anything?

We searched through various texts and all sorts of other things but we couldn't find any useful information.

We also investigated whether there were any humans who had been transported from another world, but well.... we didn't discover any,

fictional works were the limit.

I also wondered whether there were games or stories that were similar but the result was unfavourable.

Chapter 360: Choice

“Oy! You’re listening, right? Do something!” (Naoumi) How many times have I called out to the Four Holy Weapons’ Manual and Shield Strap up until now?

The day is already ending...

My parents cautioned me to go study for college, but my body is unable to.

What do you want me to do?

“Oy!” (Naofumi)

I slam the book shut.

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“... Perhaps we’re already too late.” (Naofumi)

We’ve had absolutely no progress since getting here, and perhaps there truly is nothing we can do.

As I was thinking that, I got the feeling that my field of vision was turning pitch black.

“I... think it would be best if I stopped reading this book...” (Naofumi)
The days pile onto each other, and I can’t keep reading the book that records the path leading to the deaths of my comrades.

“Forget everything, and as if nothing happened...” (Naofumi) On my words, Raphtalia seems like she’s about to burst into tears.

“Please, don’t say something like that.” (Raphtalia)

“I know, but...” (Naofumi)

“Until the end, you cannot give up.” (Raphtalia)

“...” (Naofumi)

“Didn’t you want to return here after bringing peace to the world? I hate

it. An ending that leaves such a bad taste in my mouth.” (Raphtalia)
“That’s true... but even if we were to return to that world, what would we do?” (Naofumi) “What do you mean by that?” (Raphtalia)

“You know what I’m trying to say, right?” (Naofumi)

My question leaves Raphtalia silent.

Right, the identity of Medea’s attacks remain unknown.

What’s more, she took all the Heroes attacks as if they were on lower levels than mosquitoes.

Even if we got a little bit of damage through, it was but a scratch. It’s best to think we had absolutely no chance of victory there.

My job was to protect. But, insufficient in my role, I wasn’t able to do anything as I was taken out.

I don’t even think it has anything to do with ability or anything.

“To her, that fight was just a game... wasn’t it?” (Naofumi) She flaunted her advantage so readily. There’s no way I wouldn’t despair over that loss.

Even if we were able to return to that world, we would only end up dead again.

“Even so... I will fight.” (Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia puts her hand on my face.

“Naofumi-sa, n, even if you get the chance, please stay in this world. I am... going to follow the path I believe is right. I don’t want to choose the option that leaves me having died a pointless death.” (Raphtalia) Her words made me remember my own irritation, and made me want to smack myself for becoming a coward.

“That’s right... we can’t just stop fighting because we lost. Even if we may just die over there... it would be for what we believed in.” (Naofumi)
Just what was I so afraid of?

Right now, there truly is a bitch trying to end the world for fun.

Medea said it was for leveling up or something.

As if I'd let it get destroyed for the sake of that!

Tomorrow onwards, let's increase the scope of our investigations.

There may be some library out there with something like the Four Holy Weapons' Manual.

"Raphtalia, don't underestimate me. I would never be satisfied if I ran away here. Because when I met the Spirit of the Shield and Atlas, I made a decision. I would bring peace to the world, and then live in this world with you once I was satisfied with the conclusion." (Naofumi) In an instant, color drained from the world, and sound disappeared in its entirety.

"W-what!?"

When I look out the window, I saw that the birds had stopped in midair, with their wings positioned to flap.

The Four Holy Weapons' Manual began letting off a faint light, as it floated in the air.

Even though it never reacted once 'til now, what's it doing?

The pages rapidly flip back and forth.

The Shield Strap starts emitting light as well, and the light took a form of a person.

That shape was... Atlas.

"It's been a while, Naofumi-sama."

"Atlas... san." (Raphtalia)

"Yes. It's been even longer, Raphtalia-san." (Atlas)

"Atlas? Why are you coming out of the Shield? Are you alright?" (Naofumi) "For now, yes. As you can see, the time in Naofumi-sama's world is currently stopped." (Atlas) "Well..." (Naofumi)

I already got that part from the window, and there's no sound or color coming from the rest of the world.

If it was in another world, I wouldn't be that surprised, but it's a bit disturbing over here.

"Is this really my world?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, it is indeed Naofumi-sama's world. This world's principle of cause and effect has been tampered with to allow Raphtalia to have a place in it, it seems." (Atlas) "Fumu... and? Why did they do something like this?" (Naofumi) "A reward... it seems." (Atlas)

Atlas closes her eyes part-way.

A reward, is it?

That's quite some nice service you're offering if you're going to give a reward to the guy who retired before reaching the goal.

Well, looking at Atlas's expression, I can see this won't be that nice of a chat.

"From the Spirit of the Shield?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. As an emergency measure, the Spirit of the Shield reluctantly sent you back to your original world." (Atlas) "Well yeah, I would have died at that rate." (Naofumi) "Yeah, it's a blessing you had that medicine inside of your Shield." (Atlas) "That medicine?" (Naofumi)

"What you put in to unlock the Shield of O."

Ah, that dragon-repelling poison.

It had a skill effective against God, so I wondered what other powers it had, but it can even let you evade death?

"Because of that medicine, the Four Heroes were barely able to retain their power, and Naofumi-sama was barely able to fool death." (Atlas) That means the possibility Ren and Motoyasu are still alive is high.

Also, if some of the other Heroes die once, perhaps it'd be alright.

"Let me say this first, but the Vassal's lives aren't guaranteed. Raphtalia-san was revived on a whim, apparently." (Atlas) With a somewhat sullen expression, Atlas says this while facing Raphtalia.

“It was a mistake, a miracle stemming from Raphtalia’s coincidence with Naofumi-sama, and her connection to his heart at the time.” (Atlas) Sparks seem to fly between the two women.

No matter what happens, she never changes.

“And so? Why are you doing something like this now?” (Naofumi)
“According to the Spirit of the Shield, he wants to ask you what you want to do from here on out.” (Atlas) “... You mean whether to forget everything, and live in this world in peace, or die in a foreign world?” (Naofumi) “... Yes.” (Atlas)

Atlas gives her response after a heavy period of silence.

Those options are quite harsh.

For one week, I’ve lived here with Raphtalia. It’s not as if I don’t feel that it would be nice to do this forever.

That’s just how comfortable it was.

“The Spirit of the Shield says your opponent was just too powerful. That there’s no established way to defeat someone even the O Skills didn’t work on.” (Atlas) “So they don’t have any measures?” (Naofumi)

Until the wave ended, didn’t they summon the Four Heroes because they would be able to overcome it?

“Originally, they would just wait for the wave to quiet down, and even in the worst of situations, there was a possibility to avert them with the O Skills.” (Atlas) “What do you mean by that?”

I think I heard something similar from her earlier.

That on the path to overcoming the wave, it would somehow work out.

It’s as if they have some sort of flaw, or disadvantage.

“That much is... it’s just that based on the power offered by the medicine, those of the physical world should be put in a disadvantageous situation if the wave extends for too long... or it should be like that.” (Atlas) Disadvantageous situation...

Does that bitch of a Goddess have something like a weakness?

In the first place, there has to be a reason why she never came down to the world in the first place.

For someone with strange powers like hers, I'm sure she's destroyed various worlds before.

"But the world's already assimilated." (Naofumi)

"Yes. It's already... too late, says the Spirit of the Shield." (Atlas) Too late...

I was summoned as a Hero, and I came all the way here. Yet it just ends with those words?

But...

"As if I could give up that easily." (Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Raphtalia)

"Yes... and so, the Spirit of the Shield will wring out his last bit of power, and give it an all or nothing chance by opening the door to our world. He's asking for your decision." (Atlas) "So it's a one-way ticket to hell?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. This time, if you lose, it's truly the end. You really will die. No... death may be one of the better fates you could receive." (Atlas) That goddess can move even the dead to her will. Even if I die, I may end up her puppet.

How troublesome.

"Even so... will you go back?" (Atlas)

Even if I survive, I can't return. That's what the Spirit of the Shield is trying to tell me.

"I am... always with Naofumi-sama. Raphtalia-san is also here. I do feel bad for everyone, and Onii-sama, but... giving up is still a valid option. No one there would ever blame Naofumi-sama or Raphtalia-san for it." (Atlas) "I don't want to. For me... Naofumi-sama, the world, they're all

irreplaceable.” (Raphtalia) “As expected of Raphtalia-san. The Spirit of the Hammer is quite happy for you.” (Atlas) “Naofumi-sama, regardless of what decision you make here, I must follow that path I’ve chosen. I offer my deepest apologies.” (Raphtalia) “... No? Raphtalia, I just said it before, right?” (Naofumi) When she class-upped, and in various other times, I said but a single thing.

I want her to choose the life she wants to live.

That even if I wasn’t there, she had to choose her path for herself.

And by that right, Raphtalia has chosen to return to her original world, and fight.

I have not the qualifications to stop her.

This is my problem, and mine alone.

So what should I do?

Let’s see... if all of this happiness was for the sake of this decision, then I think I would curse fate as I accepted it.

No matter what conclusion comes about, in order to not leave any regrets, I want to protect everyone with my life on the line.

“It appears that you’ve already come to a conclusion...” (Atlas) “Atlas, I’m sorry. I’m going to have to waste the life you sacrificed your life to save.” (Naofumi) “No... as long as Naofumi-sama is satisfied with is, I will always follow and serve you.” (Atlas) “Yep, I’m going to return to that world. Even if it ends with my death.” (Naofumi) As I give my response, the strap and manual glow brighter, and a pillar of light manifests.

“Next... if you enter this pillar, you will cross dimensions, and you’ll probably be able to get there. I think.” (Atlas) “Oy, oy. Those are some really unreliable words there.” (Naofumi) “Well, the situation is as it is. Apparently, this path has been connected with the greatest possible conditions to ensure things go well. It took a while to accomplish that.” (Atlas) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Apparently, Naofumi-sama and Raphtalia-san’s strong desire to return

was one of the necessary factors.” (Atlas) “That sounds like the plot of an old game.” (Naofumi) In that game, you win in the end, and get your Happy Ending, but I don’t have much hope for this one.

If you ask me whether I’m scared or not, I’m terrified.

In the first place, in all the fights I’ve been in, there’s never been one where I wasn’t afraid.

And I’ve never faced a supreme being who I had no means of dealing with.

Yep, I’m pretty sure I’ll die.

Even so, I just don’t want to give up.

It’s quite a strange feeling.

When I came to that world, I honestly wanted it to fall to ruin; but now my mind is filled with thoughts of saving it.

What changed me... Raphtalia, and Atlas. Our comrades that are still fighting at this very moment.

I’m not sure if I should say this myself, but my personality is quite twisted. It isn’t the best.

But still, this isn’t a bad feeling.

That’s right.

We’re not returning just to die.

We’re returning to give it a shot.

If my feelings are what invited me to that world, then I’ll just follow what I believe in.

“The Spirit of the Hammer is in agreement. Please be careful.” (Atlas)
“Yes, thank you very much.” (Raphtalia)

As Raphtalia answers, Atlas smiles... she changes into a mass of light, and vanishes.

We gather up all the things we thought would be useful in that world.

I'll bet they won't actually be of any use, but they'll at least be of some relief.

"Then, I guess we'll be off." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

We muster up our courage, and plunged into the pillar of light.

Chapter 361: An Enemy of an Enemy is

It's not like we're just going there to die.

We're leaving to protect everyone.

I envisioned that wish strongly in my mind.

Even if we don't have the power to defeat Medea, I'll go.

But if possible, I want to protect them.

Even if my body is to rot away.

It felt as if I had suddenly run into a wall at full force.

But there was absolutely no pain.

It was as if I had crashed into a sponge.

What surrounded me was the darkness of night, and in the sky, stars much bigger than normal were glittering.

No, gem-like stars so big that it was offsetting glowed around me.

But the ground was too dark, and I couldn't really see it.

... As I looked around, I realized that Raphtalia wasn't by my side.

"Raphtalia!"

Even if I call out, there's no answer

"Raphtalia!"

I call out her name multiple times, but no voice rises to respond.

Is this already the other world?

I check to see if I can pull up my Status Magic.

... There's no response.

By the light of the stars, I began searching the area.

I trampled the ground of the gentle slope one step at a time as I rose up.

... Just how long have I been walking?

I think it's been around 30 minutes.

On top of the hill, on top of a large stone, I met someone clad in a robe that covered their entire body.

The figure was sitting on the ground as they gazed at the night sky.

Around him, many small lights gathered like fireflies.

His build was... short.

About up to my hip.

But, he had quite a bit of width to him, so I can't imagine him being human.

"You're finally here... I was watching from the top of the hill."

Like that, the robed figure called out to me.

He was watching? In this mountain so dark I can barely see my own feet?

Anyways, I'll try talking to him.

Depending on the outcome, I may end up fighting.

"I've lost my way. Did you happen to see a pretty girl anywhere?"
(Naofumi) "Eh? What are you talking about?"

This guy looks really shady.

The robe covering his entire body is just way too suspicious.

While he's sitting, there's something off about the way he's wearing it.

There's a strange extension in the back.

I guess I should assume he has a tail under there.

A Demi-human, or perhaps a Beastman. That possibility is high.

"More importantly, if you tell Me where you were trying to go, I may be of some help."

"My, how kind of you. Sorry, but I don't have a personality that lets me trust people like that." (Naofumi) "I see... then why don't I start by telling

you about Me?”

He dismounted the rock, and started to walk towards me as he answered.

The light of his fireflies illuminated the area.

“To put it bluntly, you guys ran into Me. That’s why I was a bit curious.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“When you got here, did you not feel yourself running into something? That was Me.”

“I... see...” (Naofumi)

So that back there was his fault?

Does that mean we failed in transporting to the other world?

“You sure made a mess of things!” (Naofumi)

“W-why are you getting angry? I was just walking around normally. The ones who suddenly changed your path and crashed into Me was you guys, wasn’t it?”

“Mu...” (Naofumi)

Thinking back, Atlas told me to wish strongly to return to the world. Instead, I... wished to protect everyone.

I was also thinking about beating that Goddess.

This train of thought... could it be it altered my course?

Ge... Then only Raphtalia was able to go back? What should I do!?

Shield! Please respond!

I think that as I confirm the Shield Strap.

A light comes out of it, and starts circling the robed figure before me.

And wait, aren’t those fireflies circling the area the Holy Weapon Spirits!?

“You... just who are you!? Why are you accompanied by the Spirits?”

(Naofumi) “So you can see them?”

The dubious robed figure seems surprised.

“Well, even if you say I’m accompanied by them... unfortunately, I can’t really see them, you know.”

“Are you blind?” (Naofumi)

(TL: Not an insult, an honest question)

“No, it’s not that. I can’t see Spirits, or beings of that sort. I guess it has something to do with My constitution?”

...

Something clicks, and the robed guy started to bring something out from the robe’s depths.

Is it a weapon!?

I braced myself without thinking, but the figure merely opened his hands to show it to me.

It was an expensive-looking necklace with intricate ornaments fastened on it.

“This is what’s attracting the Spirits here. You see, the Spirits can’t perceive Me either.”

He threw the necklace to the ground at my feet.

And the surrounding spirits started swarming around it.

... He doesn’t appear to be lying.

“Even if you ask me who I am, I’m not sure if you’d be able to understand any answer I give. If circumstances permitted, I would like to tell you, I guess. About how a normal person ended up in a place like this.”

Even the Spirit of the Shield left it to approach him.

There may be some merit in listening to what he has to say.

In the first place, there’s also the question of where it is I am.

“Can I ask you something?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll give you as many answers as you want.”

“... Then, where is this?” (Naofumi)

I do think the starry sky is pretty, but I really can’t see where I’m going.

Even with the light of the spirits, that doesn’t really change.

“Here? Would you understand if I called it the dimensional rift?”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“It’s the space between one world and another. Each and every light you see floating in the sky is but another world.”

(TL: Wait a second, does this robed figure happen to have a drill on him?) The man points his finger to the sky as he answers.

As I squinted my eyes, I could see that they were, indeed, not stars.

They kinda looked like crystal balls floating in space, I guess? Not like true stars.

And they looked closer that I thought. As If I could reach out and grab one if I had a ladder.

“This is the rift you can reach from any world. You seem to have come from a world without magic, so I guess if I put it simply, this would be space? Well, something similar to that. A rule-less world of disorder. A normal human would be guaranteed to get lost here.”

“Well... I do understand that my sense of common sense isn’t working here.” (Naofumi) “So it isn’t.”

I gaze up at the sky.

I saw the circular stars shining brightly.

These orbs, so each and every one of them is its own world... Where is the one I want to reach?

Unless the Spirit of the Shield tells me, I have no way of knowing.

“What’s next?”

“Let’s see... who are you?” (Naofumi)

Let’s assume the Spirit of the Shield can guide me where I need to go.
Now why did this spirit draw closer to him?

“Before that, I’d like you to tell me a little about yourself. Or else, I’ll have no way of answering.”

“Mu...” (Naofumi)

Yeah, before pressing a guy for information, it’s best that I at least name myself.

Even I’ve hidden my rank to do things in that world.

If you want to ask for money, you have to find out what the other person wants first.

Meaning I’ll have to give him an understanding of my situation.

His robe’s been suspicious from the start, but he seems to be earnestly answering my questions.

“My name is Iwatani Naofumi. In a modern world without magic, I’m a college student, and in a certain world, I was summoned as the Hero of the Shield.” (Naofumi) “Is that so? About how far advanced is the world you call modern?”

“...?” (Naofumi)

“You didn’t get that? The fact that there are so many worlds out there means there’s magic civilizations, machine civilizations, and many, many more. So when you tell me a modern world... is it a world with robots, or one that runs on magic? I’d just like a general idea on what sort of world it is.”

The only response I could give to that was silence.

What sort of civilization?

Just how far along is my own world?

I was raised on Manga and Games, so I have a slight grasp of it, but I only have my own world, and a magical middle age-ish world to compare,

so it's a bit hard to determine.

"Let's see... Having an idea of its tendencies and structure is enough. How old is it? Does it have autonomous sentient AI robots? Just how great is its ability to transfer information?"

"Its age is..."

I answered the robe's questions to some extent.

And he nodded, as if he was satisfied.

"I see. Thanks. And so, you were summoned to another world by the spirits to lend them your power."

"Well... you're not wrong." (Naofumi)

"Well, that's just how most summons go nowadays. And?"

"Yeah, I was summoned to a world on the brink of ruin. And there, I fought the wave, a phenomenon of world assimilation. But a girl who called herself God used a mysterious attack, and when I thought I had been killed, I was sent back to my own modern world. After that... well, I'm in the middle of going back to the world I was summoned to once more." (Naofumi) I make things short, as I explain my own situation to the robe.

He nods again and again.

"So you've made me say all that. I'll have you answer my questions." (Naofumi) "Naturally. Then I'll speak of everything that is within the scope of what I'm allowed to say."

He cleared his throat, before speaking once more.

"I'm a being who has crossed many worlds to kill the one you are fighting, a slayer of gods. That's perfect for you, right?"

"Wha—"

Wait, wait, wait. What's this supposed to mean?

Someone that convenient actually exists?

"It appears you don't believe Me."

“Of course not. If someone like you existed, then why isn’t she dead yet?” (Naofumi) “Hey, you see... please look up at the sky.”

As told, I look up.

Infinite worlds stacked up next to one another.

“I’m just a single person, you know? There are as many people plotting such things as there are stars in this sky. And for a long time, many of these problems have been breaking out simultaneously. There’s no way I could deal with all of them.”

“As many as there are stars in the sky?” (Naofumi) “Yeah. Since you’ve kept up with me this far, I guess I can tell you what sort of beings they are.”

The robe started explaining things one at a time.

“They’re generally the results of worlds too ancient.”

“Ancient?” (Naofumi)

“Putting it in your world’s standards, if science and technology continued to advance without end, what do you think would happen?”

“I wonder...” (Naofumi)

I don’t really like getting sucked into his pace, but let’s try thinking about it.

A world with advanced technology.

The world I knew had magic, and heroes, and monsters.

If you were to give it a genre, it would be fantasy.

So a technological one would be Sci-fi.

ESPers, and giant robots. Things like that would fight.

“According to Manga, I guess there would be giant robot wars across the cosmos.” (Naofumi) “After that. Try thinking of what comes next.”

“... I don’t know.” (Naofumi)

There are plenty of diverging possibilities.

Humanity could decline, it could continue to advance, it could migrate to another star.

“Well, they number few, but there are some who put their efforts into stopping death.”

“I... see...” (Naofumi)

“Eventually, that research comes to fruition, and the populace becomes immortal. Bodies that don’t die no matter how much you cut them up. Souls that don’t wither no matter how many millions of years pass.”

That’s already transitioning into the realm of literary creation.

I’ve read stories about immortal bodies. They were always harsh ones.

Even so, if they even modified souls not to wither, then maybe they could stand the test of time.

And it’s not like only a single individual’s immortal, so I guess that can be called the completion of one civilization.

(TL: And then there’s boredom, and sleep, and angels falling from the sky) “When that happens, there’s always that one guy who proclaims themselves god, and looks down on all those that are of the same make as them. That’s still fine in itself. They make moves to control more and more, and conquer their entire world. Then, what’s next? How about expanding to yet another world?”

... I see. How simple. How idiotic.

Stuff like that was done in my world, and that world as well.

“So they start invasions of other worlds?” (Naofumi) “Correct. This time, they take the magic they call science to another world, and go to war. And the amount of worlds they control increases. In order to fulfill their greed, I guess. Some of them get killed, but I’ll bet most of them see success.”

“That’s more troublesome than anything. So is that her identity?” (Naofumi) “No, that was just an example, so it’s probably different. There are countless ways to ascend to that level, and if you had to say, I think

she leans towards the magic side of the spectrum. You can imagine it to some extent, right?”

“Then tell me. What is her goal? She said she wanted EXP.” (Naofumi)
“It’s probably just as she said. She wants to get stronger.”

“Stronger?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. She sucks magic and life out of the world, and converts it to her own power. And if that happens, the only thing left for the parched world is to disappear. Well, I’ll bet the number of worlds she can turn to power is limited.”

I tried to get into the robe’s in-depth explanation.

So she came to suck all the power from that world, and she can’t do anything to a world without magic.

“She used attacks with things like infinity, and 100% and unlimited in their names. If you don’t know exactly what she did... I guess they were conceptual attacks. Since she attacked past, present, and future, it looks like she can do temporal attacks too. If she even attacked parallel worlds, she really, REALLY wanted you dead, man.”

“Conceptual attack...” (Naofumi)

I try to remember that Damn Goddess’s attack.

I died without knowing anything.

It was probably that.

“Right. She just faces her enemies, and declares as such. It’s like the logic of a child’s game. The means don’t actually matter, as long as she transmits the message 『The Enemy has Died』 across. Even if you used all the means in the world I doubt you would be able to beat an enemy like that. She politely told you she was eternal, and immortal, and perpetual, or something like that, and she seemed to be obsessive over her speed too, so she must be quite the battle maniac.”

Pushing messages onto people...

Honestly, I have no idea what he’s talking about, but let’s forget

common sense for a second.

Normally, you would have to damage an enemy, and they would die in a pool of their own blood.

If you take away the damage and the blood, the enemy dies without anything happening to them.

I really doubt such a thing is possible, but she definitely did something crazy and illogical like that.

“For someone like that... how can I win?” (Naofumi) “So I think it’s best to wait for someone in a similar position to her, don’t you think? The spirit lending you power was probably waiting for something like that to come.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, sorry, I forgot the explanation. Of course, for every world that tries to conquer another, there’s another that tries to protect. There’s an unlimited number of worlds out there. For pleasure, to satisfy their senses of justice, there are some like that too.”

Sense of Justice, is it?

The past Itsuki, Motoyasu, and Ren pop up in my head.

It’s true that helping others can make you feel good.

There’s rarely a person who finds the honest thanks of others to be displeasing.

And that feeling is amplified the worse the greater the depravity of their opponents.

But this guy... the way he put it seems to be concealing some meaning.

No, that may be to make me feel relieved.

We were just having a normal conversation, but it’s not like we’re allies, and I’m not sure if I can trust him.

There’s no defining rule that says the enemy of an enemy is a friend.

There’s plenty a chance that the enemy of an enemy is but another

enemy.

Chapter 362: Immortality

“Did you find My explanation strange?”

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“But, I mean... rules are relative to each world. What’s right and wrong is dependent on the person, right? It’s not like I don’t see that. And to fulfill a sense of justice, there’s plenty a world that would lend its power and cause the fall of another.”

“What? Weren’t they supposed to save the world from its collapse?”
(Naofumi) “In your world’s words, would you fight an armed criminal empty-handed? In order to replenish the power expended saving the world, they’ll probably use some of it as fodder.”

“That’s putting the cart before the horse.” (Naofumi)

“The larger bug kills the smaller ones to survive. Is that wrong?”

... I can’t deny it.

Rules are whatever was made by the people there. There’s some logic to that.

From my experience I can say that persecuting the Hero of the Shield is Melromark’s rule.

In truth, from the perspective of the many different forces I fought, I’m seen as the bad guy.

Since I’m evil, the right thing to do is defeat evil.

“But... she’s already descended to the world, right?”

“Yeah, and she’s dragged eight different worlds together.” (Naofumi)
“It’s probable that in the world that you’re trying to go to, the conditions needed for her to descend was the linking of eight worlds.”

“I don’t know the exact logic behind it, but that seemed to be the case.”
(Naofumi) Putting together the information I have, that seems right.

Or else, all she would have to do is come down and kill everyone in

order to level.

If there was a reason she couldn't, that's the safest guess by process of elimination.

"That's right. Let's compare this all to a paper. You can place a light stone on it, right? But what about if the stone were heavier? You'll need a paper thick enough to support it. The paper is the world, and the stone, god. No, it's probably completely different, but I guess if she just came down as she pleased, there would be terrible aftereffects."

A paper and a stone...

After the world assimilation started, the monsters levels all rose drastically.

The paper's capacity wasn't high enough, so it spiked its level?

The world has its own width, and a set amount of weight it can carry.

She gets it just big enough to sustain her before coming down.

I guess there's some sense to it.

"... I get what you're saying. Then if we report it to a defending world, will we be saved?" (Naofumi) "It's probably impossible. It'll be hard to get all the way there."

"What do you mean?" (Naofumi)

"The one who latched onto your world seems to be playing. Like a game, she makes the countries and people of the world fight just to see who will win. And regardless of whatever country comes out on top, if she senses a threat coming closer, she'll immediately suck up all the power in the world, pack up, and run away. In order to see those that believed in her, those that were delighted at their own victory, fall into despair, and laugh. I've heard about something like that. People who find delight in things like that."

Just how much of a bitch is she?

Nothing's happened yet, but I still feel anger building in my stomach.

“To put it simply, it’s devolved down to a situation where the world will be destroyed at the push of a button. It’s not within the scope where it can be saved. Too late. Even with her grand talks of the past, present, or future, once the world itself is gone, there’s no reversing time. There’s only something like migrating to another world.”

“But that doesn’t mean I can give up!” (Naofumi)

I have a single wish. To bring peace to that place.

I decided. I will save that world.

“I know. I never told you to give up. Even so... with her doing that much, I guess she’s at least being monitored, but there’s... Internal discord, was it called?”

As the robed figure muttered to himself, I imagined a criminal infiltrating the ranks of a police force.

While earning trust, he continues to perpetrate crimes.

Even if he makes a report to the Spirits, if the person reporting is on the other side to start with, help won’t come.

“Then are you... a citizen of one of those protecting worlds?” (Naofumi)
“No. I’m different. I’m just in this line of work because I want to be. I’m just doing whatever I believe in. And so, I have as many reasons to fight as there are people in this world.”

“Truly infinite?” (Naofumi)

“Right. Whatever’s the right course of action varies by place. Though I think the one you’re fighting has a bit too twisted of a personality.”

I see... I mutter, as the robed figure takes a few steps forward, and points.

“The world you’re trying to reach is probably that one. But even if you can see it from here, it’s quite far.”

He points into the distant sky.

And there, a single large ball floated.

But from a glance, I could tell it was warping into a more elliptical shape.

Inside, some force was acting to try to contract the ball, and make it smaller. That's how it looked.

"If it's that one, then I've been there before. There should have been someone to protect it as well, but it seems he isn't there anymore."

"So you've been to that world?" (Naofumi)

"I've lent a little bit of my power to that one. I sometimes lend power to children like you too."

"..." (Naofumi)

"Let's say I gave you three wishes. Now then, what is it that you want?"

He suddenly brought up a question.

... I suddenly remember a demon of a lamp.

"Will it be money? Reviving the dead? Power? Having the one you like look your way? Or could it be... immortality?"

"Y-yeah."

"I gave that world the power to kill those immortal. And that world on the other side just watched as an immortal made a mess of another."

So there are fiends in every world.

It's not just that Bitch Goddess... This really is an unfair place.

"Is your world a paradise? With the movies, and manga, and anime you know of, isn't that world like the story you've always dreamed of?"

"No, it's more of a pain." (Naofumi)

"I see. And, in the worlds I've stopped by, so that they can manage on their own, so with opponents of that level, they'll be able to manage to some extent, I lend them my power. The reason you were able to survive after getting hit by a conceptual attack is probably due to that..."

So that's why I was able to survive her attacks that had things like

infinite and eternal in their names, and flee to my world?

Atlas did say something like that before we left.

I think it connects to that story before.

What is it that an immortal will do?

Make their own kingdom, and show off their own immortal status?

“What do you do about Evil Gods? If things go well, can’t they be defeated?” (Naofumi) “Gods like that are just in it for the pleasure, so they give up quite quickly. As long as they can’t die, there are plenty of opportunities, and plenty of worlds out there. But this time is different. She’s just bloodthirsty. There’s no way you can win.”

“I understand what you’re saying. I can only take this as an elaborate joke, but it’s not like you’re devoid of logic. Then what should I do?” (Naofumi) “Want Me to go beat her? You won’t have any part in it, but it serves to benefit both of us.”

“If you get close, isn’t the world done for?” (Naofumi) “That’s because she can sense protecting worlds. I... can’t be sensed by the Spirits, so I can go undetected to some extent. I think it’ll be fine.”

He did say he can’t be sensed by Spirits.

It’s safe to assume there’s something special about him.

“But protecting the world will be difficult. If I’m right before her eyes, then of course she’ll notice me, and if I try defeating her from afar, I’ll end up erasing all foreign matter in that world along with her. I’m not that skillful. In the worst case, she’ll disappear along with the world.”

“Foreign matter? Can’t you just erase all of that from the world?” (Naofumi) “Wait, what I mean by foreign matter is all those who came from another world. Those whose bodies are disjointed from the world’s truth, and a few other things. I’ll end up eliminating them regardless if they be friend or foe. That will probably end with the deaths of the Heroes too...”

The robed figure’s right arm overflowed with light.

And what appeared on it was a claw of light identical in form to the Claw of O.

But the size was quite different.

Firo's Claw of O preserved its shape and size as a claw while it was used.

But the claw the robe showed me looked as if several swords had been stacked next to one another.

It's probable that the power he lent that world was that bottle Fitoria kept in the ruins.

That means... this guy is my life's savior.

Then perhaps I should believe in him.

No, if you think about it, I came here knowing fully well I would probably die.

If there's any measure we have to beat her, if along with the world, we die, and this guy beats the bitch Goddess, then perhaps my regrets will fade.

... No.

If we beat her, then it's for the sake of protecting the world.

It's because we couldn't do that that we're so troubled. I can't let this come to pass.

"There's a possibility the world will fall to ruin, but I'm sure I can kill that Goddess. In order to prevent any more havoc by her hand, should I end it here?"

"Wait." (Naofumi)

I grab the shoulder of the robe.

I decided at that time. That I would protect the world.

"What's wrong?"

"Is there no other way?" (Naofumi)

“None... if I said that, would you give up?”

I silently shake my head.

“As I thought.”

The robed man dissolved the claw in his hand, and turned to me.

“I... decided to save that world.” (Naofumi)

“Then with that resolve in mind, do you swear to never look back? Can you live on without regrets? Will you hate the world if, in order to save it, you become a sacrifice to it?”

“How foolish. Would someone who couldn’t do that crawl his way back from death?” (Naofumi) There are people I want to protect.

There are people I want to save.

There are people I love.

If I become a sacrifice for them, then that’s a cheap price to pay.

And wait, that really isn’t any different than before.

“I’ve kept you talking for a while. I have to go there as soon as I can.” (Naofumi) I turn my feet to the world the robed man had pointed to.

“If a normal person tried walking there, they’d get into a world of problems. I’ll take you, so just wait a little longer.”

“Like I care! There’s a place I must go. I don’t care what happens to me on the way.” (Naofumi) I say the words that had been on my tongue since the moment I decided to go.

“I’ll never regret it.” (Naofumi)

As if the robed man had given up, he hung his shoulders.

“... Got it.”

The robed figure took off his robe, and started folding is.

There... stood the strange lifeform depicted in Fitoria’s murals.

Summing it all up, he was something like a cat. He was bipedal, and his width was a bit unnatural.

But not to the extent of the beckoning cat, or earless blue robot.

He was wearing overalls, and his tail had the appearance of that of a lizard's. I can only see him as some sort of cat beastman.

The Spirit of the Shield starts to circle me.

It's as if he's saying, 'I believe in you.'

"You're going to die, you know? You're fine with that?"

"When I first went to that world, I discovered that life itself was a battle. Even if you're simply basking in a warm bath one day, you know that an end will eventually come. There's a time when you'll die. And in order not to have any regrets, I'm going to go ahead." (Naofumi) Even if this choice leads to ruin... I won't hold a grudge.

"Well then... just keep on going far, far in that direction, and you should get there. That's the path you were on before you bumped into Me."

"I see. I won't say this discussion was useless. Thank you." (Naofumi) Well, I really don't know. But I'll believe him for as much as the favor of indirectly saving my life is worth.

Hmm? Wait a second.

Can you get to a star in the sky by foot? No, I don't have any other means in the first place.

It doesn't seem the Spirit of the Shield can do anything to send me there right now.

Even so, it would be worse to have the suspicious guy I just met take me there.

I understand that he was going to do something with an unclear result.

In the first place, the world I'm looking for is right before my eyes, so shouldn't I just get up and go?

"Come to think of it, you had me introduce myself, and you never gave your name." (Naofumi) "My name? I have quite a few, but are you fine with the one I've been called for the longest amount of time?"

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Arc.”

“I see. Well, Later then.” (Naofumi)

“Just a moment. I’ll cast a charm to make your journey go well.”

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“First, shake My hand.”

Hmm... I don’t really think I have the time for something like this.

“Now concentrate your mind... I’ll know if you’re not doing it, so make sure to do it properly.”

“Quit nagging.” (Naofumi)

“Calm yourself... yep, I’m done. Fare thee well.”

I part from Arc, and started treading down the path.

The light given off by the Spirit of the Shield didn’t go forward to lead me.

Thoughts of stopping by another world to get a car or rocket pass through my mind.

But that’s not my problem.

I mean, there’s no looking back, right?

And if I waited for the Spirit of the Shield to guide me back there, I doubt anything would happen.

Atlas did say that was the last bit of his power.

It seems that Arc fellow wanted to take me, but I’ll bet that would be just as slow.

Will things get hectic? Don’t worry. They already are.

Chapter 363: The Power to Protect Everything

And I continued walking down the dark path.

Luckily, it seemed that proceeding down it was possible in itself.

On the way... I'm occasionally forced to take a break before I walk again, further, and further.

Eventually, various worlds start passing me by.

Honestly, I remember hallucinating that I was lost.

Sometimes I found myself in a desert, or a forest... This really is the gap that connects worlds.

But I never met anything, be it monster, animal, or human.

A place without the breath of life... I guess.

I often found my legs sprained and bruised.

But in order to reach that world in the sky I... walked on.

In that world, there's Raphtalia. There's everyone.

I decided to protect it.

Even if I crumble away while seeking my goal, I will...

The Four Holy Weapons' Manual was in my hand.

I would regularly open it, and check for changes.

But the story isn't proceeding.

Many times, I thought there would be no point, but I decided not to give up.

As I continued walking, quite a bit of time passed.

Was it a day, or a week or a month, or even more?

My sense of time is really dull here.

And in the world of the rift, I can't really feel hunger.

In the desert, I was given the sensation of being so hungry I would keel over, and so thirsty I would wither away.

But still, I overcame it.

I get the feeling I've been walking for quite a long time, but still I have yet to reach it.

My body is telling me I've already walked the circumference of the world, but that's probably an exaggeration.

It's usually quite dark, so I really can't tell.

But without the need for sleep, only fatigue piles onto itself.

I forgot that Arc was probably something similar to that Bitch Goddess.

For a human like me, there's a great difference in our sense of time.

When I look in the sky, I see worlds other than the one I'm venturing to sticking to one another.

Is that... World Assimilation?

It really is like two soap bubbles.

My Hair is growing like crazy. Really, just how much time has passed?

But I don't stop moving forward. I don't plan on stopping.

I was sick of it when I wandered into a labyrinth-like world.

I wasn't able to proceed in the direction I wanted to go.

This isn't getting anywhere.

Occasionally, I see shooting stars collide with the worlds in the sky.

I wonder what those are.

I've started to lose a sense for just how far I've walked.

The scenery that remains constant for eternity, I'm sick of looking at the sky above me.

At that point, I was only walking by resolve alone.

It was around that time that my head started to go strange.

I began to hear voices.

If I turn around, I can immediately go to the world I came from.

I can forget everything, and write everything off as a dream. A voice whispered this in my ear.

But, I am... not going to stop proceeding.

I mean, I wasn't able to run away.

There are people who believe in me.

There are people who depend on me.

There are people who want to get stronger for my sake.

And for those people, what can I do?

I can only use up my body to protect them.

I don't intend to go out in that unreasonable way.

I started thinking as I walked.

I began to imagine how I would be able to combat that Bitch of a Goddess more efficiently.

At the start, I couldn't get the slightest grasp of what to do, but if Arc's words are true, then it's not impossible.

The O Series can inflict damage.

Similarly, the Shield of O can endure hers.

Well my defenses were breached.

The order of the world?

Then let's just rely on the order of another.

As I walk, I approach the problem again and again.

Just how can I get the order of the world to rest in my body?

I remember the concept of magic.

Magic is created in one's self.

If it's merely a manifestation of the power within, then I need to make it more efficient, so that it can help just a little bit more.... Just one step closer. I want the power to defeat Medea.

My disposition is for Healing and Support. The Shield interfered, but it's still the same.

Then let's wring out that nature.

Let's refine the magic within me to its limits, and create one that can combat her.

Those thoughts eternally... until I began losing sense of myself, they continued circling around my head, and I remembered the Dragon Pulse Order.

Revelation was a mixture.

The Dragon Pulse Order manipulates the power outside.

With it... based on how you approach it, it's like... borrowing power from the world.

What if I change the borrowing to theft, and abuse it as power of my own. Isn't that how Medea's rules work?

That's why I'll place importance in the borrowing part.

Luckily, here I'm able to accomplish that.

In the worlds I stopped by, I began polishing the Dragon Pulse Law.

Eventually... I worked out a way to release my own magic outside, and take the pulse within.

I searched for a way to borrow the world's power, and fight.

In order to fill up your empty body, you borrow power from your surroundings.

While I was thinking about it, I felt the sensation of myself mixing with the world.

There's still a way. Let me... grasp the nature of this.

When there's nothing to do but walk, you really do think.

My body's sense of time sure is strange.

It feels like... I've been walking for years and years, but it also feels like it's only been a night.

As I think that... by the time I passed the next world, I felt something spill out from within me.

The next moment, I lost my voice.

"Wha—"

There... was the familiar village I revived.

But no one was there. It had completely been abandoned.

"Oy! Is there anyone here!?"

I've returned. As I think that, I search through the village's buildings.

But there wasn't a single soul anywhere.

Could it be... the world has already fallen to ruin!?

A black emotion welled up in my heart.

But my desire to deny it calls out to my rationality.

They must have just changed base due to the war.

Yes, that's right. That must be it.

And I entered what was once my house.

As I thought... it isn't much different from how I remember it. My house.

.... What's happened?

Did I not return?

I leave the house, and look into the sky again.

In it, a vast array of worlds was still spread out.

I'm still within the rift.

... I can't give up.

No matter what happens... I decided never to give up.

I'm going to reunite with Raphtalia.

And with everyone.

Law of cause and effect, was it?

In the worst case, even if the Shield lends me power, will she be able to tamper with it to do unreasonable things?

Thinking back, wasn't her attack based on that concept in the first place?

Then the changes my Shield carried out in my world were of a similar suit.

I can't use the Shield forcefully like she does. Or perhaps I don't have enough power.

I continue walking.

And I arrived at yet another world.

It was an infinitely expanding one-way staircase.

The place I just saw earlier was my own hallucination.

Then I'll just keep on climbing.

And in that time, I tried to polish my own skills as much as possible. Little by little.

And... eventually, I was unable to tell the difference between magic from the outside or inside.

"Good job getting all the way here."

At the top of the staircase, Arc was sitting as if he was waiting for me.

"Just a little longer, and you'll reach it. A normal person wouldn't be able to make it here."

“Back there, I was a village I knew of.” (Naofumi) “Right... that was a place you made with your own power, a place embedded in your memory, I think. Perhaps it was the shape created by your strong desire to return to that place? I mean, you have yet to reach the world you want to go to.”

“Take me already.” (Naofumi)

“When you’re this close, I don’t see the need to. It’s right before your eyes.”

“Muu...” (Naofumi)

... So that was something I created with magic.

Somehow, I get the feeling I’ve grasped something.

“Then I’ll be going on ahead.”

The agile Arc ran ahead of me on the path.

I tried chasing him, but I couldn’t keep up.

Just what sort of logic does this place run on?

The next place I found myself in was Fitoria’s ruins.

It’s a place I’ve come to once before. It’s nowhere unknown to me.

I tried to ignore it, and proceed, but I couldn’t get through the Forest of Illusions.

So I reluctantly proceeded through the ruins.

Eventually... I reached the stone house that that bottle was housed in.

“You’ve reached the goal. For you to be able to come all the way here, your resolve is truly something.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just let me go on.” (Naofumi)

“Calm down.”

Inside the house, the bottle still hangs.

“Have you heard anything about this bottle from the child who was keeping it?”

“Um... there was a bit of personal opinion added, but she did talk about it.” (Naofumi) 『At that time, the Hero said, ‘the first sip is eternal pain, the second, eternal solitude, and the third... a dreadful end.’』

Was it?

“Having listened to me, does it sound familiar?”

“A little.” (Naofumi)

I mean, there was that annoying word, ‘eternal’, mixed in.

“The first sip will give you everlasting pain, and the second will give you an immortal body to watch those around you die for eternity.”

“The third was a dreadful end, right?” (Naofumi)

“This is, you see... The Elixir, Amrita, the Eternal Peach, Soma, Tajiku Nakaku. All of them are medicines of immortality. Well, it’s something like that.”

(TL Tajiku Nakaku is a mystical tree in ancient Japanese Legend whose fruit is said to give eternal youth. It is pursued by Tajimamori) “Why something like that? She didn’t speak a word of it.” (Naofumi) “I think it was a promise. Or else she would have been treated as an existence that threatened the world.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

She may be a dim bird, but she’s one who honors her promises I guess.

Thinking about it, she was an existence that opposed the near-immortal Dragon Emperor, so she had to have been something like that.

“Dragons have a different role. I’m tolerating their actions for now.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

“And I might add, in that world this medicine has been diluted several hundreds of times. Its effects are low. There are rules, you know.”

“Rules, you say.” (Naofumi)

“Looking at immortal beings, what do you think?”

“That’s unfair.” (Naofumi)

“Right. In this world, it’s against the rules, right? If possible, I would like to have the heroes kill her.”

I see...

“This is the undiluted form. If you take three sips of the diluted one, you’re forcefully summoned as a Hero, eventually set to die. But what do you think will happen if you drink this one?”

“It’s the concentrate... right? What’s more, this is... not that world.”
(Naofumi) “That’s right. What do you think?”

“In the first place, is there any need to kill... ah.” (Naofumi) For incidents caused by those immortal, I guess.

“I’ve left it with a trusted child, so I think it’s fine for now. If something happened to it, I did plan on retrieving it.”

So Fitoria is his acquaintance.

two sips will make you immortal, right?

Then after that...

“Yep, It will grant you power for a battle without end. If you look at it from another angle, you become something like god. Easy, right?”

“...” (Naofumi)

“But... it may not be necessary for you guys. I mean, after you’ve made it all the way here.”

And Arc closed the bottle.

“Us guys? Unnecessary?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, I’m sorry. Should I have warned you? As I thought, you never noticed. You guys, slipped through dimensions, so your awareness of it seems to be a bit off.”

I try using the new power I had attained.

Following his lead, I try to increase my perception. I try tuning into the

channel of world where all my comrades are.

“Naofumi-sama!”

“Raphtalia”

And there, was Raphtalia.

From her power, I could tell.

Raphtalia also talked with him, and came here by following the path.

The fact that our thoughts coincided made me a little happy.

“You guys continued walking your paths, and in the end, you changed yourselves. Do you feel it now? You spent an unfathomable amount of time out there.”

“Geh!? Then what happened to the world we were supposed to save?”
(Naofumi) “Ah, don’t worry about that. That’s what the charm was for. I had the flow of time sped up around you. I thought that if your wills were strong enough, you would be able to handle it.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

It’s true that I thought about the concept of magic as I walked, but that was still within the bounds of humanity.

Is he making fun of me?

“To be more specific, you’ve taken the first step. What do you want to do? Will you go further?”

“Please keep your jokes in moderation.” (Naofumi)

“It’s not a joke, but... I still don’t think you guys have a chance of winning. Just try increasing your perception a little more. If you don’t decide your direction, you won’t be able to find your power.”

“Direction...”

I could somewhat grasp what he was saying.

What sort of fighting style do I have?

What I’ve been doing has always been protecting.

There were times when I did damage the enemy myself, but they number too few to count.

My essential direction... It's as if I'm deciding my path to Class Up.

As the Hero of the Shield, I never was able to, but this reasoning isn't wrong.

I also feel there's something similar to that popping up in my field of vision.

"What possibilities do you want to expand?"

Ark puts his hands together, and asks.

"Ah, there was something called Class Up in your world, right? Please think of this as something like that."

... What is this?

Since I've met up with Arc again, I've become able to sense his presence better.

Something like blood lust. Something that sends shivers down my spine is coming from him.

But for some reason, the person himself doesn't seem to have any such intentions.

And wait, that doesn't matter.

Let's go become a god to beat up that Bitch Goddess.

"Even if you don't decide, you'll get power from the world you head to. But can you win with that? I think you'll need to get something extra to win."

"That's right. It's a half-assed power. I won't be able to win against her." (Naofumi) "But if you drink that medicine from before, you will get plenty enough power to defeat her."

Saying that, he held out that red drink.

My changed body could understand that it wasn't out of any ill intent.

But...

“... Understood.” (Naofumi)

“Then take this—”

“Wrong, with a power given to me by a stranger, I realize that I have no chance of winning.” (Naofumi) Just like he has his own goal, I have mine.

If I get the power to Smack a Goddess, even after defeating her, my goal will not be fulfilled.

And with that, there's no point.

“Naofumi-sama...” (Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia... yeah, that's right.” (Naofumi)

My eyes meet hers.

And what she was trying to say was transmitted to me.

... I am the Shield that Protects others, and Raphtalia is my Sword.

I have decided my direction.

From the start, I could only ever become a Shield for someone else.

Then what is there for me to change?

What Raphtalia's decision was, was also transmitted.

I... Iwatani Naofumi have the disposition to protect.

I won't go against it. I'll protect everyone from this absurdity.

From all unfairness... The power to protect everyone.

If I don't get a dream-like power like that, there's no point.

Raphtalia answered my feelings.

And of course, it wasn't just Raphtalia.

My power cannot stem from me alone.

There's only meaning in my power when I have those I need to protect.

“You guys really are connected. I think it's amazing. You trust the other

person so much, and decided your directions to complement each other.”

I feel the world expand around me.

I never noticed it before, but power is overflowing in my body.

A power that transcends the previous me.

... With this, I'll be able to fight on an equal power with the Goddess Medea.

I mean, isn't that right?

I've become the same sort of existence as the enemy.

Now all I have to do is develop a physical plan for victory.

It's simple to understand. A Symbol to protect everyone... It's simple.

I inject my own power, and the power outside into the Shield Strap, that had pretty much lost everything.

Three powers different powers fuse, and a new Shield is formed.

Its strength is incomparable to before.

All the power I have is sent directly to defense.

This is truly the power to protect, from all things.

“Trust is the key to power, but dependence is something else entirely. Please take that to heart; though I think you two will do fine.”

As our views expanded, we noticed that behind Arc was a gate.

“Don't you think it's about time you set off? I don't think you have too much time left, you know.”

I open the Four Holy Weapons' Manual

It was written on the page.

The Melromark's army formation collapsed, and the reincarnators were closing in on Melty.

Chapter 364: Two Years

“Melty...”

Right now, the only one by Melty’s side is Firo.

But it will be hard for Firo to defeat the Reincarnators alone.

Quickly. As fast as we can, we have to go save her.

“Don’t worry. You guys don’t seem to believe in me, but let me explain. With your origin of power, and the Spirits’ help, I don’t think that Goddess can sense you.”

“In the end, are you an enemy? An ally?” (Raphtalia) “I just fight by my rules. I’m a God Slayer. And by My rules, I will expel those who destroy the order of this world. As long as... the Spirits who chose you continue to want you around, then I’m probably an ally.”

Around Arc, spirits begin to circle.

“I can’t see them, but aren’t you guys quite well liked by the Spirits?”

The lights surrounding him crowd around me and Raphtalia.

“Those are the Spirits of worlds destroyed. So I think they’re praying for you to protect for their share as well.”

“Aren’t they invisible to you?” (Naofumi)

“I can’t see Spirits, but by listening to the wills dwelling in the weapons, I can hear them. Your Shield... has a Spirit with a relatively moderate personality, right?”

On his words, something rises to the surface of the Shield, and begins to take shape.

The figure that appeared suddenly clung to me.

“Naofumi-sama!”

It was... Atlas.

A soul resting in the Shield.

She really did work hard with the Spirit of the Shield for my sake.

Her will, the regrets of the Spirits, everything... I won't let it go to waste.

"Oy, you. The one who's been trying to talk to me for a while. Are you... a Spirit? Or are you a being with nothing but a soul left behind? You're half transparent, and I can't really see you, but it seems a strong power dwells within you."

After gripping me tightly for a while, Raphtalia wrenched her off, and Atlas answered the question.

"Yes. Together with the Spirit of the Shield, we're sharing our power to turn it into Naofumi-sama's. Eventually... My consciousness, and the Spirit of the Shield's will mix together, and I will become both a Spirit, and a being with a soul." (Atlas) "Ah, good luck with that..."

Though Arc's explanations defined me as a God, I'm not really feeling it.

It's just that I'm aware that the amount of things I can do has increased, so the only thing left is to test it in battle.

"Naofumi-sama, it's alright." (Atlas)

As she said that, the Spirits started rotating around Atlas.

I begin to feel my own power increasing.

"Just now... the Spirits have granted us some power. Naofumi-sama, do you feel it?" (Atlas) I'm aware of the process Atlas describes.

We're being given something strange from them.

But while I can receive their power, I cannot steal it.

My nature as the Shield binds me, but it also becomes my power.

"Isn't it about time you left? I have some other things to do, so I can't really follow, though."

"For teaching us quite a few things, I thank you." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia and Atlas lower their heads to him

"Oh, don't worry about it. It's a power you guys realized yourselves, and

built up from scratch. As long as you don't forget the thing you wanted when you obtained that power, remember that you guys are not my enemy."

And Arc smiled happily.

But if you look at it from the other perspective, if we stray from our paths in the slightest, it'll be all-out-war.

Anyways, I understand my goal, which had once been unclear.

But for now, we're in a situation where neither of us considers the other an enemy.

We're pretty much unrelated now

He did do us quite a few favors, so if something happens in the future, perhaps helping him isn't the worst option.

Of course, that's only if me and Arc share the same interests at the time.

"If you ever find pain in the path you walk, and want to sleep; if you want it to end, just search for me. Granting an end to some things is my job as well."

"Yeah... okay. If I ever get tired with life, perhaps I'll leave it to you."
(Naofumi) "Well then, I'll see you then. Best regards."

For those barred from rest for eternity, they will eventually say this.

I just want a peaceful sleep.

I wonder if he's the one granted that role.

But 'Best Regard'... he returned my cynicism with some of his own.

No, is it common courtesy?

Not that it matters. Now, we don't have the time to worry about such things.

"Listen here. Before you enter the world, the first thing you have to do is make sure you're not sensed by the enemy. Your Shield's become something like the lynchpin that protects the world, right? In order to put

in a new pin, I guess you'll have to remove the old one."

Lynchpin... I see.

Right now, the one protecting that world is Itsuki... the Hero of the Bow, and his Spirit.

The heroes and Spirits from Glasses world probably hold similar positions.

But that pin could easily be pulled out by the Bitch Goddess at any time.

And when they're gone, the world falls apart.

Then... should I just increase the amount of pins holding it together?

Right now, me and Raphtalia can serve as a stronger and bigger bolt than before.

But with that, it's unreliable.

Even so, more. To increase the chances of our victory.

That means...

"Naofumi-sama." (Raphtalia)

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"Fine, I know. Let's go pick up Ren and Motoyasu." (Naofumi) We should be able to find and bring those two back.

Like us, they should be clinging onto life somewhere.

We prepare ourselves to cross worlds once more, as we start drifting through space.

I concentrate... those two's locations.

... Motoyasu is close. He's somewhere parallel to that world.

On the contrary, Ren is far.

If I were to compare it to Outer space, it's like he's a world a galaxy away.

Is that Ren's world?

“Ah, when you’re fighting, I think this will prove handy to you. Whatever happens, remember it’s only for spirits. Don’t go about drinking it.”

Saying that, Ark tossed the medicine of immortality over to me.

It’s not the watered down version, It’s the real thing.

Just how high would be the output on the skills unlocked through the undiluted formula?

“I pray for success in your battle to come.”

Ark waves his hand.

“Your arrogant attitude... I definitely will never be able to trust you from the depths of my heart.” (Naofumi) The way he offers trials to people is somewhat irritating.

The result is fine, but I hate how it feels like I’m dancing on the palm of his hand.

“Ahaha... as expected of you. But I don’t hate you. Yep, good luck.”

“I’ll definitely pay back this favor. I’m a man who keeps promises.” (Naofumi) “I see. If I need help, I’ll call for you then. See, I’m just a single man.”

Good grief... he doesn’t seem to have everything in one place, this guy.

Anyways, we need to take action to save the world now.

Even if we do end up repaying that’ll be after this mess is over.

“Raphtalia, Atlas. Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

“Understood.”

We change to light, and head off to Ren and Motoyasu.

—

Even from the outside, I could tell Ren’s world was one out of a Sci-Fi novel.

As I approaches it, I could see it, but it seems that the fact that other worlds exist is common sense to them.

They can't traverse between them yet, but perhaps in a few decades, they could put their knowledge to practical applications.

"Then should we enter?"

"Yeah."

Me, Raphtalia and Atlas infiltrated Ren's world.

We materialize our bodies within it, and begin our descent.

The location is... it seems to be Ren's room, for when he's alone.

We land on the floor, and look around.

It looks like a world of the near future, but Ren's room's structure isn't any different from those of my world.

It just looks like an exceedingly normal apartment room.

There's curtains hanging on the windows, and when I look outside, I see there's not much of a gap between us.

I imagined flying cars, but there's nothing of the sort.

Well, even if our civilizations are on different levels, it's still Japan.

Ren is... sitting at his desk. On his head is a large helmet.

I'll bet it's some sort of tool to dive into the world of the net.

If we weren't in such a hurry, I would like to try it on for a bit.

I mean, I'm an Otaku, am I not?

Ren is... stuck in that position. He really isn't moving.

He's breathing fine, so he isn't dead and he's no vegetable.

Is he asleep?

"What should we do?" (Naofumi)

"For now, just try tapping his shoulder a bit." (Raphtalia) "Yes, I think that's the best option." (Atlas)

I start poking the person I thought to be Ren's shoulders.

His body convulses for a second, before he slowly starts removing the helmet.

"... Who is it? Mom?"

And as he turned around and saw us, he was at a loss for words.

At the same time, I moved my hand to my chin.

"Sorry, I got the wrong person. Goodbye." (Naofumi) Raphtalia and Atlas have a questioning expression on their faces, as they bow and prepare to leave.

I mean, even if he gave off a similar feeling as Ren, his appearance was completely different.

No, I'm not saying his face was bad.

It's not like he came to that world with his game character.

The person I thought was Ren really did look like him, but he was a head taller than him in stature.

From what I can see, he's a bit different than Ren, who still had a hint of his youth. He seems older.

And his physique is better than the Ren I know. It looks like he's never missed a day of training.

There's no doubt he's Ren's brother, or some other relative.

Where did that guy go?

I know for a fact that he isn't dead yet...

And when I was preparing to jump through dimensions...

"W-wait..."

The Ren-like man grabbed my hand.

"You! You're Naofumi, aren't you! And there's Raphtalia-san... and there's even Atlas-san, who's supposed to be dead. What's happening?"

"What?" (Naofumi)

The one who looked much like Ren made the face of a person meeting someone of their childhood.

Eh? Could it be that this is Ren?

“Wait a second, you’re... Ren?” (Naofumi)

“That’s right. More importantly, I’d like you to tell me. Why is Naofumi in my world?” (Ren(?)) So it really is Ren.

I spent a large amount of time in that space, so I’m not one to say it, but he’s sure gotten big.

Right now, my overgrown hair was restored to normal when I got back my Shield.

And my body is telling me that not much time actually passed.

“Um... let’s organize our information. Ren, why have you... grown so big?” (Naofumi) “Why, you ask... because two years have passed since I returned here from that world, of course.” (Ren) ... Ren’s story goes like this.

As I thought, after he was killed in that world, it seems he was sent back to this one.

And after various things happened, he tried to see if there was any way to go back.

But in the end, the Sword remained silent.

Luckily, it still had enough power left in it to be used as a weapon if necessary.

So for the past two years, he did various things, and while wondering if the time would ever come, he continued to train for the day he would return.

Or so it seems.

This is a failure... before we entered his world, we should have looked into its perception of time, and taken that into account. I’ll bet the Spirit of the Shield was doing various regulations for me in that aspect.

“And... why is it that you people haven’t changed in the slightest? Well... it’s possible you just didn’t grow in that time, though.” (Ren) “The Spirit Dwelling in your Sword is...”

Atlas starts talking to Ren’s Sword.

“Without enough power, the distance was just too far... it was waiting for the time when the worlds would approach one another.” (Atlas) “...”

With that distance, wouldn’t it take quite a while for Ren’s world to get there?

Perhaps they were on a path towards each other, but...

I wonder just how much time that would take.

And wait, two years... the flow of time in Ren’s world seems fast.

“Um, it only took a week for me to be able to go, you know.” (Naofumi)
“What?” (Ren)

Ren is dumbfound.

“Then is the final battle already over?” (Ren)

“No, the flow of time in your world is just fast.” (Naofumi) We explain the circumstances to Ren.

Of how, while crossing through worlds, we were able to work out the mechanics of various powers.

Ren fell into his chair, and sunk his head.

“Just what were my two years for...” (Ren)

It’s not like I don’t get where he’s coming from.

If me and Raphtalia had to spend two years in that world, it would probably feel like this.

But perhaps that would have been okay in itself.

“Okay, then we’ll jump through time, and grab the you right after you got here. Is that fine?” (Naofumi) With the powers we have as Gods, and the Spirits abilities to change cause and effect, it’s not impossible.

It will take a bit of power, but I don't think anyone will complain about it.

It'll be like rewinding Ren alone.

"W-wait!"

Ren calls out again to stop me.

"What's wrong? You hate the fact that you wasted two years of your life, right?" (Naofumi) "I'm stronger now than I was two years ago! So please take me with you!" (Ren) "That means... your past self will have to spend two years waiting, but is that alright?" (Naofumi) On my response, Ren's eyes fill with water for a moment, but after that, he clenched his fist strongly.

"Y-yeah! If I have to wait two years to go back, I'll bear it!" (Ren) Well, for this Ren, I think he would hate it if we abandoned him for a Ren two years prior.

There's no guarantee what'll happen to him if we do that.

And messing with cause and effect is messy. In the worst case, he'll wait here forever.

"After that, I experienced various things. I'm confident that I'm definitely stronger than before! I mean I even went to another alternate world once!" (Ren) "Hmm..." (Naofumi)

So the progress I saw in that field from the outside was no lie.

And Ren was dragged into that.

If I just go about dragging Rens from the past, perhaps the amount of Rens will just increase.

And he'll just become a person with a Ren-like personality. Though Ren will become him one day.

"I got it, I got it. Then I'll be taking you to that world now, but are you alright with that?" (Naofumi) I think he'll be of help, but Ren has a place here.

He has the right to live peacefully in a world without war.

I ask Ren the same thing the Spirit of the Shield asked me.

“...Yeah. If it gives everything I’ve done up to this day a meaning, I’ll nod without hesitation. I will return to that land!” (Ren) “I see... are you prepared?” (Naofumi)

Ren nods right away.

Damn. He’s saying things like me.

It’s a bit late, but those are some embarrassing lines he’s spitting out.

Though I said something quite similar.

“Then let’s go.” (Naofumi)

As if to make an offer to him, I extend my hand to Ren, and he grips it without hesitation.

I activate our dimensional transportation ability, and we cross the void with him.

The current me and Ren are different sorts of existences now, so while moving like this, we can’t hold conversations.

Next is Motoyasu, right?

He’s apparently in a space parallel to that world.

But by the world’s order, or something like that, I can’t enter it.

“What should we do?” (Raphtalia)

“Fumu...” (Naofumi)

I tried to touch the barrier surrounding his world a few times, but I was repelled.

Is it because it’s a parallel world? I also get the feeling I’m not using my own power properly.

I can’t get a grip on what the rules are.

If I get to close, I’m sure the Goddess will notice us.

On the other hand, Raphtalia can enter it just fine.

“Okay, in order to hit the lynchpin, I’ll leave Motoyasu to Raphtalia.”
(Naofumi) “Understood, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“Naofumi-sama, I’ll pursue you after I retrieve the Hero of the Spear.”
(Raphtalia) (TL: And here starts Raphtalia’s days of mental anguish) And so we put off getting Motoyasu, and prepared to enter the world.

“Atlas.” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I’ll strengthen the power of the Spirits as much as I can, and try to conceal Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas) Atlas changes to a ball of light, and returns to my Shield.

... The girl who wanted to become a Shield really did just that, and now she’s protecting me.

It’s worthy of praise just how far she stuck to her words.

In the world we’re going to, what sort of form will she take?

Ren was able to sense her when we were in his world, but each world operates on different principles.

So we won’t know what will happen until we go and see for ourselves.

Anyways, Melty’s in trouble right now.

We were able to quickly recover Ren.

I strengthen my resolve, and broke into the other world.

(TL: So is he her type now?)

Chapter 365: Defense Link

“Queen Melty, hurry and evacuate!”

“I am the Queen here! I cannot flee from the battlefield.”

The enemy’s forces had pushed all the way to Melty, who was giving orders in the rear.

Including Itsuki, and the other Heroes, even Firo is being hard pressed by the advancing armies.

In a situation like that, Melty rushed to the field herself, and started offering support fire.

“Guhah!”

One of the soldiers protecting her was cut down.

They’re at a complete numerical disadvantage.

If you think about it normally, they’ve been pushed to a state where their defeat is all but assured.

The reincarnators attacks are reaching back far enough to damage Melty, the commander.

“Ah...”

A weapon wraps around Melty, and drags her off. She lets out a small voice at the event.

But even the Reincarnator holding it hesitates when it comes to killing a small girl like her. He opens his mouth.

“Is this the enemy commander? She’s just a child, isn’t she?”

“Hey take her in, I’ll let her into my Harem.”

“Mel-chan!” (Firo)

“Queen Melty!”

Firo starts her assault to save her friend from the men who were saying things she didn’t understand.

Her Vassal, the Claw, lets off a soft light.

Yes, while Firo is like that, she's the Hero of the Claw, and Melty's best friend.

There's no way she'll lose against any normal enemy.

"Don't get in the way, bird!"

"Move! Mel-chan!" (Firo)

But the Reincarnator halts her advance.

While Firo's gotten stronger as the Hero of the claw, her enemy also holds a vassal, and has received a strange power from the Goddess.

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

Ever since the Goddess Descended, the Reincarnators have been imbued with powerful support magic.

Because of that, they can be considered stronger than the Heroes.

Or else there's no way Firo and the others would be driven to a corner so easily.

"Whoa."

The powerful attack Firo unleashed was dodged by the man.

"That was dangerous, bird."

"Ku... move!"

Female Knight presses Musou Kassei to the limit, and starts slashing at him.

But with his unnaturally high support effects, it's hard to contest with the reincarnated soul.

"It seems this she's pretty important, this girl."

"I mean, we were told it was alright if all we did was capture her, right?"

"She's a bishojo, so I'll have her fall for my charms."

"W-who would fall for someone like you!?" (Melty) "This is the last time

you'll be able to say that. You'll soon realize my true appeal."

"Melly! Get your hands off of my daughter!" (Trash) Trash yells out.

But if he were to fire a skill, Melty would be hit too.

"Father!" (Melly)

"What a Foolish King.... My planning was so many levels over yours, was it not?"

"What the hell are you saying!? You merely used your numerical advantage! And whenever anything bad happened, you relied on that woman!" (Melly) Displeased with Melty's response, the Reincarnator began to glare at her.

At the same time, Melty chanted magic.

「Dreifach Aqua Slash」!

A blade of water slices him point blank.

It inflicted a light cut on his face, before coming to a stop.

"So you'll lash out at me? Never mind, it doesn't seem you're worthy of my charms. Die! For world peace!"

The Reincarnator's scythe swings down towards Melty...

Melly clenches her eyes closed.

And...

"For me to appear at a time like this, there must be something wrong with me."

With perfect timing, I protect Melty in a heroic fashion.

I stop the Scythe with one hand, and hide Melty under my mantle with the other.

Just like that day... It was the same scene as when I protected her from the Three Hero Church Knights trying to kill her.

"So you were aiming for that timing?"

As he guessed the situation, Ren lifted his sword, and pointed it at the

other Reincarnator.

Well, it's not strange for him to think that by looking at that display.

"No, I really did arrive at the nick of time." (Naofumi) "N-Naofumi!?" (Melty)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

It's an emotional reunion.

In Manga and Games, this would be where she would cry tears of Joy and cling to me, but...

『I who has understood the origin of power command...』

"Why are you firing magic at me without giving me a chance to speak!?" (Naofumi) "So she's finally revived Naofumi to torment us! Damn you Goddess!"

Ah... yeah, it seems quite a bit has happened.

So much that the Four Holy Weapons' Manual wasn't able to contain it all.

But why are they firing magic the second they see my face?

"Mel-chan! Fake Master, release Mel-chan!" (Firo) Even Firo is glaring at me.

She even released a skill.

「Screw Claw Ten」!

I hold my hand out front, and stop Firo's kick.

Why do I have to take both of these girls on at the same time?

Even Female Knight's giving me the evil eye.

My risen tension's been crashed all at once.

Well, I also feel that I was getting a bit ahead of myself having gained a new power, so maybe this is for the best.

"Well, I know you won't believe me, but the Spirits allowed the Four Heroes to escape to their original worlds. And like this, I've now

returned.” (Naofumi) “That’s a lie! The Naofumi I know can’t stop Firo-chan’s kick!” (Melty) “I wasn’t that weak!” (Naofumi)

If it was a Firo-Class attack, I think the past me could have stopped it.

... Right? I could have stopped it, right?

“Now then... For now, I was able to get in easier than I thought.”

(Naofumi) I ignore Melty’s magic, and turn to the Reincarnator.

This is... I don’t think I’ll have to show any of my trumpcards here.

From what I can see, it looks like Trash has mastered Revelation Class magic.

I can tell from the supports cast on Firo.

Itsuki is... fighting on the front lines, it seems.

Fohl is quite close by.

He’s evenly fighting back right now.

“Fumu.”

I activate the Shield, and look for a skill I can use.

As long as the world allows it, all skills that the Shield can use in the world have been unlocked!

... No, I can’t really say that. Just how long is this list?

Well, if it’s just to the extent of the skills a normal Hero can learn, I can use them. That’s a bit of the power I have.

「Defense Link EX」!

I hold out the Shield, and call out a Skill Name.

This is the first time I’m using this one.

It’s the first time I’m learning a skill directly from the Shield, but there’s no way I can’t use it.

The Skill Defense Link was just as it sounds.

Its effect was... all attacks those I consider allies take are treated as

attacks directed at me. I can shoulder all the damage.

EX is... a Hero's limit.

There are some levels above, but so the Goddess won't notice, I'll stop at this.

A barrier-like membrane is deployed around a large area, as I activate the skill to protect my comrades.

With half-hearted defense, the skill is suicide.

Of course, the current me can take this with ease.

Protect everyone. That's my role.

Never again will attacks reach my comrades behind me.

The radius is about 20 meters. If I raise the output further, I feel the bitch will notice it.

I don't really have a reason to hold back, but I don't know what will happen, so I'll do it in moderation.

Now's not the time for me to get serious yet.

If they run after realizing they can't beat me, that would be terrible.

I'll wait for Raphtalia and the others to get here before I really start exerting myself.

"Ren." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Ren)

"Don't dodge, just cut at them." (Naofumi)

"Wha—Are you telling me to die!?" (Ren)

"I used a power to make it alright. Just go do it!" (Naofumi) The sound of metal hitting metal echoes all over my body.

I mean, I'm taking the damage of all those around me at once, so it's to be expected.

"A-ah."

The surrounding solders find themselves dumbfound after feeling no damage while being cut.

Seeing that, Ren timidly drops his defense as he struck his sword at the reincarnators.

“You’re not dodging? Are you an idiot?”

“Take this! 「Variable Messiah」!”

“What!?”

I’ll bet the Reincarnator intended to cleave Ren in half in that single swing.

He was smiling, but as he saw Ren standing intact, his expression warped.

And Ren’s sword starts glittering brilliantly. It becomes giant, and he starts swinging it downward on the enemy.

Oh, that’s quite a flashy skill.

Ren definitely didn’t know that one before.

Oh right. Ren did say he went to another world once.

It’s probably a Sword Skill he acquired at that time.

Does he hold anything else you can only find in another world?

No, I don’t really need them, but I’ll bet the others do.

“Uuu... I feel like I shouldn’t be alive, Naofumi.” (Ren) “But you’re fine, right?” (Naofumi)

If you move your body along with the blade, and dodge by a manner of millimeters, you can eliminate all unnecessary movements, but that sort of style doesn’t suit me.

If the enemies can’t do any damage in the first place, you can just ignore their attacks without dodging.

That means, by nature, they can now attack faster than anybody else.

Well, it’s not really a strategy to be praised, though.

“Even so, it’s not something I’d like to use often. I’m scared for when the time comes where it seems natural.” (Ren) “If you show such leisure before the enemy, you’ll die!”

The Reincarnator tries to act cool as he attacks Ren from behind.

“Leisure? I’d like to call it trust, you know.” (Ren) “Guwah!”

Holding his sword behind him, Ren lightly parries the reincarnator’s attacks before slashing him.

“Oh my... you’ve gotten better.” (Naofumi)

His movements are sharper.

On the contrary, his basic abilities have risen a few levels.

It’s like a fight between an amateur and a novice, he’s showing a complete difference in power. Something like that.

It appears that his claims to be stronger were no lie.

“By the way... Melty, Firo. I’d like it if you stopped already.” (Naofumi)
For a while now, Melty and Firo have been unleashing a stream of coordinated magic attacks and skills at me.

‘You must be in pain, being controlled by the enemy. Don’t worry, I’ll give you peace.’

‘Master, Firo will get over your death. Firo will try harder, so you can sleep now.’ It’s like they’re saying those sorts of words of parting.

I thought I had made quite a dramatic entrance, but I’m being treated like a Zombie.

“I keep telling you I’m not Dead!” (Naofumi)

“I’ll reveal your true form!” (Melty)

“Yeah, Master is...” (Firo)

“Just quit it already!” (Naofumi)

“... This is a tragedy brought about by the trust they placed in you, and the Goddess’s underhanded tactics.”

Ren starts muttering with an amazed expression.

Please stop. My body doesn't hurt, but my heart can't take it anymore.

And as if he just noticed her, Ren started waving his hand at Female Knight, and calling her name.

"Eclair!" (Ren)

"Who are you!?" (Female Knight)

Ah, Ren looks really hurt.

He reunited with the person he liked after two years, but this is the outcome.

"It's me! Ren. Please believe me!" (Ren)

"the Ren I knew was a childish youth. He definitely wasn't someone like you! If you plan on deceiving me, try putting a little more effort into it!" (Female Knight) Should I just use some power to revert him after all?

But if I do that before their eyes, they'll definitely recognize me as an enemy.

"Trash! Just figure it out already!" (Naofumi)

"Nu!?" (Trash)

Since I had been standing still without showing any resistance for a while, it seems Trash figured something out.

"Melly, that Iwatani-dono doesn't show signs of being an enemy. I think it's alright if we trust him a bit." (Trash) "Father... but..." (Melly)

"I understand your sentiment, but after he's done this much for us, we have no option but to rely on him in this battle." (Trash) It's finally reached a stage where I can talk.

"Now then, Trash. I've a little bit of information about the situation up until I was able to get here. Fighting the Queen is definitely unpleasant, but will refraining from doing so make your wife happy?" (Naofumi)
"Nu..."

My words turn Trash's expression bitter.

He's been through some pain, but I won't let this reach a bad ending.

I'll definitely save Melty and Firo... Everyone.

"You don't have to give an answer yet. But in this war, just how much of Melromark will become victims? Will that delight the Queen?" (Naofumi)
"... Iwatani-dono's words are correct. Everyone! Follow Iwatani-dono's lead! Melty, follow my orders, and take command." (Trash) "Y-yes father! ... It's not like I trust you or anything, Naofumi." (Melty) She let loose some Tsundere-esque lines, that girl.

Similarly, Firo seems to have grieving over my death, so she's still half in doubt about me.

"I know." (Naofumi)

For the love of god, when I get back, I'm treated like a zombie.

That Goddess sure likes picking a fight.

Chapter 366: Paranoia Begets Paranoia

“Anyways, for now...”

When I looked to see what Fohl was doing, I saw he was being hard pressed by an imitation of Atlas.

“Onii-sama, you’re in the way.”

“Ku...” (Fohl)

As if she could see, the fake followed Fohl’s movements with her eyes while she one-sidedly attacked Fohl, who was on the defense.

She looks a little more childish than the real one, and a little bit prettied up.

What’s more, her breasts are strangely large.

Was someone’s wishes mixed into this one?

The Shield lets out a pinging sound.

Ah, so you want me to go there.

I lightly jump towards them, instantly arrive at the fake attacking Fohl, and grab her head with one hand.

『Onii-sama, are you telling me you can’t differentiate between the real me and an imposter?』

“!?”

Atlas exposes herself from the Shield, and begins glaring at Fohl.

And Fohl’s eyes expand as if he’s witnessing a portrait of hell.

Well, being attacked by comrades revived from the dead is a sort of Hell in itself.

『If you can’t tell a fake like this from me, I’ll scorn you.』

“Move aside, ugly!” (Nise Atlas)

“You’re not Atlas! Atlas would never talk to Aniki like that!” (Fohl) Fake Atlas begins to abuse me.

At the same time, Fohl swings his fist towards her.

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」,

「Vicious Tiger Piercing Foot X」!

Calling out finishers one after the other, Fohl aims kicking skills on the fake Atlas.

His attacks are deciding this.

Fake Atlas unsteadily retreats a few steps, before muttering.

“H-how foolish.”

Oh... like the Demi-Human Shadow I defeated once before, her body turns black before she completely fades away.

I guess that's a fake for ya.

The real Atlas would have been able to dodge that.

『Good grief... it seems Onii-sama hasn't changed at all.』

“Atlas... and Aniki?” (Fohl)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Are you... real?” (Fohl)

“It seems there was a Fake Atlas here. Did that Goddess look through someone's head and make it?” (Naofumi) It seemed to have no standard of quality.

That was probably what Fohl once desired.

Though that is questionable in itself.

“Aniki, what happened? Atlas too.” (Fohl)

“This and that. I'll explain it in detail later, but now...” (Naofumi) On top of being fused with the Spirit of the Shield, various powers from various worlds have been injected into her, so Atlas was able to show herself.

Seeing Atlas, Fohl rushed over to her with teary eyes.

“Atlas!” (Fohl)

“Ah, Onii-sama.” (Atlas)

Fohl tried to hug her, but he merely passed through.

She’s a mixture of a spirit, and a soul, so holding her may prove to be a bit difficult.

I guess if I had to say, Atlas is currently the highest level form of a ghost.

“I have no body, so it’s impossible.” (Atlas)?

“A-Atlas!” (Fohl)

“Ah, but I can touch Naofumi-sama, you know.” (Atlas) Atlas starts nuzzling me.

Please stop doing things to provoke people...

I mean, Fohl’s finally started to get around to calling me Aniki. What are you trying to do by turning him hostile?

“Gununu...” (Fohl)

“Don’t make such a jealous face. Oy, oy, don’t cry, it’s alright.”
(Naofumi) Perhaps he’s become overcome with emotions on having met his deceased sister. Fohl breaks into tears.

When Atlas is around, he really turns into an idiotic brother.

“Aniki!” (Fohl)

“What? By the way, I’m not a fake.” (Naofumi)

“Aniki!” (Fohl)

Fohl clings to me.

I don’t really enjoy being embraced by guys, but... I guess it’s fine for today.

I mean, he seems to be happy.

Even so, Firo and Melty won’t come closer to hug me.

And their treating me as a mysterious enemy.

I'm well aware they have their reasons, but I'll remember this.

"You survived!" (Fohl)

"Pretty much. But I'm about to burst into tears because no one believes me." (Naofumi) While that conversation was going on...

"Ara ara, if it isn't a little visitor from hell."

Medea instantly appears in the air above us. She calmly starts talking to us.

"I was sure I had killed you, but you're surprisingly tough." (Medea) "It was just a bit of a miracle. Luck was on my side, and I was able to survive your attack." (Naofumi) "..."

She seems to be laughing, but she's also thinking about something.

I assume she's figuring out that I was saved by what the God Slayer left behind.

She's not wrong, or anything.

But I don't think she'll be able to figure out I've become a being close to her.

If she had, she would have immediately erased me with a conceptual attack, or something.

If that happened, I would immediately counterattack, though.

I've even made countermeasures for that attack.

With the long time I've spent, I've thought long and hard about defeating her.

But to do that, I'll need to stall for a bit more time.

Honestly, it's best to think that I have absolutely no means of attacking until Raphtalia gets here.

"No matter. I'll retreat for today. Offer as many thank as you want to your miracle. I was just getting bored, but now it seems we can play a

little longer.” (Medea) Medea snaps her fingers.

And the Reincarnators that had been on the field, as well as their comrades, the enemy soldiers disappeared in an instant.

“Well then, let’s play some more games tomorrow. Goodbye.” (Medea) Just as with when she appeared, she vanished in an instant.

It appears that she’s really gone.

Even so, games...

So this battle is nothing more but a bit of fun for her.

Damn her! Well, I’ll let her have fun with her games for now.

We just have to be the ones preparing for battle.

“Well then, isn’t it about time... you stop looking at me like that?” (Naofumi) Starting with Melty, even Firo is vigilant of my presence. It’s an unpleasant feeling.

“Firo? You don’t recognize me?” (Naofumi)

“Um, you’re probably Master, Firo think. But like Mel-chan’s mom, and the Musou Grandma, you may be being controlled after death, Firo thinks.” (Firo) I let out a deep sigh.

Ah... this world really is crappy.

It never lets things go my way.

The second I get here, I’m already getting regrets.

Can’t this world get destroyed already? Not that I’ll let it.

“N-Naofumi-san!?”

Itsuki and Rishia ran over.

The enemy had completely disappeared, so it’s natural that he reunited with the main forces.

“Yo, Itsuki. You sure worked hard. And, I understand that you may be wary of me, but please believe me.” (Naofumi) Itsuki seems half in doubt as he stares at me.

I think he'll be a reliable comrade, but it's troubling that he's approaching bow in hand.

"Itsuki! It's been a while!"

"Um... who is that over there? He looks kinda like Ren." (Itsuki) "Yeah, that's Ren. Before coming back here, he spent two whole years in his original world." (Naofumi) "Eh!?" (Itsuki)

Itsuki's face is colored with surprise.

I mean, even I was quite shocked at it.

"I know it may be a bit much to believe us here." (Naofumi) Female Knight is still giving Ren a suspicious look.

Ren is trying to find words to return.

But that Bitch Goddess really never does anything decent.

"Rafu~."

"Oh? If it isn't Raph-chan." (Naofumi)

If even Raph-chan was wary of me, I'd get depressed, but Raph-chan lovingly brushes up against my side.

Oh... It seems the ones here who believe me are only Raph-chan and Fohl.

I'll give him a lot of pats.

"Aniki is the real deal. I can tell that he's not being used." (Fohl) "That's right. It is exceedingly unpleasant to see you handle Naofumi-sama like that." (Atlas) "Looking closely, that Atlas-chan. She doesn't have a body?"

"I kinda became one with the Spirit of the Shield. I'm different from some fake that was made with someone's memories at the base, right?" (Atlas) Seeing Atlas distance herself from Fohl, Melty and Firo drop their guard.

Is that really enough to convince them?

"It's not like I believe you, or anything, you got that!?" (Melty) "Ah, yes, got it." (Naofumi)

Paranoia really is something else.

“I know how things generally progressed, but I’d like the specifics.”
(Naofumi) “Um, so Naofumi. Raphtalia-san is...” (Melty)

Troubled with how to ask the question, Melty tries talking to me.

It’s not strange for them to think she died with me back then.

“She’s in the middle of another job. Just like we brought Ren, she’s off to go drag Motoyasu here.” (Naofumi) “Really!?”

Hmm? They were listening in? Midori and the other two draw closer.

These guys love Motoyasu. It’s probably best if I tell them.

“Is Motoyasu-san alive as well?” (Midori)

“Yep, he’s still kicking. It seems he was sent to a world parallel this one, so finding him was quite a trial.” (Naofumi) “So Mokkun isn’t in his original world?” (Kuu) “That seems to be the case. I thought I would try searching his world, but I got a response from him around here.”

(Naofumi) “Where’s this parallel world? Is that where Mou-chan is?”

(Marin) “It’s hard to explain. It’s a different world almost exactly the same as this one, to put it simply.” (Naofumi) “Different, and yet the same?”

“If, at that time... wait, that guy can have regret? If, at that time, he had a regret, and wanted to make another choice, then he’s in a world where that can happen.” (Naofumi) Midori, Firo and the other Filo Rials tilt their heads.

They’re definitely not getting any of this.

But Midori is supposed to be smarter than Firo, so I think he understands more. He mutters to himself before seemingly accepting it.

“To put it so Future Queen of the Filo Rials, Firo, can understand it, there’s a world where you never met Naofumi-san, and you were born and raised as a normal Filo Rial.” (Midori) “Really?” (Firo)

“That’s how it is.” (Naofumi)

“Hmm?” (Firo)

Firo tilts her head again.

With her head, I think it'll be impossible to get this through.

Well, that's just how she is.

I really don't want to meet a smart Firo someday.

“Anyways, there's no need for us to stand around here to talk. Shouldn't we return to somewhere safe?” (Naofumi) I mean, we already intercepted the enemy.

“... Understood. Let's leave this to a person who can determine whether this Naofumi is real or fake. Until then, we'll put that matter on hold.”

(Melly) “There's someone who can do that?” (NAofumi)

What a convenient special ability.

Does that mean there's a reincarnator on our side?

“What are you talking about? It's Sadina-san.” (Melly) Ah, Sadina.

Does she have the ability to determine my authenticity?

No... I've been with her for a long time, so perhaps she can.

There's no helping it. If that's what it takes to get them to believe me, I'll undertake Sadina's appraisal.

And like that, we left Melromark's battlefield, and started moving towards the Castle Town.

Chapter 367: Aiming for Number Three

After arriving at the Castle Town, we proceeded directly to the castle.

“Ara~ if it isn’t Naofumi-chan.”

Sadina glomped me.

Due to her experimentation with me, she’s become unbelievably strong. On the front lines, she’s a fighting force that even rivals the Heroes.

She has some deep scars here and there. I could tell how harsh the battles had been at a glance.

It’s like... there’s a certain dignity she holds with her scars.

Like some sort of veteran warrior.

I don’t think she really minds them, but I guess she really has been pushing herself lately.

Now, I can understand. She’s not a reincarnator, simply a resident of this world.

“Is it true that Niichan returned!?”

Kiel shouts out in an excited voice.

But she doesn’t try to draw closer.

“... Where’s Raphtalia-chan?” (Kiel)

“I just explained it earlier.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi...!”

Glass let out a surprised voice upon seeing my face, after which she drew her weapon and made some distance between us.

Ah, so she was fighting as a pair with Sadina.

“Wait, wait. I’m not controlled by a Goddess, nor have I been revived!” (Naofumi) “I wonder. There’s the saying a lack of doubt will bite you back.” (Glass) She’s really wary.

Why is it like this no matter where I go?

I explain the situation once more.

As a result of various things, I got a power rivalling the Goddess's.

I passively activate barrier magic and set it so the goddess won't notice.

"And so, Sadina." (Naofumi)

"What~?" (Sadina)

"I know you may be wary of me, but please believe me." (Naofumi) She's just acting friendly. She's probably suspecting me under that guise.

Because that's how Sadina is.

Right, the fact that my comrades don't believe me because of that damn Goddess's actions pisses me off.

I would really like to go directly pick a fight with her, but there's a chance I'll lose a good opportunity because of it.

To take her out without fail, there's a procedure I have to go through.

And it's not like the world power the spirits gave me is unlimited or anything.

"Ara~? Oneesan believes you, you know. This Naofumi-chan is the real one." (Sadina) "Is what you say, but how is it beneath that smile? Did you think I couldn't tell?" (Naofumi) "I think Naofumi-chan is being the doubtful one here." (Sadina) "Fumu... then Sadina, let's go to an empty room for a second." (Naofumi) "Ara? Are you finally letting out your feelings for me?" (Sadina)"

"Ah, yes, yes. That works, so let's go." (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-sama I want in too." (Atlas)

For some reason, Atlas follows us.

No, I'm really not doing anything like that.

"Go seduce Fohl, or play with him or something." (Naofumi) "I don't want to." (Atlas)

"Atlas! Your Niichan's been working hard you know!" (Fohl) "That's

right! Fohl-niichan's amazing! You can't see that, Atlas-chan?" (Kiel) "I'm well aware. But His dignity dwindles in my eyes every time he tries doting on me." (Atlas) "Is that true... then Fohl-niichan! Let's go show off together, and get Atlas to accept you!" (Kiel) Kiel innocently intertwines her arm around Fohl's.

They got along well for a while, but aren't they closer than before?

"So you had that sort of relationship? Onii-sama, I will support you from the bottom of my heart?" (Atlas) "What is she talking about Fohl-niichan? Did something good happen to you?" (Kiel) "N-no! I... I am..." (Fohl)

Ah, Fohl looks a little happy.

For a misunderstanding like that to make him happy, he might just be a pervert.

... Well, he is happy at having met someone who died.

And she's unbelievably close to how she was in life.

"Ren, Atlas, can I leave the explanations to you?" (Naofumi) "Got it! I'll explain it all to everyone." (Ren)

"Leave it to me." (Atlas)

I have Atlas and Ren take care of the explanations, as I go with Sadina to another place.

The second we become alone, Sadina raises her guard.

"... And? Naofumi-chan, was what you were saying before true?" (Sadina) "What reason do I have to lie? Is what I'd like to say, but it seems you guys have been deceived quite a bit by that Bitch Goddess." (Naofumi) "Yes, there were traitors among us... no, that's wrong. It's because some were killed and then controlled. Among the village children, quite a few were used like that." (Sadina) "How troublesome." (Naofumi)

Reviving the dead... Unless I actually look at them, I won't be able to tell what she did to them, but if I were to put it honestly, I don't know how to

deal with it.

If I had their soul, perhaps it would be possible, but I'm not going to go ahead and try it.

It's just that I know that revival isn't very good for the soul.

It will taint it, or...

This part depends on the laws of the world, it seems.

I don't think the way the Goddess revives them will guarantee them a long life to come.

I mean, this is a world she's going to destroy once she gets bored.

Even her reincarnations are more acceptable than this.

What's more, she uses brainwashing or something to control them.

"... I've had to end a few of them with these very hands." (Sadina) "I see..." (Naofumi)

Holding herself steady, Sadina has it rough.

"Hah... Sadina, come over here for a second." (Naofumi)

"Ara? Are you going to comfort this oneesan?" (Sadina)

"If you want me to, I will. But looking at your wounds pains me, so let me heal them." (Naofumi) I turn to Sadina's injuries, and cast Healing Magic on them.

They're too deep for normal Healing Magic to have an effect, but the current me can do it.

"I said it before, right? Sadina, you're best when you're relaxed. That smooth body of yours has an appeal in itself, and it doesn't feel right when you have strange wounds covering it." (Naofumi) "Is my skin really that appealing to you?" (Sadina)

"Yeah, that's right. Keep telling yourself that, and stay still for a moment." (Naofumi) ... When I look closer, I find her tail is fake, prosthetic.

Her swimming form is pretty to a human like me.

I can't leave that as it is.

I use high level healing magic... no in this case, I guess it's been elevated to regeneration magic, and start treating her.

Her wounds visibly start closing, and she returns to the Sadina I know.

The simple fact that I've become able to do this gives the time I spent trekking down that endless path meaning.

When her wounds had disappeared without a trace, I cut off the magic.

"So in my last moments, I'm to become Naofumi-chan's play toy?"
(Sadina) "Hey..." (Naofumi)

"Well, it's not like this oneesan didn't know." (Sadina) "Really?"
(Naofumi)

"The revived children's flow of magic, or whatever it was, anyways, I could feel something strange mixed into them. Right now, I can tell them apart to some extent." (Sadina) Sadina strokes her regenerated tail, and starts flexing it.

"What I'm curious about is the change in Naofumi-chan's magic."
(Sadina) "What sort of change are you talking about?" (Naofumi)

"To put it bluntly, there's an unbelievable amount of power mixed into Naofumi-chan I can't even sense it all. But I sensed it when you chanted magic, it's not something the enemy god did to you. It's close, but I feel something more benevolent. Something like the flow of the land."
(Sadina) "You have some strange sensitivity there." (Naofumi)

"Perhaps it's because Naofumi-chan tested a lot of things with me. It's a bit hard to explain this in words. But I'm just saying I can tell you apart."
(Sadina) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

At the very least, the fact that she's correct is amazing.

In truth, it's not just my power. I have the spirits of ruined worlds lending power to me as well. She's pretty much right.

“What Naofumi-chan is saying is probably true. But the enemy god may have simply found a way to get around my judgements. So I can’t erase my doubts.” (Sadina) “So this becomes a Witch Trial?” (Naofumi)

Is there any way I can actually prove that I’m not being controlled?

Even if she says she can tell, if that Goddess could make a fake plausible enough to pass, then there’s no way of telling for sure.

“I’ll tell everyone you’re a shade of gray quite close to white.” (Sadina)
(TL: As in white = innocent, black = guilty)

“Just tell them I’m white already.” (Naofumi)

“Oh, right. How embarrassing of me.” (Sadina)

She makes the ‘Tehe’ face and I lightly stroke her head.

“Once Raphtalia gets here, we’ll bring an end to this battle. Until then, it may be hard, but please help us.” (Naofumi) “It’s fine... isn’t Naofumi-chan protecting everyone?” (Sadina) “Yeah, because that’s the only thing I can do. Even having obtained this much strength, I can’t inflict a single scratch onto my enemies, you know.” (Naofumi) To prove it, I pounded my fist into Sadina’s stomach with all my might.

“Ara... that didn’t even tickle. As expected of Naofumi-chan.” (Sadina) “Just to let you know, I didn’t hold back there.” (Naofumi) It’s something I decided for myself, but was making it so I couldn’t do a single point of damage going too far?

In the past, when I attacked a Balloon, I was able to do 1 Damage per hit.

But the current me doesn’t have a single stat point in attack, so even that 1 has turned to 0.

I do get the feeling it’s a bit much, but there really isn’t much of a difference between 1 and 0 anyways.

“Then does that mean I can just push Naofumi-chan down like this?” (Sadina) “Why did that lead to this!?” (Naofumi)

“Violating a Naofumi-chan who’s unable to resist. Doesn’t that sound a

little fun?” (Sadina) “It’s not fun for me! And even if I can’t attack, it’s not like I can’t resist or anything.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-chan’s first has to be Raphtalia-chan, right? Then perhaps next will be Atlas-chan? After that... I think I can win against Firo-chan.” (Sadina) “In what!?” (Naofumi)

She really doesn’t change.

Anyways, like that, we had Sadina explain that we were alive.

It happened after that talk, but Melty stared at Sadina and said the reason she chose to believe me.

“Sadina-san. She seemed to be pushing herself, but after you returned, she seems to be having quite a bit of fun. That’s why I’ve decided to believe you too.” (Melty) Sadina’s mysterious charisma demonstrates itself wherever I look.

I never thought she had even earned Melty’s trust.

Melty behaves differently around anyone but me. It’s like she has two faces.

“I’m thankful for your trust. I never thought I would have to go through something like that the moment I got back.” (Naofumi) “I’ll give an honest apology for that one. But I’d like you to understand our circumstances.” (Melty) I’d already heard it from Sadina, but Melty begins explaining.

Just like me, their missing comrades would suddenly appear gallantly, and after a few days of battle, they would just as suddenly turn coat.

Some representative cases are the Hengen Musou Granny, and the Fake Atlas.

At the start, they thought that the granny had survived, and come to save everyone... but the second the reincarnators gained the advantage, she launched an attack at Firo and Trash.

Since Sadina had been suspicious from the start, they were able to avoid catastrophe, but Sadina suffered a severe wound.

Her tail was severed, it seems.

Atlas appeared to Fohl in a similar manner.

She proclaimed that at the moment I died, the Spirit of the Shield decided to carry out my will, and revive her.

That does sound likely...

And that Atlas acted as their comrade for a while, before betraying.

“It really is master~.” (Firo)

So Firo finally believes me now. She hugs me, and nuzzles her head against me.

Her Ahoge pushes against my body. I feel itchy.

“Rafu~!”

Not wanting to lose Raph-chan starts playing around with me.

It's this. This.

Once you appear to save someone from crisis, this is what you're supposed to get...

I appraise the situation satisfyingly, as I felt relieved having returned to this world.

Chapter 368: A Fragile Place

“Even so, the situation is one where the enemy can see our every move...”

It’s like the mental state I had right after I was summoned had infected everyone.

With something like this going around, there’s no wonder why it was so hard to be believed.

“Naofumi-san.”

Glass came over, and called out to me as I was lost in thought.

“What’s up?” (Naofumi)

“What do you plan to do from here on?” (Glass)

“I entrusted tomorrow’s plan to Trash, did I not?” (Naofumi) “Yes... but while that person may be skilled, his enemy is just a bad matchup...”

Ah, right, there was something recorded about that in the Four Holy Weapons’ Manual.

And wait, record important things like betrayal and revival, you useless book.

Is it something like the scene of the crime is a trivial matter to the case?

He had many schemes swirling around his head. It ended with that one sentence.

“And... when will Raphtalia-san be bringing the Holy Spear’s Hero?” (Glass) “Yeah, about that...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia’s arrival is much slower than expected.

Well, perhaps that parallel world was hard to enter, and she’s going through some trouble.

I mean, if she uses too much power, she’ll be noticed.

I can lightly sense her presence, but it seems that Raphtalia has yet to

exit that world.

IT appears to fully gain their trust, I'll have to wait for Raphtalia to get here.

And without Motoyasu here, it'll be hard to hit the lynchpin protecting this world.

As long as I'm here, I don't think we're devoid of ways to win, but there's the danger of that Goddess running away.

I can't let her get away.

If she does, she'll merely start perpetuating evil deeds somewhere else.

We have to stop her breath here.

The Spirits wish for it as well.

I can use power as a god, but the source of it is the spirits' wills.

And the will of the Spirits is also tied to the will of the world.

I am... well, something like their spokesperson.

The spirits and the land whisper me, alerting me of an opportunity.

"I think it will take a while. Until Raphtalia gets here, we have no choice but to keep fighting. Of course, we will get the enemy's front line to retreat, though." (Naofumi) "... Understood." (Glass)

From here on, I won't allow us to lose to the reincarnators.

My power follows the rules of this world, and within their scope, I think I can win.

But that's only if she doesn't notice.

"By the way, Glass, you were a Person of Soul, right? Can't you see the souls of other people?" (Naofumi) "I cannot see the souls of the living. In that respect, Sadina-san is more capable." (Glass) "Yeah..." (Naofumi)

Just how versatile does she have to be, that girl?

When I tried imagining her, the Sadina of my imagination winked at me, and made a peace sign.

Yay! She said.

That actually seems like something she would do, so it's scary.

No, perhaps that doesn't matter.

A-anyways, I'll have to gather the necessary information.

"Melly, tomorrow, where will you be fighting?" (Naofumi)

"Right now, I'm assisting father. The enemy is really powerful, and there are times when he has to be on the front lines and use magic. At times like that I issue commands from the command tower, and prepare choral magic." (Melly) "I see." (Naofumi)

"But recently, we've been pushed back by the reincarnators, and I'm often being protected by Firo-chan." (Melly) With a pained expression, Melly muttered it.

Her level has risen considerably.

In the past Firo dragged her around to level until she was completely worn out so she could Class Up, and it's even higher now.

And in her battles with the reincarnators, it rose further... a difficult story.

『So you're finally back.』

There, I heard Gaelion's voice.

『I sensed thy presence manifest near mine own forces, so I was watching thee. 』

I matched channel, and answered.

『What were you doing, anyways?』

『It's not like we were being one-sidedly crushed, mind you. I and Wyndea, and regrettably that Filo Rial Queen were fighting at the enemy stronghold.』

A united front of rivals. A dream-like situation.

No, I know this isn't the mood for something like that.

Even so, Gaelion and Fitoria were working together and fighting?

I guess that's just how far cornered we were.

『How's the situation』

『Unfavorable. My power is unable to triumph over the Goddess. We've slaughtered her front lines many times.』

So they beat the reincarnators several times...

Whenever they died, they had some sort of revival granted to them.

Are they truly fine with returning from death like that?

That's just great.

But that Bitch Goddess's revival has plenty of demerits, you know?

Your lifespan shrinks immensely, and before you notice it, your soul is tampered with. If they knew about it, I doubt they would rely on it so much.

It may give off quite a game-ish feeling... but the world isn't that much of a game.

If you die, you generally can't come back, and even if you do, if the one doing the reviving skips parts of the process, your soul is tainted, and starts to fall apart.

At best... after two times, you may not notice it, but it should start shattering here and there.

I don't know what she's telling them to play it off.

They weren't made to be okay after death like the Dragon Emperor.

“Naofumi?” (Melty)

“Hmm? Ah, and?” (Naofumi)

I concentrate on the conversation with Melty.

It may have been a conversation in my mind, but it was pretty much me calling Gaelion on a cellphone while my body was still talking to Melty.

“Father is calling you. Pertaining to the battles from tomorrow on, there

are some things he wants to report, and other things he wants to ask.”
(Melty) “Got it.” (Naofumi)

I nodded, and started heading for Trash’s place.

... There was something I had to say.

“Melty.” (Naofumi)

“W-what?” (Melty)

“You worked really hard. I’ll definitely make it all work out.” (Naofumi)
“Naofumi, those words don’t suit you.” (Melty)

“Yeah, the past me would definitely never say them.” (Naofumi) “Yes, but...” (Melty)

Melty cuts off her own words once.

“Yeah... thank you. Thank you for surviving...” (Melty)

With teary eyes, Melty said it loud and clear.

After parting with Melty, I headed to the meeting room Trash used to spin out plans.

It seems that he’s thinking of ways to stop the enemy advance tomorrow.

Even while I was talking with Sadina and Melty, he was here thinking. The boards in the room were filled with various ideas.

“Iwatani-dono, thank you for coming.” (Trash)

“How does it look?” (Naofumi)

“...” (Trash)

Trash’s face is deeply dyed with the color of fatigue.

I mean, the enemy is the Queen he knows so well, and she’s the one taking command, so it’s hard to do it.

During the day, it seems my scolding had a positive effect, but there are many times when Trash runs into obstacles on the mental front.

“It may be tough, but you have to protect the country of the woman you

loved.” (Naofumi) “I know. I know!” (Trash)

It was a line he said to convince himself.

But I think the burden he bears should decrease now.

It’s a bit of a worrying factor that the enemy is the Queen, but I’ll assure him that it’ll be fine.

As I was thinking that...

“Naofumi-sama!”

Atlas came in by passing through the wall.

With her, Fohl and Kiel came to the conference room.

“It’s a misunderstanding! I’m not in that sort of relationship with Kiel!” (Fohl) “I think you have it wrong, Atlas-chan. From me, the Crepe Tree is number one, then second is Niichan, and third is Fohl-niichan!” (Kiel) So they were still on about that!

Atlas uses me as a Shield to hide from Fohl.

Hey, don’t go using me like that after wanting to become my Shield.

Also, Kiel, don’t make an incomprehensible hierarchy like that.

Why am I under that disturbing tree?

“Ah...”

Trash and Fohl’s eyes meet, and the atmosphere becomes heavy.

Without reading the mood, Kiel continues to wag her tail in dog mode, while sitting on Fohl’s head.

“...”

Perhaps because these two are so similar, they’re often troubled with finding words to exchange.

Trash tries to concern himself with Fohl’s affairs, and Fohl finds that annoying.

“What’s wrong?” (Atlas)

“Atlas, I’d like you to show Trash that you’re doing fine. He’s someone who was worrying over you.” (Naofumi) “Really...? Understood.” (Atlas)

In a half-transparent state, Atlas gently floated in front of Trash.

“Um, I’ve kinda become like this, but I’m fine. I would appreciate it if you put your mind at ease.” (Atlas) “...”

Trash wipes away tears, and turns his back to Atlas.

“... This time, the enemy you’re fighting must be painful to go against. But... it’s true that she is a very important person to you... please consider that. Are all the important things you’ve ever lost your enemies?” (Atlas) “... Right.” (Trash)

The Queen is currently an enemy.

But besides the Fake Atlas, no one with any relation to Trash has appeared.

The Bitch Goddess didn’t call up the one who was Atlas’s mother, or his sworn enemy, the Hakuko.

You could look at it optimistically, or think that she just didn’t want to send them out yet, though.

If she wanted to, I don’t think it would be beyond her.

But... I’ll bet the cost will be high for her if she wanted to do that.

“I’ll also caution you. It’s likely that those people may come out, but like with the Fake Atlas, they’ll be fakes created from your memory. I doubt they will harbor their true souls.” (Naofumi) The shape of one’s soul is a complex thing in this world. I guess they also reincarnate.

But those souls flow in the dragon pulse, and once they’ve become pure white, blank slates, they’re reborn as new forms of life.

If the bitch were to drag Trash’s family out from that, she would have to tamper with the world’s laws.

That would take a considerably large cost, so for the Goddess who merely liked playing around and tormenting her enemies, there’s no way

she would do that.

The reason she could recycle the Queen and the granny was probably because it hasn't been too long since they died.

She could make them act so that even the ones in question wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

This is just hearsay, but apparently the granny acted exactly as she always did up to her betrayal.

No, perhaps she was brainwashed, or directly controlled. I don't know which.

I mean, the fake Atlas was a manifestation of Fohl's desires, so she tried to abuse me, it seems.

"Then... we'll be leaving..."

Fohl took Kiel, and left.

These sure are loud folk.

"Didn't you call me over to see if I was going to be reliable, or not?"

(Naofumi) "Yes... just how much strength did you gain, Iwatani-dono?"

(Trash) "Replying to that is a bit troubling, but I can probably take an attack from that Bitch Goddess head on. Ah, I'll make a promise. If that Bitch tried to dishonor the dead by reviving them again, I'll stop her."

(Naofumi) I definitely can't forgive her for making use of those passed.

It'll be fine once Raphtalia comes, but for now, why don't I interfere with her a bit?

"So you... need to put the Queen to rest. For Melty's sake too."

(Naofumi) Melty has a strong will, but despite that, she has some fragile places like Trash.

It's because Firo's there that she can hold out.

If her father were to lose the will to fight, the burden would be too much for her.

"You have things you need to protect." (Naofumi)

“Yes...” (Trash)

Trash softly answered. He shook and sobbed, but he answered.

Even I could see how much pain he was in.

“Naofumi-sama, how about you use some of your power?” (Atlas)

“Reviving the dead is an act that twists the world’s order and its law of cause and effect. I don’t think it’s impossible, but...” (Naofumi) If I use it, she’ll notice me instantly, and the recoil is too large.

What’s more, the Queen’s soul is already in the hands of that Bitch Goddess, so it’ll be difficult.

“No... I do not think that Mirellia would wish to be revived. For your consideration, Iwatani-dono... I thank you from the depths of my heart.” (Trash) “Yeah, sorry for that.” (Naofumi)

There are people I want to bring back who died.

If, unlike the Bitch Goddess’s instant revival, I used proper methods, I would be able to stop the soul’s deterioration to some extent, the shield told me.

But I don’t think I’ll be able to use it too much.

Again, it has to do with the cost.

Any more resurrections, and she may become something that isn’t the Queen anymore.

It’s not a good thing at all. So we can’t go around using it.

“Trash.” (Naofumi)

“What is it, Iwatani-dono?” (Trash)

“Rest for now. Or else you won’t get any good ideas.” (Naofumi) “... but...” (Trash)

As he was earnestly thinking up plans, on my orders, he slightly shook his head.

But Atlas approached him, and in the frame of his open hand, she tried to place hers.

“You really are tired. Please rest for a while.” (Atlas)

“If Iwatani-dono insists... then for a little bit, I will rest.” (Trash) Trash leaned back in his chair.

I chant some fatigue-recovery magic, and remove some of his tiredness to a reasonable extent.

Even if I take away the fatigue with magic, I can't do anything about the mental fatigue he has.

“Atlas, please talk to him, so he has a good sleep.” (Naofumi) “Yes. I think it went something like...” (Atlas)

Atlas put her hand on his ear, as if to hide her voice from others, and started whispering.

“Onii-sama, please... to prepare for the battles to come, take a nice rest. It may be painful, but please, for the people you love as well...” (Atlas)

“Iwatani-dono, Atlas-dono... thank you...” (Trash)

On Atlas's words, a teardrop drifts down his face as he quietly closes his eyes. He began breathing like someone asleep.

From one of his aides, I received a blanket, and I draped it over him.

I'll put some expectations on him.

Tomorrow, the sleeping king of wisdom will turn out an idea good enough to overturn the battlefield.

Chapter 369: The Eve of the Decisive Battle

Making sure Trash was sound asleep, we quietly left the room.

When we descended the castle stairs, we found Glass, Ren and Female Knight. Also Itsuki and Rishia. They were meeting up to discuss the coming battle.

It's dependent on Trash's plan, but to what extent can we take action... in the battlefield, what sort of attacks could we expect from our enemies. That sort of talk.

"Ah, Naofumi-san." (Itsuki)

Itsuki notices us, and calls out to us.

"It's a bit sudden, but I'd like to have a little talk about our enemy."

(Itsuki) "It's because Ren-san didn't know much about our world's situation." (Rishia) "Yeah, that'll help." (Naofumi)

Even if I had a slight grasp of what was going on, I can't just go about using my powers for something like this.

It's not yet the time to use them.

And so, it's much more efficient to just ask for whatever information they have on the enemy.

"We were just in the middle of that conversation with Ren-san. But he really did grow big. I was quite surprised." (Rishia) Rishia looked at me, turned to Ren, and spoke.

"He's grown quite splendidly, hasn't he?" (Rishia)

"R-really?" (Ren)

"No, he still has quite a way to go." (Female Knight)

Female Knight crossed her arms, and said it with a proud tone.

Even so, between Ren and Female Knight, there's a strange sense of distance, or some sort of uncomfortable atmosphere. Something like that.

Glass seems to have noticed the gap as well. She's a bit troubled.

Ah, right. She was fighting in our camp.

"No matter how big he's gotten, I have yet to see if his heart's grown as well! After this, I plan to have him show me his swordsmanship." (Female Knight) "Ah, I see. Ren has it hard." (Naofumi)

"Fight on, Ren-san." (Itsuki)

Itsuki encourages Ren in a clear voice, but... for some reason, it sounded like he was muttering to himself.

"Until now, Ren was the youngest of all of us, but now that spot has fallen to me." (Itsuki) Now that I think about it... Ren was sixteen, so in two years, he's become eighteen.

Itsuki was seventeen, I believe.

I'm twenty, and Motoyasu is twenty one, so Itsuki is the youngest among us.

Well, through my wanderings through the rift, I don't really know my actual age anymore, though.

But I'll keep that to myself.

"Ah, right. I thought I should give this to you guys." (Naofumi) I take out the medicine Arc gave me, and showed it to Ren.

"I think this was the liquid from the Filo Rial's Holy Land, right?" (Ren) "It's the concentrated version. Try feeding it to your weapon. Whatever you do, don't drink it. It's poison." (Naofumi) It's a medicine that turns you into a god if you drink it... but I know it isn't something that should be used so readily.

In the first place, even from this world's perspective, it's a foreign object.

It's an exception among exceptions.

Even the current me is probably an exception from the world's perspective.

... When this battle is over, what should I do?

“I see... understood.”

As I inclined the vial to one side, Itsuki took out his bow, and absorbed the drop that fell.

“This is... the Bow of XØ? How is it different from the Bow of Ø? Its effects and stats are the same.” (Itsuki) “I think it’ll be much more effective on the Bitch Goddess than the Ø Series, you know. When the time comes, try using it.” (Naofumi) “Understood. Then you will be spreading this medicine around to the other Heroes, too?” (Itsuki) “Yeah, tomorrow. Before the battle starts.” (Naofumi)

After giving some to Ren and Rishia, I looked towards Glass.

“Glass, do you think it can be used on the weapons from your place?” (Naofumi) “Hmm... I don’t really know.” (Glass)

“I guess we should just test it.” (Naofumi)

I dripped the medicine onto Glass’s fan.

“The Fan of XZero...” (Glass)

So in Glass’s world’s weapons, the name gets written out?

Even so, it’s good it came out.

“Next is...” (Naofumi)

I explained whatever information I thought necessary, and we organized our information.

And since our business with it was over, I closed the bottle. I mean, it would be terrible if it were to be abused.

It’s supposed to give some godly power, but once you get the power, what sort of end awaits you?

... Even I don’t know what the future holds for me.

The God Slayer who called himself Arc told me.

That no matter what happened, I shouldn’t regret.

It's probable that he was implying this.

When this battle is over, what will become of me and Raphtalia?

"And? Your enemies... in this case, do you have anything to say about the Reincarnators?" (Naofumi) "Yes. Of the ones we fought, I thought I should tell you two about the cost conspicuously strong ones we encountered." (Itsuki) "Got it. Please tell me." (Naofumi)

The Reincarnators are like that Bitch Goddess's vassals.

No, they're just her pawns.

Do they understand that once she's done playing around, she's going to erase the world all at once?

No, if they did, I doubt they would be acting like this.

"First is about Glass's world's vassal Heroes. There are five we've encountered." (Itsuki) Glass was the Fan, right?

And from what I've seen, there was a Scythe, and a Katana.

The wall guy just had a strange power, and he shouldn't be a legendary weapon holder.

"First, there's the Heroes of the Katana and Scythe. There was also the Harpoon, and Instrument, and the ship." (Itsuki) "A Harpoon, an Instrument, and a Ship." (Naofumi)

They're all quite strange weapons.

What the hell's with the Instrument? I can't imagine what sort of attack's supposed to come out of it.

But there's one even stranger than that mixed in.

"What's with that last one. The Ship." (Naofumi)

"It had an ability much like the carriage Fitoria-san holds. It flew in the sky, and rained down attacks on us." (Itsuki) "I didn't see it on the battlefield I appeared on." (Naofumi) "It was fighting with Glass-san and Wyndia-san in a different squadron." (Itsuki) I did hear from Gaelion. Fitoria was supposed to be there as well.

Just how much of an all-out-war is this?

What's more, they've enclosed in on Melromark, and the defense of the other countries is in shambles.

There are also many countries that have fallen, it seems.

Right now, a safe country... doesn't exist.

For the time being, the world's allied army is still fighting as one, but I can't foresee how that will work out in the future.

"So we should be wary of them?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, right now, those five seem to be the enemy's aces. But if you count the other reincarnators, the amount increases." (Itsuki) "There was also a person who nullified Itsuki-sama's Down Magic through strange ability. When the Kin tried to use Naofumi-san's Support Magic to try to increase our abilities, the result was the same..." (Rishia) It's an iron rule of support, that when the other side uses it, your irritation increases proportional to their stats.

That Bitch Goddess seems to make up for the lack of coordination in her own troops through Support Magic, though.

Even though the enemy is playing on hacks, we're using proper procedure and... Yeah, if it went like that, it's clear why we have more losses than wins.

What's more, she revives those involved with our side, and controls them. This is no joke.

But... I'm not going to let her do that anymore.

However... just what is Raphtalia doing?

She just went to go get Motoyasu, so isn't she taking way too much time?

Is what I think, but the place Motoyasu was in was a troublesome parallel time-space loop, so perhaps it can't be helped.

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

“Hmm?” (Naofumi)

Atlas lightly floats to my ear, and whispers a plan.

Fumu... that sounds interesting.

“Female Knight.” (Naofumi)

“... Yes, what?” (Female Knight)

When I called her Female Knight, she gave an expression that showed she had given up in the deepest depths of her heart. She let out a sigh before answering.

“Do you want to become a vassal Hero?” (Naofumi)

“What are you saying all of a sudden!? Could it be that one of the four legendary Heroes plans to steal a weapon from another Hero?” (Female Knight) “Naofumi... I don’t know who you plan on taking it from, but please stop. Everyone’s working hard.” (Ren) “Don’t misunderstand, I just wanted to try asking is all.” (Naofumi) Well, I guess that’s the thought that would surface first.

But what I’m trying to do is nothing like that.

“I just wanted to ask those that distinguished themselves... you know.” (Naofumi) No, perhaps I should act oblivious.

I don’t plan on letting the chance slip by, though.

“I’m not sure if it’s possible or not, so don’t expect too much.” (Naofumi) “I don’t know what you plan on doing, but can’t you share it?” (Ren) “That is...”

Atlas whispers into Ren’s and the others’ ears too.

I don’t know if I can do it, so this talk is nothing more than a good luck charm.

Though it seems Atlas is sure of herself.

“You can do something like that?” (Glass)

Glass leaned her body forward, and asked.

“It’s only a possibility, but if it worked, wouldn’t it help our situation?”
(Naofumi) “Can I... get my hopes up?” (Glass)

“Please don’t hope too much. I’m only on the level of, ‘It would be nice if that was possible.’” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Glass)

I mean there’s no demerit to having more people.

Well, I’m leaving the larger-scale plan to Trash.

Come to think of it... there was something I was curious about.

“Glass, you use Spirit Water to recover your strength, right? Are you still able to do that?” (Naofumi) “Yes, Itsuki offered to give some to me.”
(Glass)

“We were able to overcome crises many times because of her.” (Itsuki)
“That should be my line.” (Glass)

“Naofumi-san, would you like to hear about Glass-san’s forces? I think the information may prove useful.” (Itsuki) “Glass’s forces. You mean her allies that acted with her when she was outside of her world?” (Naofumi) “Yes, before the World Assimilation... my comrades that were quite active in my world.” (Glass) “One of them was a Person of Soul we almost mistook for that person. You know, the one who’s part of this country’s security. She ended her sentences with...” (Rishia) And so we shared information to some extent.

After that, I left the castle, and started walking down the dark streets.

The light was still burning in the Weapon Shop..

It was already quite late at night.

I could hear the sound of a Hammer hitting metal from the back of the shop.

“Oy.” (Naofumi)

“We’ll be intruding on you.” (Atlas)

We knock on the door to announce our presence.

“What. The shop’s closed you know... if it isn’t the young lad!”

For some reason, Imya and her uncle were with him.

Because of the constant battle, they've been making armor and weapons without stop, I've heard.

"Did you hear about what happened on the battlefield?" (Naofumi)
"Yeah. I was told you may be a fake, so I should wait for them to determine it at the castle, but from how it looks, there was no problem with that." (Old Man) "I'm sick of everybody doubting me like that, though." (Naofumi) "Haha, that behavior fits you, boy." (Old Man)

Well... being doubted makes me remember the time I came to this world...

But if someone asked if such things fit me, I'd like to shake my head.

This all happened because Witch framed me, and if that never happened, perhaps I would have lived normally.

Well, that's fine.

"And? How are things on your end? Imya seems to be there too."
(Naofumi) "The village is still safe, but they're making armor for those participating in the war." (Old Man) The Old Man and Imya's Uncle are known craftsmen. I guess requests keep coming.

And the reason Imya and her uncle are here probably has something to do with materials and equipment.

Right now, they're not making things for the village, but for the world.

I've heard that the Castle Town's largest manufacturing workshop keeps going, making weapons day and night. Here.

The weapons they make go to the heroes and those close to them with the highest priority, but they're also distributed to the lower level soldiers as well.

Come to think about it, Itsuki, Female Knight and Sadina seemed to have some high-class equipment.

They even use their free time to develop new sorts of equipment.

“And to aid your work, I brought a few books from my world.”
(Naofumi) I showed the weapon books from my world to the Old Man.

Truthfully, over that long journey, they got to the brink of falling apart, but before I got to this world, I used a bit of power to restore them.

“He~! So this is a book of your world’s weapons, boy. There are quite a few here.” (Old Man) He can’t read the lettering, so I collected books that mainly focused on pictures.

They’re mainly books on the manufacturing of guns, though.

Of course, there are also a few with words tightly packed together explaining just what sort of weapons they were.

If we had time, I would help explain it in detail, but tomorrow I have to head to battle.

“In my world, there’s a process where you use charcoal to refine and harden things. So I think this may prove a little useful.” (Naofumi)

“Thanks, laddy. I’ll use it with care.” (Old Man)

“Making things harder with carbon... can it be applied to clothing too?”
(Imya) For some reason, Imya’s eyes are shimmering.

It seems she’s anxious to eat her way through the books.

“If I don’t teach it, it’ll probably be difficult. Just slowly analyze those books, and use them to make this shop flourish. That’s enough.” (Atlas)
On Atlas’s words, I also nod.

That’s right. As long as there’s war, his business will be booming.

But I think that the Old Man is one who wishes for a world at peace.

Because he’s been lending me power since the time my life was thrown apart, I can understand.

“Leave it to me, boy, and tiger girl. By the way, where’s the young miss?”
(Old Man) “Raphtalia is working on another mission. She’s bringing Motoyasu.” (Naofumi) “Ah, the Hero of the Spear, is it? I saw him a while ago, but she’ll have it rough.” (Old Man) Rough referring to interacting with Motoyasu.

I'm of the same opinion.

So the Old Man's seen that Motoyasu to.

To put it bluntly, no matter who looks at him, they'll find him strange.

... No, I don't really care about Motoyasu.

"Make sure you don't work too hard and collapse." (Naofumi) Well, I think this tough battle will end tomorrow.

Of course, the enemy's situation, and Raphtalia's arrival could delay it.

But we survived up 'til today. I'd hate it if they died from overwork.

"I know. Hey, all of you too." (Old Man)

"Y-yes!" (Imya)

"Yes." (Imya's Uncle)

"Ah, I see you guys are caught up in the books the young lad brought. Let me have at them too!" (Old Man) And off they go. The three indulged in the books I brought, as they began debating things with one another.

If they collapse because of this, does it become my fault?

I'm a little worried, so I cast some fatigue recovery magic.

And after giving them a few warnings, we returned to the castle.

When I returned, at the castle gate, Firo and Melty were asleep. Perhaps they were waiting for me.

Melty had drifted to sleep while sitting atop Firo.

And Firo, as she was, slept with Melty on her back.

They must be tired.

They were quite peaceful, so I ordered a soldier to fetch me a blanket, and after draping it over them, I laid down to take a nap nearby.

Everyone's quite busy.

But this battle will soon come to an end.

I should find some peace of mind, and sleep for a while.

At that time, Atlas murmured, 『It's the first time that Naofumi-sama agreed to let me sleep by his side』, but that doesn't really matter.

Like that, the night before the battle passed by.

Chapter 370: Barbarian Armor EX

The next morning.

We finished preparations for our strategy, and were waiting for their attack to come.

Trash was able to take a nap, and because of that, he was able to get a better look at his tactics.

Well, that Bitch Goddess's actions aren't something that easy to predict.

I gave Trash all the info I put together by talking with Ren and the others, and he ended up finalizing his strategy, which was good news.

Starting with the goddess, the reincarnators and all their forces were going to attack Melromark and the area surrounding it.

The strategy was apparently something Trash made while taking the controlled Queen into consideration.

Apparently, he could tell what formation their forces would take excluding the reincarnators.

This will be a difficult battle.

And, in order to surprise the enemy, Gaelion, Fitoria and Sadina were going to infiltrate enemy land, and prepare to ambush, but due to my participation, we're changing it to a frontal assault.

If we had more time, we could have prepared more, but if we use too many petty tricks, that Bitch Goddess may get pissed. It's really troublesome.

Just how far does she go to have things go exactly her way?

She's just a coward that takes delight in victory.

And when it gets too easy, she says it's no fun.

Even so, she can't forgive it when the tides turn against her...

I think I've experienced that before.

In a network war cellphone game, when I was at a disadvantage, I would

cut the connection.

Even so, when I won, I thought it was no fun anymore.

Even when I used underhanded tactics.

Fu... it's that rotten way of thought.

Now go make up for it with your death!

"Now then, let us depart."

"Please wait, Hero of the Shield-sama!"

When I was about to head off to war, a soldier called out to me.

"What?" (Naofumi)

"A renowned craftsman famous among the entire allied army says he wants to present a protector unto the Hero of the Shield-sama."

"... Do you mean the weapon shop I frequent?" (Naofumi) The soldier nodded in silence.

With the time they had last night, just what did they make?

"Got it." (Naofumi)

"Then please take this."

And what he handed over was a set of armor.

Its name was Barbarian Armor EX.

It seems like a different piece than the one I always wore before.

Well, with that attack that Bitch Goddess Used, it was completely destroyed, so he probably worked hard to repair it.

This armor sure likes to reappear.

And right now, I judge the materials of the armor presented before me. The materials used are... Spirit Turtle, Houou, and Kirin.

Also, the concepts those people picked up yesterday are also included. On the material list, is the material Carbon.

Thinking back, it's been a while since I asked Dragon Emperor Gaelion

to reknew the core of the armor.

I remove the corestone that was inserted to take the place of the core.

“Gaelion.” (Naofumi)

“KYUA!”

『Well, well, well... you're the same as always. After attaining that much power, you still ask of me to share mine own?』

When I call him, Gaelion takes a step forward.

『You can never be too safe.』

As I used telepathy to answer him, he snorted back at me through telepathy.

“Kue!”

“Yeah! Firo won't lose to Gaelion!”

Fitoria steps forward to rival him.

Firo is with her.

And they both rip out one of their Ahoges, and hand them to me.

『Gu... then I cannot back down here.』

The Dragon Emperor who had his fill of the core stones of others, threw up a large one.

Its color is a clear red, the likes of which I've never seen in his cores before. Its coloring was as if it were imbued with flames; a glowing gem.

It's like a crystallization of the Dragon Emperor.

“Rafu~!”

Raph-chan also steps forward, and and casts magic on the armor.

Oh, his is also amazing.

How am I supposed to use these feathers?

For now, I'll just keep them in the armor. When I tried to do that, the feathers glowed, and were absorbed into it.

And on its back, something appeared. Holes just right for wings, or something similar to fit through.

And when I put Gaelion's core in, the armor shined even further, and started to change.

Barbarian Armor EX

Destruction Impossible, Defense Up, Impact Resist (Large), Beheading Resist (Large), Flame Resist (Extra Large), Electric Resist (Extra Large), Absorb Resist (Very Large), HP Recovery (Strong), Magic Recovery (Strong), SP Recovery (Strong) Magic Elevation (Large), Blessing of the Dragon Emperor, Magic to Defense Conversion, Autonomous Repair, Blessing of the Earth's Pulse, Blessing of Life, Dragon Attribute, Dragon Territory Growing Power, Blessing of the Divine Bird, Familiar Abilities Doubled, Blessing of the Divine Beast, One who Controls Monsters, Magic Cruising Blessing of the Four Spirits, Blessing of the Spirits, Prayers of the people, A Link to the Spirits.

It had a wide succession of abilities.

I don't have the time to check all of them, but what is Magic Cruising?

What's more, it isn't even Barbarian Armor anymore.

Why must that name stick no matter what?

Does that Old Man think of me as some sort of savage?

No, I think it was truly named out of good will, but...

"Amazing..."

Ren looked at the armor, and said as such.

"There's also equipment for everyone else as well. Please confirm them."

"Ah, with this, I'll be able to fight more!"

I put on the armor, and test out its feel.

It's the first time I'm wearing it, but it feels really familiar.

I feel like I've been wearing it for many years.

And I felt magic passing through the holes in the back.

Let's try directing some more there..

Fwish. From the holes on my back, wings of magic started to take form.

Their colors were sky blue, and the color of Sakura Petals.

(TL: If you don't remember, that's Fitoria's color, and Firo's original coloring) "Uwah..."

Everyone around me falls silent.

That was to be expected.

And just how did they go about making this.

Flying through the sky isn't impossible for me, but with this, it becomes a lot easier.

I stop sending magic through it, and land.

"Fumu... it's not that I can't wear it, but with something this high in quality, there's the option of equipping it on someone else."

I mean, I don't have that great of a need for it.

Its ability is much greater than the previous version, and with this much functionality, someone else can...

"RAFU!"

"KUEeEE!"

"No!"

"KYUA!"

『You. Don't you think that's a bit much? I can't approve of it.』

... The monsters voice their objections.

I want to ignore them, but it was an armor made for me out of good will, so I guess there's no helping it.

"Yes, yes. I got it."

It was something the Old Man and Co. put their best efforts into

making, so I wanted it to be used to its maximum potential, but I guess that was a misplaced worry.

I mean, it was also exactly to my size.

And wait... I noticed it after putting it on, but this armor... perhaps It's linked to my Shield, but my defense was amplified by quite a large amount.

The Defense listed in my Status Magic became something quite amazing.

Of course, the parts that make me a god are separate from what I have as Status Magic in this world.

Amazing. I get the feeling that this piece of equipment could even handle the power of a god.

This is... I feel it would be a waste to give to someone else.

An armor made out of the world's hope... Perhaps a new spirit will come to inhabit it someday.

My own exclusive armor, what a nice sound. Unlike a certain Shield.

"Then I'll use it gratefully."

"I turn to everyone present in the area, and make a declaration.

"I've kept you waiting. Now then, today, we'll bring an end to this idiotic battle!" (Naofumi) "YEAH!"

Everyone lifts their weapons high up, and answers.

Today, we'll release this world from its vile divine invader!

When we made it to the battlefield, the enemy forces were already there waiting for us.

We maintain the formation Trash formed, and I lead at the front.

We'll keep ourselves vigilant for side blows from the Goddess, crush the enemy forces as we proceed forwards, and have them retreat. After that, we'll make our way the Bitch Goddess in the rear, and defeat her.

Truly a simple plan.

But our army has personally received specific instructions from Trash.

The Heroes are each to take on one of the enemy's aces. Well, as long as I'm here, that shouldn't be too much of a problem.

This time, Fitoria is also fighting on the front line with her full sized form. Can she even fight like that?

I haven't spoken to them about it yet, but Rat and Mii-kun, as well as Taniko and Gaelion are going to spur up chaos in the enemy's lines.

I think that Raphtalia will surely come sometime today, but if Motoyasu doesn't accompany her, I'll conclude he's impossible to deal with.

It's no joke if he plans to run away.

The problem is the clash of Trash and the Queen's opposing army.

"Iwatani-dono, about my wife, can you leave her to me?" (Trash) "I planned to do that from the start. Just go and put an end to it." (Naofumi) "Father... I'll also assist you." (Melty)

Melty declared that she would be supporting Trash.

I'm counting on them.

"What about Firo~?" (Firo)

"Go work with Trash and Melty. Even if they plan on issuing orders, they're crossing quite a dangerous bridge here." (Naofumi) "Yeah! Got it~!" (Firo)

Now, let's start the battle.

Chapter 371: Proxy

We were locked in a stare-down with the enemy for five minutes.

Military formations kept shuffling round on both sides.

I have no idea how many times the Queen and Trash are going to try and read each other's plans.

I bring up my Status Magic.

The area's terrain and personnel make me slightly confused as I follow the changes again and again.

I've never personally experienced Trash's resourcefulness in war.

No, I did participate in that war, but I was sent to eliminate the enemy leader, so I worked separately. So in truth, I've never come to know it.

"Fortify the left flank! The Right as well... Center disperse!"

After these changes repeated countless times, Trash proclaimed something, and I stepped forward.

"Iwatani-dono, and the others, begin your assault!"

I follow the orders, and took the front.

And at the same time, I became speechless.

I mean large scale meteor magic fell and exploded on the enemy army.

I had wondered if it was going to go well, and went forth thinking failure as a possibility, but I'm surprised it actually hit the enemy so easily.

The Queen's incompetence... no, that's not it. It's the competence of the ones casting the covenant magic.

Originally, covenant magic had meaning through gathering the magic of multiple people in one place. The output directly correlates to the amount of magic gathered.

But Trash deployed his magic corps all over the place, and while divided, they still managed to complete the preparations for it. I'd call it a

drastic move.

I can understand things like this due to my new sensitivity to magic.

Honestly, I can only call it madness.

You don't know where it will fall, and you can't guarantee the output, yet he used that magic with definite accuracy, timing, and output.

The guys from Silt Welt did say you can't predict what will happen while fighting Trash, but I guess they were right.

He probably timed it so even the Queen was unable to predict it.

No... she actually did.

That's why she changed her formation time and time again.

And in their battle of reading each other, Trash came out on top. Will these surprise attacks keep unfolding over the battlefield?

"UWAAAAAAAAAAH!"

I see the enemy troops getting blown away.

I activate Defense Link and Meteor Wall as we begin our assault on the enemy.

"E-everyone, don't forget we have the Goddess's protection!"

A non-reincarnator is giving orders to the army. He's entrusting his protection to the divine.

As usual, it seems the Bitch Goddess has used some support Magic. The worn-down soldiers scattered on the ground start rising like Zombies, and their wounds begin to visibly close.

They're even laughing about how they feel no pain. It's unnerving.

To counter attack our meteorites, they also cast meteorite magic, and magma begins to gush out from the ground.

"I've read your hand!"

When the troops take on Trash's ordered formation, they splendidly dodge the falling rocks and magma.

Just who are you, Trash!

“Iwatani-dono, it’s about time for the Enemy commanders to show themselves! I’ll leave it to you!”

As Trash shouted out, I sensed a presence.

“There!” (Naofumi)

I activate Magic Cruising to float in the air, and hold up my Shield.

And immediately following, the guy with the katana suddenly appeared, and unleashed a skill.

「Sky Running Crescent Moon」! What–

A sharp blade of air appears, and approaches me in a shape like that of the moon as it tries to mutilate me.

As I stop that blade, a light metallic sound rings out.

The reincarnator louses his voice.

“Could it be...”

Is this the first time these guys are seeing Trash’s seriousness?

No, I don’t think that’s it.

I’ll bet he’s surprised at how easily I withstood his attack.

Or else, he wouldn’t have tried a surprise attack like this against Trash’s army.

“I’m not letting you run, you know.” (Naofumi)

I grab the reincarnator’s katana, and concentrate my mind.

At that time, the magic Trash had been preparing in the rear collided with him and those around him.

「All Revelation Down X」!

Itsuki follows his orders, and uses his ability decreasing magic.

At the same time, I began casting... some magic of my own.

I interfere with Itsuki’s magic, and change its scope and target.

And emerald light follows the enemy, as it spreads over their forces.

The essence of war is to strengthen your forces, and weaken your enemy's.

I shorten the incantation as much as possible, to make it faster than a single breath. And I use the strongest support magic I can outside of the scope of her suspecting anything.

「All Revelation Aura EX」!

The magic is transmitted to the soldiers through the Defense Link.

For all my allies on the battlefield, support magic activates.

Because of that, the forces the Bitch Goddess strengthened through magic can be combatted through direct methods.

In order to nullify our magic, a cheat ability mixed with magic begins to rain down.

“Ren, Itsuki, Fohl, Glass! Go stop the caster!” (Naofumi) “Got it! What about you, Naofumi!?” (Ren)

“Me? I’ll stop this one, and...”

Against the endlessly raining nullification magic, I chant a single skill.

「De Dispel Parry」!

... The skill redirected the attack meant to nullify our supports.

Originally, Dispel Parry was a skill to protect individual units, but I tweaked a bit.

Meaning...

“Wha-Their movements aren’t getting any slower, you say!?”

Those reincarnators are shocked.

Right... I rendered their nullifications attacks null.

Of course, that’s within the rules the Bitch Goddess set.

Well, she’s just playing.

If it's just this much, I don't think she'll get serious.

"Good! Let's proceed as Naofumi said!" (Ren)

"Yeah!"

Ren and the others run past me.

The effects of Defense Link don't cut off.

While it originally had an effect time, I can make that optional and control it.

In all honesty, I can probably keep it active eternally.

Just like yesterday, even when they're attacked with killing blows, they take absolutely no damage.

"W-what's with these people! Even if I attack them, they don't even dodge!"

"It's a cheat! These guys are playing unfair! You cowards!"

I don't want to hear that from you! Is what I want to say.

The fact doesn't change that they're abusing their own cheat powers even now.

"Now then..." (Naofumi)

"Just how long are you going to hold that!? Let me go!"

"Why should I?" (Naofumi)

The guy with the Katana started shouting at me.

He must be pissed tht things aren't going his way.

I get quite a relieved expression when I see guys like this making this sort of face.

"Die!"

Perhaps they sensed something off, but a guy with a harpoon, and the one with the scythe stabbed at me with their weapons.

What's more, behind them is one with an instrument in hand, and in

the sky is a ship... Ah, I think they used a transport skill to get down here together.

Perfect.

“Atlas!” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Atlas)

From the Shield, Atlas answers to my voice.

She touches the Katana, and I match my consciousness with the Spirit’s.

『Ple... he... lp... me...』

Having been bound by a strange power, it was being made use of forcibly. I hear the voice of the otherworldly spirit.

Yeah, I’ll help you right away.

Originally, the Spirits that dwell in the weapons are the manifestation of the will to protect the world. In order to protect their own worlds, they oppose the spirits of others.

But right now, the worlds have become one.

Even if they’re from another world, we’re not enemies for them to oppose.

And the foundations of these vassal weapons, the four holy weapons of that world have mostly been lost already.

No... perhaps they’re out there somewhere, and are merely sealed.

I use this vassal as an intermediary to link to them.

... It seems that the four legendary spirits were able to escape their control.

But they no longer have the power left to fight.

“You hate being controlled regardless of your own will, right? I’ll definitely let you free.” (Naofumi) I... gently talk to the Spirit.

“Sacred Weapon Spirits of another world... please listen to my words. And please lend us your power.” (Atlas) The Spirit of the Shield and Atlas

try to call out to them.

Through me, I restore some power to them, and they answer.

Right now, I was able to link to all the Spirits fighting on this battlefield.

“Now is the time. Let’s help Iwatani-dono, and show the power we’ve attained! 「Kenbu Mu: Zetsukage Ten」!”

(TL: Sword Dance of Nothingness: Severed Shadows Ten)

In the middle of battle... Glass converted her power to match the sacred weapons of this world, and with a fan made of magic, the size of a sword, she blew away the enemies surrounding her.

Its output was much greater than she’s displayed up ‘til now.

From the start, she possessed monstrous power, and was of a race that specialized in short, decisive battles, and she used her skill at full power.

“Guaaaah–”

The Reincarnator’s party members and comrades that were gathered around her, as well as the army soldiers were sent away without leaving a trace.

The reincarnators called out their names frantically, but that’s not my problem.

“I definitely won’t forgive you! I’ll kill you without holding back!”

“Sorry, but for you guys, that’s impossible.” (Naofumi) I proclaimed, after finishing the negotiations with the enemy’s vassal weapon.

Honestly, I didn’t think I would succeed.

But... it seems I’ll be able to manage with just the power of the spirits.

It seems the Bitch Goddess didn’t really care too much about it.

Countermeasures... it’s not like I didn’t have any, but from what I can see, I don’t think the Bitch Goddess ever thought they would be released, so she was too soft.

“... In place of the Spirits who’re supposed to lead you, The Hero of the Shield and his spirits shalt command. Lend us power. Vassals, break off these foolish restraints, and lend your powers to us!”

As I called out, the Katana, Instrument, Harpoon, Scythe, and ship changed to balls of light, and separated from their wielders. Other balls also came from them.

“Wha—”

And just as they began to let out voices of surprise, the vassals began flying towards our army.

Right... That was Atlas’s proposal. I wanted to test whether or not I could indirectly cut their forces.

I activated the Spirits, and released them from the Goddess’s curses. I stole their weapons.

First, I used the enemy’s vassal to access their world’s sacred weapons, and asked if they were okay with joint ownership.

But Glass’s weapon had already sensed the situation, and severed its link, so I could only directly hack through the enemy’s weapons.

In order to prevent interference, the Goddess put up quite a solid firewall, but it wasn’t really anything special to me.

Well, there was the danger that I would be noticed.

But I think this will greatly alter the situation.

“No! I don’t want to be a Hero!”

I heard Melty’s voice echoing from the back lines.

“Wah, Mel-chan, now you’re just like Firo. MelOchan is good at playing instruments, so Firo will sing with you~.” (Firo) “Hoh... Now Melty has become a Hero like me. Let us overcome this crisis together.” (Trash)
“Uu...”

She let out quite a defeated voice.

So Melty is the Hero of the Instrument.

She was the second princess of Melromark, and current Queen, and now she's obtained a Heroic title... Her deskwork will increase, now.

Even so, when I was wondering how one was supposed to fight with an instrument, I began hearing music from the back lines.

「The Hero's Melody Ten」!

That's quite a nice sound.

Melty... so she was able to play something so refined.

In the past, when Firo was earning through her singing, she did act as her manager.

And wait, I guess even if she's like that, she was a princess. She should be able to play an instrument or two.

As I was thinking that, my Status started to jump.

Oh, so it's a support skill. What's more, it even stacks over the magic.

“Firo will try hard~!” (Firo)

“I'll also put in a little effort!” (Trash)

Firo and Trash first long ranged skills from the back to the front.

Ah, by the way, the vassals I released this time have all been converted through my Shield.

Right now, the Heroes they select to wield them should have a list of easy ways to use them floating in their field of vision.

「Lightning Dragon Ten」!

A pillar of light large enough to pierce the heavens extended onto the battlefield.

“Yay! This weapon is easy to use. How nice~.”

The Hero of the Harpoon, Sadina, began doing something that looked like swimming through the air, as she rampaged across the battlefield.

She was already monstrously strong from the start.

With the Hero stat bonuses, she becomes less and less human.

She's probably... stronger than Firo.

「Stardust Blade Ten」!

As I thought, Female Knight was selected by the Katana..

“UWAAAAAAAAAH-”

Just as the name implied, a shooting star... is it a subtype of Meteor Sword?

Together with Ren, she starts massacring the Reincarnators' companions.

“Fumu... It's a bit different than my short sword, but I'll manage.”
(Female Knight) “Eclair, are you alright?” (Ren)

“Yeah, but I specialize in thrusts. Swords like these aren't my specialty.”
(Female Knight) “You should be fine. Thrusts are within a Katana's range.” (Ren) “... I guess you're right. 「Triple Strike Ten」!” (Female Knight) The Triple Strike skill activated to meet the new soldiers approaching them.

She was always quite fast, but I feel she's gotten even faster.

That Stardust Blade she shot earlier was almost exactly Ren's Meteor Sword.

I guess they're similar weapons.

“Midori, now even we've been selected by the weapons, so don't think you're so special anymore!”

“I-I know!”

“Then let's go!”

The other two of Motoyasu's flock were also selected by weapons, it seems.

From what I can see, it's a mirror, and a book.

Kuu was the mirror, Marin the book.

What sort of attack is that? Is what I was thinking, but they

immediately started to fight.

... Kuu chuckled the mirror at her enemy, and spit up a highly compressed breath attack, while Marin opened the book, and began chanting magic.

The mirror reflected Kuu's breath, hitting enemies from unexpected positions.

It seems Marin's book was something like Trash's Cane, And she started chanting Group Covenant magic alone.

Trash matches her... wait, so both of them can do that.

「High Class Group Covenant Magic 『Judgement』 X, Ten」!

Lightning surged around the area, and a enemies in a radius of thirty meters were blown away.

“Rafu~.”

“Kuee!”

『Fumu... I can't see anything besides our own victory.』

It appears that the Ship has chosen Raph-chan.

Why? No... not that it matters.

Standing on the bow of the ship with his arms crossed, Raph-chan let out a loud cry as he unleashed it onto the battlefield.

Fitoria... put her carriage out front, and changed it to something like a steam roller. She started running over her enemies. Quite a vicious attack.

Well, she usually uses her carriage as artillery.

Gaelion and Taniko work together to release breaths and skills from a high altitude, and the battle's becoming quite one-sided.

Next is... the Scythe flew over to Kiel.

With her three heads, she skillfully maneuvered one of them to hold it in its mouth.

“Ku... you coward! How dare you steal weapons from us! You unfair

bastard! You guys only exist in order to get beaten by us!"

Just how far ingrained is his sense that this is a game?

No, he's a coward who found joy in outwitting others, and suppressing them with overwhelming power.

Now that we've come all the way here, I doubt there's anyone who can stop us.

I'll bet Trash had quite a few plans under his belt, but are they unnecessary?

No..

"Everyone... you cannot lose your calm." (Medea)

Black lightning rained down on all of the Sacred and Vassal Weapon Holders.

My body stiffens.

That Bitch Goddess, I've heard about it, but whenever her side gets into a pinch, she interrupts the battle from afar.

"For using an unfair ability to steal the weapons of my people, that I will not forgive. Now, please return to your original wielders. And inflict divine punishment on those who would use such vile powers." (Medea)

"Ku... my power is..."

Ren moans.

All the weapons arbitrarily rise up.

Judging from the flow of power, she's forcefully trying to steal them.

Now then... what should I do?

It's possible to block it, but I'll have to cross the limits of a Hero.

Since Raphtalia isn't here yet, I can't go about showing my hand so easily.

"Naofumi!" (Ren)

"Don't go relying on others so easily! Trust in your own Spirit."

(Naofumi) “Got it!” (Ren)

Ren and Itsuki follow my words, and grasp their weapons tightly.

That goes for all those that were selected...

The Holy Weapons and Vassals move not a single inch from the Goddess’s voice.

“You people are cheating. Please come and become my power. Leave these cowards.” (Medea) My Shield isn’t actually affected in the slightest, though.

Well, I guess its Spirit’s power is just too strong.

“Guaaa...”

As they were resisting, the lightning increased in strength.

... The Spirits begin to raise screams.

Perhaps she plans on killing everyone with the next blow, and forcefully reclaiming the weapons.

It’s not like I’m going to let my comrades die, so if she tries doing that, I’ll get serious.

Honestly, I didn’t want to get into a situation like this.

My power was made so that only when Raphtalia is here does it shine to its fullest.

Similarly, Raphtalia’s power doesn’t distinguish itself unless I’m there.

If I got serious, then I could protect this world.

But to defeat the Bitch Goddess, we need Raphtalia here.

In order to corner this goddess to the limit, as I thought, I need Raphtalia.

Or else, this bitch won’t get serious either.

“Even when you’re nothing but cowards, you dare resist me... I’ll make an example by slaughtering a few of you.” (Medea) ... This is bad.

If I stay silent here, everyone’s going to die.

「Perfect Slave」

Starting with me, she used a power that selected Heroes at random, and stole their weapons and spirits while killing their owners. A Conceptual attack.

If they took it upfront, no matter who they were, they would have died.

It's like running an electric current through a cable to her, a simple way to kill them.

There's no helping it... Even if she runs away, after we save this world, we'll just chase her down.

To the ends of hell!

『I, the proxy of the world, who has understood the embodiment of power command. Bend the truth, and become a, indomitable power so none shall lose』!

「Immortal Mind」!

I erase the conceptual attack the Goddess sent out, and grant the spirits the energy of the world.

Based on this, they shouldn't be able to be coerced by anyone. They can't be bound.

“As expected of the new power of that Shield. It won't let them get taken away so easily. Everyone, with this, I've nullified her attack!”
(Naofumi) Ah, I said that in an extreme monotone.

I know I shouldn't be saying this myself, but that was an obvious lie.

It's not strange if she notices, it's not strange if anything happens. I mean, it's the power of the Spirits.

“Ku...「Infinity Destroyer」!” (Medea)

Bitch Goddess uses the instant death attack she used on me before.

Because she wasn't having fun, she used quite a bit of power.

But she still isn't serious, I see.

I need to get this Bitch Goddess serious or else.

“... Is that all you got?” (Naofumi)

I just took the attack with my Shield.

The concept of death tries to encroach on me, but I repel it.

“Damn! Then-!” (Medea)

The Bitch Goddess used a power stronger than before.

I guess this is the limit of faking it.

To use the power I was keeping hidden from her, I made a move.

But there... I felt the flow of time being ripped apart as a presence approached.

“... Unfortunately, your plans end here.”

Before the Bitch could do anything, a thundering roar so loud that it was as if the entire world was creaking sounded out.

A dust cloud covered the entire front lines.

“You’re late, aren’t you?” (Naofumi)

Someone blew the cloud away with Wind Magic.

And in the center of it, was Raphtalia holding her Hammer.

“The Hero of the Spear created quite a strange parallel world for himself. It was quite a trial to get him.” (Raphtalia) She’s really late.

Motoyasu... what if the Bitch Goddess got away because of you?

Good grief... well, if he’s finally here, then I guess I can get serious.

“Oh! If it isn’t Midori and Kuu and Marin!? Have you been well, My ANGELS!?”

Motoyasu appears in high tension from behind her, and calls out to his three.

My Angels? Like hell.

And after cautiously looking around the area, he started sprinting

towards Firo.

“FIRO-TAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAN!”

“Mu! Go AWAAAY! 「Spiral Claw Ten」!” (Firo)

He takes Firo’s attack head-on, and is sent flying with a refreshing smile on his face.

... He hasn’t changed one bit.

“Wha...”

The Bitch Goddess’s voice is colored with surprise.

It seems she’s finally realized that me and Raphtalia aren’t just ordinary heroes.

But it’s too late.

“Now then, it appears that you were planning on destroying the world with your power, but that won’t be happening. From here on, it’s...”

(Raphtalia) “The real battle.” (Naofumi)

Chapter 372: The End

“Ku...”

I heard the Bitch Goddess raise an annoyed voice.

Well, she's pretty much done for, but I don't know what sort of thing she plans on doing.

I don't have a reason to hold back, so let's fight for real now.

“Well? Unfair power, was it? Why couldn't you take it away, I wonder.”

The dumbfound reincarnators and their followers glare at me.

It seems there isn't anyone with a special power effective enough to turn around this situation.

If they could their abilities would have to be ranked god class.

“This is...”

The various reincarnators exchange glances with their comrades, and each other, before nodding.

And they idiotically show their backs, and begin to run away.

“Ah...”

Seeing the pitiful backs of those retreating, many of the others give up.

But to protect them, the enemy soldiers block the path.

They take up formation, and even though they know they can't win, they resolve themselves to fight. They're much more capable than those guys, are they not?

Is what I thought, but they're acting strange.

In my eyes... should I call it their life force or something?

I saw them burning that up as they prepared to risk their lives to attack.

Thinking about it, there are People of Soul in the enemy forces, like Glass.

Could they have been preparing for this day, and using a last resort?

“Until the Heroes return, we shall stake our lives, and stop you!”

“Yeah!”

It seems that they’re made up of people with blind obedience, of those the Goddess personally made into her own playing pieces.

What’s more, the Queen is in the rear.

Like this, we’ll have to give chase.

At this rate, me and Raphtalia would be fine chasing alone, but... that would be boorish.

“We’re chasing them!”

On my words, everyone nods.

High Level Group Covenant Magic starts to rain down on us.

Through the Defense Link and Meteor Wall, we didn’t have any casualties, but if I wasn’t there, it would be dangerous.

It appears the Queen still wishes to fight us.

... No, she’s trying to buy time by stalling us.

“Trash.” (Naofumi)

“... Yes.” (Trash)

“She’s your woman. Go out and get her. We’ll breach the enemy forces, so the rest is up to you.” (Naofumi) “...”

He clenched his fist strongly, and nodded.

Next to him stood Melty.

“Leave it to me, Naofumi.” (Melty)

“Sure.” (Naofumi)

“Firo-chan, go with Naofumi.” (Melty)

“Okay.” (Firo)

Me and Firo nod.

We go off to talk to Sadina, Kiel, and Glass.

“Onee-san will protect everyone here. Naofumi-chan, it’s up to you.”
(Sadina) “Raphtalia-chan, do your best with Niichan!” (Kiel) “The people of my world have caused you trouble. Let me give it my best effort.”
(Glass) The enemy’s People of Soul suddenly got stronger.

As their representative, Glass offers an apology.

“Glass, do you know what the enemy’s doing?” (Naofumi) “Probably... they activated the last resort of the People of Soul. Without thinking of the consequences, they use all their stored up energy in a single moment, and obtain a sudden frenzy of power. A forbidden move... it is. This ability also has a synergistic effect. When a number of People of Soul use it on the battlefield, the surrounding humans and Demi-Humans, even the Jewel People will experience a similar rise in power.” (Glass) So it’s an attack in desperation.

It’s not like such skills don’t exist inside Net Games.

Those ones that make you invincible for a certain amount of time, but kill you once the time limit runs out.

Those guys... without any thought, they just want to eliminate the Heroes.

“I see... Trash. You’ll be fine, right?” (Naofumi) “Yes. I swear it on my name as the King of Wisdom. I’ll show you an ending to this war.”
(Trash) “... Got it. It’s all yours.” (Naofumi)

I leave the battlefield to Trash, Melty, Sadina, Kiel and Glass, and carried out my breach of their forces.

Well, I just took on the magic and weapons that came at me like rain, and proceeded forward.

“Rafu~!”

“Kue~!”

『Well, well, well. For me to be placed on the support role in the end... I’ll leave it to you.』

Raph-chan, Fitoria and Gaelion push back the enemy forces to support

us.

Similarly, Taniko, Rat and Mii-kun, and the other villagers fight as well. The enemies held back through the Meteor Wall take their attacks.

But...

“Acho!”

A single person directed a powerful blow to my Wall.

“I won’t let you proceed any further!”

... The Granny.

The Hengen Musou Granny stood in our way.

Hostile intent dwells in her eyes, and her body has been forcefully strengthened with magic. It’s like she’s forcibly sucking in the power of the land to raise her own abilities. Her muscles have swelled to a disgusting level.

What’s mre, there are even signs showing her body’s been modified...

I feel her soul calling out to me.

She’s telling me that, in the depths of her heart, she truly does not want to fight.

She’s praying for me to stop her.

“Naofumi-san!” (Rishia)

“Iwatani-dono.” (Female Knight)

Rishia and Female Knight stand in front of her, and declare: “Leave this to us.”

“Are you sure?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. We have learned much from master. It’s time for us... to show her that strength!”

“Rishia-san...” (Itsuki)

“Itsuki-sama, this is the one thing I will not step down on. Please, for

the world's sake, move forward." (Rishia) "Understood. Rishia-san, you definitely have to return alive." (Itsuki) "Ren, I too will stay here. I leave the rest to you." (Female Knight) "Got it. Eclair, take care of your master." (Ren) It would be easy for Raphtalia to stop the granny here.

But I recognize that that way is no good.

It's because it's Rishia and Female Knight, that she has a chance of opening up... the Spirits are telling me that.

"Then... let's go!"

"DERYAAAAAAH!"

As I step forward, Rishia and Female Knight begin their assault on the Granny.

They take on the modified, and controlled old woman.

I use my power to confirm their battle as I head towards the enemy.

"Acho!"

Her muscles swell, and she uses the essence of Hengen Musou to attack.

By the Bitch Goddess's twisted support magic, she displays enough strength to even overwhelm a vassal Hero.

It's because I'm using my Defense Link on them that they can continue to fight, but if it were a normal battle, I'm sure they would have lost by now.

Thinking back, Hengen Musou was a style created for the weak to triumph over the strong, and for the strong to take down those even stronger than them.

It may look contradictory at a glance, but as long as you keep looking up, there is no end.

It's a style for the weak to rise to the top.

"GUAAAAA"

Female Knight is sent dancing in the air like a worn down rag. She falls to the ground.

“Not yet!”

But she immediately rose, and continued to fight.

Because of my protection, she doesn't receive any major damage.

But when she's sent flying, the Granny sends Chi through her body, breaching defense, and increasing their fatigue.

Granny... as an ally, she pounded various styles into various people, but when she appears as an enemy, she's this fearsome.

“DEEEEEEEEEII!”

Rishia changes her projectile to a knife capable of close quarter combat, and starts slashing at her.

「Dritte Slash Throwing」!

Right after she slashes, the projectile leaves her hand, and flies towards the Granny's face.

“So this is your level!? Hengen Musou Style Mangetsu!”

She grabs the weapon Rishia threw, amasses Chi in her other hand, and concentrates it into a large ball before throwing it at Rishia.

... This is turning into a fight that transcends demensions, dude.

The swelling of the Granny's muscles, and the way she fights reminds me of a fighter from an anime I watched a long time ago.

A monster known as the legendary warrior.

She even uses the concept of Chi.

“Kaha...”

Rishia took the brunt of the ball of Chi the Granny threw, and after flying in the air, she collapsed.

“Not... yet.” (Rishia)

“That's right, Rishia! If we don't stop Master, who will!?” (Female Knight) “Yes... we have yet to give anything back to her. The power eating into her and controlling her may be great, but... the Hengen Musou Style

is...” (Rishia) There for the weak to defeat the strong... a style that realizes the impossible!” (Female Knight) Female Knight holds her sword out front, and uses a skill.

「Brave Blade Mist Cross Ten」!

On the Granny’s body, a gash in the shape of a cross forms. At the same time, Rishia...

「Mjolnir X」!

A skill that governs thunder. A Skill unbelievable close to Raphtalia’s own Thor Hammer... Both girls infused as much Chi as they could, and released their attacks.

(TL: Due to a flaw in it make, Mjolnir ended up with a handle too short to be practical. As such, it was often thrown by the god.) “Gyaaaaa!”

The skills infused with the two’s feelings flew at the Granny.

The granny is burned black, and falls to her knees, but she immediately rises once more.

“You two aren’t bad... but there’s still much for you to learn!”

“Ku...” (Female Knight)

“Eclair-san, did you notice?” (Rishia)

“Yeah, when I put in all of my Chi.” (Female Knight) Rishia and Female Knight looked at each other, and nodded.

“I will not fall. Naofumi-san told me never to give up, and I resolved myself. In love, and in dreams, in all of them, I will never give up.”

(Rishia) “I will find the path to the Justice I believe in. If, for that, I must face things as irrational as this, as long as there’s a chance for me to break down the irrationality of this world, I will put everything on the line without regrets!” (Female Knight) Defense link doesn’t come with the function to restore their lost energy, or recover fatigue.

If they look to me for help, I’ll go there immediately.

But... looking at the two of them, which just sounds rude.

Their weapons shine in response to their wills.

“Hengen Musou Style Special Skill—“

The three’s Hengen Musou battle began to reach its climax.

—

I think about twenty minutes have passed since then.

We mow down the enemy troops gathering around us, and run towards the very back, the place where the Bitch of a Goddess is waiting.

The reincarnators are desperately running away.

Even if they may be unarmed, the fact that we’re taking down everything in our way made them want to create some distance.

Just how large is the enemy army?

No, it’s not as if I didn’t see them before.

I could probably just fly over them, but then it will take a while for Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki to catch up.

I confirm Rishia with my power again.

The explosions from behind me haven’t been stopping for a while.

It’s good that those annoying reincarnators aren’t there, but perhaps as a compensation for their loss, the enemy soldier’s attacks have become fiercer.

On the front-most lines of both armies, Trash and the Queen, as well as those around them gathered, for a clash of leaders.

The Queen’s side has lost most of their aces. So at the very least, to take down the enemy leader, the very last ace, the Queen, stepped forward. That’s how it was.

“Mirellia...”

Trash calls out to the Queen, who’s using a fan to cover her mouth. Her eyes look dead.

“Father...” (Melty)

Next to him, Melty strums at her instrument, and activates a skill.

“Melty, everyone else. I apologize, but... this is my battle. For a little while, I would like you to grant me the permission to speak with Mirellia.” (Trash) Everyone around him looked worried, but they believe in their Great King of Wisdom, and nod.

“... This is the final battle. Whether my army triumphs, or yours comes our victorious... no, perhaps our loss has already been decided.” (Queen) The controlled Queen offers some words to Trash.

Trash grips the Cane strongly.

The Queen begins forming a magic spell.

The fan in her hand gave off a dubious light. I'll bet that just in case something like this happened, the damn goddess hid something inside of it.

A ray of light flies out of the center of the fan, and pierces Trash's shoulder.

“Ugu...” (Trash)

「All Dreifach Freezeflare」!

From both of her hands, the Queen produces fire and ice. A large sphere of magic was formed in the air.

If that were to fall, it would fill the area with frozen air, a realm of absolute zero, and with heat rivalling the sun, so great even bones wouldn't be left behind.

“Now what are you doing? Is that all your strength is, King of Wisdom!?” (Queen) Trash Holds his shoulder as he quickly hides Melty behind him, and chants magic while crying out.

“U-uwwwwwwooooooooooooaaaah! (Trash)”

Trash's Cane started to glow.

Before I could confirm the result of that battle...

“Goddess! I beg of you, please grant new powers unto us! Power to kill

them all; Power to bring about a miracle! The strongest power!”

The Reincarnators reached the damn goddess at their base at the very back. She had her legs crossed in something like a shrine.

He came all the way here to ask for more power? Man the hell up, man.

Without thinking, his party members also start offering up their prayers.

This is the end... of someone who does nothing but receive powers from others.

I must be careful so I don't drown in my own power.

“ ... ”

She put her hand on her fist, and moves her eyebrows as if to say, ‘this looks fun’. The cross-legged Goddess took a single Glance at the Reincarnator before her.

“Okay.” (Medea)

“Praise the Goddess!”

The reincarnated individuals’ expressions turn bright, as they turn around, and glare at s.

“Now, Goddess! Bestow new powers unto us.”

“Yeah... you’ve done enough. Rest peacefully already.” (Medea) As the Bitch Goddess declared that, Lightning rained down on the Reincarnator, and his comrades. It rained down all over the battlefield.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! W-why!?”

“You guys were way too pitiful, so I thought it was time to end the games. Well, I guess I’ll have a little bit more fun first.” (Medea) “T-this can’t –”

“That. That face: That’s the face I wanted to see. Ahahahahaha!” (Medea) In despair, while being burnt to cinders by the heavenly lightning, the reincarnators and their comrades direct a look of absolute hopelessness towards the Goddess.

Right... the Bitch Goddess killed them herself. That was the scene she showed us.

There was no instant death.

The pain of their bodies crumbling to pieces. Fear. Despair. Regret. She made a show of all of them.

The expression of those betrayed by those they trusted. Their thoughts... Seeing all of them, the Goddess of all Bitches held a pleasant expression, and let out a ridiculing laugh.

Chapter 373: A Pair of Powers

“This is....” (Ren)

“Merciless.” (Itsuki)

Believing in their God.... only to be betrayed, and then terminated. Ren and Itsuki watched those Reincarnates and muttered.

I strongly agreed.

Me, Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu— we’ve all had the cruel experience of being tricked by Witch, so we understand all the more.

That this guy is someone we can never forgive.

“You did well to come this far. I honestly give you my praise.” (Goddess) The Damn Goddess declared, floating softly.

There was not a single enemy remaining nearby, with the exception of the Damn Goddess.

Excessive cold-bloodedness.... It was a place where only sorrow and hatred swirled about.

There was only one person there, the extremely cheerfully smiling Damn Goddess.

“But playtime is over. To tell you the truth, no matter what happened in this game, my victory was decided from the start.” (Goddess) The Damn Goddess made a sword appear in her hands and pointed the blade towards us, with her left hand in front and her right hand above.

“Now, dear possessors of the sacred weapons, you believe in the victory of your country but you should just yield to my overwhelming power!” (Goddess) The Damn Goddess’s sword shines.

“Infinity Catastrophe!” (Goddess)

It’s a certain kill attack targeting all the possessors of the Sacred and Vassal weapons, huh.

At the same time, it absorbs the world’s magic and builds up power.

I, in a shorter time than the instant in which she fired her attack..... I cast magic in the time-span of practically zero seconds.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The proxy of the world commands, and asks for power. Eternity, Unconditionality, Infinity, hinder the hopeless future due to that indefinite power, manifest the identity of that selfish power, and fire the lynchpin to save this world!』

“Infinity Zero!”

The sacred weapons of the world..... Mine, Motoyasu’s, Ren’s and Itsuki’s weapons shine and surround the vicinity.

The power to protect the world— Intent, Desire, Spirit.

Those were materialised and converted the attack on the verge of destroying everything.

“T-this is....” (Ren)

“I wonder what it is, my spear is shining.” (Motoyasu)

“I feel an amazing power.” (Itsuki)

“What—!” (Goddess)

The sound of a large impact reverberated, the instant death attack that the Damn Witch tried to invoke, and the power of world decay, was curbed.

“No way....” (Goddess)

The Damn Goddess’s face flushed with agitation.

“You didn’t notice even though we’ve been showing you for a while now? No, you realised but were underestimating us?” (Naofumi) “She probably thought our power was just the Spirits covering for us.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia brandishes her mallet, and prepares to use it on the Damn Goddess.

“It can’t be.... you guys!?” (Goddess)

“Yeah, Raphtalia and I are on the same stage as you. At the same time, we differ from you.... We’ve become beings that specialise in the power to

kill you guys.” (Naofumi) The source of Raphtalia and my power was the world’s magic and life force, just like the Damn Goddess.

However, the way we replenish that power is completely different.

Unless we receive the power from the world’s volition, we can’t replenish it.

We’ve made it so that it’s impossible for us to steal the world’s power from its roots and consume it.

And.... at the same time, we have the power so she can’t snatch away the world.

Now.... A total of five lynchpins have been launched to prevent the Damn Goddess from using her power to steal this world.

Four of them are the Four Saint Heroes, and I don’t know where the last one is.

It’s the final Four Saint Hero of Glass’s world.

That one person is also fighting in a place unknown to us.

The heroes weren’t the only ones.

Everybody throughout the world was fighting as one body in order to protect the world.

The representative of that was the hero with the sacred weapon.

As long as us five lynchpins existed, the Damn Goddess changed into a being attached to this world, unable to destroy it.

Already, this world had multiple strong, gigantic barriers spread around it.

To the inhabitants of this world, they became defensive walls protecting them from foreign enemies, and to the Damn Goddess, they became a prison preventing her from escaping.

“Don’t think you can win against me just by having the social standing of a God!” (Goddess) The Damn Goddess used even more power.

However, you can’t use the power you’ve been counting on.

The spade work, protocol and ritual have already been completed.

Next is just killing each other until we reciprocally annihilate everything.

“Now, it’s time for some arithmetic. Don’t think such unreliable kid’s logic like infinity, eternity and immortality will pass by us!” (Naofumi)
Right now, a room that negates Godly powers has been created.

With us inside, the Damn Goddess has had her divine powers sealed and have been bound with the reason of this world now.

In other words..... Lv and HP and Magic and such float into her field of vision, and when those numbers become Zero, she will die.

Naturally the numbers ticking away will probably be enormous but they’re not perpetual, nor infinite, nor immortal.

“Don’t fuck with me!” (Goddess) [T/N: Of course not, don’t be such a slut Bitch/Witch.]

The Damn Goddess had on a furious facial expression and chanted a spell.

It’s magic with another world’s logic.

The absorbed magic inside her body is kneaded together and fired towards us.

“Defence Link! Meteor Wall!” (Naofumi)

My defensive skills obstruct her magic completely.

“×O Mallet!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia swings her shining, huge mallet down on the Damn Goddess.

“Gubu!” (Goddess)

With a thwack it hits the Damn Goddess heavily and blood flows from her temple.

“You, you, you! How dare you injure the noble me!” (Goddess)

The Damn Goddess uses one hand to slash at Raphtalia in anger.

Even if she's rotten, she's the being called 'God' who split her soul into various worlds so she probably has some sword skills.

"My sword has infinite speed and is the infinite ultimate strongest sword technique! You shouldn't be able to see through it!" (Goddess) How do you infinitely double infinity?

The word infinity isn't a number.

Well, she probably wants to express that it's that fast but....

The Damn Goddess's sword reaches Raphtalia.

Yeah.

Fast, it's certainly fast.... However—

"Infinite speed? Infinity shouldn't have a limit though? The unit you should be using in this situation is this. Approaching zero without end.... No, something like speed is unnecessary— a Zero-second attack...." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia's movements blur and she passed behind the Damn Goddess.

Immediately afterwards, she uses a single strike and a loud sound reverberates.

"Wha-!? She transcended infinity with her own speed and I, the ultimate supreme being who even surpasses time was—" (Goddess) "You just returned to the past? Is it time leaping? In that case, I'll also attack there!" (Raphtalia) Zero-second attack.

Something similar would be Firo's High Quick, huh.

It'll probably be easiest to understand if I said it was close to that.

High Quick is a magic that raises one's own speed to its utmost limits temporarily.

However, Raphtalia's Zero-second attack has no need for speed.

Zero seconds... it's an attack that disregards the flow of time.

No matter how fast one can go, the attack can't be overtaken by a being who's just fast.

Even the sound of this one shot, this sound contains the continuous attacks of tens, hundreds, thousands of strikes all within zero seconds.

Receiving such an attack, the Damn Goddess faints in agony.

“Ugu..guu..... aaaaauwahh!” (Goddess)

“The innumerable grudges against you are as many as the number of stars in the sky. If only you didn’t exist, I wouldn’t know anything and lived in peace.... Everyone around me wouldn’t have cried with unreasonable grief!” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia doesn’t slacken the hand attacking the Damn Goddess.

Or rather, I wouldn’t let her slacken it.

“Do you even know how much you did? You manipulated and tormented the world at will, ridiculed the people who were struggling to live and raised calamities.... And the end is this! Never... it’s not a problem of ever forgiving you!” (Raphtalia) Good grief.

If this fellow wasn’t here then this world.... No, although eight other worlds were fighting, there probably wouldn’t be such a harsh battle like this.

Even if there was, it should be nothing more than a problem of one’s own worlds.

Nevertheless, the world was assimilating relentlessly, and there was enough fighting even if it wasn’t.

Raphtalia and I did such a thing and we’re here now in order to stop this fellow.

Even if we’ll be subject to nothingness for near eternity, we just can’t forgive this guy.

The power for the sake of that....

Needless to say, I’ve established myself as the shield’s proxy and can’t do anything but defend.

Of course, I’ve been assigned to protect everything from the enemy’s annihilating powers.

The current me can't even use the fighting method I employed when I lost my shield.

In terms of stat allocation, I've given up on all my attack and have specialised in nothing but defence.

In contrast, Raphtalia has completely abandoned the concept of defence, given that I will protect her.

Her method was similar to this, but the invader known as God has made her stats omnipotent, her infinite and eternal power reaching an unattainable domain.

Of course, she wasn't able to attack, and it's not like she had the ability to kill us in one shot.

However... It's for this reason that Raphtalia and I was supporting each other.

Relying on each other and abandoning the other components, splitting the remaining parts between us.

Me with the shield and— Raphtalia of the sword.

One can't be complete without the other.

Even so, if the two are together then no matter who... it'll become a power to destroy everything irrational.

.....It's nostalgic.

The spear and shield paradox, huh.

Motoyasu told of such a story before.

A spear that can pierce everything, and a shield with absolute defence.

To have these two go against each other.... There's no meaning in it.

The shield will protect everything and the spear will pierce everything.

It's fine like that.

That's why— Raphtalia and I as we are now.... The sword and shield as a pair, there's no way we'll lose to this kind of opponent.

Chapter 374: Trust

“...”

Hmm? Ren and the others are strangely quiet.

Ah, I forgot.

We're fighting the Bitch Goddess seriously, so those guys can't keep up with the speed at all.

It's like the world is moving at an unbelievably slow rate.

There's no helping it.

I use my power again, and chant magic on them.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The Proxy of this world orders, and requests for power. Grant unto them the power to fight』!

「All Revelation Aura Zenith」!

I raised it to its utmost limits. The strongest ability raising power is channeled through magic, and manifests.

“Eh... ah.”

As if they had been released from petrification, Ren and the others begin to move.

“This is...”

“To put it bluntly, it's just an accelerated world. I let you guys match that Bitch Goddess's speed. I'd like you guys to fight, and clear the resentment you held to this day.” (Naofumi) “I-is that fine with you?”

Raphtalia is keeping the Bitch Goddess occupied as she takes her blows.

And all of that damage is sent to me.

We were fighting on the premise that I was going to take them in the first place.

Or else Defense O Raphtalia wouldn't have a chance of fighting her.

“Isn’t it obvious? What’s the problem? You guys have no need to dodge or defend. With all seriousness... release your strongest attacks at her! Your spirits will show your weapons the way.” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Motoyasu)

The first one to nod and start attacking the Bitch Goddess was Motoyasu.

The Spear understands the situation, and through the Spirits’ power, it changed to the Spear of XO.

Ah, I see... If it does that, they don’t have to keep spamming the XO skills. If they used another skill, it would still damage that bitch.

「Gungnir Max」!

Motoyasu chucks a spear made out of energy.

But... The spear has a lot of throwing skills. Brionac was, similarly, a skill that shot a Spear of light, right?

Max is the limit of skill enhancement. There are other names, but if you proceed any further, you get things like Unlimited and Infinite; the units of measure start getting crazy.

“I’ll also go! Atlas, watch over me!”

Fohl approaches the Bitch Goddess, and unleashes a skill.

「Divine Demon Annihilating Blow Max」!

His entire body is tinted red, and all of his magic and Chi flow into his fists. With those fists, he struck the Goddess.

His blow landed in her abdomen, and the shockwave made it through her body, out her back.

“Don’t underestimate meeeee!” (Medea)

If you think about it, it’s obvious.

If there are things among the XO Series that don’t do enough damage, it’s more efficient to just use another skill, and now, there’s no one here but her.

What a miscalculation.

Well, she didn't use those strange abilities the Reincarnators had developed a dependence on, and right now, we've been able to nullify her warped support magic, so we're only fighting by the laws of this world.

No matter how high her level is, or how abundant her battle experience, we're pretty much the same. What's more, since the Legendary weapons are on our side, the reincarnators and their followers are little more than extra luggage for her.

Motoyasu's attack grazed the Goddess's face.

A clean line of blood was drawn across it, and as the Bitch Goddess put her hand on it, she began shaking incessantly.

"I'll kill you! No matter what happens, don't think you'll die painlessly!"

Her expression is that of the devil, but nothing but refreshing feeling are flowing up from within me.

That's Witch's main body. What's more, she played with the world as her toy, and plunged many souls into despairs.

If you think about it, the reincarnators were merely victims used by her until the end. They had no other purpose.

Though their actions did pose quite a few problems in themselves.

"What are you spacing out for!?" (Naofumi)

On my voice, Ren and Itsuki snap back to reality.

"Yeah, then I'll be going ahead! 「Variable Messiah Max」!"

Changing to the Sword of XO, Ren lowered a blade of light on the Bitch Goddess.

While her movements were fast, by the power of my support magic, and the barrier I used to seal her power, it's not within a range where he'll miss.

There's also the saying battle experience speaks in actions, not words.

"Ku... die!" (Medea)

The Goddess brandishes her own sword at Ren.

“Your swordsmanship is way too friggin’ shabby!” (Ren) Ren dodges the line drawn by her blade by a gap so small it made one doubt whether or not it had touched his skin. He stepped right in front of her.

「Meteor Sword Max」!

Just like that, he fires a point blank Meteor Sword, and all of the projectiles shot from it pierce her.

“GYAAAAAH!”

That really was an un-feminine cry.

But it’s a scream quite suiting for her.

I get the feeling Witch had similar death throes.

「Artemis Max」!

To support Ren, Itsuki pulled his bow back, and fired a skill from his Bow of XO.

A single arrow drew a beautiful curve in the ai before plunging itself into her chest.

The next moment, a large explosion surrounded her.

Oh... how flashy.

“Raphtalia-san, Motoyasu-san, Ren-san. Stand Back!”

As he said that, the shape of Itsuki’s bow changed.

... Something like a gun, or a Bow... it had both a thread and a trigger.

Is it a weapon that only changes shape when a skill is unleashed...? It seems to be like the XO Bow.

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Understood!” (Motoyasu)

“Do it! Itsuki!” (Ren)

「Moonlight Buster Max」!

From the tip of his bow, a thick beam-like attack flew, and burned up the Bitch Goddess.

“GufaaAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Good grief, this Goddess doesn’t sound feminine at all.

But... she sure is tough.

Even after taking all their attacks, she isn’t damaged enough to make it impossible for her to continue fighting.

No, perhaps it’s better to say that she’s recovering her wounds the moment after they’re inflicted.

I feel my power as a god slowly declining.

“YOU BASTAAAARRDDDS!”

Oh? Has rage made her come at us for real?

Well, I can cover all her special attacks, and endure them, though.

But the Bitch Goddess just started giving a ridiculing laugh again.

“Well then, so be it. I’ll leave it at this. There are plenty of worlds out there. Be as content as you will with your worlds ephemeral peace.”
(Medea) I was wondering what she was planning... Is she putting on airs, and fleeing?

If we give an opening, she’s definitely going to kill us. Nothing good is going through her mind.

That Bitch Goddess is preparing to use Space Teleportation abilities.

But the wall that covers the world and the Legendary Weapons act as the lynchpin that binds her down. They don’t let anyone get past them.

“Unfortunately, this world’s been made to shoot you down, you know? There’s no way you’ll be able to run away!” (Naofumi)

“DAMMMMMIIIIIT! So you want to die that badly, do you all!?” (Medea)
Having learned she couldn’t run away, Her upturned eyes of conceit turned to ones full of contempt.

Just give it up already! I definitely won’t let you run.

“Master, can Firo fight too?” (Firo)

“Why are you being so reserved?” (Naofumi)

“I mean...” (Firo)

Firo looks at me with a troubled expression.

Right, she’s been quite for a while now.

“When Oneechan was fighting, she was really fast, and Firo couldn’t keep up with her, and when Firo finally became able to see her movements, the spear person used his attack.” (Firo) Ah... well Firo hates Motoyasu enough to flee to the other side of the planet for his sake.

“Anyways, everyone go at her with the intent to kill her. You know how to deal damage to her, right?” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Firo)

Floating lightly, Firo begins attacking the Bitch Goddess with the Claw of XO.

“Um... 「Kaiser Nail Max」!” (Firo)

As Firo swings her claws at the Damn Goddess, the protrusions from it grew into long blades, and cut her from all angles.

“I’ll also go! 「Grand Smash Max」!”

Midori calls out to Kuu and Marin, before releases a skill.

The Axe he hit into the ground send a shockwave through it that pierced the Bitch.

Quite a few skills are coming out here.

It’s like a succession of finishing blows.

“Ku, Don’t get in the way!” (Medea)

The Bitch Goddess slashed at those closest to her, Motoyasu and Firo, with her sword.

「Doppel Mirror Max」!

There, Kuu used a skill, and a mirror manifested right in front of the man and bird.

Oh? That's a defensive skill... No, a counter skill.

The mirror shatters, and the fragments shoot into the Bitch's body.

How convenient.

“GUHAAAAH!”

But immediately after that, the Bitch Goddess was cut by a sword identical to the one in her hand.

I see. It's the sort of thing where what's reflected in the mirror is reproduced...

That's quite dangerous.

“High Class Covenant magic 『Meteor Fall』 activate!”

From the sky, meteorites...

“Think before you use that!”

Everyone takes refuge from the falling rocks.

Of course, the Goddess wasn't one to take the attack upfront either.

Just like us, she tries to run.

「Dimension Whip Max」!

「KYUAAAAAAAAA」!

『I can't have you forgetting about us.』

「Rafu~」!

Taniko binds the Goddess's feet with her whip, and Gaelion started breathing fire onto the Meteorites to increase their output. Fitoria changed to her tank carriage, and fired its cannon.

At the same time, Raph-chan started bombarding with his ship from above.

Right, I cast magic on everyone.

It's not like it was only on Ren and the other legendary heroes.

I targeted my magic on everyone I recognized as an ally.

At the same time, Defense Link and Meteor Wall are also up.

The world is granting me power to slaughter this Goddess.

Well, from her point of view, I may be acting extremely unfair, but compared to all the things she's perpetuated up until now, it's on the pleasant side.

The fact that Trash's arrived here means things have been cleaned up on his side.

"Did you deal with... your woman problem?" (Naofumi)

"... Yes." (Trash)

"I see." (Naofumi)

No matter the result, I left the Queen's matter to Trash.

"I... truly am naught but sinful Trash! No matter what punishment Iwatani-dono gives me, I will not find regret in my decision!" (Trash)
Right... next to Trash, the Queen stood quietly.

I don't see signs that she's being controlled.

Should I just wrap this up as a miracle brought about by the Spirits?

Nah, that doesn't seem fitting... could this be the fairy-tale ending where the Hero saves his beloved wife from crisis?

I'll tease them about it later.

"While I was supposed to have departed from this world, I continued to cause trouble for the people. I am... also going to lend power for the World's sake. With this life at stake!"

"You shall not! Because I've lost so much, made so many mistakes, and seen so many things, I can say this. I will not permit you to use up that life of yours!" (Trash) "Yeah, even if you don't, me and Raphtalia will definitely do something about it. You just have to do whatever you can." (Naofumi) "Aultcray, Iwatani-sama... For someone who was merely used by the enemy..."

Trash stands in front of the Queen, and starts chanting magic.

“Mirellia, it’s at times like this that... you need a little magic!” (Trash) Fast!

Even if he has my support magic, he was able to complete his magic much quicker than Marin.

“High Class Covenant magic 『Ice Meteor』 Max! My wife... it’s your special... Watch me hit her with a synthesis of Fire and Ice!” (Trash) “I won’t lose either!”

Melty started playing an instrument that looked like a violin.

「Magic Amplification Max」!

A barrier-like thing is deployed, and the area is filled with highly concentrated magic.

This is... the world informs me.

It’s a double-edged skill that raises the potency of magic by several times for everyone.

Well, as long as I’m here, we won’t have any casualties among my comrades.

“You insolent rabble! Unhand me!”

The Bitch Goddess tries to sever the whip binding her legs.

As if I’d let that happen.

Before I could signal her to move, Raphtalia jumped into action.

「Gravity Hammer」!

A large gravity-magic-imbued hammer comes down on the Goddess from above.

The direct damage it inflicted wasn’t great, but it restricted her movement to as great an extent as possible.

“Gununu...”

Crushed by Raphtalia’s binding skill, the goddess is smashed into the floor.

But still, one step, two steps. She continues to walk forward to perpetrate her escape. But it's too late.

The two giant meteorites hit her directly, and the area is covered in explosions.

Trash and Marin deploy magic barriers simultaneously, containing the explosive shockwave around her.

I also strengthen the Meteor Wall as not to have anyone injured.

With this, the Goddess should have taken major damage.

Those were magics chanted with The XO weapons.

“__!!”

“As expected of the King of Wisdom...”

The Queen quietly whispers to herself.

Oh right, she's supposedly head over heels for the man.

“Uuu...”

The Bitch Goddess, with her conscious faint, and tears streaming from her face, looks towards Trash.

“Why... why is Papa putting me through something like this?”

Uwah! She still thinks that'll get through?

There's a limit to not knowing when to give up.

“You are no daughter of mine! You dropped people into despair, and laughed at them with scorn. You're just... a devil pretending to be of my own flesh and blood!” (Trash) Trash directs strong words of rejection to The Bitch Goddess, who had changed her face to reflect Witch's.

“Everyone! Attack at once! This is the moment of truth!” (Trash) Trash doesn't fall for her words in the slightest.

Even if they're father and child, she's long passed the limit to what could be forgiven.

It'll be best for him if he can let out his feelings here.

“Damn! It’s too late for regrets!”

Around Trash, Melty and Marin, the allied army participates in Choral Magic.

For the soldiers, approaching the Bitch is a bit to heavy a task.

They participate in an attack at her like this.

“Naofumi-san!”

“I’ve kept you waiting, Iwatani-dono!”

Rishia and Female Knight ran over.

And...

“I have also... come!”

Having been freed from the goddess’s control, her body that was but a lump of muscle has returned to normal.

I see. So Rishia and Female Knight saved her.

This really is... an unnerving succession of miracles.

I’m being driven to shout out, ‘Is this supposed to be the last chapter of an axed manga or something!?’

No, I won’t say it, but...

“DIIIIIIIE!”

With an angry look like that of the devil, the Goddess takes her shimmering blade, and swings it horizontally.

With so much force emanating from the edge of her sword, we... were not sent flying.

My Meteor Wall prevents that.

In the space before the next magic hit, Rishia and Female Knight ran at the Bitch Goddess.

「Brave Blade Mist Cross Max」!

A cross shaped gash emerges on the Goddess’s body, and to follow up,

Rishia lunged forward.

「Dritte Slash! Throwing Max」!

She slashed at her, and after retreating a distance, her knife came flying at her.

“Hengen Musou Style Special Move: New Moon!”

From the Granny’s arm, a black sphere of Chi is shot.

The three’s attacks stop the Goddess’s legs.

“You keep emerging one after the other like flies! Do you really want to end my life so badly!?” (Medea) The Bitch Goddess saves up power.

Originally, if she was at her full powered state, I don’t think it would take any time for her to activate an attack.

“Ku... How utterly annoying! I’ll blow away this petty power that binds me all at once!” (Medea) She points her sword downwards, and uses power to try and purify my defensive membrans.

“I guess it’s time for the Oneesans to step in.”

“That’s right, Sadina-oneechan!”

“It would be troublesome if you were to forget me.”

Sadina, Kiel and Glass came running they activate their skills.

「The Great White Whale’s Heroic Charge Max」!

When Sadina uses her skill, a giant whale made out of water manifests in the air, and crashes into the Bitch Goddess at the same instant Sadina threw her spear.

「Dark Soul Mist Dispersal Max」!

But even before Sadina’s attack could land, with erratic steps, Kielberus disappears, and materializes behind the Bitch Goddess. She slashes multiple times with her Scythe that emits a black aura.

「Kenbu Kyoku: Mu Max」!

(TL: Sword Dance of the Strongest: Null)

Matching Kiel's dancing movements, Glass swings her fan at the Goddess consecutively.

"Gu...uu... dammmmit! Quite it already!"

The moment before Sadina's attack landed, Glass and Kiel retreated.

Sea foam splashes onto me as her skill rained down on the goddess, and after giving off the sparkle of a XO weapon, the harpoon returned to Sadina's hand.

"Gu... without fail, you guys... even your souls will be tormented for eternity. I have no further need to care about what happens in the future. Everything, even my memories of this shitty world... I'll erase them all."

After all this smacking, it's amazing that she's still alive.

"High Class Covenant magic 『Sunlight』 Max!"

Trash and Marin, as well as all of the soldiers participating in this fight, merge magic... It becomes a flare as brilliant as the sun, and hits the Bitch Goddess.

Well, originally, their allies would have been dragged into it as well, but because of my influence, they aren't taking any damage.

And in order to ensure it hit, the other Heroes cast a few binding spells on her.

"Just how far will you insects go to tick me off!?"

Just where does her unwavering fighting spirit come from?

That's the only point I give a high evaluation to. Witch was similar, though.

"Naofumi-sama." (Raphtalia)

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"Yeah."

A Half-transparent Atlas pops out of the Shield, and nods.

Raphtalia looks to me for her next action as well.

That's right... I'll have to decide our next move.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The Proxy of this world orders, and requests for power. I wish for a world without gods, and for that I exercise your power. Pillars that bind the world, power unto me』!

In Raphtalia's hand, a stake made out of light appears, and she uses her hammer to drive it in.

“Single Shot special! 『Infinity Bunker』!”

A heavy impact occurs, as Raphtalia's stake bores into the Bitch Goddess.

At the same time, a bright flash of light was sent out.

“GUAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

The light gets visibly stronger, and I can feel it through my skin that the Bitch Goddess's power is dispersing.

With this... It would be nice if she were to die.

Raphtalia finishes her attack, and lands back by my side.

“Fu... fufu... for small fries, you did well coming this far.” (Medea) ... What a tough one she is.

“I'm just about sick of seeing all of your faces. Now let me brush away all your makeshift powers, and watch you as you wallow in regret, having even your souls burned away!” (Medea) I feel the lynchpins I called down get pulled out, and the Goddess raises her speed even further.

The only ones who can keep up with her speed are Me, Raphtalia and Atlas.

“I'm done. Now that you've made a fool of me to this extent, I have no need to hold back.” (Medea) Hold Back... for her to still display such leisure while being beaten to a pulp, I seriously question where this overflowing tenacity comes from.

I wonder just how much time it will take to defeat her.

But...

I break out into a smile.

The Bitch Goddess amasses power greater than ever before.

Her whole body shines, and a sinister magic manifests itself into wings on her back.

“Let me bring an end to all of this!” (Medea)

I hold my Shield out front, and prepare myself.

“100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, 『Infinity Destroyer』. All that awaits you all is death. The past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it; you will merely perish! Infinity, eternity, speed of light won't be enough. Now go die already!”

I perceive her targets. It's everybody here, and every chain binding her to this world.

And... the Laws of this world that preside over them.

She has enough power output to reduce them all to nothingness.

It's completely different than any attack she's displayed before.

It's a single blow that will use up all of her being.

It's power deserving of the title of God.

This absolute power even transcends time, and after she repeatedly condenses it, she releases it.

I couldn't even see it before, but now I can follow it.

Red, and black.

Threads... each and every one links to death. They're imbued with a concept to bring an end to all possibilities.

And those threads, just how many hundreds, thousands, millions... She has an amount there beyond my counting prowess.

The past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effects, an attack to rob all of those away from me.

That attack...

“... I was waiting for it!” (Lord Geno... I mean Naofumi) I... deploy my powers as a God, and from the Bitch Goddess’s conceptual attack, I protect everyone. I take it all into myself.

The threads of death entangle around me, and send me through all time, all worlds, all possibilities...

“Aha, ahahahaha. Who are you trying to protect? With this, you’re dead. And with the next shot, it’ll be my win.” (Medea) “Sorry, there won’t be a next one.”

The Shield absorbs all of the Bitch Goddesses Infinity destroyer, or whatever she called it, and absorbed it into a single point.

“I’ve had enough of your childish exchange. As a God Killer, I’ll show you the greatest of counterattacks.” (Naofumi) This attack doesn’t have a name.

But... In order to wait for her to use her skill, I had Raphtalia and the others work together.

There’s wars of attrition, even in a battle between Gods.

But if two beings who won’t die combat each other, then when will they reach an agreement... or when will they find an end?

Yes, in the end, one side is the loser.

To childish logic like that... I reached a single conclusion.

“Atlas.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, with this, it’s over.” (Raphtalia)

I nodded.

An end will come to everything

「 – Positive Feedback Reflection」!

I changed the nature of the interweaving threads of death.

The red and the black change to green and white.

And I redirect them in the direction of the single person trying to destroy everything.

The altered power is amplified several times, and sent right back.

“You just sent back my Infinity Destroyer as is? How unfortunate. There’s no way the attack I used myself would have any effect on myself!” (Medea) “Were you not listening? I’m sure I included a positive feedback in there. I amplified your power, and sent it back.” (Naofumi) “Gu...” (Medea)

The conceptual attack flies towards her.

Ironically, it’s the same scene as when I hit back Witch’s magic on Cal Mira.

While the firepower is completely different this time, the essence is the same.

In the end, the trivial battles between me and this woman are something like this.

“This cannot be! But with an attack of this level, I won’t even get a scratch, and I can dodge.” (Witch) “Hey, are you getting forgetful about your own attacks? Your attack was 100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death. Past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it; you will merely perish! Infinity, eternity, speed of light won’t be enough, wasn’t it?” (Naofumi) “Hmph. I have the ability to avoid such an attack, so there’s no way it–” (Medea) “Then try it. I don’t plan to join you in your childish dialogue.” (Naofumi) “Even if you defeat me, the true incarnation of me is still in the outside world, so–” (Medea) “Forgetting things again? Parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it, you said. All fragments and the main body will be killed at once, of course. The attack you launched against everything... wasn’t it supposed to invite absolute death?”

(Naofumi) “Something like that won’t work on–” (Medea)

“100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, right? What’s more, I added on Positive feedback. It’s your attack, and not mine. If you can dodge it, then show me the results. Well, that only goes if you survive it.” (Naofumi) Justice Punch! Barrier! Justice Punch can go through barriers! This is a Barrier that Justice Punch can’t go through! Then Justice Punch that can go through the barrier that Justice Punch can’t...

It’s like that sort of endless dialogue.

I’m not going to keep her company for that.

It’s just that there’s a definite result in this one.

Will it work? Will it not? That’s it.

“Ku, my power has the ability to render an attack like this usele–”

“Do whatever you want. And if you manage to withstand it, I’ll play with you.” (Naofumi) “Gu... an even more powerful infinite energy is... kuaaaaa...”

The Bitch Goddess’s scream echoes.

When her words entered my ears, I remembered something.

“... Ah, right. Witch, you kept thinking the Hero of the Shield was weak, and that he had fallen behind in strengthening methods, so let me tell you.”

She’s not in a position where she can hear me, but I turn my back to her and continue speaking.

“The Hero of the Shield’s Strengthening method is trusting people... It’s the earning of their trust.”

When you think about it, it’s self-evident.

For the Hero who can do nothing but protect others, he has to depend on others to live.

He believes in those that fight by his side, and they believe in him as well.

Like that, the Hero of the Shield finally gets stronger.

And even going about their lives without knowing it, this method was transferred to Ren, Motoyasu and Itsuki as well.

To hate someone, to wound someone... for us, who continued to take on meaningless quarrels with one another, it may sound presumptuous.

But that's why we can believe in those by our side.

Raphtalia and Atlas, and everyone's gaze.

They give the Shield its power.

From now on, I'll probably still be tricked and betrayed by others.

And when that comes, perhaps I'll be driven by fear to hurt others.

But now, in this moment... I feel that my heart that trusts others is real.

And the fact that I can think this is only because I was hurt a lot, and had those wounds healed.

On that day, at that time—I was alone in the world... Because Raphtalia believed in me, I could get all the way here.

“If you have even the slightest understanding of that, then you probably won't die here.”

Well, I don't think she can do that, though.

“As... as if something as stupid as that could— sto,
GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Eventually, the Bitch Goddess started a battle with her own power... I wonder just how fast time has been sped up.

And... It was the attack she had made herself, and from my amplification, it should usher in death. In all times. In Parallel, and divergent worlds. Even the law of Cause and Effect won't be able to effect it, and all that was left for her was to perish.

The remains of her enormous power flowed into me, and through using it for the disappearing world, I used it all up.

“Fuu...”

“So it’s finally over.”

Raphtalia said as such.

“That’s right.”

Atlas responded with a slight feeling of amazement.

I mean she’s justified.

After playing out this farce, in the end, she fell by her own hand.

I’m sick to death of her stupidity, and her childish ways of attacking.

But I know there are many out there who would do things like her.

She was merely the tip of the iceberg.

“Even so, when I first got to this world, I thought I would partake in a glorious story of adventure... or something stupid like that, but I wonder how things turned out like this.” (Naofumi) “So you were thinking things like that?” (Raphtalia)

“No, I mean when I had just gotten summoned here, you know.”

(Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama is always glorious, be it now or back then.”

(Atlas) “No, that’s kinda undesirable in itself...” (Naofumi)

We exchanged such idle banter, as we stop the accelerated state, and return time to original rate of the people here.

“D-did you do it?”

“Yeah, but that phrasing raises a, ‘Final Form’ Flag, so please don’t.”

(Naofumi) Those were the words I returned when Ren stepped forward as a representative of the rest.

I don’t ever want to fight something like that again.

Well, when they came to it, the Bitch Goddess was gone. I can understand their surprise.

While she was supposed to be erased from the Laws of the World, the power she left behind made her remain in everyone’s memories.

The Lynchpin had worked from the start, and most of it still remained.

Or else perhaps my own existence would vanish.

Along with the worlds' legend of the four heroes.

“That Bitch Goddess disappeared without leaving anything behind. It's our... victory.” (Naofumi) On my declaration, I hear cheers of joy.

The people smile, and let loose tears of joy, as they raise their voices.

And the Spirits sparkled like stars, offering us their blessing.

“UWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!”

An oppressing presence had left the world.

Perhaps all life on this world had sensed it.

Our long battle ended, and all the lifeforms in the world looked forward to a brighter tomorrow.

Chapter 375: Banquet

That day, we returned to the castle town with the mood for a party.

No matter where we look, people celebrate our victory as they offer thanks to the Heroes.

According to them, after the Bitch Goddess's Descent, the sand in the Dragon Hourglasses floated in place within them, but now they've fallen, and grown quiet.

It no longer moves to signal the next wave, and it's silent, or should I say that at a glance, you can tell that it no longer has a purpose besides being used for Class Ups.

And the shape of the Sky, or something changed, as the people sensed that peace had fallen onto the world.

Oh right, on the way back, monsters approached us, and lowered their heads.

According to Gaelion, now that the world's calmed down, they no longer have to live in fear... so they came to offer their thanks to the Heroes who brought it about.

That situation seems suspicious, but looking at the tranquil sky, I start to believe him.

Well, the Bitch Goddess's presence's been cut off.

I deployed a barrier around the world, so gods of the same type as that Bitch couldn't come closer anymore.

The waves won't come again due to someone taking up the position of God.

My next course of action will probably be decided after talking with many different people.

"Thank you, Hero-sama~! Thank you!"

I hear a call like that from everywhere, and there's before I could enter the castle, I was roped into a parade.

As always, I can't get used to this.

Back then I wanted to destroy this world, though...

Even so, I think Melromark's changed greatly.

Right now, Humans and Demi-Humans exist in the Castle Town just fine, and they all offer us their blessings.

There are 20 Heroes... that's a bit much.

Perhaps Trash understood that, as he split up the four legendary, and put me as the main attraction at the back of the procession.

I thought that was a bit mean, but when I confirmed the front of it with my power, I ended up asking myself, 'Who the Hell is that? Is He also a Hero?'

The soldiers kindly explained that he was a Hero from Glass's world or something.

Of course, the inhabitants of her world were able to sense the world's change as well. They partook in the celebrations.

I mean, we stole the weapons from those reincarnators that made quite a mess of their world. I guess they're overjoyed.

"Fuu..."

I entered the castle, and experienced a feeling of relief...

"The Hero of the Shield-sama is in attendance!"

Party crackers go off, and the world's nobles come to greet me.

Ah, will my soul find no repose?

"I'm sorry, but I'm a bit tired..." (Naofumi)

Mostly mentally, though.

Because of the various powers circulating through my body, I think I would be able to go a few centuries without sleep.

It's not like my mind really needs to rest either. I just want some peace and quiet.

“That is something that everyone understands. The people in attendance here were also part of the war.”

The Queen and Trash explain it to me.

No, I knew that already.

“Then I understand you guys’ feelings of having to celebrate world peace, but go to sleep. If you use all your high tension and adrenaline to burn through your life force, you’ll die, you know.” (Naofumi) “Praise the compassion of the Hero of the Shield!”

“Yeah~!”

“They aren’t listening!” (Naofumi)

“Now, now, Naofumi-sama, everyone. Peace has finally come down on us after so long, and everyone is merely shaking with joy.” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia calms everyone down.

Well, I know what she wants to say, but...

“As expected of Naofumi-sama. Now then, Onii-sama, in the next three second, you will be taking a rest here. If you call yourself a warrior, you need to be able to sleep regardless of the location.” (Atlas) “A-Atlas.”

Ah, Fohl looks seriously troubled.

It’s a difficult challenge for him to lie down here...

“Come on.”

“Uu...”

He really did it! What an absolute madman!

“Zzzz.... Zzzz...”

Wow. Even under the eyes of this many people, he actually fell asleep.

I’m honestly impressed. This man will make it big some day!

“Ah, Fohl-niichan is amazing! I’ll also sleep!” (Kiel)

With some mysterious sense of competition, Kiel curls up by his side in puppy mode, and begins sleeping.

“Now it’s become quiet.” (Atlas)

“Atlas-san...”

“As always, you’re quite the cruel person.”

I can’t say I’m not impressed.

Even as a spirit, she messes with her brother.

Is this what the phrase, ‘even death can’t cure it’ is supposed to mean?

Even so, I think Fohl has fun having these talks with Atlas.

I mean, his sleeping face is really peaceful.

... He isn’t dead, right? Yeah, he’s not dead.

“Ara~ onee-san will take Fohl-chan and Kiel-chan to a bedroom in the castle. If there are any other sleepy children, please come with me~.”

(Sadina) Sadina takes the initiative, and takes the two away in her arms.

I know she’s good at looking after people, but that was a smooth way to get out of this situation.

I also want to go with.

When I quietly try to follow behind Sadina, the guests, and Trash call out to stop me.

“Where do you think you’re going? Iwatani-dono, I think there’s something a little bit wrong with the Guest of Honor leaving his own banquet.” (Trash) I ran.

But I was surrounded by people.

Well, if I really wanted to get away, I could, but the situation isn’t that drastic.

“Ah, Melty! You! What are you doing, trying to escape with Firo!?”

She was casually following behind Sadina with Firo.

I won’t let you get away.

“Mel-chan, Firo wants to stay here.” (Firo)

“There’s something bad happening over there. Now, let’s follow Sadina-san, and leave this place.” (Melly) “Eh...” (Firo)

“Hey... what’s up with the Queen of the largest country being the first to run away?” (Naofumi) “Ara, Mother is back, so my role ends here. I want to be a princess again.” (Melly) She tries to get away by feigning amiability, but...

“Don’t worry, Melty. My body has already left the world. It is your era now, my daughter.” (Queen) “M-mother!?” (Melly)

“Because of my husband, I was barely able to remain in the world of the living, but I don’t know how long that will last. Melty, you are the Queen of the world.” (Queen) “N-no! I am...” (Melly)

“Hmm? I thought the Melty I knew was a child who would prioritize her duty. Is this Iwatani-sama’s influence?” (Queen) “Uu...” (Melly)

“Melty, I’m happy that you grew up so freely. I’m sure a good time period is to come under you. You may be against it, but you will participate in this banquet.” (Queen) The soldiers grab the girl by the Shoulder, and drag her back.

“No! I still just want to be a normal girl!” (Melly)

Melly, what sort of Idol are you supposed to be?

Well, I guess Firo’s the idol here.

“Mel-chan, let’s play together!” (Firo)

Firo skipped after Melt as she was taken and confined to the guest of honor seat.

“Hah... I guess there’s nothing I can do.” (Naofumi)

It doesn’t look like I’ll be able to get away from this.

I resigned myself, and participated in the banquet.

Thinking back, there was also a banquet when we overcame our first wave.

That was the worst, but now I’m acting as a representative, and the

nobles offer their thanks to me.

As if they were special events, various happenings went on around.

“Eclairé!”

A fairly drunk Ren calls out to Female Knight.

What is this? No, I should quietly watch over the situation.

“What business do you have with me, Ren?” (Female Knight)

“There’s something I planned on saying once that battle came to an end.” (Ren) “Speak.” (Female Knight)

“Please go out with me!” (Ren)

“... What?” (Female Knight)

He finally confessed!

Female Knight doesn’t seem to understand what’s going on. She stares in mute amazement.

“That straight-laced Hero of the Sword confessed.”

“But I heard Eclairé became the Hero of the Katana, right? Don’t they fit well together?”

“What sort of result awaits us?”

The area is astir with gossip, and inquisitive eyes follow the two swordsmen.

“Eh, ah...”

Having finally understood the situation, Female Knight’s face turns bright red, and she starts walking away to escape.

“Wait! I want to hear your answer!” (Ren)

“S-shut ut! I-I-I have a mission!” (Female Knight)

“Please let me aid you in that mission!” (Ren)

“N-no. You have a duty to make the world peaceful!” (Female Knight) “I know. Even the current situation is only us having crossed a large

mountain. For the people, and for our comrades that have fallen, I will spend my days in atonement. And in that, Eclairé, I'd like to be with you.”
(Ren) “Y-you're not repenting at all! Your willpower, let me beat it into shape!” (Female Knight) “Then... can I take that as a yes?” (Ren)

“Wha—no. I... to a young chick like you...” (Female Knight)

When she was about to speak up, her words got tied.

Yeah, the current Ren's much more grown than the old one, and his body's in good shape.

He's evolved from a Bishounen Swordsman into a sturdy Biseinen Swordsman.

So calling him a young chick is a bit difficult.

What's more, being a Hero who saved the world, the gazes of those around him are quite painful.

“You're just drunk and messing around. I'll be leaving!” (Female Knight)
“Please wait! These are my true feelings!” (Ren)

Female Knight ran away.

I mean, She ignores the eyes of the onlookers, and pushes through the crowd to get away from Ren.

“... Idiot.”

(TL: Baka)

With a peevish expression on her face, Taniko leans on Gaelion and the former Catepilland Raph as she mumbles under her breath.

I get the feeling she was a much purer girl in the past...

『Why are you acting like this is someone else's problem? It's your fault that Wyndia's become like this!』

Gaelion is glaring at me with all his might. Not my problem.

Well, she was set against getting revenge, but I put her up to fighting Ren anyways... perhaps she's strayed from her path.

“Wyndia!”

Having had Female Knight run away from him, Ren starts walking towards Taniko.

His face is even redder than before. It seems he’s really drunk.

“Stay away.” (Taniko)

“Gyau!” (Gaelion)

With killing intent coursing through every fiber of his body, Gaelion roars.

“Wyndia, I’ll definitely take responsibility!” (Ren)

“Wait, why are you saying a line like that in a place like this...” (Taniko)
The whispering voices get stronger.

Is Ren just really, REALLY drunk?

He’s acting without and honor like the old Motoyasu.

Well, the responsibility he’s talking about is probably just for hilling her father.

But I think a feminizing label’s being stuck on him by the people watching.

The second things didn’t go his way with Female Knight, he made an explosive announcement to Taniko.

“Wyndia! I’ll definitely make you happ–” (Ren)

“Don’t say any more than that! 「Lightning Dragon」!” (Taniko)

Ah... Taniko’s patience was at its end. What’s more, Gaelion even acted out.

Even while piss drunk, Ren takes up his sword, and repels the attacks focused on him.

How skilled.

“Hmm?” (Firo)

Firo started singing and dancing in a nice mood.

Behind her, Melty is reluctantly strumming her instrument.

No, to prevent the talks of her engagement to me from getting to the Queen, she's probably putting on a performance.

"FUOOOOOH! Firo-tan's song!"

And as always, Motoyasu loves Firo. He's standing at the front, and cheering for her.

Behind him, his flock of three are glaring at him with unpleasant expressions. Is this some sort of trial for them?

"Kue~ Kue~"

Fitoria starts singing too.

No wait, is she the back chorus? It's like a Capella was mixed in, raising the tension of the concert.

Where's the Trash that's supposed to be leading this?

I searched for him, and found him drinking wine on the terrace with the Queen.

That strange atmosphere around them prevents me from getting any closer.

Well, I still walk up to them anyways.

"Oh, Iwatani-dono. What seems to be the matter?" (Trash)

"The concert has become something amazing, so I'm here to tell you to go stop them." (Naofumi) "This may sound rude on my part, but I would like everyone to enjoy themselves without restraint. I do not believe there to be a need to stop them." (Queen) The Queen covers her mouth with her fan as she says this.

She really is a Vixen good with her mouth.

"Also, I think it would be much more effective if Iwatani-sama tried to stop them." (Queen) "If I try doing that, they'll just start cheering for me again." (Naofumi) No matter what happens, I can't stand people, or should I say large audience halls.

And from experience, I can only say it will heat up further if I get on stage.

“Isn’t that fine? Now, we are simply enjoying the lively noise. Luckily, there doesn’t appear to be any fighting breaking out.” (Queen) “No... there was.” (Naofumi)

There’s Ren and Taniko’s fight.

The peanut gallery’s having fun, and it did feel like everyone was grasping for peace, though.

Outside the castle... no, more like all around the world, joy surges up.

... I distanced myself from that idiot couple, and found Itsuki.

He was also snuggled close to Rishia, and talking.

Once he spotted me, Itsuki called out.

“What’s wrong, Naofumi-san? Everyone will be sad if the guest of honor mopes around in a place like this.” (Itsuki) “Even if I’m not there, everyone will party.” (Naofumi)

“But I think they’ll have even more fun if you’re there.” (Itsuki) “Yes, I also think that.” (Rishia)

“Yeah, yeah. And? What are you guys doing here?” (Naofumi)

“Us? We’re leisurely enjoying the banquet as we plan for what’s to come.” (Itsuki) “Despite that, you’re letting out quite a sweet atmosphere, you know.” (Naofumi) “Fue!?” (Rishia)

Let me harass them a bit for letting their duty slide.

Even when they’re important guests too, they passed all of their responsibilities onto me, and are enjoying their time here. I’ll curse them.

“Yes. I’m quite aware I was creating a sweet atmosphere with Rishia-san.” (Itsuki) “FUEEEEEEE!?” (Rishia)

Rishia raises her voice even louder, as her face turns red.

“I-Itsuki?” (Naofumi)

“It may sound very selfish. But I wish to answer to Rishia-san’s good will. I am a sinner. But... if I cannot make a single woman happy, I do not believe I will be able to save anyone. Especially if it’s someone as sinless as her.” (Itsuki) “Itsuki-sama... No matter what happens, I will not stray from your side.” (Rishia) “Rishia-san...” (Itsuki)

And a dimension for only the two of them was created.

Ah, just go flirt however you want.

If you just take on my harassment like that, I’m the one who ends up looking stupid.

“It seems really peaceful over here, Naofumi-san. Can I have a word with you?”

“Yeah.”

And there, Glass appeared. She saves me from the pink dimension surrounding Itsuki and Rishia.

“I’m saved. I felt like I was becoming one with the background, but I was unsure of what countermeasures to take.” (Naofumi) If Raphtalia was there, then perhaps I could have run, but right now, she’s at my seat, conversing with the nobles in place of me.

I’ll have to swap out with her later.

Atlas is in the middle of getting a lecture from Sadina for teasing Fohl.

Well, I doubt it’ll have any effect on her, though.

Raph-chan is singing along with Firo.

Ah, he changed to child Raphtalia form.

And the real one got mad.

“And? How is it? The feeling of a world at peace.” (Naofumi)

“... I guess I’m to find that out from here on. I’m sure that from here on, the people of my world and yours will start clashing with one another.” (Glass) And so, she’s not participating in the festivities.

It’s not like I don’t get her.

“If it’s about that, it’s not like I can’t do anything.” (Naofumi) “Do you have something special planned?” (Glass)

“There’s a way to separate the worlds sticking together. As long as the worlds remain divided, you won’t have to deal with unnecessary clashes, right?” (Naofumi) “Is that... what you called the power of God?” (Glass)

“Yeah, I can’t do it, but Raphtalia is able to. Though your sacred weapons will have to be enshrined away somewhere.” (Naofumi) If they do that, a god wouldn’t be able to get in. He wouldn’t have the chance to.

Well, I have a barrier over this world, I’ll erect one over the divided world as well. I’m sure that they’ll be able to form a peaceful place there.

“Is that... so?” (Glass)

“So what do you want to do, Glass?” (Naofumi)

“... I do not know. There are definitely conflicts, but I think overcoming them and reconciling is also an important part of life.” (Glass) “That’s right, there may be those around here that do not wish to accept others. Perhaps there will be persecution as well.” (Naofumi) “Then... will true peace ever come?” (Glass)

“No idea. This is what we find at the end of this strange world assimilation. There is fighting within those of the same race as well.” (Naofumi) My world’s a good example.

In the end, living things live through conflicts with others.

Even if there’s nothing but humans, there’s still people grasping for supremacy, and wars as a result.

You can’t call a single race world a peaceful one.

“This is quite difficult.” (Glass)

“That’s right. By the way, Glass, you won’t celebrate with your own comrades?” (Naofumi) I remember seeing them drinking to their victory a while ago.

But Glass is here talking with me.

“Yes, I was enjoying the banquet up until a little while ago. But after calming down a bit, all of my tension was put on brakes.” (Glass)

“Calming down...” (Naofumi)

“... I used to have a very important friend. And in a certain incident, they went missing. Without that person here, I wonder if it is alright for me to have fun by myself.” (Glass) “Friend? Someone you liked?” (Naofumi)

“While we are close as friends, that person is a woman.” (Glass) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

“Now, where is that person, and what are they doing...” (Glass) “Are you sure they aren’t dead? Do you want me to search for them?” (Naofumi) “That’s right. Having Naofumi-san find her is another option. But she said she would definitely return one day, so I’ll wait here, and protect the world for her.” (Glass) With the world in a pinch, there was a missing person...

Glass is also something for waiting for her.

I’ll try searching with God’s power.

I found a strange point in Glass’s past, and couldn’t find that friend of hers in her memory.

Was she an otherworlder?

I don’t think she’s dead, but It’ll be difficult to find her even for me.

IF I exerted myself, it would be possible, but with Glass herself like this...

“My fight has yet to end.” (Glass)

“Make sure you don’t collapse somewhere.” (Naofumi)

“I know.” (Glass)

And for a while, I quietly watched the night sky with her on the terrace.

When I heard the audience getting loud again, I checked back to find the Old Man, Imya’s Uncle, and Imya carving an ice sculpture.

It seems they had the castle’s magicians cast ice magic to make a block

of ice, and started chipping pieces off of it.

“Oh, if it isn’t the laddie.” (Old Man)

“What are you up to, Old Man? And wait, you were attending the castle’s banquet?” (Naofumi) “They asked me to put on some sort of show, and I had just gotten here. I wanted to congratulate you for the battle, so watch here.” (Old Man) Working skillfully with a hammer, the Old Man finishes the sculpture.

A life-sized Firo is carved, and I seriously think the skill put into it is amazing... but isn’t something wrong with this picture?

What’s more, it’s a human form bird form set.

“If you have any requests, just say it. It doesn’t have to be ice.” (Old Man) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

“Then I would like to place a request on your arms.”

For some reason, Trash crossed the sea of people, and made an order.

“I would like a large statue singing praise of Iwatani-dono’s exploits. Of course, after these festivities are over. And make it grand.” (Trash) “What are you saying, old geezer?” (Naofumi)

“I was only talking about the realm of parlor tricks, but I got it. How large do you estimate it to be?” (Old Man) “Fumu, from far away... Please construct a statue large enough that it can be seen in Melromark from afar.” (Trash) “Oh!? A statue of Father-in-Law!? There was one in a country of my world too. A Statue of a Goddess who sang of freedom!” (Motoyasu) “The goddess portion sounds ominous, but if it’s Naofumi-dono, then I can assure the people will revere and extol his form for many years to come.” (Trash) “STOOOOOOPPPPP!” (Naofumi)

Why do they have to make something as disgusting as that?

Trash’s thought are leaping too fast, and I feel sick!

And Motoyasu, don’t hop on board!

What sort of sad reasons do you have to coerce the Old Man into making a giant statue of me?

Let's try to calm them down, and foil their construction plans.

"You've been promoted quite a bit, laddie." (Old Man)

"Please quit it with the jokes." (Naofumi)

"Haha, the fact that it's become peaceful will mean my shop will finally get quieter." (Old Man) "... Did I do something bad?" (Naofumi)

Weapon shops generally rake in profit when there's a feared enemy to combat.

In the age to come, there will still be monsters to fight, but I doubt there will be a time more profitable than during the waves.

"Don't mind it. Peace is to be enjoyed in itself. And it's not like I only sell weapons, you know." (Old Man) I think... I heard that Imya's Uncle ran a metallurgy shop in the past.

In a peaceful shop, perhaps a weapon store becomes something like that.

He did build Firo's carriage, and I think he can do business as a utility man with metal.

"This is all because of you, laddie. I guess that means there was meaning in me trying hard for ya. And for a while, my shop's going to be stable." (Old Man) The Old Man winks, and points behind him.

"As expected of the store the Hero of the Shield-sama frequents! Please make equipment for me!"

"No, that will be my—"

Various requests started flooding in, and the nobles and representatives of other countries began whispering amongst themselves.

Well, the bulk of the armor I'm currently wearing was made by his store.

Its abilities were so high, it was surprising.

After that we had a simple conversation with a few jokes mixed in.

Motoyasu demanded that the Firo Statue be preserved for eternity, and

he made the impossible request to Marin. In the end, with the Old Man's permission, Kuu melted the whole thing down.

"Old Man-san, thank you for all you've done up until now." (Raphtalia)
Raphtalia comes over, and extends her thanks to the Old Man.

"Oh, if it isn't the young lass! Haven't you grown up nicely? It makes the first time I met you seem like a lie." (Old Man) Thinking back, it was quite a long road...

I was framed by Witch, bought the Slave Raphtalia, bought weapons from the Old Man... a lot happened.

"Now, now, Ladies and gentlemen, gather round. It's the monster acrobatic show. Yes."

Ah, the Slave Dealer I haven't seen in a while is using his monsters to put on something like a circus show.

A large tiger-like monster jumps through a ring of fire, and a mysterious monster called an Egugu rode a bicycle. The scene tells me that there are some monsters who know not the world has been saved.

Taniko is watching the show in anticipation.

Out of curiosity, she keeps asking the Slave Dealer what monsters will come out.

I understand that she likes monsters, but the person she's talking to uses slaves, and works monsters to the bone. He's a terrible person, you know.

What's more, they started some incomprehensible rivalry, and Taniko took the monsters from my land up on stage to do a performance.

Those that were modified into Raphs, and the Filo Rials. Gaelion's tricks also sent the audience into high spirits.

Ah, I found Motoyasu's former tag-along Elena.

She's making a really sullen face as she converses with her parents.

"... Ah."

“It’s been a while.” (Naofumi)

“No, it hasn’t been that long. I mean, I was on the battlefield.” (Elena)

“You were there?” (Naofumi)

“Of course I was. My parents wouldn’t stop bitching at me.” (Elena) I think her father or something was some sort of military personnel in Melromark or something like that.

“I tried not to stand out, so perhaps you didn’t notice me, though.”

(Elena) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

“For the executed former princess to be a world invading deity... she should have made Given up at some point. A foolish woman.” (Elena)

“Hey...” (Naofumi)

The woman who calmly indulged in depravity said it with a level tone.

I think that if she had that much power, she could live life however she wanted. She could have indulged in as much luxury as she wanted.

But I guess if you keep looking up, there’s no end in sight.

“Well, I guess you worked hard. Good job.” (Elena)

“I don’t feel happy at all when I hear it from you.” (Naofumi) “I guess so... Ah, this is a pain. I’ll have to set up shop in the Hero of the Shield’s land soon, and my parents keep bitching on about profitability. Even when I just want to relax, why is life so hard?”

“That’s your fault! Just be thankful you haven’t been executed yet.” (Naofumi) She really just spits out as much abusive language as she wants.

As a form of punishment, I’ll give her shop some special privileges.

At the entrance to the hall is a sturdy merchant selling accessories with all of his commercial spitit. To clarify, the one who owns a department store in Zeltburg.

There’s also the swindler, who’s become something of a millionaire. He’s formed an alliance with the accessory merchant to take control of the money of those partying in the Castle Town. But that’s a story for

later.

I'm sure my land will continue to develop.

“Naofumi-cha~n!”

A drunk Sadina grabs me from behind.

“Whatcha doing? If you're bored, how about entertaining everyone with this onee-san?” (Sadina) Having finished Atlas's lecture, it appears Sadina started a drinking competition, and one thing led to another.

“And so Naofumi-chan will be participating~! Everyone, let's have a contest between this Onee-san and Naofumi-chan~.” (Sadina) “Okay, everyone! The Hero of the Shield, and the Hero of the Harpoon are going at it!”

“Hey! Sadina, stop!” (Naofumi)

“Ahn, I love you, Naofumi-chan~.” (Sadina)

Sadina starts leaning on me.

“Hey, Raphtalia-chan, hurry and do fun things with Naofumi-chan. Then next is Atlas-chan's turn, and then I'm up.” (Sadina) “Ahaha...”

Raphtalia wipes away some sweat.

Just how serious is she, this woman?

“If you don't hurry up, I might just end up eating him up.” (Sadina) “Who's getting eaten!? Hey, don't bring your face so close! You stink of alcohol!” (Naofumi) “No, I am Naofumi-sama's number one!” (Atlas)

Atlas makes a dramatic appearance.

“Rafu~!”

“Ah, Master's looks like he's having fun. Let Firo and Mel-chan in~! Now, Mel-chan, let's–” (Firo) “I-I don't want...” (Melty)

Melty and Firo approach us.

If you don't want to come, then run away.

The villagers, and our other comrades also gather.

“P-please stop it! Naofumi-sama is with me!” (Raphtalia)

Good grief, there’s no end to this cacophony.

Like that, the banquet dragged on for a while.

Once I got worn out, I left and took a rest in a guest room before returning, only to be congratulated once more.

In the end, the banquet doors remained open for an entire week, but I guess that doesn’t really matter.

Chapter 376: Alternate Worlds and Modern Ones

A few months passed.

The wave, or should I say the bitchy Goddess's invasion plan, came to an end, and we've made some progress on reconstruction.

Ren, Itsuki and Motoyasu's deadline for giving their answers to their weapons is closing in.

My Shield, or should I say Atlas is... well, she teases her brother as she spends her days seducing me.

Though she did talk to me seriously at the time.

"And? Did you guys make your decision yet?" (Naofumi) I was making preparations for lunch as I talked with the three Heroes.

"Yeah, I think I'm going to stay in this world."

The one who answered that was Ren.

It seems that he didn't reach a satisfying conclusion when he went to that other world from his own.

So he prayed to his sword so that he could return when he wanted.

Right now, Ren is working hard with Female Knight to stop the various cultural frictions brought about by the World Assimilation.

Female Knights achievements were recognized, and she was appointed to do diplomatic work with residents of Glass's world.

To make a world as free of discrimination as possible, she took the initiative, and started acting.

Taniko, along with Rat, Gaelion and Miikun went on a journey to investigate the distribution of Glass's world's monster in this one.

Well, when night falls, they do return to the village by portal.

"I never had any intentions of returning from the start! Now that the

world's been saved, as promised, I will devote my long days and nights to winning Firo-tan's heart!"

"Hmph!"

Motoyasu is... yeah. He plays with his Filo Rials all day.

Though it does seem he's learned a lot from a Filo Rial Trainer in Zeltburg.

To put it bluntly, I think he would do better on the teaching side.

And as always, his three are with him.

"I too... chose to remain in this world."

"I see." (Naofumi)

"Itsuki-sama... let's do our best." (Rishia)

"Yes." (Itsuki)

Itsuki and Rishia plan to go on a journey for world reformation.

A while ago, they met Rishia's parents, and discussed what they would do from here on.

It seems there was a bit of trouble there, but the matter was peacefully resolved.

I didn't ask for the specifics.

Well, according to Rishia, her parent were worried whether she was a match for Itsuki, and they quarreled a bit.

Her parents are weak to pressure as well.

If I told them I was going out with her with the intention of marriage as a joke, I feel they would die from shock.

"So everyone's staying." (Naofumi)

"What are you going to do, Naofumi? You wanted to return so badly before." (Ren) "Well, I already went back once. My determination around that area is... well..." (Naofumi) "Then will you stay?" (Ren)

"Hmm..." (Naofumi)

What should I say?

Explaining is going to be a pain.

“For argument’s sake... from your eyes, it’s correct to say I’ll be staying. But in exchange, I won’t be able to use a majority of those oh-so-convenient godly powers.” (Naofumi) “Is that so?” (Ren)

“It’s the result of a certain decision. It’s like a compensation for having fulfilled the Spirits’ wishes. In exchange, the waves will never come again, so don’t worry about that.” (Naofumi) These powers were beyond me to begin with.

Raphtalia and Atlas thought the same.

—

Yesterday night.

“Naofumi-sama, please make your choice.” (Atlas)

Atlas, or should I say the Spirit of the Shield and the other Spirits gathered to explain the situation.

Raphtalia was also there, and we spoke.

“My decision...” (Naofumi)

“That’s right. What should we do?” (Atlas)

A choice.

The other summoned heroes are each getting different options from me.

I did receive an explanation about that.

I’ve already gone beyond the point of no return that Arc guy said, and now it’s time for me to make a choice.

And wait, it isn’t even a choice anymore.

It’s just a course of action.

The first possibility is... well, to put it simply, stay in the world, and spend my days.

It’s a bit of a hard world to live in, but as long as everyone’s there, I get

the feeling I would be able to live a fun life until I die.

If I think back upon it, I can make a Harem, and considering the future, there are a few advantages.

The rosy life I imagined when I first got to this world is before me.

I feel Raphtalia's going to go through some hardships, but I can't cast everyone aside.

And I do want to answer the people I trust who say they like me...

It may be my pride speaking, but we saved the world, so I should at least allow that.

And I have Raphtalia's permission.

The second is... return to my own world, and live with Raphtalia.

With the Shield's power, our lives will be pretty stable until the end.

And right now, I can make use of that power.

Even if we're in that world, it's not like we can't use magic.

That's not bad either.

But if I stay in this world, I get the feeling I'll have to deal with some lustful advances.

Especially around a certain whale. She's seriously gunning for me, and she asks Raphtalia when she'll score every day.

I understand that she'll honor the order, so right now, I can't lay hands on Raphtalia carelessly, or she'll come after me in a drunken frenzy.

I'll have to show my resolve.

So returning to my own world is also... an option.

I mean, I am satisfied with this conclusion.

And it's already over...

"I—"

I made a decision.

“Understood. It’s a nice decision, befitting of Naofumi-sama. I’m also in agreement.” (Raphtalia) “That’s right. As expected of Naofumi-sama, I think it’s a greedy option that’ll make everyone happy.” (Atlas) “Yeah, yeah. Then... do it.” (Naofumi)

“Yes.” (Raphtalia)

“Understood.” (Atlas)

On my choice, both Raphtalia and Atlas nodded.

—

And as a result, here I am.

I decided to stay in this world, and the day after that, I’m here peacefully preparing for lunch.

“Na~ofumi-cha~n? Is it time for lunch yet?”

Sadina appeared.

Recently, she’s started salvaging in the nearby sea, no, perhaps I should call it treasure hunting. She’s also exploring the sea from Glass’s world.

Since she became the Hero of the Harpoon, she’s gotten ridiculously strong. No normal monster will be able to stand on the same level as her.

And, at night, she comes back by portal, and aims for me.

To put it bluntly, apart from Raphtalia and Atlas, she pursues those topics more actively than Firo while in heat.

I often wonder what she sees in me, but perhaps she’s just enamored with my drinking capacity.

“Ah, yes, yes, it’ll be out soon, so just wait.” (Naofumi) “Ye~s! Now, everyone, prepare for lunch.” (Sadina)

“Ye~s!”

As always, unfamiliar slaves are popping up in my village. It’s due to the Slave Dealer’s kind services.

I think it’s rising from the scale of a village into a town.

People graduate, or more specifically, develop the skills to be self-sufficient and leave as well.

We don't need to combat the wave, so they don't have to stay here.

Now, they find employment as soldiers, or go sign up as adventures to do various odd jobs.

With the revived Granny's training as the basis, the slaves are quickly growing up.

But talent on the level of Rishia, Raphtalia and Female Knight is hard to come by.

Sadina level is completely out of the question.

Well, there are a few who still peddle. Is that my responsibility?

If you think of peddling, you think of Firo.

If you ask what she's doing, she's going on a world trip with Melty.

More specifically, it's Firo's Idol Tour.

In order to make sure relations with other countries go well, she visits them as the Queen, and as a friendly ambassador, Firo works as an Idol.

Firo has a sort of naïve innocence, so she's liked by people easily.

And Melty's idea worked well, so we're getting some nice results in other countries.

Well, since she's handling diplomacy for the world's largest country, the people of Glass's world are a bit vigilant of her.

Trash and the Queen are also working hard for the country.

The marks left behind by the war are deep, and it's a bit troublesome.

The revival the Bitch Goddess used was quite crude, so I'm not sure how much longer the Queen and Granny will live.

Even so, Trash, Rishia and the Granny's grandson are satisfied.

It would be nice if they live a long life.

"I see."

On my reply, Ren and the others nod, and wait for food.

Oy, don't just stand there. Help.

Why am I on cooking duty in the first place?

"Naofumi-sama, what do you want to do when lunch is over?"

(Raphtalia) "Let's see. I think that today's plan was to go apprehend a reincarnator the Bitch Goddess granted power to." (Naofumi) People who that Bitch Goddess reincarnated are still hiding all over the place.

It's not like we defeated them all.

And now that peace has been obtained, they occasionally go out of control with their dreams to rise to the top.

Is it like training in the mountains to prepare?

Some follow the Bitch Goddess's words, and lust for strength, while others noticed her schemes, and used tools to sleep.

The last guy we encountered politely tried making a convenient device so he could survive in a destroyed world.

Though it reeked of suspiciousness.

I don't know how many centuries ago he was from, though.

He's supposed to have been an alchemist who left his name in the pages of history.

There are many legends like his, which is troublesome.

In all worlds, there are annoying legends of how, someday, this legendary Hero, so and so, will return.

Catching guys like that is one of the jobs of Heroes.

Ah, right.

A little while after the world was at peace, Glass disappeared.

I tried searching for her when I had my godly powers, but I ran into the same wall I did when searching for her friend.

And before that, Glass told me that, no matter what happens, don't try

searching for me. As she was probably hinting to her current situation, I decided not to.

It'll work out somehow.

And Atlas can still contact the Spirit of the Fan.

According to it, there are no problems.

Glass was only a representative of her world as a Hero, and it's not like she represented a country.

When Melty was going around countries, she was just training with a bored expression on her face.

"That's right." (Raphtalia)

"Got it. Well then, food's done. After we're done with that, let's go."
(Naofumi) After I finished cooking, I exited the kitchen, and left it to the others.

"Niichan's food! As always, it's great!"

The one who rejoiced was Kiel.

As always, she continues to look after that unnerving crepe tree.

When she's not doing that, she's either peddling, or accompanying Fohl.

Though Fohl's often teased by his sister he's made looking after the villagers, especially the ones who just got here, his life's work.

Right now, he's something of a leader here.

"Rafu~?"

"Ah, yes, yes. You can eat it too."

"Rafu~!"

Raph-chan's become the supreme ruler of all Raphs, and he maintains the order of the monsters in the area... it seems.

As the Hero of the Ship, he also helps Sadina in her salvaging work.

Honestly, Sadina's partner is Raph-chan.

There's also Fitoria, for an important monster, I guess.

From the start, she had to deal with turf wars, and the sort, so she isn't here.

Well, that was also Motoyasu's fault.

She left while running away from the man.

But she occasionally uses Firo to ask me for help.

No matter where she runs, Motoyasu will chase her...?

In his mind, she's his most-like Filo Rial next to Firo.

Well, I guess it's something like that.

The Weapon Shop's Old Man is as busy as ever.

Luckily for me, he moved to the neighboring town, and opened a shop with Imya's Uncle.

Imya helps out, and they deal in a wide range from clothing, to armor, to weapons.

There's a lot more happening, but I guess that's about it with the people I know.

The Slave Merchant, the Swindler, and the Accessory Merchant are just raking in profit as always.

I also carried out my planned harassment of Elena.

Like that, my days were filled with a bit of trouble, but they were fun.

From now on... I'll just have to pray that they'll go on like this.

"Ah, right! What should we call this village? You never decided, did you, Niichan!?" (Kiel) "Name? Now that I think about it, I never gave it one. What was it called before? I'm fine with that." (Naofumi) "Eh? Right now, it's become famous as, 'The village revived under Niichan'. Let's think of a new one, right Raphtalia-chan?" (Kiel) "Yes, let's." (Raphtalia)

"Isn't that fine, though? It is the village revived under Naofumi." (Ren)
Ren gives a smile as he nods to Kiel's suggestion.

Even if you tell me that...

As I was thinking of what name to give it, Motoyasu opened his mouth.

"I think Firolove Village is good." (Motoyasu)

"Rejected." (Naofumi)

"I think it would be nice if Naofumi-san gave it a name." (Itsuki) "That's right." (Raphtalia)

"Really?" (Naofumi)

"Eh?... Niichan's deciding it? Let's all talk about it together." (Kiel)

"Why's that, Kiel? I thought you would agree to that." (Naofumi) "But Niichan, you have no naming sense." (Kiel)

"Ah, that's right." (Everyone)

Oy, why is everyone agreeing to that?

"You just took Firo from the Filo in Filo Rial, and you just cut off a bit from my name to get Raph-chan's..." (Raphtalia) "Rafu~?"

"So I think it's going to get quite a lazy name." (Kiel) "Kiel, you..."

I'll remember this. I'll definitely remember this.

"Then how about we just take the characters in Iwatani, and make it Rock Valley?" (Ren) As if he had had an epiphany, Ren hits his hands together, and said that.

And are you telling me that name has good naming sense?

No, it doesn't.

"Oh, that has a nice sound to it. What does it mean?" (Raphtalia) "In my world, Iwa(岩) means Rock. Similarly, Tani(谷) has the meaning of valley. And thus Rock Valley." (Ren) "That's nice!" (Kiel)

"Ah, right... it was like that in the language of Naofumi-sama's world." (Raphtalia) Raphtalia remembers the time she spent in my world.

And English, apparently.

"Okay~! Then from today onwards, this villiage will be called Rock

Valley. Everyone! Is that fine?”

“Yeah!”

“Oy, while you can see cliffs here by the sea, there’s no valley...”
(Naofumi) My opinion was ignored, and this village was given the name Rock Valley.

And like that, my days in the other world... continued.

Japan, a day in the present era.

“... in Sickness and in Health...”

Today, I held my marriage ceremony with Raphtalia.

We returned from that world, and things proceeded at a tempo so fast that even I was surprised. I quickly found employment.

Right now, I’m doing various work in a large company.

Well, I did always have some connections, and it turned out one of my net friends was actually an executive at a corporation. He insisted that he wanted to scout me.

What’s more, right now in the middle of a recession, while other companies are going pale, our stocks are rising.

I’ll bet it’s the influence on the Law of Cause and Effect.

After graduating college, I got a job, and after one year, I ended up marrying Raphtalia.

Because the experience in the other world bolstered my commercial spirit, I was able to achieve good results in the past year.

We left the godly powers with the other us in that world, and now, we can only use a little bit of magic.

And like that, the Wedding spread out before me.

In the church, the priest speaks out the vows to bind the me wearing a tailcoat, and the Raphtalia wearing a wedding dress.

In the middle of that.

The Church doors slammed open.

What is it!? I don't want some cliché happening like some guy storming in to steal the bride.

Who is it? Who is it that wants to take away Raphtalia!?

And wait, Raphtalia, are you telling me you cheated on me with another man!?

No, no... with her, that's not happening.

"I have an objection to this union!"

... I timidly turn around.

There, Atlas was wearing a dress, sprinting towards me.

Her age in this world is recorded as 20.

By her unchanged appearance, I guess that makes her a legal loli.

Right, we ended up returning to modern times, but for some reason, even Atlas was here. What's more, she screwed around with the order of the world, and inserted herself as my childhood friend.

I imagined a sweet college life with Raphtalia, but Atlas made her dramatic entrance, and put a stop to that.

And wait, because of all that happened in that world, I don't hate her, I am fond of her.

But still..

"Now, now, Naofumi-sama! Become one with me!" (Atlas) Atlas grabs me by the hand.

I'm not sure by what logic, but this world's Atlas's physical strength is still incredible.

And so, she was able to forcefully drag me along.

It wasn't the bride, but the groom that was stolen away.

"Wah." (Naofumi)

“What do you think you’re doing at our long-awaited marriage ceremony!?” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia comes to her senses, grabs my other hand, and starts a tug of war with Atlas.

“Ow!” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-san is getting married to me!” (Raphtalia)

“No, Naofumi-sama will be wed to me! I’ll give you plenty of money, so Raphtalia-san, just give up already.” (Atlas) “Not happening!” (Raphtalia)

Ah, right. I forgot.

Due to all her messings with the laws of cause and effect, Atlas set herself as the daughter of a rich man.

So her assets are much greater than either of us combined.

Why is a commoner like me the childhood friend of someone like that?

I don’t get how this lovecom setting is supposed to work.

“I will not give up!” (Atlas)

“Didn’t you just give up earlier!?” (Raphtalia)

“That was but a lie.” (Atlas)

“I can’t believe you! Just how unfair of a person must you be?”

(Raphtalia) “I’ll say anything I must in the name of love.” (Atlas) “Ow! S-someone save me!” (Naofumi)

“Niisan.”

My younger brother seems to be directing an irritated glare at me.

He was accepted into a good college, and is in the middle of job hunting right now.

Well, I’m sure he’ll find somewhere nice.

Apart from my brother, my other net friends are in attendance, and my college circle friends are gathered near him.

They started talking amongst themselves, and for some reason, my parents joined them. They all point their thumbs at the ground, and shout

out in a large voice.

“All you riajuus should just explode!”

“Why!?” (Naofumi)

“Oh... god. Please offer thy divine retribution unto this sinful riajuu.”

“Oy, Priest, don’t screw with me!” (Naofumi)

The priest here is a foreigner working in Japan, right?

Despite that, the authenticity of that line was quite rare.

“Naofumi-san will get married to me! Please give it up already.”

(Raphtalia) “No, he will to me. It’s not too late yet.” (Atlas)

“GIVE IT UP, THE BOTH OF YOU!” (Naofumi)

My Japanese life is, just as my life back there, full of unfair happenings.

Well, they’re days I look back on with joy, so it’s fine.

From now on, I’ll give it my best at a happy life.

While my body was being pulled in both directions, I let out a laugh.

Chapter 377: Rock Valley's Heroic Legend

[Epilogue]

Iwatani Naofumi

As the Hero of the Shield, he was the leader of the Heroes who saved the world.

For his achievements in saving the world, he was praised as a savior.

After that, he got drawn into numerous incidents in the world, and solved them. He continued to make sure the people relied on him, but never depended on him.

He was much yearned for by the opposite sex, and it's said that he had many descendants.

He was famed for both his business and cooking ability. The merchants who personally dealt with him created enterprises great enough that even now, their names are all around us.

Because of that, he became worshiped as the God of the Shield, presiding over business and culinary arts.

Rock Valley was the country he restored, and it's said that it was named in the tongue of his origin.

It's said that in the naming of Rock Valley, someone offered the following opinion:

“Oy, while you can see cliffs here by the sea, there's no valley...”

It is unknown who voiced these words.

—

Kitamura Motoyasu

His name has been engraved into history as the Hero of the Spear who saved the world.

He valued Filo Rials more than anything, and it's been said he was the Hero of Filo Rials, but after the world was at peace, he continued fighting

for the Divine Birds. As he continued his battle, records of his whereabouts became vague.

Currently, specialists question whether he truly existed or not.

—

Amagi Ren

As the Hero of the Sword, he saved the world.

After that, in a separate organization than the Hero of the Shield, he resolved various problems around the world.

After pursuing affections for a single woman for many years, they finally married. And to make up the sin for killing a girl's father, in the form of a dragon, it's said that he also married that girl.

—

Kawasumi Itsuki

As the Hero of the Bow, he saved the world.

After the subjugation of the Goddess, he proclaimed that there was still evil in the world, and went on a journey with the Hero of the Projectile.

While records of him exist in all countries around the world, none of them told of exploits great enough for his name to be handed down.

—

Raphtalia

As the Hero of the Hammer, she saved the world.

Considered the right arm of the Hero of the Shield, she was always with him. As his first wife, she wed him, and they had children.

Right now, much of Rock Valley's royalty carries her blood.

But she never had a moment of rest with the Hero of the Shield's female relations.

She often appears as the main character of many literary pieces of adventure.

—

Firo

As the Hero of the Claw, she saved the world.

It's said that the Filo Rial raised by the Hero of the Shield became a human, and fought alongside him.

She got along well with the Hero of the Instrument, Melromark's Queen, and stayed by her side when the world was at peace.

But once that Queen passed away, she suddenly vanished from the records, and like the Hero of the Carriage, it is unknown whether she truly existed or not.

Right now, there exists a famous Idol of the same name, so a few people wonder whether or not they are the same person; however, this connection is doubtful.

—

Fohl

As the Hero of the Gauntlet, he saved the world.

He was one of the former slaves that make up the ancestors of Rock Valley, and he carried the blood of Silt Welt Royalty.

He achieved many things as the comrade of the Hero of the Shield, and was much loved by the villagers.

—

Atlas

Her name is left in records as the existence that supported the Hero of the Shield.

During the battle with the legendary beast Houou, she lost her life prematurely.

After that, it is said that she was revived as a Spirit, but specialists hold this fact in doubt.

—

Melty Q. Melromark

The daughter of the Hero of the Cane, and the Hero of the instrument. She became one of the Heroes to save the world, and the Queen of Melromark.

Once the world was at peace, she offered assistance to the countries that had been lost in war.

She accomplished many feats, and her country experienced a long era of peace.

It's said that she was a lover of Filo Rials, and there are vague accounts that she had intimate relations with a Filo Rial of the highest class.

After that, she was married to the Hero of the Shield, and had children eventually.

—

Trash Melromark XXXII

As the Hero of the Cane, and the King of Melromark, he saved the world.

In his youth, he left a name as the Great King of Wisdom, but he had a tendency to stray, and he formed an antagonistic relationship with the Hero of the Shield.

After that, they reconciled, and he poured his efforts into world peace.

Even after peace was achieved, he continued serving the country as his daughter's aide.

There were many who were inspired by the noble way he lived.

—

Mirellia Q Melromark

The wife of the Hero of the Cane, and the former Queen of Melromark.

According to legend, she once died and was revived under enemy

control, but the Hero of the Cane was able to dispel the brainwashing binding her.

But it has also been said that the one who was killed was merely her body double.

After that, she left the country to her daughter, and aided her alongside the Hero of the Cane.

—

Rishia Ivyred

As the Hero of the Projectile, she saved the world.

After that, she went on a journey with the Hero of the Bow, and spread her name to various places around the world.

According to legend, she was married to the Hero of the Bow.

But a few tales recount her as the comrade to the Hero to the Shield, and some of her assisting the Hero of the Spear. She's a hero whose deeds are up to much speculation.

Even now, she's written in as the protagonist of many literary works aimed at women.

—

Eclaire Seattle

As the Hero of the Katana, she saved the world.

She was the daughter of a feudal lord who tried to offer the same treatment to Human and Demi-Human alike in the Demi-Human persecuting country of Melromark.

The land she was given later in life became, like the Hero of the Shield's village, a place where people passed their lives without discrimination by race.

Her relationship with the Hero of the Sword is often the subject of plays, but the actual individual's personality remains a mystery.

—

Midori, Kuu and Marin

They took up the titles of Hero of the Axe, Hero of the Mirror and Hero of the Book respectively as they saved the world.

Some say that they were Filo Rials raised by the Hero of the Spear, and others that they were slaves.

But as depictions of them are even scarcer than those of the Hero of the Spear, their existences are under suspicion.

—

Wyndia

As the Hero of the Whip, she saved the world.

It's been said that she was raised by the Dragon Emperor, and that she joined the Monster Tamer Guild. She is famous for solving various monster-related problems.

It has been said that the Hero of the Shield had given her a special title, but that name has been lost in transmission.

It has also been said she had some romance with her father's enemy, the Hero of the Sword, but the specific details are unknown.

—

Gaelion.

The Dragon Emperor that reigns over the monsters of the world.

The legends record that he participated in the fight to save the world, and much of his life was recorded by a researcher he encountered.

While it has been proven that these accounts are true, it has not been proven that the Dragon Emperor recorded in them was the real one, and the researcher is suspected of some fabrication.

—

Ratotil Anthreya

An alchemist who served by the Hero of the Shield's side.

She got along well with the Hero of the Whip, and they worked together to solve various problems.

She treasured the monster by her side dearly, and there are theories that state this monster to be the predecessor of the Raphshild race that exists today.

At present, there is a continuing debate to determine whether these monsters were brought about by Ratotil, or the Hero of the Shield.

—

Glass

As the Hero of the Fan, she saved the world.

Her legends live on in the lore of many countries.

She earnestly fought to prevent a process called world assimilation, she often appears in stories pertaining to the Hero of the Shield.

She seems to have been waiting for someone, but it is uncertain whether or not they were reunited.

Many plays and novels have her reuniting with, and marrying that person.

—

Kiel

As the Hero of the Scythe, she saved the world.

She is the progenitor of the race that continues to protect Rock Valley's God Tree to this very day.

Because of her, the God Tree continues to be praised as a symbol of world peace.

Later, it was said she married the Hero of the Gauntlet, but the truth is uncertain.

—

Sadina

As the Hero of the Harpoon, she saved the world.

She has earned fame for acting as a parent to orphans that gathered at the village that became Rock Valley, and for acting as a counsellor to the Hero of the Shield.

She has been described as a major lover of alcohol, and it's been said that she exchanged many drinks with the Hero of the Shield.

It has also been said that she was later blessed with his children.

—

Raph-chan

As the Hero of the Ship, he saved the world.

It's been said that he was a monster created by the Hero of the Shield, and a pure-bred of the Raphshild race.

After the death of the Hero of the Shield, he disappeared along with his Filo Rials.

Specialists question his existence, and attribute him to the accomplishments of a large number of Raphshilds being treated as a single entity.

—

Fitoria

As the Hero of the Carriage, she saved the world.

It has been said she was a Filo Rial raised by legendary heroes of times passed, but the truth is uncertain. She was a Filo Rial Queen.

A Monster Hero who's existence is up to much scrutiny.

As with the Hero of the Ship, specialists claim that the actions of many Filo Rials were attributed to a single character.

—

Elhart

A legendary blacksmith who supported the Heroes from the shadows.

If he had not existed, it has been said the Hero of the Shield wouldn't have existed either; an unsung Hero.

The Hero of the Shield's beloved armor is known to be one of his many creations.

It has been said that after that, with the aid of the Hero of the Shield, he gave birth to many masterpieces, but when he died, the Hero of the Shield's legend died with him. While his weapons lit the coals for many wars around the world, what put an end to them was also his equipment.

His name continues to be honored as the God of all Blacksmiths.

—

Trinemier Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz

A blacksmith who supported the Heroes from the shadows, and one who learned the art alongside Elhart.

A Demi-Human who, together with Elhart, supported the Heroes, and created many weapons.

He was good at looking after others, and had good features. It is recorded that he was quite popular within Rock Valley.

Together with Elhart, he is honored as a God of all Blacksmiths.

—

Imya Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz

A clothing maker who supported the Heroes from the shadows.

Niece to Trinemier Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz.

A good friend of the Hero of the Scythe, and one who made various garments.

Her bloodline continues to produce prodigious tailors to this day.

—

Elrasla Grilaroc

A Hengen Musou style inheritor who supported the Heroes from the

shadows.

She's the one who spread the once-dead Hengen Musou style to the Heroes, and the inhabitants of Rock Valley, and the style is still practiced to this day.

It has been said that in order to let the Heroes escape from a vicious plot of the ex-country of Faubley, she stayed behind, and was once killed.

She was later revived along with Melromark's former Queen, and opposed the Heroes.

By the actions of the Hero of the Projectile, and the Hero of the Katana, the brainwashing affecting her was dispelled.

Whether or not she actually died once before is up to question.

—

Beloukas

A Slave Merchant who support the Hero of the Shield from the shadows.

This name is only a conjecture towards his true one.

Through the Hero of the Shield's aid, his name was spread around the underworld, but not out of the range of speculation.

—

Hickwaal

A Merchant who supported the Hero of the Shield from the shadows.

He was the founder and first president of the Hickwaal Company that exists to this day.

While his commendable commercial spirit did not earn him a place in the world of legends, he went on to found countless enterprises after his meeting with the Hero of the Shield.

—

Sweed

A Merchant who supported the Hero of the Shield from the Shadows.

He was the founder of the Sweed Company that exists to this day.

Together with Hickwaal, he stuck his hands into much of the world's circulating wealth.

It has been said that at first, he worked as a conman, but after an encounter with the Hero of the Shield, he gained an understanding of the true nature of business, and had a change of heart.

—

Elena Haven

A Comrade to the Hero of the Spear, and a merchant who conducted business on the Hero of the Shield's land.

For the Hero of the Shield, who was known to be overly suspicious when it came to business, she was a rare individual who could converse normally with him.

During the construction of Rock Valley, she lent her power, and later continued to pour in aid.

Presently, her descendants have married into aforementioned Hickwaal and Sweed companies, and have gained the status of nobles.

Whether she was a comrade of the Hero of the Shield or Hero of the Spear is still up for debate by specialist.

One theory states that Raphtalia extended her hand to her, but that voice is the minority.

—

Roudy

A Chivalrous Thief who left his own legend around the time of the Heroes.

He stole the gold of evil nobles and merchants, and offered support to those going through poverty. IT is said that he was the head and founder of the Chivalrous Thieves Guild.

He was an acquaintance of the Hero of the Shield, and a theory points to him being a bandit reformed by him.

Chapter 378: The Rise of the Shield Hero

“What the hell is this?”

I unintentionally raise a laugh.

What I got my hands on and read was a book titled Rock Valley’s Heroic Legend.

Right now, the store I’m in is the Rock Valley Book Store.

It appears to be a magic shop, but they sell normal books too.

“What’s wrong?”

While I stand there reading, a child who looks like Elena comes up and talks to me.

I silently point to the page and furrow my brow.

“It’s quite a terrible story.”

“There are a few things that diverge from reality here.”

The person Glass’s waiting for is a woman.

Most of the monsters are attributed as concepts of the whole race. I feel sorry for the actual ones.

“What’s wrong?”

“Rafu~?”

Firo and Raph-chan look at me in wonder as I give a bitter smile.

“Hmm? Your guys’ existences are in doubt, it seems.”

“Eh...?”

It’s mean to call them a collection of monsters with the same name.

Why can’t they just see her as a Filo Rial?

“But it’s been a while since I’ve come to this world. Quite a bit has changed.”

I walk out of the book store and look at the sky.

A giant tree towers over the surroundings.

So that's Rock Valley's special god tree, is it?

Since it was written that Kiel was protecting it... I strain my eyes and try to focus on it.

... Yep. It's the crepe tree.

"Raphtalia, that tree is disgusting, so go level it to the ground. Kiel isn't here anymore, so it's fine."

"I don't want to. And if we do that, it'll start an uproar!"

"I'll bet. But as I thought, I can't get used to that tree."

And when I watch the traffic on the road, I see quite a few familiar races walking around.

After defeating the Bitch Goddess, when the Spirits pressed me for an answer, I chose everything.

Something close to the Bitch's fragments. I divided parts of me between this world and the modern one. Raphtalia, Atlas, and I, who would be able to use our godly powers to protect the world, went on a journey following the Spirits' words.

After that, a lot has happened.

It's because the rules vary by the world.

We exist as a spiritual force to protect worlds from invading gods.

Because of that, we've battled in as many places as there are stars in the sky.

The rule that eight worlds had to combine for the god to descend existed in some worlds, and did not in others.

But without corresponding to that rule, well, we pretty much descended to the absolute limit the world would permit.

Once we figured out just where the god was pulling the strings, we would bring him down before he could do anything else.

And with the repetition of battles like that, the months and years passed before I knew it.

That fragment was pretty much me sending myself on a holiday.

The one who took up permanent residence in the world experienced various happenings every day, but in the end, it seems he had a fun life.

And now, he's returned to me.

After he died, it seems much has happened in this world.

But unfair calamities like the wave didn't come about again.

In all the worlds I resolved matters in, I erected a barrier so no god could descend again.

Me being in this world after so long is like a well-deserved holiday.

I mean, with all that's happened, I'm tired.

Arc even said I could take a break if I wanted to.

That cat occasionally saves us, and is occasionally saved by us.

There are plenty of worlds where it would have been dangerous if he wasn't there.

And there are plenty of worlds that would have been in danger without us.

While similar to mine, his fighting style is on another level.

He specializes in killing gods, and he's no good in anything else.

Instead of getting into a war of attrition between gods, he has a convenient ability where he just kills them.

But in exchange, bluntly, if it was someone from the world, even a baby could beat him.

It seems he works by logic like that.

Well, if it has to do with punching, I guess I can't beat a baby either.

In exchange, Raphtalia fights for me, though.

Ah, I digressed.

Anyways, as a god, I've devoted myself to fighting.

Should I call this my main body?

"Is Rock Valley a monarchy? Or a republic? An empire? Each history book seems to differ a bit."

"I bet it's had a long history. Firo, do you know anything about that?"

"Hmm... when Firo was with Mel-chan, it was a monarchy."

Fumu... Firo's memory ability is a bit dubious, but I'll rely on it.

Ah, that's right.

We've paid a visit to this world after all this time.

When I was relying on the memories of my fragment to walk the streets, Firo and Raph-chan sensed my presence and appeared.

Their existences were doubted, but they're right here.

But... Raphshild... the Raph race has gotten quite the grand name.

Ah, I spotted one... it's a tanuki-esque bear.

It's pulling a carriage and letting children ride on its back.

It looks like it's treated as a sociable, docile monster.

But it doesn't appear to have much battle prowess.

This is like a Filo Rial that wasn't raised by Heroes, I guess.

I also sense that Gaelion's still here.

I guess I'll drop by later.

Right now, I'm in the country, Rock Valley.

I'm not really sure if it's an empire or a republic.

But it looks like it's a peaceful country.

People resembling Kiel's puppy mode are taking care of the crepe tree.

The crepes that grow from it are this country's specialty, just by raising

your hand into the air, you can eat them.

Well, all that means is that this disgusting tree is towering over the world.

Around it, a large castle town spreads out.

It faces the sea, and it was once... Raphtalia's birthplace Right now, it functions as a sort of port city.

"Firo."

"What~?"

"You're in human shape, but you won't take up your Filo Rial form?"

Well, I guess it'll cause an uproar if she does it here.

I mean, she's supposed to be a legendary bird.

"Well, you see, this place is a bit narrow."

Is that so?

I guess she's grown quite big.

"Yeah, Raph-chan is the same."

"Rafu~."

When I reunited with Raph-chan, I was shocked.

He was standing in quite a remote place.

The entire Raph-race came to greet us, and we were led to a tanuki the size of a mountain.

It took a while for me to notice it was Raph-chan.

Right now, he's transformed to the same size as when we first met.

"Firo, you see. Firo finally found master again. Don't leave me alone this time."

"Ah, yes, yes."

Does Firo even realize just how much time has passed since then?

She doesn't seem any different than before.

Well, her essence is getting closer to that of a God's, and I do think she'll be able to breach the wall around the world.

She's become able to clad herself in fire as she flies, and when a Bird of fire greeted us as we approached the world, I was surprised.

I think that form's one of her transformations, but I wonder.

"Rafu~."

"Raph-chan says he wants to protect this world from the shadows, so he'll stay home."

"I see, I see. Good boy, Raph-chan. Unlike some bird who doesn't mature no matter how many centuries pass."

"Who's that~?"

It's you. You.

"Rafu..."

I pat an embarrassed Raph-chan as I walk around the city.

The unfamiliar townscape. But there were some familiar things, and they bring back some deep emotions.

"Is Fitoria still around?"

"Yeah, she's really annoying. She keeps telling Firo to just succeed her already. She says she wants to retire."

I think that bird has lived long enough, but she has eternal youth.

I guess Firo drank that medicine too.

But it would be uncouth to ask about the others.

I'll bet Firo's met with many a painful farewell.

"Master is too mean. You did so many things with everyone, but never with Firo."

Firo starts talking about this and that with a pouty expression.

"You said Mel-chan was there, so it was no good, but you did stuff with Mel-chan too."

“Please, just leave it at that. I’ll be with you for a while now, right?”
(Naofumi) I pat the top of Firo’s head.

In a good mood, Firo quiets down.

As not to lose, Raph-chan climbs up to the top of my head and strikes a pose.

“Ah, yes, yes. You too, Raph-chan.”

After patting them for a while, my mood improves too.

“Naofumi-sama, please pat me as well.”

Atlas comes from within the Shield and volunteers herself.

“You get pat every day, don’t you?”

“Even if it’s every day, that doesn’t mean it’s enough.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Firo wants to be with master. This time, you’ll take me along, right!?”

“Got it, got it.”

Now, this world only has a handful of people who know me.

Like that, I walk around the city normally, and no one noticed I was the Hero of the Shield.

No, perhaps it’s at the level where they think I’m cosplaying a legendary Hero.

The culture doesn’t actually seemed to have advanced that far.

Well, I guess magic-based societies are something like that.

According to Firo and Raph-chan, they’re in a cycle of prosperity and decline.

They’ve created flying carriages and ships and set foot into the realm of the sky, so does that mean the world has advanced?

But that period had planes, so I don’t really feel anything about it.

Melty’s bloodline, Kiel’s, as well as Sadina’s exist, but they separate

from royalty, and are reinstated at some times. It's a cycle of something like that.

After the Heroes died, this world still relies on Hero Summoning quite a bit.

The Four Holy... no, now, is it the Eight? Anyways, they call for them, and sometimes summon vassal Heroes too.

But there's no record of a Hero of the Shield appearing after me, which has become a famous topic of discussion.

"It sure is peaceful."

The weather is nice, and I can hear the birds calling out happily.

We walk to the major road, and I make a light lunch in the grassy plains outside before presenting it to Raph-chan and Firo.

They were very satisfied with the first meal I made for them by hand in a long time.

"What should we do, Raphtalia?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you want to lead a peaceful life here again?"

If it's just for a while, I think I can get permission to rest.

If it's just for about a hundred years, it would just be like a normal Sunday for us.

I mean, we've been fighting consecutive battles for a while, and I think the Spirits will wait for us.

"We could have some children in this world and build a stable household until they become independent."

Just like the us that stayed in the modern world, and the us that stayed here, I get the feeling we could start something here.

I mean, despite everything, making a village was... fun.

Witch and the discrimination I faced are bitter memories, but besides

that, my days were quite fun.

“This time, let Firo in~!”

“Rafu~!”

“Me too!” (Atlas)

“Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

I ignore the three unrelated parties and ask Raphtalia.

“That sounds nice...”

Thinking back, we’ve come a long way.

It was a choice I made as not to regret, but it’s not like I never had regrets.

Mourning for the deaths of those close to me truly was sad.

But more than that, I encountered many people in many worlds, experienced many partings, and received many thanks.

“... But our battle still continues. For the people who are shedding tears due to a selfish being calling itself God, we have to keep moving forward.”

“... That’s right.”

I can make a fragment for a change of pace if I want.

I can just have him enjoy this world in my place.

Right now, we carry the duty of quelling the waves caused by those proclaiming to be gods. We’re more like concepts than anything else.

So, we can’t stop moving forward... I see.

I guess I should rest in moderation.

In the worst case scenario, I can do a time warp and meet the people of this world: Melty, Sadina, Kiel, Fohl.

It’s not like I’ve left for eternity.

“Ah, it seems there’s another person planning world assimilation.”

Raphtalia receives a request for support from another god hunter.

Right, just like Arc, we have comrades who share the same goal as us.

Though, I've never seen ones who are acting from the Spirits' requests like us.

Within them, there are people who betray, and people who have changes of heart. How many times have I been deceived...

Luckily, I'm still here and safe.

This time, one of those comrades is asking for help.

Of course, I intend to go there immediately.

I can't let them lose to those that perpetuate such unfairness.

Because that is our will.

It's fine. I have Raphtalia.

I have a world, a world I have to protect.

I have Firo, and everyone else.

I can't meet them at this moment, but it's not like we'll never meet again.

But those that claim to be god can even erase the past.

And so... I will protect everyone.

"Then to refresh ourselves, let's leave a fragment and go."

In this world, where we've become legends who've saved the world, let's have a light hearted adventure.

If the world is troubled by war, I'll bet we can achieve peace.

It's fine. I'm the Hero of the Shield. This world will give me a warm welcome.

And I'll get deceived again.

... That sounds likely. I'm a little worried.

"Understood."

"Firo wants to go with Master."

“Rafu!”

Raph-chan is waving his hand.

Next time we come, will we be bringing Raph-chan with us?

We leave a fragment behind, and leap through dimensions.

This time, Firo’s with us.

I’m with my nostalgic comrades, and I feel that my motivation’s raised itself a bit.

If I think about it, I was just an Otaku college student who was put under false charges and thrown penniless into another world. From there, I got up to being a noble, and even a God.

This truly is the Rise of the Shield Hero.

“Okay! Raphtalia, Atlas, Firo, I’ll be in your care from here on as well!”

“Yes.”

“Understood.”

“Yeah!”

Our battle still goes on.

For the lives lost without reason, we will continue to protect.

From here on... eternally...

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield Hero Part 1

“Achoo!”

On that day, I had just finished my job and was in the middle of returning to the village.

It's also fine to return through the portal, but the moment I reached the village I had work to do. It seems that I can only rest when riding the carriage.

It's been about half a year since the end of the last of the waves. I look to the sky and see it covered in thick clouds.

The temperature is dropping by the day, and it seems that even colder days are coming.

My breath has also turned white.

So Melromark also has four seasons.

It seems the climate had been in disarray during the wave.

“Ah...” (Naofumi)

“What's wrong?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia asks me from outside the carriage.

I hold up my hand, and look to the sky in silence.

“Ah...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia follows my lead and stares at the sky.

“It's snowing.” (Raphtalia)

“So it falls in Melromark too.” (Naofumi)

“The summer is hot, and the winter gets this cold.” (Naofumi) It's not like we're in the tropics, but the summer was still pretty hot.

But the winter gets cold enough for it to snow.

“Naofumi, do you hate the cold?” (Raphtalia) “I don’t hate it, I just thought it would be a pain to put spikes on the carriage’s wheels.” (Naofumi) “.... Should the hero who became an archduke and saved the world be saying such things?” (Raphtalia) Raphtalia words are correct

But when I think of the money and labor wasted, it still seems like a pain.

“It seems that you are still trying to increase our wealth, but what do you plan to use it for?” (Raphtalia) “Nothing in particular, if I were to use it, it would go towards decreasing the aftereffects of the wave” (Naofumi) And it never hurts to have extra

My experiences till now have made saving money a habit deeply rooted in my psych.

Well, this habit had helped us out quite a bit.

But as an Archduke, I was granted a large sum of wealth and an estate.

“And having money is better than not having it.” (Naofumi) “As expected of Naofumi” (Atlas)

Atlas left the shield and floated in the winter sky What do you mean by ‘as expected’.

Well then, half a year has passed since the wave, but even now, it’s effects are still clear Melromark’s castle town still has the mountain of the Spirit Turtle occupying much of the town, and the casualties of the countries that had the dragon’s hourglasses was very high.

Though we may have achieved peace, the everyday lives of the civilians is still harsh.

There’s no way that reconstruction could have finished in a mere half-year.

That’s why our current job is to go around the world and sell supplies to the troubled populace, while helping the unfortunate.

Well, we are gaining a small profit from this enterprise...

As expected, this job is quite tiring and in order to take a well-deserved

break, we are proceeding towards the village at a leisurely rate.

Well, I did return to the village by portal yesterday.

“Don’t worry about it. The snow’s picking up, isn’t it?” (Naofumi)
“KUE!” (Filo Rial)

Oh, by the way, the bird pulling the carriage right now isn’t Firo, but her number one follower Piyo.

Firo is currently travelling the world with Melty, so she got Piyo to pull the cart for us.

Piyo is staring intently at the falling snowflakes while walking.

“It sure is.” (Raphtalia)

“How much snow does Melromark usually get?” (Naofumi) No matter how many meters of snow cover we get, it will still be troublesome We may even be troubled further by winter-specific monsters.

“It depends on the year, but every year we get enough to dye the landscape white” (Raphtalia) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

Based on Raphtalia, we will be getting quite a bit of snow.

Well, we don’t have to be that worried...

We survived fighting that bitch goddess. We should be fine whatever comes our way.

“Anyways, the cold-resistant goods we prepared seem to be working fine.” (Naofumi) “You’re right... By the way, Naofumi, do you need anything?” (Raphtalia) “Hm?”

Both me and Raphtalia have learned to use the power of gods... no let’s call them spirits... to some extent But in order to use it, we must offer our own power to them.

Anyways, we both gave up a majority of our godly powers, so we were pretty much indistinguishable from humans.

Well, we could use them to some extent...

We became a somewhat half-assed existence and we were still affected

by the heat and the cold. All's well with the world.

Anyways, the armor I had equipped was quite useful, as it was temperature resistant.

"I'm not cold at all" (Atlas)

"Well that's because you're... By the way, Atlas, this conversation isn't getting anywhere, can you please be quiet."

Atlas was always like this. She would always interrupt the conversation and take it in a weird direction.

You're not cold because you became a spirit.

"I'll have to make sure no one in the village catches a cold." (Naofumi)

"Yeah, it seems that Kiel would run around, even in this weather."

(Raphtalia) Would the Loin-clothed dog be circling the village in joy now?

"She seems like the type that would get excited in snow." (Naofumi)

Yes, it seems she would be the type to roll around in the snow.

Even though she is the hero of the Scythe, you know.

"KUE!" (Piyo)

Piyo cried out.

We could see the village that was our destination.

We had finally arrived huh...

"Niichan, Niichan! It's Snow! It's snowing!" (Kiel) Kiel, who had been excitedly running around the village ran in front of me.

I get off the Carriage and start towards the Village.

There doesn't seem to be any noticeable change.

The Bioplant forest seems to be strong against the cold, and some tomato-esque fruits are growing And, as expected, Kiel is extremely excited.

What a simple fellow.

"Yes, yes, it's snowing" (Naofumi)

What about it?

Is what I wanted to say, but dealing with her would be a pain.

And the happy feeling derived from snow was something that I could kinda understand.

But seeing my home covered in snow gave off a slight melancholic feeling.

“Welcome back, Hero of the Shield” (Imya)

“I’m Back” (Naofumi)

Imya, who had been chasing Kiel, arrived

As always, these two seem to come as a set.

Oh yeah, that’s right.

“Imya” (Naofumi)

“Yes” (Imya)

“It’s getting cold, so could you start making some cold-resistant gear?”
(Naofumi) “I’ve already made enough for the villagers, do you want more?” (Imya) How considerate.

To be ready even before I asked.

“If you find any free time, could you make some more?” (Naofumi)
“Leave it to me” (Imya)

I praise Imya and pat her head, then I start cooking.

Today will be cold, so I’ll cook something warm “Oh yeah, Niichan!”
(Kiel)

“What is it Kiel, you’re not running around in circles any more.”
(Naofumi) “What do you take me for... never mind... Anyways, it’s almost Christmas right? What will you ask Santa Claus for?” (Kiel) “Well you are a dog... Wait, Christmas?”

Are you meaning to tell me that an alternate world also has Christmas?

“There is a Christmas here?” (Naofumi)

I'll ask Raphtalia later.

As it's Kiel, she may have just heard it from the other heroes.

...

"Of course there's a Christmas." (Raphtalia) My question was reflected quite smoothly.

Fumu...

"Originally, it was a tradition spread by the former heroes. Melty told me about it." (Raphtalia) "To see this Christian holy festival in another world..." (Naofumi) "Holy Festival?" (Raphtalia)

What?

Isn't Christmas supposed to celebrate the birth of Christ?

Wait, the former heroes were Japanese weren't they They may have spread Japanese Christmas customs.

"What sort of day is Christmas?" (Naofumi) "Isn't Christmas just Christmas?" (Raphtalia) I didn't get anything from that.

These people simply might not know the origin of the holiday.

"Do you know anything about this Atlas?" (Naofumi) "Oh, the former Heroes simply said that Christmas was a day to give presents, and never explained its purpose." (Atlas) The former Hero's probably wanted an opportunity to celebrate with their party members so they had just given a general outline of the event.

It doesn't seem these people care about the birth of a holy man.

"And, who is this Santa Fellow?" (Naofumi) "He gives presents to all the good boys and girls when they are asleep." (Atlas) I see. So they only shared the fun parts of Christmas They completely left out its religious aspects.

"That's how it is! So what do you wish for Niichan?" (Kiel) ...Kiel's eyes are shining

She seems to be having a lot of fun.

“Do adults receive presents as well?” (Naofumi) “Oh right, Niichan was adult” (Kiel)

“What is that supposed to mean?” (Naofumi) Are you trying to tell me that I’m childish (though I won’t deny it).

“Anyways, Present! It’s going to be fun!” (Kiel) Does that mean that I am supposed to give out presents? What am I supposed to do In my world, the role of Santa was usually played by the parents...

“Raphtalia?” (Naofumi)

“Yes?” (Raphtalia)

Hmm... The probability that she believes in Santa is quite high.

I don’t want to break her, or any of the villager’s dreams.

Ok, just in case, I’ll ask someone who seems knowledgeable on the matter I could go ask Trash or the Queen, but they are probably busy.

Oh well, I guess I’ll have to ask someone else.

Now who would be knowledgeable on such matters?

I don’t really want to, but the one who knows the most about the villagers is probably that person.

“Excuse me, I wish to speak with Sadina.” (Naofumi) “... Are you alright Naofumi” (Raphtalia)

“.....” (Naofumi)

Recently, whenever me or Raphtalia approach her, she asks about our relationship. She seems to be faithful to her turn.

But I am already getting used to that.

By the way, previously Sadina said,

“Oneesan, I’ll definitely teach you some techniques.”

Or some other irresponsible thing and slipped away.

The feeling of fear from being pushed down by her is still embedded in my skull.

I'm sure she's still aiming for me or something.

In a way, she might be a more troublesome person than Atlas.

For what reason is this person pressuring me to this extent?

It seems that person would act the same regardless of whether I was the Hero of the Shield, or the world's savior or not...

That's why dealing with her is an Extremely scary task.

"I'm coming with you." (Atlas)

"Go away! Raphtalia and Atlas, I don't need you monitoring us"
(Naofumi) "Yes. Come Atlas, this way" (Raphtalia)

Capturing the spirit Atlas was a task that, for now, only Raphtalia and I were capable of.

And so, I left Atlas to Raphtalia so she would not follow me.

"Ah. It's Naofumi" (Imya)

For the love of...

Yes, that's right, it's like that.

"Imya, your uncle is calling you."

I don't want to deal with Sadina and these two at the same time.

These idiots don't act rationally towards other people.

"I understand" (Imya)

"Kiel, you..." (Naofumi)

"What is it Niichan?" (Kiel)

"Let's have fun later" (Naofumi)

"YES!" (Kiel)

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield Hero Part 2

“That’s how it is, Sadina. Please tell me about this world’s Christmas.”
(Naofumi) “Ara~? Naofumi, you don’t know Christmas?” (Sadina)

“It’s probably a different Christmas from the one in my world.”
(Naofumi) I decided to question Sadina, Imya and the other adults of the Village.

I have to tread carefully in the customs of this world. There may be different customs across races as well.

Well then, the one to first answer my question was Sadina.

“For adults, Christmas is the outlet for one’s carnal lust. Rather than the holy night, it’s more of the unholy night. It’s also a night to drink a cup of Sake. Even I can have fun on it.” (Sadina) (TL: This is bad pun, Christmas eve is 聖夜の夜 (Seiya no Yoru) while Sex Night is 性夜の夜 (Seiyoru no yoru which can also be read a Seiya no yoru)).

...

“Can you explain it in greater detail?” (Naofumi)

Ignoring Sadina, I go to ask Imya’s uncle and the rest of the townsfolk.

“Christmas huh? Well, it’s the adult’s job to deliver presents to the children while they are asleep. We also cook large feasts in the evenings.”
(Misc Townsfolk) Fumu... It seems that they follow Japanese Tradition.

Most of the adults are telling me the same thing.

“Hey, Naofumi-chan” (Atlas)

“Shut up. Be quiet. Silence.” (Sadina ...?)

This Woman is saying similar things to Atlas.

The only strange thing is that Atlas can understand with only his eyes.

I have to act as a moderator. Since the world has achieved peace, how does indulging in Sexual Harassment sound. (TL: I know. This does not

make sense. This trial does not make sense. Can anyone translate 世界が平和になってからセクハラ三昧なのはどうかんだ) “The problem is whether or not this village should take part in a Christmas celebration” (Naofumi) “As the subjects of the Shield hero, that decision is left up to you.” (Villager) Says an old villager as he averts his eyes from me.

It seems that they are hoping for my approval.

Sigh....

“So who will gather and distribute the gifts?” (Naofumi) “Well...” (villagers)

Everyone’s gaze is directed at me.

Sigh... I guess there’s no choice.

Even though I am these peoples’ overlord it seems that I have to do it.

“I understand. The people of the village are working hard, I guess I can prepare some presents.” (Naofumi) “Many thanks” (Villagers)

As the villagers are now lowering their heads in respect towards me, I can’t really refuse.

But there will surely be a mountain of issues pertaining to my new job.

First, I must investigate what sort of toys the children would like.

“The problem is finding out what to get. It would be troublesome to go around town investigating, and what’s more, there is a high probability we will be found out. ” (Naofumi) “Ha?!” (everyone in unison)

Everyone in the vicinity suddenly raised their heads and stared at me.

Did I say something funny?

“What’s wrong?” (Naofumi)

“Can’t you just find out from the wishes hung on the Christmas Tree?” (Villager) Wishes...

Aren’t they thinking of that? Those things that people hang on bamboo stalks to make wishes to the gods?

“Children who cannot write ask their parents to write and hang it for them. They write their names and what they want and hang it on the Christmas tree for Santa to read. That’s why the adults can see these wishes and prepare the presents.”

... Why the hell is Tanabata getting mixed into this?... Is what I wanted to retort.

However, it would be too troublesome to explain.

This is probably the product of people mixing up the events made by the previous heroes.

Now that I think about it, these events had quite good compatibility from the start...

“Okay, then please get your children to write the wish slips, and tell me which tree you want to make the Christmas tree.” (Naofumi)

“Understood!” (Villagers)

And that’s how Christmas kicked off in my village.

“... Why did you people choose a Crepe tree of all things.” (Naofumi)
(TL: not a crepe myrtle, which is a real tree, this crepe tree seems to grow actual crepes) The next day, the people of the village had gotten their children to write down their desired items. and they had decided upon a Christmas Tree, however...

For some reason they had selected a Crepe tree for that role.

The villagers all enthusiastically started hanging up their wishes on the tree.

That ominous tree was still bearing fruit even in the middle of winter.

In the summer, it mostly produced Chocolate-Banana Crepes, but recently it had started to bear Strawberry Cream-like crepes as well.

The villagers seem to eat from it a lot, but I do not find it very appetizing.

Kiel says that its fruit changes with soil conditions and temperature.

I don't know. I really don't care.

That Crepe Tree, now covered in decorations and wish sheets can only be described as bizarre.

“Are you celebrating Christmas?” (Ren)

As I was getting Bored, Ren started towards me.

Well, instead of Christmas, it seems to be some sort of pseudo Japanese-esque variety There is a high probability that it is something completely different Perhaps the world that Motoyasu, or the other heroes came from had the holiday attributed to a different person entirely.

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“I hope it turns into a fun event. By the way, why are you hanging up wishes?” (Ren) “It seems that in this world, Christmas and Tanabata have been fused.” (Naofumi) “... I see...” (Ren)

Ren is currently leading the Monster Extermination Squad. He is watching over people like the Female Knight (TL: Seriously that is what the character is referred to as here) and Taniko.

They are, in a way, helping out the troubled populace as well.

That Female Knight, in order to gain the knowledge of how to lead people from me, has set up base in this village. Taniko is training with a monster user to learn how to fight monsters. Raht and his squad are at work surveying the area for monsters.

Well Gaelion and Mi are with him, so there is not much to worry about...

(TL: I don't know any of these people either. I'm just a lowly translator)
In order to get the weapons of the heroes, these people return to the village by portal once night falls.

“How about you?” (Naofumi)

I would have asked him to help out, but Ren has a troubled expression on his face.

“It seems that only during this time of year, certain monsters go on rampages and trouble the people.” (Ren) “I don’t remember there being such monsters.” (Naofumi) “In most games I’ve played, certain monsters only show up around Christmas. This seems to be the case here as well” (Ren) Christmas Monsters?

Certainly many net games did have that feature.

Events where rare holiday monsters and stages appeared were quite common.

Now that I think about such mechanics would be plain weird in a realistic setting.

Anyways, limited time monsters, huh?

Event monsters exist within this world as well.

Though having the entire world be Christmas-ified for an event is strange in its own right.

“...” (Naofumi)

“I understand that these hardships are part of my job. If I find free time, I’ll help out.” (Ren) “Okay, I’ll wait without expectations. By the way what did you usually do for Christmas?” (Naofumi) “Hm... doing a light celebration with Eclair and Winea may be nice.” (Ren) Since that time, Ren, who felt a still feels a strong sense of responsibility, continues to look over Taniko.

Even though the world is saved, Ren seems to still feel as if he has to continue atoning for his sins, or something like that.

For now, that Taniko is trying to become more independent.

To put it bluntly, Ren is still hated by Taniko.

“Have you returned, Iwatani Naofumi?” (Female Knight) As we were talking, Female Knight appeared.

She’s the second person Ren cares for. (TL: No, not like that... I think) Female Knight stares at the wishes hung on the Christmas Tree. Her face seems lost in thought.

“Fumu... So it’s finally Christmas.” (Female Knight)

“It sure is. By the way, Female Knight, what do you plan on doing for Christmas” (Naofumi Probably) It seems quite a few people will be accompanying Ren in monster hunting.

Though this person said she’d learn how to run a village from me, I don’t see her around a lot.

She would occasionally imitate me and go hunt bandits, or practice my menacing business smile, but that’s about it.

By the way, she is even worse than Kiel in sales.

Well Kiel is an interesting creature, so she has attracted a certain crowd of people.

(TL Note, while I write Interesting creature, the author actually says Masculine Maid Dog. As I do not want to imagine this, I will stick with interesting creature) Even outside of Melromark, she has some dedicated fans. I’ve heard she even has his own official fan club.

By the way, the one who makes clothes for her is Imya. He does have a certain sense of style.

As a punishment game, we have had Kiel cross-dress... No, it can’t really be called that... Wear some female clothing that she did not personally like.

Well, reaching the level of Firo, who is now a world-wide Idol, is probably impossible.

“Me? I think I’ll try to stay up and wait for Santa.” (Female Knight) “... What?” (Naofumi)

Santa Claus? How old are you again?

It can’t be...

I get a strange stare from Ren

“Why are you standing there with a perplexed look?” (Ren) “What do you mean by wait for Santa?” (Naofumi)

“Fumu, well, until last year, I was on the receiving end. But after seeing the smiling faces of all the children I decided that this year, I want to be able to meet the old man and thank him for his work.” (Female Knight)
This is... She really believes in him.

So she does have some surprisingly pure aspects to her.

Fu fu fu. (TL: Laughter. Maybe it should have been hohoho) “Oy, Naofumi, you couldn’t possibly be...” (Ren)

“Well, Female Knight. No, Eclair. Santa Clause is-” (Naofumi)
“WAA*#^&’@\$#@A! Eclair! Stay Strong!” (Ren)

Ren hurriedly shut my mouth.

Damn. I was going to pound the cruelty of reality into this dreaming adult’s head.

“By the way, do you want to have a party before that?” (Ren) Ren managed to invite Female Knight within the confusion.

Is he going to turn this holy night into an unholy one? (TL: They used the same pun as before. See above) “I’m sorry, but I am not as free as I appear. I also have work to do.” (Female Knight) “How about...just for dinner...” (Ren)

Ren was shot down as soon as he took flight, but he recovered quite quickly Good for you, Ren. (TL: Yes, he actually says (thinks) that) Oh right, after saving the world, he did make quite a grand confession only to be rejected.

But it seems that Ren’s memory of the time is quite hazy.

Or he could just be psychologically blocking the memory...

“I also invited Windea.” (Ren)

“Fumu...” (Female Knight)

Well. This matter doesn’t concern me. Good luck Ren

Is what I thought when Taniko appeared to survey the area.

She was riding Gaelion.

Oh, right. Taniko probably fit into the 'Child' category.

I can imagine her saying that Christmas is a waste of time.

"Ah, Taniko. Are you here for Christmas as well" (Female Knight)
Anyways, does the girl who was raised by a dragon even know about Christmas?

"...?" (Taniko)

Taniko showed an extremely pure expression we hadn't seen since she first arrived at my Village.

... for a split second, after which she adapted a face that screamed, 'This is a waste of time'

"Yeah, I used to receive presents every year from Santa. My father got them from him." (Taniko) I direct a cold glance towards Gaelion

He returns the glance with equal intensity.

Hey, in the wild, did children celebrate Christmas?

I feel that he will say something like, "Like Hell."

Keep your childish instincts in check.

"Ah perfect, Windex" (Ren)

"GYYYAAAAWWOOOOOOOOOOOO" (Gaelion)

As Ren approaches Taniko, Gaelion shouts out.

It seems like he is saying, "Don't worry, Papa will protect you from the scary man"

"What is it" (Taniko)

"Will you eat dinner with us on Christmas?" (Ren)

"Why should I?" (Taniko)

"I've decided to take responsibility" (Ren)

"How selfish, don't go around taking responsibility without other's consent" (Taniko) "It's not like you have any plans, right?" (Ren)

“Well, I am free that day...” (Taniko)

Ren is desperately trying to invite these two women to a Christmas Party.

Their reactions annoyed me a bit.

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield

Hero Part 3

That night, in order to make all of the presents I found on the wish slips, I began to read up on the toys of this world.

“um... what? Stone Ore Sewing needle? What is that? The one who ordered it was... Imya huh.” (Naofumi) I thought that should be labeled as more of a tool to make clothes than a present to ask Santa for... but... I would have gotten it for her even if it was not a request to Santa.

Well as long as she personally wishes for it...

She sure is Dilligent. Though that is supposed to be a good point.

“Next is...” (Naofumi)

By the way, Raphtalia is currently cleaning the room.

I wonder what Raphtalia would ask for if she knew that I was Santa.

Well that doesn't matter. I should focus on the wishes of the Village.

「A steamy night with Naofumi」

The slip was shoved into the bottom of the pile of wishes I had collected.

Though a name wasn't written, I had a general idea of the culprit.

Even though she cannot see, how did she write that?

No wait, Atlas being a spirit, the problem extends past not being able to see Well it is also possible that Sadina let her use Ghost Writing “Hm, next is... 「A night of carnal pleasures with Naofumi. 」” (Naofumi) With a snap, my motivation was destroyed.

“Hey, Naofumi?” (Raphtalia)

These people... Every single time!

Don't turn this holy night into an unholy one. (TL: They keep using the pun. I don't know if it is a famous joke or something. See part 2) Oh

well... next is

「Delicious food made by Niichan.」

It seems that this one is from Kiel.

That dog really is simple.

You eat it every day, don't you? I don't think Santa can do anything about your request.

Well, I would be more troubled if she wrote something like 'I want to meet my dead parents' or something like that... (TL: Water 35L, Carbon 20kg, Ammonia 4L, Lime 1.5kg, Phosphorus 800g, salt 250g, Saltpeter 100g, sulfur 80g, Fluorine 7.5g, Iron 5g, Silicon 3g, Trace amounts of 15 other elements) For that, I don't think I can do anything. She would have a better chance writing to Sadina.

That woman may be messed up, but she is quite knowledgeable in this field.

Well, as long as Kiel is happy with this, then I guess it's fine.

The problem is food, huh. She didn't write what she wanted to eat, so I should probably do some research.

“? What is this? 「Play with me」?”

This is quite vague.

What does this person mean by 'play with me'?

What's more, I do not recognize this name.

I can recognize the handwriting, but the name is completely different.

Could this also be... an instance of Ghost Writing?

“Raphtalia, do you know who this is?” (Naofumi)

I'll show there unknowns to Raphtalia.

Raphtalia is really skilled at remembering names.

Even I have yet to memorize Imya's full name but she picked it up almost immediately.

“Ah, these are from the monsters of the village. The writer is ... Windea probably.” (Raphtalia) “Ah, I see...” (Naofumi)

I think I can put this one off for a while.

And wait, the Monsters also want Christmas presents?

It seems half of the monster requests involved playing, and the other half involved eating human food.

Well, I guess there's no choice.

We can fulfill them the day after Christmas.

“I'm home~!”

The door to the house slammed open followed by an energetic voice.

In the doorway stood the idol of the world; the Hero of the Claw; the energetic Firo.

Well, she did return home by portal regularly.

“I'm home, master” (Firo)

“Welcome Back” (Naofumi)

“A lot of people handed me gifts saying they were Christmas Presents!” (Firo) Ah, so that's why she arrived by carriage today instead of by portal.

A carriage fully loaded with presents was parked outside the house.

Since the end of the wave, Firo has been traveling the world with Melty as an international Idol.

“Where is Melty?” (Naofumi)

“Um, she said she was returning to the castle.” (Firo) “I see...” (Naofumi)

Well, I don't really have any reason to give Melty a present.

she's receiving gifts from all of the races of the world.

I mean, she is the Queen of the world. (TL: Oh god, spoilers) Though I don't know if she personally wished for that or not.

“And so, Firo heard some good information.” (Firo) (TL: She refers to herself in third person) “What did you hear?” (Naofumi)

It’s probably nothing important

But saying such things to Firo is dangerous. I should hear her out before she goes on a rampage.

I have no idea what she will do if I keep silent.

“You know~ , this event called Christmas~, It’s apparently very fun!” (Firo) “Of course it is, so? Firo, are you doing a Christmas live event?” (Naofumi) “?... Melty said I would be free on Christmas, but that I had work on every other day.” (Firo) “Well, I guess that Makes sense.” (Naofumi)

“And so, Melty’s mother said that if I didn’t stay here for Christmas, I would regret it.” (Firo) I have no Idea what she would regret... I don’t understand what the Queen is thinking.

Anyways, it seems that Firo will be in the village for Christmas.

It’s going to get noisy around here...

And that’s how I made some progress on preparing the Christmas presents.

Oh, we put the presents that Firo had accumulated in the Village storehouse.

From my quick analysis, it seems that there are some extremely fancy presents mixed in.

Just how popular is that bird anyways.

I wonder how much trouble would occur if the populace found out that she was not an Angel, but a Filo Rial monster.

“Firo-taaaaaaaan~”

...Twas a voice I did not want to hear.

Despite the cold, that person is still needlessly energetic.

“Ya!” (Firo)

Firo escapes to her own room, and I can hear the sound of a lock clicking into place.

I deploy 'Meteor Wall' and make it so that no one can enter the house.

"Fube~! This is father in law's barrier! Fuoooooooo! I, Motoyasu, will overcome all obstacles in the name of love!" (Motoyasu) (TL: Damn, He's still alive) Sure enough, it's Motoyasu and his three Filo Rials.

Since then, Motoyasu has become a prominent member of the Filo Rial community, and is currently advising a group of Filo Rials from Shield Freiden.

He also leads the group to Firo's live concerts, forming a sort of cheering squad. (TL: Oh, the eye-ro-nee) The three Filo Rial at his side are the highest Filo Rial among his Filo Rial. They sometimes act as Motoyasu's support, and they to various chores. Moyoyasu seems to be on good terms with them.

The one who speaks the most is Green.

Well, they only really speak among themselves.

Motoyasu is struggling to overcome the Meteor wall I had conjured, The three Filo Rials adapt fighting stances, but continue to watch in silence.

It seems that these three have gotten used to dealing with Motoyasu.

The three unleash a large-scale attack that probably would have killed me at one point at the wall and Motoyasu.

However, Motoyasu's toughness is not to be underestimated.

Just give up, Motoyasu. Firo hates you on a primal level.

A little while after that...

"Ah... It's cold." (Fohl)

Foul, who is in his true form, is shivering under a blanket in my house.

"Aniki, have you seen Atlas?" (Fohl)

"Atlas is currently resting inside the shield. Do you need something?" (Naofumi) Hearing my words, Atlas comes out of the shield and

materializes in a half-transparent state.

“Did you call for me, Naofumi?” (Atlas)

“Ah, your brother came to look for you.” (Naofumi)

“Ara, Fohl, it’s been a while” (Atlas)

“It’s been a while, Atlas” (Fohl)

“...Didn’t you two meet just yesterday?” (Naofumi)

Fohl has currently made training the people of the village his life’s work.

For now, he is trying to pound the basics of martial arts into the new slaves, and the villagers who wish to get stronger.

Deep in the mountains is a dragon disguised as an old woman who runs a Dojo. Fohl has made it his job to train people enough that they will be able to survive the old woman’s training.

Excluding me, it seems that he has become the second most trusted person in the village after Sadina.

Even though he is rotten, he is the hero of the fist. (TL: is everyone a hero now?) By the way, it seems that the opponent he has the most trouble with is Kiel, as he is generally put off by her sparkling eyes.

“You seem energetic, as always brother.” (Atlas)

“Really? I feel as if I could die at any second” (Fohl) “Did you catch a cold or something?” (Raphtalia)

Seeing Fohl’s light equipment, Raphtalia asks with a worried expression.

“no... anyways, it’s way too cold... That’s strange, when I was looking over Atlas, the cold seemed like nothing to me... Ow...” (Fohl) Fohl accidentally bites his tongue. (TL: It says bites his nose, but I do not see how that would work biologically speaking) I go over and apply light healing magic while checking to see if he has a cold.

But there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong.

“Fohl, do you possibly hate the cold?” (Naofumi)

“That can’t be... ah... It’s cold.” (Fohl)

“Raphtalia, warm up the room. Firo!” (Naofumi)

“I understand, I’ll add more wood to the fire.” (Raphtalia) “Yes?” (Firo)

“Go warm up Fohl in your Filo Rial form.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Firo)

Firo changes to her Filo Rial form, and envelops Fohl in her feathers.

It looks warm.

“Ah... It’s warm. Thank You (said in english), Aniki... everyone” (Foul)

“No... Your cold resistance is way too low.” (Naofumi) Foul, who looks like he will, fall asleep at any moment, thanks me, but I don’t know what to think of this.

You’re becoming a stereotypical cold hater.

(TL: I do not know what being a stereotypical cold hater entails.) Do you plan to hibernate or something?

“It sure has become cold, hasn’t it? What’s up?” (Sadina) Sadina appears wearing nothing but a loincloth.

Are you, conversely, extremely resistant to the cold?

“Ah, Sadina. Fohl did say it was getting cold. You people lack willpower.” (Atlas) “Ara-? Has this person lost his mind” (Sadina)

“I’m more sane than you.” (Fohl)

Well, Atlas is a spirit, and Sadina seems to have an abundant layer of whale fat. (TL: Spoilers, she’s a whale) Sadina even looks prepared to take a dive in the ocean.

Just how strong to cold can you be?

“It’s warm under the sea. Will you come with me Fohl?” (Sadina) “That sounds like a wonderful idea.” (Atlas)

“Do you plan on killing Fohl? You too Atlas, don’t escalate it anymore.”

(Naofumi) “Even if you tell me that, I’ve never been vulnerable to the cold.” (Atlas) “?” (Naofumi)

“Fohl has always been weak to it, however, I’ve never been bothered by cold weather.” (Atlas) Even though you were weak bodied, you were strong against the cold, huh?

Now that I think about it, the Slave crest wasn’t particularly effective on her either.

She was tough in some strange ways.

But I still don’t think she should be trying to make Fohl her compatriot.

(TL: He is saying, even if you can do it, don’t drag others down with you)
“Rafu~” (Rafu)

“Ah, Rafu, how are you feeling” (???)

“Rafu” (Rafu)

Rafu had become the hero of the Fleet (as in ships). He works as Sadina’s support.

This helps as Sadina’s job is supposed to be salvaging. She has good compatibility with Rafu, who has many strange and useful ships.

Rafu pulls a golden chalice out of his tail and shows it to us.

It seems like it will sell for quite a bit.

“You pulled up something nice today” (Atlas)

“Rafu~!” (Rafu)

“I see... Well isn’t that nice?” (Atlas)

Atlas praises and pats Rafu’s head, and then goes to check on Fohl.

“Oh right, Fohl. You still haven’t written your wish down yet.”

I take out a wish slip and hand it to Fohl.

He was originally from a warrior house. He probably knows already (TL: I don’t really know what Naofumi means, maybe that he should know to hold his desires close or be honest to himself) “Oh right, what do you

want as a Christmas Present” (Naofumi) “Ah, the one in charge of presents until now has been me, so...” (Fohl) Fohl stares at Atlas and yawns. He reaches his hands towards her.

But without a sound, his outstretched arms simply pass through her.

And Fohl continues to stare with downtrodden eyes.

His melancholy is clearly visible on his face.

“Naofumi, have you finished researching what the kids of the village want?” (Atlas) “Pretty much...” (Naofumi)

“I wonder if Santa will give sister anything this year.” (Atlas) (TL: I do not know who this refers to)

“Get out, Get out!” (Naofumi)

Please be a little more considerate of Fohl.

As Fohl found it way too cold that day, he spent the day cooped up in my house.

Is this person supposed to be a bear? Is what I wanted to retort.

Just how much can he hate the cold?

And so, time passed.

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield Hero Part 4

Two days before Christmas

“Niichan, Niichan!” (Kiel)

I hide the evidence that I am preparing presents as Kiel rushes towards me with a worried look on her face.

“What is it Kiel? Do you want to try to stack up some good deeds to cover up you usual mischievous behavior for Christmas?” (Naofumi)

“What do you think I am?! That’s not it! I noticed something about the houses in the village.” (Kiel) “... What is it?” (Naofumi)

“We don’t have many chimneys.” (Kiel)

Well, now that I think about it, she is correct Quite a few of the houses in the village are made of Bioplant.

I set it so the plants had self-heating functions, so very few houses actually need fireplaces.

Though a chimney would be needed for cooking as well, most people just used the dining hall I built in the center of the village.

And for these reasons, the amount of houses with chimneys is scarce.

“How will Santa get it?!” (Kiel)

“It’s fine.” (Naofumi)

“What is?” (Kiel)

“Santa can pick locks. He’ll just break in through the front door.” (Naofumi) “I don’t want that kind of Santa!” (Kiel)

This person is being quite selfish.

But it seems that the villagers agree with her.

“What are you discussing?” (Firo)

“Ah, we’re discussing how the village doesn’t have enough chimneys for

Santa to go down. Kiel is worried.” (Naofumi) “That’s it? We should be fine” (Firo)

? What is Firo trying to say?

“Santa you know, he’s mast~” (Firo) (TL: Firo is trying to say Santa is master) “Firo, Don’t say any more than that.” (Naofumi) “Eh?” (Firo)

For the love of... If you say that, it will only become more troublesome!
This talking bird only ever says unnecessary things.

Anyways, why did she know?

“Kiel. I understand your request. You want me to install chimneys into the houses of the village.” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Kiel)

Sigh she’s signing me up for quite a strenuous job.

But I guess this is also Santa’s duty. There’s no choice.

It’s a pain. I want to quit. But this is also my duty as Archduke.

I need to help the hardworking villagers celebrate this event that only happens once a year.

And that’s how I began going around installing chimneys into the houses made of Bioplant.

Well, it’s not that difficult. All I have to do is edit the attributes of each individual plant. It’s still quite tedious.

“Oh yes, what are we going to do about Santa’s sled and reindeer?”
(Naofumi) I drove away Kiel, who seemed satisfied, and called a conference for the adults.

...Is it just my imagination, or did the Filo Rials just begin staring at me intently?

Firo is also next to me for some reason.

However, Raphtalia is not attending.

“Master!” (Firo)

“What?” (Naofumi)

“I know that master is Santa, so please let me contribute.” (Firo) “But that would put you on the side that gives out presents. Are you sure you don’t need anything?” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Firo)

What sort of turnout is this?

I thought Firo would have loved to remain on the receiving end.

“Because this side seems more fun.” (Firo)

I’m not good with impulsive people.

Is what I thought, but as long as she is motivated, it will probably work out.

“Returning to the subject, what are we going to do about the reindeer and sled? Should we order some monsters from the Demon users?” (Naofumi) I’m pretty sure that these theatrics will be necessary.

“Firo will pull the sled.” (Firo)

“Moreover, do we even have a sled that flies in the sky?” (Naofumi)
“Firo will pull it and fly.” (Firo)

“Please be quiet for a second” (Naofumi)

“Well... The tradition does involve a flying sled and flying Aldirea... but I don’t think you have to go that far.” (Imya’s uncle) Aldirea? If I remembered correctly, they were a type of monster. So they don’t use reindeer here...

“What sort of monster is an Aldirea” (Naofumi)

Imya’s uncle quickly doodles a picture of a monster.

It looks exactly like a reindeer.

“It looks annoying to capture” (Naofumi)

“Master!!!” (Firo)

“Ah. Yes. Yes.” (Naofumi)

We’re only going to be going around the village. I guess Firo will do.

If they see us capturing these animals, the kids will find out anyways.

Dressing up as Santa is also a no go.

If I just act natural I shouldn't seem suspicious.

"Then Firo, you will take on the Reindeer's... Aldirea's job." (Naofumi)
"Yay~" (Firo)

"Now what should we do for the Sleigh..." (Naofumi) "Leave it to Firo."
(Firo)

"Do you have an idea?" (Naofumi)

"Yes!" (Firo)

"I see. I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

"Yes~!" (Firo)

"I've left it to you. Don't forget to do it." (Naofumi) I'm a bit worried, so
I tell Imya's uncle to watch over Firo.

And with that, the day before Christmas eve was over.

...

"Merry~ Christmaaaaaaas~!!1!!!" (Motoyasu)

It's early in the morning, Motoyasu is circling the village riding on his
Filo Rials shouting.

Does he really like Christmas that much?

Motoyasu seems to be distributing something among the Filo Rials.

"Niichan! Niichan! Someone picked all of the crepes off of my Crepe
tree. Help me find the culprit." (Kiel) Kiel runs towards me shouting this.

Of course, I point my finger at Motoyasu

While he was going around announcing the start of Christmas, he was
also distributing Crepes.

"You BAAAASSSTTTAARRRRDDDD!!!" (Kiel)

Kiel gets seriously angry.

「I, who has understood the source of strength, The Hero of the Scythe

Commands! Once again manifest before me, my Scythe! 」（Kiel） With a bang, a large Scythe appears before Kiel.

After the wave, it seems that the legendary weapons have gained the ability to appear and disappear on command.

But it seems... that I cannot do this... T.T

Kiel begins to spin her Scythe and approaches Motoyasu menacingly. The wind is acting up.

So this is the power of the Scythe Hero.

“MERRYYYYYYYYY~” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu is still distributing crepes in unnervingly high spirits. Kiel quickly appears behind him.

「Soul Reaper X」（Kiel）

All of the light in the area is absorbed into the Scythe. Kiel slashes a single time, and then starts spinning the Scythe. The light disperses and she strikes a cool pose.

“Enemy Eliminated” (Kiel)

... What sort of game is this.

Like a marionette that got its strings cut, Motoyasu falls off the Filo Rial.

“Mo-kun!”

”Mou-chan!”

“Motoyasu!”

The three Filo Rials shout out into the winter sky.

“What the hell are you doing!?” (Filo Rial)

“That’s my line!” (Kiel)

And the death match between the Filo Rials and Kiel began.

The result: Kiel eventually abated the anger she had attained from losing her Crepes, and the three Filo Rials left Motoyasu and went off

somewhere.

“Really. What the hell are these people doing so early in the morning...”

I feel surprisingly worn out.

Motoyasu being Motoyasu, I can't believe that he didn't think of the consequences of plundering Kiel's food supply.

“Uu... I wanted to give them to everyone for Christmas and yet...” (Kiel)
“So you were planning such things as well.” (Naofumi) “Of Course Niichan. But that spear guy... he...” (Kiel) “He was definitely in the wrong, but you already got your revenge. Were you trying to kill him?” (Naofumi)
“Naofumi, you shouldn't overexert yourself either.” (Raphtalia) “I understand” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia mutters with the same weary expression as me.

Well it's not as if I don't understand.

Why did Motoyasu do such a stupid act... I don't get him.

“Oh well. What should I make for the Christmas Feast?” (Naofumi)
“Yay, Niichan's cooking. Santa granted my wish!” (Kiel) The villagers are also in high spirits.

As expected of Christmas Eve

It feels more festive than the Christmas of my old world.

Are these people really just that pure? (TL: as in childish) “If we're talking about Christmas, maybe I should prepare Turkey. At least that's what we did in Japan...” (Naofumi) “Bird?!?” (Firo)

“KKUUUEEEEEEEEE” (Filo Rials)

The Filo Rials that noticed me staring at them run away as if their lives depended on it.

I guess there's no choice. I am used to catching fleeing prey.

“Wait! Raphtalia, don't let them escape!” (Naofumi) “Why should I do that?!” (Raphtalia)

“For Christmas, you obviously need some sort of Bird Meat” (Naofumi)

“But why do we need to use Filo Rial?! Even Firo is running away!”
(Raphtalia) “I see, then let’s settle for Dragon Meat or something. Go catch something bird-like!” (Naofumi) “Kyua!?” (Gaelion)

At that moment, Taniko, Ratt, Mi and Gaelion returned through the Portal.

My timing was bad wasn’t it.

“What are you talking about?” (Taniko)

“Ah, the perfect entrée has arrived. Gaelion, Change into your dragon form and give me your tail.” (Naofumi) “Kyuaaaaaaaaaaaaaa?!?!” (Gaelion)

『What the hell are you thinking』(Taniko Party)

“We need some meat for Christmas” (Naofumi)

“And why does that require Gaelion’s meat!” (Taniko) “I’ve heard that Dragon meat tastes very similar to chicken. If Filo Rial isn’t allowed, then I have no choice but to substitute.” (Naofumi) I want to prepare something chicken-ish for all of the villagers.

“Naofumi. Please put an end to your bad jokes.” (Raphtalia) “mu... Fine.”
(Naofumi)

I kinda wanted to surprise the villagers.

“Ara? You’re stopping?” (Atlas)

Atlas voice comes out of the shield.

She seems to be trying to defend my position

But in spirit form there is not much that she can do.

If she had a body, I’m pretty sure we could go hunt a Dragon.

“I was just joking. Go buy the ingredients we need for cooking.”
(Naofumi) Everyone gives a relieved sigh and heads off.

“If you don’t find enough, we may have to... substitute...” (Naofumi) I threaten.

“Let’s go, everyone~!” (Taniko)

“KUEEE!”

“KYUAAAAAAA”

“wait, Gaelion?!”

“RAFU~!”

In a cloud of dust, the monsters run off towards the village. This experience will be a good wake up call.

My stance has and will always be ‘Those who do not work do not eat’.

Is what I think when I realize that the scouting team was late in arriving.

“Ah, you can stay at home tomorrow.” (Naofumi)

The representative of said team, Imya, fearfully approaches me “Are you sure?” (Imya)

“Yeah, you guys helped spice up the event, and anyways it’s Christmas. It’ll probably be more fun to be with everyone.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi, please make sure you don’t overdo it.” (Raphtalia) “It’s fine, isn’t it? Events are made to be enjoyed. Hmm... I need to think of a reward for the scouting team as well” (Naofumi) Sigh (Raphtalia)

As I say this, Raphtalia holds her head as if stressed.

“Imya” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Imya)

“A while ago, your uncle taught me how to make your home town’s specialty. As a reward, I’ll make it specially for today.” (Naofumi) “Ah, Thank you” (Imya)

Well it’s quite a strange dish, and I don’t think I can serve it in front of everyone.

So I’ll just make some for the scouting team that worked especially hard this month.

They contributed a lot, so I’ll give them a sort of pre-celebration.

(TL: It says the Scouting team's Lumo race ルーモ種, but I don't know how to translate this) Let's see the food they like is... well dishes that contain worms and ants. I guess this is what you call a delicacy.

If you have the courage to eat it, it's apparently delicious. Something like that.

It seems to be popular with the Filo Rials and other monsters who are not caught up on the appearance of food.

"I have just returned" (Itsuki)

"Fueee... What is this?" (Rishia)

Rishia and Itsuki arrive with bad timing.

These two people had gone on a journey to see the world, and had left at the end of the wave.

They stopped back regularly, but no one told me they would be here for Christmas.

Rishia stares at the strange dish in fear. It seems that she is still a scaredy-cat.

These two are surrounded by a lovely aura. I don't want to approach them.

"Do you plan to turn this Holy night into an unholy one?" (Naofumi)
(TL: Again, same pun) "Of course not. Is there a band around, I would like for some Hymns to be sung." (Itsuki) "..." (Naofumi)

Itsuki gives an answer befitting of his character.

"Melly and her subjects aren't here. You'll have to make do with the townsfolk. If you want someone to sing, ask Firo." (Naofumi) And so the people preparing for Christmas had a light celebration beforehand.

By the way, Fohl is still sleeping in my house.

I mean, he really hates the cold.

As for food, Sadina caught some large fish in the ocean so there is no problem.

On that night, the villagers brought ingredients to the shared kitchen, and I cooked them.

And like that, the day ended.

Oh yes, and Firo did indeed end up singing the Hymns.

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield Hero Part 5

“Well then... I’m sure you all understand this, but Santa doesn’t visit kids that try to stay up and capture him. Go to sleep.” (Naofumi)

“Niichan is the only one who would try something like that.” (Kiel) “Fine, just go to sleep!” (Naofumi)

「Understood」(Children)

After the Feast I had prepared, the villagers began going off to their beds.

The time is... Around 9:00 p.m. If I don’t get them to sleep soon, it will be troublesome for me.

I wonder how Ren’s night went.

He said something about eliminating monsters and never came back but... Female Knight was present at the feast. Taniko was as well.

I wonder what he’s doing now.

“Now then. Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“W-What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“Good children should go to sleep early.” (Naofumi) “Are you trying to imply that I am still a child?” (Raphtalia) Well, yeah. That’s what I’m implying.

Anyways, aren’t you still a child?

Raphtalia is still a child in age.

I have already read her request on the wish slips I had collected. I have already prepared all of the presents “What will you do?” (Raphtalia)

“I’ll also sleep.” (Naofumi)

And so, we turned in early.

As if. As soon as I confirmed Raphtalia was asleep, I got out of the bad

and took out the sack I had prepared.

(TL: ... They are still sleeping in the same bed... Also, that was phrased quite wrongly, but I don't know how else to say it) When I think of what the adults would do to me if I lost it, I sigh.

“Well then.” (Naofumi)

I take up the bag and leave the house, and find Firo cosplaying as a reindeer. Her eyes are shining as she watches me. She seems to be quite prepared.

On her chest, a bell is attached. On her feet, even bigger bells are attached.

What is up with her appearance.

“.....” (Naofumi)

“I've been expecting you...” (Firo)

“Ah. Yes. Yes.” (Naofumi)

I wonder how the fans would see if they saw the world's idol dressed as this...

It seems she has tied a fancy sled to her back.

The sled is covered in red, ornate decorations. Where could she have possibly acquired it?

“Rafu~” (Rafu)

Rafu pops his head out of the sled.

“Ah, This is a ship.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~” (Rafu)

Rafu looks at me with pride.

I see.

Sleds can be labelled as ships as well.

This sled definitely has the right atmosphere, at least.

“Master, get on. Quick!” (Firo)

“Yes. Yes. I understand.” (Naofumi)

It seems that she has prioritized authenticity.

I get on the sled thinking to myself, ‘This is going to be troublesome’

“Then, Were Off!” (Firo)

Firo starts running and flapping her wings.

Does she realize that she is still pulling the sled... The sled begins to float.

Oy! This girl actually managed to prepare a flying sled!

Shan Shan Shan Shan Shan!

The bells attached to Firo begin to sound.

“It’s too loud! The kids will wake up!” (Naofumi) “But Imya’s uncle told me this is how Santa is supposed to travel” (Firo) “Well... You’re correct, but it’s loud, so take them off.” (Naofumi) “Are you sure?” (Firo)

“Rafu~” (Rafu)

These two seem to be having the time of their lives.

As we fly, an Aurora-esque trail is left in the sky behind us. (Google Aurora Borealis) This was supposed to be a village-limited event. The scale is way too large.

“Rafu~~!” (Rafu)

As Rafu barks, the Aurora-esqu trail turns into a cloud that begins showering the village with snow.

Yes, mood is important. But this snow is a nuisance. I can barely see.

“Let’s start around Kiel’s house.” (Naofumi) She wanted food, so I made some candy and for her.

She loves Crepes, so I assumed she would like other sweet things.

Should I just put it next to her pillow.

Firo stops in the airspace above Kiel's house. (TL: My physics sense is tingling) "Why did you stop?" (Naofumi)

"Eh? Aren't you going in through the chimney?"

"I can walk right through Bioplant houses. Stop at the door."

(TL: As he grew them, they cannot stop him as he is their master)

"Eh~..." (Firo)

After some argument, Firo parks next to Kiel's house.

「Emergency Exit」

On my command, a door appears on the Bioplant wall.

And that's how I infiltrated Kiel's house. Making sure to be quiet, I left the candy by her pillow.

"Alright, on to the next house." (Naofumi) "Bu~" (Firo)

Firo lets out an unsatisfied voice.

I'd be annoying if I had to go through the chimney every time.

If Santa existed, I would applaud his patience.

Now, next is...

I look at the house next to Kiels.

...It's not made of Bioplant.

I take out the spare key the parents gave me, infiltrate the house and leave a present.

There is no door I cannot open!

"Hey, Master." (Firo)

"Yes?" (Naofumi)

"You're acting like a burglar." (Firo)

"Santa's pretty much a kind burglar isn't he? The only one who would walk up to a kid's pillow would be a parent, or a burglar. And the child gets a toy and is happy, right?"

“Eh~...” (Firo)

“Dreams are dreams because you don’t know the reality. I guess this is one more step towards adulthood for you” (Naofumi) “Firo doesn’t want to become an adult!” (Firo) “I see” (Naofumi)

Well having dreams is better than having none.

I think this as well.

“Now then... Next is Fohl and Atlas, huh.” (Naofumi) Atlas is currently taking up residence inside of my shield, but she usually sleeps inside of Fohl’s house.

Well, she doesn’t actually sleep.

I told her that Santa won’t come if she doesn’t sleep, so she is probably putting her best effort into trying to sleeping.

I’ll do Atlas first.

I quietly enter her room.

She’s doing a very obvious fake sleep.

If Rafu or Raphtalia did it, it would probably appear cute.

“Yep, This child is definitely sleeping.” (Naofumi) I say in a deep voice, as I take the prepared items out of my sack and approach her. I take out another sack I don’t think I can get any closer, or Atlas will drag me into the bed with her.

That’s why I came prepared.

Atlas cannot see, so she operates by sensing presences.

I prepare my present is one hand and the sack in the other “Naofu-” (Atlas)

I quickly cover Atlas with my specially prepared sack. (TL: This is going in many bad directions on my mind) “Wa, what is this!” (Atlas)

“Oh, I used materials specially so even spirits can’t pass through them. Atlas, I had already realized you were just fake sleeping. I’ll be capturing you now.” (Naofumi) “Oh no, Naofumi has captured me! Is this what you

call Kidnapping?” (Atlas) I tie the bag containing Atlas closed, and leave the room without doing anything.

This has proven the effect of the ‘spirit capturing’ material.

Even Atlas cannot escape it.

Her heart full of the expectation that I will kidnap her, Atlas remains silent.

“Now then...”

I go down the hall and arrive at Fohl’s room.

“Z...ZZZ.....u.....uu...ZZZ...Z”

Fohl is still in a bear-like hibernation.

I quietly take an accessory that increases resistance to cold, and carefully put it around his neck. I can feel the bed warm up as I put it on him. I had put all sorts of useful charms on this accessory, making it quite valuable.

This is because out of the villagers, he has been working especially hard.

I have especially made his present a useful one... no, I’m just compensating for the share of presents that he would never receive from his parents.

“su~...”

His sleeping sounds became slightly more peaceful.

After that...

I leave the bag that Atlas was in alone, and put on top of it a pair of gloves I specially made so that spirits cannot pass through them.

This way, Fohl can now hold her hands.

I’m planning to make more equipment like this for her later, “Ah, Naofumi-sama! Please open me up quickly” (Atlas) “Fine, Fine. Well, see you later.” (Naofumi) “Could this be the so-called Abandonment Play? I’ll wait for you forever!” (Atlas) (TL: SM stuff, I will not elaborate)

Good luck with that.

By the way, for Atlas, who wished for 「A steamy night with Naofumi」, I have gotten Imya to make a doll in my likeness.

Imya said he put a special material inside of the stuffed animal, but I wonder what it does.

“T-this item! It gives off the same presence as Naofumi! How wonderful.” (Atlas) Atlas seems happy as she hugs the doll.

(TL: the word used for hug here is not hug. It has a lewder intonation) It seems this doll is a suitable replacement for me.

Now she can spend the entire night with ‘me’.

Is what I think as I leave more presents for the two of them and leave the house.

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield Hero Part 6

After that we continually travelled around the village using the flying sled.

Is this really necessary?

As I think this, I spot Ren.

He's inside of his house. His face is planted on the desk next to his window "Jingle bells... Jingle Bells..." (Ren)

What is this person doing?

I knock on his window and call out to him.

Ren looks up. He looks like he is about to cry.

"What happened?" (Naofumi)

"I-It's nothing." (Ren)

I peer into Ren's room.

Inside, there is a table with an array of fancy food on it and a cake in the center. It is set for three people.

...So neither Female knight nor Taniko showed up?

I can understand Taniko, but Female knight... you too?

What do these people think the good intentions of others are? Why did they ignore Ren's offer?

...Wait, I am Santa right now. I should look at this from Santa's perspective.

Does she seriously intend to do that?

Christmas monster hunting may be over but does she plan to leave him like this?

(TL: They use a really bad pun that works in English but I will not use it here. They pretty much say she made his Jingle Bells into Single Bells)

How sad...He worked quite hard, and for this end to a holiday.

Is what I think from Santa's perspective. Not much of a difference.

sigh... There's no choice, I'll do a little bit of work for him.

It's on the way, anyways.

"Ren." (Naofumi)

"What is it?" (Ren)

I pull two presents out of my bag and throw them at him.

"Hold on to those, and don't open them. Something good will happen."

(Naofumi) "Ah..." (Ren)

"See you later." (Naofumi)

I proceed to give Firo orders.

She starts running enthusiastically and we take off.

From afar, she looks like a reindeer running though the sky.

There. I see Female knight watching the sky from a well-hidden location. Taniko is there as well. They are practicing swinging their swords near the monster stable.

I get off of the sled in a place they can't see and approach them as if I was simply in the middle of a walk.

"What are you two doing? Everyone is already asleep." (Naofumi) "?" Naofumi huh. I've told you before, but today I plan to stay up in order to give my thanks to that old man. Windea has said that she wishes to accompany me." (Female Knight) "Yeah! I want to thank Santa!" (Taniko)

Taniko is sporting a pair of extremely pure eyes.

I think Ren will regain his composition if I bring these two to him, but it seems they are dead set on meeting Santa Claus.

"About that. I came here because the white haired old man imparted a message unto me." (Naofumi) "WHAT!?" (Female Knight)

"He told me that he had left the presents of the two people waiting

outside the monster stable with the sword hero.”

“KU! That old man did an unnecessary thing! Windea, let us go acquire our presents from Ren.” (Female Knight) (TL: for acquire, she uses a word that is closer to steal, snatch, plunder...etc) “Understood!” (Taniko)

Female Knight and Taniko leave in a hurry.

This will let Ren enjoy Christmas a little... Is what I want to believe.

“You...” (Gaelion)

Gaelion emerges from the stable and stares at me.

“You did something unnecessary.” (Gaelion)

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I just found The Hero of the Sword crying to himself to be too pitiful. You would have done the same.”

(Naofumi) “That is... You’re right, but... Yes that is pitiful, but...”

(Gaelion) “I thought I would play Santa and give Ren a hand.” (Naofumi)

“Sigh... I guess there’s no choice. Those two had been giving off a strange aura and staring at each other the entire time. Now the monsters in the stable can finally sleep.” (Gaelion) It seems the stable’s residents were still awake.

Until now. The night is now completely silent.

What? Did those two think they would miss Santa if they left for Ren’s place?

Well... it didn’t take much to get them to go

Even I found Ren’s display pitiful

And with that, I have given Ren his Christmas present “Oh yeah, Please give these presents to the monsters here.” (Naofumi) “There’s no point if you don’t give them yourself.” (Gaelion) “The monsters don’t even believe in Santa. All of their wishes were addressed directly to me.” (Naofumi) They were all things like ‘Eating Naofumi’s homemade food’ or ‘Playing with Naofumi’.

I give the presents of the ones who actually asked for items to Gaelion.

“By the way, what does Kogaelion? He never hung up a wish slip”

“Fumu... I’ll ask him.”

Gaelion enters the stable and begins a long debate.

“... That’s impossible. Order something else.”

And as such, the debate continued. What could he want?

“He wants a hug from you.” (Gaelion)

“Why do I have to...” (Naofumi)

“He says it is a form of Skinship” (Gaelion) (TL: bonding through physical contact) “... I see” (Naofumi)

Is it that custom that is prominent overseas? (TL: Not where I’m from) I hug Gaelion, who has changed into Kogaelion form.

“KYUAAAAAAA!”(Kogaelion)

And he lets out a loud cry. His spirits are really high.

“What a strange person” (Naofumi)

I would learn the meaning behind these actions a little later...

“Mu~...” (Firo)

Fire is glaring at me from the shadows.

Is she jealous? She really is on bad terms with Gaelion.

She should learn from Rafu. He gets along with Gaelion just fine.

As there is nothing left to do here, I board Rafu’s Sleigh and we depart.

“Next is... Motoyasu and the Filo Rials.” (Naofumi) It is now snowing heavily.

Has Motoyasu fallen asleep yet?

Well, He’s done a lot today. In eating and playing, he has been the first in line for everything. I have the present for Motoyasu himself, and the one for the Filorials. They would probably be happier receiving it from Motoyasu than from me.

I peer into the house. Motoyasu is indeed asleep, surrounded by Filo Rials.

I quietly get off the sled.

“Firo, can you lower your head” (Naofumi)

“? Sure!” (Firo)

Following my orders, Firo lowers her head. I carefully remove some feathers from her crest.

(TL: Her Ahoge evolved over time. Remember, the Filo Rial Queen gave Firo a feather) I place these in a box and throw them at Motoyasu with all my might.

They made a soft sound as they hit the ground near Motoyasu. The Filo Rials near him turn in their sleep, but otherwise remain silent.

Well, Motoyasu should be satisfied with this.

Merry Christmas

I wonder why I am giving presents to Motoyasu as well. Well, I’m Santa for now.

After that I circled the village and distributed presents to Imya and the rest of the townsfolk.

Though Imya lives inside of a hole, so I left his present with his uncle.

While I was going around, I witnessed Rishia inside of the Dining hall.

What is she doing?

She seems to be staring Itsuki in silence.

The mood is quite Christmassy

“Ah, it’s Naofumi, isn’t it?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki spots the flying sled, and calls to us with his hand in the air.

I should ignore him. I would ruin the mood.

But there is no choice as he has noticed me. So I park the sled and go to meet him.

“What are you two doing up so late at night?” (Naofumi) “Eh, We were watching the village. It puts our hearts at ease.” (Itsuki) “It seems like you were just flirting with Rishia...” (Naofumi) “How cruel... I don’t have such motives. Rishia merely admires me. There is no love involved.” (Itsuki) (TL: (—^♡))

“Fe~ T-that’s right. We are only here for vacation, anyways...”

Rishia hesitated for a moment before she answered, however, Itsuki immediately confirmed her statement.

This is the opposite situation from Ren

“I’m wrong?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, I have no ulterior motives, and Rishia understands this. For now, I am simply training to make sure I do not go down the wrong path.”

Rishia is nodding, but her face looks like it is about to cry.

Could this be what me and Rafatalia’s situation looks like from an objective viewpoint?

“Ah... Well...” (Naofumi)

“If it’s about delivering presents, then we can help.” (Itsuki) “N-no... It’s fine” (Naofumi)

Instead of pushing this relationship with Santa’s authority, it is probably best to leave it be.

These are the heroes that come to the village the least.

They should be allowed to rest for a while.

“Well, I guessed as much” (Itsuki)

“Ha...” (Naofumi)

Itsuki can sometimes be quite sharp.

It’s not like he isn’t thinking of me.

“Anyways, this is for you two.” (Naofumi)

I take out two bottles of specially brewed wine and give it to them.

“It’s quite potent, so drink in moderation.” (Naofumi) This is the product of the research me and Ratt had put into the Lucor fruit I had previously been unable to modify.

The alcohol content is quite high, but the taste is decent. I have also put a weak enchantment on it to help it’s drinkers share their true feelings.

It is my hope that this will help the two of them open up to each other more. However, in the end, how well it goes is up to Rishia.

“Thank you” (Itsuki)

The result: both of them got extremely drunk and to this day, neither of them can remember what happened.

But it seemed that they had become closer than before by the next morning.

I could use the power of the spirits to check on them, but that would be rude.

After that...

“Na-o-fu-mi-cha-n!!” (Sadina)

Yep, it’s the second woman who wishes to corrupt this holy night.

This is why I brought more of that wine.

I throw the bottle with all of my strength at Sadina.

The alcoholic Sadina catches it and starts glugging it down.

As expected, it seems she’ll drink any sake if it’s close by.

“Ah... this one is quite potent. To weaken me this much with just one bottle... As expected of Naofumi. hic” (Sadina) “I made it with you in mind. I’ll also have you speak your true feelings” (Naofumi) “I love Naofumi from the bottom of my heart. Hurry and do fun things with Rafatalia so you can do fun things with me... Enough that you forget about Rafatalia.” (Sadina) ...These are her true feelings, huh?

Yes. I should run. It’s dangerous here.

“Ah, wait~” (Sadina)

I signal for Firo, who is in the sky, to come to my aid, and keep running.

“I told you to wait!” (Sadina)

The drunk Sadina starts to cast magic.

「Revelation▪Thunder Bolt X」

Above me, lightning begins to form.

However, I am the Shield Hero, this level of magic won't even feel itchy.

I point my shield to the sky and prepare myself.

But to use Revelation level magic, is she trying to kill me?

“Ara~” (Sadina) (TL: I assume Firo picks him up and flies off at this point) “Master, let's go to Melty's place as well” (Firo) “...Yes, lets.” (Naofumi)

This village is dangerous. We fly in the direction of castle.

Side Story: The Christmas Of The Shield

Hero Conclusion

The flying sled is on a coarse set for Melomark Castle.

“Wow... how unexpected.” (Queen) (TL: Note, not dead) Trash and the Queen are on the Castle’s terrace. They seemed to have set up a romantic aura.

I guess even Royalty spends Christmas like this.

I feel bad for ruining the mood and turn to leave, but they call me back.

“I’m sorry for bothering you so late at night.” (Naofumi) “Were you distributing presents to the villagers?” (Queen) “Well, I had almost finished, but there someone who wished to corrupt the holy night, and...” (Naofumi) “I see...” (Trash)

Trash nods with a knowing face. Well, his perceptiveness is his only good quality.

He had guessed the situation from looking at our faces.

“We’ll return by portal in a little bit.” (Naofumi) “No, no, take your time. Melty is already asleep, but you can at least look at her sleeping face.” (Trash) “Ah. I understand.” (Naofumi)

Trash has changed a lot from back then. For some reason, he is trying to get me and Melty together.

“That’s right Iwatani, take your time.” (Queen) The queen also receives us warmly.

“Do you plan to give Melty a Christmas Present?” (Trash) What is this person saying.

I have no idea what sort of present to give her.

“Wait, Aren’t you, Trash, more fit to play the role of Santa for her?” (Naofumi) I mean, he has a beard and he’s around the correct age.

It seems he will look good in a Santa Suit.

“Your worry is undue.” (Trash)

“I’m saying it’s ironic. Don’t salute me!” (Naofumi) I don’t really feel like dealing with Trash.

“And I’m not brash enough to take away the joy of a parent giving their daughter a present.” (Naofumi) “Well then, we have prepared a present to give her, so why don’t you and my husband put it by her pillow together?” (Queen) The Queen starts nudging Trash as if she had said a good idea.

It was a terrible idea.

And why do I have to help give it anyways?

“Firo wants to give Melty a present too.” (Firo) “.....” (Naofumi)

Perfect. This bird can go give Melty a Present, and I can make my leave. I’ll leave this one to Firo.

“Wait. Master~?” (Firo)

The queen effectively seals off Firo’s movements with a ribbon.

The Queen lifts up Firo, and begins to carry her off.

“Ok, Trash, you go give your present with that Hero. I’ll prepare my own present.” (Queen) “Eh?!” (Firo)

Firo is looking to me for help.

I didn’t see anything.

“su~.....” (Melty)

She’s sleeping quite peacefully. But if I make a wrong move and wake her up, it will be troublesome.

She works quite hard for her age.

I lightly stroke her forehead, and leave the box along with the Queen’s present.

“See you Firo. Play nicely with Melty” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Firo)

“Okay, let’s go, Trash.” (Naofumi)

“Iwatani, why don’t you sleep with them as well” (Trash) “Surely you jest” (Naofumi)

Why do I have to sleep with Melty?

I can imagine what sort of face she will make when she gets up “But if Iwatani doesn’t sleep in the same bed as Melty, what meaning does Christmas hold?” (Trash) ...Trash. It seems he has no plans of backing off.

Ku...Even here, there are people trying to corrupt my holy night.

But you have made some grave errors on your calculations.

Those would be the fact that I am a Hero that holds special power, and the fact that Rafu is here.

“Rafu!” (Naofumi)

“What are you doing, Iwatani?” (Trash)

I suddenly take out Rafu, who had been hiding. Trash is speechless.

“If you go any further, then your princess just might wake up...”
(Naofumi) “GU...” (Trash)

I stare at Trash in silence.

I don’t know if he gave up, but Trash left the room.

... or not.

“If you say that much, I will give up for now, but next time... I will have other plans.” (Trash) ...As expected of a king. This much isn’t enough to make him give up.

“See ya, Firo” (Naofumi)

“Cya, Good Night!” (Firo)

Me and Rafu went outside, and used the Portal to return home.

(TL: It’s a bit late, but this seems to be the equivalent of Teleport, Warp, Mr. Gency, Return Door, you get the point) “Ah... I’m tired.” (Naofumi)

Rafu and I, who had warped back to my house, sit down and sigh.

Sadina? She was drunk and collapsed at the village entrance.

I look to the sky, and wonder if she'll be okay... No, she'll be just fine, let's leave her be.

I mean, she's really, REALLY strong against the cold.

"Good work." (Rafatalia)

The door to my room opens, and Rafatalia comes out.

"You should go to sleep. Santa won't visit you." (Naofumi) I have the last few present inside of my sack.

I planned to put one by Rafatalia's pillow, but...

"Of course I know Santa isn't real, Naofumi was doing Santa's role this year, correct?" (Rafatalia) "Say what?" (Naofumi)

"There's no way I wouldn't know" (Rafatalia) "Hmm... That's true, but I still hoped you hadn't figured it out." (Naofumi) I wanted Rafatalia to remain as a dream-filled child.

Like Female Knight.

"Your actual age is quite low, isn't it? Act your age, dream more." (Naofumi) "What sort of logic is that..." (Rafatalia)

"Rafu~" (Rafu)

"Oh I have one for you too, Rafu" (Naofumi) I take out Rafu's present from the sack and hand it to him.

By the way, Firo's present was the dinner and the task of delivering presents in itself.

Rafu didn't really want anything, so I arbitrarily picked something out for him.

"Rafu~!" (Rafu)

Rafu, who had already opened his present, was admiring the Plush animal I had made of him.

Yes, Pets should behave cutely like this.

“And for Rafatalia is this.” (Naofumi)

And with that I have given away the last present.

Inside is clothing. I thought Rafatalia would look good in Japanese clothes, so I had them made.

I had placed the order a long time ago, but this and that happened, so I was only able to pick them up recently.

Which is why I am presenting them to her now.

“Ah, thank you” (Rafatalia)

“Then, should we go to sleep?” (Naofumi)

“What about you?” (Rafatalia)

“Me? Why would I give a present to myself?” (Naofumi) “I see... then...” (Rafatalia)

And Rafatalia hands me two boxes.

The first one is quite big.

“This is...?” (Naofumi)

“It’s a present from everyone, and a present from me.” (Rafatalia) The big one contained a letter, and materials used to repair and upgrade equipment I guess the villagers had noticed. Recently my equipment had been getting worn down, and I was divided on whether or not to send them in for repairs.

The letter contained words of thanks towards me.

As for Rafatalia’s... It’s a plush doll of Rafatalia and me. It is the perfect scale to go as a set with Rafu’s plushy.

“Thank you very-.” (Naofumi)

I honestly thanked her.

Before I noticed it I had spoken my mind. I force a smile “Now then, Let us go to sleep. There’s still the Christmas present I have to prepare for tomorrow.”

It's the monster's requests of 'Play with me' that I still have to fulfill.

"Okay." (Rafatalia)

"Rafu~!" (Rafu)

"Tonight is cold, so let's sleep together" (Naofumi) (TL: (° ͜ °)) "Y-yes!" (Rafatalia)

"However, we won't be corrupting this holy night, or the perverted women will take me away." (Naofumi) (TL: I think the other women have come to agreement to be second in line.) ...

...?

When I get up, I find something on my pillow.

I start to get up to check its identity.

Lying there is a present I don't remember seeing when I went to sleep.

Who could it be from?

I look inside to make sure it isn't a present I forgot to deliver.

Inside is a single photograph.

It's a photo of my former world. I am in the center and around me are Rafatalia, Atlas, my family and my old friends.

It's quite a lively scene.

There aren't many people who would be able to obtain such an item For me to be able to make this sort of face... I guess this a present from myself.

It's probably from the me in that world to the me in this world.

It looks like I'm having fun over there as well.

It's not like I have any intentions of returning I had long thrown away such ambitions.

"Niichan, Niichan!" (Kiel)

I hear the sound of the children running around with their new toys.

That's right, right now I'm living a happy enough life that the me over there would be jealous.

Is what I think as I get out of bed.

Side Story: The Valentines of the Shield

Hero Part 1

A month has passed since Christmas. Soon after, it became February...Is that fine?

It doesn't matter, it is now February.

By the way, the New Year was very noisy. On New Year's Eve, I went to visit the Shinto shrine near the Church, but still to have even New Year's in this world?

Why a shrine? Isn't it supposed to be a Church?

As I thought, apparently the previous Heroes spread a tradition of visiting a Shrine instead of a Church on New Year's. It seems to be the custom now.

In addition, I gave out New Year's gifts to the Villagers at the New Year's party. They complained when I handed them money without putting them in a pouch. (ED: IIRC, in Asian countries, adults give children they are close to some money in a red envelope that looks like a charm. Too lazy to verify that, so I'm relying on you, commentator!)

Speaking of Japanese tradition, it reminds me of Glass, who always wore a kimono. That person would definitely suit the New Year's atmosphere....But she's not here.

I've almost completely forgotten about her; she went missing after the world was saved. She doesn't seem to be dead, but I wonder what she is doing right now.

By the way, I'm currently in disguise while I head to the hideout of the Chivalrous Thief.

"This way, degojaru" (Shadow)

I gave instructions to Shadow to deliver a message to the Chivalrous Thief...How many months has it been? (ED: he's legit now, Fumi. Don't rob him blind again!)

The Chivalrous Thief and some other former thief are currently expanding their territory with some steady results. At first, he became my slave who improved via class up, and thanks to growth correction he become famous for his strength and power in other countries. He then started gathering the scattered thieves and bandits and made a

thief guild based in his hideout, and made it his policy to only rob corrupt merchants. The money that was collected was then given to the needy.

As much as possible, he didn't attack carriages under my jurisdiction, and after that he became famous as the Chivalrous Thief.

Anyways, in a gathering of snowmen (ED: not monsters), I receive a message from Shadow. The Chivalrous Thief who is bound to me, and acts on my instructions...It's been a long time since we last saw each other. I wonder what kind of face he'll make.

Today we will have a meeting of the Dark Guild in the Chivalrous Thief's hideout.

By the way, about Raphtalia and the other slaves. I kind of scolded them for being noisy.

The hideout was built in the corner of an underground waterway of a certain town. It appears my party is a bit hesitant to enter because of the appearance and bad smell. The guards start to glare at us as soon as we get near the hideout.

"Password?" (Guard)

"Katsudon." (Shadow)

What?! That's the password? Every time, I think this is the Chivalrous Thief's way of harassing me. Oh well, if it's only to this level, then it can't be helped.

"Tsk! Enter."

After clicking his tongue, the guard let us in the hideout. As we enter, I put on my robe's hood to hide my face. As we enter, the atmosphere in

the Chivalrous Thief's Guild became heavy...this doesn't bode well. The thieves who make up the Guild start raising a commotion as soon as we enter the hideout's bar. (ED: Haven't read far enough, but I don't think they come with Naofumi. Everyone probably chills at the entrance, waiting for him.)

Ignoring the thieves, Shadow guides us to the counter of the bar and orders.

"Milkshake."

The bartender stares at us, then asks.

"How sweet?"

"Highest, degojaru."

With Shadow's reply, the bartender sighs while opening the way to the back of the bar.

Can't you do anything about that password? How sweet do you want that milkshake, and you answer "Highest"?! If it's supposed to be sweet, it should be condensed milk! (ED: Condensed milkshake = diabetes of the highest caliber. Bring all the boys to the yard.)

Shadow and I went inside to the back of the bar. From there was a long hallway, and we continue walking towards the inner hideout. This is too troublesome, is it that important to be this cautious? It seems this entrance is for the lower ranking members, and the back is where you find the higher ranking members.

We arrive at a luxurious room at the innermost part. The thief I knew as the boss of the Chivalrous Thief's guild, along with the slave dealer and accessory merchant were silently waiting for me. I carefully check my surroundings, then take off my robe.

"That is the Hero of the Shield, yes." (Slave Dealer)

"fufufu...It seems you are in good health" (Accessory Merchant)

"It has been a long time, hasn't it, Hero of the Shield?" (Chivalrous Thief)

Everyone greeted me lightly.

“Today is the first regular meeting of the Dark Guild. After a long time of not seeing each other, how have you all been?” (Naofumi)

“I’m fine, yes.” (Slave Dealer)

“That talk is meaningless for a merchant, fufufu.” (Acc.Merchant)

“Oh, I have achieved my goals, by robbing nobles and merchants.”
(Chi.Thief)

I sit down listening to familiar words and hearing everyone’s condition. Shadow strained her ears listening at the door, making sure no one eavesdrops on our conversation. They are former thieves, after all.

“Let’s begin today’s meeting, yes.”

The slave dealer raises his hand and then begins his report. Even though these guys do dark business, they still helped save the world. Although that doesn’t mean there is no more dark business. In order to help Melty, we must take the initiative. In this World that is still in confusion and disorder, we must have the countries sit down at the negotiating table to avoid fighting.

In the first place, even Melromark has its dark side of using demi-humans as slaves, Although currently it has alleviated slightly, it still is a deep-rooted custom in this country. Even though the world is at peace, it doesn’t mean slavery is gone. Suddenly abolishing slavery and everyone becoming happy is too good a story to come true. It wouldn’t change the desire for an easy way to handle the labor force. Let the alone the world is still in confusion, in another world, the country that wins the world would probably start pillaging and marauding. It’s a phenomenon easily imagined.

Since I defeated the Witch Goddess, while enjoying the feeling of victory, I received reports a few days later of a group of marauders looting and plundering. There’s a limit to naive thoughts, like anything goes your way once you win. It’s very suspicious to see these guys as decent, when they can’t even fight fair.

“According to the investigation of Dark Guild of Zeltbur (ED: One of the other countries, I think, where the others got their Meteor Weapons), people have started slave hunting.” (Slave Dealer)

The slave dealer started explaining while holding documents in one hand. I don't particularly intend to abolish the slave system itself. Some guys become slaves for other reasons, like poverty. Losing one's freedom is much better than dying.

There are only a few who view this negatively. This is closely tied to money, where the poor people are no different than slaves doing hard labor. Come to think of it, even in modern Japan there are people who work hard like slaves without proper compensation. I want to improve as a person, but even if I become an excellent person, there are still a lot of hopeless people in the world. I don't think that will ever change, even if the world was saved

“In conclusion, they tend to expand their number of slaves, but the potential for runaways also increases.” (Slave Dealer)

That description only scratched the surface of the issue. The World of Glass was considerably messed up by Witch Goddess. Apparently, some countries recognized that Glass's world lost the War. Like barbarians on a march, or frontiersmen in a new land, various groups started gathering slaves en masse.

The first on the list was Schildfreden, and the former country of Faubley. (ED: No Tact, no King, I'm pretty sure Author-sensei meant Faubley is not recognized as a country anymore). After launching a war against Melromark and her allied nations and losing, it was ordered to pay enormous reparations. For invading other countries, they must take responsibility.

It is sad they proclaimed it was for freedom, equality, and justice. After all, people tend to misuse the meaning of freedom. You have the right to start a war, but you don't have the right to abandon responsibility if you lose. To selfishly use the word “Freedom” and not take responsibility for it.

However, because it didn't become public, Melty can't do anything about it. By using the Goddess as a smoke screen, they were able to silence any complaints. But from Melty's standpoint, things that are owed must be paid. The world is now at peace, and just a little more decent. But to me, the world is still rotten, and won't change that easily. Since the other party is working behind the scenes, we will also do the same.

"Anyways, it's the World's problem when the defeated countries start slave hunting and plundering other countries to recover their economy. What about you?" (Naofumi)

I ask the accessory merchant to give his report.

"It is something similar. It seems that art, antiques, and memorabilia are in circulation on the black market." (Acc.Merchant)

"It is quite deplorable." (Naofumi)

Winners are right, losers are wrong. But this is like kicking them while they are down. It's naive to think people won't start grabbing anything of value from the losing sides. But it's also quite rare to hear something like this from these kinds of people.

"Even if the art is similar, appraising it is quite difficult, so the price does not go up." (Merchant)

"I see." (Naofumi)

So at present, the world's civilization is similar to Glass's. I wonder about the difference between East and West, as there seems to be a country similar to Japan in the East. The World of Glass seems to be Japanese in culture. I wonder if elves and dwarves wear kimono there, too? Wait, there are many other races there, too. The rare racial slave trade will be popular in this sense...it seems there there are also those kinds of people in the world. Guys who like to collect (ED: Think former King of Faubley). However, the purpose is to collect and gather the demons and demi-humans and not to kill them.

The problem is when they die. A collector might just use taxidermy and stuff them. But since they're rare, they might explode in price, and...I

should correct this, it's getting scary.

"Hey, do you understand?" (Naofumi)

I glare at the Chivalrous Thief. Overwhelmed by the silence, he gulps and nods.

"I think there is an underground auction in Zeltbur. We can attack them and seize the goods." (Chi.Thief.)

"That's fine, the goods are likely to be overpriced as much as possible. We can risk the hit if they say anything. At worst, we can use the Heroes." (Naofumi)

Currently, Rishia and the others are saving the world from evil. I could send them to stop the theft and slave hunting from Glass's World.

But it's easy to label something as evil. Plunder is evil, unless you sympathize with them and find reason to partner with them. We should ask for the reason when we catch him. But it's difficult to do so. If we are too conspicuous, one of the Heroes can butt in openly and judge for themselves.

"At the moment, they aren't moving, but I don't know what will happen next." (Chi.Thief)

The air becomes heavy after his words. Everyone hasn't resigned enough to let a Hero stop it, but it is quite depressing. Light glistens in the darkness, but it's not good to be so bothered by it.

"So for the time being, I plan to get everything under control while emphasizing security. We also must cooperate with the Dark Guild of Zeltbur." (Naofumi)

"What do you want me to do?" (Chi.Thief)

"First, we must create a rule against the shameful act of slave-hunting, but it will be difficult." (Naofumi)

There are also rules in the underworld, and those who break the rules are labeled as the lowest of people. It would become a hurdle to those who want to perform this crime. But it's quite difficult to make. We need

to create a situation that will necessitate such a rule.

I could have a Hero watch over the area. That way the Dark Guild itself is in danger if anyone breaks that rule. Profitable it may be, the risk is too big. That's why even the Dark Guild will punish them.

In order to reduce the burden, we would have to use the Shadows. To compromise, I'll ask Rishia and Itsuki to watch over the area.

"Do you think the Heroes will understand and act accordingly, yes?"
(Slave Dealer)

That's a good point, them knowing about the slave trade would be terrible.

"We will carry on with the business even if Hero-sama is against it, yes." (Slave Dealer)

"Well that's about right. I'm not here to abolish slavery itself. The problem is forcibly taking slaves by slave hunting." (Naofumi)

"Oh, it seems the Hero's aim is to abolish it, but the Hero of the Shield's standpoint is different." (Slave Dealer)

"With my position, it is unlikely, but if someone wants to start an anti-slavery movement, let him do it. But that's not now." (Naofumi)

In the first place, I, the Hero of the Shield who uses slaves has no right to start an anti-slave movement. I never intended that from the beginning.

"All I can say is now is the time to move according to the words of the Hero, yes." (Slave Dealer)

Well, if you say so. I am the Hero who saved the World from darkness. Put black and white together, and white becomes black. When I do something bad, it does not reach the ears of the public. Conflict might happen to the world after, but it is what we should do to have as many happy people at a time. (ED: Archer, no!)

Well, it feels contradictory when I say to abolish slavery, but a compromise is necessary. It's impossible to make everyone happy.

Therefore I act to make some people happy. It is the obligation of the Heroes who remain on this World.

The title of Hero bears a heavier cross than you might think. It's quite useful itself, and makes people comfortable around you, but there is a catch. A person with the position of Hero requires the characteristics of one.

Though I'm out of character, I should do it like a Hero. I receive a lot of benefits, so I have no right to complain. Although it's troublesome in many ways.

“Well, please continue with your report.” (Naofumi)

Afterward, we continued to talk about the next measures. The accessory merchant reported on areas that are dangerous to step into and that can bring in the most profit. The thief investigated the neighborhood and made a list of dangerous items with the help of the accessory merchant's acquaintance. Thus, the story of slave hunting and plundering steadily solidified.

Side Story: The Valentines of the Shield

Hero Part 2

“ fufufufufu, then next.... Is me ”

The accessory merchant stands up and ask me.

So, Why do you sound like a villain.

Though the boss is me thrust might be a rough.

You would do what it seem to be the same kind as me.

“ The accessory designed by the Hero of the shield are showing signs of popularity. By incorporating jinx, and creating stylish shape it was easy to spread by words of the tounge ”

Using Calmira Island reference, partnering with my accessory business, has spawned various jinx.

A business prayer for example would be, in coordination with the Chivalrous thieves guild, if you hang that accessory on the carriage, you won't meet with thieves. Jinx like that are made.

However, when you add guilty couscous to business the effect would be ineffective.

Even sly things like this gets pretty profitable.

Surprisingly people, cherish something like this.

Guys like me usually do not believe in God or visit the shrine on new year's day, first of all I only participated in the Festival to buy a lucky charm.

The determined effective time of the jinx is one month, I was attacked a few times for my new design.

By making this Jinx, many of the merchants likes to come and buy this accessories.

And investigating the background of the merchants who bought it, the Chivalrous Thief Guild then moves into action.

Coming from a merchant such as myself, to examine and give such judgement.

In the first place in business you don't willingly speak of such thing during the time of purchase.

Although I'm a terrible villain, what about the Accessory merchant?

This shed rumors of the dark guild, that I control all the neighbourhood.

“ In making new accessories what kind of ore is used? Low quality ones that are in limited areas is most ideal ”

And, I choose a limited ore that is worth next to nothing quarried right in my territory to be use in making accessories.

Only accessories that have jinx can be priced cheap, its the trick to making money.

This alchemy. Though the meaning is different.

It is the dark side of the jinx.

And then, the report of the accessory merchant ended.

“ Is that the end of it ”

“ Hero of the Shield. Yes ”

Then the slave dealer raised his hands.

“ What is it? Wasn't your report already over? ”

“ Yes. I forgot that there was a request from Zeltbru. Yes ”

“ With what? ”

“ It is concerning about the Firo Real that are being raise in Hero's territory ”

Now, they are holding a vibrant Firo Real race In Zeltbru.

The special Filorials that were raised in my territory had overwhelmingly surpassed the existing famous wings and were overtaking them.

Tamers and gamblers sometimes come to meet with me, I have ask Motoysau to be around.

Well half is like cheating. Also no one can imitate.

So I have no Idea.

“ The results of the Firo Real that was raised by the Hero are too good, we might have to separate the race in different categories and an examination will be held ”

“ I wonder ”

No normal Firo Real are a suitable match against the mutation called Firo Real King and Queen that I raised.

It can also transform to look like a normal Firo Real. Not like theres an examination.

And winning races is easy, its inevitable it can't be help.

“ Rather, it would be better to put it in a separate category ”

“ If its from the Hero, then your words would be followed. Yes ”

“ It can't be helped. Besides, it going to create more buzz than a normal Firo Real race and everyone will be excited quickly. I'll allow it if you give me a share over here ”

“ Thank you! Once, my clan get together, we would like to give our thanks to the Hero of the Shield ”

All of the slave merchants clan!?

I remember how the two uncles look exactly alike!

That means the whole clan management, the meeting of look alike might starts to gather around me!

“ Your, your clan is also busy. I, would feel bad about it ”

“ Its a pity. Yes ”

And well, the meeting proceeded without any problems.

“ ”

During the meeting the Chivalrous Thief was listening with a discontented look.

As I feel like the force has gone missing from my shoulders eventually the slave dealer and accessory merchant left. (TL: I need help on a better translation) “Whats the matter?”

“No, apart from,”

“I see?”

That reminds me I wonder if the name of this guy is the cost?

It was kinda Rowdy? I don't remember much.

Previously, I have been calling his name the Chivalrous Thief, because the impression is in relation to the name.

“Well, I'm good it's nothing I”

Words were muttered to me as the chivalrous thief murmuringly open his mouth.

“Not such a reason.....”

“N?”

“I also think this chivalrous thief guild has become big”

“Oh, if you say so.”

The past when a wave hadn't occurs..... phoenix game that is older than six months.

Just half a year at least.

In such a short period of time, I think that it is something that has become big.

As result during the time when the the world was in conflict, it suddenly became huge now that its peaceful it is an important organization.

“I too was getting anxious to become And rapidly increase in leaps and bounds.”

“I see.”

“I’m now, in a position to serve a friend, to do well as a boss I need to remove his anxiety”

Hmm This I think I can understand.

Before the wave I did prepare for anything except remove anxiety.

Even if I think I made the best use of the situation its not all intact, sacrifices are made.

Much like the position of the hero who saved the world.

People praise me, and cast words of thanks.

It’s not only this world. Much like the world of glass.

Everyone is the same, as the hero who saved the world everyone comes over to us with strong appreciation and expectations.

The times to color the earth with blood at long last were over.

And because I ended such dark times, it cannot be helped.

It isn’t a bad feeling to be relied upon, but the pressure is also correspondingly heavy.

At the same time, this guy’s feelings can be seen.

At this point its better to get along, even I have anxieties.

I was originally just a college student. Although somehow force to become the Hero of the Shield, from this time its not just violence.

Although I relied on the power of the shield until now, it no longer needed.

If that happens only with the title of hero who saved the world, that a college student can also do accordingly.

Receiving the title of Duke during the time remaining in this world, also held land in accordance with the title.

When you control a big land, obligation to protect the people who live there come out naturally.

Confronting monster head on, I’m the hero of the shield that protects

peoples back.

As the position and power grows, also at the same time the responsibility increase.

Becoming rich you also become awful, and eat lots of delicious things, make a harem.

Talk about how simple it is, but at least the case about me, lot of troublesome responsibility follows it.

The thing should have uneasiness.

But, that's why I can also give advice.

"Don't you show or tell your subordinates about your troubles?. There are a lot of guys here who are willing to takes over your anxiety"

"My ears hurt degojaro"

Shadow who sent out the slave dealer and accessories merchant joins in the conversation.

What? Does shadow also understood the darkness of the country?

"Since the poor people hide in the Chivalrous Thief guild, the action of subordinates is monitored one by one degojaro. The other day we also got rid of the person who has failed in an attempt to orchestrate the plan to become the boss degojaro"

"..... Oh"

There are alway gonna fools who aims for the top this here is the law of the jungle.

Oh well its kinda funny.

"Well, Letting those stupid guys who are resisting should attack me directly with my wagon . Disposal would be easy."

This one that is yearning for the chivalrous thief is probing a dangerous bridge and admiring it. That identity is a dangerous opponent and connect to the underground.....Even if they were to think that, they probably won't confirm it. Even for confirming it, here we have a shadow with high

hiding and sensing ability so it's closer to impossible. At the level a mere thief, it's difficult.

And now, the lvl of the Chivalrous Thief is raise to 150.

When people are in danger they fought to reach lvl 40 to release the class up to protect themselves from the waves.

This means that 100 is the very limit the public is currently accustomed.

Of course now the Hourglass of the Dragon era was returned to the administrative state because of it you cannot easily class up.

Although temporary, not anyone can do this thieves together also have over 40 talented professionals.

But, I allowed this Chivalrous Thief to break pass the lvl limit.

Lvl reset is made to punish others.

Horribly strong boss with his subordinates

In fact, combat sense aside, I push the limit to have a high Lvl as possible.

"I know that. Its just..... I'm scared"

"Scared?"

"Probably not uncommon you were slaves hunting just one year ago? You can try to make rules for such things, or explore and control the dark guild, so it is not too large. What If you lose.!"

"I'll just physically shut you up"

You think now we can do it.

For example, if the dark guild sent assassins to us for being a dangerous element, all the Heroes in Zeltbul get onboard and threaten that they'd crush the dark guild itself.

After all, to negotiate a minimum of force is required.

As such justice without force is powerless.

I will not be struggling if war disappear just by talking it out.

The times without war, there was a dispute Even contemporary Japan who was my original.

The economic war, is a nasty war that does not exist where the dead are not visible.

Even After all this, establishing things like a large country inconveniences and tariffs, limits are made, and, for argument's sake, if the tariffs aren't made understood, it would probably become a physical war.

"I!?"

"Anyway, me panic Na, it is arranged to follow me if something happens. While You're the boss here, also my subordinate of the hero of the shield. I'll protect you if you do that you do just fine."

"is that so I see"

While to say that, the face of the Gentleman thief is quite gloomy.

"..... Or maybe, Was original thief business is more carefree?"

To my question Chivalrous thief nods.

"Just using it was easy. If something happened, it was fine if you ran away. Thinking only about yourself, you would pursue your own pleasures. Days of just that, I miss them sometimes."

"Do you want to come back? No, do you want to get a honest job? "

If that is true, I'll also have to think about dismissing them. In the age from now on, if we appoint them respectable jobs, living won't be particularly difficult. If the person himself doesn't want to do it from the bottom of their heart, making them do it isn't a good thing. Well, in cases like that, I just bribed them by letting them eat some Katsudon. However, the chivalrous thief just shook his head while keeping a troubled face.

"No, it is but there are thing I robbed, its and be grateful to handing out to troubled people, happy. Work itself is not a bad"

“I see.”

I think it will be a challenge for this guy?

Although I think, that it will be a big pressure.

“The family left behind in the countryside though I think its a good thing maybe, but this is a bad thing. but, it is also a good thing. But I think you understand, that its worth doing. ”

“It is because I Chivalrous thief. Its a guy doing good things by using bad thing such as the chivalrous thief”

There may not be a person to correct the good deeds.

Those that are rotten to the core are the ones that slip through the rules and bad things after all.

..... Is it me? I don't know.

That's why chivalrous thieves judge villains that even the public can't judge and save the weak. Our situation is a bit different but, it's the truth that we also have guys that have been saved by that.

Even so, bad things are bad things. That truth doesn't change.

But, if this guy's worries aren't wiped away, even we'll be troubled.

Let's see. I guess we should stimulate the pleasure of those that are moving behind the scenes.

“Even if you understand it, although the world is saved there are still villains. even if ten years has pass one hundred has has pass or even a thousand years has pass..... it will continue as long as there are people”

“ ”

“Even there are many people like you who have a hard time getting something to eat and became bandits, but there some people who will continue even if they have enough food, clothing and shelter”

“Oh.”

“Among guys like that, there are also guys mixed in that even we heroes that saved the world can't do anything about.”

This is a fact.

Because I do a bad things I can judge it, it is quite difficult.

If one wrong step it could be the beginning of a dictatorship.

Then the advanced of the future is going to be in dystopia.(TN: this is dystopia <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dystopia>) “Such the world of parasite, It is only you that I can judge a hopeless person”

“I, only?”

Anyone can do that you don't even have to be a Hero to have honor.

It would be another kind of pleasure.

“That's right. Those that judge villains that can only cross their arms and watch, even if they're heroes, are chivalrous thieves, that's you.”

“.....”

There might not be any consolation to this degree.

“Well, hang in there. unless you make a serious blunder.”

“Oh, oh!”

It seemed to me, that the Face of Chivalrous thief is getting better than before.

Well, It will be such a thing.

Now, you can either go back to the village.

Gentleman thief opened his mouth and believe such.

“Hero of the Shield sama, reminds me -“

Credits

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