

Hammer the Nail that Sticks Out

We've pretty much set quelling the waves worldwide to be our goal.

In the past, we could just do the ones around Melromark about once per month, but now, a wave happens every few days.

But by regularly fighting the waves, it seems we'll be able to reduce the pace to one wave per week.

It's just that when the Holy Weapons and Vassals are in a damaged state, the waves get more and more severe.

If you do something about that, you can go about the Waves with more leisure.

That was the main point of Glass's speech.

"Did you manage to take care of it?" (Glass)

After calming the wave, we meet up with Glass again.

We're in the middle of investigating whether any problems occurred around the area where the wave hit.

Once this finishes, we'll end it by portalling back.

"How about your side?" (Naofumi)

Glass periodically enters and exits the rift made by the wave.

The world connected is generally Glass's... apparently.

She occasionally finds herself in an unfamiliar one and immediately returns, though.

The last time that happened was the wave in the sea.

And wait, that doesn't matter. I need to find out the situation in Glass's world.

"If the world on your side loses the wave, then what happens?" (Naofumi)

"Well, the vassals I worked with and I somehow managed to quell it this time. If the world on this side quickly contains it, then the monsters on the other side will continue rampaging for a while... and eventually die down by themselves... is how it is." (Glass) "It doesn't look like your situation is very favorable."

(Naofumi) "Yes... as always, the reincarnators just run around with their

weapons without helping in anything." (Glass) "How troublesome." (Naofumi)

It's even becoming doubtful whether or not these reincarnators were ever the legitimate possessor of a weapon in the first place...

"I'm jealous of your team." (Glass)

"Once you gather yourselves, you're going to crush him, right?" (Naofumi) "... Of course. Though I don't know what's there to celebrate." (Glass) "Do you even have time for celebration?" (Naofumi)

To keep just a sprinkle of hope in her pot of misery, Glass is cooperating with this world.

If she truly had any fortune, it would never have come down to this.

"However... pertaining to the World Assimilation, what do you think about the reincarnator?" (Naofumi) "Mostly, why must he interfere with us? Is my main question. He said it was something like apdeit... or something that made absolutely no sense to me." (Glass)

Update... the wave is?

So he's also functioning on his gamer instincts.

Well, by destroying his comrades, his enemies get stronger, and he gets new equipment. He's not exactly wrong, but this and that are separate issues.

"How deplorable." (Naofumi)

"Exactly my sentiment. Are there not many reincarnators within this world?" (Glass) "If I were to answer honestly, I don't really know." (Naofumi)

I mean, if they said it outright or took actions that stood out, we could tell, but just by looking at the people and their histories, it's difficult to determine.

It's just that to pick the bad sprouts before they grow, Trash has put surveillance on all those that stand out strangely in the world.

Starting with Melromark, various countries are keeping their eyes on their capable individuals.

Nobles and people of royal descent, especially those that made groundbreaking discoveries with inadequate research in related fields. Those who didn't register with the country, yet still managed to break the level limit. Also those who were witnessed using powers that had never been seen before. All sorts of people were secretly detained.

But it's more troublesome than anything, since it's impossible to say whether they're guilty or not.

Before they were noticed, most would conceal their own ability.

And if they were truly skilled at deceit, then even more so. Apparently, a few individuals stayed conspicuous, so it wasn't... that hard.

"For now, we're keeping the existence of reincarnators a secret. If we do anything that stands out and causes unnecessary accusations, it will only get harder for us." (Naofumi)

They're at least skilled in avoiding danger, I'll bet.

The problem is if there are any hidden in our ranks.

“I’m in the middle of strengthening those I think are probably innocent.”
(Naofumi)

Right now, those that stand out from the slaves in my place are but a small fraction, and it’s mostly those who haven’t tried finding groundbreaking ways to get strong.

Like this, if there’s a reincarnator among them, it will only serve to strengthen my forces.

We’ve been together for a long time, so I hope... there won’t be any problems.

Since Sadina seemed to be way too skilled, I looked at her with suspicious eyes, and she pushed me down once...

“Why are you staring at this Onee-san like that? I guess there’s no helping it. It’s time to do it in front of all the village children. Oh Naofumi-chan, how bold of you. Onee-san will try her best.” (Sadina) “Stop it! Hey, get off of me! Don’t strip me! Uwah! R-r-Raphtalia, stop her!” (Naofumi) “Sadina-neesan!” (Raphtalia)

That part’s burned into my memory.

That really was dangerous. She actually pushed me down.

But she’s probably fine.

She’s a woman, and she doesn’t seem like a gamer at all.

Most female Reincarnators I’ve read about aren’t that militaristic.

If she was a man before reincarnating, then her brain is rotten.

Accepting that she’s a woman now, she pushes down a modern person of Otaku heritage?

She also seems to have some connection to Raphtalia's parents, and she values the world.

If she was hiding and plotting against me, then her concealment skills are way too high.

Well, I can't deny the possibility completely.

Anyways, those challenging the wave besides the Heroes are being treated with a certain level of caution.

I'd like to believe we're alright.

It's the nobles and adventurers that Trash's investigating that are more suspicious.

I just remembered them, but they're being processed behind closed doors.

Recently, they've been quietly... a number of them have suddenly vanished.

Perhaps the ones competing with Tact were sensible fellows, but in Faubley, his political rivals were disposed of.

Is this good luck for us?

The prodigious and capable nobles of the country have been lessened to some extent...what an ironic conclusion.

"There's also completely unrelated adventurers, but adventurers are managed by the guild, and we really don't have to watch them so closely." (Naofumi)

I've never used it, but apparently, the Guild records Level and things like that.

So they can distinguish special people at a glance.

People who suddenly managed to take down powerful monsters are put under their high priority surveillance.

Right now, we have a monopoly on limit breaking, so the Adventurer Guild is also troubled with the world's disastrous situation... or so they're acting to

smoke out troublemakers.

We'll, I guess that's just how it goes.

The nail that sticks up gets hammered down. The ones that stay down are ignored.

We've left no space for a reincarnator to go out of control.

If they try anything, the Heroes will converge and deal with them.

It's scary that we don't know what sort of abilities they possess... but they won't be able to use weapon-snatching abilities like Tact's anymore.

"I see, so there are some here as well." (Glass)

"We only have our suspicions. They'll continue to live in the dark forever. They'll have no part in this." (Naofumi)

They're more like people who would neglect the wave.

For them to interfere to make the wave expand further seems... impossible at this point.

Because the world's become desperate to stop it.

"Glass, how is your world? How's the movement to take care of the wave?" (Naofumi) "It's not that there isn't one, but now that a certain man's taken control of half the world, there's a large portion of the population who are convinced the world isn't going to ruin, and..." (Glass) "In that respect... this side is better, I guess." (Naofumi)

Before he could flaunt his power any further, we took measures against him.

It is our small salvation that we noticed Tact as quickly as we did.

Well, it also brought about much casualty.

"The disposal of the reincarnator... it would be nice if we could do it. By the

way, I'm a bit curious." (Glass) "About what?" (Naofumi)

"The young woman who was burned at the stake after rebuking the false hero; she was one who traveled with you Heroes, correct? Did something happen?" (Glass)

Glass did fight with Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and their parties.

They had all been beaten up, and Witch was among the fallen.

That was quite refreshing.

I was able to step on Witch's head all I wanted.

"That bitch is..." (Naofumi)

I began speaking of the tracks of evil Witch had been leading.

She was born to Trash as a princess, and raised with ample pride. In Faubley, she met Tact, and during the Four Hero Summoning, she involved herself with me and threw me to the wolves. She did whatever possible to bask in all the luxury she could, and whenever the wind took a bad turn, she would flee the scene. She made off with Ren, conspired with Itsuki, and tried to overturn the state.

After her arrest, she became a political scapegoat, but Tact saved her on the brink of life, and together, they plotted her mother's death and the instigation of world war.

She was merely executed for those crimes.

"I see." (Glass)

The next... words that came out of Glass's mouth had nothing but sympathy behind them, and yet...

"So people like that exist, no matter which world you're in." (Glass)

Cheat

“What?” (Naofumi)

There are other bitches like Witch?

That’s no joke. As if I’d let multiple versions of that woman exist.

No, in my world, I’ve also heard of countries falling due to the work of evil vixens.

Meaning it isn’t all that rare.

“In my world... there are three heroes whose stories resemble yours. She was accepted by the Sacred Weapon wielders, but those heroes fell into her traps, and faced the consequences. Right now, I guess you can say she act as a sort of mistress to some of the other Vassal Weapon possessors...” (Glass) “A-and you’re alright with that?” (Naofumi)

“Well, they’re members of enemy countries... and since the reincarnators continue to neglect the wave anyways...” (Glass) “I have the feeling you’re going to be opposing them in the near future.” (Naofumi) “That woman isn’t directly taking any action to corrupt their hearts or interfere, so as long as we keep tabs on her, it should be fine.” (Glass) “Well, I guess that’s best for a woman like that. Even so, just what is the situation in your world? At least tell me about those you think to be reincarnators.” (Naofumi)

I’m really starting to lose my grasp of her situation.

What the hell are they doing when there isn’t a wave going on?

“There are two countries led by Reincarnators at war, and it’s merely a scuffle of a large number of people who do nothing but aim to be the strongest every

day.” (Glass)

Uwah... and Glass was acquainted with three who fell for the wiles of a Witch-like woman.

I have nothing but my utmost sympathy.

Well, thinking about the past heroes of this world and Tact, I can't say it isn't my problem.

“Right now, my world is moving to locate our last Sacred Weapon Wielder. During the wave... I'm sorry, but if he's killed... then that will be the end. I really wanted to save that world, though.” (Glass) “I see.” (Naofumi)

They exist in every world.

Even if I can't stand her very being, I learned there are plenty of women like that bitch.

It may be people like that who ruined the world.

But something's bugging me about these women.

It would be easy to conclude that there are corrupt women with power no matter what world you're in, but it would be too hasty to bring the topic to a conclusion like that.

In this world, could it be... were the heartless ones among Tact's followers like that?

This can only fall into the category of supposition.

There's no way an answer will come.

And like that, in our battle to stop the wave, since this one was over, the next one was set to be in Melromark, in a week's time.

“Once this wave is over, will it get a little more peaceful?” (Glass)
We have a tad more than a week until the next wave.

In that time, we’ll do whatever we can to strengthen our forces.

“That’s right...” (Naofumi)

My level rose alongside Sadina’s, so I was able to rise to 150.

40 through 100 was surprisingly easy when I tagged along with her, but as we crossed 100, the amount of EXP required suddenly jumped.

It’s good to overwhelm enemies with a gap in level, but with our Growth Elevation, we’re able to handle it as we are.

We’ll have to fight stronger monsters, and level higher. I’ll bet the waves will only get harder from here.

I learned that the Ocean is full of monsters, making grinding easy.

Raphtalia is 146, and Firo 155.

Firo occasionally makes mistakes in the enhancement methods, so it’s quite a trial to teach her.

The others are in a similar position.

Just how many years would it take to get to 350?

Since he reincarnated, he had much more time to battle and strengthen himself. I’m honestly jealous.

Well, I can only say this after he’s gone.

Anyways, thinking about Tact’s level leaves me a bit anxious.

It’s only been about two weeks and a bit since we fought and beat him, and wishing for more time is just my form of selfishness.

In these two weeks, we've challenged the wave again and again.

There were even days where we had to fight twice.

Goodness... it only worked out because the Heroes were all gathered...

The sea battle was troublesome because we barely had anyone who could fight there.

“Rafu~?”

Raph-chan's the same level as Raphtalia.

It would be nice if his strength was around the same as well.

By the way, his specialty is versatility.

Illusion Magic and Transformation, right? He can also control the Bioplant to a certain extent.

My research with Rat gave birth to an ability-raising accessory in the form of a leaf on his head.

We were able to give the Bioplant the power to raise some abilities.

We used Raph-chan's DNA and the concept of Firo's Ahoge.

But half of it was only possible because of Rat.

With this, Raph-chan's abilities will increase even further... it seems.

The layer of foliage that bobs up and down on Raph-chan's head is somehow quite cute.

And Raph-chan generally fights in a combination with Raphtalia.

Like a mirror image, he usually performs pincer attacks with her.

I guess his weakness is that he's can't go as far as to reproduce skills. But he can copy most things besides that.

“After today, our free time will increase. And we’ll be able to make more preparations.” (Naofumi) “Finally. I was getting tired of the consecutive battles.” (Raphtalia) “Firo only had time to sleep, talk to Mel-chan, and fight.” (Firo) “That’s right... we’ll have to put in more effort.” (Raphtalia)

The equipment made by Imya and her uncle, as well as the Weapon Shop’s Old Man isn’t arriving in fast enough.

Should I allot more manpower to that field?

But time is of the essence.

Anyways... once this finishes, we’ll be able to do something about it.

Now, we can only wait.

“Let’s go!” (Naofumi)

On my cry, the heroes nod.

00:00

The Hourglass runs dry, and we were all summoned to the place the wave would take place.

And right after that, the counter appeared in our fields of vision.

01:30

“What!?”

Short!

No matter how you look at it, it’s too short.

In the waves up until now, we never encountered a situation like this.

No, the one that happened while we were fighting Tact eventually devolved

down to this, but in waves besides that, this is the first. What's more, the time limit is already flashing when the wave's only started.

"Let's hurry!" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's voice brings me to my senses, and we rush forward.

In the the sky, a wine-red crevice is... spread out wide.

We must end this as soon as possible.

"Everyone, hurry!"

"Yeah!"

Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki, and Raphtalia... the villagers, and the allied armies, and the Filo Rial Brigade with Gaelion follow.

01:25

Eh? Wait a goddamn second! 5 minutes haven't passed yet!

As I watch, the nave's crevice gets filled with the shadows of humans.

"!?"

Glass runs out in front of all of us.

And still showing us her back... she begins talking to those that appeared.

"You people! Why are you on this side?" (Glass)

"The Vassal Holders and reincarnators have... overcome the wave..."

Looking at them, they were quite beat up.

“What?” (Naofumi)

I look at the enemy the Wave had manifested.

Who are they? There are plenty of humans, but there are also Demi-Humans and People of Soul mixed in.

“So this is the world the update added.”

“Let’s start it already.”

“I know.”

As if performing menial labor, their vanguard forces prepare for battle. Those in the rear place their hands on the crack in the sky, and... manually start wrenching it open.

01:10

“This new power the goddess gave me is so totally a cheat.”^[1]

A really annoying voice rang out.

What’s this with cheats? Don’t screw with me.

Even so, is what they’re doing shortening the remaining time?

“Stop them as quickly as possible!”

“I know!”

I concentrate, and cast Revelation Aura X.

At the same time, Itsuki begins chanting Revelation Down X.

The rest of us prepare our attack skills and magic.

“Oh, my.”

The reincarnated(?) man standing at the front held his hand out front.

And a Meteor Shield-esque barrier manifested.

“Hurry up. Even if it’s an absolute defense, I can’t keep it up for long.”

What the hell is up with that!

“Damn! That is... the reincarnator’s special power.” (Glass) “A time-limited absolute defensive wall!? There was a power like that in my world too.” (Itsuki)
Glass supplements some information, leaving Itsuki speechless.

There are many worlds and many possible possibilities, or perhaps it’s a gift from that goddess he mentioned.

“What sort of power is it!?”

“You couldn’t catch it? It’s the creation of a wall that cannot be destroyed no matter what. As long as that exists, our attacks will not get through.” (Itsuki)

“Ku... so it’s come to that.” (Naofumi)

They sure have quite a convenient ability on their hands.

Is he someone from Itsuki’s world?

No, he may be a case like Tact’s.

It may be a power he received from the one proclaiming to be God.

And they did say Goddess-sama~ just earlier.

“Its fault lies in the fact that they cannot attack either, I guess. In my world, it was one of the higher class skills. The highest level form allows for perpetual

deployment.” (Itsuki) “Ku...” (Naofumi)

One by one, the wave’s monsters start appearing.

But in order to get to them, do we have no choice but to fight Glass’s world’s reincarnators!?

Is it our saving grace that that guy’s ability isn’t of the highest class?

No, anyways, if we don’t bypass that wall, the remaining wave time will keep being chipped away.

If that happens, this world is done for.

“Now, Ciel-sama! It’s time for us to seek new powers in this brand new world. Let’s work together!”

And behind that reincarnator, the voice of a woman sounded out. For some reason, that voice pissed me off.

The figure of the one approaching the apparent reincarnator... it overlapped with the one who betrayed me for Motoyasu, the Witch of that time.

“Glass, is that the woman you spoke of before?” (Naofumi) “Yes!” (Glass)

Her face isn’t anywhere near the same. Her voice is also different.

Her stature, physique, and pretty much everything else was different. In fact, I think it’s a completely different person.

And yet... my instincts scream out.

That woman gives off a similar feeling to Witch.

Basking in luxury, moving the world to her pleasure, thinking of men as nothing more than tools to be used, an aura conveying these feelings emanated from her.

01:01

Ku... every second, more and more is shaved off.

A Sky Dyed Crimson

“Ren, Motoyasu, Itsuki! Go all out!” (Naofumi)

“Sure! 「Phoenix Gale Sword X」!” (Ren)

Ren’s skill flies at the reincarnator’s barrier.

It takes the shape of a bird made out of the flames of hell.

But as it comes into contact with an invisible wall, the bird cries out as the flames die down. It was no use.

「Brionac X」!

Motoyasu releases Brionac, the skill that’s becoming his signature.

A spear of light shoots off from his own.

But as expected, the barrier intercepts it.

「Full Buster X」!

Itsuki changes his bow to a gun before activating an attack.

The Bow is quite a versatile category, and its repertoire even encompasses guns... I’m jealous.

The Skill: Full Buster... I’d like to think it’s a skill that fires off a thick beam from the muzzle of the gun.

The skills fired off by the four heroes merge, and try to destroy the barrier, but even so, the result is unfavorable...

These were all powerful skills, you know.

We're using all of the strengthening methods of the Heroes and Vassals here, you know.

"Gu..."

But even while the wall holds, the person invoking it has gone pale.

Is it hard to stand?

"Oh, I thought they were just pests, but it seems I can't leave it to you alone!"

"Kya, how cool~!"

To help the one standing at the forefront of the wave, another holds his hand aloft and deploys another barrier.

And for some reason, the skills stray from their path.

"Ku... that was dangerous."

"It seems their attacks are quite heavy."

While their side looks a bit impatient, we are unable to destroy their defense.

"Why are you trying to expand the wave!?"

"That's right. Are you ignorant of what will come to pass?"

"You can't just listen to an enemy's words so easily!"

Witch MKII interrupts us.

She's ridiculously annoying. If our attacks could get through, she would be the first one to die.

“Be quiet. You, woman, shut up!”

I shout at Witch MKII.

By this woman’s behavior, there’s no doubt about it.

“You, do you know what exactly expanding the wave means?” (Naofumi) “Of course. It means leading the world down the right path, though this is just something like a side expansion update.”

“Wrong! If you do this, then both your world and ours will become ones where not a single blade of grass can grow!” (Naofumi) “There’s no way that’s true. The goddess granted me power and asked a favor of me. This is something necessary for the world.”

It’s no good. Just like with Tact, words aren’t enough.

There’s no need to hold back. To protect the world, we’ll have to dispose of them.

Anyways, we’ll have to continue our volley of attacks.

“Everyone, have at it!” (Naofumi)

“Yeah!”

「Heaven’s Judgement X」!

「Gungnir X」!

「Thor Hammer X」!

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」!

Etc...

All the heroes of the vassal weapons release their skills, and from the rear,

support fire rains down.

Perhaps because the weapons were made to protect the world, their attacks have good synergy, and they combine to form a large stream of power.

A large explosion surrounds the enemy and drags them in.

“Gu... so you’re not all talk.”

00:49

Someone blows away the resultant smoke cloud with magic. Because we don’t have the time to wait for it to clear.

Cracks are spreading across the barrier.

At this rate, we’ll make it. I’ll have to do what I can too.

「Shield Prison」!

Oh? I succeeded in locking away just the one forming the barrier.

Is it because I can control where it manifests?

“I see!”

Ren approaches the enemy barrier as close as he can.

「Float Sword」!

The sword version of the Float Shield activates.

According to Ren, it’s hard to control, and the output isn’t that great, so he couldn’t master it.

Anyways, he lets the floating sword run rampant within the confines of the

barrier.

“As if!”

A reincarnator-ish person locks down Ren’s sword with his own.

“Gugugu...”

It’s not like it’s his strong point, and because of the barrier, it’s hard to control.

I guess he can only bring out about half of its original power.

It’s all of nothing. Let’s try setting up Iron Maiden!

「Change Shield (Attack)」!

Something clinks into place, as thorns sprout from the shields surrounding the one making the barrier.

I immediately transition to the next skill.

「Iron Maiden X」!

A giant Woman of Iron appears, dealing the finishing blow.

But the output shouldn’t be more than half the original.

Of course, with the enemies being who they are, there’s a possibility it didn’t work.

We’ll have to move again immediately.

“Hah... hah...”

I take some Spirit Water out of my Shield to restore my SP.

“T-that was dangerous.”

Dammit... I couldn't inflict anything fatal.

It seems that in order to protect himself, he deployed another small protective wall around himself.

But as his movements are sealed, he is in a bit of a panic.

“Why are you getting beat up so one-sidedly?”

00:38

This time, a man steps forward with a large scythe in hand. From within the barrier, he releases a skill.

Wait a second. Wasn't the barrier supposed to prevent their side from attacking as well?

“Take this! 「Aerial Grand Swing」!”

His energy-charged scythe flies at us like a wheel.

I stand at the front and take the attack.

Mu... it isn't actually that powerful.

If it's just this much, then...!

“Tei!”

I knock down the energy-filled scythe.

“Hyuu... he seems quite strong.”

It seems Mr. Scythe is a bit impressed.

Does he not have that many strengthening methods learned?

No, I'm not even sure what he's holding is a vassal weapon.

“Glass, is he the Wielder of a Vassal?” (Naofumi)

“Yes... he's the Vassal of the Scythe.” (Glass)

I see.

But... for him to bypass the barrier, what does it mean?

The weapon's ability... no, that doesn't seem to be it.

Is it an ability given to him by some god-ish person like Tact's?

I mean, he did say something about Goddess-sama, so that's probably it.

For her to give her pieces the ability to cheat their way to victory, just what is she thinking?

00:18

Time's running out!

“Ah...”

The enemy's barrier finally shatters.

All of my comrades don't let this chance go to waste. We hold up our weapons.

“Hold them off for a bit! I'll be deploying it again!”

Good! If we want to attack, now's the chance!

“Anyways, stop the ones behind them!”

On my call, everyone answers by running forward.

“As if I'd let you!”

「Rinbu Mu: Musou」!^[2]

Glass releases a skill at the enemies rushing towards us.

“Quickly! As fast as you can! 「Rinbu Mu: Renge」! 「Rinbu Mu: Reido」! 「Rinbu Mu: Mugetsu」!”^[3]

Without giving herself a chance to breath, Glass consecutively fires off her skills.

I believe she's of a race where the more skills she uses, the weaker she gets.

She's prepared for that, as she continues to stack skills on top of each other.

Then we'll have to fully exert ourselves too.

This is the world that's made a hell out of our lives, but it's still the one we need to protect.

We won't let it end in a half-assed way like this.

“Let's go!”

As I run towards him, the Scythe guy slashes at me.

I take his attack with the Shield and force him back.

“Don’t get in the way! If we clear this mission, then we’ll be granted a new power.”

“Granted?” (Naofumi)

“What, you don’t know? We’ll be able to unlock our new signature moves.”

I don’t know what the hell he’s saying, but I have no time to waste on him!

I can’t be anything good. It must be something self-centered.

“Move! You guys have no idea just what it is you’re trying to accomplish!”

(Naofumi) “Nah, we all know. In a dream, all of us who had memories of a life past were given our orders. By the goddess.”

Goddess... so that’s the one behind all of this.

I thought she may have just been a concept they followed, but this settles it. She’s a sentient being.

“If we don’t let the wave be released, the world will fall to ruin. Please help me, she said! Aren’t you the ones trying to destroy our world!?”

“Don’t screw with me! Why would someone with that much power have to rely on the likes of you? Are you guys really worth that much? Unfortunately, you guys are just being used!”

00:10

Crap! There’s no time left.

Dammit... this isn’t the time to be having a conversation!

“Move!” (Naofumi)

I rush through, fully prepared to take damage.

「Shield Bash」!

“Ugu...”

Good, it seems that was a good hit. His eyes are upturned.

His footing is also unsteady.

00:06

“Everyone! Take them out!”

We approach the reincarnator-esque people in the rear.

And we began releasing our various attacks.

「Meteor Sword X」!

「Meteor Spear X」!

「Meteor Bow X」!

With the Heroes at the forefront, the attacks all hit their mark.

“UWAAAAAAAAAAAAAH—”

The attacks fall like rain and reduce them to cinders.

00:03

Ku... quickly, we have to quell the wave, or else...

When I look behind, I see Trash and Fitoria, Gaelion and Taniko, and Rat and Mii-kun working together to take down the giant monster that had just appeared from the wave... a Cyclops-like monster.

Good! With this—

“Not yet! In our world, there’s—”

With Glass’s words, I look inside of the crevice.

On the other side, I see multiple human-like figures.

They’re also on our opponent’s side!

“There’s no time to rest, attack the ones inside the crack as well!”

“Yeah!”

Everyone present comes forward as one and shoots the most powerful attack they can muster.

Various wills, hearts, feelings... They overlap many times and form a great power. They merge and form a single straight beam.

The flash embodying our power hits the wine-red sky and explodes.

Everyone works together. It truly is the strongest attack I’ve ever seen.

But...

00:00

The Wine colored sky changes to the crimson hue of blood, and, like a door, the sky starts to swing open.

“No... the world is...”

So the world will end... in a place like this!?

The earth rumbles before us as the entire world begins to shake.

The Goddess Descends

The air reverberates as if the entire world is trembling. All clouds in the sky are blown away.

Hearing the rumbling, I promptly stand in front of everyone to protect them from what's to come.

Just doing this won't save anyone from a crumbling world, but even so, I've...

“No one step in front of me!”

I've decided to protect them.

Even through the inevitable collapse of the world as we know it.

No matter what happens, until my body erodes away.

The crack fills with light, and everyone shuts their eyes.

Ku... I wonder what sort of thing the collapse of the world is.

Like Glass said, will all life be sucked away, leaving this world an empty shell?

Or it could just be darkness... a black hole-like thing could appear to reduce everything to nothingness.

Anyways, right now... I'll just have to pray for a miracle.

As I think that, strong blasts of wind hit my body... I continue to stand before the blinding light.

Eventually...

The earthquake stops, and I focus my eyes.

“Wha...”

Before me is an unfamiliar land; an assimilated world stretches across the landscape.

But, perhaps you can say I’ve seen it once before.

“This is-”

Glass is dumbfound.

Right... without the world falling to ruin, the assimilation ends.

“See? The wave wasn’t going to destroy the world!”

The reincarnators hold their weapons out at us and direct their hostility.

What does this mean?

We take on our battle formation as we glare at our enemies.

The Hourglass in my vision has stopped moving. It’s completely silent.

“Now, it’s time for the Goddess to come down!”

One of the reincarnators shouts out, and Witch MKII begins releasing a faint light.

“Eh?”

Witch MKII closes her eyes, and without the light showing any signs of dying down, she starts to float.

And the light converges... as if radiance is being gathered from every corner of the globe.

“Ah!?”

Glass raises her voice.

“What’s wrong!?” (Naofumi)

“All the Soul Eater monsters under my control have mysteriously perished!”

(Glass)

What!?

When I look to the sky... various clumps of light arrive and surround Witch MKII.

Eventually, many balls of dazzling light have gathered, and MKII disappears into a mass of light herself.

“Mary!”

The reincarnators call out her name.

Soon, the gathered light disperses... Standing there, is a familiar, yet unfamiliar... woman. She floats in space.

“Oh... my Goddess.”

“Everyone, I offer you my deepest thanks. Because of all of your efforts, I can finally return to this land.”

The reincarnators and their comrades silently look upon the scene.

... It’s that. The atmosphere where a powerful person joins your party.

Does that make this the birth of an ultimate enemy for us?

This may have become a heated scene in Manga or Games, but since we're on the enemy side, the only thing that really comes to mind is, 'what sort of bullshittery is this?'

"For Mary to be the Goddess..."

"Did I surprise you? In order to assist you, I let fragments of my soul be born into this world. They had not my memory, but I truly was close to all of you."

"!?"

Fragments...?

I have an exceedingly bad feeling about this.

The one before us who proclaims herself a Goddess... I could guess just what sort of being existed as her foundation.

No... perhaps it would be better to say that everything was connected.

The discomfort I've been feeling until now was all caused by this.

The Goddess turns to us and greets us.

"It's a pleasure to meet you. No, perhaps I should say we've met many times before? I am Medea Pideth Machina. You are the ones who put one of my fragments, Malty, through quite a uncomfortable time, are you not?"

"M-Malty!?" (Trash)

Trash's voice resounds out.

Right, when you look closely, the woman who calls herself Medea resembles Witch to some extent.

"Trash, calm down!" (Naofumi)

"Y-yes!" (Trash)

“Ah, how cowardly were these people when they used their cruelest methods to torture a fragment of my being, only to execute her in the end. How pitiful an end.” (Medea)

In a manner that showed she was making a play for sympathy, Medea weeps to the reincarnators while pointing her finger at us.

“I definitely cannot offer salvation unto you. For people like you, I cannot offer forgiveness as one who holds the title of god.”

... Her eyes are laughing.

My memories whisper to me. Those are the eyes Witch made whenever she tried to fool someone.

I see. So Witch's true identity was a fragment of a Goddess's soul.

So that's why she developed a personality unbecoming of the child of the Queen and Trash.

From the start, she was merely the being trying to lead the world to ruin. No matter how hard you tried to fix her, she wouldn't change.

Perhaps the order engraved on her heart was to torment the Heroes, or to covet luxury and cause the declination of the world.

“Trash... please understand. The person who was once your daughter is now the enemy of the world. Don't forget it.” (Naofumi) “Papa, I'm over here!” (Medea)

With a perfect imitation of Witch's voice, Medea calls out to Trash.

“How dare you order my execution. Even though you were my father! I definitely won't forgive you.”

“A-ah...”

Trash begins trembling.

The fear of having the daughter he killed come back... Is it?

For Trash, who cares deeply for his family, this must be torture.

“Trash! Get yourself together! What about the country your beloved Queen left behind.. and what do you think will become of Melty!?” (Naofumi) “...!”

Having regained his senses, Trash begins glaring at Medea.

“Now, everyone! Let us defeat the enemy of the world!” (Medea) “Yeah~!”

The reincarnators raise a loud cry, as they point their varied weapons at us.

Behind them, lending them power, is an army from Glass’s World.

Is this... an All-Out War!?

Damn! Having come all the way here, we get wrapped up in this pointless battle.

But, I can’t be swayed here.

I just have to play my part. The Leader of my army. A Hero. Whatever works best. Just play the part.

Or else, we really will lose.

“We’re intercepting them!”

“Understood!”

We also raise our voices and begin our clash with the opposing army.

One runs ahead of everyone, capturing his enemy’s attention...

“Die! You heartless Heroes!”

A reincarnator... one holding a katana rushes at us.

“There!” (Naofumi)

I grab the blade with one hand to stop it.

“W-what!?”

“What sort of half-assed strengthening are you using?” (Naofumi)

Can we win like this?

Even if the Enemy’s general went out of her way to appear, that doesn’t mean they got any stronger.

“Motoyasu!” (Naofumi)

“I know! 「Brionac X」!” (Motoyasu)

Motoyasu’s spear of life pierces the reincarnator.

“GUHAAAAAAAH!”

Damn... he isn’t dying.

I believe there is a guy who specialized in defense among them.

“Dammit, they’re closing in!”

“Ren, Raphtalia! Go pincer them!” (Naofumi)

“Got it!” (Ren)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

Ren and Raphtlaia, and also Raph-chan, draw closer to them and unleash consecutive attacks on their members.

“Ugu—gu...”

“Trash, from the rear, prepare ritual magic and continuous support fire!”
(Naofumi) “Understood!” (Trash)

By my order, Trash prepares the rear forces to use Ritual Magic and loads the magic into Fitoria’s Vassal weapon tank.

Of course, the original she copied it off of, Mii-kun, is there too.

「Lightening Impact Whip X」!

「KYUAAAAAAAAA」!

A flexible whip coated in electricity repeatedly snaps at the enemy, and to match her, Gaelion breathes flames to envelop them.

Taniko and Gaelion’s combination is in good shape.

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」!

The ones that approach Firo are relentlessly mowed down by her spiraling claw motions, and those that dodge are pummeled down by Fohl’s fist.

Good, the enemy’s formation isn’t complete.

I’ll bet they never met to discuss their strengthening methods.

“Arara... then I guess there’s no helping it.” (Medea)

Medea gently raises her hand and snaps her finger.

「Eternal Blessing」

The reincarnators and their allies are covered in a rain of light.

And right after that—

“Gu...”

The attacks I take suddenly become exponentially heavier.

Is it support magic?

But what I’ve cast on us is Revelation Aura X, you know.

Up until now, we’ve always had some room for leisure, but right now, the most I can do is endure it.

That means Ren and the other Heroes, as well as those in the rear, won’t be able to take these attacks.

“I offer my deepest thanks, Goddess!”

The Reincarnator turns to Medea, and offers thanks before glaring at me.

“Take this! 「Cold Steel Vital Wave」!”

“Too soft!” (Naofumi)

From his katana, a wind-themed blade of light comes flying.

I take his attack and redirect it... towards the one who is fighting Ren.

Ren’s always made a habit of observing his surroundings. Noticing the sword wave flying towards him, he jumps back.

And the sharp edge tears the one who could make absolute defense barriers to shreds.

“Guhah!?”

Uwah. His legs are sent flying...

Just how high is his power output?

But the legs soon reattach themselves... As if time itself was rewinding itself, the man returns to his initial state.

“That was your fault for not dodging!”

“The hell you say!?”

In anger, the barrier guy seals the katana guy in his wall.

Oi, they're fighting each other.

Just how uncooperative are these guys?

... No, I can't really say anything against them.

Looking at the past selves of us heroes makes my head hurt.

Actually, I don't think Ren and the others would ever get into a fight before an enemy.

Though, they would call each other names afterwards.

“Don't think my absolute barrier can only be used for defense!”

When the barrier guy clenches his fist tightly, the barrier surrounding the katana guy begins to shrink.

“Gu... stoop...”

A cracking sound rings out as the Katana bastard is forced into a box much smaller than his own body.

Isn't this overkill?

There's a limit to not getting along.

... Could it be that they were trying to murder one another from the start?

I mean, Glass did say that some countries of reincarnators were at war, or something.

“Stop your fighting!”

Medea calls out to them, but the two aren't listening.

Eventually, the barrier breaks, and the Katana Bastard starts attacking the barrier maker.

There's no camaraderie here.

They're all solo players who claim to be the ace of the team.

Are those following these reincarnators party members? Women are cheering them on, and some rush forward to join the fray.

“It looks like they'll need a capable commander... Ahaha, I found an interesting soul floating around.” (Medea)

Medea starts chuckling... she opens her hand.

What? The world stopped?

Only Trash, Medea, and I can still move.

“Come out.” (Medea)

In the area above Medea's hand, a black, glass-like ball manifests... the person that emerges from it puts both Trash and I at a loss for words.

“That’s—”

Everyone else is the same.

The deceased Queen stands there, holding up a folding fan to cover her mouth.

Levelling

“Oh, great Queen of Melromark!” (Medea)

“..”

The Queen indifferently surveys the area around her.

“M-Mirellia, is that you?” (Trash)

“...”

The Queen doesn't give an answer to Trash's question.

“Now, take lead of this army, and destroy those that oppose us.” (Medea)

“Understood!”

As she saluted, the Queen was teleported, perhaps through Medea's magic, to an area much further back.

And from that moment forth, the coordination of those offering support in the back suddenly improved.

Is this betrayal? Could it be that she never actually died, and was but a pawn of the Goddess?

“Trash!” (Naofumi)

Was your wife a traitor?

Before I can ask, Trash shakes his head.

“That’s not possible! That is... that is!” (Trash)

Trash angrily scowls at Medea.

“Yes, I dragged her soul out and revived her to make her one of my pieces. Right now, she can only move by my will. Ara? Would it be best if I didn’t tell you that?” (Medea) “DAMMMN YOooooooooou!”(Trash)

Trash’s enraged voice echoes.

So that means... the Queen is forcefully being controlled.

... Right. There’s no way that Queen would ever turn coat.

Just how much manga have you read, and how many games have you played, Iwatani Naofumi?

When the dead are brought back, they’re usually being controlled, or zombies.

Just how low can she go, this one!?

Thinking about it, she can manage reincarnation.

That’s ample evidence that she can revive the dead.

What’s more, the Queen’s become her marionette.

Damn! She’ll be exceedingly hard to deal with.

And wait, the reincarnators aren’t the slightest bit put off by her actions?

Perhaps she made up a story to them, or perhaps... we were the only ones aware of that scene?

“[Arrow Rain]! Quickly! The ring leader... the enemy!” (Itsuki)

Itsuki unleashes a rain of arrows on those duking it out with Motoyasu.

Ah, that's right.

If we defeat Witch's origin point, Medea, then perhaps everything will be resolved.

From what I've seen, her forces have strong Support Magic cast on them, but since they have no cooperation, they're ridden with friendly fire.

... Okay.

"Let's go!"

"Yeah!"

Us, the Heroes at the front, will probably have to be the ones to take charge.

Or else the ones behind us won't follow!

「Phoenix Gale Sword X」!

「Brionac X」!

「Full Buster X」!

「Shield Prison→ Change Shield(Attack)→ Iron Maiden X」!

We all release our most powerful skills at Medea.

The bird of fire envelops the spear of light, which absorbs the beam fired from the gun. The combination collides with Medea, and the resulting explosion is contained within the Shield Prison. The shields change to ones laden with spikes, and an Iron Maiden envelops it all.

Did that do any damage!?

"... You guys aren't any fun."

Medea stood there with a sullen expression, as if nothing had happened to her.

It looks like she deployed a sturdy barrier.

Ku... even the combination of our strongest attacks isn't enough to scratch her.

We'll have to get Raphtalia and the others to help us before trying again.

But they're busy with the Reincarnators, and Glass's world's army. The situation is quite severe.

Luckily, the enemy's looking down on us, and floating annoyingly nearby.

"Naofumi."

Ren glances at me.

I know.

An enemy this strong, and the weapons we've collected up until now. Within our skills...

Ren nods.

It seems everyone else understands as well.

"Let's go!"

We ignore the entire army for a single moment. No...

「Meteor Wall X」!

The skill I use surrounds us, and everyone... chants a skill at Medea.

「... of ∅」

Right, it seemed too strange for a skill to do absolutely nothing.

I thought it odd that they mocked us with a skill meant for nothing but showing off, so me, Ren, and Itsuki consulted one another.

If we ever encountered an enemy too strong, we would leave the possibility open to use it to see if it did anything.

I never thought a chance to use it would present itself so soon.

“Wha—”

Medea, who had continuously showed us her lax impression, suddenly got into a panic.

So it's true...

The ∅ skills glow as they shoot off towards her.

“Goddess!?”

The warring reincarnators and their armies stop moving.

“Good!”

So we can beat her with this.

“Keep...”

Before I could finish my sentence, a single beam of light passed by me.

No, I couldn't even follow what happened with my eyes.

Something went through, and I merely looked in its direction by instinct.

“Guhaaaaah!?”

What I saw was the moment when Motoyasu, who was standing in the middle of the battlefield, collapsed. He had been pierced by something.

“Eh...?” (Motoyasu)

“M-Motoyasu-san!”

“Mokkun!”

“Mo-chan!”

His party members rush over to him.

“...”

But Motoyasu’s body isn’t moving in the slightest.

“How dare you place an injury on my body!”

... The only wound left on Medea was a small scratch on her hand.

“M-Motoyasu...?”

Seeing his limp, motionless body, I couldn’t muster any words.

Eventually.

“Ah—”

Motoyasu’s body glowed gold, and dispersed into the air.

As if no one had been lying there to start with.

“That was a bit surprising. I didn’t think... you were this good. But how unfortunate for you. I’m not so fragile as to fall from something like this.”

(Medea)

Medea surveys the area, and scrunches her eyebrows, as she starts counting us.

“One... two... three... Eleven in total? That’s quite a bit. With this much, it feels a bit unbalanced. There are still three holy weapons left, and Vassals, was it? Even though I did so much, there’s still eight left. This is the worst.” (Medea)
She glares at me.

“Just how far did you intend to get in my way, despite being but a measly shield?”

“Like I care! Don’t advance the conversation by yourself!”

What’s the source of all of this trying to say?

Motoyasu just died! But I can’t lose it here.

Ren and Itsuki probably get it as well.

They contain their rage as they calmly consider ways to defeat her.

“Just what is your objective!? For what purpose did you cause something like the wave!?” (Naofumi) “Fufufu, you wanna know?” (Medea)

Looking down on all of us, Medea laughs.

“If I had to say, I guess it’s to make myself stronger. If I had to put it in your boorish words, then I wanted to raise my level.” (Medea) “How... for something as petty as that... you started all this unproductive violence!?” (Itsuki)

Itsuki screams out as he clenches his bow.

Me too... no, all of the ones who heard her words share the sentiment.

Raising her level, you say!?

For something as worthless as that, we lived through our days of hell!?

Through the wave, many lost their lives, and many lost their loved ones. Even so, we kept fighting on to bring an end to it all. And yet the enemy's goal was merely leveling.

Don't fuck with me...

"Say what you will. Now then, let's slay the evil heroes!" (Medea)

Medea's words send the enemy rushing forward at once.

Their powers seem to have been raised to a strange extent, and even for me, the most I can do is block them.

Gu...

"Ah, right, right. You guys are a bit too strong, so I'm going to have to kill a few of your Heroes to give us a handicap, kay?" (Medea)

Medea holds her hand in front of her, and a half-transparent sword made out of energy appears in it. She points it at us.

"Good bye." (Medea)

I immediately spring forward, and protect Ren, Raphtalia, Firo, Fohl, Midori, and all the heroes who were on the front lines.

「Shield of ∅」!

If the others had enough output to overcome a god's defense... then I should be able to withstand it with this.

"Ah, how sad." (Medea)

For me, it felt as if the world had just stopped.

And in that stagnant world, Medea was the only one moving.

“With defense of your level, it’s impossible.” (Medea)

_____!

“Let’s see. 100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, 『Infinity Destroyer』. Yep, you’re dead.” (Medea)^[4]

White, and black. Red was also mixed in. An infinite amount of lines circle.

They merge into a single narrow beam, and fly towards me.

Just like with the attack that killed Motoyasu, I can’t follow it with my eyes.

Yes... I guess you could call it death.

It’s like she materialized the concept of death itself. That’s the sort of feeling I got.

I don’t know why I was able to see it.

In truth, Medea’s attack was much faster than my own sense of perception, so there’s no way I should have been able to see it.

It’s as if she had bypassed the entire effect animation, leaving only the message 『Enemy has been Killed』 behind. A patchwork of time that left only the result.

W-what is... this!?

By luck, or miracle, I... block the attack with my Shield.

It felt as if I had successfully blocked it.

I also had confidence in the fact that I hadn’t died yet.

But...

“Ara? You blocked it? For you to be able to take an attack whose speed surpassed infinity, you must be quite the lucky one.” (Medea)

Speed that surpasses infinity?

Is this one alright in the head? Her words are going all over the place.

No, it was true that I was unable to understand the enemy’s attack.

The fact that I was able to block it was truly just a miracle. It’s like she had merely sent the blast flying to the area where my Shield was fastened.

If she shoots again... I’m dead.

“Then how about this? It wastes a needless amount of power, so I don’t like using it, but I guess there’s no choice.” (Medea)

... The moment after Medea said that, I died.

“Eh...?”

As if a switch had been turned off. As if the power had been cut, my consciousness was instantly sent adrift.

I truly did not understand just what it was that Medea did.

“You’d probably hate dying without even knowing the reason, so let me tell you. Your past, present future. I directed an attack on all of the yous in all parallel and divergent worlds in existence.” (Medea)

By the time I was aware of my surroundings once more, I was in the air.

In no time at all, the HP bar on my Status had reached 0.

Ren was the same, and...

“Naofumi-sama—”

Raphtalia immediately reached her hand out to me.

I try to answer her warmth by raising my arm, but I can't put any power in.

"In the name of god, just vanish into oblivion!" (Medea)

My body's been torn to pieces, but still, she continues to attack...

"Now fall into the rift between dimensions! AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

Medea's painful laugh echoes through my ears endlessly.

Not yet... move, my body!

I'm in the middle of being blown away!

When I looked down, what I was... was my torso being minced into miniscule pieces.

"Ara? The Hammer Wench got mixed in too? Well I guess that's enough to balance the odds, right? I've kept you waiting for a while, but it's finally time to start the game." (Medea)

When I thought I had finally been freed from her laugh, my field of vision warped, and my mind went far away.

... So my end comes like this. Randomly killed for reasons I don't even get?

Up until now, I've tried so hard. I've desperately battled my way here, and without being able to save... to protect everyone, I'm going to die like a dog?

Then what the hell have we been doing up until now?

Was the reason they were all born simply to build up EXP?

Don't fuck with me... as if I'd let that be reality.

Move.

At least let me offer some resistance.

But for the current me, that wish was impossible to grant.

If I close my eyes here, I'll definitely be dead.

... No, I'm quite sure I already am.

I don't know why, but I recognize the fact that I'm dead.

Ah... so that's it.

So I'm... already dead.

Then this is the revolving lantern.

My memories start to revive, and spin around before me.

It really was a crappy life.

I immersed myself in Manga and Games at a whim, and after complained about my world all the time. Then I was summoned here.

In this terrible alternate world, I tried my best, and met Raphtalia.

I met Firo. I met Melty. I cleared my name of my false crimes.

I defeated a giant enemy, and I met Atlas. I met Fohl, and I met the villagers. I made up with Ren, the other Heroes, and Trash, whom I had made out to be my enemies.

And from here on, it was supposed to have gotten better...

Why, why must it be so unfair....

No matter how hard I struggled, no matter what sad things I faced, in the end... the Hero is supposed to beat the Demon King. He's supposed to bring peace to the world. He's supposed to make everyone happy...

Can't I get an ending like that?

Haha... In the end, I'm just the same as all of them. So I was just being dragged along by my optimistic ideals stemming from my game knowledge...

... I know. From that day, and all the days up until now, I've had the fact pounded in me enough to make me vomit.

It isn't that easy.

No matter what you do, it's always unfair, and there's despair you have no ways of fighting against. That's reality.

Raphalia... Atlas... everyone.

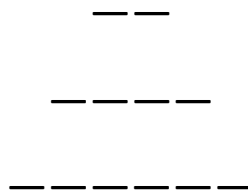
If I can't move a single finger on my hands anymore, at the very least, let me move my heart.

Why I'm saying this, even I don't know... Ah, so that's how it is.

What's with this? While I kept saying this and that, didn't I actually like this world quite a bit?

"Everyone. My power was barely able to banish three of the Evil Heroes from this world, and to the gap between dimensions..."

And Like that, I dies meaninglessly. I was ripped appart without even leaving anything to bury.



After sinking into deep darkness, my conscious resurfaced.

My mind was faint, as if I had just become a ghost.

The sound of pages flipping, and a slight dusty scent.

It was so quiet, and yet so nostalgic, I began to remember all I had forgotten.

This is...

“ _____!”

Eh?

My voice works.

What is this? My eyes had been closed.

Then all I have to do is open them. Isn't that obvious? I open my eyelids... and lost my voice once more.

— I was in a familiar library.

While sitting in one of their installed chairs, I got up, as if I had merely dozed off.

I turn my eyes to the calendar and clock on the reception desk.

... Since I read the Holy Weapons Manual, and was sent to another world, only 30 minutes have passed.

I... confirm the cover of the book in my hands.

The Four Holy Weapon's Manual.

And this time, the Hero of the Shield's accomplishments were recorded as well.

It was... a recording of the tracks I followed. An outline of my story.

And like that, the Hero of the Shield was defeated by the enemy of the world, the Goddess Medea.

The remaining bow, and his companions continued to fight on...

The next page was blank.

I turn back, and start reading from the beginning.

It appears the contents of the book have changed quite a bit from the first time I read it.

In the start, the Hero of the Shield was set up to meet the Princess and the King, and his relationship with the other Heroes wasn't the best. Oh my, how kind of you to put it like that.

What does this mean?

A dream... like hell!

That's impossible.

There's no way that all of it could have been a dream.

I confirm my own appearance once more.

My garments were those I wore before being sent away.

Look closer. There's no way that was a dream!

Something, there has to be something! Like I'd let all of that be written off as a dream!

"Oww..."

"Hmm?"

I turn around to confirm the source of that voice.

And there...

"A-are you alright, Naofumi-sama?"

"Wha... Raph... talia?"

Raphtalia held one of her hands on her head, as she woke up.

“T-this is...?”

Without any words escaping my lips, I froze up.

There’s no way I would let it end as a dream, but I never thought I’d find Raphtalia as my proof.

“Hmm? Naofumi-sama, your clothes are... mine too...”

Raphtalia tilts her head at the clothes she’s wearing.

Just what happened?

I look at the place my Shield used to hang.

And there, was a pitiful strap made of chains, with a familiar jewel in the center. My Shield.^[5]

Undesired Return

Raphtalia is here.

I look around the area once more.

Yep, this isn't another world. It's the library of my reality.

"Um, Naofumi-sama?" (Raphtalia)

"Shh! This is a place where you have to be quiet. I don't get what's going on either, so let me think for a second." (Naofumi)

I tell Raphtalia as such, and look through the Four Holy Weapons' Manual again.

... I notice the pages that were once blank start to revise themselves.

—Having the Hero of the Sword, Spear and Shield, as well as the Hammer Vassal defeated left the Hero of the Bow and his party in despair.

In the end of the battle, they all faced utmost defeat.

While the battle raged on, Medea raised a high laugh as she withdrew her forces, who destroyed in the name of fun.

By the whim of the enemy, their lives had been spared, but those left behind were unable to feel any joy at this fact.

The losses they faced had been too great.

It seems that Goddess showed off her advantage by drawing back.

I wonder what sort of vile development awaits.

It's a truly unpleasant feeling. Having that annoying face pop up in my head makes me want to punch something.

...

“Oi, what does this mean?” (Naofumi)

I try talking to the book.

But the book shows absolutely no signs of action.

Ku... what should I do?

“N-Naofumi-sama?” (Raphtalia)

“Y-yeah...” (Naofumi)

The book and the bracelet showed no reaction. I tried fiddling with them, but nothing happened.

Perhaps if I continue doing this in silence, nothing will activate.

“We won’t be able to talk much here. Let’s move. Follow me. I’ll explain where we are on the way.” (Naofumi) “Yes.” (Raphtalia)

... How should I explain Raphtalia’s tail and ears?

Well, I guess I can just say it’s cosplay... right?

I take the Four Holy Weapons’ Manual in hand, and lead Raphtala to the reception desk.

Wait a second, can I even borrow this book in the first place?

I lift the cover, and check all around it.

Yep, there isn’t a security chip embedded anywhere in it.

But still, should I try?

I take out my library card, as well as a random book that was close, before

placing them both on the counter. I silently pass them over to the receptionist.

“Um... this book is...?”

The receptionist looks all over the book before tilting his head.

It seems it's not anything registered to this library.

“Ah, I'm sorry. I forgot I brought that one from home.” (Naofumi)

I casually take the book back, and successfully finish the borrowing procedure.

After that, I shoved it into the bag I had brought to the library with me, with all of the other books I borrowed. I led Raphtalia out of the building by the hand.

After leaving the library, Raphtalia observes the area with wide eyes.

The building was in a relatively urban area, so there are many bars and department stores around.

What's more, cars and traffic lights... there are plenty of things she wouldn't have seen over there. Her reaction is natural.

“Naofumi-sama, where exactly are we?” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah, it seems... we're in my world.” (Naofumi)

“Eh!?” (Raphtalia)

What was reflected in my eyes was the usual cityscape surrounding the library.

Is it just my imagination that the quality of air seems to have gotten worse?

I guess the air over there was clearer.

It's the familiar world I longed for, but...

“For some reason, Raphtalia, I've returned to this world with you. In order to

organize the situation, please just quietly follow me.” (Naofumi) “Y-yes! So this is Naofumi-sama’s world...” (Raphtalia)

She restlessly looks around as she walks behind me.

Random passersby are taking quick glances at her.

So her ears and tail really do stand out?

No, more importantly, Raphtalia’s face may be what they’re focusing on.

That’s Japan’s good point. Even if something looks strange, they just let it pass.^[6]

As I think that, I notice my stomach is empty.

... There’s money in my wallet.

I crave Junk Food.

I’ve heard that once you go overseas, you begin to crave the taste of home, but perhaps this is the same.

It’s because the food over there didn’t have much taste.

I used to prefer foods with thick flavor, but I simply didn’t have the necessary spices.

“Okay!” (Naofumi)

Let’s go to a restaurant.

I drag Raphtalia along with me as I step into a family restaurant.

Perhaps I should have taken her to the ones in the mall to see her reaction.

This time, I just brought us to a Chain Restaurant called ‘Storm’.

“Welcome, how many will we be serving today?”

“Two.” (Naofumi)

“Two, is it? Then this way please.”

The host leads us, and we take our seats.

Raphtalia seems to be restless, but she doesn't seem all too shocked.

"Um, what sort of store is this?" (Raphtalia)

"Can't you tell?" (Naofumi)

"No, I understand it's a store that sells food, but you told me to silently follow you, and it ended up being for lunch..." (Raphtalia) "That's right... even so, I need time to think. I'm also hungry, so I thought we would stop by for food."

(Naofumi) "Understood. I'd like to try the food of your world." (Raphtalia)

"Then here's a menu. Order whatever you want." (Naofumi) "Ah, yes! Wow, is there a slim projection crystal stuck onto it?" (Raphtalia)

Fumu... now that I think about it, that world had quite strange technological advancements.

Projection Crystals would be equated to something like 3D crystals here, right?

Well, the immobile ones are just pictures, so... no, perhaps a painting?

"You won't call it a simple drawing?" (Naofumi)

"Hmm? But isn't it really detailed? There was a painter among the Lemos, but I feel there's something fundamentally different about this one..." (Raphtalia)
Ah, so it's like that.

In that world there were oil and water based paints, as well as magic ways of coloring. There were plenty of ways to make an image.

It's not as if they didn't have a realist movement, but those weren't that high in numbers...

More than a painting, it's quicker to just call it a photo. And for that purpose, a Projection Crystal fits best.

"Then this one." (Raphtalia)

“Can you read the name?” (Naofumi)

“No...” (Raphtalia)

So she can't read the language.

Spoken words will get taken care of through her vassal, but writing is a bit...

And wait, if that was possible, I wouldn't have had so much trouble in that world.

I press the button to call the waiter, and make my order.

“You just pushed a button to call him, right? Is this a high class eatery?”

(Raphtalia)

If you think about it, Raphtalia's been to local restaurants countless times in that world, so she isn't giving that much of a reaction.

And it's not like there weren't any places where you had to ring a bell to call the server.

Though we rarely ever went into restaurants of that high a class.

“This is normal, even for my world's commoners.” (Naofumi) “Is that so? T-that's quite amazing...” (Raphtalia)

Well, I wonder if Raphtalia's reaction is wrong.

“Outside, cars like the ones in Faubley are going at speeds faster than Firo.”

(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia expresses her thoughts as she gazes at the street outside the window.

Well, it's true that a car's speed is faster than Firo.

But that bird's full speed is much higher.

When she's boosted with Aura, it goes even further, and on curved and uneven roads, she can continue without dropping speed.

In that sense, the bird is more versatile than the car.

We should install one Filo Rial Queen per house.

“The bigger ones can even carry more things than her.” (Naofumi) “W-wow.”
(Raphtalia)

“Well, it’s a matter of carrying capacity, so if we do something about the size, Firo should be able to carry it.” (Naofumi)

And while we were engaging in pointless conversation, the food came.

That was fast.

No... here, this was normal.

Raphtalia was also startled at the speed of the food.

“Thank you for waiting~.”

The waiter puts the items we ordered on the table.

What’s laid out before me is the nostalgic taste of my world.

Ah... just how many times have you appeared in my dreams? I begin eating with knife and fork.

“Thank you for the food. Um, I believe the food Naofumi-sama makes is better.”
(Raphtalia) “I don’t need the flattery.” (Naofumi)

“That’s not what I meant... I think that this food is tasty, but the flavor is too deep.” (Raphtalia)

I mean, it’s not like I used too many spices in that world.

I’ve been told that foods with unfamiliar tastes are good.

But there was nothing I could do about the simple flavor.

In truth, I hear that many of the younger generation of this world care not for nutrition.

But for me, that’s irrelevant.

As I think upon those lines, the taste of hamburger fills my mouth.

“...”

To be honest, it wasn't really that good.

But for some reason, the first hamburger steak I had in half a year was the best I'd ever tasted.

We finish filling our stomachs, and leave.

... As I was leaving the family restaurant, a burger joint caught my eye.

“Okay, let's go there too.” (Naofumi)

“You plan to eat more?” (Raphtalia)

“I'm just savoring the taste of my home.” (Naofumi)

I was full, but the nostalgia whetted my appetite.

And with ¥500, you can eat quite a bit.

Right now's not the time to think about my financial situation, and if it's just that much, I can spend it.

“Now onwards, Raphtalia!” (Naofumi)

“Y-yes!” (Raphtalia)

And so I ate burgers, and whatever looked interesting until I was satisfied...

I ate too much... I feel sick.

“So this is the taste of Naofumi-sama's hometown.” (Raphtalia) “Pretty much.” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia would say it was tasty every time, but in the end, she concluded the taste was too thick.

I don't think there's anything I can do about it, but is it really that bad?

My saving grace came in the fact that there were many things Raphtalia said she liked in what we ordered.

She'll have to get used to the culinary culture over here, so if there isn't anything she likes, it will be rough.

Well, take out having a thick flavor is something natural.

I randomly select a park bench to lower myself onto, before taking the Four Holy Weapons' Manual out of my Knapsack, and look at it again.

"Is that the book you read before you were summoned?" (Raphtalia) "Yeah, I just flipped through it earlier, but what we've done is recorded as well."
(Naofumi)

... But nothing was written after what I read before leaving the library.

It seems the enemy retreated, but in that world, the only Legendary Hero left is Itsuki.

There's Trash and the other Vassals, as well as Glass, but this will be a hard battle.

The last scene I saw in that world flashes back in my head.

No... Even if we remained there, winning would be difficult.

Honestly, I can't imagine a scenario where we would stand triumphantly above them.

Because even now, I don't understand what it was that caused my loss.

"U...mu..."

Even so, I can't get a grasp of what I should do now.

I never thought I would find it strange that my status wasn't in my field of

vision.

And wait, when I had felt something was off earlier, it was the feel of the air. Something's different.

It's like... something that was supposed to be there naturally had completely vanished.

What should I compare it to? I can only say it's a peculiarity in that world's air.

"Naofumi-sama..."

Raphtalia's looking at me with a worried expression.

In order to prevent her from standing out, her clothing consists of a shirt and jeans.

You can call it boyish if you want.

Raphtalia's hair is long and her figure isn't bad, so I think she looks good in them.

"I don't have the slightest idea of what the cause was, but we lost. No, it's more accurate to say we died. By the time I noticed it, we woke up here, in the world I originated from." (Naofumi)

I show Raphtalia my Shield, which had been converted into a simple strap.

And in return, Raphtalia showed me her strap-turned hammer.

"A possibility is that the Hammer and Shield let us escape here as an emergency measure." (Naofumi) "But that doesn't sound correct." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia flicks the strap on her arm as she answers.

Right. It hasn't been giving any sort of reaction.

"Well, there's no point in worrying about it, so let's continue the conversation.

We've come to my world, and I don't know any way to get back." (Naofumi)

"Yes... because we lost..." (Raphtalia)

"Yes, it annoys me to no end that we went out like that. So here is a single problem." (Naofumi) "What is it?" (Raphtalia)

"Raphtalia, it's about your life here. I told you that living in my world would be troublesome, right?" (Naofumi)

I mean, she is an otherworlder here.

She doesn't have an entry in the family registry, and she'll have problems finding a place to live.

No matter what happens, I'll shelter her, but I don't know how long I'll be able to do that.

"Also, it doesn't seem like anybody said anything about your tail and ears, but if they get found out, it may be dangerous." (Naofumi)

If they figure out she's from another world, they may bring her in for investigation.

I doubt they'll just go 'Oh, how wonderful~~.' There's a high chance she'll be shipped to some research facility somewhere.

We'll have to avoid that as best we can.

"Y-yes." (Raphtalia)

"Oh, right. Can you use magic? Try to conceal them as best you can." (Naofumi)

I concentrate my mind, and test to see if I can still use magic.

... I think Revelation will be impossible.

『I, The Hero of the Shield, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the legend be read forth once more, and grant all unto him』

「Zveit Aura」

Oh? Aura activated.

A target floats faintly in my field of vision.

Raphtalia also tries.

『I, who has understood the origin of power command. Let the truth be read forth once more, let balls of light come forth』

「Fast Light」

In Raphtalia's outstretched hand, a faint ball of light appeared.

But it was quite a feeble light. It looked as if it would go out at any moment.

With this, a lighter from the ¥100 would be more reliable.

“Uu... how should I put it, controlling it has become really difficult.” (Raphtalia)
The light immediately vanished.

Fumu... I can't use the Dragon Pulse Order at all, and normal magic's effect is faint.

It would be quite romantic to be able to use the magic of another world, but the output is really low.

It's probably because the magic power comes from within our bodies, so we can use a little of it. That sounds possible.

I don't know if I'll be able to replenish our internal magic in the first place.

But mulling over it doesn't accomplish anything.

“Anyways, for now...”

Just think about it.

There's nothing I can do. Neither the Four Holy Weapons' Manual nor the Shield react to my words.

Just what do you want me to do?

“Let’s go to my house.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama’s house?” (Raphtalia)

“Ah...” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi-sama? What’s wrong?” (Raphtalia)

For a bishojo to be adding –sama to my name... isn’t this a bit bad?

She said it again and again in the restaurant, but now that I think about it, it’s embarrassing.

I guess this is the proof that we’ve returned to the world of my reality.

“Raphtalia, while we’re in this world, please don’t call me –sama.” (Naofumi)

“Huh? U-understood.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia nodded.

“N-Naofumi... sa–” (Raphtalia)

She suddenly cuts herself off as her face is dyed a deep red.

“Naofumi-san.” (Raphtalia)

“Yep, that’s fine. Next, it’s about you...” (Naofumi)

It would be nice if people thought of Raphtalia-san as her nickname, or pen name, or something...

What sort of name should I... I glance over at Raphtalia.

Her face make seems quite foreign, and her hair is brown.

Is she within the range where I can talk people into thinking she's Japanese?

No, it's not like saying she's a half won't work, but it'll be a bit tricky.

"Should I call you by a fake name, Shigaraki Tanuko, or something?" (Naofumi)

"Are you sure you're alright with calling me that?" (Raphtalia)

Alright with that name? Me?

Of course not.

In the first place, Shigaraki just comes from the fact that she's a Tanuki girl.

And wait, Tanuko is insulting, isn't it?

Though I'm the one who proposed it.

Ponko, Rafuko... there's already a Raph-chan.

"If we get troubled, we'll think of one. Right now, I think Raphtalia's fine. Then let's go." (Naofumi) "Y-yes." (Raphtalia)

We walk through the town before arriving at my house.

Returning Home

Now then, let me offer a bit of explanation about my house.

To put it bluntly, it's a detached house that lies in a relatively quiet neighborhood near the city.

It has a yard, attached, and my parents bought it on a loan.

I slide the key into the door, and timidly look around as I enter.

“N-Naofumi-sa... n. What's wrong?” (Raphtalia)

It seems there's some resistance to her calling me –san as she asks me a question out of pure curiosity.

“Ah, no, if we ran into my parents here, it would pave the way to a mountain of misunderstandings.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sa... n's Father and Mother?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia puts her hand over her heart, and takes a deep breath.

“Ah, it seems you don't have to worry. My mom's out at the moment.” (Naofumi)

After confirming no one was home, I opened the house door, and invited Raphtalia in.

“So this is Naofumi-sa...n's House?” (Raphtalia)

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

I thought I would bring her here once the world was at peace, but I never thought we would end up here like this.

I guess that just goes to show you never know what's going to happen in life.

“Make sure to take off your shoes before coming in.” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Raphtalia)

As told, Raphtalia takes her shoes off before entering the house.

Now then, my room is on the second floor. To organize the information on hand, it's best we go there, but... Here, I noticed something.

I'm an Otaku. An Otaku who invited a girl into his home, and is ready to show her his room.

The stereotypical development that comes with this situation is...

... Isn't this bad? I have quite a few embarrassing things displayed there.

“Raphtalia, please wait here.” (Naofumi)

I stop Raphtalia, and lead her to the living room.

“Is something the matter?” (Raphtalia)

... Right now, I'm stuck between two big life choices.

I could take Raphtalia to my room now, without care for my hobbies.

But the Galge posters, the figures and the various character goods are out in the open.

It's not like I plan to hide the fact that I'm an Otaku at this point. I'm actually curious to see what Raphtalia will think of it.

But in that world, I continued to proclaim that love was useless and unnecessary.

If a guy like that's room was filled with books of women and figures, just what would she think?

Is it not right to stop her for now?

Okay! First of all, let's clean the room!

"Please wait a second." (Naofumi)

"Ah, sure." (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia sat down on the living room sofa as I quickly ran up the steps to my room.

And what I found was my nostalgic castle.

Just how many times have I dreamed of returning here?

But that isn't important right now.

Right now, Raphtalia's going to come here.

How about I just openly display this embarrassing side of me?

I'll stop that with all my might!

I stuff all the figures and Galge packages into the closet, and peel off the posters.

Oh? I had left my PC on the whole time, and Net Game Item I've put on the market has been sold.

... I'll close it for now.

Next is—

"I'm home~."

Geh! My brother has returned.

That goddam Riajuu, why must he return at a time like this?^[7]

If that little brother of mine comes into contact with Raphtalia, it's going to get complicated!

I quickly leave the room, and run down the stairs.

“What's up, Nii-san?”

He had taken off his shoes in the entrance, and put his hand on the living room door when I called out to him.

“Wait, wait. Why don't we have a little chat?” (Naofumi) “Did something happen? The look in your eyes is a bit strange...?”

Is my face really that weird?

“More importantly, Niisan. Can't you make some food?”

“Why?” (Naofumi)

“What do you mean? Mom doesn't seem to be home, so I thought I would ask you. I mean, I'm busy with my studies.”

“Just go to the convenience store. I'll give you some money.” (Naofumi) “Eh.... Nii-san's food is much better than the ones at the store.”

This is strange. Did my brother really like my home-made food that much?

No, well, I've always helped my parents out with the house chores, and I did it willingly to give off a good impression to them.

I've cooked for him whenever our parents weren't home.

But even so, did he ever say anything so Kiel-like?

Is this déjà vu?

“Didn’t I ask you this morning? You totally said yes back then.”

Come to think of it... I get the feeling I made some sort of promise like that.

I mean, to me, it’s been more than half a year, so there’s no way I really remember it.

“And Nii-san, you know, if you ever have trouble getting a job when ya graduate, you should try cooking school. Don’t go off wasting your talent like that, dude.”

Mu... this one, I do have a recollection of.

I remember. Whenever something happens, my brother is someone who asks me to go cook.

Unlike me, he doesn’t really enjoy eating out.

Something about nutrition and sodium, it’s like he’s a girl going through puberty.

“Anyways, today I have something to do. So go buy it at the convenience store.”
(Naofumi) “Is it a promise with your Net Game friends again? How about you just stop playing around with those guys, and start taking stuff seriously, man?”

And as he said that, he opened and walked through the living room door.

“W-wait.” (Naofumi)

“—I mean, you have someone like Raphtalia-san with ya, right?”

What...?

My mind can’t keep up with what my brother’s saying.

“Ah, Raphtalia-san. I’m home.”

“Ah...?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia’s gaze shifts between my face, and my brother’s. A worried expression comes on her face as she inclines her head to one side.

I mean, it’s true, isn’t it? Raphtalia’s never met this guy before.

I mean, we never went back far enough for the two to have had a chance to meet.

“What’s wrong?”

“No, I was just wondering why you knew about Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)
I mean, he greeted her quite naturally, just now.

“What do you mean by ‘why’?”

As if he thought I was mocking him, my brother makes a sullen expression.

“For argument’s sake, you see.” (Naofumi)

“Hah? Nii-san, are you going senile? Are you having premature dementia?”

“Shut up. Just tell me.” (Naofumi)

“When you’re just Nii-chan, you’re trying to give me orders?”

This is the hierarchy of the Iwatani Household.

It may be a bit late, but that’s quite a line he threw out there.

Since I went to that world, I get the feeling I’ve been harassed by a lot of strange people, but it was like that from the start?

But that’s not the problem.

“Like I care.” (Naofumi)

“Seriously, what’s wrong, Nii-san? Your usual loose eloquence and bullshittery is gone, man.”

Who has loose eloquence!?

I always kinda wanted to return, but I shed tears upon receiving this treatment upon my return.

Why must my own younger brother wring me out like this?

“Don’t worry about it, just speak.” (Naofumi)

“Have you finally awoken to your role as the eldest son? How out of character of you.”

“Why are your eyes sparkling at that? You’ve always just had to add on that one extra sentence, haven’t you?” (Naofumi) “If it’s against Nii-san, then I won’t lose!”

My younger brother suddenly takes up a fighting pose.

Despite how he looks, this guy practices Kendo, I think.

He also did Karate.

Oi, there’s a world out there in need of a Hero.

Ah, don’t make a mistake and get hit by a truck, or anything.

I have a personal grudge against reincarnations at the moment.

“I didn’t intend to get into fisticuffs with you!” (Naofumi) “Now, be more and more willful! I’ll take on your challenge anytime!”

What’s with him?

Did he have this sort of personality?

“Just answer the question already!” (Naofumi)

“I-I got it...”

With a bit of sadness, but a lot more joy, my younger brother begins to speak.

Was he merely joking around?

“When Nii-san entered college, Raphtalia-san came to our house to homestay as a foreign exchange student.”

“... Foreign exchange student. Homestay, is it?” (Naofumi) “Wasn’t she your friend on the net, Nii-san? You spoke to mom and dad, and she came over to our house, and just like that, she became your girlfriend, didn’t she, Nii-san?”

Okay, let’s organize this information.

It seems that here, Raphtalia is treated as a foreign exchange student staying in this house, under the same roof as me?

And she’s my girlfriend. What’s more, with parental recognition?

Just what sort of romcom is this?

“What country did Raphtalia come from again?” (Naofumi) “I don’t know that. I think you told me before, though. What was it again?”

Brother makes a tantalizing expression as he tries to recall the country name.

No, I don’t think even Raphtalia knows the country she’s supposed to be from.

It’s that. Should I just say Melromark in another world?

Her nationality is otherworlder. That phrase pops up in my head.

No, I really can’t laugh at that.

“Ah, Nii-san sure has it nice. Having someone like Raphtalia-san as your girlfriend.”

“G-girlfriend...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia embarrassingly touches her hands to her reddening face.

Her reaction is top notch.

“But you have one too, don’t you?” (Naofumi)

In the past, he said something like『Unlike me, the girlfriend-less Nii-san is pitiful. Do you plan on becoming a wizard or something?』 to provoke me.

Though I just laughed it off back then.

Thinking back now, it really pisses me off.

“Yeah, but compared to Raphtalia-san... I’m jealous of Nii-san! Raphtalia-san, can you forget Nii-san and transfer to someone with better future prospects like me?”

“Not happening.” (Raphtalia)

That was fast.

Raphtalia’s quick and natural answer frightened me a bit.

It’s a mixture of happiness and embarrassment. A strange feeling.

... Let’s continue the conversation.

Lil’ brother continues to speak fluidly while nodding.

Aren’t you the one with the loose eloquence?

“As I thought.”

“I’m definitely tattling to your girlfriend later.” (Naofumi) “S-stop! If strange rumors get around, I’ll be troubled.”

Well, he’s a girlfriend-holding Riajuu in his third year of high school.

But if his girlfriend heard that line, I think he would be smacked the hell out of.

Just what sort of Galge heroin is he supposed to be?

“Anyways, don’t going around saying strange things.”

“That depends on your attitude.” (Naofumi)

“Nii-san, what’s wrong? You’re much colder than before.”

“I thought I would have to be stricter from here on.” (Naofumi)

Is what I’ll answer for now.

I see my long time spent in another world has changed me enough for people to notice.

“I see, yep. It looks like Nii-san has gotten just a bit cooler. In the past, you were kind, or how should I put it, too soft, so I like the atmosphere you’re giving off right now. Good luck with that, Nii-san.”

Is what I thought, but my brother takes the change positively.

“More importantly, you.” (Naofumi)

I’ll take this chance to gather some information.

I point to Raphtalia’s ears.

“What do you think of these?” (Naofumi)

“Meaning?”

“No, I mean...” (Naofumi)

“What?”

... I lightly poke the ears.

Raphtalia reluctantly twitches them back and forth.

“I mean these.” (Naofumi)

“And again, what?”

... Can he not see them?

I gently lift up the tail.

“Ah...”

Raphtalia lets out an embarrassed moan.

It is quite a sensitive spot, it seems. I’m a bit sorry, but there’s no helping it.

“Next is this.” (Naofumi)

“I have no idea what you’ve been trying to show me for a while. Are you bragging?”

Fumu... Raphtalia’s ears and tail aren’t being recognized by his senses.

Then what people were looking at when we walked down the street was simply her beauty.

“Now then, Nii-san. Food, please.”

... Why does he want my food so much?

Is he supposed to be some loin-clothed dog?

“Can’t you just wait until mom comes home?” (Naofumi) “You promised!”

Ah, for the love of god! Even when I’m supposed to be busy!

“Naofumi-san, how about you make it for him?” (Raphtalia) “Ah, see? Raphtalia-san gets it~!”

Little brother’s tension rises.

In the end... I ended up making dinner.

Why is the first thing I do upon returning from another world making dinner for my brother?

What’s more, while I was in the kitchen, Mom came home. She walked to the living room, and started chatting with Raphtalia as if it were natural while munching on senbei.^[8]

She seems unnaturally close to Raphtalia, contrarily making my discomfort grow to massive proportions.

Well, the individual herself seems to be uncomfortable as well.

“Raphtalia-san, in the end, what did Naofumi-san do all day?”

“Umm...” (Raphtalia)

He went to another world, and ended up getting killed by a goddess.

Is something we can’t say.

“He was playing games again, right? You need to get him to pull himself together.”

From my experience over there, I'd like to offer a complaint or two.

But here... it seems my day = gaming.

In truth, it really was like that before I went to that world, but it grates my nerves when they actually say it.

"Y-yes." (Raphtalia)

Being troubled with an answer, Raphtalia gives a response as not to cause any trouble.

After that, for some reason, I ended up making enough food for the whole family, and finally, I headed for my room with Raphtalia.

Well, it's not like I didn't do chores whenever I felt like it, but...

And for some reason, Raphtalia's room was on the second floor as well.

If memories serve right, that should have been a storage room, or something of the sort.

"What do you think has happened?" (Raphtalia)

"A place for you in this world has been made... the Spirit of the Shield did say he could tamper with cause and effect to some extent so that I could bring someone along." (Naofumi)

It's likely that this is the tampered world.

Just how thorough was he?

Anyways, after finishing the menial labor, I led Raphtalia, and returned to my room.

I didn't notice it because I was depressed over being forced to cook, but I had casually brought Raphtalia into the room.

"It's a bit narrow, isn't it?" (Raphtalia)

Well, compared to the house in the village, of course my room is narrow.

I thought my room would make her draw back, but it seems that's not the case.

If I had to decide, I would assume she just didn't know what anything there was.

"T-that's right." (Naofumi)

"So this is Naofumi-sa...n's room?" (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia restlessly surveys the inside.

The posters and figures are in the closet.

There's only Manga left around.

"Are these books?" (Raphtalia)

"Yeah." (Naofumi)

"Is it alright if I read them?" (Raphtalia)

"Can you read them?" (Naofumi)

She doesn't know the lettering system.

But if you think about it, you can understand some manga just by the art.

Raphtalia pulls a volume of Manga out of the bookshelf, and opens it.

Its contents were of a normal high school boy and girl's club activities. It was a typical romcom.

"Is this about the place nobles go to study?" (Raphtalia) "Well, it's a characteristic of our culture, per say, if I were to put it simply..." (Naofumi) "This resembles the art from the Hero of the Spear, and the Tailor." (Raphtalia) Yep... those two did it.

It was actually quite popular in the village.

The Tailor did look like someone who would draw Doujinshi. And yes, she did end up drawing them.

Motoyasu's were ero-doujins. They were mainly of steamy love with Firo.

But those were just him venting out his emotions.

In that sense, Manga existed in that world.

Though the genre was a bit biased.

I truly had absolutely no interest, so I didn't really remember it.

"Ah, right. Raphtalia, please remember this." (Naofumi) "What could it be?" (Raphtalia)

"In this world, in the country I live in, almost all of the people around our age attend school. You're probably going to be treated as if you're attending as well." (Naofumi) "M-me too? To study for nobility?" (Raphtalia)

The place for nobles to study... It seems I'll have to offer a bit of explanation.

Well, I'll put that matter aside for now. As long as she understands that.

"Yeah, so until we figure something out, we'll have to live our lives here. And so, let's try hard to get you to fit in here." (Naofumi) "Y-yes..." (Raphtalia)

First, I'll have to teach her how to read and write.

Hmm.

By the way, I checked the Four Holy Weapons' Manual after that, and it showed absolutely no change.

Frustration

One week passed since then.

The Four Saint Weapons book had its contents updated little by little.

While wondering if there was anything we could do, we tried tampering with our straps at first and going to the library many times, but there was no development.

The days passed with us worrying endlessly about what we should do. [\[9\]](#)

“I’ll be going to practice with your little brother.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia started sword practice in the garden with my little brother.

It was only with Shinai though. [\[10\]](#)

My little brother was beaten black and blue by Raphtalia and was frustrated.

Kendo was different in many ways, but Raphtalia was still at an expert level.

Or I should say, she ended up being on the instructing side.

I think if I was in my little brother’s position, I would parry lightly.

The weapons in our possession were currently in an idle state.

In one week, there were many incidents of cultural friction from Raphtalia coming to my world.

Being surprised by the television and home appliances was a given, but.... she adapted quicker than I imagined.

Well, everything could be settled with magic. In that world, that was.

It seems she thought the television was similar to recording crystals, which

she had seen normally.

Although, she did show an interest in the program contents.

Movies and such were also.... I considered being indiscrete at this kind of time, but we did go see them.

I hoped she would mistakenly believe the movies were real, but it seems the Raphtalia with comprehension watched the movies and thought them to be fictional stories, or otherwise records of people who were summoned into another world like I was.

So she didn't make such a fuss.

Our courses were different, but she also showed up at university like me, just in case.

In any case, everyone recognized Raphtalia as an obvious existence.

So in reality, the reaction was this kind of thing.....

Right now is the result of helping my mother with the housework. Raphtalia was helping with the laundry and cleaning.

I was cooking meals every day for some reason though.

“Um.. What is this?” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia brought a little Shigaraki ornament from the room and asks me.

I was informed by my little brother that it was something I gave Raphtalia.

To give Shigaraki ware to a girlfriend as a present, what kind of taste was that?

“Shigaraki ware.” (Naofumi)

“Huh.... Doesn't it kind of look like Raph-chan? Naofumi-sa...n gave Raph-chan

this kind of appearance in the past.” (Raphtalia) “I think it doesn’t resemble him much, although I guess it’s true that it looks that way.” (Naofumi)

Raph-chan has way more charm and fanciness.

I guess it’s rude to confuse plushies and ornaments.

“So.....why....” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia had trouble verbalizing her words.

I knew what she was referring to.

“Ah.....yeah.” (Naofumi)

Shigaraki ware has, you know... that stands out. [\[11\]](#)

Incidentally, although I haven’t seen them, there are female ones apparently.

“I think because they’re tanuki, maybe.” (Naofumi)

“Tanuki....” (Raphtalia)

“In my world, they’re also called Raccoon Dogs.” (Naofumi)

While I was informing her, Raphtalia made a really sullen face.

Well, it’s because they’re not really a popular animal.

In reality, there aren’t many personified-tanuki heroines in manga or light novels, and they’re not very famous.

“In other words, Naofumi-san thinks I am like this?” (Raphtalia) “No, I didn’t say that much. There’s also an animal with a similar name, the Raccoon. They’re also called Araiguma though.” (Naofumi) [\[12\]](#)

I used the computer to show Raphtalia.

When I tried searching, they appeared quite sufficiently.

“I feel like I know what Naofumi-san is thinking when he sometimes looks at me.” (Raphtalia)

Oh? I have a hunch that a strange misunderstanding has arisen.

Well, it's also true though.

“And so you pictured this when you were giving me an alias, I see.” (Raphtalia)
[13]

“Don't be like that.” (Naofumi)

“Hmph.....” (Raphtalia)

Ah, Raphtalia was sulking.

That is, it is quite rude to be compared to Shigaraki ware.

“It couldn't be helped. Because there was an animal that resembled a Demi-human.” (Naofumi) “Sigh.... I understand. I understand, but it's hard to accept it.” (Raphtalia) “And so, this is.... It looks like a piggybank.” (Naofumi)

“It seems so. There's a hole at the back for inserting money.” (Raphtalia)
With sounds of jingling, Raphtalia shook the Shigaraki piggybank.

I wonder where it was bought?

“.....Father wasn't this big though?” (Raphtalia)

“Huh?”

“Nothing!” (Raphtalia)

There was even something like that.

Apart from that, Raphtalia, who had been learning the alphabet little by little, tampered with my computer while I was in the toilet and was astonished at my

playing of dating sims.

In the end, Raphtalia with an erotic scene reflected in her gaze was terrifying.

Well, I suppose it's similar to the slate terminal and keyboard in Rat's laboratory, so it's not like she wouldn't know how to use it.

"R-raphtalia?" (Naofumi)

She clicked with the mouse as if she didn't hear me, her face bright red.

I was worried she would decide nothing else mattered and kill time for a while.

However, Raphtalia was also of the appropriate age.... No, based on her actual age, isn't this no good?

She was the same age as me in our census though.

"This is...." (Raphtalia)

"He~y." (Naofumi)

"Hyau!" (Raphtalia)

Surprised, Raphtalia stiffened and then fell off her chair with a thud.

She appeared extremely flustered and panicked.

I understand her feelings.

If someone came up to me when I was reading an erotic book, I'd probably feel considerably shaken.

"Ah, Naofumi-sa...n." (Raphtalia)

"I'd rather you didn't touch other people's computers that much, but...."
(Naofumi) "S-sorry." (Raphtalia)

I have a hunch that it was too late, because Raphtalia had already quite a few of the manga in my room.

There were times where she'd read somewhat enthusiastically.

She had seemed embarrassed to ask me what was written. Moreover, going to my little brother and asking.

She was often seen with an erotic doujin that she got from somewhere.

When I speculated, it was established that she borrowed it from my little brother.

Despite telling others to buy doujinshi for him, what was my little brother planning by showing them to the pure-hearted Raphtalia?

And yet he goes and lends out doujinshi and dating sims from other people's rooms as if it were natural.

And well.... Various things happened.

I remember my dark history.

I think Raphtalia did well, but....

“Naofumi-sa...n..... Come over here.” (Raphtalia)

I'd prefer it if she didn't copy those dating sim characters and lie on the bed while saying that sort of thing.

Being influenced by a game and doing the same actions is just like someone from another world, huh.

One way or another, getting influenced by fictional works can't be helped.

Because that's how pure she was.

Even so, I have to caution her when she's mistaken.

“It's fine if it's just fiction, but I'll get weak in reality. In Sadina's case.... Well she

does it as a joke, but Raphtalia is fine as you are now.” (Naofumi) “I-is that so.....” (Raphtalia)

She seems somewhat disappointed.

Raphtalia was relatively active though.....

She probably researched because she thought I'd be pleased by this.

In reality, I do feel a little happy, but this course is wrong.

I kind of felt like Raphtalia is being contaminated by modern society.

I wonder if it's alright?

And that.... Let's think about that later.

Right now is the Four Saint Weapons book.

I think I should talk about the continuation.

Itsuki and the others who were left behind had sunken into despair at losing us, but they couldn't cry forever.

It seems the Goddess commandeered the resurrected Queen and invaded Melromark together with the Reincarnates.

They used the Queen, who was well versed in Trash's tactics, and because the opponent was the resurrected Queen, Trash was in a bad condition and wasn't able to seriously refine their tactics, putting Melromark at a disadvantage.

The Vassals were certainly strong, but the Reincarnates became strong due to being granted various abilities by Medea, and so apparently they had a handicap.

The story referred to them as the Hero of the Bow or the Hero of the Cane and such though.

The Four Saint Weapons book had written that Itsuki was fighting at the frontlines along with the people that the Hero of the Shield left behind.

Within that were also descriptions which seemed to refer to Sadina, Kiel, Raph-chan, and Gaelion.

Gaelion was treated as the Dragon Emperor.

In the text, there was an explanation saying that the unsealed Ouryuu was useless as the worlds had already assimilated completely.

Damn.... So it's saying we erred in regards to when to release our final measure.

But.. As if we could sacrifice two thirds of the world population.

I could infer from the text that every day was leading to ruin.

Scenes in which Firo tried hard and played an active role were also mentioned.

She had been the one who mourned the most at our deaths.

It seems Melty somehow encouraged her.

Right now, Melty was proceeding to the frontline as a commander.

It seemed they were somehow trying to find a way out.

Even then, the result was poor, and now was certainly when the collapse of the frontline commenced.

It was a scene in which showed the Reincarnates faced Melty.

We couldn't do anything.

It was extremely frustrating. It's like saying dead people can't do anything.

It looks like there haven't been any more casualties among the heroes since then, but I don't know how long that will last.

I'm in the real world that I had longed to return to for ages, but when I see

this kind of thing, I'm not sure what to do.

So far, we've been spending our days looking for a solution, wondering if there was anything we could do.

The Net Games aren't linked from that point anyway.... if we were able to return, I'd procure weapons from modern society for everyone and—... or so I considered.

I guess swords, spears, and small arms are probably things I can't obtain in Japan.

And so, I bought various weapon encyclopedias from the bookstore as a substitute idea.

Because it seems like we could make some ground-breaking arms if I show them to the Old Man at the Weapon Shop.

In addition, I went to places like the hardware store and bought meaningless items that looked as if they could be absorbed into our weapons.

There were drills and such, but a Drill Spear?

If I had to say, then it seems like they'll become Itsuki's equipment based on their shape though.

I wonder if Ren will be like us and do something in his own world?

Because his world is a Sci-Fi world.

If we could meet again, it seems like he'd bring some amazing weapons.

Meeting again.... I wonder if it's possible.

At this rate, won't we just stay in the real world without being able to do anything?

We searched through various texts and all sorts of other things, but we couldn't find any useful information.

We also investigated whether there were any humans who had been transported from another world, but well... we didn't discover any, fictional works were the limit.

I also wondered whether there were games or stories that were similar, but the result was unfavorable.

Choice

“Oi! You’re listening, right? Do something!” (Naofumi)

How many times have I called out to the Four Holy Weapons’ Manual and Shield Strap up until now?

The day is already ending...

My parents cautioned me to go study for college, but my body is unable to.

What do you want me to do?

“Oi!” (Naofumi)

I slam the book shut.

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“What is it?” (Raphtalia)

“...Perhaps we’re already too late.” (Naofumi)

We’ve had absolutely no progress since getting here, and perhaps there truly is nothing we can do.

As I was thinking that, I got the feeling that my field of vision was turning pitch black.

“I... think it would be best if I stopped reading this book...” (Naofumi)

The days pile onto each other, and I can’t keep reading the book that records the path leading to the deaths of my comrades.

“Forget everything, and as if nothing happened...” (Naofumi)

On my words, Raphtalia seems like she’s about to burst into tears.

“Please, don’t say something like that.” (Raphtalia)

“I know, but...” (Naofumi)

“Until the end, you cannot give up.” (Raphtalia)

“...” (Naofumi)

“Didn’t you want to return here after bringing peace to the world? I hate it. An ending that leaves such a bad taste in my mouth.” (Raphtalia) “That’s true... but even if we were to return to that world, what would we do?” (Naofumi)

“What do you mean by that?” (Raphtalia)

“You know what I’m trying to say, right?” (Naofumi)

My question leaves Raphtalia silent.

Right, the identity of Medea’s attacks remain unknown.

What’s more, she took all the Heroes’ attacks as if they were on lower levels than mosquitoes.

Even if we got a little bit of damage through, it was but a scratch. It’s best to think we had absolutely no chance of victory there.

My job was to protect. But, insufficient in my role, I wasn’t able to do anything as I was taken out.

I don’t even think it has anything to do with ability or anything.

“To her, that fight was just a game... wasn’t it?” (Naofumi)

She flaunted her advantage so readily. There’s no way I wouldn’t despair over that loss.

Even if we were able to return to that world, we would only end up dead again.

“Even so... I will fight.” (Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia puts her hand on my face.

“Naofumi-san, even if you get the chance, please stay in this world. I am... going to follow the path I believe is right. I don't want to choose the option that leaves me having died a pointless death.” (Raphtalia)

Her words made me remember my own irritation, and made me want to smack myself for becoming a coward.

“That's right... we can't just stop fighting because we lost. Even if we may just die over there... it would be for what we believed in.” (Naofumi)

Just what was I so afraid of?

Right now, there truly is a bitch trying to end the world for fun.

Medea said it was for leveling up or something.

As if I'd let it get destroyed for the sake of that!

Tomorrow onwards, let's increase the scope of our investigations.

There may be some library out there with something like the Four Holy Weapons' Manual.

“Raphtalia, don't underestimate me. I would never be satisfied if I ran away here. Because when I met the Spirit of the Shield and Atlas, I made a decision. I would bring peace to the world, and then live in this world with you once I was satisfied with the conclusion.” (Naofumi)

In an instant, color drained from the world, and sound disappeared in its entirety.

“W-what!?”

When I look out the window, I saw that the birds had stopped in midair, with their wings positioned to flap.

The Four Holy Weapons' Manual began letting off a faint light, as it floated in the air.

Even though it never reacted once 'til now, what's it doing?

The pages rapidly flip back and forth.

The Shield Strap starts emitting light as well, and the light took a form of a person.

That shape was... Atlas.

"It's been a while, Naofumi-sama."

"Atlas... san." (Raphtalia)

"Yes. It's been even longer, Raphtalia-san." (Atlas)

"Atlas? Why are you coming out of the Shield? Are you alright?" (Naofumi)

"For now, yes. As you can see, the time in Naofumi-sama's world is currently stopped." (Atlas) "Well..." (Naofumi)

I already got that part from the window, and there's no sound or color coming from the rest of the world.

If it was in another world, I wouldn't be that surprised, but it's a bit disturbing over here.

"Is this really my world?" (Naofumi)

"Yes, it is indeed Naofumi-sama's world. This world's principle of cause and effect has been tampered with to allow Raphtalia to have a place in it, it seems." (Atlas) "Fumu... and? Why did they do something like this?" (Naofumi)

"A reward... it seems." (Atlas)

Atlas closes her eyes part-way.

A reward, is it?

That's quite some nice service you're offering if you're going to give a reward to the guy who retired before reaching the goal.

Well, looking at Atlas's expression, I can see this won't be that nice of a chat.

"From the Spirit of the Shield?" (Naofumi)

"Yes. As an emergency measure, the Spirit of the Shield reluctantly sent you back to your original world." (Atlas) "Well yeah, I would have died at that rate."

(Naofumi) "Yes, it's a blessing you had that medicine inside of your Shield."

(Atlas) "That medicine?" (Naofumi)

"What you put in to unlock the Shield of 0."

Ah, that dragon-repelling poison.

It had a skill effective against God, so I wondered what other powers it had, but it can even let you evade death?

"Because of that medicine, the Four Heroes were barely able to retain their power, and Naofumi-sama was barely able to fool death." (Atlas)

That means the possibility Ran and Motoyasu are still alive is high.

Also, if some of the other Heroes die once, perhaps it'd be alright.

"Let me say this first, but the Vassals' lives aren't guaranteed. Raphtalia-san was revived on a whim, apparently." (Atlas)

With a somewhat sullen expression, Atlas says this while facing Raphtalia.

"It was a mistake, a miracle stemming from Raphtalia's coincidence with Naofumi-sama, and her connection to his heart at the time." (Atlas)

Sparks seem to fly between the two women.

No matter what happens, she never changes.

“And so? Why are you doing something like this now?” (Naofumi) “According to the Spirit of the Shield, he wants to ask you what you want to do from here on out.” (Atlas) “... You mean whether to forget everything and live in this world in peace, or die in a foreign world?” (Naofumi) “... Yes.” (Atlas)

Atlas gives her response after a heavy period of silence.

Those options are quite harsh.

For one week, I've lived here with Raphtalia. It's not as if I don't feel that it would be nice to do this forever.

That's just how comfortable it was.

“The Spirit of the Shield says your opponent was just too powerful. That there's no established way to defeat someone even the 0 Skills didn't work on.” (Atlas)
“So they don't have any measures?” (Naofumi)

Until the wave ended, didn't they summon the Four Heroes because they would be able to overcome it?

“Originally, they would just wait for the wave to quiet down, and even in the worst of situations, there was a possibility to avert them with the 0 Skills.” (Atlas) “What do you mean by that?”

I think I heard something similar from her earlier.

That on the path to overcoming the wave, it would somehow work out.

It's as if they have some sort of flaw, or disadvantage.

“That much is... it's just that based on the power offered by the medicine, those of the physical world should be put in a disadvantageous situation if the wave

extends for too long... or it should be like that.” (Atlas)

Disadvantageous situation...

Does that bitch of a Goddess have something like a weakness?

In the first place, there has to be a reason why she never came down to the world in the first place.

For someone with strange powers like hers, I’m sure she’s destroyed various worlds before.

“But the world’s already assimilated.” (Naofumi)

“Yes. It’s already... too late, says the Spirit of the Shield.” (Atlas)

Too late...

I was summoned as a Hero, and I came all the way here. Yet it just ends with those words?

But...

“As if I could give up that easily.” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Yes... and so, the Spirit of the Shield will wring out his last bit of power, and give it an all or nothing chance by opening the door to our world. He’s asking for your decision.” (Atlas) “So it’s a one-way ticket to hell?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. This time, if you lose, it’s truly the end. You really will die. No... death may be one of the better fates you could receive.” (Atlas)

That goddess can move even the dead to her will. Even if I die, I may end up her puppet.

How troublesome.

“Even so... will you go back?” (Atlas)

Even if I survive, I can’t return. That’s what the Spirit of the Shield is trying to

tell me.

“I am... always with Naofumi-sama. Raphtalia-san is also here. I do feel bad for everyone, and Onii-sama, but... giving up is still a valid option. No one there would ever blame Naofumi-sama or Raphtalia-san for it.” (Atlas) “I don’t want to. For me... Naofumi-sama, the world, they’re all irreplaceable.” (Raphtalia) “As expected of Raphtalia-san. The Hero of the Hammer is quite happy for you.” (Atlas) “Naofumi-sama, regardless of what decision you make here, I must follow that path I’ve chosen. I offer my deepest apologies.” (Raphtalia) “... No? Raphtalia, I just said it before, right?” (Naofumi)

When she class-upped, and in various other times, I said but a single thing.

I want her to choose the life she wants to live.

That even if I wasn’t there, she had to choose her path for herself.

And by that right, Raphtalia has chosen to return to her original world, and fight.

I have not the qualifications to stop her.

This is my problem, and mine alone.

So what should I do?

Let’s see... if all of this happiness was for the sake of this decision, then I think I would curse fate as I accepted it.

No matter what conclusion comes about, in order to not leave any regrets, I want to protect everyone with my life on the line.

“It appears that you’ve already come to a conclusion...” (Atlas) “Atlas, I’m sorry. I’m going to have to waste the life you sacrificed your life to save.” (Naofumi)

“No... as long as Naofumi-sama is satisfied with this, I will always follow and serve you.” (Atlas) “Yep, I’m going to return to that world. Even if it ends with my death.” (Naofumi)

As I give my response, the strap and manual glow brighter, and a pillar of light

manifests.

“Next... if you enter this pillar, you will cross dimensions, and you’ll probably be able to get there. I think.” (Atlas) “Oi, oi. Those are some really unreliable words there.” (Naofumi) “Well, the situation is as it is. Apparently, this path has been connected with the greatest possible conditions to ensure things go well. It took a while to accomplish that.” (Atlas) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“Apparently, Naofumi-sama and Raphtalia-san’s strong desire to return was one of the necessary factors.” (Atlas) “That sounds like the plot of an old game.” (Naofumi)

In that game, you win in the end, and get your Happy Ending, but I don’t have much hope for this one.

If you ask me whether I’m scared or not, I’m terrified.

In the first place, in all the fights I’ve been in, there’s never been one where I wasn’t afraid.

And I’ve never faced a supreme being who I had no means of dealing with.

Yep, I’m pretty sure I’ll die.

Even so, I just don’t want to give up.

It’s quite a strange feeling.

When I came to that world, I honestly wanted it to fall to ruin; but now my mind is filled with thoughts of saving it.

What changed me... Raphtalia, and Atlas. Our comrades that are still fighting at this very moment.

I’m not sure if I should say this myself, but my personality is quite twisted. It isn’t the best.

But still, this isn’t a bad feeling.

That's right.

We're not returning just to die.

We're returning to give it a shot.

If my feelings are what invited me to that world, then I'll just follow what I believe in.

"The Spirit of the Hammer is in agreement. Please be careful." (Atlas) "Yes, thank you very much." (Raphtalia)

As Raphtalia answers, Atlas smiles... she changes into a mass of light, and vanishes.

We gather up all the things we thought would be useful in that world.

I'll bet they won't actually be of any use, but they'll at least be of some relief.

"Then, I guess we'll be off." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

We muster up our courage, and plunged into the pillar of light.

An Enemy of an Enemy is

It's not like we're just going there to die.

We're leaving to protect everyone.

I envisioned that wish strongly in my mind.

Even if we don't have the power to defeat Medea, I'll go.

But if possible, I want to protect them.

Even if my body is to rot away.

It felt as if I had suddenly run into a wall at full force.

But there was absolutely no pain.

It was as if I had crashed into a sponge.

What surrounded me was the darkness of night, and in the sky, stars much bigger than normal were glittering.

No, gem-like stars so big that it was offsetting glowed around me.

But the ground was too dark, and I couldn't really see it.

... As I looked around, I realized that Raphtalia wasn't by my side.

"Raphtalia!"

Even if I call out, there's no answer

"Raphtalia!"

I call out her name multiple times, but no voice rises to respond.

Is this already the other world?

I check to see if I can pull up my Status Magic.

... There's no response.

By the light of the stars, I began searching the area.

I trampled the ground of the gentle slope one step at a time as I rose up.

... Just how long have I been walking?

I think it's been around 30 minutes.

On top of the hill, on top of a large stone, I met someone clad in a robe that covered their entire body.

The figure was sitting on the ground as they gazed at the night sky.

Around him, many small lights gathered like fireflies.

His build was... short.

About up to my hip.

But, he had quite a bit of width to him, so I can't imagine him being human.

"You're finally here... I was watching from the top of the hill."

Like that, the robed figure called out to me.

He was watching? In this mountain so dark I can barely see my own feet?

Anyways, I'll try talking to him.

Depending on the outcome, I may end up fighting.

"I've lost my way. Did you happen to see a pretty girl anywhere?" (Naofumi)

“Eh? What are you talking about?”

This guy looks really shady.

The robe covering his entire body is just way too suspicious.

While he’s sitting, there’s something off about the way he’s wearing it.

There’s a strange extension in the back.

I guess I should assume he has a tail under there.

A Demi-human, or perhaps a Beastman. That possibility is high.

“More importantly, if you tell me where you were trying to go, I may be of some help.”

“My, how kind of you. Sorry, but I don’t have a personality that lets me trust people like that.” (Naofumi) “I see... then why don’t I start by telling you about me?”

He dismounted the rock, and started to walk towards me as he answered.

The light of his fireflies illuminated the area.

“To put it bluntly, you guys ran into me. That’s why I was a bit curious.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“When you got here, did you not feel yourself running into something? That was me.”

“I... see...” (Naofumi)

So that back there was his fault?

Does that mean we failed in transporting to the other world?

“You sure made a mess of things!” (Naofumi)

“W-why are you getting angry? I was just walking around normally. The ones who suddenly changed your path and crashed into me was you guys, wasn’t it?”

“Mu...” (Naofumi)

Thinking back, Atlas told me to wish strongly to return to the world. Instead, I... wished to protect everyone.

I was also thinking about beating that Goddess.

This train of thought... could it be it altered my course?

Geh... Then only Raphtalia was able to go back? What should I do!?

Shield! Please respond!

I think that as I confirm the Shield Strap.

A light comes out of it, and starts circling the robed figure before me.

And wait, aren’t those fireflies circling the area the Holy Weapon Spirits!?

“You... just who are you!? Why are you accompanied by the Spirits?” (Naofumi)

“So you can see them?”

The dubious robed figure seems surprised.

“Well, even if you say I’m accompanied by them... unfortunately, I can’t really see them, you know.”

“Are you blind?” (Naofumi)^[14]

“No, it’s not that. I can’t see Spirits, or beings of that sort. I guess it has something to do with my constitution?”

...

Something clicks, and the robed guy started to bring something out from the robe’s depths.

Is it a weapon!?

I braced myself without thinking, but the figure merely opened his hands to show it to me.

It was an expensive-looking necklace with intricate ornaments fastened on it.

“This is what’s attracting the Sprits here. You see, the Sprits can’t perceive me either.”

He threw the necklace to the ground at my feet.

And the surrounding spirits started swarming around it.

... He doesn’t appear to be lying.

“Even if you ask me who I am, I’m not sure if you’d be able to understand any answer I give. If circumstances permitted, I would like to tell you, I guess. About how a normal person ended up in a place like this.”

Even the Spirit of the Shield left it to approach him.

There may be some merit in listening to what he has to say.

In the first place, there’s also the question of where it is I am.

“Can I ask you something?” (Naofumi)

“I’ll give you as many answers as you want.”

“... Then, where is this?” (Naofumi)

I do think the starry sky is pretty, but I really can’t see where I’m going.

Even with the light of the spirits, that doesn’t really change.

“Here? Would you understand if I called it the dimensional rift?”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“It’s the space between one world and another. Each and every light you see floating in the sky is but another world.”^[15]

The man points his finger to the sky as he answers.

As I squinted my eyes, I could see that they were, indeed, not stars.

They kinda looked like crystal balls floating in space, I guess? Not like true stars.

And they looked closer than I thought. As if I could reach out and grab one if I had a ladder.

“This is the rift you can reach from any world. You seem to have come from a world without magic, so I guess if I put it simply, this would be space? Well, something similar to that. A rule-less world of disorder. A normal human would be guaranteed to get lost here.”

“Well... I do understand that my sense of common sense isn’t working here.”
(Naofumi) “So it isn’t.”

I gaze up at the sky.

I saw the circular stars shining brightly.

These orbs, so each and every one of them is its own world... Where is the one I want to reach?

Unless the Spirit of the Shield tells me, I have no way of knowing.

“What’s next?”

“Let’s see... who are you?” (Naofumi)

Let’s assume the Spirit of the Shield can guide me where I need to go. Now why did this spirit draw closer to him?

“Before that, I’d like you to tell me a little about yourself. Or else, I’ll have no way of answering.”

“Mu...” (Naofumi)

Yeah, before pressing a guy for information, it’s best that I at least name myself.

Even I’ve hidden my rank to do things in that world.

If you want to ask for money, you have to find out what the other person wants first.

Meaning I’ll have to give him an understanding of my situation.

His robe’s been suspicious from the start, but he seems to be earnestly answering my questions.

“My name is Iwatani Naofumi. In a modern world without magic, I’m a college student, and in a certain world, I was summoned as the Hero of the Shield.”
(Naofumi) “Is that so? About how far advanced is the world you call modern?”

“...?” (Naofumi)

“You didn’t get that? The fact that there are so many worlds out there means there’s magic civilizations, machine civilizations, and many, many more. So when you tell me a modern world... is it a world with robots, or one that runs on magic? I’d just like a general idea on what sort of world it is.”

The only response I could give to that was silence.

What sort of civilization?

Just how far along is my own world?

I was raised on Manga and Games, so I have a slight grasp of it, but I only have my own world and a magical middle age-ish world to compare, so it’s a bit hard to determine.

“Let’s see... Having an idea of its tendencies and structure is enough. How old

is it? Does it have autonomous sentient AI robots? Just how great is its ability to transfer information?”

“Its age is...”

I answered the robe’s questions to some extent.

And he nodded, as if he was satisfied.

“I see. Thanks. And so, you were summoned to another world by the spirits to lend them your power.”

“Well... you’re not wrong.” (Naofumi)

“Well, that’s how summons go nowadays. And?”

“Yeah, I was summoned to a world on the brink of ruin. And there, I fought the wave, a phenomenon of world assimilation. But a girl who called herself God used a mysterious attack, and when I thought I had been killed, I was sent back to my own modern world. After that... well, I’m in the middle of going back to the world I was summoned to once more.” (Naofumi)

I make things short, as I explain my own situation to the robe.

He nods again and again.

“So you’ve made me say all that. I’ll have you answer my questions.” (Naofumi)

“Naturally. Then I’ll speak of everything that is within the scope of what I’m allowed to say.”

He cleared his throat, before speaking once more.

“I’m a being who has crossed many worlds to kill the one you are fighting, a slayer of gods. That’s perfect for you, right?”

“Wha—”

Wait, wait, wait. What’s this supposed to mean?

Someone that convenient actually exists?

“It appears you don’t believe me.”

“Of course not. If someone like you existed, then why isn’t she dead yet?”
(Naofumi) “Hey, you see... please look up at the sky.”

As told, I look up.

Infinite worlds stacked up next to one another.

“I’m just a single person, you know? There are as many people plotting such things as there are stars in this sky. And for a long time, many of these problems are breaking out simultaneously. There’s no way I could deal with all of them.”

“As many as there are stars in the sky?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. Since you’ve kept up with me this far, I guess I can tell you what sort of beings they are.”

The robe started explaining things one at a time.

“They’re generally the results of worlds too ancient.”

“Ancient?” (Naofumi)

“Putting it in your world’s standards, if science and technology continued to advance without end, what do you think would happen?”

“I wonder...” (Naofumi)

I don’t really like getting sucked into his pace, but let’s try thinking about it.

A world with advanced technology.

The world I knew had magic, and heroes, and monsters.

If you were to give it a genre, it would be fantasy.

So a technological one would be Sci-fi.

ESPers, and giant robots. Things like that would fight.

“According to Manga, I guess there would be giant robot wars across the cosmos.” (Naofumi) “After that. Try thinking of what comes next.”

“... I don’t know.” (Naofumi)

There are plenty of diverging possibilities.

Humanity could decline, it could continue to advance, it could migrate to another star.

“Well, they number few, but there are some who put their efforts into stopping death.”

“I... see...” (Naofumi)

“Eventually, that research comes to fruition, and the populace becomes immortal. Bodies that don’t die no matter how much you cut them up. Souls that don’t wither no matter how many millions of years pass.”

That’s already transitioning into the realm of literary creation.

I’ve read stories about immortal bodies. They were always harsh ones.

Even so, if they even modified souls not to wither, then maybe they could stand the test of time.

And it’s not like only a single individual’s immortal, so I guess that can be called the completion of one civilization.^[16]

“When that happens, there’s always that one guy who proclaims themselves god, and looks down on all those that are of the same make as them. That’s still fine in itself. They make moves to control more and more, and conquer their entire world. Then, what’s next? How about expanding to yet another world?”

... I see. How simple. How idiotic.

Stuff like that was done in my world, and that world as well.

“So they start invasions of other worlds?” (Naofumi)

“Correct. This time, they take the magic they call science to another world, and go to war. And the amount of worlds they control increases. In order to fulfill their greed, I guess. Some of them get killed, but I’ll bet most of them see success.”

“That’s more troublesome than anything. So is that her identity?” (Naofumi)

“No, that was just an example, so it’s probably different. There are countless ways to ascend to that level, and if you had to say, I think she leans towards the magic side of the spectrum. You can imagine it to some extent, right?”

“Then tell me. What is her goal? She said she wanted EXP.” (Naofumi) “It’s probably just as she said. She wants to get stronger.”

“Stronger?” (Naofumi)

“Yeah. She sucks magic and life out of the world, and converts it to her own power. And if that happens, the only thing left for the parched world is to disappear. Well, I’ll bet the number of worlds she can turn to power is limited.”

I tried to get into the robe’s in-depth explanation.

So she came to suck all the power from that world, and she can’t do anything to a world without magic.

“She used attacks with things like infinity, and 100%, and unlimited in their names. If you don’t know exactly what she did... I guess they were conceptual attacks. Since she attacked past, present, and future, it looks like she can do temporal attacks too. If she even attacked parallel worlds, she really, REALLY wanted you dead, man.”

“Conceptual attack...” (Naofumi)

I try to remember that Damn Goddess's attack.

I died without knowing anything.

It was probably that.

“Right. She just faces her enemies, and declares as such. It's like the logic of a child's game. The means don't actually matter, as long as she transmits the message 『The Enemy has Died』 across. Even if you used all the means in the world, I doubt you would be able to beat an enemy like that. She politely told you she was eternal, and immortal, and perpetual, or something like that, and she seemed to be obsessive over her speed too, so she must be quite the battle maniac.”

Pushing messages onto people...

Honestly, I have no idea what he's talking about, but let's forget common sense for a second.

Normally, you would have to damage an enemy, and they would die in a pool of their own blood.

If you take away the damage and the blood, the enemy dies without anything happening to them.

I really doubt such a thing is possible, but she definitely did something crazy and illogical like that.

“For someone like that... how can I win?” (Naofumi)

“So I think it's best to wait for someone in a similar position to her, don't you think? The spirit lending you power was probably waiting for something like that to come.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, sorry, I forgot the explanation. Of course, for every world that tries to conquer another, there's another that tries to protect. There's an unlimited

number of worlds out there. For pleasure, to satisfy their senses of justice, there are some like that too.”

Sense of Justice, is it?

The past Itsuki, Motoyasu, and Ren pop up in my head.

It's true that helping others can make you feel good.

There's rarely a person who finds the honest thanks of others to be displeasing.

And that feeling is amplified the worse the greater the depravity of their opponents.

But this guy... the way he put it seems to be concealing some meaning.

No, that may be to make me feel relieved.

We were just having a normal conversation, but it's not like we're allies, and I'm not sure if I can trust him.

There's no defining rule that says the enemy of an enemy is a friend.

There's plenty a chance that the enemy of an enemy is but another enemy.

Immortality

“Did you find my explanation strange?”

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“But, I mean... rules are relative to each world. What’s right and wrong is dependent on the person, right? It’s not like I don’t see that. And to fulfill a sense of justice, there’s plenty a world that would lend its power and cause the fall of another.”

“What? Weren’t they supposed to save the world from its collapse?”

(Naofumi) “In your world’s words, would you fight an armed criminal empty-handed? In order to replenish the power expended saving the world, they’ll probably use some of it as fodder.”

“That’s putting the cart before the horse.” (Naofumi)

“The larger bug kills the smaller ones to survive. Is that wrong?”

... I can’t deny it.

Rules are whatever was made by the people there. There’s some logic to that.

From my experience, I can say that persecuting the Hero of the Shield is Melromark’s rule.

In truth, from the perspective of the many different forces I fought, I’m seen as the bad guy.

Since I’m evil, the right thing to do is defeat evil.

“But... she’s already descended to the world, right?”

“Yeah, and she’s dragged eight different worlds together.” (Naofumi) “It’s probable that in the world that you’re trying to go to, the conditions needed for

her to descend was the linking of eight worlds.”

“I don’t know the exact logic behind it, but that seemed to be the case.”
(Naofumi)

Putting together the information I have, that seems right.

Or else, all she would have to do is come down and kill everyone in order to level.

If there was a reason she couldn’t, that’s the safest guess by process of elimination.

“That’s right. Let’s compare this all to a paper. You can place a light stone on it, right? But what about if the stone were heavier? You’ll need a paper thick enough to support it. The paper is the world, and the stone, god. No, it’s probably completely different, but I guess if she just came down as she pleased, there would be terrible aftereffects.”

A paper and a stone...

After the world assimilation started, the monsters’ levels all rose drastically.

The paper’s capacity wasn’t high enough, so it spiked its level?

The world has its own width, and a set amount of weight it can carry.

She gets it just big enough to sustain her before coming down.

I guess there’s some sense to it.

“... I get what you’re saying. Then if we report it to a defending world, will we be saved?” (Naofumi) “It’s probably impossible. It’ll be hard to get all the way there.”

“What do you mean?” (Naofumi)

“The one who latched onto your world seems to be playing. Like a game, she makes the countries and people of the world fight just to see who will win. And regardless of whatever country comes out on top, if she senses a threat coming closer, she’ll immediately suck up all the power in the world, pack up, and run

away. In order to see those that believed in her, those that were delighted at their own victory, fall into despair, and laugh. I've heard about something like that. People who find delight in things like that."

Just how much of a bitch is she?

Nothing's happened yet, but I still feel anger building in my stomach.

"To put it simply, it's devolved down to a situation where the world will be destroyed at the push of a button. It's not within the scope where it can be saved. Too late. Even with her grand talks of the past, present, or future, once the world itself is gone, there's no reversing time. There's only something like migrating to another world."

"But that doesn't mean I can give up!" (Naofumi)

I have a single wish. To bring peace to that place.

I decided. I will save that world.

"I know. I never told you to give up. Even so... with her doing that much, I guess she's at least being monitored, but there's... Internal discord, was it called?"

As the robed figure muttered to himself, I imagined a criminal infiltrating the ranks of a police force.

While earning trust, he continues to perpetrate crimes.

Even if he makes a report to the Spirits, if the person reporting is on the other side to start with, help won't come.

"Then are you... a citizen of one of those protecting worlds?" (Naofumi) "No. I'm different. I'm just in this line of work because I want to be. I'm just doing whatever I believe in. And so, I have as many reasons to fight as there are people in this world."

“Truly infinite?” (Naofumi)

“Right. Whatever’s the right course of action varies by place. Though I think the one you’re fighting has a bit too twisted of a personality.”

‘I see...’ I mutter, as the robed figure takes a few steps forward, and points.

“The world you’re trying to reach is probably that one. But even if you can see it from here, it’s quite far.”

He points into the distant sky.

And there, a single large ball floated.

But from a glance, I could tell it was warping into a more elliptical shape.

Inside, some force was acting to try to contract the ball, and make it smaller. That’s how it looked.

“If it’s that one, then I’ve been there before. There should have been someone to protect it as well, but it seems he isn’t there anymore.”

“So you’ve been to that world?” (Naofumi)

“I’ve lent a little bit of my power to that one. I sometimes lend power to children like you too.”

“...” (Naofumi)

“Let’s say I gave you three wishes. Now then, what is it that you want?”

He suddenly brought up a question.

... I suddenly remember a demon of a lamp.

“Will it be money? Reviving the dead? Power? Having the one you like look your way? Or could it be... immortality?”

“Y-yeah.”

“I gave that world over the power to kill those immortal. And that world on the other side just watched as an immortal made a mess of another.”

So there are fiends in every world.

It's not just that Bitch Goddess... This really is an unfair place.

“Is your world a paradise? With the movies, and manga, and anime you know of, isn't that world like the story you've always dreamed of?”

“No, it's more of a pain.” (Naofumi)

“I see. And, in the worlds I've stopped by, so that they can manage on their own, so with opponents of that level, they'll be able to manage to some extent, I lend them my power. The reason you were able to survive after getting hit by a conceptual attack is probably due to that...”

So that's why I was able to survive her attacks that had things like infinite and eternal in their names, and flee to my world?

Atlas did say something like that before we left.

I think it connects to that story before.

What is it that an immortal will do?

Make their own kingdom, and show off their own immortal status?

“What do you do about Evil Gods? If things go well, can't they be defeated?” (Naofumi) “Gods like that are just in it for the pleasure, so they give up quite quickly. As long as they can't die, there are plenty of opportunities, and plenty of worlds out there. But this time is different. She's just bloodthirsty. There's no way you can win.”

“I understand what you're saying. I can only take this as an elaborate joke, but it's not like you're devoid of logic. Then what should I do?” (Naofumi) “Want me to go beat her? You won't have any part in it, but it serves to benefit both of

us.”

“If you get close, isn’t the world done for?” (Naofumi)

“That’s because she can sense protecting worlds. I... can’t be sensed by the Spirits, so I can go undetected to some extent. I think it’ll be fine.”

He did say he can’t be sensed by Spirits.

It’s safe to assume there’s something special about him.

“But protecting the world will be difficult. If I’m right before her eyes, then of course she’ll notice me, and if I try defeating her from afar, I’ll end up erasing all foreign matter in that world along with her. I’m not that skillful. In the worst case, she’ll disappear along with the world.”

“Foreign matter? Can’t you just erase all of that from the world?” (Naofumi)

“Wait, what I mean by foreign matter is all those who came from another world. Those whose bodies are disjointed from the world’s truth, and a few other things. I’ll end up eliminating them regardless if they be friend or foe. That will probably end with the deaths of their Heroes too...”

The robed figure’s right arm overflowed with light.

And what appeared on it was a claw of light identical in form to the Claw of 0.

But the size was quite different.

Firo’s Claw of 0 preserved its shape and size as a claw while it was used.

But the claw the robe showed me looked as if several swords had been stacked next to one another.

It’s probable that the power he lent that world was that bottle Fitoria kept in the ruins.

That means... this guy is my life’s savior.

Then perhaps I should believe in him.

No, if you think about it, I came here knowing fully well I would probably die.

If there's any measure we have to beat her, if along with the world, we die, and this guy beats the bitch Goddess, then perhaps my regrets will fade.

... No.

If we beat her, then it's for the sake of protecting the world.

It's because we couldn't do that that we're so troubled. I can't let this come to pass.

"There's a possibility the world will fall to ruin, but I'm sure I can kill that Goddess. In order to prevent any more havoc by her hand, should I end it here?"

"Wait." (Naofumi)

I grab the shoulder of the robe.

I decided at that time. That I would protect the world.

"What's wrong?"

"Is there no other way?" (Naofumi)

"None... if I said that, would you give up?"

I silently shake my head.

"As I thought."

The robed man dissolved the claw in his hand, and turned to me.

"I... decided to save that world." (Naofumi)

"Then with that resolve in mind, do you swear to never look back? Can you

live on without regrets? Will you hate the world if, in order to save it, you become a sacrifice to it?"

"How foolish. Would someone who couldn't do that crawl his way back from death?" (Naofumi)

There are people I want to protect.

There are people I want to save.

There are people I love.

If I become a sacrifice for them, then that's a cheap price to pay.

And wait, that really isn't any different than before.

"I've kept you talking for a while. I have to go there as soon as I can." (Naofumi)
I turn my feet to the world the robed man had pointed to.

"If a normal person tried walking there, they'd get into a world of problems. I'll take you, so just wait a little longer."

"Like I care! There's a place I must go. I don't care what happens to me on the way." (Naofumi)

I say the words that had been on my tongue since the moment I decided to go.

"I'll never regret it." (Naofumi)

As if the robed man had given up, he hung his shoulders.

"... Got it."

The robed figure took off his robe, and started folding it.

There... stood the strange lifeform depicted in Fitoria's murals.

Summing it all up, he was something like a cat. He was bipedal, and his width was a bit unnatural.

But not to the extent of the beckoning cat, or earless blue robot.^[17]

He was wearing overalls, and his tail had the appearance of that of a lizard's. I can only see him as some sort of cat beastman.

The Spirit of the Shield starts to circle me.

It's as if he's saying, 'I believe in you.'

"You're going to die, you know? You're fine with that?"

"When I first went to that world, I discovered that life itself was a battle. Even if you're simply basking in a warm bath one day, you know that an end will eventually come. There's a time when you'll die. And in order not to have any regrets, I'm going to go ahead." (Naofumi)

Even if this choice leads to ruin... I won't hold a grudge.

"Well then... just keep on going far, far in that direction, and you should get there. That's the path you were on before you bumped into me."

"I see. I won't say this discussion was useless. Thank you." (Naofumi)
Well, I really don't know. But I'll believe him for as much as the favor of indirectly saving my life is worth.

Hmm? Wait a second.

Can you get to a star in the sky by foot? No, I don't have any other means in the first place.

It doesn't seem the Spirit of the Shield can do anything to send me there right now.

Even so, it would be worse to have the suspicious guy I just met take me there.

I understand that he was going to do something with an unclear result.

In the first place, the world I'm looking for is right before my eyes, so shouldn't I just get up and go?

“Come to think of it, you had me introduce myself, and you never gave your name.” (Naofumi) “My name? I have quite a few, but are you fine with the one I’ve been called for the longest amount of time?”

“Yeah.” (Naofumi)

“Arc.”

“I see. Well, Later then.” (Naofumi)

“Just a moment. I’ll cast a charm to make your journey go well.”

“What is it?” (Naofumi)

“First, shake my hand.”

Hmm... I don’t really think I have the time for something like this.

“Now concentrate your mind... I’ll know if you’re not doing it, so make sure to do it properly.”

“Quit nagging.” (Naofumi)

“Calm yourself... yep, I’m done. Fare thee well.”

I part from Arc, and started treading down the path.

The light given off by the Spirit of the Shield didn’t go forward to lead me.

Thoughts of stopping by another world to get a car or rocket pass through my mind.

But that’s not my problem.

I mean, there’s no looking back, right?

And if I waited for the Spirit of the Shield to guide me back there, I doubt anything would happen.

Atlas did say that was the last bit of his power.

It seems that Arc fellow wanted to take me, but I'll bet that would be just as slow.

Will things get hectic? Don't worry. They already are.

The Power to Protect Everything

And I continued walking down the dark path.

Luckily, it seemed that proceeding down it was possible in itself.

On the way... I'm occasionally forced to take a break before I walk again, further and further.

Eventually, various worlds start passing me by.

Honestly, I remember hallucinating that I was lost.

Sometimes I found myself in a desert, or a forest... This really is the gap that connects worlds.

But I never met anything, be it monster, animal, or human.

A place without the breath of life... I guess.

I often found my legs sprained and bruised.

But in order to reach that world in the sky, I... walked on.

In that world, there's Raphtalia. There's everyone.

I decided to protect it.

Even if I crumble away while seeking my goal, I will...

The Four Holy Weapons' Manual was in my hand.

I would regularly open it, and check for changes.

But the story isn't proceeding.

Many times, I thought there would be no point, but I decided not to give up.

As I continued walking, quite a bit of time passed.

Was it a day, or a week, or a month, or even more?

My sense of time is really dull here.

And in the world of the rift, I can't really feel hunger.

In the desert, I was given the sensation of being so hungry I would keel over, and so thirsty I would wither away.

But still, I overcame it.

I get the feeling I've been walking for quite a long time, but still I have yet to reach it.

My body is telling me I've already walked the circumference of the world, but that's probably an exaggeration.

It's usually quite dark, so I really can't tell.

But without the need for sleep, only fatigue piles onto itself.

I forgot that Arc was probably something similar to that Bitch Goddess.

For a human like me, there's a great difference in our sense of time.

When I look in the sky, I see worlds other than the one I'm venturing to sticking to one another.

Is that... World Assimilation?

It really is like two soap bubbles.

My hair is growing like crazy. Really, just how much time has passed?

But I don't stop moving forward. I don't plan on stopping.

I was sick of it when I wandered into a labyrinth-like world.

I wasn't able to proceed in the direction I wanted to go.

This isn't getting anywhere.

Occasionally, I see shooting stars collide with the worlds in the sky.

I wonder what those are.

I've started to lose a sense for just how far I've walked.

The scenery that remains constant for eternity, I'm sick of looking at the sky above me.

At that point, I was only walking by resolve alone.

It was around that time that my head started to go strange.

I began to hear voices.

If I turn around, I can immediately go to the world I came from.

I can forget everything, and write everything off as a dream. A voice whispered this in my ear.

But, I am... not going to stop proceeding.

I mean, I wasn't able to run away.

There are people who believe in me.

There are people who depend on me.

There are people who want to get stronger for my sake.

And for those people, what can I do?

I can only use up my body to protect them.

I don't intend to go out in that unreasonable way.

I started thinking as I walked.

I began to imagine how I would be able to combat that Bitch of a Goddess more effectively.

At the start, I couldn't get the slightest grasp of what to do, but if Arc's words are true, then it's not impossible.

The O Series can inflict damage.

Similarly, the Shield of O can endure hers.

Well, my defenses were breached.

The order of the world?

Then let's just rely on the order of another.

As I walk, I approach the problem again and again.

Just how can I get the order of the world to rest in my body?

I remember the concept of magic.

Magic is created in one's self.

If it's merely a manifestation of the power within, then I need to make it more efficient, so that it can help just a little bit more.... Just one step closer. I want the power to defeat Medea.

My disposition is for Healing and Support. The Shield interfered, but it's still the same.

Then let's wring out that nature.

Let's refine the magic within me to its limits, and create one that can combat her.

Those thoughts eternally... until I began losing sense of myself, they continued circling around my head, and I remembered the Dragon Pulse Order.

Revelation was a mixture.

The Dragon Pulse Order manipulates the power outside.

With it... based on how you approach it, it's like... borrowing power from the world.

What if I change the borrowing to theft, and abuse it as power of my own? Isn't that how Medea's rules work?

That's why I'll place importance in the borrowing part.

Luckily, here I'm able to accomplish that.

In the worlds I stopped by, I began polishing the Dragon Pulse Law.

Eventually... I worked out a way to release my own magic outside, and take the pulse within.

I searched for a way to borrow the world's power, and fight.

In order to fill up your empty body, you borrow power from your surroundings.

While I was thinking about it, I felt the sensation of myself mixing with the world.

There's still a way. Let me... grasp the nature of this.

When there's nothing to do but walk, you really do think.

My body's sense of time sure is strange.

It feels like... I've been walking for years and years, but it also feels like it's only been a night.

As I think that... by the time I passed the next world, I felt something spill out from within me.

The next moment, I lost my voice.

“Wha—”

There... was the familiar village I revived.

But no one was there. It had completely been abandoned.

“Oi! Is there anyone here!?”

I’ve returned. As I think that, I search through the village’s buildings.

But there wasn’t a single soul anywhere.

Could it be... the world has already fallen to ruin!?

A black emotion welled up in my heart.

But my desire to deny it calls out to my rationality.

They must have just changed base due to the war.

Yes, that’s right. That must be it.

And I entered what was once my house.

As I thought... it isn’t much different from how I remember it. My house.

....What’s happened?

Did I not return?

I leave the house, and look into the sky again.

In it, a vast array of worlds was still spread out.

I’m still within the rift.

... I can’t give up.

No matter what happens... I decided never to give up.

I'm going to reunite with Raphtalia.

And with everyone.

The law of cause and effect, was it?

In the worst case, even if the Shield lends me power, will she be able to tamper with it to do unreasonable things?

Thinking back, wasn't her attack based on that concept in the first place?

Then the changes my Shield carried out in my world were of a similar sort.

I can't use the Shield forcefully like she does. Or perhaps I don't have enough power.

I continue walking.

And I arrived at yet another world.

It was an infinitely expanding one-way staircase.

The place I just saw earlier was my own hallucination.

Then I'll just keep on climbing.

And in that time, I tried to polish my own skills as much as possible. Little by little.

And... eventually, I was unable to tell the difference between magic from the outside or inside.

"Good job getting all the way here."

At the top of the staircase, Arc was sitting as if he was waiting for me.

"Just a little longer, and you'll reach it. A normal person wouldn't be able to make it here."

“Back there, I was in a village I knew of.” (Naofumi) “Right... that was a place you made with your own power, a place embedded in your memory, I think. Perhaps it was the shape created by your strong desire to return to that place? I mean, you have yet to reach the world you want to go to.”

“Take me already.” (Naofumi)

“When you’re this close, I don’t see the need to. It’s right before your eyes.”

“Muu...” (Naofumi)

... So that was something I created with magic.

Somehow, I get the feeling I’ve grasped something.

“Then I’ll be going on ahead.”

The agile Arc ran ahead of me on the path.

I tried chasing him, but I couldn’t keep up.

Just what sort of logic does this place run on?

The next place I found myself in was Fitoria’s ruins.

It’s a place I’ve come to once before. It’s nowhere unknown to me.

I tried to ignore it and proceed, but I couldn’t get through the Forest of Illusions.

So I reluctantly proceeded through the ruins.

Eventually... I reached the stone house that that bottle was housed in.

“You’ve reached the goal. For you to be able to come all the way here, your resolve is truly something.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just let me go on.” (Naofumi)

“Calm down.”

Inside the house, the bottle still hangs.

“Have you heard anything about this bottle from the child who was keeping it?”

“Um... there was a bit of personal opinion added, but she did talk about it.”
(Naofumi)

『At that time, the Hero said, ‘the first sip is eternal pain, the second, eternal solitude, and the third... a dreadful end.’』

Was it?

“Having listened to me, does it sound familiar?”

“A little.” (Naofumi)

I mean, there was that annoying word, ‘eternal’, mixed in.

“The first sip will give you everlasting pain, and the second will give you an immortal body to watch those around you die for eternity.”

“The third was a dreadful end, right?” (Naofumi)

“This is, you see... The Elixir, Amrita, the Eternal Peach, Soma, Tajiku Nakaku. All of them are medicines of immortality. Well, it’s something like that.”^[18]

“Why something like that? She didn’t speak a word of it.” (Naofumi) “I think it was a promise. Or else she would have been treated as an existence that threatened the world.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

She may be a dim bird, but she’s one who honors her promises I guess.

Thinking about it, she was an existence that opposed the near-immortal Dragon Emperor, so she had to have been something like that.

“Dragons have a different role. I’m tolerating their actions for now.”

“I see.” (Naofumi)

“And I might add, in that world, this medicine has been diluted several hundreds of times. Its effects are low. There are rules, you know.”

“Rules, you say.” (Naofumi)

“Looking at immortal beings, what do you think?”

“That’s unfair.” (Naofumi)

“Right. In this world, it’s against the rules, right? If possible, I would like to have the heroes kill her.”

I see...

“This is the undiluted form. If you take three sips of the diluted one, you’re forcefully summoned as a Hero, eventually set to die. But what do you think will happen if you drink this one?”

“It’s the concentrate... right? What’s more, this is... not that world.” (Naofumi)

“That’s right. What do you think?”

“In the first place, is there any need to kill... ah.” (Naofumi)

For incidents caused by those immortal, I guess.

“I’ve left it with a trusted child, so I think it’s fine for now. If something happened to it, I did plan on retrieving it.”

So Fitoria is his acquaintance.

Two sips will make you immortal, right?

Then after that...

“Yep, It will grant you power for a battle without end. If you look at it from

another angle, you become something like god. Easy, right?”

“...” (Naofumi)

“But... it may not be necessary for you guys. I mean, after you’ve made it all the way here.”

And Arc closed the bottle.

“Us guys? Unnecessary?” (Naofumi)

“Ah, I’m sorry. Should I have warned you? As I thought, you never noticed. You guys slipped through dimensions, so your awareness of it seems to be a bit off.”

I try using the new power I had attained.

Following his lead, I try to increase my perception. I try tuning into the channel of the world where all my comrades are.

“Naofumi-sama!”

“Raphtalia.”

And there, was Raphtalia.

From her power, I could tell.

Raphtalia also talked with him, and came here by following the path.

The fact that our thoughts coincided made me a little happy.

“You guys continued walking your paths, and in the end, you changed yourselves. Do you feel it now? You spent an unfathomable amount of time out there.”

“Geh!? Then what happened to the world we were supposed to save?”
(Naofumi) “Ah, don’t worry about that. That’s what the charm was for. I had the

flow of time speed up around you. I thought that if your wills were strong enough, you would be able to handle it.”

“What?” (Naofumi)

It’s true that I thought about the concept of magic as I walked, but that was still within the bounds of humanity.

Is he making fun of me?

“To be more specific, you’ve taken the first step. What do you want to do? Will you go further?”

“Please keep your jokes in moderation.” (Naofumi)

“It’s not a joke, but... I still don’t think you guys have a chance of winning. Just try increasing your perception a little more. If you don’t decide your direction, you won’t be able to find your power.”

“Direction...”

I could somewhat grasp what he was saying.

What sort of fighting style do I have?

What I’ve been doing has always been protecting.

There were times when I did damage the enemy myself, but they number too few to count.

My essential direction... It’s as if I’m deciding my path to Class Up.

As the Hero of the Shield, I never was able to, but this reasoning isn’t wrong.

I also feel there’s something similar to that popping up in my field of vision.

“What possibilities do you want to expand?”

Ark puts his hands together, and asks.

“Ah, there was something called Class Up in your world, right? Please think of this as something like that.”

...What is this?

Since I’ve met up with Arc again, I’ve become able to sense his presence better.

Something like bloodlust. Something that sends shivers down my spine is coming from him.

But for some reason, the person himself doesn’t seem to have any such intentions.

And wait, that doesn’t matter.

Let’s go become a god to beat up that Bitch Goddess.

“Even if you don’t decide, you’ll get power from the world you head to. But can you win with that? I think you’ll need to get something extra to win.”

“That’s right. It’s a half-assed power. I won’t be able to win against her.”
(Naofumi) “But if you drink that medicine from before, you will get plenty enough power to defeat her.”

Saying that, he held out that red drink.

My changed body could understand that it wasn’t out of any ill intent.

But...

“... Understood.” (Naofumi)

“Then take this—”

“Wrong, with a power received through another, I realize that I have no chance of winning.” (Naofumi)

Just like he has his own goal, I have mine.

If I get the power to Smack a Goddess, even after defeating her, my goal will not be fulfilled.

And with that, there's no point.

“Naofumi-sama...” (Raphtalia)

“Raphtalia... yeah, that's right.” (Naofumi)

My eyes meet hers.

And what she was trying to say was transmitted to me.

... I am the Shield that Protects others, and Raphtalia is my Sword.

I have decided my direction.

From the start, I could only ever become a Shield for someone else.

Then what is there for me to change?

What Raphtalia's decision was, was also transmitted.

I... Iwatani Naofumi have the disposition to protect.

I won't go against it. I'll protect everyone from this absurdity.

From all unfairness... The power to protect everyone.

If I don't get a dream-like power like that, there's no point.

Raphtalia answered my feelings.

And of course, it wasn't just Raphtalia.

My power cannot stem from me alone.

There's only meaning in my power when I have those I need to protect.

“You guys really are connected. I think it's amazing. You trust the other person

so much, and decided your directions to complement each other.”

I feel the world expand around me.

I never noticed it before, but power is overflowing in my body.

A power that transcends the previous me.

... With this, I'll be able to fight on an equal level with the Goddess Medea.

I mean, isn't that right?

I've become the same sort of existence as the enemy.

Now all I have to do is develop a physical plan for victory.

It's simple to understand. A Symbol to protect everyone... It's simple.

I inject my own power, and the power outside into the Shield Strap that had pretty much lost everything.

Three different powers fuse, and a new Shield is formed.

Its strength is incomparable to before.

All the power I have is sent directly to defense.

This is truly the power to protect, from all things.

“Trust is the key to power, but dependence is something else entirely. Please take that to heart; though I think you two will do fine.”

As our views expanded, we noticed that behind Arc was a gate.

“Don't you think it's about time you set off? I don't think you have too much time left, you know.”

I open the Four Holy Weapons' Manual

It was written on the page.

Melromark's army formation had collapsed, and the reincarnators were closing in on Melty.

Two Years

“Melty...”

Right now, the only one by Melty’s side is Firo. But it will be hard for Firo to defeat the Reincarnators alone. Quickly. As fast as we can, we have to go save her.

“Don’t worry. You guys don’t seem to believe in me, but let me explain. With your origin of power, and the Spirits’ help, I don’t think that Goddess can sense you.”

“In the end, are you an enemy? An ally?” (Raphtalia)

“I just fight by my rules. I’m a God Slayer. And by My rules, I will expel those who destroy the order of this world. As long as... the Spirits who chose you continue to want you around, then I’m probably an ally.”

Around Arc, spirits begin to circle.

“I can’t see them, but aren’t you guys quite well liked by the Spirits?”

The lights surrounding him crowd around me and Raphtalia.

“Those are the Spirits of worlds destroyed. So I think they’re praying for you to protect for their share as well.” “Aren’t they invisible to you?” (Naofumi) “I can’t see Spirits, but by listening to the wills dwelling in the weapons, I can hear them. Your Shield... has a Spirit with a relatively moderate personality, right?”

On his words, something rises to the surface of the Shield, and begins to take shape. The figure that appeared suddenly clung to me.

“Naofumi-sama!”

It was... Atlas. A soul resting in the Shield. She really did work hard with the Spirit of the Shield for my sake. Her will, the regrets of the Spirits, everything... I won’t let it go to waste.

“Oy, you. The one who’s been trying to talk to me for a while. Are you... a Spirit? Or are you a being with nothing but a soul left behind? You’re half transparent, and I can’t really see you, but it seems a strong power dwells within you.”

After gripping me tightly for a while, Raphtalia wrenched her off, and Atlas answered the question.

“Yes. Together with the Spirit of the Shield, we’re sharing our power to turn it into Naofumi-sama’s. Eventually... My consciousness, and the Spirit of the Shield’s will mix together, and I will become both a Spirit, and a being with a soul.” (Atlas) “Ah, good luck with that...”

Though Arc’s explanations defined me as a God, I’m not really feeling it. It’s just that I’m aware that the amount of things I can do has increased, so the only thing left is to test it in battle.

“Naofumi-sama, it’s alright.” (Atlas)

As she said that, the Spirits started rotating around Atlas. I begin to feel my own power increasing.

“Just now... the Spirits have granted us some power. Naofumi-sama, do you feel it?” (Atlas)

I’m aware of the process Atlas describes. We’re being given something strange from them. But while I can receive their power, I cannot steal it. My nature as the Shield binds me, but it also becomes my power.

“Isn’t it about time you left? I have some other things to do, so I can’t really follow, though.” “For teaching us quite a few things, I thank you.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia and Atlas lower their heads to him

“Oh, don’t worry about it. It’s a power you guys realized yourselves, and built up from scratch. As long as you don’t forget the thing you wanted when you obtained that power, remember that you guys are not my enemy.”

And Arc smiled happily. But if you look at it from the other perspective, if we stray from our paths in the slightest, it’ll be all-out-war. Anyways, I understand my goal, which had once been unclear.

But for now, we're in a situation where neither of us considers the other an enemy. We're pretty much unrelated now. He did do us quite a few favors, so if something happens in the future, perhaps helping him isn't the worst option. Of course, that's only if me and Arc share the same interests at the time.

"If you ever find pain in the path you walk, and want to sleep; if you want it to end, just search for me. Granting an end to some things is my job as well."

"Yeah... okay. If I ever get tired with life, perhaps I'll leave it to you." (Naofumi)

"Well then, I'll see you then. Best regards."

For those barred from rest for eternity, they will eventually say this. I just want a peaceful sleep. I wonder if he's the one granted that role.

But 'Best Regard'... he returned my cynicism with some of his own. No, is it common courtesy? Not that it matters. Now, we don't have the time to worry about such things.

"Listen here. Before you enter the world, the first thing you have to do is make sure you're not sensed by the enemy. Your Shield's become something like the lynchpin that protects the world, right? In order to put in a new pin, I guess you'll have to remove the old one."

Lynchpin... I see. Right now, the one protecting that world is Itsuki... the Hero of the Bow, and his Spirit. The heroes and Spirits from Glasses world probably hold similar positions. But that pin could easily be pulled out by the Bitch Goddess at any time. And when they're gone, the world falls apart.

Then... should I just increase the amount of pins holding it together? Right now, me and Raphtalia can serve as a stronger and bigger bolt than before. But with that, it's unreliable. Even so, more. To increase the chances of our victory. That means...

"Naofumi-sama." (Raphtalia) "Naofumi-sama." (Atlas) "Fine, I know. Let's go pick up Ren and Motoyasu." (Naofumi)

We should be able to find and bring those two back. Like us, they should be clinging onto life somewhere.

We prepare ourselves to cross worlds once more, as we start drifting through space. I concentrate... those two's locations. ... Motoyasu is close. He's

somewhere parallel to that world.

On the contrary, Ren is far. If I were to compare it to Outer space, it's like he's a world a galaxy away. Is that Ren's world?

"Ah, when you're fighting, I think this will prove handy to you. Whatever happens, remember it's only for spirits. Don't go about drinking it."

Saying that, Ark tossed the medicine of immortality over to me. It's not the watered down version, It's the real thing. Just how high would be the output on the skills unlocked through the undiluted formula?

"I pray for success in your battle to come."

Ark waves his hand.

"Your arrogant attitude... I definitely will never be able to trust you from the depths of my heart." (Naofumi)

The way he offers trials to people is somewhat irritating. The result is fine, but I hate how it feels like I'm dancing on the palm of his hand.

"Ahaha... as expected of you. But I don't hate you. Yep, good luck." "I'll definitely pay back this favor. I'm a man who keeps promises." (Naofumi) "I see. If I need help, I'll call for you then. See, I'm just a single man."

Good grief... he doesn't seem to have everything in one place, this guy. Anyways, we need to take action to save the world now. Even if we do end up repaying that'll be after this mess is over.

"Raphtalia, Atlas. Let's go." "Yes." "Understood."

We change to light, and head off to Ren and Motoyasu.

—

Even from the outside, I could tell Ren's world was one out of a Sci-Fi novel. As I approaches it, I could see it, but it seems that the fact that other worlds exist is common sense to them. They can't traverse between them yet, but perhaps in a few decades, they could put their knowledge to practical applications.

"Then should we enter?" "Yeah."

Me, Raphtalia and Atlas infiltrated Ren's world. We materialize our bodies within it, and begin our descent. The location is... it seems to be Ren's room, for when he's alone.

We land on the floor, and look around. It looks like a world of the near future, but Ren's room's structure isn't any different from those of my world. It just looks like an exceedingly normal apartment room. There's curtains hanging on the windows, and when I look outside, I see there's not much of a gap between us. I imagined flying cars, but there's nothing of the sort. Well, even if our civilizations are on different levels, it's still Japan.

Ren is... sitting at his desk. On his head is a large helmet. I'll bet it's some sort of tool to dive into the world of the net. If we weren't in such a hurry, I would like to try it on for a bit. I mean, I'm an Otaku, am I not?

Ren is... stuck in that position. He really isn't moving. He's breathing fine, so he isn't dead and he's no vegetable. Is he asleep?

"What should we do?" (Naofumi) "For now, just try tapping his shoulder a bit." (Raphtalia) "Yes, I think that's the best option." (Atlas)

I start poking the person I thought to be Ren's shoulders. His body convulses for a second, before he slowly starts removing the helmet.

"... Who is it? Mom?"

And as he turned around and saw us, he was at a loss for words. At the same time, I moved my hand to my chin.

"Sorry, I got the wrong person. Goodbye." (Naofumi)

Raphtalia and Atlas have a questioning expression on their faces, as they bow and prepare to leave. I mean, even if he gave off a similar feeling as Ren, his appearance was completely different. No, I'm not saying his face was bad.

It's not like he came to that world with his game character. The person I thought was Ren really did look like him, but he was a head taller than him in stature. From what I can see, he's a bit different than Ren, who still had a hint of his youth. He seems older. And his physique is better than the Ren I know. It looks like he's never missed a day of training. There's no doubt he's Ren's brother, or some other relative.

Where did that guy go? I know for a fact that he isn't dead yet... And when I was preparing to jump through dimensions...

"W-wait..."

The Ren-like man grabbed my hand.

"You! You're Naofumi, aren't you! And there's Raphtalia-san... and there's even Atlas-san, who's supposed to be dead. What's happening?" "What?" (Naofumi)

The one who looked much like Ren made the face of a person meeting someone of their childhood. Eh? Could it be that this is Ren?

"Wait a second, you're... Ren?" (Naofumi) "That's right. More importantly, I'd like you to tell me. Why is Naofumi in my world?" (Ren(?))

So it really is Ren. I spent a large amount of time in that space, so I'm not one to say it, but he's sure gotten big. Right now, my overgrown hair was restored to normal when I got back my Shield. And my body is telling me that not much time actually passed.

"Um... let's organize our information. Ren, why have you... grown so big?" (Naofumi) "Why, you ask... because two years have passed since I returned here from that world, of course." (Ren)

... Ren's story goes like this. As I thought, after he was killed in that world, it seems he was sent back to this one. And after various things happened, he tried to see if there was any way to go back. But in the end, the Sword remained silent.

Luckily, it still had enough power left in it to be used as a weapon if necessary. So for the past two years, he did various things, and while wondering if the time would ever come, he continued to train for the day he would return. Or so it seems.

This is a failure... before we entered his world, we should have looked into its perception of time, and taken that into account. I'll bet the Spirit of the Shield was doing various regulations for me in that aspect.

"And... why is it that you people haven't changed in the slightest? Well... it's

possible you just didn't grow in that time, though." (Ren) "The Spirit Dwelling in your Sword is..."

Atlas starts talking to Ren's Sword.

"Without enough power, the distance was just too far... it was waiting for the time when the worlds would approach one another." (Atlas) "..."

With that distance, wouldn't it take quite a while for Ren's world to get there? Perhaps they were on a path towards each other, but... I wonder just how much time that would take. And wait, two years... the flow of time in Ren's world seems fast.

"Um, it only took a week for me to be able to go, you know." (Naofumi)

"What?" (Ren)

Ren is dumbfound.

"Then is the final battle already over?" (Ren) "No, the flow of time in your world is just fast." (Naofumi)

We explain the circumstances to Ren. Of how, while crossing through worlds, we were able to work out the mechanics of various powers. Ren fell into his chair, and sunk his head.

"Just what were my two years for..." (Ren)

It's not like I don't get where he's coming from. If me and Raphtalia had to spend two years in that world, it would probably feel like this. But perhaps that would have been okay in itself.

"Okay, then we'll jump through time, and grab the you right after you got here. Is that fine?" (Naofumi)

With the powers we have as Gods, and the Spirits abilities to change cause and effect, it's not impossible. It will take a bit of power, but I don't think anyone will complain about it. It'll be like rewinding Ren alone.

"W-wait!"

Ren calls out again to stop me.

"What's wrong? You hate the fact that you wasted two years of your life,

right?” (Naofumi) “I’m stronger now than I was two years ago! So please take me with you!” (Ren) “That means... your past self will have to spend two years waiting, but is that alright?” (Naofumi)

On my response, Ren’s eyes fill with water for a moment, but after that, he clenched his fist strongly.

“Y-yeah! If I have to wait two years to go back, I’ll bear it!” (Ren)

Well, for this Ren, I think he would hate it if we abandoned him for a Ren two years prior. There’s no guarantee what’ll happen to him if we do that. And messing with cause and effect is messy. In the worst case, he’ll wait here forever.

“After that, I experienced various things. I’m confident that I’m definitely stronger than before! I mean I even went to another alternate world once!” (Ren) “Hmm...” (Naofumi)

So the progress I saw in that field from the outside was no lie. And Ren was dragged into that. If I just go about dragging Rens from the past, perhaps the amount of Rens will just increase. And he’ll just become a person with a Ren-like personality. Though Ren will become him one day.

“I got it, I got it. Then I’ll be taking you to that world now, but are you alright with that?” (Naofumi)

I think he’ll be of help, but Ren has a place here. He has the right to live peacefully in a world without war. I ask Ren the same thing the Spirit of the Shield asked me.

“...Yeah. If it gives everything I’ve done up to this day a meaning, I’ll nod without hesitation. I will return to that land!” (Ren) “I see... are you prepared?” (Naofumi)

Ren nods right away. Damn. He’s saying things like me. It’s a bit late, but those are some embarrassing lines he’s spitting out. Though I said something quite similar.

“Then let’s go.” (Naofumi)

As if to make an offer to him, I extend my hand to Ren, and he grips it without

hesitation. I activate our dimensional transportation ability, and we cross the void with him. The current me and Ren are different sorts of existences now, so while moving like this, we can't hold conversations.

Next is Motoyasu, right? He's apparently in a space parallel to that world. But by the world's order, or something like that, I can't enter it.

"What should we do?" (Raphtalia) "Fumu..." (Naofumi)

I tried to touch the barrier surrounding his world a few times, but I was repelled. Is it because it's a parallel world? I also get the feeling I'm not using my own power properly. I can't get a grip on what the rules are. If I get too close, I'm sure the Goddess will notice us. On the other hand, Raphtalia can enter it just fine.

"Okay, in order to hit the lynchpin, I'll leave Motoyasu to Raphtalia."
(Naofumi) "Understood, Naofumi-sama." (Atlas) "Naofumi-sama, I'll pursue you after I retrieve the Hero of the Spear." (Raphtalia) (TL: And here starts Raphtalia's days of mental anguish)

And so we put off getting Motoyasu, and prepared to enter the world.

"Atlas." (Naofumi) "Yes. I'll strengthen the power of the Spirits as much as I can, and try to conceal Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

Atlas changes to a ball of light, and returns to my Shield. ... The girl who wanted to become a Shield really did just that, and now she's protecting me. It's worthy of praise just how far she stuck to her words.

In the world we're going to, what sort of form will she take? Ren was able to sense her when we were in his world, but each world operates on different principles. So we won't know what will happen until we go and see for ourselves.

Anyways, Melty's in trouble right now. We were able to quickly recover Ren.

I strengthen my resolve, and broke into the other world.

(TL: So is he her type now?)

Defense Link

“Queen Melty, hurry and evacuate!”

“I am the Queen here! I cannot flee from the battlefield.”

The enemy’s forces had pushed all the way to Melty, who was giving orders in the rear. Including Itsuki, and the other Heroes, even Firo is being hard pressed by the advancing armies. In a situation like that, Melty rushed to the field herself, and started offering support fire.

“Guhah!”

One of the soldiers protecting her was cut down. They’re at a complete numerical disadvantage. If you think about it normally, they’ve been pushed to a state where their defeat is all but assured. The reincarnators attacks are reaching back far enough to damage Melty, the commander.

“Ah...”

A weapon wraps around Melty, and drags her off. She lets out a small voice at the event. But even the Reincarnator holding it hesitates when it comes to killing a small girl like her. He opens his mouth.

“Is this the enemy commander? She’s just a child, isn’t she?” “Hey take her in, I’ll let her into my Harem.” “Mel-chan!” (Firo) “Queen Melty!”

Firo starts her assault to save her friend from the men who were saying things she didn’t understand. Her Vassal, the Claw, lets off a soft light. Yes, while Firo is like that, she’s the Hero of the Claw, and Melty’s best friend. There’s no way she’ll lose against any normal enemy.

“Don’t get in the way, bird!” “Move! Mel-chan!” (Firo)

But the Reincarnator halts her advance. While Firo’s gotten stronger as the Hero of the claw, her enemy also holds a vassal, and has received a strange

power from the Goddess.

「Spiral Claw Ten」!

Ever since the Goddess Descended, the Reincarnators have been imbued with powerful support magic. Because of that, they can be considered stronger than the Heroes. Or else there's no way Firo and the others would be driven to a corner so easily.

“Whoa.”

The powerful attack Firo unleashed was dodged by the man.

“That was dangerous, bird.” “Ku... move!”

Female Knight presses Musou Kassei to the limit, and starts slashing at him. But with his unnaturally high support effects, it's hard to contest with the reincarnated soul.

“It seems that she's pretty important, this girl.” “I mean, we were told it was alright if all we did was capture her, right?” “She's a bishojo, so I'll have her fall for my charms.” “W-who would fall for someone like you!?” (Melty) “This is the last time you'll be able to say that. You'll soon realize my true appeal.” “Melty! Get your hands off of my daughter!” (Trash)

Trash yells out. But if he were to fire a skill, Melty would be hit too.

“Father!” (Melty) “What a Foolish King.... My planning was so many levels over yours, was it not?” “What the hell are you saying!? You merely used your numerical advantage! And whenever anything bad happened, you relied on that woman!” (Melty)

Displeased with Melty's response, the Reincarnator began to glare at her. At the same time, Melty chanted magic.

「Dreifach Aqua Slash」!

A blade of water slices him point blank. It inflicted a light cut on his face, before coming to a stop.

“So you'll lash out at me? Never mind, it doesn't seem you're worthy of my charms. Die! For world peace!”

The Reincarnator's scythe swings down towards Melty... Melty clenches her eyes closed. And...

"For me to appear at a time like this, there must be something wrong with me."

With perfect timing, I protect Melty in a heroic fashion. I stop the Scythe with one hand, and hide Melty under my mantle with the other. Just like that day... It was the same scene as when I protected her from the Three Hero Church Knights trying to kill her.

"So you were aiming for that timing?"

As he guessed the situation, Ren lifted his sword, and pointed it at the other Reincarnator. Well, it's not strange for him to think that by looking at that display.

"No, I really did arrive at the nick of time." (Naofumi) "N-Naofumi!?" (Melty) "Yeah." (Naofumi)

It's an emotional reunion. In Manga and Games, this would be where she would cry tears of Joy and cling to me, but...

『I who has understood the origin of power command...』 "Why are you firing magic at me without giving me a chance to speak!?" (Naofumi) "So she's finally revived Naofumi to torment us! Damn you Goddess!"

Ah... yeah, it seems quite a bit has happened. So much that the Four Holy Weapons' Manual wasn't able to contain it all. But why are they firing magic the second they see my face?

"Mel-chan! Fake Master, release Mel-chan!" (Firo)

Even Firo is glaring at me. She even released a skill.

「Screw Claw Ten」!

I hold my hand out front, and stop Firo's kick. Why do I have to take both of these girls on at the same time? Even Female Knight's giving me the evil eye. My risen tension's been crashed all at once. Well, I also feel that I was getting a bit ahead of myself having gained a new power, so maybe this is for the best.

"Well, I know you won't believe me, but the Spirits allowed the Four Heroes

to escape to their original worlds. And like this, I've now returned." (Naofumi)
"That's a lie! The Naofumi I know can't stop Firo-chan's kick!" (Melty) "I wasn't that weak!" (Naofumi)

If it was a Firo-Class attack, I think the past me could have stopped it. ... Right? I could have stopped it, right?

"Now then... For now, I was able to get in easier than I thought." (Naofumi)

I ignore Melty's magic, and turn to the Reincarnator. This is... I don't think I'll have to show any of my trumpcards here. From what I can see, it looks like Trash has mastered Revelation Class magic. I can tell from the supports cast on Firo.

Itsuki is... fighting on the front lines, it seems. Fohl is quite close by. He's evenly fighting back right now.

"Fumu."

I activate the Shield, and look for a skill I can use. As long as the world allows it, all skills that the Shield can use in the world have been unlocked! ... No, I can't really say that. Just how long is this list? Well, if it's just to the extent of the skills a normal Hero can learn, I can use them. That's a bit of the power I have.

「Defense Link EX」!

I hold out the Shield, and call out a Skill Name. This is the first time I'm using this one. It's the first time I'm learning a skill directly from the Shield, but there's no way I can't use it. The Skill Defense Link was just as it sounds.

Its effect was... all attacks those I consider allies take are treated as attacks directed at me. I can shoulder all the damage.

EX is... a Hero's limit. There are some levels above, but so the Goddess won't notice, I'll stop at this. A barrier-like membrane is deployed around a large area, as I activate the skill to protect my comrades.

With half-hearted defense, the skill is suicide. Of course, the current me can take this with ease.

Protect everyone. That's my role. Never again will attacks reach my comrades

behind me.

The radius is about 20 meters. If I raise the output further, I feel the bitch will notice it. I don't really have a reason to hold back, but I don't know what will happen, so I'll do it in moderation.

Now's not the time for me to get serious yet. If they run after realizing they can't beat me, that would be terrible. I'll wait for Raphtalia and the others to get here before I really start exerting myself.

"Ren." (Naofumi) "What?" (Ren) "Don't dodge, just cut at them." (Naofumi) "Wha—Are you telling me to die!?" (Ren) "I used a power to make it alright. Just go do it!" (Naofumi)

The sound of metal hitting metal echoes all over my body. I mean, I'm taking the damage of all those around me at once, so it's to be expected.

"A-ah."

The surrounding soldiers find themselves dumbfounded after feeling no damage while being cut. Seeing that, Ren timidly drops his defense as he struck his sword at the reincarnators.

"You're not dodging? Are you an idiot?" "Take this! 「Variable Messiah」!" "What!?"

I'll bet the Reincarnator intended to cleave Ren in half in that single swing. He was smiling, but as he saw Ren standing intact, his expression warped. And Ren's sword starts glittering brilliantly. It becomes giant, and he starts swinging it downward on the enemy.

Oh, that's quite a flashy skill. Ren definitely didn't know that one before.

Oh right. Ren did say he went to another world once. It's probably a Sword Skill he acquired at that time. Does he hold anything else you can only find in another world? No, I don't really need them, but I'll bet the others do.

"Uuu... I feel like I shouldn't be alive, Naofumi." (Ren) "But you're fine, right?" (Naofumi)

If you move your body along with the blade, and dodge by a manner of millimeters, you can eliminate all unnecessary movements, but that sort of style

doesn't suit me. If the enemies can't do any damage in the first place, you can just ignore their attacks without dodging. That means, by nature, they can now attack faster than anybody else. Well, it's not really a strategy to be praised, though.

"Even so, it's not something I'd like to use often. I'm scared for when the time comes where it seems natural." (Ren) "If you show such leisure before the enemy, you'll die!"

The Reincarnator tries to act cool as he attacks Ren from behind.

"Leisure? I'd like to call it trust, you know." (Ren) "Guwah!"

Holding his sword behind him, Ren lightly parries the reincarnator's attacks before slashing him.

"Oh my... you've gotten better." (Naofumi)

His movements are sharper. On the contrary, his basic abilities have risen a few levels. It's like a fight between an amateur and a novice, he's showing a complete difference in power. Something like that. It appears that his claims to be stronger were no lie.

"By the way... Melty, Firo. I'd like it if you stopped already." (Naofumi)

For a while now, Melty and Firo have been unleashing a stream of coordinated magic attacks and skills at me. 'You must be in pain, being controlled by the enemy. Don't worry, I'll give you peace.' 'Master, Firo will get over your death. Firo will try harder, so you can sleep now.' It's like they're saying those sorts of words of parting. I thought I had made quite a dramatic entrance, but I'm being treated like a Zombie.

"I keep telling you I'm not Dead!" (Naofumi) "I'll reveal your true form!" (Melty) "Yeah, Master is..." (Firo) "Just quit it already!" (Naofumi) "... This is a tragedy brought about by the trust they placed in you, and the Goddess's underhanded tactics."

Ren starts muttering with an amazed expression. Please stop. My body doesn't hurt, but my heart can't take it anymore. And as if he just noticed her, Ren started waving his hand at Female Knight, and calling her name.

“Eclair!” (Ren) “Who are you!?” (Female Knight)

Ah, Ren looks really hurt. He reunited with the person he liked after two years, but this is the outcome.

“It’s me! Ren. Please believe me!” (Ren) “The Ren I knew was a childish youth. He definitely wasn’t someone like you! If you plan on deceiving me, try putting a little more effort into it!” (Female Knight)

Should I just use some power to revert him after all? But if I do that before their eyes, they’ll definitely recognize me as an enemy.

“Trash! Just figure it out already!” (Naofumi) “Nu!?” (Trash)

Since I had been standing still without showing any resistance for a while, it seems Trash figured something out.

“Melty, that Iwatani-dono doesn’t show signs of being an enemy. I think it’s alright if we trust him a bit.” (Trash) “Father... but...” (Melty) “I understand your sentiment, but after he’s done this much for us, we have no option but to rely on him in this battle.” (Trash)

It’s finally reached a stage where I can talk.

“Now then, Trash. I’ve a little bit of information about the situation up until I was able to get here. Fighting the Queen is definitely unpleasant, but will refraining from doing so make your wife happy?” (Naofumi) “Nu...”

My words turn Trash’s expression bitter. He’s been through some pain, but I won’t let this reach a bad ending. I’ll definitely save Melty and Firo... Everyone.

“You don’t have to give an answer yet. But in this war, just how much of Melromark will become victims? Will that delight the Queen?” (Naofumi) “... Iwatani-dono’s words are correct. Everyone! Follow Iwatani-dono’s lead! Melty, follow my orders, and take command.” (Trash) “Y-yes father! ... It’s not like I trust you or anything, Naofumi.” (Melty)

She let loose some Tsundere-esque lines, that girl. Similarly, Firo seems to have grieving over my death, so she’s still half in doubt about me.

“I know.” (Naofumi)

For the love of god, when I get back, I’m treated like a zombie. That Goddess

sure likes picking a fight.

Paranoia Begets Paranoia

“Anyways, for now...”

When I looked to see what Fohl was doing, I saw he was being hard pressed by an imitation of Atlas.

“Onii-sama, you’re in the way.” “Ku...” (Fohl)

As if she could see, the fake followed Fohl’s movements with her eyes while she one-sidedly attacked Fohl, who was on the defense. She looks a little more childish than the real one, and a little bit prettied up. What’s more, her breasts are strangely large. Was someone’s wishes mixed into this one?

The Shield lets out a pinging sound. Ah, so you want me to go there. I lightly jump towards them, instantly arrive at the fake attacking Fohl, and grab her head with one hand.

『Onii-sama, are you telling me you can’t differentiate between the real me and an imposter?』 “!?”

Atlas exposes herself from the Shield, and begins glaring at Fohl. And Fohl’s eyes expand as if he’s witnessing a portrait of hell. Well, being attacked by comrades revived from the dead is a sort of Hell in itself.

『If you can’t tell a fake like this from me, I’ll scorn you.』 “Move aside, ugly!” (Fake Atlas) “You’re not Atlas! Atlas would never talk to Aniki like that!” (Fohl)

Fake Atlas begins to abuse me. At the same time, Fohl swings his fist towards her.

「Dragon of Ruin Inferno Fist X」, 「Vicious Tiger Piercing Foot X」!

Calling out finishers one after the other, Fohl aims kicking skills on the fake Atlas. His attacks are deciding this. Fake Atlas unsteadily retreats a few steps, before muttering.

“H-how foolish.”

Oh... like the Demi-Human Shadow I defeated once before, her body turns black before she completely fades away. I guess that’s a fake for ya. The real Atlas would have been able to dodge that.

『Good grief... it seems Onii-sama hasn’t changed at all.』 “Atlas... and Aniki?” (Fohl) “Yeah.” (Naofumi) “Are you... real?” (Fohl) “It seems there was a Fake Atlas here. Did that Goddess look through someone’s head and make it?” (Naofumi)

It seemed to have no standard of quality. That was probably what Fohl once desired. Though that is questionable in itself.

“Aniki, what happened? Atlas too.” (Fohl) “This and that. I’ll explain it in detail later, but now...” (Naofumi)

On top of being fused with the Spirit of the Shield, various powers from various worlds have been injected into her, so Atlas was able to show herself. Seeing Atlas, Fohl rushed over to her with teary eyes.

“Atlas!” (Fohl) “Ah, Onii-sama.” (Atlas)

Fohl tried to hug her, but he merely passed through. She’s a mixture of a spirit, and a soul, so holding her may prove to be a bit difficult. I guess if I had to say, Atlas is currently the highest level form of a ghost.

“I have no body, so it’s impossible.” (Atlas)? “A-Atlas!” (Fohl) “Ah, but I can touch Naofumi-sama, you know.” (Atlas)

Atlas starts nuzzling me. Please stop doing things to provoke people... I mean, Fohl’s finally started to get around to calling me Aniki. What are you trying to do by turning him hostile?

“Gununu...” (Fohl) “Don’t make such a jealous face. Oy, oy, don’t cry, it’s alright.” (Naofumi)

Perhaps he’s become overcome with emotions on having met his deceased sister. Fohl breaks into tears. When Atlas is around, he really turns into an idiotic brother.

“Aniki!” (Fohl) “What? By the way, I’m not a fake.” (Naofumi) “Aniki!” (Fohl)

Fohl clings to me. I don't really enjoy being embraced by guys, but... I guess it's fine for today. I mean, he seems to be happy.

Even so, Firo and Melty won't come closer to hug me. And their treating me as a mysterious enemy. I'm well aware they have their reasons, but I'll remember this.

"You survived!" (Fohl) "Pretty much. But I'm about to burst into tears because no one believes me." (Naofumi)

While that conversation was going on...

"Ara ara, if it isn't a little visitor from hell."

Medea instantly appears in the air above us. She calmly starts talking to us.

"I was sure I had killed you, but you're surprisingly tough." (Medea) "It was just a bit of a miracle. Luck was on my side, and I was able to survive your attack." (Naofumi) "..."

She seems to be laughing, but she's also thinking about something. I assume she's figuring out that I was saved by what the God Slayer left behind. She's not wrong, or anything.

But I don't think she'll be able to figure out I've become a being close to her. IF she had, she would have immediately erased me with a conceptual attack, or something. If that happened, I would immediately counterattack, though.

I've even made countermeasures for that attack. With the long time I've spent, I've thought long and hard about defeating her. But to do that, I'll need to stall for a bit more time. Honestly, it's best to think that I have absolutely no means of attacking until Raphtalia gets here.

"No matter. I'll retreat for today. Offer as many thanks as you want to your miracle. I was just getting bored, but now it seems we can play a little longer." (Medea)

Medea snaps her fingers. And the Reincarnators that had been on the field, as well as their comrades, the enemy soldiers disappeared in an instant.

"Well then, let's play some more games tomorrow. Goodbye." (Medea)

Just as with when she appeared, she vanished in an instant. It appears that

she's really gone.

Even so, games... So this battle is nothing more but a bit of fun for her. Damn her! Well, I'll let her have fun with her games for now. We just have to be the ones preparing for battle.

"Well then, isn't it about time... you stop looking at me like that?" (Naofumi)

Starting with Melty, even Firo is vigilant of my presence. It's an unpleasant feeling.

"Firo? You don't recognize me?" (Naofumi) "Um, you're probably Master, Firo think. But like Mel-chan's mom, and the Musou Grandma, you may be being controlled after death, Firo thinks." (Firo)

I let out a deep sigh. Ah... this world really is crappy. It never lets things go my way. The second I get here, I'm already getting regrets. Can't this world get destroyed already? Not that I'll let it.

"N-Naofumi-san!?"

Itsuki and Rishia ran over. The enemy had completely disappeared, so it's natural that he reunited with the main forces.

"Yo, Itsuki. You sure worked hard. And, I understand that you may be wary of me, but please believe me." (Naofumi)

Itsuki seems half in doubt as he stares at me. I think he'll be a reliable comrade, but it's troubling that he's approaching bow in hand.

"Itsuki! It's been a while!" "Um... who is that over there? He looks kinda like Ren." (Itsuki) "Yeah, that's Ren. Before coming back here, he spent two whole years in his original world." (Naofumi) "Eh!?" (Itsuki)

Itsuki's face is colored with surprise. I mean, even I was quite shocked at it.

"I know it may be a bit much to believe us here." (Naofumi)

Female Knight is still giving Ren a suspicious look. Ren is trying to find words to return. But that Bitch Goddess really never does anything decent.

"Rafu~." "Oh? If it isn't Raph-chan." (Naofumi)

If even Raph-chan was wary of me, I'd get depressed, but Raph-chan lovingly

brushes up against my side. Oh... It seems the ones here who believe me are only Raph-chan and Fohl. I'll give him a lot of pats.

"Aniki is the real deal. I can tell that he's not being used." (Fohl) "That's right. It is exceedingly unpleasant to see you handle Naofumi-sama like that." (Atlas) "Looking closely, that Atlas-chan. She doesn't have a body?" "I kinda became one with the Spirit of the Shield. I'm different from some fake that was made with someone's memories at the base, right?" (Atlas)

Seeing Atlas distance herself from Fohl, Melty and Firo drop their guard. Is that really enough to convince them?

"It's not like I believe you, or anything, you got that!?" (Melty) "Ah, yes, got it." (Naofumi)

Paranoia really is something else.

"I know how things generally progressed, but I'd like the specifics." (Naofumi) "Um, so Naofumi. Raphtalia-san is..." (Melty)

Troubled with how to ask the question, Melty tries talking to me. It's not strange for them to think she died with me back then.

"She's in the middle of another job. Just like we brought Ren, she's off to go drag Motoyasu here." (Naofumi) "Really!?"

Hmm? They were listening in? Midori and the other two draw closer. These guys love Motoyasu. It's probably best if I tell them.

"Is Motoyasu-san alive as well?" (Midori) "Yep, he's still kicking. It seems he was sent to a world parallel this one, so finding him was quite a trial." (Naofumi) "So Mekkun isn't in his original world?" (Kuu) "That seems to be the case. I thought I would try searching his world, but I got a response from him around here." (Naofumi) "Where's this parallel world? Is that where Mou-chan is?" (Marin) "It's hard to explain. It's a different world almost exactly the same as this one, to put it simply." (Naofumi) "Different, and yet the same?" "If, at that time... wait, that guy can have regret? If, at that time, he had a regret, and wanted to make another choice, then he's in a world where that can happen." (Naofumi)

Midori, Firo and the other Filo Rials tilt their heads. They're definitely not

getting any of this. But Midori is supposed to be smarter than Firo, so I think he understands more. He mutters to himself before seemingly accepting it.

“To put it so Future Queen of the Filo Rials, Firo, can understand it, there’s a world where you never met Naofumi-san, and you were born and raised as a normal Filo Rial.” (Midori) “Really?” (Firo) “That’s how it is.” (Naofumi) “Hmm?” (Firo)

Firo tilts her head again. With her head, I think it’ll be impossible to get this through. Well, that’s just how she is. I really don’t want to meet a smart Firo someday.

“Anyways, there’s no need for us to stand around here to talk. Shouldn’t we return to somewhere safe?” (Naofumi)

I mean, we already intercepted the enemy.

“... Understood. Let’s leave this to a person who can determine whether this Naofumi is real or fake. Until then, we’ll put that matter on hold.” (Melty) “There’s someone who can do that?” (Naofumi)

What a convenient special ability. Does that mean there’s a reincarnator on our side?

“What are you talking about? It’s Sadina-san.” (Melty)

Ah, Sadina. Does she have the ability to determine my authenticity? No... I’ve been with her for a long time, so perhaps she can. There’s no helping it. If that’s what it takes to get them to believe me, I’ll undertake Sadina’s appraisal.

And like that, we left Melromark’s battlefield, and started moving towards the Castle Town.

Aim at the Third One

After arriving at the Castle Town, we proceeded directly to the castle.

“Ara~ if it isn’t Naofumi-chan.”

Sadina glomped me. Due to her experimentation with me, she’s become unbelievably strong. On the front lines, she’s a fighting force that even rivals the Heroes. She has some deep scars here and there. I could tell how harsh the battles had been at a glance.

It’s like... there’s a certain dignity she holds with her scars. Like some sort of veteran warrior. I don’t think she really minds them, but I guess she really has been pushing herself lately. Now, I can understand. She’s not a reincarnator, simply a resident of this world.

“Is it true that Niichan returned!?”

Kiel shouts out in an excited voice. But she doesn’t try to draw closer.

“... Where’s Raphtalia-chan?” (Kiel) “I just explained it earlier.” (Naofumi)
“Naofumi...!”

Glass let out a surprised voice upon seeing my face, after which she drew her weapon and made some distance between us. Ah, so she was fighting as a pair with Sadina.

“Wait, wait. I’m not controlled by a Goddess, nor have I been revived!”
(Naofumi) “I wonder. There’s the saying a lack of doubt will bite you back.”
(Glass)

She’s really wary. Why is it like this no matter where I go?

I explain the situation once more. As a result of various things, I got a power rivalling the Goddess’s. I passively activate barrier magic and set it so the goddess won’t notice.

“And so, Sadina.” (Naofumi) “What~?” (Sadina) “I know you may be wary of me, but please believe me.” (Naofumi)

She’s just acting friendly. She’s probably suspecting me under that guise. Because that’s how Sadina is.

Right, the fact that my comrades don’t believe me because of that damn Goddess’s actions pisses me off. I would really like to go directly pick a fight with her, but there’s a chance I’ll lose a good opportunity because of it. To take her out without fail, there’s a procedure I have to go through. And it’s not like the world power the spirits gave me is unlimited or anything.

“Ara~? Oneesan believes you, you know. This Naofumi-chan is the real one.” (Sadina) “Is what you say, but how is it beneath that smile? Did you think I couldn’t tell?” (Naofumi) “I think Naofumi-chan is being the doubtful one here.” (Sadina) “Fumu... then Sadina, let’s go to an empty room for a second.” (Naofumi) “Ara? Are you finally letting out your feelings for me? (Sadina)” “Ah, yes, yes. That works, so let’s go.” (Naofumi) “Naofumi-sama I want in too.” (Atlas)

For some reason, Atlas follows us. No, I’m really not doing anything like that.

“Go seduce Fohl, or play with him or something.” (Naofumi) “I don’t want to.” (Atlas) “Atlas! Your Niichan’s been working hard you know!” (Fohl) “That’s right! Fohl-niichan’s amazing! You can’t see that, Atlas-chan?” (Kiel) “I’m well aware. But His dignity dwindles in my eyes every time he tries dotting on me.” (Atlas) “Is that true... then Fohl-niichan! Let’s go show off together, and get Atlas to accept you!” (Kiel)

Kiel innocently intertwines her arm around Fohl’s. They got along well for a while, but aren’t they closer than before?

“So you had that sort of relationship? Onii-sama, I will support you from the bottom of my heart?” (Atlas) “What is she talking about Fohl-niichan? Did something good happen to you?” (Kiel) “N-no! I... I am...” (Fohl)

Ah, Fohl looks a little happy. For a misunderstanding like that to make him happy, he might just be a pervert. ... Well, he is happy at having met someone who died. And she’s unbelievably close to how she was in life.

“Ren, Atlas, can I leave the explanations to you?” (Naofumi) “Got it! I’ll explain it all to everyone.” (Ren) “Leave it to me.” (Atlas)

I have Atlas and Ren take care of the explanations, as I go with Sadina to another place. The second we become alone, Sadina raises her guard.

“... And? Naofumi-chan, was what you were saying before true?” (Sadina) “What reason do I have to lie? Is what I’d like to say, but it seems you guys have been deceived quite a bit by that Bitch Goddess.” (Naofumi) “Yes, there were traitors among us... no, that’s wrong. It’s because some were killed and then controlled. Among the village children, quite a few were used like that.” (Sadina) “How troublesome.” (Naofumi)

Reviving the dead... Unless I actually look at them, I won’t be able to tell what she did to them, but if I were to put it honestly, I don’t know how to deal with it. If I had their soul, perhaps it would be possible, but I’m not going to go ahead and try it. It’s just that I know that revival isn’t very good for the soul. It will taint it, or...

This part depends on the laws of the world, it seems. I don’t think the way the Goddess revives them will guarantee them a long life to come. I mean, this is a world she’s going to destroy once she gets bored. Even her reincarnations are more acceptable than this. What’s more, she uses brainwashing or something to control them.

“... I’ve had to end a few of them with these very hands.” (Sadina) “I see...” (Naofumi)

Holding herself steady, Sadina has it rough.

“Hah... Sadina, come over here for a second.” (Naofumi) “Ara? Are you going to comfort this oneesan?” (Sadina) “If you want me to, I will. But looking at your wounds pains me, so let me heal them.” (Naofumi)

I turn to Sadina’s injuries, and cast Healing Magic on them. They’re too deep for normal Healing Magic to have an effect, but the current me can do it.

“I said it before, right? Sadina, you’re best when you’re relaxed. That smooth body of yours has an appeal in itself, and it doesn’t feel right when you have strange wounds covering it.” (Naofumi) “Is my skin really that appealing to

you?” (Sadina) “Yeah, that’s right. Keep telling yourself that, and stay still for a moment.” (Naofumi)

... When I look closer, I find her tail is fake, prosthetic. Her swimming form is pretty to a human like me. I can’t leave that as it is. I use high level healing magic... no in this case, I guess it’s been elevated to regeneration magic, and start treating her.

Her wounds visibly start closing, and she returns to the Sadina I know. The simple fact that I’ve become able to do this gives the time I spent trekking down that endless path meaning.

When her wounds had disappeared without a trace, I cut off the magic.

“So in my last moments, I’m to become Naofumi-chan’s play toy?” (Sadina)
“Hey...” (Naofumi) “Well, it’s not like this oneesan didn’t know.” (Sadina)
“Really?” (Naofumi) “The revived children’s flow or magic, or whatever it was, anyways, I could feel something strange mixed into them. Right now, I can tell them apart to some extent.” (Sadina)

Sadina strokes her regenerated tail, and starts flexing it.

“What I’m curious about is the change in Naofumi-chan’s magic.” (Sadina)
“What sort of change are you talking about?” (Naofumi) “To put it bluntly, there’s an unbelievable amount of power mixed into Naofumi-chan I can’t even sense it all. But I sensed it when you chanted magic, it’s not something the enemy god did to you. It’s close, but I feel something more benevolent. Something like the flow of the land.” (Sadina) “You have some strange sensitivity there.” (Naofumi) “Perhaps it’s because Naofumi-chan tested a lot of things with me. It’s a bit hard to explain this in words. But I’m just saying I can tell you apart.” (Sadina) “Fumu...” (Naofumi)

At the very least, the fact that she’s correct is amazing. In truth, it’s not just my power. I have the spirits of ruined worlds lending power to me as well. She’s pretty much right.

“What Naofumi-chan is saying is probably true. But the enemy god may have simply found a way to get around my judgements. So I can’t erase my doubts.” (Sadina) “So this becomes a Witch Trial?” (Naofumi)

Is there any way I can actually prove that I'm not being controlled? Even if she says she can tell, if that Goddess could make a fake plausible enough to pass, then there's no way of telling for sure.

"I'll tell everyone you're a shade of gray quite close to white." (Sadina) (TL: As in white = innocent, black = guilty) "Just tell them I'm white already." (Naofumi) "Oh, right. How embarrassing of me." (Sadina)

She makes the 'Tehe' face and I lightly stroke her head.

"Once Raphtalia gets here, we'll bring an end to this battle. Until then, it may be hard, but please help us." (Naofumi) "It's fine... isn't Naofumi-chan protecting everyone?" (Sadina) "Yeah, because that's the only thing I can do. Even having obtained this much strength, I can't inflict a single scratch onto my enemies, you know." (Naofumi)

To prove it, I pounded my fist into Sadina's stomach with all my might.

"Ara... that didn't even tickle. As expected of Naofumi-chan." (Sadina) "Just to let you know, I didn't hold back there." (Naofumi)

It's something I decided for myself, but was making it so I couldn't do a single point of damage going too far? In the past, when I attacked a Balloon, I was able to do 1 Damage per hit. But the current me doesn't have a single stat point in attack, so even that 1 has turned to 0. I do get the feeling it's a bit much, but there really isn't much of a difference between 1 and 0 anyways.

"Then does that mean I can just push Naofumi-chan down like this?" (Sadina) "Why did that lead to this!?" (Naofumi) "Violating a Naofumi-chan who's unable to resist. Doesn't that sound a little fun?" (Sadina) "It's not fun for me! And even if I can't attack, it's not like I can't resist or anything." (Naofumi) "Naofumi-chan's first has to be Raphtalia-chan, right? Then perhaps next will be Atlas-chan? After that... I think I can win against Firo-chan." (Sadina) "In what!?" (Naofumi)

She really doesn't change. Anyways, like that, we had Sadina explain that we were alive.

It happened after that talk, but Melty stared at Sadina and said the reason she chose to believe me.

“Sadina-san. She seemed to be pushing herself, but after you returned, she seems to be having quite a bit of fun. That’s why I’ve decided to believe you too.” (Melty)

Sadina’s mysterious charisma demonstrates itself wherever I look. I never thought she had even earned Melty’s trust. Melty behaves differently around anyone but me. It’s like she has two faces.

“I’m thankful for your trust. I never thought I would have to go through something like that the moment I got back.” (Naofumi) “I’ll give an honest apology for that one. But I’d like you to understand our circumstances.” (Melty)

I’d already heard it from Sadina, but Melty begins explaining. Just like me, their missing comrades would suddenly appear gallantly, and after a few days of battle, they would just as suddenly turn coat. Some representative cases are the Hengen Musou Granny, and the Fake Atlas.

At the start, they thought that the granny had survived, and come to save everyone... but the second the reincarnators gained the advantage, she launched an attack at Firo and Trash. Since Sadina had been suspicious from the start, they were able to avoid catastrophe, but Sadina suffered a severe wound. Her tail was severed, it seems.

Atlas appeared to Fohl in a similar manner. She proclaimed that at the moment I died, the Spirit of the Shield decided to carry out my will, and revive her. That does sound likely... And that Atlas acted as their comrade for a while, before betraying.

“It really is master~.” (Firo)

So Firo finally believes me now. She hugs me, and nuzzles her head against me. Her Ahoge pushes against my body. I feel itchy.

“Rafu~!”

Not wanting to lose Raph-chan starts playing around with me. It’s this. This. Once you appear to save someone from crisis, this is what you’re supposed to get... I appraise the situation satisfyingly, as I felt relieved having returned to this world.

A Fragile Place

“Even so, the situation is one where the enemy can see our every move...”

It's like the mental state I had right after I was summoned had infected everyone.

With something like this going around, there's no wonder why it was so hard to be believed.

“Naofumi-san.”

Glass came over, and called out to me as I was lost in thought.

“What's up?” (Naofumi)

“What do you plan to do from here on?” (Glass)

“I entrusted tomorrow's plan to Trash, did I not?” (Naofumi) “Yes... but while that person may be skilled, his enemy is just a bad matchup...”

Ah, right, there was something recorded about that in the Four Holy Weapons' Manual.

And wait, record important things like betrayal and revival, you useless book.

Is it something like the scene of the crime is a trivial matter to the case?

He had many schemes swirling around his head. It ended with that one sentence.

“And... when will Raphtalia-san be bringing the Holy Spear's Hero?” (Glass)

“Yeah, about that...” (Naofumi)

Raphtalia’s arrival is much slower than expected.

Well, perhaps that parallel world was hard to enter, and she’s going through some trouble.

I mean, if she uses too much power, she’ll be noticed.

I can lightly sense her presence, but it seems that Raphtalia has yet to exit that world.

It appears to fully gain their trust, I’ll have to wait for Raphtalia to get here.

And without Motoyasu here, it’ll be hard to hit the lynchpin protecting this world.

As long as I’m here, I don’t think we’re devoid of ways to win, but there’s the danger of that Goddess running away.

I can’t let her get away.

If she does, she’ll merely start perpetuating evil deeds somewhere else.

We have to stop her breath here.

The Spirits wish for it as well.

I can use power as a god, but the source of it is the spirits’ wills.

And the will of the Spirits is also tied to the will of the world.

I am... well, something like their spokesperson.

The spirits and the land whisper me, alerting me of an opportunity.

“I think it will take a while. Until Raphtalia gets here, we have no choice but to keep fighting. Of course, we will get the enemy’s front line to retreat, though.”

(Naofumi) “... Understood.” (Glass)

From here on, I won't allow us to lose to the reincarnators.

My power follows the rules of this world, and within their scope, I think I can win.

But that's only if she doesn't notice.

“By the way, Glass, you were a Person of Soul, right? Can't you see the souls of other people?” (Naofumi) “I cannot see the souls of the living. In that respect, Sadina-san is more capable.” (Glass) “Yeah...” (Naofumi)

Just how versatile does she have to be, that girl?

When I tried imagining her, the Sadina of my imagination winked at me, and made a peace sign.

Yay! She said.

That actually seems like something she would do, so it's scary.

No, perhaps that doesn't matter.

A-anyways, I'll have to gather the necessary information.

“Melly, tomorrow, where will you be fighting?” (Naofumi)

“Right now, I'm assisting father. The enemy is really powerful, and there are times when he has to be on the front lines and use magic. At times like that, I issue commands from the command tower, and prepare choral magic.” (Melly) “I see.” (Naofumi)

“But recently, we've been pushed back by the reincarnators, and I'm often being protected by Firo-chan.” (Melly)

With a pained expression, Melty muttered it.

Her level has risen considerably.

In the past, Firo dragged her around to level until she was completely worn out so she could Class Up, and it's even higher now.

And in her battles with the reincarnators, it rose further... a difficult story.

『So you're finally back.』

There, I heard Gaelion's voice.

『I sensed thy presence manifest near mine own forces, so I was watching thee.』

I matched channel, and answered.

『What were you doing, anyways?』

『It's not like we were being one-sidedly crushed, mind you. I and Wyndea, and regrettably that Filo Rial Queen were fighting at the enemy stronghold.』

A united front of rivals. A dream-like situation.

No, I know this isn't the mood for something like that.

Even so, Gaelion and Fitoria were working together and fighting?

I guess that's just how far cornered we were.

『How's the situation?』

『Unfavorable. My power is unable to triumph over the Goddess. We've slaughtered her front lines many times.』

So they beat the reincarnators several times...

Whenever they died, they had some sort of revival granted to them.

Are they truly fine with returning from death like that?

That's just great.

But that Bitch Goddess's revival has plenty of demerits, you know?

Your lifespan shrinks immensely, and before you notice it, your soul is tampered with. If they knew about it, I doubt they would rely on it so much.

It may give off quite a game-ish feeling... but the world isn't that much of a game.

If you die, you generally can't come back, and even if you do, if the one doing the reviving skips parts of the process, your soul is tainted, and starts to fall apart.

At best... after two times, you may not notice it, but it should start shattering here and there.

I don't know what she's telling them to play it off.

They weren't made to be okay after death like the Dragon Emperor.

"Naofumi?" (Melty)

"Hmm? Ah, and?" (Naofumi)

I concentrate on the conversation with Melty.

It may have been a conversation in my mind, but it was pretty much me calling Gaelion on a cellphone while my body was still talking to Melty.

"Father is calling you. Pertaining to the battles from tomorrow on, there are some things he wants to report, and other things he wants to ask." (Melty) "Got it." (Naofumi)

I nodded, and started heading for Trash's place.

... There was something I had to say.

"Melty." (Naofumi)

“W-what?” (Melty)

“You worked really hard. I’ll definitely make it all work out.” (Naofumi)

“Naofumi, those words don’t suit you.” (Melty)

“Yeah, the past me would definitely never say them.” (Naofumi) “Yes, but...” (Melty)

Melty cuts off her own words once.

“Yeah... thank you. Thank you for surviving...” (Melty)

With teary eyes, Melty said it loud and clear.

After parting with Melty, I headed to the meeting room Trash used to spin out plans.

It seems that he’s thinking of ways to stop the enemy advance tomorrow.

Even while I was talking with Sadina and Melty, he was here thinking. The boards in the room were filled with various ideas.

“Iwatani-dono, thank you for coming.” (Trash)

“How does it look?” (Naofumi)

“...” (Trash)

Trash’s face is deeply dyed with the color of fatigue.

I mean, the enemy is the Queen he knows so well, and she’s the one taking command, so it’s hard to do it.

During the day, it seems my scolding had a positive effect, but there are many times when Trash runs into obstacles on the mental front.

“It may be tough, but you have to protect the country of the woman you

loved.” (Naofumi) “I know. I know!” (Trash)

It was a line he said to convince himself.

But I think the burden he bears should decrease now.

It’s a bit of a worrying factor that the enemy is the Queen, but I’ll assure him that it’ll be fine.

As I was thinking that...

“Naofumi-sama!”

Atlas came in by passing through the wall.

With her, Fohl and Kiel came to the conference room.

“It’s a misunderstanding! I’m not in that sort of relationship with Kiel!” (Fohl) “I think you have it wrong, Atlas-chan. From me, the Crepe Tree is number one, then second is Niichan, and third is Fohl-niichan!” (Kiel)

So they were still on about that!

Atlas uses me as a Shield to hide from Fohl.

Hey, don’t go using me like that after wanting to become my Shield.

Also, Kiel, don’t make an incomprehensible hierarchy like that.

Why am I under that disturbing tree?

“Ah...”

Trash and Fohl’s eyes meet, and the atmosphere becomes heavy.

Without reading the mood, Kiel continues to wag her tail in dog mode, while sitting on Fohl’s head.

“...”

Perhaps because these two are so similar, they're often troubled with finding words to exchange.

Trash tries to concern himself with Fohl's affairs, and Fohl finds that annoying.

“What's wrong?” (Atlas)

“Atlas, I'd like you to show Trash that you're doing fine. He's someone who was worrying over you.” (Naofumi) “Really...? Understood.” (Atlas)

In a half-transparent state, Atlas gently floated in front of Trash.

“Um, I've kinda become like this, but I'm fine. I would appreciate it if you put your mind at ease.” (Atlas) “...”

Trash wipes away tears, and turns his back to Atlas.

“... This time, the enemy you're fighting must be painful to go against. But... it's true that she is a very important person to you... please consider that. Are all the important things you've ever lost your enemies?” (Atlas) “... Right.” (Trash)

The Queen is currently an enemy.

But besides the Fake Atlas, no one with any relation to Trash has appeared.

The Bitch Goddess didn't call up the one who was Atlas's mother, or his sworn enemy, the Hakuko.

You could look at it optimistically, or think that she just didn't want to send them out yet, though.

If she wanted to, I don't think it would be beyond her.

But... I'll bet the cost will be high for her if she wanted to do that.

"I'll also caution you. It's likely that those people may come out, but like with the Fake Atlas, they'll be fakes created from your memory. I doubt they will harbor their true souls." (Naofumi)

The shape of one's soul is a complex thing in this world. I guess they also reincarnate.

But those souls flow in the dragon pulse, and once they've become pure white, blank slates, they're reborn as new forms of life.

If the bitch were to drag Trash's family out from that, she would have to tamper with the world's laws.

That would take a considerably large cost, so for the Goddess who merely liked playing around and tormenting her enemies, there's no way she would do that.

The reason she could recycle the Queen and the granny was probably because it hasn't been too long since they died.

She could make them act so that even the ones in question wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

This is just hearsay, but apparently the granny acted exactly as she always did up to her betrayal.

No, perhaps she was brainwashed, or directly controlled. I don't know which.

I mean, the fake Atlas was a manifestation of Fohl's desires, so she tried to abuse me, it seems.

"Then... we'll be leaving..."

Fohl took Kiel, and left.

These sure are loud folk.

“Didn’t you call me over to see if I was going to be reliable, or not?” (Naofumi)

“Yes... just how much strength did you gain, Iwatani-dono?” (Trash) “Replying to that is a bit troubling, but I can probably take an attack from that Bitch Goddess head on. Ah, I’ll make a promise. If that Bitch tries to dishonor the dead by reviving them again, I’ll stop her.” (Naofumi)

I definitely can’t forgive her for making use of those passed.

It’ll be fine once Raphtalia comes, but for now, why don’t I interfere with her a bit?

“So you... need to put the Queen to rest. For Melty’s sake too.” (Naofumi)

Melty has a strong will, but despite that, she has some fragile places like Trash.

It’s because Firo’s there that she can hold out.

If her father were to lose the will to fight, the burden would be too much for her.

“You have things you need to protect.” (Naofumi)

“Yes...” (Trash)

Trash softly answered. He shook and sobbed, but he answered.

Even I could see how much pain he was in.

“Naofumi-sama, how about you use some of your power?” (Atlas)

“Reviving the dead is an act that twists the world’s order and its law of cause and effect. I don’t think it’s impossible, but...” (Naofumi)

If I use it, she’ll notice me instantly, and the recoil is too large.

What’s more, the Queen’s soul is already in the hands of that Bitch Goddess, so it’ll be difficult.

“No... I do not think that Mirellia would wish to be revived. For your consideration, Iwatani-dono... I thank you from the depths of my heart.” (Trash)

“Yeah, sorry for that.” (Naofumi)

There are people I want to bring back who died.

If, unlike the Bitch Goddess’s instant revival, I used proper methods, I would be able to stop the soul’s deterioration to some extent, the shield told me.

But I don’t think I’ll be able to use it too much.

Again, it has to do with the cost.

Any more resurrections, and she may become something that isn’t the Queen anymore.

It’s not a good thing at all. So we can’t go around using it.

“Trash.” (Naofumi)

“What is it, Iwatani-dono?” (Trash)

“Rest for now. Or else you won’t get any good ideas.” (Naofumi) “... but...” (Trash)

As he was earnestly thinking up plans, on my orders, he slightly shook his head.

But Atlas approached him, and in the frame of his open hand, she tried to place hers.

“You really are tired. Please rest for a while.” (Atlas)

“If Iwatani-dono insists... then for a little bit, I will rest.” (Trash)

Trash leaned back in his chair.

I chant some fatigue-recovery magic, and remove some of his tiredness to a reasonable extent.

Even if I take away the fatigue with magic, I can’t do anything about the mental fatigue he has.

“Atlas, please talk to him, so he has a good sleep.” (Naofumi) “Yes. I think it went something like...” (Atlas)

Atlas put her hand on his ear, as if to hide her voice from others, and started whispering.

“Onii-sama, please... to prepare for the battles to come, take a nice rest. It may be painful, but please, for the people you love as well...” (Atlas) “Iwatani-dono, Atlas-dono... thank you...” (Trash)

On Atlas’s words, a teardrop drifts down Trash's face as he quietly closes his eyes. He began breathing like someone asleep.

From one of his aides, I received a blanket, and I draped it over him.

I’ll put some expectations on him.

Tomorrow, the sleeping king of wisdom will turn out an idea good enough to overturn the battlefield.

The Night before the Decisive Battle

Making sure Trash was sound asleep, we quietly left the room.

When we descended the castle stairs, we found Glass, Ren and Female Knight. Also Itsuki and Rishia. They were meeting up to discuss the coming battle.

It's dependent on Trash's plan, but to what extent can we take action... in the battlefield, what sort of attacks could we expect from our enemies. That sort of talk.

"Ah, Naofumi-san." (Itsuki)

Itsuki notices us, and calls out to us.

"It's a bit sudden, but I'd like to have a little talk about our enemy." (Itsuki) "It's because Ren-san didn't know much about our world's situation." (Rishia) "Yeah, that'll help." (Naofumi)

Even if I had a slight grasp of what was going on, I can't just go about using my powers for something like this.

It's not yet the time to use them.

And so, it's much more efficient to just ask for whatever information they have on the enemy.

"We were just in the middle of that conversation with Ren-san. But he really did grow big. I was quite surprised." (Rishia)

Rishia looked at me, turned to Ren, and spoke.

“He’s grown quite splendidly, hasn’t he?” (Rishia)

“R-really?” (Ren)

“No, he still has quite a way to go.” (Female Knight)

Female Knight crossed her arms, and said it with a proud tone.

Even so, between Ren and Female Knight, there’s a strange sense of distance, or some sort of uncomfortable atmosphere. Something like that.

Glass seems to have noticed the gap as well. She’s a bit troubled.

Ah, right. She was fighting in our camp.

“No matter how big he’s gotten, I have yet to see if his heart’s grown as well! After this, I plan to have him show me his swordsmanship.” (Female Knight)

“Ah, I see. Ren has it hard.” (Naofumi)

“Fight on, Ren-san.” (Itsuki)

Itsuki encourages Ren in a clear voice, but... for some reason, it sounded like he was muttering to himself.

“Until now, Ren was the youngest of all of us, but now that spot has fallen to me.” (Itsuki)

Now that I think about it... Ren was sixteen, so in two years, he’s become eighteen.

Itsuki was seventeen, I believe.

I’m twenty, and Motoyasu is twenty one, so Itsuki is the youngest among us.

Well, through my wanderings through the rift, I don’t really know my actual age anymore, though.

But I’ll keep that to myself.

“Ah, right. I thought I should give this to you guys.” (Naofumi)

I take out the medicine Arc gave me, and showed it to Ren.

“I think this was the liquid from the Filo Rial’s Holy Land, right?” (Ren) “It’s the concentrated version. Try feeding it to your weapon. Whatever you do, don’t drink it. It’s poison.” (Naofumi)

It’s a medicine that turns you into a god if you drink it... but I know it isn’t something that should be used so readily.

In the first place, even from this world’s perspective, it’s a foreign object.

It’s an exception among exceptions.

Even the current me is probably an exception from the world’s perspective.

... When this battle is over, what should I do?

“I see... understood.”

As I inclined the vial to one side, Itsuki took out his bow, and absorbed the drop that fell.

“This is... the Bow of XØ? How is it different from the Bow of Ø? Its effects and stats are the same.” (Itsuki) “I think it’ll be much more effective on the Bitch Goddess than the Ø Series, you know. When the time comes, try using it.”

(Naofumi) “Understood. Then you will be spreading this medicine around to the other Heroes, too?” (Itsuki) “Yeah, tomorrow. Before the battle starts.”

(Naofumi)

After giving some to Ren and Rishia, I looked towards Glass.

“Glass, do you think it can be used on the weapons from your place?”

(Naofumi) “Hmm... I don’t really know.” (Glass)

“I guess we should just test it.” (Naofumi)

I dripped the medicine onto Glass’s fan.

“The Fan of XZero...” (Glass)

So in Glass’s world’s weapons, the name gets written out?

Even so, it’s good it came out.

“Next is...” (Naofumi)

I explained whatever information I thought necessary, and we organized our information.

And since our business with it was over, I closed the bottle. I mean, it would be terrible if it were to be abused.

It’s supposed to give some godly power, but once you get the power, what sort of end awaits you?

... Even I don’t know what the future holds for me.

The God Slayer who called himself Arc told me.

That no matter what happened, I shouldn’t regret.

It’s probable that he was implying this.

When this battle is over, what will become of me and Raphtalia?

“And? Your enemies... in this case, do you have anything to say about the Reincarnators?” (Naofumi) “Yes. Of the ones we fought, I thought I should tell you two about the most conspicuously strong ones we encountered.” (Itsuki)

“Got it. Please tell me.” (Naofumi)

The Reincarnators are like that Bitch Goddess’s vassals.

No, they’re just her pawns.

Do they understand that once she’s done playing around, she’s going to erase the world all at once?

No, if they did, I doubt they would be acting like this.

“First is about Glass’s world’s vassal Heroes. There are five we’ve encountered.” (Itsuki)

Glass was the Fan, right?

And from what I’ve seen, there was a Scythe, and a Katana.

The wall guy just had a strange power, and he shouldn’t be a legendary weapon holder.

“First, there’s the Heroes of the Katana and Scythe. There was also the Harpoon, and Instrument, and the Ship.” (Itsuki) “A Harpoon, an Instrument, and a Ship.” (Naofumi)

They’re all quite strange weapons.

What the hell’s with the Instrument? I can’t imagine what sort of attack’s supposed to come out of it.

But there’s one even stranger than that mixed in.

“What’s with that last one. The Ship.” (Naofumi)

“It had an ability much like the carriage Fitoria-san holds. It flew in the sky, and rained down attacks on us.” (Itsuki) “I didn’t see it on the battlefield I appeared on.” (Naofumi)

“It was fighting with Glass-san and Wyndia-san in a different squadron.”

(Itsuki)

I did hear from Gaelion. Fitoria was supposed to be there as well.

Just how much of an all-out-war is this?

What's more, they've enclosed in on Melromark, and the defense of the other countries is in shambles.

There are also many countries that have fallen, it seems.

Right now, a safe country... doesn't exist.

For the time being, the world's allied army is still fighting as one, but I can't foresee how that will work out in the future.

“So we should be wary of them?” (Naofumi)

“Yes, right now, those five seem to be the enemy's aces. But if you count the other reincarnators, the amount increases.” (Itsuki) “There was also a person who nullified Itsuki-sama's Down Magic through strange ability. When the King tried to use Naofumi-san's Support Magic to try to increase our abilities, the result was the same...” (Rishia)

It's an iron rule of support, that when the other side uses it, your irritation increases proportional to their stats.

That Bitch Goddess seems to make up for the lack of coordination in her own troops through Support Magic, though.

Even though the enemy is playing on hacks, we're using proper procedure and... Yeah, if it went like that, it's clear why we have more losses than wins.

What's more, she revives those involved with our side, and controls them. This is no joke.

But... I'm not going to let her do that anymore.

However... just what is Raphtalia doing?

She just went to go get Motoyasu, so isn't she taking way too much time?

Is what I think, but the place Motoyasu was in was a troublesome parallel time-space loop, so perhaps it can't be helped.

"Naofumi-sama." (Atlas)

"Hmm?" (Naofumi)

Atlas lightly floats to my ear, and whispers a plan.

Fumu... that sounds interesting.

"Female Knight." (Naofumi)

"... Yes, what?" (Female Knight)

When I called her Female Knight, she gave an expression that showed she had given up in the deepest depths of her heart. Then let out a sigh before answering.

"Do you want to become a Vassal Hero?" (Naofumi)

"What are you saying all of a sudden!? Could it be that one of the four legendary Heroes plans to steal a weapon from another Hero?" (Female Knight)

"Naofumi... I don't know who you plan on taking it from, but please stop.

Everyone's working hard." (Ren) "Don't misunderstand, I just wanted to try asking is all." (Naofumi)

Well, I guess that's the thought that would surface first.

But what I'm trying to do is nothing like that.

"I just wanted to ask those that distinguished themselves... you know."
(Naofumi)

No, perhaps I should act oblivious.

I don't plan on letting the chance slip by, though.

“I’m not sure if it’s possible or not, so don’t expect too much.” (Naofumi) “I don’t know what you plan on doing, but can’t you share it?” (Ren) “That is...”

Atlas whispers into Ren’s and the others’ ears too.

I don’t know if I can do it, so this talk is nothing more than a good luck charm.

Though it seems Atlas is sure of herself.

“You can do something like that?” (Glass)

Glass leaned her body forward, and asked.

“It’s only a possibility, but if it worked, wouldn’t it help our situation?”

(Naofumi) “Can I... get my hopes up?” (Glass)

“Please don’t hope too much. I’m only on the level of, ‘It would be nice if that was possible.’” (Naofumi) “Understood.” (Glass)

I mean there’s no demerit to having more people.

Well, I’m leaving the larger-scale plan to Trash.

Come to think of it... there was something I was curious about.

“Glass, you use Spirit Water to recover your strength, right? Are you still able to do that?” (Naofumi) “Yes, Itsuki offered to give some to me.” (Glass)

“We were able to overcome crises many times because of her.” (Itsuki) “That should be my line.” (Glass)

“Naofumi-san, would you like to hear about Glass-san’s forces? I think the information may prove useful.” (Itsuki) “Glass’s forces. You mean her allies that acted with her when she was outside of her world?” (Naofumi) “Yes, before the World Assimilation... my comrades that were quite active in my world.” (Glass)

“One of them was a Person of Soul we almost mistook for that person. You know, the one who’s part of this country’s security. She ended her sentences

with..." (Rishia)

And so we shared information to some extent.

After that, I left the castle, and started walking down the dark streets.

The light was still burning in the Weapon Shop..

It was already quite late at night.

I could hear the sound of a Hammer hitting metal from the back of the shop.

"Oi." (Naofumi)

"We'll be intruding on you." (Atlas)

We knock on the door to announce our presence.

"What? The shop's closed you know... if it isn't the young lad!"

For some reason, Imya and her uncle were with him.

Because of the constant battle, they've been making armor and weapons without stop, I've heard.

"Did you hear about what happened on the battlefield?" (Naofumi)

"Yeah. I was told you may be a fake, so I should wait for them to determine it at the castle, but from how it looks, there was no problem with that." (Old Man)

"I'm sick of everybody doubting me like that, though." (Naofumi) "Haha, that behavior fits you, boy." (Old Man)

Well... being doubted makes me remember the time I came to this world...

But if someone asked if such things fit me, I'd like to shake my head.

This all happened because Witch framed me, and if that never happened, perhaps I would have lived normally.

Well, that's fine.

“And? How are things on your end? Imya seems to be there too.” (Naofumi)
“The village is still safe, but they're making armor for those participating in the war.” (Old Man)

The Old Man and Imya's Uncle are known craftsmen. I guess requests keep coming.

And the reason Imya and her uncle are here probably has something to do with materials and equipment.

Right now, they're not making things for the village, but for the world.

I've heard that the Castle Town's largest manufacturing workshop keeps going, making weapons day and night. Here.

The weapons they make go to the heroes and those close to them with the highest priority, but they're also distributed to the lower level soldiers as well.

Come to think about it, Itsuki, Female Knight, and Sadina seemed to have some high-class equipment.

They even use their free time to develop new sorts of equipment.

“And to aid your work, I brought a few books from my world.” (Naofumi)
I showed the weapon books from my world to the Old Man.

Truthfully, over that long journey, they got to the brink of falling apart, but before I got to this world, I used a bit of power to restore them.

“He~! So this is a book of your world's weapons, boy. There are quite a few here.” (Old Man)

He can't read the lettering, so I collected books that mainly focused on pictures.

They're mainly books on the manufacturing of guns, though.

Of course, there are also a few with words tightly packed together explaining just what sort of weapons they were.

If we had time, I would help explain it in detail, but tomorrow I have to head to battle.

“In my world, there’s a process where you use charcoal to refine and harden things. So I think this may prove a little useful.” (Naofumi) “Thanks, lad. I’ll use it with care.” (Old Man)

“Making things harder with carbon... can it be applied to clothing too?” (Imya)
For some reason, Imya’s eyes are shimmering.

It seems she’s anxious to eat her way through the books.

“If I don’t teach it, it’ll probably be difficult. Just slowly analyze those books, and use them to make this shop flourish. That’s enough.” (Atlas)

On Atlas’s words, I also nod.

That’s right. As long as there’s war, his business will be booming.

But I think that the Old Man is one who wishes for a world at peace.

Because he’s been lending me power since the time my life was thrown apart, I can understand.

“Leave it to me, boy, and tiger girl. By the way, where’s the young miss?” (Old Man) “Raphtalia is working on another mission. She’s bringing Motoyasu.” (Naofumi) “Ah, the Hero of the Spear, is it? I saw him a while ago, but she’ll have it rough.” (Old Man)

Rough referring to interacting with Motoyasu.

I’m of the same opinion.

So the Old Man’s seen that Motoyasu to.

To put it bluntly, no matter who looks at him, they’ll find him strange.

... No, I don’t really care about Motoyasu.

“Make sure you don’t work too hard and collapse.” (Naofumi)

Well, I think this tough battle will end tomorrow.

Of course, the enemy's situation, and Raphtalia's arrival could delay it.

But we survived up 'til today. I'd hate it if they died from overwork.

"I know. Hey, all of you too." (Old Man)

"Y-yes!" (Imya)

"Yes." (Imya's Uncle)

"Ah, I see you guys are caught up in the books the young lad brought. Let me have at them too!" (Old Man)

And off they go. The three indulged in the books I brought, as they began debating things with one another.

If they collapse because of this, does it become my fault?

I'm a little worried, so I cast some fatigue recovery magic.

And after giving them a few warnings, we returned to the castle.

When I returned, at the castle gate, Firo and Melty were asleep. Perhaps they were waiting for me.

Melty had drifted to sleep while sitting atop Firo.

And Firo, as she was, slept with Melty on her back.

They must be tired.

They were quite peaceful, so I ordered a soldier to fetch me a blanket, and after draping it over them, I laid down to take a nap nearby.

Everyone's quite busy.

But this battle will soon come to an end.

I should find some peace of mind, and sleep for a while.

At that time, Atlas murmured, 『It's the first time that Naofumi-sama agreed to let me sleep by his side』, but that doesn't really matter.

Like that, the night before the battle passed by.

Proxy

We were locked in a stare-down with the enemy for five minutes.

Military formations kept shuffling round on both sides.

I have no idea how many times the Queen and Trash are going to try and read each other's plans.

I bring up my Status Magic.

The area's terrain and personnel make me slightly confused as I follow the changes again and again.

I've never personally experienced Trash's resourcefulness in war.

No, I did participate in that war, but I was sent to eliminate the enemy leader, so I worked separately. So in truth, I've never come to know it.

"Fortify the left flank! The Right as well... Center disperse!"

After these changes repeated countless times, Trash proclaimed something, and I stepped forward.

"Iwatani-dono and the others, begin your assault!"

I follow the orders, and took the front.

And at the same time, I became speechless.

A mean large scale meteor magic fell and exploded on the enemy army.

I had wondered if it was going to go well, and went forth thinking failure as a possibility, but I'm surprised it actually hit the enemy so easily.

The Queen's incompetence... no, that's not it. It's the competence of the ones casting the covenant magic.

Originally, covenant magic had meaning through gathering the magic of multiple people in one place. The output directly correlates to the amount of magic gathered.

But Trash deployed his magic corps all over the place, and while divided, they still managed to complete the preparations for it. I'd call it a drastic move.

I can understand things like this due to my new sensitivity to magic.

Honestly, I can only call it madness.

You don't know where it will fall, and you can't guarantee the output, yet he used that magic with definite accuracy, timing, and output.

The guys from Silt Welt did say you can't predict what will happen while fighting Trash, but I guess they were right.

He probably timed it so even the Queen was unable to predict it.

No... she actually did.

That's why she changed her formation time and time again.

And in their battle of reading each other, Trash came out on top. Will these surprise attacks keep unfolding over the battlefield?

"UWAAAAAAAAAAH!"

I see the enemy troops getting blown away.

I activate Defense Link and Meteor Wall as we begin our assault on the enemy.

“E-everyone, don’t forget we have the Goddess’s protection!”

A non-reincarnator is giving orders to the army. He’s entrusting his protection to the divine.

As usual, it seems the Bitch Goddess has used some support Magic. The worn-down soldiers scattered on the ground start rising like Zombies, and their wounds begin to visibly close.

They’re even laughing about how they feel no pain. It’s unnerving.

To counter attack our meteorites, they also cast meteorite magic, and magma begins to gush out from the ground.

“I’ve read your hand!”

When the troops take on Trash’s ordered formation, they splendidly dodge the falling rocks and magma.

Just who are you, Trash!

“Iwatani-dono, it’s about time for the Enemy commanders to show themselves! I’ll leave it to you!”

As Trash shouted out, I sensed a presence.

“There!” (Naofumi)

I activate Magic Cruising to float in the air, and hold up my Shield.

And immediately following, the guy with the katana suddenly appeared, and unleashed a skill.

“「Sky Running Crescent Moon」! What—”

A sharp blade of air appears, and approaches me in a shape like that of the moon as it tries to mutilate me.

As I stop that blade, a light metallic sound rings out.

The reincarnator loses his voice.

“Could it be...”

Is this the first time these guys are seeing Trash’s seriousness?

No, I don’t think that’s it.

I’ll bet he’s surprised at how easily I withstood his attack.

Or else, he wouldn’t have tried a surprise attack like this against Trash’s army.

“I’m not letting you run, you know.” (Naofumi)

I grab the reincarnator’s katana, and concentrate my mind.

At that time, the magic Trash had been preparing in the rear collided with him and those around him.

「All Revelation Down X」!

Itsuki follows his orders, and uses his ability decreasing magic.

At the same time, I began casting... some magic of my own.

I interfere with Itsuki’s magic, and change its scope and target.

And emerald light follows the enemy, as it spreads over their forces.

The essence of war is to strengthen your forces, and weaken your enemy’s.

I shorten the incantation as much as possible, to make it faster than a single

breath. And I use the strongest support magic I can outside of the scope of her suspecting anything.

「All Revelation Aura EX」!

The magic is transmitted to the soldiers through the Defense Link.

For all my allies on the battlefield, support magic activates.

Because of that, the forces the Bitch Goddess strengthened through magic can be combatted through direct methods.

In order to nullify our magic, a cheat ability mixed with magic begins to rain down.

“Ren, Itsuki, Fohl, Glass! Go stop the caster!” (Naofumi)

“Got it! What about you, Naofumi!?” (Ren)

“Me? I’ll stop this one, and...”

Against the endlessly raining nullification magic, I chant a single skill.

「De Dispel Parry」!

... The skill redirected the attack meant to nullify our supports.

Originally, Dispel Parry was a skill to protect individual units, but I tweaked a bit.

Meaning...

“Wha-Their movements aren’t getting any slower, you say!?”

Those reincarnators are shocked.

Right... I rendered their nullifications attacks null.

Of course, that's within the rules the Bitch Goddess set.

Well, she's just playing.

If it's just this much, I don't think she'll get serious.

"Good! Let's proceed as Naofumi said!" (Ren)

"Yeah!"

Ren and the others run past me.

The effects of Defense Link don't cut off.

While it originally had an effect time, I can make that optional and control it.

In all honesty, I can probably keep it active eternally.

Just like yesterday, even when they're attacked with killing blows, they take absolutely no damage.

"W-what's with these people! Even if I attack them, they don't even dodge!"

"It's a cheat! These guys are playing unfair! You cowards!"

I don't want to hear that from you! Is what I want to say.

The fact doesn't change that they're abusing their own cheat powers even now.

"Now then..." (Naofumi)

"Just how long are you going to hold that!? Let me go!"

"Why should I?" (Naofumi)

The guy with the Katana started shouting at me.

He must be pissed that things aren't going his way.

I get quite a relieved expression when I see guys like this making this sort of

face.

“Die!”

Perhaps they sensed something off, but a guy with a harpoon, and the one with the scythe stabbed at me with their weapons.

What’s more, behind them is one with an instrument in hand, and in the sky is a ship... Ah, I think they used a transport skill to get down here together.

Perfect.

“Atlas!” (Naofumi)

“Yes!” (Atlas)

From the Shield, Atlas answers to my voice.

She touches the Katana, and I match my consciousness with the Spirit’s.

『Ple... he... lp... me...』

Having been bound by a strange power, it was being made use of forcibly. I hear the voice of the otherworldly spirit.

Yeah, I’ll help you right away.

Originally, the Spirits that dwell in the weapons are the manifestation of the will to protect the world. In order to protect their own worlds, they oppose the spirits of others.

But right now, the worlds have become one.

Even if they’re from another world, we’re not enemies for them to oppose.

And the foundations of these vassal weapons, the four holy weapons of that world have mostly been lost already.

No... perhaps they're out there somewhere, and are merely sealed.

I use this vassal as an intermediary to link to them.

... It seems that the four legendary spirits were able to escape their control.

But they no longer have the power left to fight.

“You hate being controlled regardless of your own will, right? I'll definitely let you free.” (Naofumi)

I... gently talk to the Spirit.

“Sacred Weapon Spirits of another world... please listen to my words. And please lend us your power.” (Atlas)

The Spirit of the Shield and Atlas try to call out to them.

Through me, I restore some power to them, and they answer.

Right now, I was able to link to all the Spirits fighting on this battlefield.

“Now is the time. Let's help Iwatani-dono, and show the power we've attained!

「Kenbu Mu: Zetsukage Ten」!^[19]

In the middle of battle... Glass converted her power to match the sacred weapons of this world, and with a fan made of magic, the size of a sword, she blew away the enemies surrounding her.

Its output was much greater than she's displayed up 'til now.

From the start, she possessed monstrous power, and was of a race that specialized in short, decisive battles, and she used her skill at full power.

“Guaaaah—”

The Reincarnator's party members and comrades that were gathered around her, as well as the army soldiers were sent away without leaving a trace.

The Reincarnators called out their names frantically, but that's not my problem.

"I definitely won't forgive you! I'll kill you without holding back!"

"Sorry, but for you guys, that's impossible." (Naofumi)

I proclaimed, after finishing the negotiations with the enemy's vassal weapon.

Honestly, I didn't think I would succeed.

But... it seems I'll be able to manage with just the power of the spirits.

It seems the Bitch Goddess didn't really care too much about it.

Countermeasures... it's not like I didn't have any, but from what I can see, I don't think the Bitch Goddess ever thought they would be released, so she was too soft.

"... In place of the Spirits who're supposed to lead you, The Hero of the Shield and his spirits shalt command. Lend us power. Vassals, break off these foolish restraints, and lend your powers to us!"

As I called out, the Katana, Instrument, Harpoon, Scythe, and Ship changed to balls of light, and separated from their wielders. Other balls also came from them.

"Wha—"

And just as they began to let out voices of surprise, the vassals began flying towards our army.

Right... That was Atlas's proposal. I wanted to test whether or not I could indirectly cut their forces.

I activated the Spirits, and released them from the Goddess's curses. I stole their weapons.

First, I used the enemy's vassal to access their world's sacred weapons, and asked if they were okay with joint ownership.

But Glass's weapon had already sensed the situation, and severed its link, so I could only directly hack through the enemy's weapons.

In order to prevent interference, the Goddess put up quite a solid firewall, but it wasn't really anything special to me.

Well, there was the danger that I would be noticed.

But I think this will greatly alter the situation.

"No! I don't want to be a Hero!"

I heard Melty's voice echoing from the back lines.

"Wah, Mel-chan, now you're just like Firo. Mel-chan is good at playing instruments, so Firo will sing with you~." (Firo) "Hoh... Now Melty has become a Hero like me. Let us overcome this crisis together." (Trash) "Uu..."

She let out quite a defeated voice.

So Melty is the Hero of the Instrument.

She was the second princess of Melromark, and current Queen, and now she's obtained a Heroic title... Her deskwork will increase, now.

Even so, when I was wondering how one was supposed to fight with an instrument, I began hearing music from the back lines.

「The Hero's Melody Ten」!

That's quite a nice sound.

Melty... so she was able to play something so refined.

In the past, when Firo was earning through her singing, she did act as her manager.

And wait, I guess even if she's like that, she was a princess. She should be able to play an instrument or two.

As I was thinking that, my Status started to jump.

Oh, so it's a support skill. What's more, it even stacks over the magic.

"Firo will try hard~!" (Firo)

"I'll also put in a little effort!" (Trash)

Firo and Trash first long ranged skills from the back to the front.

Ah, by the way, the vassals I released this time have all been converted through my Shield.

Right now, the Heroes they select to wield them should have a list of easy ways to use them floating in their field of vision.

「Lightning Dragon Ten」!

A pillar of light large enough to pierce the heavens extended onto the battlefield.

"Yay! This weapon is easy to use. How nice~."

The Hero of the Harpoon, Sadina, began doing something that looked like swimming through the air, as she rampaged across the battlefield.

She was already monstrously strong from the start.

With the Hero stat bonuses, she becomes less and less human.

She's probably... stronger than Firo.

「Stardust Blade Ten」!

As I thought, Female Knight was selected by the Katana..

“UWAAAAAAAAAH—”

Just as the name implied, a shooting star... is it a subtype of Meteor Sword?

Together with Ren, she starts massacring the Reincarnators' companions.

“Fumu... It's a bit different than my short sword, but I'll manage.” (Female Knight) “Eclair, are you alright?” (Ren)

“Yeah, but I specialize in thrusts. Swords like these aren't my specialty.”

(Female Knight) “You should be fine. Thrusts are within a Katana's range.” (Ren)

“... I guess you're right. 「Triple Strike Ten」!” (Female Knight)

The Triple Strike skill activated to meet the new soldiers approaching them.

She was always quite fast, but I feel she's gotten even faster.

That Stardust Blade she shot earlier was almost exactly Ren's Meteor Sword.

I guess they're similar weapons.

“Midori, now even we've been selected by the weapons, so don't think you're so special anymore!”

“I-I know!”

“Then let's go!”

The other two of Motoyasu's flock were also selected by weapons, it seems.

From what I can see, it's a mirror, and a book.

Kuu was the mirror, Marin the book.

What sort of attack is that? Is what I was thinking, but they immediately started to fight.

... Kuu chucked the mirror at her enemy, and spit up a highly compressed breath attack, while Marin opened the book, and began chanting magic.

The mirror reflected Kuu's breath, hitting enemies from unexpected positions.

It seems Marin's book was something like Trash's Cane, And she started chanting Group Covenant magic alone.

Trash matches her... wait, so both of them can do that.

「High Class Group Covenant Magic 『Judgement』 X, Ten」!

Lightning surged around the area, and a enemies in a radius of thirty meters were blown away.

“Rafu~.”

“Kuee!”

『Fumu... I can't see anything besides our own victory.』

It appears that the Ship has chosen Raph-chan.

Why? No... not that it matters.

Standing on the bow of the ship with his arms crossed, Raph-chan let out a loud cry as he unleashed it onto the battlefield.

Fitoria... put her carriage out front, and changed it to something like a steam roller. She started running over her enemies. Quite a vicious attack.

Well, she usually uses her carriage as artillery.

Gaelion and Taniko work together to release breaths and skills from a high

altitude, and the battle's becoming quite one-sided.

Next is... the Scythe flew over to Kiel.

With her three heads, she skillfully maneuvered one of them to hold it in its mouth.

"Ku... you coward! How dare you steal weapons from us! You unfair bastard! You guys only exist in order to get beaten by us!"

Just how far ingrained is his sense that this is a game?

No, he's a coward who found joy in outwitting others, and suppressing them with overwhelming power.

Now that we've come all the way here, I doubt there's anyone who can stop us.

I'll bet Trash had quite a few plans under his belt, but are they unnecessary?

No..

"Everyone... you cannot lose your calm." (Medea)

Black lightning rained down on all of the Sacred and Vassal Weapon Holders.

My body stiffens.

That Bitch Goddess, I've heard about it, but whenever her side gets into a pinch, she interrupts the battle from afar.

"For using an unfair ability to steal the weapons of my people, that I will not forgive. Now, please return to your original wielders. And inflict divine punishment on those who would use such vile powers." (Medea) "Ku... my power is..."

Ren moans.

All the weapons arbitrarily rise up.

Judging from the flow of power, she's forcefully trying to steal them.

Now then... what should I do?

It's possible to block it, but I'll have to cross the limits of a Hero.

Since Raptalia isn't here yet, I can't go about showing my hand so easily.

"Naofumi!" (Ren)

"Don't go relying on others so easily! Trust in your own Spirit." (Naofumi)

"Got it!" (Ren)

Ren and Itsuki follow my words, and grasp their weapons tightly.

That goes for all those that were selected...

The Holy Weapons and Vassals move not a single inch from the Goddess's voice.

"You people are cheating. Please come and become my power. Leave these cowards." (Medea)

My Shield isn't actually affected in the slightest, though.

Well, I guess its Spirit's power is just too strong.

"Guaaa..."

As they were resisting, the lightning increased in strength.

... The Spirits begin to raise screams.

Perhaps she plans on killing everyone with the next blow, and forcefully reclaiming the weapons.

It's not like I'm going to let my comrades die, so if she tries doing that, I'll get

serious.

Honestly, I didn't want to get into a situation like this.

My power was made so that only when Raphtalia is here does it shine to its fullest.

Similarly, Raphtalia's power doesn't distinguish itself unless I'm there.

If I got serious, then I could protect this world.

But to defeat the Bitch Goddess, we need Raphtalia here.

In order to corner this goddess to the limit, as I thought, I need Raphtalia.

Or else, this bitch won't get serious either.

“Even when you're nothing but cowards, you dare resist me... I'll make an example by slaughtering a few of you.” (Medea)

... This is bad.

If I stay silent here, everyone's going to die.

「Perfect Slave」

Starting with me, she used a power that selected Heroes at random, and stole their weapons and spirits while killing their owners. A Conceptual attack.

If they took it upfront, no matter who they were, they would have died.

It's like running an electric current through a cable to her, a simple way to kill them.

There's no helping it... Even if she runs away, after we save this world, we'll just chase her down.

To the ends of hell!

『I, the proxy of the world, who has understood the embodiment of power

command. Bend the truth, and become a, indomitable power so none shall lose!!

「Immortal Mind」!

I erase the conceptual attack the Goddess sent out, and grant the spirits the energy of the world.

Based on this, they shouldn't be able to be coerced by anyone. They can't be bound.

“As expected of the new power of that Shield. It won't let them get taken away so easily. Everyone, with this, I've nullified her attack!” (Naofumi)

Ah, I said that in an extreme monotone.

I know I shouldn't be saying this myself, but that was an obvious lie.

It's not strange if she notices, it's not strange if anything happens. I mean, it's the power of the Spirits.

“Ku...「Infinity Destroyer」!” (Medea)

Bitch Goddess uses the instant death attack she used on me before.

Because she wasn't having fun, she used quite a bit of power.

But she still isn't serious, I see.

I need to get this Bitch Goddess serious or else.

“... Is that all you got?” (Naofumi)

I just took the attack with my Shield.

The concept of death tries to encroach on me, but I repel it.

“Damn! Then—!” (Medea)

The Bitch Goddess used a power stronger than before.

I guess this is the limit of faking it.

To use the power I was keeping hidden from her, I made a move.

But there... I felt the flow of time being ripped apart as a presence approached.

“... Unfortunately, your plans end here.”

Before the Bitch could do anything, a thundering roar so loud that it was as if the entire world was creaking sounded out.

A dust cloud covered the entire front lines.

“You’re late, aren’t you?” (Naofumi)

Someone blew the cloud away with Wind Magic.

And in the center of it, was Raphtalia holding her Hammer.

“The Hero of the Spear created quite a strange parallel world for himself. It was quite a trial to get him.” (Raphtalia)

She’s really late.

Motoyasu... what if the Bitch Goddess got away because of you?

Good grief... well, if he’s finally here, then I guess I can get serious.

“Oh! If it isn’t Midori and Kuu and Marin!? Have you been well, My ANGELS!?”

Motoyasu appears in high tension from behind her, and calls out to his three.

My Angels? Like hell.

And after cautiously looking around the area, he started sprinting towards

Firo.

“FIRO-TAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAN!”

“Mu! Go AWAAAY! 「Spiral Claw Ten」!” (Firo)

He takes Firo’s attack head-on, and is sent flying with a refreshing smile on his face.

... He hasn’t changed one bit.

“Wha...”

The Bitch Goddess’s voice is colored with surprise.

It seems she’s finally realized that me and Raphtalia aren’t just ordinary heroes.

But it’s too late.

“Now then, it appears that you were planning on destroying the world with your power, but that won’t be happening. From here on, it’s...” (Raphtalia) “The real battle.” (Naofumi)

The End

“Ku...”

I heard the Bitch Goddess raise an annoyed voice.

Well, she’s pretty much done for, but I don’t know what sort of thing she plans on doing.

I don’t have a reason to hold back, so let’s fight for real now.

“Well? Unfair power, was it? Why couldn’t you take it away, I wonder?”

The dumbfounded reincarnators and their followers glare at me.

It seems there isn’t anyone with a special power effective enough to turn around this situation.

If they could, their abilities would have to be ranked god class.

“This is...”

The various reincarnators exchange glances with their comrades and each other, before nodding.

And they idiotically show their backs, and begin to run away.

“Ah...”

Seeing the pitiful backs of those retreating, many of the others give up.

But to protect them, the enemy soldiers block the path.

They take up formation, and even though they know they can't win, they resolve themselves to fight. They're much more capable than those guys, are they not?

Is what I thought, but they're acting strange.

In my eyes... should I call it their life force or something?

I saw them burning that up as they prepared to risk their lives to attack.

Thinking about it, there are People of Soul in the enemy forces, like Glass.

Could they have been preparing for this day, and using a last resort?

"Until the Heroes return, we shall stake our lives, and stop you!"

"Yeah!"

It seems that they're made up of people with blind obedience, of those the Goddess personally made into her own playing pieces.

What's more, the Queen is in the rear.

Like this, we'll have to give chase.

At this rate, me and Raphtalia would be fine chasing alone, but... that would be boorish.

"We're chasing them!"

On my words, everyone nods.

High Level Group Covenant Magic starts to rain down on us.

Through the Defense Link and Meteor Wall, we didn't have any casualties, but if I wasn't there, it would be dangerous.

It appears the Queen still wishes to fight us.

... No, she's trying to buy time by stalling us.

"Trash." (Naofumi)

"... Yes." (Trash)

"She's your woman. Go out and get her. We'll breach the enemy forces, so the rest is up to you." (Naofumi) "..."

He clenched his fist strongly, and nodded.

Next to him stood Melty.

"Leave it to me, Naofumi." (Melty)

"Sure." (Naofumi)

"Firo-chan, go with Naofumi." (Melty)

"Okay." (Firo)

Me and Firo nod.

We go off to talk to Sadina, Kiel, and Glass.

"Onee-san will protect everyone here. Naofumi-chan, it's up to you." (Sadina)

"Raphtalia-chan, do your best with Niichan!" (Kiel)

"The people of my world have caused you trouble. Let me give it my best effort." (Glass)

The enemy's People of Soul suddenly got stronger.

As their representative, Glass offers an apology.

"Glass, do you know what the enemy's doing?" (Naofumi)

"Probably... they activated the last resort of the People of Soul. Without thinking of the consequences, they use all their stored up energy in a single moment, and obtain a sudden frenzy of power. A forbidden move... it is. This

ability also has a synergistic effect. When a number of People of Soul use it on the battlefield, the surrounding humans and Demi-Humans, even the Jewel People will experience a similar rise in power.” (Glass)

So it’s an attack in desperation.

It’s not like such skills don’t exist inside Net Games.

Those ones that make you invincible for a certain amount of time, but kill you once the time limit runs out.

Those guys... without any thought, they just want to eliminate the Heroes.

“I see... Trash. You’ll be fine, right?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. I swear it on my name as the King of Wisdom. I’ll show you an ending to this war.” (Trash) “... Got it. It’s all yours.” (Naofumi)

I leave the battlefield to Trash, Melty, Sadina, Kiel, and Glass, and carried out my breach of their forces.

Well, I just took on the magic and weapons that came at me like rain, and proceeded forward.

“Rafu~!”

“Kue~!”

『Well, well, well. For me to be placed on the support role in the end... I’ll leave it to you.』

Raph-chan, Fitoria, and Gaelion push back the enemy forces to support us.

Similarly, Taniko, Rat and Mii-kun, and the other villagers fight as well.

The enemies held back through the Meteor Wall take their attacks.

But...

“Acho!”

A single person directed a powerful blow to my Wall.

“I won’t let you proceed any further!”

... The Granny.

The Hengen Musou Granny stood in our way.

Hostile intent dwells in her eyes, and her body has been forcefully strengthened with magic. It’s like she’s forcibly sucking in the power of the land to raise her own abilities. Her muscles have swelled to a disgusting level.

What’s more, there are even signs showing her body’s been modified...

I feel her soul calling out to me.

She’s telling me that, in the depths of her heart, she truly does not want to fight.

She’s praying for me to stop her.

“Naofumi-san!” (Rishia)

“Iwatani-dono.” (Female Knight)

Rishia and Female Knight stand in front of her, and declare:

“Leave this to us.”

“Are you sure?” (Naofumi)

“Yes. We have learned much from master. It’s time for us... to show her that strength!”

“Rishia-san...” (Itsuki)

“Itsuki-sama, this is the one thing I will not step down on. Please, for the world’s sake, move forward.” (Rishia) “Understood. Rishia-san, you definitely have to return alive.” (Itsuki) “Ren, I too will stay here. I leave the rest to you.”

(Female Knight) “Got it. Eclair, take care of your master.” (Ren)

It would be easy for Raphtalia to stop the granny here.

But I recognize that that way is no good.

It’s because it’s Rishia and Female Knight, that she has a chance of opening up... the Spirits are telling me that.

“Then... let’s go!”

“DERYAAAAAAH!”

As I step forward, Rishia and Female Knight begin their assault on the Granny.

They take on the modified and controlled old woman.

I use my power to confirm their battle as I head towards the enemy.

“Acho!”

Her muscles swell, and she uses the essence of Hengen Musou to attack.

By the Bitch Goddess’s twisted support magic, she displays enough strength to even overwhelm a vassal Hero.

It’s because I’m using my Defense Link on them that they can continue to fight, but if it were a normal battle, I’m sure they would have lost by now.

Thinking back, Hengen Musou was a style created for the weak to triumph over the strong, and for the strong to take down those even stronger than them.

It may look contradictory at a glance, but as long as you keep looking up, there is no end.

It’s a style for the weak to rise to the top.

“GUAAAAA!”

Female Knight is sent dancing in the air like a worn down rag. She falls to the ground.

“Not yet!”

But she immediately rose, and continued to fight.

Because of my protection, she doesn't receive any major damage.

But when she's sent flying, the Granny sends Chi through her body, breaching defense, and increasing their fatigue.

Granny... as an ally, she pounded various styles into various people, but when she appears as an enemy, she's this fearsome.

“DEEEEEEEI!”

Rishia changes her projectile to a knife capable of close quarter combat, and starts slashing at her.

「Dritte Slash Throwing」!

Right after she slashes, the projectile leaves her hand, and flies towards the Granny's face.

“So this is your level!? Hengen Musou Style Mangetsu!”

She grabs the weapon Rishia threw, amasses Chi in her other hand, and concentrates it into a large ball before throwing it at Rishia.

... This is turning into a fight that transcends dimensions, dude.

The swelling of the Granny's muscles, and the way she fights reminds me of a fighter from an anime I watched a long time ago.

A monster known as the legendary warrior.

She even uses the concept of Chi.

“Kaha...”

Rishia took the brunt of the ball of Chi the Granny threw, and after flying in the air, she collapsed.

“Not... yet.” (Rishia)

“That’s right, Rishia! If we don’t stop Master, who will!?” (Female Knight)

“Yes... we have yet to give anything back to her. The power eating into her and controlling her may be great, but... the Hengen Musou Style is...” (Rishia) There for the weak to defeat the strong... a style that realizes the impossible!”

(Female Knight)

Female Knight holds her sword out front, and uses a skill.

「Brave Blade Mist Cross Ten」!

On the Granny’s body, a gash in the shape of a cross forms. At the same time, Rishia...

「Mjolnir X」!

A skill that governs thunder. A Skill unbelievably close to Raphtalia’s own Thor Hammer... Both girls infused as much Chi as they could, and released their attacks.^[20]

“Gyaaaaa!”

The skills infused with the two’s feelings flew at the Granny.

The granny is burned black and falls to her knees, but she immediately rises once more.

“You two aren’t bad... but there’s still much for you to learn!”

“Ku...” (Female Knight)

“Eclair-san, did you notice?” (Rishia)

“Yeah, when I put in all of my Chi.” (Female Knight)

Rishia and Female Knight looked at each other, and nodded.

“I will not fall. Naofumi-san told me never to give up, and I resolved myself. In love, and in dreams, in all of them, I will never give up.” (Rishia) “I will find the path to the Justice I believe in. If, for that, I must face things as irrational as this, as long as there’s a chance for me to break down the irrationality of this world, I will put everything on the line without regrets!” (Female Knight)

Defense link doesn’t come with the function to restore their lost energy, or recover fatigue.

If they look to me for help, I’ll go there immediately.

But... looking at the two of them, this just sounds rude.

Their weapons shine in response to their wills.

“Hengen Musou Style Special Skill—“

The three’s Hengen Musou battle began to reach its climax.

—

I think about twenty minutes have passed since then.

We mow down the enemy troops gathering around us, and run towards the very back, the place where the Bitch of a Goddess is waiting.

The reincarnators are desperately running away.

Even if they may be unarmed, the fact that we're taking down everything in our way made them want to create some distance.

Just how large is the enemy army?

No, it's not as if I didn't see them before.

I could probably just fly over them, but then it would take a while for Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki to catch up.

I confirm Rishia with my power again.

The explosions from behind me haven't been stopping for a while.

It's good that those annoying reincarnators aren't there, but perhaps as a compensation for their loss, the enemy soldier's attacks have become fiercer.

On the front-most lines of both armies, Trash and the Queen, as well as those around them gathered, for a clash of leaders.

The Queen's side has lost most of their aces. So at the very least, to take down the enemy leader, the very last ace, the Queen, stepped forward. That's how it was.

"Mirellia..."

Trash calls out to the Queen, who's using a fan to cover her mouth. Her eyes look dead.

"Father..." (Melty)

Next to him, Melty strums at her instrument, and activates a skill.

“Melty, everyone else. I apologize, but... this is my battle. For a little while, I would like you to grant me the permission to speak with Mirellia.” (Trash)
Everyone around him looked worried, but they believe in their Great King of Wisdom, and nod.

“... This is the final battle. Whether my army triumphs, or yours comes out victorious... no, perhaps our loss has already been decided.” (Queen)

The controlled Queen offers some words to Trash.

Trash grips the Cane strongly.

The Queen begins forming a magic spell.

The fan in her hand gave off a dubious light. I'll bet that just in case something like this happened, the damn goddess hid something inside of it.

A ray of light flies out of the center of the fan, and pierces Trash's shoulder.

“Ugu...” (Trash)

「All Dreifach Freezeflare」!

From both of her hands, the Queen produces fire and ice. A large sphere of magic was formed in the air.

If that were to fall, it would fill the area with frozen air, a realm of absolute zero, and with heat rivalling the sun, so great even bones wouldn't be left behind.

“Now what are you doing? Is that all your strength is, King of Wisdom!?”
(Queen)

Trash holds his shoulder as he quickly hides Melty behind him, and chants magic while crying out.

“U-uwwwwwoooooooooooooaaaah! (Trash)”

Trash's Cane started to glow.

Before I could confirm the result of that battle...

"Goddess! I beg of you, please grant new powers unto us! Power to kill them all; Power to bring about a miracle! The strongest power!"

The Reincarnators reached the damn goddess at their base at the very back. She had her legs crossed in something like a shrine.

He came all the way here to ask for more power? Man the hell up, man.

Without thinking, his party members also start offering up their prayers.

This is the end... of someone who does nothing but receive powers from others.

I must be careful so I don't drown in my own power.

"..."

She put her hand on her fist, and moves her eyebrows as if to say, 'this looks fun'. The cross-legged Goddess took a single Glance at the Reincarnator before her.

"Okay." (Medea)

"Praise the Goddess!"

The reincarnated individuals' expressions turn bright, as they turn around, and glare at us.

"Now, Goddess! Bestow new powers unto us."

"Yeah... you've done enough. Rest peacefully already." (Medea)

As the Bitch Goddess declared that, Lightning rained down on the Reincarnator, and his comrades. It rained down all over the battlefield.

“GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH! W-why!?”

“You guys were way too pitiful, so I thought it was time to end the games. Well, I guess I’ll have a little bit more fun first.” (Medea) “T-this can’t –”

“That. That face: That’s the face I wanted to see. Ahahahahaha!” (Medea)
In despair, while being burnt to cinders by the heavenly lightning, the reincarnators and their comrades direct a look of absolute hopelessness towards the Goddess.

Right... the Bitch Goddess killed them herself. That was the scene she showed us.

There was no instant death.

The pain of their bodies crumbling to pieces. Fear. Despair. Regret. She made a show of all of them.

The expression of those betrayed by those they trusted. Their thoughts... Seeing all of them, the Goddess of all Bitches held a pleasant expression, and let out a ridiculing laugh.

A Couple's Strength

“This is....” (Ren)

“Merciless.” (Itsuki)

Believing in their God.... only to be betrayed, and then terminated. Ren and Itsuki watched those Reincarnates and muttered.

I strongly agreed.

Ren, Itsuki, Motoyasu, and I — we've all had the cruel experience of being tricked by Witch, so we understand all the more.

That this guy is someone we can never forgive.

“You did well to come this far. I honestly give you my praise.” (Goddess)
The Bitch Goddess declared, floating softly.

There was not a single enemy remaining nearby, with the exception of the Bitch Goddess.

Excessive cold-bloodedness.... It was a place where only sorrow and hatred swirled about.

There was only one person there, the extremely cheerfully smiling Bitch Goddess.

“But playtime is over. To tell you the truth, no matter what happened in this game, my victory was decided from the start.” (Goddess)

The Bitch Goddess made a sword appear in her hands and pointed the blade towards us, with her left hand in front and her right hand above.

“Now, dear possessors of the sacred weapons, you believe in the victory of your country, but you should just yield to my overwhelming power!” (Goddess)
The Bitch Goddess’s sword shines.

“Infinity Catastrophe!” (Goddess)

It’s a certain kill attack targeting all the possessors of the Sacred and Vassal weapons, huh?

At the same time, it absorbs the world’s magic and builds up power.

I, in a shorter time than the instant in which she fired her attack..... I cast magic in the time-span of practically zero seconds.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The proxy of the world commands, and asks for power. Eternity, Unconditionality, Infinity, hinder the hopeless future due to that indefinite power, manifest the identity of that selfish power, and fire the lynchpin to save this world!』

“Infinity Zero!”

The sacred weapons of the world..... Mine, Motoyasu’s, Ren’s, and Itsuki’s weapons shine and surround the vicinity.

The power to protect the world— Intent, Desire, Spirit.

Those were materialised and converted the attack on the verge of destroying everything.

“T-this is....” (Ren)

“I wonder what it is, my spear is shining.” (Motoyasu)

“I feel an amazing power.” (Itsuki)

“What—!” (Goddess)

The sound of a large impact reverberated, the instant death attack that the Damn Witch tried to invoke, and the power of world decay, was curbed.

“No way....” (Goddess)

The Bitch Goddess’s face flushed with agitation.

“You didn’t notice even though we’ve been showing you for a while now? No, you realised but were underestimating us?” (Naofumi) “She probably thought our power was just the Spirits covering for us.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia brandishes her mallet, and prepares to use it on the Bitch Goddess.

“It can’t be.... you guys!?” (Goddess)

“Yeah, Raphtalia and I are on the same stage as you. At the same time, we differ from you.... We’ve become beings that specialise in the power to kill you guys.” (Naofumi)

The source of Raphtalia and my power was the world’s magic and life force, just like the Bitch Goddess.

However, the way we replenish that power is completely different.

Unless we receive the power from the world’s volition, we can’t replenish it.

We’ve made it so that it’s impossible for us to steal the world’s power from its roots and consume it.

And.... at the same time, we have the power so she can’t snatch away the world.

Now.... A total of five lynchpins have been launched to prevent the Bitch Goddess from using her power to steal this world.

Four of them are the Four Saint Heroes, and I don’t know where the last one is.

It’s the final Four Saint Hero of Glass’s world.

That one person is also fighting in a place unknown to us.

The heroes weren't the only ones.

Everybody throughout the world was fighting as one body in order to protect the world.

The representative of that was the hero with the sacred weapon.

As long as we five lynchpins existed, the Bitch Goddess changed into a being attached to this world, unable to destroy it.

Already, this world had multiple strong, gigantic barriers spread around it.

To the inhabitants of this world, they became defensive walls protecting them from foreign enemies, and to the Bitch Goddess, they became a prison preventing her from escaping.

“Don't think you can win against me just by having the social standing of a God!” (Goddess)

The Bitch Goddess used even more power.

However, you can't use the power you've been counting on.

The spade work, protocol, and ritual have already been completed.

Next is just killing each other until we reciprocally annihilate everything.

“Now, it's time for some arithmetic. Don't think such unreliable child's logic like infinity, eternity, and immortality will pass by us!” (Naofumi)

Right now, a room that negates Godly powers has been created.

Including us, the Bitch Goddess has her divine powers sealed and has been bound with the reason of this world now.

In other words..... Lv and HP and Magic and such float into her field of vision, and when those numbers become Zero, she will die.

Naturally the numbers ticking away will probably be enormous, but they're not perpetual, nor infinite, nor immortal.

“Don’t fuck with me!” (Goddess) [21]

The Bitch Goddess had on a furious facial expression and chanted a spell.

It’s magic with another world’s logic.

The absorbed magic inside her body is kneaded together and fired towards us.

“Defence Link! Meteor Wall!” (Naofumi)

My defensive skills obstruct her magic completely.

“x0 Mallet!” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia swings her shining, huge mallet down on the Bitch Goddess.

“Gubu!” (Goddess)

With a *thwack*, it hits the Bitch Goddess heavily and blood flows from her temple.

“You, you, you! How dare you injure the noble me!” (Goddess)

The Bitch Goddess uses one hand to slash at Raphtalia in anger.

Even if she’s rotten, she’s the being called ‘God’ who split her soul into various worlds, so she probably has some sword skills.

“My sword has infinite speed and is the infinite ultimate strongest sword technique! You shouldn’t be able to see through it!” (Goddess)

How do you infinitely double infinity?

The word infinity isn't a number.

Well, she probably wants to express that it's that fast, but....

The Bitch Goddess's sword reaches Raphtalia.

Yeah.

Fast, it's certainly fast.... However—

“Infinite speed? Infinity shouldn't have a limit, though. The unit you should be using in this situation is this. Approaching zero without end.... No, something like speed is unnecessary— a Zero-second attack....” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia's movements blur and she passed behind the Bitch Goddess.

Immediately afterwards, she uses a single strike and a loud sound reverberates.

“Wha-!? She transcended infinity with her own speed and I, the ultimate supreme being who even surpasses time was—” (Goddess) “You just returned to the past? Is it time leaping? In that case, I'll also attack there!” (Raphtalia)

Zero-second attack.

Something similar would be Firo's High Quick, huh?

It'll probably be easiest to understand if I said it was close to that.

High Quick is a magic that raises one's own speed to its utmost limits temporarily.

However, Raphtalia's Zero-second attack has no need for speed.

Zero seconds... it's an attack that disregards the flow of time.

No matter how fast one can go, the attack can't be overtaken by a being who's just fast.

Even the sound of this one shot, this sound contains the continuous attacks of tens, hundreds, thousands of strikes all within zero seconds.

Receiving such an attack, the Bitch Goddess faints in agony.

“Ugu..guu..... aaaaauwahh!” (Goddess)

“The innumerable grudges against you are as many as the number of stars in the sky. If only you didn’t exist, I wouldn’t know anything and have lived in peace.... Everyone around me wouldn’t have cried with unreasonable grief!”

(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia doesn’t slacken the hand attacking the Bitch Goddess.

Or rather, I wouldn’t let her slacken it.

“Do you even know how much you did? You manipulated and tormented the world at will, ridiculed the people who were struggling to live, and raised calamities.... And the end is this! Never... it’s not a problem of ever forgiving you!” (Raphtalia)

Good grief.

If this fellow wasn’t here, then this world.... No, although eight other worlds were fighting, there probably wouldn’t be such a harsh battle like this.

Even if there was, it should be nothing more than a problem of one’s own worlds.

Nevertheless, the world was assimilating relentlessly, and there was enough fighting even if it wasn’t.

Raphtalia and I did such a thing and we’re here now in order to stop this fellow.

Even if we’ll be subject to nothingness for near eternity, we just can’t forgive this guy.

The power for the sake of that....

Needless to say, I’ve established myself as the shield’s proxy and can’t do

anything but defend.

Of course, I've been assigned to protect everything from the enemy's annihilating powers.

The current me can't even use the fighting method I employed when I lost my shield.

In terms of stat allocation, I've given up on all my attack and have specialised in nothing but defence.

In contrast, Raphtalia has completely abandoned the concept of defence, given that I will protect her.

Her method was similar to this, but the invader known as God has made her stats omnipotent, her infinite and eternal power reaching an unattainable domain.

Of course, she wasn't able to attack, and it's not like she had the ability to kill us in one shot.

However... It's for this reason that Raphtalia and I were supporting each other.

Relying on each other and abandoning the other components, splitting the remaining parts between us.

Me with the shield and— Raphtalia of the sword.

One can't be complete without the other.

Even so, if the two are together, then no matter who... it'll become a power to destroy everything irrational.

.....It's nostalgic.

The spear and shield paradox, huh?

Motoyasu told of such a story before.

A spear that can pierce everything, and a shield with absolute defence.

To have these two go against each other.... There's no meaning in it.

The shield will protect everything and the spear will pierce everything.

It's fine like that.

That's why— Raphtalia and I as we are now.... The sword and shield as a pair, there's no way we'll lose to this kind of opponent.

Trust

“...”

Hmm? Ren and the others are strangely quiet.

Ah, I forgot.

We're fighting the Bitch Goddess seriously, so those guys can't keep up with the speed at all.

It's like the world is moving at an unbelievably slow rate.

There's no helping it.

I use my power again, and chant magic on them.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The Proxy of this world orders, and requests for power. Grant unto them the power to fight』!

「All Revelation Aura Zenith」!

I raised it to its utmost limits. The strongest ability raising power is channeled through magic, and manifests.

“Eh... ah.”

As if they had been released from petrification, Ren and the others begin to move.

“This is...”

“To put it bluntly, it’s just an accelerated world. I let you guys match that Bitch Goddess’s speed. I’d like you guys to fight, and clear the resentment you held to this day.” (Naofumi) “I-is that fine with you?”

Raphtalia is keeping the Bitch Goddess occupied as she takes her blows.

And all of that damage is sent to me.

We were fighting on the premise that I was going to take them in the first place.

Or else the Defense 0 Raphtalia wouldn’t have a chance of fighting her.

“Isn’t it obvious? What’s the problem? You guys have no need to dodge or defend. With all seriousness... release your strongest attacks at her! Your spirits will show your weapons the way.” (Naofumi) “Understood!” (Motoyasu)

The first one to nod and start attacking the Bitch Goddess was Motoyasu.

The Spear understands the situation, and through the Spirits’ power, it changed to the Spear of X0.

Ah, I see... If it does that, they don’t have to keep spamming the X0 skills. If they used another skill, it would still damage that bitch.

「Gungnir Max」!

Motoyasu chucks a spear made out of energy.

But... The spear has a lot of throwing skills. Brionac was, similarly, a skill that shot a Spear of light, right?

Max is the limit of skill enhancement. There are other names, but if you proceed any further, you get things like Unlimited and Infinite; the units of measure start getting crazy.

“I’ll also go! Atlas, watch over me!”

Fohl approaches the Bitch Goddess, and unleashes a skill.

「Divine Demon Annihilating Blow Max」!

His entire body is tinted red, and all of his magic and Chi flow into his fists. With those fists, he strikes the Goddess.

His blow landed in her abdomen, and the shockwave made it through her body, out her back.

“Don’t underestimate meeeee!” (Medea)

If you think about it, it’s obvious.

If there are things among the X0 Series that don’t do enough damage, it’s more efficient to just use another skill, and now, there’s no one here but her.

What a miscalculation.

Well, she didn’t use those strange abilities the Reincarnators had developed a dependence on, and right now, we’ve been able to nullify her warped support magic, so we’re only fighting by the laws of this world.

No matter how high her level is, or how abundant her battle experience, we’re pretty much the same. What’s more, since the Legendary weapons are on our side, the reincarnators and their followers are little more than extra luggage for her.

Motoyasu’s attack grazed the Goddess’s face.

A clean line of blood was drawn across it, and as the Bitch Goddess put her hand on it, she began shaking incessantly.

“I’ll kill you! No matter what happens, don’t think you’ll die painlessly!”

Her expression is that of the devil, but nothing but refreshing feelings are flowing up from within me.

That's Witch's main body. What's more, she played with the world as her toy, and plunged many souls into despair.

If you think about it, the reincarnators were merely victims used by her until the end. They had no other purpose.

Though their actions did pose quite a few problems in themselves.

“What are you spacing out for!?” (Naofumi)

On my voice, Ren and Itsuki snap back to reality.

“Yeah, then I'll be going ahead! 「Variable Messiah Max」!”

Changing to the Sword of X0, Ren lowered a blade of light on the Bitch Goddess.

While her movements were fast, by the power of my support magic and the barrier I used to seal her power, it's not within a range where he'll miss.

There's also the saying battle experience speaks in actions, not words.

“Ku... die!” (Medea)

The Goddess brandishes her own sword at Ren.

“Your swordsmanship is way too friggin' shabby!” (Ren)

Ren dodges the line drawn by her blade by a gap so small it made one doubt whether or not it had touched his skin. He stepped right in front of her.

「Meteor Sword Max」!

Just like that, he fires a point blank Meteor Sword, and all of the projectiles shot from it pierce her.

“GYAAAAAH!”

That really was an un-feminine cry.

But it’s a scream quite suiting for her.

I get the feeling Witch had similar death throes.

「Artemis Max」!

To support Ren, Itsuki pulled his bow back and fired a skill from his Bow of X0.

A single arrow drew a beautiful curve in the air before plunging itself into her chest.

The next moment, a large explosion surrounded her.

Oh... how flashy.

“Raphtalia-san, Motoyasu-san, Ren-san. Stand back!”

As he said that, the shape of Itsuki’s bow changed.

... Something like a gun, or a Bow... it had both a thread and a trigger.

Is it a weapon that only changes shape when a skill is unleashed...? It seems to be like the X0 Bow.

“Yes!” (Raphtalia)

“Understood!” (Motoyasu)

“Do it! Itsuki!” (Ren)

「Moonlight Buster Max」!

From the tip of his bow, a thick beam-like attack flew, and burned up the Bitch Goddess.

“GufaaAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Good grief, this Goddess doesn't sound feminine at all.

But... she sure is tough.

Even after taking all their attacks, she isn't damaged enough to make it impossible for her to continue fighting.

No, perhaps it's better to say that she's recovering her wounds the moment after they're inflicted.

I feel my power as a god slowly declining.

“YOU BASTAAAARRDDDS!”

Oh? Has rage made her come at us for real?

Well, I can cover all her special attacks and endure them, though.

But the Bitch Goddess just started giving a ridiculing laugh again.

“Well then, so be it. I'll leave it at this. There are plenty of worlds out there. Be as content as you will with your world's ephemeral peace.” (Medea)

I was wondering what she was planning... Is she putting on airs, and fleeing?

If we give an opening, she's definitely going to kill us. Nothing good is going through her mind.

That Bitch Goddess is preparing to use Space Teleportation abilities.

But the wall that covers the world and the Legendary Weapons act as the lynchpin that binds her down. They don't let anyone get past them.

“Unfortunately, this world's been made to shoot you down, you know? There's no way you'll be able to run away!” (Naofumi) “DAMMMMMIIIIIT! So you want to die that badly, do you all!?” (Medea)

Having learned she couldn't run away, Her upturned eyes of conceit turned to ones full of contempt.

Just give it up already! I definitely won't let you run.

“Master, can Firo fight too?” (Firo)

“Why are you being so reserved?” (Naofumi)

“I mean...” (Firo)

Firo looks at me with a troubled expression.

Right, she's been quite anxious for a while now.

“When Oneechan was fighting, she was really fast, and Firo couldn't keep up with her, and when Firo finally became able to see her movements, the spear person used his attack.” (Firo)

Ah... well Firo hates Motoyasu enough to flee to the other side of the planet for his sake.

“Anyways, everyone go at her with the intent to kill her. You know how to deal damage to her, right?” (Naofumi) “Yeah!” (Firo)

Floating lightly, Firo begins attacking the Bitch Goddess with the Claw of X0.

“Um... 「Kaiser Nail Max」!” (Firo)

As Firo swings her claws at the Damn Goddess, the protrusions from it grew into long blades, and cut her from all angles.

“I’ll also go! 「Grand Smash Max」!”

Midori calls out to Kuu and Marin, before releasing a skill.

The Axe he hit into the ground sends a shockwave through it that smashes the Bitch.

Quite a few skills are coming out here.

It’s like a succession of finishing blows.

“Ku, Don’t get in the way! (Medea)

The Bitch Goddess slashed at those closest to her, Motoyasu and Firo, with her sword.

「Doppel Mirror Max」!

There, Kuu used a skill, and a mirror manifested right in front of the man and bird.

Oh? That’s a defensive skill... No, a counter skill.

The mirror shatters, and the fragments shoot into the Bitch’s body.

How convenient.

“GUHAAAAH!”

But immediately after that, the Bitch Goddess was cut by a sword identical to the one in her hand.

I see. It’s the sort of thing where what’s reflected in the mirror is

reproduced...

That's quite dangerous.

“High Class Covenant magic 『Meteor Fall』 activate!”

From the sky, meteorites...

“Think before you use that!”

Everyone takes refuge from the falling rocks.

Of course, the Goddess wasn't one to take the attack upfront either.

Just like us, she tries to run.

「Dimension Whip Max」!

「KYUAAAAAAAAA」!

『I can't have you forgetting about us.』

「Rafu~」!

Taniko binds the Goddess's feet with her whip, and Gaelion started breathing fire onto the Meteorites to increase their output. Fitoria changed to her tank carriage, and fired its cannon.

At the same time, Raph-chan started bombarding with his ship from above.

Right, I cast magic on everyone.

It's not like it was only on Ren and the other legendary heroes.

I targeted my magic on everyone I recognized as an ally.

At the same time, Defense Link and Meteor Wall are also up.

The world is granting me power to slaughter this Goddess.

Well, from her point of view, I may be acting extremely unfair, but compared to all the things she's perpetuated up until now, it's on the pleasant side.

The fact that Trash's arrived here means things have been cleaned up on his side.

"Did you deal with... your woman problem?" (Naofumi)

"... Yes." (Trash)

"I see." (Naofumi)

No matter the result, I left the Queen's matter to Trash.

"I... truly am naught but sinful Trash! No matter what punishment Iwatani-dono gives me, I will not find regret in my decision!" (Trash)

Right... next to Trash, the Queen stood quietly.

I don't see signs that she's being controlled.

Should I just wrap this up as a miracle brought about by the Spirits?

Nah, that doesn't seem fitting... could this be the fairy-tale ending where the Hero saves his beloved wife from crisis?

I'll tease them about it later.

"While I was supposed to have departed from this world, I continued to cause trouble for the people. I am... also going to lend power for the World's sake. With this life at stake!" (Queen) "You shall not! Because I've lost so much, made so many mistakes, and seen so many things, I can say this. I will not permit you to use up that life of yours!" (Trash) "Yeah, even if you don't, me and Raphtalia will definitely do something about it. You just have to do whatever you can." (Naofumi) "Aultcray, Iwatani-sama... For someone who was merely used by the enemy..."

Trash stands in front of the Queen, and starts chanting magic.

“Mirellia, it’s at times like this that... you need a little magic!” (Trash)
Fast!

Even if he has my support magic, he was able to complete his magic much quicker than Marin.

“High Class Covenant magic 『Ice Comet』 Max! My wife... it’s your special... Watch me hit her with a synthesis of Fire and Ice!” (Trash) “I won’t lose either!” (Melty)

Melty started playing an instrument that looked like a violin.

「Magic Amplification Max」!

A barrier-like thing is deployed, and the area is filled with highly concentrated magic.

This is... the world informs me.

It’s a double-edged skill that raises the potency of magic by several times for everyone.

Well, as long as I’m here, we won’t have any casualties among my comrades.

“You insolent rabble! Unhand me!”

The Bitch Goddess tries to sever the whip binding her legs.

As if I’d let that happen.

Before I could signal her to move, Raphtalia jumped into action.

「Gravity Hammer」!

A large gravity-magic-imbued hammer comes down on the Goddess from above.

The direct damage it inflicted wasn't great, but it restricted her movement to as great an extent as possible.

“Gununu...”

Crushed by Raphtalia's binding skill, the goddess is smashed into the floor.

But still, one step, two steps. She continues to walk forward to perpetrate her escape. But it's too late.

The two giant meteorites hit her directly, and the area is covered in explosions.

Trash and Marin deploy magic barriers simultaneously, containing the explosive shockwave around her.

I also strengthen the Meteor Wall as not to have anyone injured.

With this, the Goddess should have taken major damage.

Those were magics chanted with The X0 weapons.

“___!!”

“As expected of the King of Wisdom...”

The Queen quietly whispers to herself.

Oh right, she's supposedly head over heels for the man.

“Uuu...”

The Bitch Goddess, with her consciousness faint and tears streaming from her

face, looks towards Trash.

“Why... why is Papa putting me through something like this?”

Uwah! She still thinks that'll get through?

There's a limit to not knowing when to give up.

“You are no daughter of mine! You dropped people into despair, and laughed at them with scorn. You're just... a devil pretending to be of my own flesh and blood!” (Trash)

Trash directs strong words of rejection to The Bitch Goddess, who had changed her face to reflect Witch's.

“Everyone! Attack at once! This is the moment of truth!” (Trash)

Trash doesn't fall for her words in the slightest.

Even if they're father and child, she's long passed the limit to what could be forgiven.

It'll be best for him if he can let out his feelings here.

“Damn! It's too late for regrets!”

Around Trash, Melty, and Marin, the allied army participates in Choral Magic.

For the soldiers, approaching the Bitch is a bit too heavy a task.

They participate in an attack at her like this.

“Naofumi-san!” (Rishia)

“I've kept you waiting, Iwatani-dono!” (Female Knight)

Rishia and Female Knight ran over.

And...

“I have also... come!”

Having been freed from the goddess’s control, her body that was but a lump of muscle has returned to normal.

I see. So Rishia and Female Knight saved her.

This really is... an unnerving succession of miracles.

I’m being driven to shout out, ‘Is this supposed to be the last chapter of an axed manga or something!?’

No, I won’t say it, but...

“DIIIIIIIE!”

With an angry look like that of the devil, the Goddess takes her shimmering blade, and swings it horizontally.

With so much force emanating from the edge of her sword, we... were not sent flying.

My Meteor Wall prevents that.

In the space before the next magic hit, Rishia and Female Knight ran at the Bitch Goddess.

「Brave Blade Mist Cross Max」!

A cross shaped gash emerges on the Goddess’s body, and to follow up, Rishia lunged forward.

「Dritte Slash! Throwing Max」!

She slashed at her, and after retreating a distance, her knife came flying at her.

“Hengen Musou Style Special Move: New Moon!”

From the Granny’s arm, a black sphere of Chi is shot.

The three’s attacks stop the Goddess’s legs.

“You keep emerging one after the other like flies! Do you really want to end my life so badly!?” (Medea)

The Bitch Goddess saves up power.

Originally, if she was at her full powered state, I don’t think it would take any time for her to activate an attack.

“Ku... How utterly annoying! I’ll blow away this petty power that binds me all at once!” (Medea)

She points her sword downwards, and uses power to try and purify my defensive membrans.

“I guess it’s time for the Oneesans to step in.” (Sadina)

“That’s right, Sadina-oneechan!” (Kiel)

“It would be troublesome if you were to forget me.” (Glass)

Sadina, Kiel and Glass came running they activate their skills.

「The Great White Whale’s Heroic Charge Max」!

When Sadina uses her skill, a giant whale made out of water manifests in the air, and crashes into the Bitch Goddess at the same instant Sadina threw her spear.

「Dark Soul Mist Dispersal Max」!

But even before Sadina's attack could land, with erratic steps, Kielberus disappears, and materializes behind the Bitch Goddess. She slashes multiple times with her Scythe that emits a black aura.

「Kenbu Kyoku: Mu Max」!^[22]

Matching Kiel's dancing movements, Glass swings her fan at the Goddess consecutively.

“Gu...uu... dammmmit! Quit it already!”

The moment before Sadina's attack landed, Glass and Kiel retreated.

Sea foam splashes onto me as her skill rained down on the goddess, and after giving off the sparkle of a X0 weapon, the harpoon returned to Sadina's hand.

“Gu... without fail, you guys... even your souls will be tormented for eternity. I have no further need to care about what happens in the future. Everything, even my memories of this shitty world... I'll erase them all.”

After all this smacking, it's amazing that she's still alive.

“High Class Covenant Magic 『Sunlight』 Max!”

Trash and Marin, as well as all of the soldiers participating in this fight, merge magic... It becomes a flare as brilliant as the sun, and hits the Bitch Goddess.

Well, originally, their allies would have been dragged into it as well, but because of my influence, they aren't taking any damage.

And in order to ensure it hit, the other Heroes cast a few binding spells on her.

“Just how far will you insects go to tick me off!?”

Just where does her unwavering fighting spirit come from?

That’s the only point I give a high evaluation to. Witch was similar, though.

“Naofumi-sama.” (Raphtalia)

“Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“Yeah.”

A half-transparent Atlas pops out of the Shield, and nods.

Raphtalia looks to me for her next action as well.

That’s right... I’ll have to decide our next move.

『Oh Spirits. Oh World. The Proxy of this world orders, and requests for power. I wish for a world without gods, and for that I exercise your power. Pillars that bind the world, power unto me』!

In Raphtalia’s hand, a stake made out of light appears, and she uses her hammer to drive it in.

“Single Shot Special! 「Infinity Bunker」!”

A heavy impact occurs as Raphtalia’s stake bores into the Bitch Goddess.

At the same time, a bright flash of light was sent out.

“GUAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

The light gets visibly stronger, and I can feel it through my skin that the Bitch

Goddess's power is dispersing.

With this... It would be nice if she were to die.

Raphtalia finishes her attack, and lands back by my side.

"Fu... fufu... for small fries, you did well coming this far." (Medea)

... What a tough one she is.

"I'm just about sick of seeing all of your faces. Now let me brush away all your makeshift powers, and watch you as you wallow in regret, having even your souls burned away!" (Medea)

I feel the lynchpins I called down get pulled out, and the Goddess raises her speed even further.

The only ones who can keep up with her speed are Me, Raphtalia, and Atlas.

"I'm done. Now that you've made a fool of me to this extent, I have no need to hold back." (Medea)

Hold back... for her to still display such leisure while being beaten to a pulp, I seriously question where this overflowing tenacity comes from.

I wonder just how much time it will take to defeat her.

But...

I break out into a smile.

The Bitch Goddess amasses power greater than ever before.

Her whole body shines, and a sinister magic manifests itself into wings on her back.

"Let me bring an end to all of this!" (Medea)

I hold my Shield out front, and prepare myself.

“Let’s see. 100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, 『Infinity Destroyer』. All that awaits you all is death. The past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it; you will merely perish! Infinity, eternity, speed of light won’t be enough. No, go die already!”

I perceive her targets. It’s everybody here, and every chain binding her to this world.

And... the Laws of this world that preside over them.

She has enough power output to reduce them all to nothingness.

It’s completely different than any attack she’s displayed before.

It’s a single blow that will use up all of her being.

It’s power deserving of the title of God.

This absolute power even transcends time, and after she repeatedly condenses it, she releases it.

I couldn’t even see it before, but now I can follow it.

Red, and black.

Threads... each and every one links to death. They’re imbued with a concept to bring an end to all possibilities.

And those threads, just how many hundreds, thousands, millions... She has an amount there beyond my counting prowess.

The past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect, an attack to rob all of those away from me.

That attack...

“... I was waiting for it!” ([23]Naofumi)

I... deploy my powers as a God, and from the Bitch Goddess's conceptual attack, I protect everyone. I take it all into myself.

The threads of death entangle around me, and send me through all time, all worlds, all possibilities...

“Aha, ahahahaha. Who are you trying to protect? With this, you're dead. And with the next shot, it'll be my win.” (Medea) “Sorry, there won't be a next one.” (Naofumi)

The Shield absorbs all of the Bitch Goddesses Infinity Destroyer, or whatever she called it, and condenses it into a single point.

“I've had enough of your childish exchange. As a God Killer, I'll show you the greatest of counterattacks.” (Naofumi)

This attack doesn't have a name.

But... In order to wait for her to use her skill, I had Raphtalia and the others work together.

There's wars of attrition, even in a battle between Gods.

But if two beings who won't die combat each other, then when will they reach an agreement... or when will they find an end?

Yes, in the end, one side is the loser.

To childish logic like that... I reached a single conclusion.

“Atlas.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, Naofumi-sama.” (Atlas)

“Raphtalia.” (Naofumi)

“Yes, with this, it’s over.” (Raphtalia)

I nodded.

An end will come to everything

「– Positive Feedback Reflection」!

I changed the nature of the interweaving threads of death.

The red and the black change to green and white.

And I redirect them in the direction of the single person trying to destroy everything.

The altered power is amplified several times, and sent right back.

“You just sent back my Infinity Destroyer as is? How unfortunate. There’s no way the attack I used myself would have any effect on myself!” (Medea) “Were you not listening? I’m sure I included a positive feedback in there. I amplified your power, and sent it back.” (Naofumi) “Gu...” (Medea)

The conceptual attack flies towards her.

Ironically, it’s the same scene as when I hit back Witch’s magic on Cal Mira.

While the firepower is completely different this time, the essence is the same.

In the end, the trivial battles between me and this woman are something like this.

“This cannot be! But with an attack of this level, I won’t even get a scratch, and I can dodge.” (Witch) “Hey, are you getting forgetful about your own attacks? Your attack was 100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death. Past, present, future, parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it; you will merely perish! Infinity, eternity, speed of light won’t be enough, wasn’t it?” (Naofumi) “Hmph. I have the ability to avoid

such an attack, so there's no way it—" (Medea) "Then try it. I don't plan to join you in your childish dialogue." (Naofumi) "Even if you defeat me, the true incarnation of me is still in the outside world, so—" (Medea) "Forgetting things again? Parallel worlds, divergent worlds, the law of cause and effect. Not a single thing in the world will be able to stop it, you said. All fragments and the main body will be killed at once, of course. The attack you launched against everything... wasn't it supposed to invite absolute death?" (Naofumi) "Something like that won't work on—" (Medea)

"100% Deadly Aim, 100% Death, right? What's more, I added on Positive feedback. It's your attack, and not mine. If you can dodge it, then show me the results. Well, that only goes if you survive it." (Naofumi)

Justice Punch! Barrier! Justice Punch can go through barriers! This is a Barrier that Justice Punch can't go through! Then Justice Punch that can go through the barrier that Justice Punch can't...

It's like that sort of endless dialogue.

I'm not going to keep her company for that.

It's just that there's a definite result in this one.

Will it work? Will it not? That's it.

"Ku, my power has the ability to render an attack like this usele—"

"Do whatever you want. And if you manage to withstand it, I'll play with you." (Naofumi) "Gu... an even more powerful infinite energy is... kuaaaaa..."

The Bitch Goddess's scream echoes.

When her words entered my ears, I remembered something.

"... Ah, right. Witch, you kept thinking the Hero of the Shield was weak, and that he had fallen behind in Strengthening Methods, so let me tell you."

She's not in a position where she can hear me, but I turn my back to her and continue speaking.

“The Hero of the Shield's Strengthening Method is trusting people... It's the earning of their trust.”

When you think about it, it's self-evident.

For the Hero who can do nothing but protect others, he has to depend on others to live.

He believes in those that fight by his side, and they believe in him as well.

Like that, the Hero of the Shield finally gets stronger.

And even going about their lives without knowing it, this method was transferred to Ren, Motoyasu, and Itsuki as well.

To hate someone, to wound someone... for us, who continued to take on meaningless quarrels with one another, it may sound presumptuous.

But that's why we can believe in those by our side.

Raphtalia and Atlas, and everyone's gaze.

They give the Shield its power.

From now on, I'll probably still be tricked and betrayed by others.

And when that comes, perhaps I'll be driven by fear to hurt others.

But now, in this moment... I feel that my heart that trusts others is real.

And the fact that I can think this is only because I was hurt a lot, and had those wounds healed.

On that day, at that time—I was alone in the world... Because Raphtalia believed in me, I could get all the way here.

“If you have even the slightest understanding of that, then you probably won’t die here.”

Well, I don’t think she can do that, though.

“As... as if something as stupid as that could— sto, GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!”

Eventually, the Bitch Goddess started a battle with her own power... I wonder just how fast time has been sped up.

And... It was the attack she had made herself, and from my amplification, it should usher in death. In all times. In Parallel, and divergent worlds. Even the law of Cause and Effect won’t be able to affect it, and all that was left for her was to perish.

The remains of her enormous power flowed into me, and through using it for the disappearing world, I used it all up.

“Fuu...”

“So it’s finally over.”

Raphtalia said as such.

“That’s right.”

Atlas responded with a slight feeling of amazement.

I mean, she’s justified.

After playing out this farce, in the end, she fell by her own hand.

I'm sick to death of her stupidity, and her childish ways of attacking.

But I know there are many out there who would do things like her.

She was merely the tip of the iceberg.

"Even so, when I first got to this world, I thought I would partake in a glorious story of adventure... or something stupid like that, but I wonder how things turned out like this." (Naofumi) "So you were thinking things like that?" (Raphtalia)

"No, I mean when I had just gotten summoned here, you know." (Naofumi)
"Naofumi-sama is always glorious, be it now or back then." (Atlas) "No, that's kinda undesirable in itself..." (Naofumi)

We exchanged such idle banter as we stop the accelerated state, and return time to original rate of the people here.

"D-did you do it?"

"Yeah, but that phrasing raises a 'Final Form' Flag, so please don't." (Naofumi)
Those were the words I returned when Ren stepped forward as representative of the rest.

I don't ever want to fight something like that again.

Well, when they came to it, the Bitch Goddess was gone. I can understand their surprise.

While she was supposed to be erased from the Laws of the World, the power she left behind made her remain in everyone's memories.

The Lynchpin had worked from the start, and most of it still remained.

Or else perhaps my own existence would vanish.

Along with the worlds' legend of the four heroes.

“That Bitch Goddess disappeared without leaving anything behind. It’s our... victory.” (Naofumi)

On my declaration, I hear cheers of joy.

The people smile and let loose tears of joy, as they raise their voices.

And the Spirits sparkled like stars, offering us their blessing.

“UWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!”

An oppressing presence had left the world.

Perhaps all life on this world had sensed it.

Our long battle ended, and all the lifeforms in the world looked forward to a brighter tomorrow.

Banquet

That day, we returned to the castle town with the mood for a party.

No matter where we look, people celebrate our victory as they offer thanks to the Heroes.

According to them, after the Bitch Goddess's descent, the sand in the Dragon Hourglasses floated in place within them, but now they've fallen, and grown quiet.

It no longer moves to signal the next wave, and it's silent, or should I say that at a glance, you can tell that it no longer has a purpose besides being used for Class Ups.

And the shape of the sky, or something changed, as the people sensed that peace had fallen onto the world.

Oh right, on the way back, monsters approached us, and lowered their heads.

According to Gaelion, now that the world's calmed down, they no longer have to live in fear... so they came to offer their thanks to the Heroes who brought it about.

That situation seems suspicious, but looking at the tranquil sky, I start to believe him.

Well, the Bitch Goddess's presence has been cut off.

I deployed a barrier around the world, so gods of the same type as that Bitch couldn't come closer anymore.

The waves won't come again due to someone taking up the position of God.

My next course of action will probably be decided after talking with many

different people.

“Thank you, Hero-sama~! Thank you!”

I hear a call like that from everywhere, and there's before I could enter the castle, I was roped into a parade.

As always, I can't get used to this.

Back then I wanted to destroy this world, though...

Even so, I think Melromark's changed greatly.

Right now, Humans and Demi-Humans exist in the Castle Town just fine, and they all offer us their blessings.

There are 20 Heroes... that's a bit much.

Perhaps Trash understood that, as he split up the four legendary, and put me as the main attraction at the back of the procession.

I thought that was a bit mean, but when I confirmed the front of it with my power, I ended up asking myself, 'Who the Hell is that? Is He also a Hero?'

The soldiers kindly explained that he was a Hero from Glass's world or something.

Of course, the inhabitants of her world were able to sense the world's change as well. They partook in the celebrations.

I mean, we stole the weapons from those reincarnators that made quite a mess of their world. I guess they're overjoyed.

“Fuu...”

I entered the castle, and experienced a feeling of relief...

“The Hero of the Shield-sama is in attendance!”

Party crackers go off, and the world’s nobles come to greet me.

Ah, will my soul find no repose?

“I’m sorry, but I’m a bit tired...” (Naofumi)

Mostly mentally, though.

Because of the various powers circulating through my body, I think I would be able to go a few centuries without sleep.

It’s not like my mind really needs to rest either. I just want some peace and quiet.

“That is something that everyone understands. The people in attendance here were also part of the war.”

The Queen and Trash explain it to me.

No, I knew that already.

“Then I understand you guys’ feelings of having to celebrate world peace, but go to sleep. If you use all your high tension and adrenaline to burn through your life force, you’ll die, you know.” (Naofumi) “Praise the compassion of the Hero of the Shield!”

“Yeah~!”

“They aren’t listening!” (Naofumi)

“Now, now, Naofumi-sama, everyone. Peace has finally come down on us after so long, and everyone is merely shaking with joy.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia calms everyone down.

Well, I know what she wants to say, but...

“As expected of Naofumi-sama. Now then, Onii-sama, in the next three seconds, you will be taking a rest here. If you call yourself a warrior, you need to be able to sleep regardless of the location.” (Atlas) “A-Atlas.” (Fohl)

Ah, Fohl looks seriously troubled.

It's a difficult challenge for him to lie down here...

“Come on.”

“Uu...”

He really did it! What an absolute madman!

“Zzzz.... Zzzz...”

Wow. Even under the eyes of this many people, he actually fell asleep.

I'm honestly impressed. This man will make it big some day!

“Ah, Fohl-niichan is amazing! I'll also sleep!” (Kiel)

With some mysterious sense of competition, Kiel curls up by his side in puppy mode, and begins sleeping.

“Now it's become quiet.” (Atlas)

“Atlas-san...”

“As always, you're quite the cruel person.”

I can't say I'm not impressed.

Even as a spirit, she messes with her brother.

Is this what the phrase, 'even death can't cure it' is supposed to mean?

Even so, I think Fohl has fun having these talks with Atlas.

I mean, his sleeping face is really peaceful.

... He isn't dead, right? Yeah, he's not dead.

"Ara~ Onee-san will take Fohl-chan and Kiel-chan to a bedroom in the castle. If there are any other sleepy children, please come with me~." (Sadina)

Sadina takes the initiative, and takes the two away in her arms.

I know she's good at looking after people, but that was a smooth way to get out of this situation.

I also want to go with them.

When I quietly try to follow behind Sadina, the guests and Trash call out to stop me.

"Where do you think you're going? Iwatani-dono, I think there's something a little bit wrong with the Guest of Honor leaving his own banquet." (Trash)

I ran.

But I was surrounded by people.

Well, if I really wanted to get away, I could, but the situation isn't that drastic.

"Ah, Melty! You! What are you doing, trying to escape with Firo!?"

She was casually following behind Sadina with Firo.

I won't let you get away.

"Mel-chan, Firo wants to stay here." (Firo)

"There's something bad happening over there. Now, let's follow Sadina-san,

and leave this place.” (Melty) “Eh...” (Firo)

“Hey... what’s up with the Queen of the largest country being the first to run away?” (Naofumi) “Ara, Mother is back, so my role ends here. I want to be a princess again.” (Melty)

She tries to get away by feigning amiability, but...

“Don’t worry, Melty. My body has already left the world. It is your era now, my daughter.” (Queen) “M-mother!?” (Melty)

“Because of my husband, I was barely able to remain in the world of the living, but I don’t know how long that will last. Melty, you are the Queen of the world.” (Queen) “N-no! I am...” (Melty)

“Hmm? I thought the Melty I knew was a child who would prioritize her duty. Is this Iwatani-sama’s influence?” (Queen) “Uu...” (Melty)

“Melty, I’m happy that you grew up so freely. I’m sure a good time period is to come under you. You may be against it, but you will participate in this banquet.” (Queen)

The soldiers grab the girl by the shoulder, and drag her back.

“No! I still just want to be a normal girl!” (Melty)

Melty, what sort of Idol are you supposed to be?

Well, I guess Firo’s the idol here.

“Mel-chan, let’s play together!” (Firo)

Firo skipped after Melty as she was taken and confined to the guest of honor seat.

“Hah... I guess there’s nothing I can do.” (Naofumi)

It doesn't look like I'll be able to get away from this.

I resigned myself, and participated in the banquet.

Thinking back, there was also a banquet when we overcame our first wave.

That was the worst, but now I'm acting as a representative, and the nobles offer their thanks to me.

As if they were special events, various happenings went on around.

"Eclair!" (Ren)

A fairly drunk Ren calls out to Female Knight.

What is this? No, I should quietly watch over the situation.

"What business do you have with me, Ren?" (Female Knight)

"There's something I planned on saying once that battle came to an end."
(Ren) "Speak." (Female Knight)

"Please go out with me!" (Ren)

"... What?" (Female Knight)

He finally confessed!

Female Knight doesn't seem to understand what's going on. She stares in mute amazement.

"That straight-laced Hero of the Sword confessed."

"But I heard Eclair became the Hero of the Katana, right? Don't they fit well together?"

"What sort of result awaits us?"

The area is astir with gossip, and inquisitive eyes follow the two swordsmen.

“Eh, ah...” (Female Knight)

Having finally understood the situation, Female Knight’s face turns bright red, and she starts walking away to escape.

“Wait! I want to hear your answer!” (Ren)

“S-shut up! I-I-I have a mission!” (Female Knight)

“Please let me aid you in that mission!” (Ren)

“N-no. You have a duty to make the world peaceful!” (Female Knight) “I know. Even the current situation is only us having crossed a large mountain. For the people, and for our comrades that have fallen, I will spend my days in atonement. And in that, Eclair, I’d like to be with you.” (Ren) “Y-you’re not repenting at all! Your willpower, let me beat it into shape!” (Female Knight)

“Then... can I take that as a yes?” (Ren)

“Wha—no. I... to a young chick like you...” (Female Knight)

When she was about to speak up, her words got tied.

Yeah, the current Ren’s much more grown than the old one, and his body’s in good shape.

He’s evolved from a Bishounen Swordsman into a sturdy Biseinen Swordsman.

So calling him a young chick is a bit difficult.

What’s more, being a Hero who saved the world, the gazes of those around him are quite painful.

“You’re just drunk and messing around. I’ll be leaving!” (Female Knight) “Please wait! These are my true feelings!” (Ren)

Female Knight ran away.

I mean, she ignores the eyes of the onlookers, and pushes through the crowd to get away from Ren.

“... Idiot.” (Taniko) [24]

With a peevish expression on her face, Taniko leans on Gaelion and the former Caterpilland Raph as she mumbles under her breath.

I get the feeling she was a much purer girl in the past...

『Why are you acting like this is someone else’s problem? It’s your fault that Wyndia’s become like this!』

Gaelion is glaring at me with all his might. Not my problem.

Well, she was set against getting revenge, but I put her up to fighting Ren anyways... perhaps she’s strayed from her path.

“Wyndia!” (Ren)

Having had Female Knight run away from him, Ren starts walking towards Taniko.

His face is even redder than before. It seems he’s really drunk.

“Stay away.” (Taniko)

“Gyau!” (Gaelion)

With killing intent coursing through every fiber of his body, Gaelion roars.

“Wyndia, I’ll definitely take responsibility!” (Ren)

“Wait, why are you saying a line like that in a place like this...” (Taniko)
The whispering voices get stronger.

Is Ren just really, REALLY drunk?

He’s acting without any honor like the old Motoyasu.

Well, the responsibility he’s talking about is probably just for killing her father.
But I think a feminizing label’s being stuck on him by the people watching.

The second things didn’t go his way with Female Knight, he made an explosive announcement to Taniko.

“Wyndia! I’ll definitely make you happ—” (Ren)

“Don’t say any more than that! 「Lightning Dragon」!” (Taniko)

Ah... Taniko’s patience was at its end. What’s more, Gaelion even acted out.

Even while piss drunk, Ren takes up his sword, and repels the attacks focused on him.

How skilled.

“Hmm?” (Firo)

Firo started singing and dancing in a nice mood.

Behind her, Melty is reluctantly strumming her instrument.

No, to prevent the talks of her engagement to me from getting to the Queen, she’s probably putting on a performance.

“FUOOOOOH! Firo-tan’s song!” (Motoyasu)

And as always, Motoyasu loves Firo. He’s standing at the front, and cheering for

her.

Behind him, his flock of three are glaring at him with unpleasant expressions. Is this some sort of trial for them?

“Kue~ Kue~” (Fitoria)

Fitoria starts singing too.

No wait, is she the back chorus? It’s like a Capella was mixed in, raising the tension of the concert.

Where’s the Trash that’s supposed to be leading this?

I searched for him, and found him drinking wine on the terrace with the Queen.

That strange atmosphere around them prevents me from getting any closer.

Well, I still walk up to them anyways.

“Oh, Iwatani-dono. What seems to be the matter?” (Trash)

“The concert has become something amazing, so I’m here to tell you to go stop them.” (Naofumi) “This may sound rude on my part, but I would like everyone to enjoy themselves without restraint. I do not believe there to be a need to stop them.” (Queen)

The Queen covers her mouth with her fan as she says this.

She really is a Vixen good with her mouth.

“Also, I think it would be much more effective if Iwatani-sama tried to stop them.” (Queen) “If I try doing that, they’ll just start cheering for me again.” (Naofumi)

No matter what happens, I can’t stand people, or should I say large audience halls.

And from experience, I can only say it will heat up further if I get on stage.

“Isn’t that fine? Now, we are simply enjoying the lively noise. Luckily, there doesn’t appear to be any fighting breaking out.” (Queen) “No... there was.” (Naofumi)

There’s Ren and Taniko’s fight.

The peanut gallery’s having fun, and it did feel like everyone was grasping for peace, though.

Outside the castle... no, more like all around the world, joy surges up.

... I distanced myself from that idiot couple, and found Itsuki.

He was also snuggled close to Rishia, and talking.

Once he spotted me, Itsuki called out.

“What’s wrong, Naofumi-san? Everyone will be sad if the guest of honor mopes around in a place like this.” (Itsuki) “Even if I’m not there, everyone will party.” (Naofumi)

“But I think they’ll have even more fun if you’re there.” (Itsuki) “Yes, I also think that.” (Rishia)

“Yeah, yeah. And? What are you guys doing here?” (Naofumi)

“Us? We’re leisurely enjoying the banquet as we plan for what’s to come.” (Itsuki) “Despite that, you’re letting out quite a sweet atmosphere, you know.” (Naofumi) “Fue!?” (Rishia)

Let me harass them a bit for letting their duty slide.

Even when they’re important guests too, they passed all of their responsibilities onto me, and are enjoying their time here. I’ll curse them.

“Yes. I’m quite aware I was creating a sweet atmosphere with Rishia-san.” (Itsuki) “FUEEEEEEE!?” (Rishia)

Rishia raises her voice even louder, as her face turns red.

“I-Itsuki?” (Naofumi)

“It may sound very selfish. But I wish to answer to Rishia-san’s good will. I am a sinner. But... if I cannot make a single woman happy, I do not believe I will be able to save anyone. Especially if it’s someone as sinless as her.” (Itsuki) “Itsuki-sama... No matter what happens, I will not stray from your side.” (Rishia)

“Rishia-san...” (Itsuki)

And a dimension for only the two of them was created.

Ah, just go flirt however you want.

If you just take on my harassment like that, I’m the one who ends up looking stupid.

“It seems really peaceful over here, Naofumi-san. Can I have a word with you?” (Glass) “Yeah.” (Naofumi)

And there, Glass appeared. She saves me from the pink dimension surrounding Itsuki and Rishia.

“I’m saved. I felt like I was becoming one with the background, but I was unsure of what countermeasures to take.” (Naofumi)

If Raphtalia was there, then perhaps I could have run, but right now, she’s at my seat, conversing with the nobles in place of me.

I’ll have to swap out with her later.

Atlas is in the middle of getting a lecture from Sadina for teasing Fohl.

Well, I doubt it’ll have any effect on her, though.

Raph-chan is singing along with Firo.

Ah, he changed to child Raphtalia form.

And the real one got mad.

“And? How is it? The feeling of a world at peace.” (Naofumi)

“... I guess I’m to find that out from here on. I’m sure that from here on, the people of my world and yours will start clashing with one another.” (Glass)

And so, she’s not participating in the festivities.

It’s not like I don’t get her.

“If it’s about that, it’s not like I can’t do anything.” (Naofumi)

“Do you have something special planned?” (Glass)

“There’s a way to separate the worlds sticking together. As long as the worlds remain divided, you won’t have to deal with unnecessary clashes, right?”

(Naofumi) “Is that... what you called the power of God?” (Glass)

“Yeah, I can’t do it, but Raphtalia is able to. Though your sacred weapons will have to be enshrined away somewhere.” (Naofumi)

If they do that, a god wouldn’t be able to get in. He wouldn’t have the chance to.

Well, I have a barrier over this world; I’ll erect one over the divided world as well. I’m sure that they’ll be able to form a peaceful place there.

“Is that... so?” (Glass)

“So what do you want to do, Glass?” (Naofumi)

“... I do not know. There are definitely conflicts, but I think overcoming them and reconciling is also an important part of life.” (Glass) “That’s right, there may be those around here that do not wish to accept others. Perhaps there will be persecution as well.” (Naofumi) “Then... will true peace ever come?” (Glass)

“No idea. This is what we find at the end of this strange world assimilation.

There is fighting within those of the same race as well.” (Naofumi)

My world’s a good example.

In the end, living things live through conflicts with others.

Even if there's nothing but humans, there's still people grasping for supremacy, and wars as a result.

You can't call a single race world a peaceful one.

"This is quite difficult." (Glass)

"That's right. By the way, Glass, you won't celebrate with your own comrades?" (Naofumi)

I remember seeing them drinking to their victory a while ago.

But Glass is here talking with me.

"Yes, I was enjoying the banquet up until a little while ago. But after calming down a bit, all of my tension was put on brakes." (Glass) "Calming down..." (Naofumi)

"... I used to have a very important friend. And in a certain incident, they went missing. Without that person here, I wonder if it is alright for me to have fun by myself." (Glass) "Friend? Someone you liked?" (Naofumi)

"While we are close as friends, that person is a woman." (Glass) "Ah, I see." (Naofumi)

"Now, where is that person, and what are they doing...?" (Glass)

"Are you sure they aren't dead? Do you want me to search for them?" (Naofumi) "That's right. Having Naofumi-san find her is another option. But she said she would definitely return one day, so I'll wait here, and protect the world for her." (Glass)

With the world in a pinch, there was a missing person...

Glass is also something for waiting for her.

I'll try searching with God's power.

I found a strange point in Glass's past, and couldn't find that friend of hers in her memory.

Was she an otherworlder?

I don't think she's dead, but it'll be difficult to find her even for me.

If I exerted myself, it would be possible, but with Glass herself like this...

"My fight has yet to end." (Glass)

"Make sure you don't collapse somewhere." (Naofumi)

"I know." (Glass)

And for a while, I quietly watched the night sky with her on the terrace.

When I heard the audience getting loud again, I checked back to find the Old Man, Imya's Uncle, and Imya carving an ice sculpture.

It seems they had the castle's magicians cast ice magic to make a block of ice, and started chipping pieces off of it.

"Oh, if it isn't the laddie." (Old Man)

"What are you up to, Old Man? And wait, you were attending the castle's banquet?" (Naofumi) "They asked me to put on some sort of show, and I had just gotten here. I wanted to congratulate you for the battle, so watch here."
(Old Man)

Working skillfully with a hammer, the Old Man finishes the sculpture.

A life-sized Firo is carved, and I seriously think the skill put into it is amazing... but isn't something wrong with this picture?

What's more, it's a human-form + bird-form set.

"If you have any requests, just say it. It doesn't have to be ice." (Old Man)

"Fumu..." (Naofumi)

"Then I would like to place a request on your arms."

For some reason, Trash crossed the sea of people, and made an order.

“I would like a large statue singing praise of Iwatani-dono’s exploits. Of course, after these festivities are over. And make it grand.” (Trash) “What are you saying, old geezer?” (Naofumi)

“I was only talking about the realm of parlor tricks, but I got it. How large do you estimate it to be?” (Old Man) “Fumu, from far away... Please construct a statue large enough that it can be seen in Melromark from afar.” (Trash) “Oh!? A statue of Father-in-Law!? There was one in a country of my world too. A Statue of a Goddess who sang of freedom!” (Motoyasu) “The goddess portion sounds ominous, but if it’s Naofumi-dono, then I can assure the people will revere and extol his form for many years to come.” (Trash) “STOOOOOOPPPPP!” (Naofumi)

Why do they have to make something as disgusting as that?

Trash's thoughts are leaping too fast, and I feel sick!

And Motoyasu, don’t hop on board!

What sort of sad reasons do you have to coerce the Old Man into making a giant statue of me?

Let’s try to calm them down, and foil their construction plans.

“You’ve been promoted quite a bit, laddie.” (Old Man)

“Please quit it with the jokes.” (Naofumi)

“Haha, the fact that it’s become peaceful will mean my shop will finally get quieter.” (Old Man) “... Did I do something bad?” (Naofumi)

Weapon shops generally rake in profit when there’s a feared enemy to combat.

In the age to come, there will still be monsters to fight, but I doubt there will be a time more profitable than during the waves.

“Don’t mind it. Peace is to be enjoyed in itself. And it’s not like I only sell

weapons, you know.” (Old Man)

I think... I heard that Imya’s Uncle ran a metallurgy shop in the past.

In a peaceful shop, perhaps a weapon store becomes something like that.

He did build Firo’s carriage, and I think he can do business as a utility man with metal.

“This is all because of you, laddie. I guess that means there was meaning in me trying hard for ya. And for a while, my shop’s going to be stable.” (Old Man)
The Old Man winks, and points behind him.

“As expected of the store the Hero of the Shield-sama frequents! Please make equipment for me!”

“No, that will be my—“

Various requests started flooding in, and the nobles and representatives of other countries began whispering amongst themselves.

Well, the bulk of the armor I’m currently wearing was made by his store.

Its abilities were so high, it was surprising.

After that, we had a simple conversation with a few jokes mixed in.

Motoyasu demanded that the Firo Statue be preserved for eternity, and he made the impossible request to Marin. In the end, with the Old Man’s permission, Kuu melted the whole thing down.

“Old Man-san, thank you for all you’ve done up until now.” (Raphtalia)
Raphtalia comes over, and extends her thanks to the Old Man.

“Oh, if it isn’t the young lass! Haven’t you grown up nicely? It makes the first time I met you seem like a lie.” (Old Man)
Thinking back, it was quite a long road...

I was framed by Witch, bought the Slave Raphtalia, bought weapons from the Old Man... a lot happened.

“Now, now, ladies and gentlemen, gather 'round. It's the monster acrobatic show. Yes.” (Slave Dealer)

Ah, the Slave Dealer I haven't seen in a while is using his monsters to put on something like a circus show.

A large tiger-like monster jumps through a ring of fire, and a mysterious monster called an Egugu rode a bicycle. The scene tells me that there are some monsters who know not the world has been saved.

Taniko is watching the show in anticipation.

Out of curiosity, she keeps asking the Slave Dealer what monsters will come out.

I understand that she likes monsters, but the person she's talking to uses slaves, and works monsters to the bone. He's a terrible person, you know.

What's more, they started some incomprehensible rivalry, and Taniko took the monsters from my land up on stage to do a performance.

Those that were modified into Raphs, and the Filo Rials. Gaelion's tricks also sent the audience into high spirits.

Ah, I found Motoyasu's former tag-along Elena.

She's making a really sullen face as she converses with her parents.

“... Ah.” (Elena)

“It's been a while.” (Naofumi)

“No, it hasn't been that long. I mean, I was on the battlefield.” (Elena) “You were there?” (Naofumi)

“Of course I was. My parents wouldn't stop bitching at me.” (Elena)
I think her father or something was some sort of military personnel in

Melromark or something like that.

“I tried not to stand out, so perhaps you didn’t notice me, though.” (Elena) “Ah, I see.” (Naofumi)

“For the executed former princess to be a world invading deity... she should have given up at some point. A foolish woman.” (Elena) “Hey...” (Naofumi)

The woman who calmly indulged in depravity said it with a level tone.

I think that if she had that much power, she could live life however she wanted. She could have indulged in as much luxury as she wanted.

But I guess if you keep looking up, there’s no end in sight.

“Well, I guess you worked hard. Good job.” (Elena)

“I don’t feel happy at all when I hear it from you.” (Naofumi)

“I guess so... Ah, this is a pain. I’ll have to set up shop in the Hero of the Shield’s land soon, and my parents keep bitching on about profitability. Even when I just want to relax, why is life so hard?” (Elena) “That’s your fault! Just be thankful you haven’t been executed yet.” (Naofumi)

She really just spits out as much abusive language as she wants.

As a form of punishment, I’ll give her shop some special privileges.

At the entrance to the hall is a sturdy merchant selling accessories with all of his commercial spirit. To clarify, the one who owns a department store in Zeltburg.

There’s also the swindler, who’s become something of a millionaire. He’s formed an alliance with the accessory merchant to take control of the money of those partying in the Castle Town. But that’s a story for later.

I’m sure my land will continue to develop.

“Naofumi-cha~n!” (Sadina)

A drunk Sadina grabs me from behind.

“Whatcha doing? If you’re bored, how about entertaining everyone with this Onee-san?” (Sadina)

Having finished Atlas’s lecture, it appears Sadina started a drinking competition, and one thing led to another.

“And so, Naofumi-chan will be participating~! Everyone, let’s have a contest between this Onee-san and Naofumi-chan~.” (Sadina) “Okay, everyone! The Hero of the Shield and the Hero of the Harpoon are going at it!”

“Hey! Sadina, stop!” (Naofumi)

“Ahn, I love you, Naofumi-chan~.” (Sadina)

Sadina starts leaning on me.

“Hey, Raphtalia-chan, hurry and do fun things with Naofumi-chan. Then next is Atlas-chan’s turn, and then I’m up.” (Sadina) “Ahaha...” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia wipes away some sweat.

Just how serious is she, this woman?

“If you don’t hurry up, I might just end up eating him up.” (Sadina) “Who’s getting eaten!? Hey, don’t bring your face so close! You stink of alcohol!” (Naofumi) “No, I am Naofumi-sama’s number one!” (Atlas)

Atlas makes a dramatic appearance.

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

“Ah, Master’s looks like he’s having fun. Let Firo and Mel-chan in~! Now, Mel-

chan, let's—" (Firo) "I-I don't want..." (Melty)

Melty and Firo approach us.

If you don't want to come, then run away.

The villagers and our other comrades also gather.

"P-please stop it! Naofumi-sama is with me!" (Raphtalia)

Good grief, there's no end to this cacophony.

Like that, the banquet dragged on for a while.

Once I got worn out, I left and took a rest in a guest room before returning, only to be congratulated once more.

In the end, the banquet doors remained open for an entire week, but I guess that doesn't really matter.

Alternate Worlds and Modern Ones

A few months passed.

The wave, or should I say the bitchy Goddess's invasion plan, came to an end, and we've made some progress on reconstruction.

Ren, Itsuki, and Motoyasu's deadline for giving their answers to their weapons is closing in.

My Shield, or should I say Atlas is... well, she teases her brother as she spends her days seducing me.

Though she did talk to me seriously at the time.

"And? Did you guys make your decision yet?" (Naofumi)

I was making preparations for lunch as I talked with the three Heroes.

"Yeah, I think I'm going to stay in this world." (Ren)

The one who answered that was Ren.

It seems that he didn't reach a satisfying conclusion when he went to that other world from his own.

So he prayed to his sword so that he could return when he wanted.

Right now, Ren is working hard with Female Knight to stop the various cultural frictions brought about by the World Assimilation.

Female Knight's achievements were recognized, and she was appointed to do

diplomatic work with residents of Glass's world.

To make a world as free of discrimination as possible, she took the initiative, and started acting.

Taniko, along with Rat, Gaelion, and Miikun went on a journey to investigate the distribution of Glass's world's monsters in this one.

Well, when night falls, they do return to the village by portal.

"I never had any intentions of returning from the start! Now that the world's been saved, as promised, I will devote my long days and nights to winning Firo-tan's heart!" (Motoyasu) "Hmph!" (The Three)

Motoyasu is... yeah. He plays with his Filo Rials all day.

Though it does seem he's learned a lot from a Filo Rial Trainer in Zeltburg.

To put it bluntly, I think he would do better on the teaching side.

And as always, his three are with him.

"I too... chose to remain in this world." (Itsuki)

"I see." (Naofumi)

"Itsuki-sama... let's do our best." (Rishia)

"Yes." (Itsuki)

Itsuki and Rishia plan to go on a journey for world reformation.

A while ago, they met Rishia's parents, and discussed what they would do from here on.

It seems there was a bit of trouble there, but the matter was peacefully resolved.

I didn't ask for the specifics.

Well, according to Rishia, her parents were worried whether she was a match for Itsuki, and they quarreled a bit.

Her parents are weak to pressure as well.

If I told them I was going out with her with the intention of marriage as a joke, I feel they would die from shock.

“So everyone’s staying.” (Naofumi)

“What are you going to do, Naofumi? You wanted to return so badly before.”

(Ren) “Well, I already went back once. My determination around that area is... well...” (Naofumi) “Then will you stay?” (Ren)

“Hmm...” (Naofumi)

What should I say?

Explaining is going to be a pain.

“For argument’s sake... from your eyes, it’s correct to say I’ll be staying. But in exchange, I won’t be able to use a majority of those oh-so-convenient godly powers.” (Naofumi) “Is that so?” (Ren)

“It’s the result of a certain decision. It’s like a compensation for having fulfilled the Spirits’ wishes. In exchange, the waves will never come again, so don’t worry about that.” (Naofumi)

These powers were beyond me to begin with.

Raphtalia and Atlas thought the same.

—

Yesterday night.

“Naofumi-sama, please make your choice.” (Atlas)

Atlas, or should I say the Spirit of the Shield and the other Spirits gathered to explain the situation.

Raphtalia was also there, and we spoke.

“My decision...” (Naofumi)

“That’s right. What should we do?” (Atlas)

A choice.

The other summoned heroes are each getting different options from me.

I did receive an explanation about that.

I’ve already gone beyond the point of no return that Arc guy said, and now it’s time for me to make a choice.

And wait, it isn’t even a choice anymore.

It’s just a course of action.

The first possibility is... well, to put it simply, stay in the world, and spend my days.

It’s a bit of a hard world to live in, but as long as everyone’s there, I get the feeling I would be able to live a fun life until I die.

If I think back upon it, I can make a Harem, and considering the future, there are a few advantages.

The rosy life I imagined when I first got to this world is before me.

I feel Raphtalia’s going to go through some hardships, but I can’t cast everyone aside.

And I do want to answer the people I trust who say they like me...

It may be my pride speaking, but we saved the world, so I should at least allow that.

And I have Raphtalia's permission.

The second is... return to my own world, and live with Raphtalia.

With the Shield's power, our lives will be pretty stable until the end.

And right now, I can make use of that power.

Even if we're in that world, it's not like we can't use magic.

That's not bad either.

But if I stay in this world, I get the feeling I'll have to deal with some lustful advances.

Especially around a certain whale. She's seriously gunning for me, and she asks Raphtalia when she'll score every day.

I understand that she'll honor the order, so right now, I can't lay hands on Raphtalia carelessly, or she'll come after me in a drunken frenzy.

I'll have to show my resolve.

So returning to my own world is also... an option.

I mean, I am satisfied with this conclusion.

And it's already over...

"I—" (Naofumi)

I made a decision.

"Understood. It's a nice decision, befitting of Naofumi-sama. I'm also in agreement." (Raphtalia) "That's right. As expected of Naofumi-sama, I think it's a greedy option that'll make everyone happy." (Atlas) "Yeah, yeah. Then... do it." (Naofumi)

"Yes." (Raphtalia)

“Understood.” (Atlas)

On my choice, both Raphtalia and Atlas nodded.

—

And as a result, here I am.

I decided to stay in this world, and the day after that, I’m here peacefully preparing for lunch.

“Na~ofumi-cha~n? Is it time for lunch yet?” (Sadina)

Sadina appeared.

Recently, she’s started salvaging in the nearby sea, no, perhaps I should call it treasure hunting. She’s also exploring the sea from Glass’s world.

Since she became the Hero of the Harpoon, she’s gotten ridiculously strong. No normal monster will be able to stand on the same level as her.

And at night, she comes back by portal, and aims for me.

To put it bluntly, apart from Raphtalia and Atlas, she pursues those topics more actively than Firo while in heat.

I often wonder what she sees in me, but perhaps she’s just enamored with my drinking capacity.

“Ah, yes, yes, it’ll be out soon, so just wait.” (Naofumi)

“Ye~s! Now, everyone, prepare for lunch.” (Sadina)

“Ye~s!”

As always, unfamiliar slaves are popping up in my village. It’s due to the Slave Dealer’s kind services.

I think it's rising from the scale of a village into a town.

People graduate, or more specifically, develop the skills to be self-sufficient and leave as well.

We don't need to combat the wave, so they don't have to stay here.

Now, they find employment as soldiers, or go sign up as adventures to do various odd jobs.

With the revived Granny's training as the basis, the slaves are quickly growing up.

But talent on the level of Rishia, Raphtalia, and Female Knight is hard to come by.

Sadina's level is completely out of the question.

Well, there are a few who still peddle. Is that my responsibility?

If you think of peddling, you think of Firo.

If you ask what she's doing, she's going on a world trip with Melty.

More specifically, it's Firo's Idol Tour.

In order to make sure relations with other countries go well, she visits them as the Queen, and as a friendly ambassador, Firo works as an Idol.

Firo has a sort of naïve innocence, so she's liked by people easily.

And Melty's idea worked well, so we're getting some nice results in other countries.

Well, since she's handling diplomacy for the world's largest country, the people of Glass's world are a bit vigilant of her.

Trash and the Queen are also working hard for the country.

The marks left behind by the war are deep, and it's a bit troublesome.

The revival the Bitch Goddess used was quite crude, so I'm not sure how much longer the Queen and Granny will live.

Even so, Trash, Rishia, and the Granny's grandson are satisfied.

It would be nice if they live a long life.

"I see."

On my reply, Ren and the others nod, and wait for food.

Oi, don't just stand there. Help.

Why am I on cooking duty in the first place?

"Naofumi-sama, what do you want to do when lunch is over?" (Raphtalia) "Let's see. I think that today's plan was to go apprehend a reincarnator the Bitch Goddess granted power to." (Naofumi)

People who that Bitch Goddess reincarnated are still hiding all over the place.

It's not like we defeated them all.

And now that peace has been obtained, they occasionally go out of control with their dreams to rise to the top.

Is it like training in the mountains to prepare?

Some follow the Bitch Goddess's words and lust for strength, while others noticed her schemes, and used tools to sleep.

The last guy we encountered politely tried making a convenient device so he could survive in a destroyed world.

Though it reeked of suspiciousness.

I don't know how many centuries ago he was from, though.

He's supposed to have been an alchemist who left his name in the pages of

history.

There are many legends like his, which is troublesome.

In all worlds, there are annoying legends of how, someday, this legendary Hero, so and so, will return.

Catching guys like that is one of the jobs of Heroes.

Ah, right.

A little while after the world was at peace, Glass disappeared.

I tried searching for her when I had my godly powers, but I ran into the same wall I did when searching for her friend.

And before that, Glass told me that, no matter what happens, don't try searching for me. As she was probably hinting to her current situation, I decided not to.

It'll work out somehow.

And Atlas can still contact the Spirit of the Fan.

According to it, there are no problems.

Glass was only a representative of her world as a Hero, and it's not like she represented a country.

When Melty was going around countries, she was just training with a bored expression on her face.

"That's right." (Raphtalia)

"Got it. Well then, food's done. After we're done with that, let's go."
(Naofumi)

After I finished cooking, I exited the kitchen, and left it to the others.

"Niichan's food! As always, it's great!" (Kiel)

The one who rejoiced was Kiel.

As always, she continues to look after that unnerving crepe tree.

When she's not doing that, she's either peddling, or accompanying Fohl.

Though Fohl's often teased by his sister, he's made looking after the villagers, especially the ones who just got here, his life's work.

Right now, he's something of a leader here.

“Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“Ah, yes, yes. You can eat it too.” (Naofumi)

“Rafu~!” (Raph-chan)

Raph-chan's become the supreme ruler of all Raphs, and he maintains the order of the monsters in the area... it seems.

As the Hero of the Ship, he also helps Sadina in her salvaging work.

Honestly, Sadina's partner is Raph-chan.

There's also Fitoria, for an important monster, I guess.

From the start, she had to deal with turf wars and the sort, so she isn't here.

Well, that was also Motoyasu's fault.

She left while running away from the man.

But she occasionally uses Firo to ask me for help.

No matter where she runs, Motoyasu will chase her...?

In his mind, she's his most-like Filo Rial next to Firo.

Well, I guess it's something like that.

The Weapon Shop's Old Man is as busy as ever.

Luckily for me, he moved to the neighboring town, and opened a shop with Imya's Uncle.

Imya helps out, and they deal in a wide range from clothing, to armor, to weapons.

There's a lot more happening, but I guess that's about it with the people I know.

The Slave Merchant, the Swindler, and the Accessory Merchant are just raking in profit as always.

I also carried out my planned harassment of Elena.

Like that, my days were filled with a bit of trouble, but they were fun.

From now on... I'll just have to pray that they'll go on like this.

"Ah, right! What should we call this village? You never decided, did you, Niichan!?" (Kiel) "Name? Now that I think about it, I never gave it one. What was it called before? I'm fine with that." (Naofumi) "Eh? Right now, it's become famous as, 'The village revived under Niichan'. Let's think of a new one, right Raphtalia-chan?" (Kiel) "Yes, let's." (Raphtalia)

"Isn't that fine, though? It is the village revived under Naofumi." (Ren)
Ren gives a smile as he nods to Kiel's suggestion.

Even if you tell me that...

As I was thinking of what name to give it, Motoyasu opened his mouth.

"I think Firolove Village is good." (Motoyasu)

"Rejected." (Naofumi)

"I think it would be nice if Naofumi-san gave it a name." (Itsuki) "That's right."
(Raphtalia)

"Really?" (Naofumi)

"Eh?... Niichan's deciding it? Let's all talk about it together." (Kiel) "Why's

that, Kiel? I thought you would agree to that.” (Naofumi) “But Niichan, you have no naming sense.” (Kiel)

“Ah, that’s right.” (Everyone)

Oi, why is everyone agreeing to that?

“You just took Firo from the Filo in Filo Rial, and you just cut off a bit from my name to get Raph-chan’s...” (Raphtalia) “Rafu~?” (Raph-chan)

“So I think it’s going to get quite a lazy name.” (Kiel) “Kiel, you...” (Naofumi)

I’ll remember this. I’ll definitely remember this.

“Then how about we just take the characters in Iwatani, and make it Rock Valley?” (Ren)

As if he had had an epiphany, Ren put his hands together, and said that.

And are you telling me that name has good naming sense?

No, it doesn’t.

“Oh, that has a nice sound to it. What does it mean?” (Raphtalia) “In my world, Iwa(岩) means Rock. Similarly, Tani(谷) has the meaning of valley. And thus, Rock Valley.” (Ren) “That’s nice!” (Kiel)

“Ah, right... it was like that in the language of Naofumi-sama’s world.” (Raphtalia)

Raphtalia remembers the time she spent in my world.

And English, apparently.

“Okay~! Then from today onwards, this villiage will be called Rock Valley. Everyone! Is that fine?”

“Yeah!”

“Oi, while you can see cliffs here by the sea, there’s no valley...” (Naofumi)
My opinion was ignored, and this village was given the name Rock Valley.

And like that, my days in the other world... continued.

Japan, a day in the present era.

“... in Sickness and in Health...”

Today, I held my marriage ceremony with Raphtalia.

We returned from that world, and things proceeded at a tempo so fast that even I was surprised. I quickly found employment.

Right now, I’m doing various work in a large company.

Well, I did always have some connections, and it turned out one of my net friends was actually an executive at a corporation. He insisted that he wanted to scout me.

What’s more, right now in the middle of a recession, while other companies are going pale, our stocks are rising.

I’ll bet it’s the influence on the Law of Cause and Effect.

After graduating college, I got a job, and after one year, I ended up marrying Raphtalia.

Because the experience in the other world bolstered my commercial spirit, I was able to achieve good results in the past year.

We left the godly powers with the other us in that world, and now, we can only use a little bit of magic.

And like that, the Wedding spread out before me.

In the church, the priest speaks out the vows to bind the me wearing a

tailcoat, and the Raphtalia wearing a wedding dress.

In the middle of that.

The Church doors slammed open.

What is it!? I don't want some cliché happening like some guy storming in to steal the bride.

Who is it? Who is it that wants to take away Raphtalia!?

And wait, Raphtalia, are you telling me you cheated on me with another man!?

No, no... with her, that's not happening.

"I have an objection to this union!" (Atlas)

... I timidly turn around.

There, Atlas was wearing a dress, sprinting towards me.

Her age in this world is recorded as 20.

By her unchanged appearance, I guess that makes her a legal loli.

Right, we ended up returning to modern times, but for some reason, even Atlas was here. What's more, she screwed around with the order of the world, and inserted herself as my childhood friend.

I imagined a sweet college life with Raphtalia, but Atlas made her dramatic entrance, and put a stop to that.

And wait, because of all that happened in that world, I don't hate her, I am fond of her.

But still..

"Now, now, Naofumi-sama! Become one with me!" (Atlas)

Atlas grabs me by the hand.

I'm not sure by what logic, but this world's Atlas's physical strength is still incredible.

And so, she was able to forcefully drag me along.

It wasn't the bride, but the groom that was stolen away.

"Wah." (Naofumi)

"What do you think you're doing at our long-awaited marriage ceremony!?"
(Raphtalia)

Raphtalia comes to her senses, grabs my other hand, and starts a tug of war with Atlas.

"Ow!" (Naofumi)

"Naofumi-san is getting married to me!" (Raphtalia)

"No, Naofumi-sama will be wed to me! I'll give you plenty of money, so Raphtalia-san, just give up already." (Atlas) "Not happening!" (Raphtalia)

Ah, right. I forgot.

Due to all her messing with the laws of cause and effect, Atlas set herself as the daughter of a rich man.

So her assets are much greater than either of us combined.

Why is a commoner like me the childhood friend of someone like that?

I don't get how this lovecom setting is supposed to work.

"I will not give up!" (Atlas)

"Didn't you just give up earlier!?" (Raphtalia)

"That was but a lie." (Atlas)

“I can’t believe you! Just how unfair of a person must you be?” (Raphtalia) “I’ll say anything I must in the name of love.” (Atlas)

“Ow! S-someone save me!” (Naofumi)

“Niisan.”

My younger brother seems to be directing an irritated glare at me.

He was accepted into a good college, and is in the middle of job hunting right now.

Well, I’m sure he’ll find somewhere nice.

Apart from my brother, my other net friends are in attendance, and my college circle friends are gathered near him.

They started talking amongst themselves, and for some reason, my parents joined them. They all point their thumbs at the ground, and shout out in a large voice.

“All you riajuus should just explode!”

“Why!?” (Naofumi)

“Oh... god. Please offer thy divine retribution unto this sinful riajuu.”

“Oi, Priest, don’t screw with me!” (Naofumi)

The priest here is a foreigner working in Japan, right?

Despite that, the authenticity of that line was quite rare.

“Naofumi-san will get married to me! Please give it up already.” (Raphtalia) “No, he will to me. It’s not too late yet.” (Atlas)

“GIVE IT UP, THE BOTH OF YOU!” (Naofumi)

My Japanese life is, just as my life back there, full of unfair happenings.

Well, they're days I look back on with joy, so it's fine.

From now on, I'll give it my best at a happy life.

While my body was being pulled in both directions, I let out a laugh.

Epilogue: Rock Valley's Heroic Legend

Iwatani Naofumi

As the Hero of the Shield, he was the leader of the Heroes who saved the world.

For his achievements in saving the world, he was praised as a savior.

After that, he got drawn into numerous incidents in the world, and solved them. He continued to make sure the people relied on him, but never depended on him.

He was much yearned for by the opposite sex, and it's said that he had many descendants.

He was famed for both his business and cooking ability. The merchants who personally dealt with him created enterprises great enough that even now, their names are all around us.

Because of that, he became worshiped as the God of the Shield, presiding over business and culinary arts.

Rock Valley was the country he restored, and it's said that it was named in the tongue of his origin.

It's said that in the naming of Rock Valley, someone offered the following opinion:

“Oi, while you can see cliffs here by the sea, there's no valley...”

It is unknown who voiced these words.

Kitamura Motoyasu

His name has been engraved into history as the Hero of the Spear who saved the world.

He valued Filo Rials more than anything, and it's been said he was the Hero of Filo Rials, but after the world was at peace, he continued fighting for the Divine Birds. As he continued his battle, records of his whereabouts became vague.

Currently, specialists question whether he truly existed or not.

—

Amagi Ren

As the Hero of the Sword, he saved the world.

After that, in a separate organization than the Hero of the Shield, he resolved various problems around the world.

After pursuing affections for a single woman for many years, they finally married. And to make up the sin for killing a girl's father, in the form of a dragon, it's said that he also married that girl.

—

Kawasumi Itsuki

As the Hero of the Bow, he saved the world.

After the subjugation of the Goddess, he proclaimed that there was still evil in the world, and went on a journey with the Hero of the Projectile.

While records of him exist in all countries around the world, none of them told of exploits great enough for his name to be handed down.

—

Raphtalia

As the Hero of the Hammer, she saved the world.

Considered the right arm of the Hero of the Shield, she was always with him. As his first wife, she wed him, and they had children.

Right now, much of Rock Valley's royalty carries her blood.

But she never had a moment of rest with the Hero of the Shield's female relations.

She often appears as the main character of many literary pieces.

—

Firo

As the Hero of the Claw, she saved the world.

It's said that the Filo Rial raised by the Hero of the Shield became a human, and fought alongside him.

She got along well with the Hero of the Instrument, Melromark's Queen, and stayed by her side when the world was at peace.

But once that Queen passed away, she suddenly vanished from the records, and like the Hero of the Carriage, it is unknown whether she truly existed or not.

Right now, there exists a famous Idol of the same name, so a few people wonder whether or not they are the same person; however, this connection is doubtful.

—

Fohl

As the Hero of the Gauntlet, he saved the world.

He was one of the former slaves that make up the ancestors of Rock Valley, and he carried the blood of Silt Welt Royalty.

He achieved many things as the comrade of the Hero of the Shield, and was much loved by the villagers.

—

Atlas

Her name is left in records as the existence that supported the Hero of the Shield.

During the battle with the legendary beast Houou, she lost her life prematurely.

After that, it is said that she was revived as a Spirit, but specialists hold this fact in doubt.

—

Melty Q. Melromark

The daughter of the Hero of the Cane, and the Hero of the Instrument. She became one of the Heroes to save the world, and the Queen of Melromark.

Once the world was at peace, she offered assistance to the countries that had been lost in war.

She accomplished many feats, and her country experienced a long era of peace.

It's said that she was a lover of Filo Rials, and there are vague accounts that she had intimate relations with a Filo Rial of the highest class.

After that, she was married to the Hero of the Shield, and had children eventually.

—

Trash Melromark XXXII

As the Hero of the Cane and the King of Melromark, he saved the world.

In his youth, he left a name as the Great King of Wisdom, but he had a tendency to stray, and he formed an antagonistic relationship with the Hero of the Shield.

After that, they reconciled, and he poured his efforts into world peace.

Even after peace was achieved, he continued serving the country as his daughter's aide.

There were many who were inspired by the noble way he lived.

—

Mirellia Q Melromark

The wife of the Hero of the Cane, and the former Queen of Melromark.

According to legend, she once died and was revived under enemy control, but the Hero of the Cane was able to dispel the brainwashing binding her.

But it has also been said that the one who was killed was merely her body double.

After that, she left the country to her daughter, and aided her alongside the Hero of the Cane.

—

Rishia Ivyred

As the Hero of the Projectile, she saved the world.

After that, she went on a journey with the Hero of the Bow, and spread her name to various places around the world.

According to legend, she was married to the Hero of the Bow.

But a few tales recount her as the comrade to the Hero to the Shield, and some of her assisting the Hero of the Spear. She's a hero whose deeds are up to much speculation.

Even now, she's written in as the protagonist of many literary works aimed at women.

—

Eclair Seattle

As the Hero of the Katana, she saved the world.

She was the daughter of a feudal lord who tried to offer the same treatment to Human and Demi-Human alike in the Demi-Human persecuting country of Melromark.

The land she was given later in life became, like the Hero of the Shield's village, a place where people passed their lives without discrimination by race.

Her relationship with the Hero of the Sword is often the subject of plays, but the actual individual's personality remains a mystery.

—

Midori, Kuu, and Marin

They took up the titles of Hero of the Axe, Hero of the Mirror, and Hero of the Book respectively as they saved the world.

Some say that they were Filo Rials raised by the Hero of the Spear, and others that they were slaves.

But as depictions of them are even scarcer than those of the Hero of the Spear, their existences are under suspicion.

—

Wyndia

As the Hero of the Whip, she saved the world.

It's been said that she was raised by the Dragon Emperor, and that she joined the Monster Tamer Guild. She is famous for solving various monster-related problems.

It has been said that the Hero of the Shield had given her a special title, but that name has been lost in transmission.

It has also been said she had some romance with her father's enemy, the Hero of the Sword, but the specific details are unknown.

—

Gaelion

The Dragon Emperor that reigns over the monsters of the world.

The legends record that he participated in the fight to save the world, and much of his life was recorded by a researcher he encountered.

While it has been proven that these accounts are true, it has not been proven that the Dragon Emperor recorded in them was the real one, and the researcher is suspected of some fabrication.

—

Ratotil Anthreya

An alchemist who served by the Hero of the Shield's side.

She got along well with the Hero of the Whip, and they worked together to solve various problems.

She treasured the monster by her side dearly, and there are theories that state this monster to be the predecessor of the Raphshild race that exists today.

At present, there is a continuing debate to determine whether these monsters were brought about by Ratotil, or the Hero of the Shield.

—

Glass

As the Hero of the Fan, she saved the world.

Her legends live on in the lore of many countries.

She earnestly fought to prevent a process called world assimilation, and she often appears in stories pertaining to the Hero of the Shield.

She seems to have been waiting for someone, but it is uncertain whether or not they were reunited.

Many plays and novels have her reuniting with, and marrying that person.

—

Kiel

As the Hero of the Scythe, she saved the world.

She is the progenitor of the race that continues to protect Rock Valley's God Tree to this very day.

Because of her, the God Tree continues to be praised as a symbol of world peace.

Later, it was said she married the Hero of the Gauntlet, but the truth is uncertain.

—

Sadina

As the Hero of the Harpoon, she saved the world.

She has earned fame for acting as a parent to orphans that gathered at the village that became Rock Valley, and for acting as a counsellor to the Hero of the Shield.

She has been described as a major lover of alcohol, and it's been said that she exchanged many drinks with the Hero of the Shield.

It has also been said that she was later blessed with his children.

—

Raph-chan

As the Hero of the Ship, he saved the world.

It's been said that he was a monster created by the Hero of the Shield, and a pure-bred of the Raphshild race.

After the death of the Hero of the Shield, he disappeared along with his Filo Rials.

Specialists question his existence, and attribute him to the accomplishments of a large number of Raphshilds being treated as a single entity.

—

Fitoria

As the Hero of the Carriage, she saved the world.

It has been said she was a Filo Rial raised by legendary heroes of times passed, but the truth is uncertain. She was a Filo Rial Queen.

A Monster Hero whose existence is up to much scrutiny.

As with the Hero of the Ship, specialists claim that the actions of many Filo Rials were attributed to a single character.

—

Elhart

A legendary blacksmith who supported the Heroes from the shadows.

If he had not existed, it has been said the Hero of the Shield wouldn't have existed either; an unsung Hero.

The current Hero of the Shield's beloved armor is known to be one of his many creations.

It has been said that after that, with the aid of the Hero of the Shield, he gave birth to many masterpieces, but when he died, the Hero of the Shield's legend died with him. While his weapons lit the coals for many wars around the world, what put an end to them was also his equipment.

His name continues to be honored as the God of all Blacksmiths.

—

Trinemier Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz

A blacksmith who supported the Heroes from the shadows, and one who learned the art alongside Elhart.

A Demi-Human who, together with Elhart, supported the Heroes, and created many weapons.

He was good at looking after others, and had good features. It is recorded that he was quite popular within Rock Valley.

Together with Elhart, he is honored as a God of all Blacksmiths.

Imya Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz

A clothing maker who supported the Heroes from the shadows.

Niece to Trinemier Lucullan Lisella Tereti Quariz.

A good friend of the Hero of the Scythe, and one who made various garments.

Her bloodline continues to produce prodigious tailors to this day.

Elrasla Grilaroc

A Hengen Musou style inheritor who supported the Heroes from the shadows.

She's the one who spread the once-dead Hengen Musou style to the Heroes and the inhabitants of Rock Valley, and the style is still practiced to this day.

It has been said that in order to let the Heroes escape from a vicious plot of the ex-country of Faublely, she stayed behind, and was once killed.

She was later revived along with Melromark's former Queen, and opposed the Heroes.

By the actions of the Hero of the Projectile and the Hero of the Katana, the brainwashing affecting her was dispelled.

Whether or not she actually died once before is up to question.

Beloukas

A Slave Merchant who support the Hero of the Shield from the shadows.

This name is only a conjecture towards his true one.

Through the Hero of the Shield's aid, his name was spread around the underworld, but not out of the range of speculation.

—

Hickwaal

A Merchant who supported the Hero of the Shield from the shadows.

He was the founder and first president of the Hickwaal Company that exists to this day.

While his commendable commercial spirit did not earn him a place in the world of legends, he went on to found countless enterprises after his meeting with the Hero of the Shield.

—

Sweed

A Merchant who supported the Hero of the Shield from the Shadows.

He was the founder of the Sweed Company that exists to this day.

Together with Hickwaal, he stuck his hands into much of the world's circulating wealth.

It has been said that at first, he worked as a conman, but after an encounter with the Hero of the Shield, he gained an understanding of the true nature of business, and had a change of heart.

—

Elena Haven

A Comrade to the Hero of the Spear, and a merchant who conducted business

on the Hero of the Sheld's land.

For the Hero of the Shield, who was known to be overly suspicious when it came to business, she was a rare individual who could converse normally with him.

During the construction of Rock Valley, she lent her power, and later continued to pour in aid.

Presently, her descendants have married into aforementioned Hickwaal and Sweed companies, and have gained the status of nobles.

Whether she was a comrade of the Hero of the Shield or Hero of the Spear is still up for debate by specialists.

One theory states that Raphtalia extended her hand to her, but that voice is the minority.

—

Roudy

A Chivalrous Thief who left his own legend around the time of the Heroes.

He stole the gold of evil nobles and merchants, and offered support to those going through poverty. It is said that he was the head and founder of the Chivalrous Thieves Guild.

He was an acquaintance of the Hero of the Shield, and a theory points to him being a bandit reformed by him.

The Rise of the Shield Hero

“What the hell is this?”

I unintentionally raised a laugh.

What I got my hands on and read was a book titled Rock Valley’s Heroic Legend.

Right now, the store I’m in is the Rock Valley Book Store.

It appears to be a magic shop, but they sell normal books too.

“What’s wrong?”

When I stood there reading, a child who looked like Elena came up and talked to me.

I silently pointed to the page and furrowed my brow.

“It’s quite a terrible story.”

“There are a few things that diverge from reality here.”

The person Glass’s waiting for is a woman.

Most of the monsters were attributed as concepts of the whole race. I feel sorry for the actual ones.

“What’s wrong?”

“Rafu~?”

Firo and Raph-chan look at me in wonder as I give a bitter smile.

“Hmm? You guys’ existences are in doubt, it seems.”

“Eh...?”

It’s mean to call them a collection of monsters with the same name.

Why can’t they just see her as a Filo Rial?

“But it’s been a while since I’ve come to this world. Quite a bit has changed.”

I walk out of the book store, and look at the sky.

A giant tree towered over the surroundings.

So that’s Rock Valley’s special god tree, is it?

Since it was written that Kiel was protecting it... I strain my eyes, and try to focus on it.

... Yep. It’s the crepe tree.

“Raphtalia, that tree is disgusting, so go level it to the ground. Kiel isn’t here anymore, so it’s fine.”

“I don’t want to. And if we do that, it’ll start an uproar!”

“I’ll bet. But as I thought, I can’t get used to that tree.”

And when I watched the traffic on the road, I see quite a few familiar races walking around.

After defeating the Bitch Goddess, when the Spirits pressed me for an answer, I chose everything.

Something close to the Bitch's fragments. I divided parts of me between this world, and the modern one. The me. Raphtalia and Atlas who would be able to use our godly powers, to protect the world, went on a journey following the Spirits' words.

After that, a lot has happened.

It's because the rules vary by the world.

We exist as a spiritual force to protect worlds from invading gods.

Because of that, we've battled in as many places as there are stars in the sky.

The rule that eight worlds had to combine for the god to descend existed in some worlds, and not in others.

But without corresponding to that rule, well, we pretty much lowered ourselves to the absolute lines the world would permit, and come down.

Once we figured out just where the god was pulling the strings, we would bring him down before he could do anything else.

And with the repetition of battles like that, the months and years passed before I knew it.

That fragment was pretty much me sending myself on a holiday.

The one who took up permanent residence in the world experienced various happenings every day, but in the end, it seems he had a fun life.

And now, he's returned to me.

After he died, it seems much has happened in this world.

But unfair calamities like the wave didn't come about again.

In all the worlds I resolved matters in, I erected a barrier so no god could come down again.

Me being in this world after so long is like a well-deserved holiday.

I mean, with all that's happening, I'm tired.

Arc even said I could take a break if I wanted to.

That cat occasionally saves us, and is occasionally saved by us.

There are plenty of worlds where it would have been dangerous if he wasn't there.

And there are plenty of worlds that would have been in danger without us.

While similar to mine, his fighting style is on another vector.

He specializes in killing gods, and he's no good in anything else.

Instead of getting into a war of attrition between gods, he has a convenient ability where he just kills them.

But in exchange, bluntly, if it was someone from the world, even a baby could beat him.

It seems he works by logic like that.

Well, if it has to do with punching, I guess I can't beat a baby either.

In exchange, Raphtalia fights for me, though.

Ah, I digressed.

Anyways, as a god, I've devoted myself to fighting.

Should I call this my main body?

"Is Rock Valley a monarchy? Or a republic? An empire? Each history book seems to differ a bit."

"I'll bet it's had a long history. Firo, do you know anything about that?"

"Hmm... when Firo was with Mel-chan, it was a monarchy."

Fumu... Firo's memory ability is a bit dubious, but I'll rely on it.

Ah, that's right.

We've paid a visit to this world after all this time.

When I was relying on the memories of my fragment to walk the streets, Firo and Raph-chan sensed my presence, and appeared.

Their existences were doubted, but they're right here.

But... Raphshild... the Raph race has gotten quite the grand name.

Ah, I spotted one... it's a tanuki-esque bear.

It's pulling a carriage, and letting children ride on its back.

It looks like it's treated as a sociable, docile monster.

But it doesn't appear to have much battle prowess.

This is like a Filo Rial that wasn't raised by Heroes, I guess.

I also sense that Gaelion's still here.

I guess I'll drop by later.

Right now, I'm in the country, Rock Valley.

I'm not really sure if it's an empire or a republic.

But it looks like it's a peaceful country.

People resembling Kiel's puppy mode are taking care of the crepe tree.

The crepes that grow from it are this country's specialty, just by raising your hand into the air, you can eat them.

Well, all that that means is that this disgusting tree is towering over the world.

Around it, a large castle town spreads out.

It faces the sea, and it was once... Raphtalia's birthplace Right now, it functions as a sort of port city.

"Firo."

"What~?"

"You're in human shape, but you won't take up your Filo Rial form?"

Well, I guess it'll cause an uproar if she does it here.

I mean, she's supposed to be a legendary bird.

"Well, you see, this place is a bit narrow."

Is that so?

I guess she's grown quite big.

"Yeah, Raph-chan is the same."

"Rafu~."

When I reunited with Raph-chan, I was shocked.

He was standing in quite a remote place.

The entire Raph-race came to greet us, and we were led to a tanuki the size of a mountain.

It took a while for me to notice it was Raph-chan.

Right now, he's transformed to the same size as when we first met.

"Firo, you see. Firo finally found Master again. Don't leave me alone this time."

"Ah, yes, yes."

Does Firo even realize just how much time has passed since then?

She doesn't seem any different than before.

Well, her essence is getting closer to that of a God's, and I do think she'll be able to breach the wall around the world.

She's become able to clad herself in fire as she flies, and when a bird of fire greeted us as we approached the world, I was surprised.

I think that form's one of her transformations, but I wonder.

"Rafu~."

"Raph-chan says he wants to protect this world from the shadows, so he'll stay home."

"I see, I see. Good boy, Raph-chan. Unlike some bird who doesn't mature no matter how many centuries pass."

"Who's that~?"

It's you. You.

"Rafu..."

I pat an embarrassed Raph-chan as I walk around the city.

The unfamiliar townscape. But there were some familiar things, and they bring back some deep emotions.

"Is Fitoria still around?"

"Yeah, she's really annoying. She keeps telling Firo to succeed her already. She says she wants to retire."

I think that bird has lived long enough, but she has eternal youth.

I guess Firo drank that medicine too.

But it would be uncouth to ask about the others.

I'll bet Firo's met with many a painful farewell.

"Master is too mean. You did so many things with everyone, but never with Firo."

Firo starts talking about this and that with a pouty expression.

"You said Mel-chan was there, so it was no good, but you did stuff with Mel-chan too."

"Please, just leave it at that. I'll be with you for a while now, right?" (Naofumi)
I pat the top of Firo's head.

In a good mood, Firo quiets down.

As not to lose, Raph-chan climbs up to the top of my head, and strikes a pose.

"Ah, yes, yes. You too, Raph-chan."

After patting them for a while, my mood improves as well.

"Naofumi-sama, please pat me as well."

Atlas comes from within the Shield, and volunteers herself.

"You get pat every day, don't you?"

"Even if it's every day, that doesn't mean it's enough."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Firo wants to be with master. This time, you'll take me along!"

"Got it, got it."

Now, this world only has a handful of people who know me.

Like that, I walked around the city normally, and no one noticed I was the Hero of the Shield.

No, perhaps it's at the level where they think I'm cosplaying a legendary Hero.

The culture doesn't actually seemed to have advanced that far.

Well, I guess magic-based societies are something like that.

According to Firo and Raph-chan, they're in a cycle of prosperity and decline.

They've created flying carriages and ships, and set foot into the realm of the sky, so does that mean the world has advanced?

But that period had planes, so I don't really feel anything about it.

Melty's bloodline and Kiel's as well as Sadina's exist, but they separate from royalty, and are reinstated at some times. It's a cycle of something like that.

After the Heroes died, this world still relies on Hero Summoning quite a bit.

The Four Holy... no, now, is it the Eight? Anyways, they call for them, and sometimes summon vassal Heroes too.

But there's no record of a Hero of the Shield appearing after me, which has become a famous topic of discussion.

"It sure is peaceful."

The weather is nice, and I can hear the birds calling out happily.

We walk to the major road, and I make a light lunch in the grassy plains outside before presenting it to Raph-chan and Firo.

They were very satisfied with the first meal I made for them by hand in a long time.

“What should we do, Raphtalia?”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you want to lead a peaceful life here again?”

If it's just for a while, I think I can get permission to rest.

If it's just for about a hundred years, it would just be like a normal Sunday for us.

I mean, we've been fighting consecutive battles for a while, and I think the Spirits will wait for us.

“We could have some children in this world, and build a stable household until they become independent.”

Just like the us that stayed in the modern world, and the us that stayed here, I get the feeling we could start something here.

I mean, despite everything, making a village was... fun.

Witch and the discrimination I faced are bitter memories, but besides that, my days were quite fun.

“This time, let Firo in~!”

“Rafu~!”

“Me too!” (Atlas)

“Ah, yes, yes.” (Naofumi)

I ignore the three unrelated parties, and ask Raphtalia.

“That sounds nice...”

Thinking back, we've come a long way.

It was a choice I made as not to regret, but it's not like I never had regrets.

Mourning for the deaths of those close to me truly was sad.

But more than that, I encountered many people in many worlds, experienced many partings, and received many thanks.

"... But our battle still continues. For the people who are shedding tears due to a selfish being calling itself God, we have to keep moving forward."

"... That's right."

I can make a fragment for a change of pace if I want.

I can just have him enjoy this world in my place.

Right now, we're carry the duty of quelling the waves caused by those proclaiming to be gods. We're more like concepts than anything else.

So, we can't stop moving forward... I see.

I guess I should rest in moderation.

In the worst case scenario, I can do a time warp, and meet the people of this world. Melty and Sadina, Kiel and Fohl.

It's not like I've left for eternity.

"Ah, it seems there's another person planning world assimilation."

Raphtalia receives a request for support from another god hunter.

Right, just like Arc, we have comrades who share the same goal as us.

Though I've never seen ones who are acting from the Spirits' requests like us.

Within them, there are people who betray, and people who have changes of

heart. How many times have I been deceived...?

Luckily, I'm still here and safe.

This time, one of those comrades is asking for help.

Of course, I intend to go there immediately.

I can't let them lose to those that perpetuate such unfairness.

Because that is our will.

It's fine. I have Raptalia.

I have a world, a world I have to protect.

I have Firo, and everyone else.

I can't meet them at this moment, but it's not like we'll never meet again.

But those that claim to be god can even erase the past.

And so... I will protect everyone.

"Then to refresh ourselves, let's leave a fragment, and go."

In this world, where we've become the legends who saved the world, let's have a light hearted adventure.

If the world is troubled by war, I'll bet we can achieve peace.

It's fine. I'm the Hero of the Shield. This world will give me a warm welcome.

And I'll get deceived again.

... That sounds likely. I'm a little worried.

"Understood."

“Firo wants to go with Master.”

“Rafu!”

Raph-chan is waving his hand.

Next time we come, will we be bringing Raph-chan with us?

And we left a fragment behind, and leapt through dimensions.

This time, Firo’s with us.

I’m with my nostalgic comrades, and I feel that my motivation’s raised itself a bit.

If I think about it, I was just an Otaku college student who was put under false charges, and was thrown penniless into another world. From there, I got up to being a noble, and even a God.

This truly is the Rise of the Shield Hero.

“Okay! Raphtalia, Atlas, Firo, I’ll be in your care from here on as well!”

“Yes.”

“Understood.”

“Yeah!”

Our battle still goes on.

For the lives lost without reason, we will continue to protect.

From here on... eternally...

Translator note

1. ↑ TL: Lit. Megami-sama
2. ↑ TL: Rinbu means something like Circle Dance of Nothingness. Musou is Blank Mind.
3. ↑ TL: Renge = Lotus Flower, Reido = Absolute Zero, Mugetsu = Moonless Sky
4. ↑ TL: Deadly Aim is the ESPer skill that's a level above Itsuki's described in chapter 261.
5. ↑ TL: This is the original ending. The rest was written because people complained too much. It's text has been altered somewhat from its first publication upon the decision to continue the story.
6. ↑ TL: You can pretty much explain anything away by, 'Because Japan'
7. ↑ TL: Riajuu can be translated to something like Realer, the people of the world beyond, 3DPD... etc, but I'll stick with Riajuu here.
8. ↑ TL: Senbei are Japanese rice crackers.
9. ↑ T/N: I wonder what would happen if they were to try writing in the book and changing the story.... Does that not work?
10. ↑ T/N: bamboo sword used for kendo.
11. ↑ T/N: He's talking about balls.
12. ↑ T/N: lit. Wild Bear, the Japanese name for Raccoon.
13. ↑ T/N: Shigaraki Tanuko.
14. ↑ TL: Not an insult, an honest question.
15. ↑ TL: Wait a second, does this robed figure happen to have a drill on him?
16. ↑ TL: And then there's boredom, and sleep, and angels falling from the sky.
17. ↑ ED I guess he's referring to Doraemon.
18. ↑ TL Tajiku Nakaku is a mystical tree in ancient Japanese Legend whose fruit is said to give eternal youth. It is pursued by Tajimamori.

19. ↑ TL: Sword Dance of Nothingness: Severed Shadows Ten
20. ↑ TL: Due to a flaw in its make, Mjolnir ended up with a handle too short to be practical. As such, it was often thrown by the god.
21. ↑ T/N: Of course not, don't be such a slut Bitch/Witch.
22. ↑ TL: Sword Dance of the Strongest: Null
23. ↑ Lord Geno... I mean
24. ↑ TL: Baka