

# Funeral

The next day.

After we both tired ourselves out with lamentation, I fell asleep with Raphtalia.<sup>[1]</sup>

“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.

Oi, oi! 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 and 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 sandless, 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?

Damn it 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.

# 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 hers 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 the 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)

Faubley 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 Faubley 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 Faubley 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 others’ 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.

# 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. Raphtalia 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.

# 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 the 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. [\[2\]](#)

“Do you think we’ll be able to get an audience in Faubley today?” (Naofumi)

“Most likely.” (Queen)

We 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 want to protect it

for a bit longer.

“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 axle.

When our eyes meet, the Raph seems to give up his grip, and falls to the ground. It creeps 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 Raphtalia 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 reaction's 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 of a weapon." (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 falling 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 affected 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.

# 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 they're allied to this area.” (Queen) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

“Silt Welt also has a Seven Star weapon, you know. That would be the Legendary Claw. The wielder 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 Heroes' 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? [\[3\]](#)

“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 genius.” (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, and 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.

# 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 others' 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 soldiers' 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 does 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, Raphtalia! 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 look 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 proceed 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)

# 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, who 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 couldn't believe what I was 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. <sup>[4]</sup>

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-sama!?”

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...

“Remillia! 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 seems that Sadina is helping as well.

“Uu... Woof!” (Kiel)

Kiel changes to Kielberus, and bits 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 cooling down, 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-stood 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 theirs 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 who 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 he releases magic.

“Wha-”

The unexpected development created 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've left 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 cried that, as she ran 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 changed, and at the same time, for me, the world got 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...

# Last Will

My body's light; it feels as if I'm floating.

I shouldn't even be here. But the various events, and the actions of various people. I saw them.

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 consciousnesses 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 were 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 was the Queen and Trash.

Her wounds were severe, and everyone could plainly see the god of death lingering over her.

“...Goho!”<sup>[5]</sup>

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 opened her eyes, and looked 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 Trash glares at him, and he steps 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 was 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.

“Faublely 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 time scene I saw was two days later.

“Why the hell is Faubley messing around with World Domination at a time like this!?”

Having finished treatment, Ren and the others that arrived at the castle participated in an allied army meeting, and shouted out upon hearing the information.

The faces of everyone present were dark.

The country of Faubley’s military might was just that high.

And they have individuals of triple our level. We knew their power firsthand.

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... With the waves 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 Faubley 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 Faubley...” (Ren) “Yes. Right now, Faubley 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...” (Itsuki)

“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 few 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 descendent 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 remain in everyone's hearts

"..."

Fohl merely quietly gazed 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 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 was 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, and 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 while, 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 left 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 usually live while hiding it.

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, there was me, and \_\_\_\_...

# 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 consciousness. 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)

“Am I wrong? 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 option, 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 consciousness 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.

# The True Enemy

“...As expected of the Hero chosen by the Spirit of the Shield. The other spirits 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)<sup>[6]</sup>

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.

"I apologize, but you can't be any more incorrect about her being my companion." (Naofumi)<sup>[7]</sup>

"Doesn't matter, what you are doing is unjust." (Glass)

“Speaking of unjust, this bitch has done far crueller 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.

# 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, sprang 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 feelings 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 would 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.

Fauble’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.

# 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 were Raphtalia and Trash, whose aura had changed beyond recognition.

The soldiers of the castle seemed to sense this too, and they swallowed 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 it. 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 Gemu 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 shall 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 off.

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 battlefield spelled the defeat of a few nations.

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.” (Melty)

“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..." (Melty)  
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." (Melty)

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! [8]

—

Fenrir Rod 0/90 C

Awakening Impossible

...

Equipment Bonus:

Fenrir Force

Ability Bonus:

Gleipnir Rope

Rebellion Against God

Proficiency Level: 0

—

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's 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.

We 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) [9]

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 has 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.

# 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.<sup>[10]</sup>

“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 of 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 has 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 Homunculi 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 finish?" (Naofumi) "Just barely. I plan to have Mii-kun ride it as its core, but 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.

His 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.

# 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. [\[11\]](#)

“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-chan)

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 his 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, Tanuki 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. [\[12\]](#)

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 Raphtalia a fake.

Though he sometimes seems to come close to saying it.

After we practiced executing the plan and managed to pull it off easily, Raptalia'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 trust 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 soothe 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 our village was high to begin with.

And while the night was drawing on, we used Ren to return to the castle.

# 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 returned 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?”  
(Naofumi)

“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 to 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 here with 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 returned to their homeworlds.

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)

“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 it is.” (Sadina)

What was there was a small hole... but it was strangely deep.

Its 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 it's 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.

# The 8th 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, it's protecting the most vital information.” (Rat)

Password... I never thought I would hear such a word in this Fantasy Parallel World.

But will we be able to crack the code?

It would be nice if there was a hint somewhere...

“Do you think you 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. And it’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 if 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 bet on all or nothing, 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, 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 the 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 the Raphs.” (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, so 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 Raphtalia?

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)

# 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) [13]

"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 leeches off of has had a Class Up maybe? [14]

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. [\[15\]](#)

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 situations they're used in....

It's quite elaborate.

“I haven't finished analyzing 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 isn’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 apologize.

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 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.

# 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.” (Naofumo)

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 beings 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 proceed 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!"

"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."

"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 Grawick ore Trash set above Melromark's airspace.

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 they 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 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, at the very least, we won’t go down without a fight.

# 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?

With things going 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 them.

"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 woman 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!” (Gaelion)

“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 crawl 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.

# 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) <sup>[16]</sup>

"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. <sup>[17]</sup>

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 the Gauntlet could assign points to skills, 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 are 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 fitting ability.

And the spell I just cast was an exceptional support 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 "Ttttttaaaaaakkkkkkkkeeeee Thhhhiiiiissss!"

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? [18]

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, it then 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. [\[19\]](#)

Always laboring, revealing attacks that surpassed 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.

# 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?<sup>[20]</sup>

“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 the Fox Race and 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 has 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, Nallishen 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 MEEEEEE!"

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 dumbfound.

“Wha... A Luka... used lightning!?”

“Onesan 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 strong 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 holds his sword up high, and casts 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 blade's 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.

# 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, I’m casting support! If we combine our power, we should easily be able to crush this guy!” (Tact)

Oi... 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 began 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 interfere with others easily!?” (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.

「Zveit 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 opens its mouth. A beam of light fires out of the Jewel portion.

“Uo!”

A thick lazer-esque beam shoots out from me, 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 BASTAAAAAAAARD!” (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 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 sophistry.

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. He even has my Shield.

If you think the attack is that powerful.

“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 dodged it.

But that wasn't my goal.

The dodged magic impacts 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 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 shouted the skill name, the prison made of my blast skill exploded.

“Guhah!” (Tact)

The explosion sent 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 said that, the surrounding women began 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.

# Gleipnir Rope

“Well, I don’t hate such rotten strategies, but it’d 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 depends on the user’s magic.

In my world, these chains were used to bind the famous god-killing wolf. [\[21\]](#)

It’d be a disgrace if it was easily torn apart.

“Ku... how about this!” (Tact)

Tact deploys the shield he stole from me with a frustrated countenance.

The shield is, 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 turns towards the women who couldn't move due to fear, and then glares at me with eyes full of frantic determination to protect them.

Right right, that's the expression I wanted to see.

The face of you – who stole the lives of Atlas, the Queen, Granny, the villagers, the Allied forces, and the other people I have relationships with – stained with hatred.

“Don't glare like that. You still haven't suffered enough.” (Naofumi)

I finish charging and fire my Skill again.

“Fenrir Force V!” (Naofumi)

This time I foresee the recoil, and without putting my spirit into it, I anticipate that he would probably be able to endure it, and fire.

A thick beam fires 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 attacks 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 shoots for 5 seconds and stops.

There, emitting smoke throughout his body, is a worn-out Tact who is out of breath and barely managing to stand.

It seems Tact incurred a befitting amount of damage from 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 Atlas.

"P-protect Tact! Everyone!" (Woman)

The women come to their senses and at an earnest-looking, different colored female knight-like fellow's supreme command, and they ready their rifles.

Is that it? Or rather, is there nothing else?

Or so I thought, but they also start casting ritual magic.

It looks like they are 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 a few versus many.

Fortunately, the ones high-leveled enough to be a threat are fighting Raptalia 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 triggers.

Gunshots resound throughout the surroundings.

But... in the middle of that, I deploy the defensive measures I had planned.

In an instant, lead balls come flying towards me.

Because it's the marksmanship of rifles fired by level 250 users, they demonstrate an ability that wouldn't lose even 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 the faces of those trying to protect their comrade mixed with a hint of impatience.

I wonder why they didn't understand, given their expressions, 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 become speechless and drop 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 Atlas, [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 hurls abuse at me in a fit of rage.

I’m in a good mood.

....For me to be in a good mood due to this sort 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 him to want to cry.

It can also be taken as me getting stronger, but it’s questionable whether this is 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 is taken aback and sinks 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 strengthens and he bites his lips.

“Now then, we’re still continuing. Try putting up with it.” (Naofumi)

In the middle of my talking, lightning rains down from the sky.

If I’m not mistaken, it is the ritual magic, Judgement.

With their levels all above 250 and enough people to cast Choral Magic, they fire.

They converge the power of Judgement so that it won’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 realized.

But it’s too late.

“Go to hell with this!” (Woman)

Thunder roars and Judgement rains down towards me.

I adjust the angle of reflection.

Ah... as I expected, the strength is high.

One of the mirrors breaks.

However the second one is fine, and successfully reflects 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 stare 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?

# An Ordinary Person

“Damn you! You made everyone’s attacks hit me!” (Tact)

“You devil!” (Follower)

The women hopped on board and start 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 take out the recovery item that was the Lukor Fruit from my pocket, and—

“As if I’d let you!” (Follower)

One of Tact’s followers suddenly appeared and tried to snatch the Lukor 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 kick 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, while 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 into 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. Realize the power of those you’ve killed!” (Naofumi)

Oh! After taking consecutive hits, I could hear the sound of Tact having receiving 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 seems they didn’t realize 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 colors.

And so I look 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 spirit.

Atla, the Queen, Granny, and the villagers.

At the very least, there were 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 to be 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 call 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)

“Kyuaaaa!” (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 turn 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 defense, 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, 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) [\[22\]](#)

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. [\[23\]](#)

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)

# 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 it was similar to the Spirit Turtle Sword in that it was impossible to identify them with a half-hearted judgment.

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 Katana's base values.

Its special ability, the growing power, is the issue.

"I'll teach you that the Heroes' Weapons are more than just toys. 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 demi-human 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 one 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 avoids 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. Even all your women put together cannot 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 Iwatani Naofumi.

“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. [24]

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<sup>[25]</sup>!”” (Fohl & Naofumi)

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 use I can draw from it 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, endure it with 「Zweite Decay」, and thrust with all my strength.

Of course, I took into account the defense-attack proportion.

The Decay spell falls under the category of a recovery magic.... attack.

This magic causes decay. <sup>[26]</sup>

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 concentrate and use Atla's forte, Collect, to assemble the magic Tact fired and shoot it back as a ball.

Of course, its 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. [\[27\]](#)

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 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 without argument.

It’s questionable whether the current me, who is 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 defense, 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.

“UGUUUUUUU!” (Tact)

I’ve never tried the Nitouryuu style, and I’m not confident that I can pull it off well. [28]

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)

“Doom Dragon Blazing Fist! (Fohl) <sup>[29]</sup>

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 intersect, 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 the Two Platon attack <sup>[30]</sup> of Fohl and I.

# A Kitsune has Seven Forms, and a Tanuki, Eight<sup>[31]</sup>

“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.” (Fohl)

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)<sup>[32]</sup>

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 speaks, 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 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) [33]

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 collided 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.

“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 the level 100 barrier 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.

Oi... 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.

# By the Order of the Shield Hero

“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 so 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 moment Raphtalia’s hammer hits the nine-tails, lightning strikes down.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAH!”

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.

# Translator note

1. ↑ TL: No, not like that.
2. ↑ TL: I think from the story, not from the events listed above.
3. ↑ TL: Chapter 65
4. ↑ TL: I wonder if you all remember that.
5. ↑ TL: Coughing sound
6. ↑ TL: \_\_\_\_, we meet again, my little friend.
7. ↑ TL: This is chapter 52.
8. ↑ TL: Fenrir is a wolf, and Loki's son. He kills Odin at Ragnarok.
9. ↑ TL: I'd like to remind you all that Japanese Pronouns are gender neutral.
10. ↑ TL: As in, Trash's change was similar to Ren's.
11. ↑ TL: Raph-chan's gender is unknown, because he/she is always referred to in a gender-neutral fashion.
12. ↑ TL: Specifically, a certain Totoro.
13. ↑ T/N: I'm going with female because Raph-chan is Raphtalia's clone.. kinda.
14. ↑ T/N: Wrath dragon stole Firo's exp and levels but Gaelion didn't Class Up until afterwards.
15. ↑ T/N: Raph Queens (/Kings)
16. ↑ 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.
17. ↑ T/N: Why is it cane? It can also be translated as Staff/Wand...
18. ↑ T/N: Ultra Beam! (Ultraman) ....maybe?
19. ↑ T/N: Atla/Raphtalia
20. ↑ TL: Loli = Loli, Baba = Baba, I.E. Shiroyasha
21. ↑ T/N: In Norse mythology, Gleipnir is a dwarven-made chain used to bind Fenrir.
22. ↑ T/N: That sarcasm....

23. ↑ T/N: Help: またの名を上げて下げるである。
24. ↑ T/N: Female Knight asked Ren during his cursed-by-greed phase.
25. ↑ T/N: Peerless Activity
26. ↑ T/N: The spell uses the English pronunciation and this explanation is in Japanese.
27. ↑ T/N: The cane boosted his attack
28. ↑ T/N: Nitouryuu = two-swords style
29. ↑ T/N: 滅竜烈火拳
30. ↑ 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".
31. ↑ TL: This is a Japanese saying that just says the Tanuki is more skilled in deception, but has less malicious intent.
32. ↑ TL: as in her brown form.
33. ↑ TL: Sound of fear.