Death attribute Magician
1
四度目は嫌な死属性魔術師
デンスケ
ぱん！

The Death Mage that doesn't want a fourth time

Volume 1: The Shield-Nation of Mirg

Prologue: The end of the first and second time

The ship that the students of Yasaka High School were on for their field trip sank due to a bomb planted by terrorists.

The entire crew and all passengers lost their lives in this tragic incident. Excluding the terrorists themselves, there were one hundred and two casualties in total.

「Ah, seeing that the cold, salty water has disappeared, I guess I've died as well.」

Amamiya Hiroto felt a deep numbness as he became aware of his own death.

He was in a faintly lit place and there were a lot of other people gathered here as well. It wasn't as simple as floating in the Sanzu River[1] with beautiful fields of flowers awaiting them on the other side. But this was likely something like the entrance to the afterlife.

The other people were showing a variety of reactions to being dead – some were crying, some consoling each other and others were showing relief that their friends or loved ones weren't here with them.

Hiroto, too, wanted to cry out that he didn't want to die, that he wanted to keep living, but he couldn't muster the energy to do so.

「Haah... In the end, I died in vain, huh.」(Hiroto)

The reason he said that was that he had spotted a female classmate sitting in a spot a short distance away from him.

She was Naruse Narumi. She was the mood-maker of the class, known by her nickname, Naru. Hiroto had died to save her.

When the ship lurched and began to capsize, Narumi had failed to grab hold of a handrail and looked like she was going to fall. Hiroto had seized her hand

immediately and helped her grab the handrail... And then he had rolled down the diagonally-inclined floor in her place, landed on his back against the wall and fallen into the sea to drown.

It had happened in an instant; it was not been something that he had thought about and decided on doing. Thinking about it now, it seemed like a reckless thing to do. Even so, if she had been saved by his actions, he would at least have been able to console himself, but...

「No, I think I acted like a good person before I died.」(Hiroto)

Even if Hiroto died, nobody would mourn for him anyway. He had lost his parents when he was young and he had no blood-related siblings. He had a poor relationship with his uncle's family on his father's side, who had adopted him. He had even been told,「get out after you graduate high school.」He didn't have any friends or a girlfriend. His uncle would be receiving the remainders of Hiroto's inheritance from his parents and condolence money[2] for this incident, so he could consider the favor of adopting him as having been repaid. In fact, it was more than enough repayment considering his uncle's abuse... The clear discrimination from his own biological children, the way Hiroto had been treated until now.

His dreams of the future had only consisted of something vague like「become happy.」It would be fine if that dream would be granted in heaven. At the very least, his uncle and that family wouldn't be here.

However, reality was irrational and not so lenient.

「You souls who have lost your lives once already, you have been chosen. I will now grant you special power, a new destiny and new fortune. Using these, I wish for you to live new lives in a world separate from the『Earth』you lived on.」(God)

Gods were probably those kinds of beings. A mysterious person with a halo over his head appeared and made this declaration to the people here.

It seemed that instead of heaven, what awaited them was the endless circle of transmigration[3]. They were further surprised at the news that they would be reborn into another world.

「Of course, you may refuse my request. If you choose to do so, you will lose all memories of your previous life and be reborn somewhere else on『Earth』, as is normal. Those of you hope for this, I would like you to come forward now.」(God)

Hiroto wondered who would refuse in this situation, but there was one boy who refused. Hiroto was a little far away from that boy, so he was unable to hear what the boy said to the god. But the god said,「Well then, you may return to the normal circle of transmigration.」and the boy disappeared, so he knew that the boy had refused the god's offer.

Of course, Hiroto, like the rest of the people here, were intending to accept the god's offer. They would receive some special power, be born in a new world to a new family and be happy. No other scenario could offer more hope than this.

「Well then, as I call your name, please come and stand in front of me. Endou Kouya.」(God)

「Shihouin Mari.」(God)

「Naruse Narumi.」(God)

「Mifuji Kanata.」(God)

「Minami Asagi.」(God)

One after another, they had their names called out and received their special powers, destinies and fortunes from the god before leaving the room. Narumi's name was called out, too.

But now about half of the people had already left, and Hiroto's name was still not being called.

「Amamiya...? *Amemiya Hiroto*[4].」(God)

For a moment, Hiroto thought that he had been called, but it seemed that wasn't the case. Someone with a very similar name stepped forward to stand in front of the god.

「*Amemiya*...?」(Hiroto)

It was a name that Hiroto had never heard before. Even if they were in

different classes, they were in the same school, so it seemed unlikely that he didn't know someone with such a similar name.

Was it a passenger who happened to be riding on the ship at the same time as them, or was it one of the crew? He looked like he was in his late teenage years... Even their physiques were similar. If even their faces were similar, surely he must be Hiroto's doppelgänger or some long-lost sibling.

The others had received one or two, at most three special powers from the god. As Hiroto observed, *Amemiya Hiroto* received no fewer than eight special powers. They were quite large powers, too. There were even two destinies and two fortunes, but the god combined them into one before handing them to him.

To receive not just two, but eight special powers! The god must truly love this person. As this thought occurred to Hiroto, the god continued, calling out the next person. And soon, Hiroto was the only one left.

「Hmm? You are?」(God)

Finally, the god noticed Hiroto.

「I'm Amamiya Hiroto.」(Hiroto)

The god sounded puzzled, so Hiroto told him his name. However, this only seemed to surprise the god further.

「Amamiya Hiroto? Not *Amemiya*? Your surname is Amamiya, written as "shrine of heaven", and your given name is Hiroto, written as "knowledgeable person"?[5]」(God)

「That's right.」(Hiroto)

With a bad feeling, Hiroto gave this answer to the god, confirming the spelling of his name. And then the god gave a groan.

「Oh dear... Your names are similar, so I made a mistake. I thought you and *Amemiya Hiroto* were the same person. All of the special powers that were supposed to be given to you, I unfortunately gave them to *Amemiya Hiroto*. And even the destiny that was supposed to be given to you and the good fortune that was to keep you safe, I have given to him.」(God)

It was an honest mistake that had occurred through pure coincidence. The time that Hiroto had first thought his name had been called, it seemed to have occurred then.

「But *Amemiya Hiroto* is no longer here, so I cannot have him return your share. Nor can I prepare new powers for you. The same goes for your destiny and fortune.」(God)

「So in other words, I'm the only one who has to start from zero with nothing?」(Hiroto)

「No; you will be starting from a negative position. You will never be saved by destiny or coincidence, nor will you ever be blessed with good fortune.」(God)

Not even a start from zero, but a negative start. Wasn't this a little too much?

「In that case, I'll give up on this. Please return me to the normal circle of transmigration, like that other person earlier.」(Hiroto)

Even if he were to be reborn in a new world, it seemed now that he would face only hardships, so Hiroto was ready to completely give up on this rebirth. But the god shook his head.

「The time of confirming your intentions has already passed.」(God)

「... Are you serious?」(Hiroto)

Hiroto no longer had the ability to refuse. He was ready to raise his objections, to say that these kinds of rules couldn't exist, but his body began to be surrounded in light and his consciousness started fading away.

「It seems the time for your rebirth has come.」(God)

No way! Isn't it too much for me to be the only one to start with nothing?!

「In exchange, your soul has a large『empty frame』that is different from the others that are being reborn. In place of special powers, this『empty frame』will likely contain a tremendous amount of Mana within your body. Though since you have no aptitude for magic, you will not be able to learn any of the magical attributes that exist in the world you are about to be reborn into,『Origin.』 Therefore, it will be quite wasted on you.」(God)

Are those supposed to be words of comfort?! To have Mana and not be able

to use magic, it really is a complete waste!

「I do feel terrible for you. Without special powers, a destiny or fortune, I am sure you will experience many hardships. You will be unable to grow up in a happy environment. Your future prospects will also be limited because you cannot use magic. You will be tormented by an even greater sense of loneliness than you experienced in your previous life; in your hopelessness, you will struggle to breathe and suffer greatly. But I want you to look forward and live on without giving up or resenting anyone.」(God)

You make it sound so easy!

Without even being able to shout his protests, Amamiya Hiroto began his second life.

The god... Rodcorte. The new world he had sent Hiroto and the others was called『Origin.』It was similar to Earth, but it was a world where science and magic blended into each other.

The hundred people reborn in『Origin』were in wonder at the differences between this world and Earth. They were born to new parents, saved by various moments of good fortune, made use of the special powers they had been granted and reunited with each other and recognized one another through their destinies.

They kept their rebirth a secret amongst themselves, but before they knew it, they were known as the hundred heroes.

Excluding the 101st person.

Rodcorte was the god who ruled over the circle of transmigration for the souls of many worlds, including Earth and Origin. He was not directly worshipped by the people, and he didn’t entrust anything to clergymen. Nor was he able to directly intervene by descending onto a world to perform miracles.

What he was capable of doing was controlling the circle of transmigration of souls and, very occasionally, altering it. However, he had almost never made any alterations to the circle before.

This was because the system of the circle of transmigration was very well-

made; there were almost no situations that required Rodcorte to adjust it.

However, a problem had occurred recently.

The circle of transmigration for one of the worlds that he managed was slower than those of the other worlds.

While the other worlds were proceeding as normal, this problematic world had come to a standstill for quite some time.

Magic, martial arts, literature, science, engineering, art, cuisine. A repetitive pattern was occurring in a wide variety of fields where development would happen, but then be lost soon after.

The countries repeatedly went to war with one another; a thousand years passed with no progress to show for it. From time to time a hero would appear and one of two smaller countries that had been at war would win and absorb the loser to form a single, larger country. But such larger countries were unable to unify properly and eventually divided, giving rise to conflict once again.

Even when countries were able to maintain peace between each other, incidents like the appearance of powerful demons caused even greater casualties than war.

There existed gods who directly controlled that world and led its people. However, to protect the world from a Demon King who had previously appeared in another world, they had to summon heroes from other worlds and fight the Demon King together with them. Ever since then, they had been unable to regain their former power.

It was necessary for this world's advancement to continue through any means necessary. It was currently in a state of stagnation, but one event could trigger a sudden decline in development.

As the world declined, fewer souls passed through the circle of transmigration, posing a danger even for Rodcorte.

As Rodcorte wondered what to do, he heard rumors from gods who managed other worlds.

The rumor was that if you took a soul from another world that retained all of

their former memories, bestowed cheat-like powers upon them and had them reborn into a world, that world would develop in a good direction at an alarming pace.

It was a rumor that he wanted to believe in. It seemed absurd think that a single person with memories of their past life and cheat-like powers could have such a large influence on an entire world.

Even so, it was worth testing. In the problematic world, the gods had summoned several heroes from other worlds to battle the Demon King. It was a direct summoning of living inhabitants of other worlds, so they had not received divine gifts such as cheat-like abilities. Even so, they were victorious against the Demon King.

Furthermore, most of the heroes lost their lives in the battle, but even in their short time on this world, they had made a lasting impact.

And there would be no better time to test this rumor than now, when there were no Demon Kings or evil gods. With no events like battles between gods and abnormal beings that could challenge them, if heroes were granted cheat-like powers, they would surely have an even more profound impact on the world's development.

Fortunately, using his position, Rodcorte could feed the souls of the dead back into the problematic world, causing their rebirth into that world as many times as he desired. It wasn't a difficult task to have them retain memories of their previous lives, either.

As for the cheat-like abilities, he could prepare them by using his ordinary god-powers that he had been saving.

However, he was uneasy with the idea of reincarnating only one person. Just in case, he should use a hundred people.

And with good timing, just as Rodcorte had finished his preparations, around a hundred Japanese people died. According to what he'd heard, they were inhabitants of an island country with advanced knowledge of science and economics, as well as a peculiar culture.

With nobody around to object, Rodcorte decided to exclude the souls of the

evil people from among those of the Japanese people who had died on the ferry and reincarnate the rest.

However, they would be reincarnated not on the problematic world, but in『Origin.』

For the purpose of executing his plan perfectly, Rodcorte chose Origin as a place where the souls could live through a practice run so that they could accumulate knowledge and experience.

Once these souls completed their second lives in Origin, he would grant them new powers and destinies once more and have them reincarnated again on the problematic world.

With this much time and effort spent on this plan, it would surely go well.

However, not being used to having to do such tasks, Rodcorte had made one small error. Even a god could not predict that this error would cause his expectations to come crashing down one day.

As if foreshadowing such events, a soul appeared before Rodcorte, having finished its second life.

Rodcorte had expected some differences in their timings depending on the order in which he had reincarnated them. But given the expected lifespan of a human, this was far too quick a reunion. However, he had predicted that this soul would be the first to appear.

「As I expected, you were unable to complete your entire lifespan, Amamiya Hiroto.」(Rodcorte)

The one that had appeared was the 101st reincarnated soul, without any power, destiny or fortune. It was the soul of Amamiya Hiroto.

The soul of Amamiya Hiroto that had appeared before Rodcorte was pitifully wounded, and covered in sinister Mana.

「I'll kill them, I'll kill those guys, even if I'm reborn I'll never forgive them! That goes for you as well!」(Hiroto)

With no care for the fact that Rodcorte was a god, Hiroto threw a punch at him.

Amamiya Hiroto was born in a military state in Origin.

Rodcorte had told him that he would never live a blessed life. Those words became reality; he experienced nothing but misfortune from the moment he was born.

His mother was a prostitute and his real father had abandoned her before he was born. His mother found a new lover who made the decision to sell the baby Hiroto to buy alcohol, to which she didn't object.

The ones who bought Hiroto was a laboratory that carried out illegal research. As he was examined there, it became clear that he was more inept at magic than any ordinary person in Origin.

In Origin, there were seven attributes of magic that could be used – the four elements of earth, water, fire and air as well as the additional attributes of light, life and spatial magic. It was common knowledge that everyone had at least one attribute out of those seven that they had an affinity for.

However, Hiroto demonstrated no aptitude for any attribute whatsoever, let alone any affinity. In other words, he was an existence that defied logic, inferior to even an ordinary person.

But the people of the laboratory realized that Hiroto owned a vast Mana pool that was far greater than that of an ordinary person.

He had incredible amounts of Mana even though he had no aptitude for any attribute. This was a bizarre contradiction in the eyes of the researchers. And among them, one suddenly came up with an idea.

「It's not that this experimental subject has no affinity for any attribute. Rather, there's another attribute that we've not discovered that this subject has an affinity for. Isn't that possible?」(Researcher)

From that point, their research began. It was around then that Hiroto's memories of his previous life returned.

After several years of research with Hiroto as a human subject, they discovered the eighth attribute – the attribute of death. The researchers had Hiroto learn the death-attribute magic that they had discovered and reconstructed his entire body, including his brain, to continue their research

and experiments.

「DIIIIIEEEEEE!」(Hiroto)

However, the circumstances that Hiroto was in ended with one word.

When he had regained his memories of his previous life, his body was filled with explosives; his life had been taken hostage. And around him were the researchers that viewed him not as a human being, but as an experimental animal.

Hiroto no longer needed basic education such as language or how to read and write, but he had no freedom whatsoever.

Not only that; if he showed any signs of rebellion, he would receive an electrical shock and be left convulsing on the floor.

He spent his days eating food that was nutritious, yet more plain than food fed to prisoners, and doing exactly as the researchers instructed him to in whatever experiments they desired to carry out.

Even though he had awakened his ability to use death-attribute magic, he couldn't leave the laboratory.

Hiroto covered his body in death-attribute magic and desperately gathered power in his hand. Completely inept with any other attribute of magic, through sheer effort, he covered himself in death-attribute magic.

He developed many different uses for his magic, contributing towards the laboratory, the researchers and the country they belonged to. However, right until the end, Hiroto's work went unrewarded.

This was because the researchers were aware of his usefulness to them, but they also feared his insubordination. As Hiroto's usefulness increased, this fear also grew.

The explosives in his body were buried not only in the heart, but also in the brain. His torso housed a GPS to prevent his escape. His right eyeball was been replaced by an artificial eye containing a special camera and a listening device was planted in his mouth and ears to catch even the smallest whisper.

His food intake was limited so that he would never have more physical

strength than necessary. His room was small and he was never allowed to leave it except for experiments.

To make him more able to use death-attribute magic, to increase the size of his Mana pool – They reconstructed his body for a variety of reasons.

In order to ensure that he wouldn't somehow make an ally to plan an escape or rebellion, the guards who watched him and the operator that gave them direct orders were rotated often, so that he wouldn't be in contact with any individual in particular for an extended period of time.

And finally, they carried out an inhumane procedure on his brain, cutting off his control over his body's Mana and making him their puppet.

At this time, Hiroto wasn't even ten years old. And from this age, he spent over ten more years in this hell where he couldn't even move a single finger of his own accord.

Even after about ten years of this situation, Hiroto's mind did not cave in. A reason for that would be the souls of the dead that had been attracted to his affinity for the death attribute, who whispered comforting words to him. Another reason was that he had hope that *they* would come to rescue him from this hell.

However, Hiroto died.

He was unable to withstand the reckless experiments carried out by the newer researchers, who were trying to surpass the results produced by their predecessors.

It was ironic that through death, Hiroto regained his freedom. Through the death of his body, his soul regained its control over his Mana.

Hiroto turned his own body into an Undead to go on a rampage, fueled by his hatred.

He tore those who had toyed with his life to pieces and squeezed the researchers that begged for their lives as if they were pieces of wet cloth. He made sport of the military personnel as he killed them.

As Hiroto continued rampaging after killing everyone in the laboratory, not

satisfied with this revenge, familiar faces appeared before him.

『Ooh...!』

Hiroto raised his voice in joy at the sight of these dozens of people, as their faces were familiar to him.

Their features were a little different, but most of them were his classmates in the same year as him in his previous life. He knew some of them as his teachers.

Naruse Narumi was among them as well.

They were Hiroto's companions who had been reincarnated in Origin with him. They were his hope.

One day they would definitely find him; they would definitely come to rescue him. For the past twenty years, Hiroto had never stopped believing that.

They were a little late, but he wasn't one to complain. Let's celebrate our reunion, let's redo our second lives, I'm sure it's possible now that all of these companions are here, he thought.

Trembling in joy, Hiroto took one step towards them.

「Everyone, commence attack!」

However, at the command of a young man who appeared to be the leader of his companions, Hiroto was struck by simultaneously-released magical attacks.

『Wait! Why are you attacking me?! I'm your ally, I'm one of your companions!』

Hiroto's screams were drowned out by blazing hellfire, blades of wind, piercing cold and devastating lightning. Hiroto, who had approached his companions with no thoughts of defending himself, was completely bewildered as he fell, his body fatally wounded.

「That was surprisingly quick. Considering that we heard that a powerful Undead had risen.」

「Well, there's thirty out of us hundred heroes gathered here. There's no way we'd have trouble with that.」

Above Hiroto's head, familiar voices were having a conversation.

Hundred people? A hundred people, you said? NO! There were a hundred and one of us, including me, there's a hundred and one!

He wanted to shout those words, but his throat had already been cut; he could not even let out a moan.

His right arm was completely burned and blackened; his left arm had gone flying off somewhere else. His legs had been torn off at some point; he could see his left leg in the corner of his vision.

His head and torso were in a terrible state as well.

「The reason we didn't have any trouble is because this Undead let its guard down. Death-attribute magic... What a terrifying magic.」

Looking in the direction of this voice with the only eyeball that he could move, Hiroto saw Naruse Narumi standing there. She had matured more than she had in her previous life; she was now an adult woman.

「Ah, he's another victim of this laboratory.」

Next to her stood a young man, the leader who had given the attack command. Judging from the distance between them, he knew that this man and Narumi were intimate with each other.

「I'm sure he wants us to kill him.」

「You're right, *Hiroto.*」(Narumi)

Hiroto...? *Hiroto? Amemiya Hiroto?! This guy is Amemiya Hiroto?!*

「Let's at least finish him off so that he doesn't have to suffer anymore.」(Narumi)

「That's the best thing we can do for him. Narumi, let's do it together.」(*Hiroto*)

Don't fuck with me! Why the hell are you the one standing there?! You, who took my share of power, destiny and fortune! Why are you trying to finish me off with such a heroic look on your face?!

Why is it you, why the fuck did it have to be you?!

It's all your fault that my second life was such a disaster! Hundred heroes?

You're treating me as an outcast and killing me?!

Hiroto let out a cry, but he was unable to withstand the bright light coming from the hands of *Hiroto* and Narumi and turned into dust.

「Everything is your fault! You call yourself a god?! Second life, my ass! You cast me into a hell even worse than my previous life!」(Hiroto)

Hiroto's fist had a black fog-like substance coiling around it, but it didn't even graze Rodcorte. That was just the result of the difference in power between man and god.

「I am aware that I did a terrible thing to you.」(Rodcorte)

Saying the same thing as he had said before, Rodcorte explained the circumstances he was facing to Hiroto's furious soul. The information was transmitted to him directly by some godly power and permeated through his mind in an instant.

「... So you're saying there's a third time?」(Hiroto)

「That is correct. This is something that has been prepared since you were first reborn in Origin. This time, you do not have the choice to refuse, and I cannot interrupt it.」(Rodcorte)

What absurd nonsense this was. However, to Hiroto, this nonsense was like finding a ship when he needed to cross[6].

「I see... Then in the next world, I'll kill them! The ones who killed me, I won't leave any of them alive! I died first, right?! In that case, I'm going to be the one who reincarnates for the second time first, so I'll have the advantage! This time, I'll be the one who kills them!」(Hiroto)

I'll become an adult before them, gain power and then find *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others among the children and kill them all! That should be possible even for someone like me with no special power.

「Now hurry up and grant me all that stuff, Kami-sama[7]. This time you've got a destiny and fortune for me, right? After all, I'm the one who died first, there's no way you're going to get me confused for someone else again, right?!」(Hiroto)

「... I have no power to bestow onto you.」(Rodcorte)

As if lightly pushing against Hiroto's soul, Rodcorte pressed his palm into Hiroto.

「Eh?」(Hiroto)

With just that, Hiroto began to speed up and fall towards somewhere.

「At this point, the only thing I can do is add something. I cannot give you a power.」(Rodcorte)

「Why?! I'm the only one with nothing again, how is that possible?!」(Hiroto)

「Because I cannot allow the others to be killed by you.」(Rodcorte)

Rodcorte spoke to Hiroto as he grew smaller and smaller, apologizing.

「If you kill the others, the world's development will be hindered. Your death on Origin was the product of a great amount of misfortune. The same goes for the fact that *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others were unaware of your existence, even until the very end. But even if I say that, you will not be satisfied.」(Rodcorte)

After Hiroto had died on the ship, before he was reincarnated, he had been standing at the edge of where all of the souls had gathered. Because of that, nobody had seen Hiroto.

Furthermore, there had only been one person to refuse to be reincarnated in a new world.

And the final point was that he had been the very last person to be reincarnated.

Because of these things, *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others had explained his absence by thinking,「he must have somehow survived and didn't die with us」or「he must have refused to be reincarnated, like that other person.」

In addition, the repeated experiments on Hiroto's body had changed the shape of his face completely, to the point that Narumi hadn't even been able recognize him.

「All of this misfortune was caused by my own clumsiness. I wished for you to

look forward and live on without giving up or resenting anyone, but unfortunately you were put on a path that made that impossible. Through your discovery of death-attribute magic and development of new magic, you contributed towards Origin's advancement. I hope that you can forgive me for being unable to repay you in any way and forcing you to endure a third life of misfortune.」(Rodcorte)

But even as Hiroto's soul grew more distant, Rodcorte could feel Hiroto telling him that this would never be forgiven.

「Therefore, all I can do is to have you give up on your foolish revenge before you can commit any sin and hope that you will quickly end your own life.」(Rodcorte)

And then, in the palm of Rodcorte's hand, something like a ball of slime appeared. In the next moment, it hit Hiroto's body.

「?!」(Hiroto)

As Hiroto screamed in agony in response to the violent pain, Rodcorte spoke.

「This is a curse. It can never be lifted. With this curse, you will never be able to gain new powers even in this new world. However, I promise you that for your fourth life I will erase all of your painful memories and return you to the normal circle of transmigration.」(Rodcorte)

With no time to object to Rodcorte's undesirable promise, Hiroto's mind went blank.

Notes

1. The Sanzu River is the Buddhist equivalent of the River Styx.
2. In Japan, people bring gifts of money to funerals to show their sympathy to the family of the deceased
3. To be more descriptive, this is the circle of birth, death and rebirth. This term is repeated later on in the chapter so I'll be using this shorter term.
4. Main character's name is "天宮博人/Amamiya Hiroto"; this other one is "雨宮

寛人/*Amemiya Hiroto*”. It’s only one letter different in English, but actually the kanji for “Hiroto” is also different in Japanese. **I’m italicizing the *non-MC Hiroto’s* name** so it’s easier to tell which is which.

5. The god is asking to clarify how Hiroto’s name is written in kanji. Japanese names can be spelled a number of different ways in kanji, even if pronounced exactly the same.

6. A Japanese phrase for a stroke of good fortune. Given everything that’s happened to him, I just don’t feel comfortable translating this as “good fortune.”

7. 神/Kami - God

Chapter 1: The Beginning of the Third Time

Amamiya Hiroto has been reincarnated in『Lambda』!

Amamiya Hiroto has been cursed by the god of transmigration, Rodcorte!

I think I heard this kind of announcement inside my head, but I don't really remember too well. In a state of being neither awake nor asleep, my consciousness gradually begins to take shape.

『Where is this place? What kind of situation am I in now? Though I get the feeling that I'm alive.』

But I don't have a good idea of what kind of circumstances I'm in.

Even if I open my eyes, only darkness fills my vision and my arms and legs aren't moving well, as if I'm in the middle of a dream.

My entire body is submerged in a warm fluid, and I can't breathe. But I don't feel any discomfort from this. It's like I've become a fish.

『Surely it's not possible that I've been reincarnated as something other than a human?』

It's possible, since I've been cursed, after all. Things might work out if I'm still a human, at least, but if I've become an animal or a fish then I have no idea what I'm supposed to do.

But fortunately, my suspicions are proven to be wrong.

『~♪』

I can hear a voice. It's not crying or shouting; it's a gentle, singing voice.

The sound is strangely muffled, so I can't make out the lyrics properly. But I can feel the emotion in the song.

Love.

『I see, I'm inside the womb. I'm a fetus right now.』

It seems that the god's curse isn't able to influence me before I'm reborn, at least.

From the fragments of information about the situation that Rodcorte put in my mind before I was reincarnated, Lambda seems to be a world with swords and magic. I might be some other species like an Elf or a Dwarf, but as long as I'm a sentient being, I don't have a problem with that.

『Is it just my imagination? This song sounds kind of like Japanese...』

And then my consciousness melts away again.

The next time my consciousness returns, I've already been born.

「You're always quiet, aren't you, Vandalieu? It's good that you are, but you're allowed to cry from time to time, you know?」

I quietly look up at the woman who's holding me and speaking to me.

『I suppose Vandalieu is my new name. It's a lot better than the serial number I was assigned in Origin. And this person must be my third mother. She seems much better than the one I had in Origin as well.』

By the time I was self-aware in Origin, I'd already been sold, so I have no complaints about this beginning to my life. Considering I have a curse in place of a god's blessing, this could be called a miracle.

『Well then, what kind of environment have I been born into? It seems my mother is a Dark Elf.』

The mother reflected in Vandalieu's eyes was a woman in her early twenties with golden hair and dark brown skin. She was a beautiful woman with pleasant features; Vandalieu could have high hopes for his own appearance if this person was his mother.

The tips of her ears were pointed.

Even Vandalieu, who had only just been reborn into this world, could guess that she was a member of the dark-skinned Dark Elf race.

Well, it was not entirely impossible that she was simply a tanned Elf.

『Well, if that's the case, I suppose it makes sense that she lives in a cave, huh.』

Indeed, the two of them were not in a cave-like house, but an actual cave.

There was a door and furs are spread out across the floor in place of a carpet, but it wasn't a particularly civilized home.

But the Elves in fantasy stories on Earth were generally people that live in harmony with nature, so perhaps this kind of thing was normal for them.

『Well, the more important problem is my own body.』

His mother's warm arms were wrapped around his fragile body. He looked at her soft skin that reminded him of chocolate, and then at his own plump, useless hands.

His hands were as white as silk.

『Why is my color different? Though my ears do seem to be pointed.』

His mother was a Dark Elf, but his skin was white. Could it be that he wasn't a Dark Elf himself? He didn't know how Dark Elves' bodies change over the course of their lives. Could it be that they were born with white skin that turned darker as they grew into adults?

Or could it be that this person was not biologically his mother?

「Hmm? Are you curious as to why your mommy's skin is a different color? You're clever, aren't you, Vandalieu? To notice that already. But don't worry. Vandalieu, you just look a lot like your daddy, but you are definitely your mommy, Darcia's, son.」(Darcia)

As Darcia, Vandaleiu's mother, smiled gently, her words dispelled his doubts. He realized that he was a child of mixed blood, born to parents of different races.

There was a chance that Darcia was lying, but he had no intention of doubting her.

He wanted to simply enjoy the love that he was being given and feel at ease, rather than spend his time and emotional endurance on doubting her words.

『And... Sleep...』

And so Darcia lulled Vandalieu to sleep.

As a three-month-old, Vandalieu was a good son who didn't cause any trouble for Darcia, who was going through her first experience raising a child.

「Ah~」(Vandalieu)

When he was hungry, he made a noise like this and patted his stomach or pointed at Darcia's chest and complained. When his diaper needed changing, he made a similar noise and patted his own hips.

「Yes~ here is Mommy's breast~ You're so well-behaved, Vandalieu~」(Darcia)

As Darcia raised Vandalieu up in her arms and exposed her nipple to feed him her milk, she thought,「what a good boy.」

Of course, she knew that this wasn't normal. That he was too clever.

But she didn't do anything to make her own son uncomfortable.

『Maybe it's because he takes after his father... after that person.』

She suspected that the intelligence of her three-month-old son was due to his father's blood.

That and the fact that she had recently often been feeling some strange Mana coming from Vandalieu only gave her more reason to believe that this was the case. His father's race was more proficient at using magic than Dark Elves.

『What bothers me more is the fact that he doesn't laugh or cry... I wonder if he feels anxious because he doesn't have a father?』

What bothered Darcia was the fact that Vandalieu didn't laugh or cry like a normal infant.

When her beloved son was hungry or even when she tickled him, he was always as expressionless as a doll. She had thought that he was just in a bad mood at first, but it seemed that wasn't the case.

It also didn't seem to be the case that his emotions were simply underdeveloped. She had once spotted him silently crying with an empty expression.

On that occasion she had thought that he might be sick and applied all the healing magic that she knew, but it seemed that he had simply been crying after having a scary nightmare.

「But the thing that bothers me the most is when I give you my breast. Does Mommy's breast not taste nice?」(Darcia)

What bothered Darcia the most about her son's behavior was that when she went to breast-feed him, he didn't suck on her breast straight away, but instead let his eyes wander without moving for a while first.

He drank the milk in the end, but... Darcia was worried that there was something wrong with her own milk.

Vandalieu, who was in the middle of the important task of sucking milk from his mother's nipple, was filled with feelings of embarrassment and guilt.

『It's not easy being an infant, huh.』

One would normally be happy and proud to have such a young and beautiful mother. However, on the inside, he was a man who had lived about thirty-seven years over his two previous lives, so he had mixed feelings about it.

Though his body was that of an infant, his mind was that of an adult so he felt overly conscious about it. He had been especially conscious of members of the opposite sex since he was a high-schooler on Earth.

『I wonder how the others felt? In Origin, I was about ten months old when my memories returned.』

Had the others who had been reborn in Origin felt embarrassment when their mother changed their diapers?

『But I can't make my mother worry about it forever. I'll just have to get used to it as soon as possible.』

Vandalieu had already imprinted in his mind that Darcia, his third mother, was "his mother". He had no discomfort with this fact. In any case, despite this being his third life, this was the first time he was experiencing a mother's love. It would be impossible for him to reject it.

And so, at first, he tried his best to act like a normal infant... But it was impossible.

It was impossible for him to act like an infant when he was a teenager on the

inside. And for some reason, he found himself unable to laugh or cry. He couldn't change his facial expression at all.

At first, he had thought his facial muscles were paralyzed, but he found that his mouth and eyelids moved normally. But they didn't move naturally. He could only move them when he put conscious effort into it.

Was this because of the curse?

『Well, I'll ask Mother about my expression not changing when I'm able to speak... There's all kinds of problems, but I've learned quite a lot during the past two months as well.』

Darcia wasn't aware that Vandalieu understood her words, so she hadn't explained her past or current situation in detail, but he had a general idea from having lived with her for two months.

First, it seemed that Darcia's husband, Vandalieu's father, was a member of a greatly-feared race. As a mixed child of that race, Vandalieu knew that he would likely be the target of discrimination and persecution.

This was the reason why Darcia was living in this cave that she had dug out using spiritual magic in a forest away from where other people lived.

It was no wonder that he had never seen a single person in the two months he had been here other than his own mother.

『I know that she's planning to return the Dark Elf village once I've grown up to some extent. And that this place is the country of Mirg, a part of the Amid Empire in the northwest part of the Bahn Gaia continent.』

It seemed that something would work out if she returned to the Dark Elf Village, so for now, her objective was probably to gather strength for that purpose.

For that reason, even though Vandalieu wasn't even able to crawl yet, he began training himself in using magic.

The death-attribute magic that he had become able to use at will during his previous life. It would surely be helpful for his journey with his mother, or so Vandalieu thought. But for some reason, he couldn't use it very well.

『Is this because my body's still that of an infant? Or is it because of the curse?』

He considered this possibility. But giving up now because he couldn't use his magic properly wasn't an option. Because for Vandalieu, who didn't have any cheat-like powers or aptitude for any other types of magic, this death-attribute magic was his only weapon.

「It would be nice if I could see Vandalieu's status.」(Darcia)

Vandalieu was about a month and a half old when he heard these words from Darcia.

『Status?』

Vandalieu was unsuccessfully trying to use his death-attribute magic and was wishing that he could at least be able to crawl across the floor while keeping his head raised when he heard these from his mother. This isn't a game, he thought, but... he was surprised when his own status was displayed inside his head.

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race:** Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age:** 0 years old
- **Title:** None
- **Job:** None
- **Level:** 0
- **Job history:** None
- **Attributes:**
  - Vitality: 12
  - Mana: 100,000,000
  - Strength: 10
  - Agility: 1
  - Stamina: 25
  - Intelligence: 20
- **Passive skills:**
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 1

- **Active skills:**
  - None
- **Curses:**
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

『Wow, my Mana is no joke. Also, it seems my father was a Vampire. And I have three curses, just how badly does that god want me to kill myself?』

There were several things displayed on Vandalieu's status that surprised him.

To start with, his race had been set as Dhampir. If that meant the same thing in Lambda as it did on Earth, that meant that he was a half-Vampire.

I see, that explains why she has to live in this hidden place. I don't know what religions there are in Lambda, but I doubt they'd be very welcoming to a mixed-blood child of a Vampire.

Isn't it actually quite likely that they'll treat me like a monster and try to exterminate me? At the very least, this is something that might endanger my life.

The possibility of facing discrimination and prejudice due to being a Dhampir would always be there. Vandalieu's life had been set to a hard mode even more extreme that he had expected.

The next surprising thing was his Mana. There was no MP stat on the status screen, so Mana must be the MP stat in the world of Lambda. But the number next to this stat was 100,000,000.

He didn't know what the average for this stat was, but this was surely an abnormal number.

Was this what Rodcorte had mentioned earlier, the Mana that was housed in the『empty frame』left by his lack of cheat-like abilities, fortune and destiny? He had been unable to see anything like a status screen in Origin so he had no indication of how vast it was other than the words of the researchers who had said『This is over ten thousand times greater than a first-class Mage!』But now, seeing the number with his own eyes, it really was amazing.

『Well, I'm a powerless infant right now, though.』

No matter how much MP he had, there was no point if he couldn't use magic. He had to relearn how to use his death-attribute magic as soon as possible.

『As for the rest, I seem to have normal strength and my agility is, well, like that. Endurance is like stamina, but intelligence doesn't seem to be as simple as just a measure of how smart I am. It's probably a stat that affects how fast I learn magic, the power of its effects, simultaneous casting and how much incantation I'll need to perform it. It could even be related to my willpower.』

As Vandalieu deciphered his status, he understood why his agility was lower than every other stat. He was a month and a half old, but he couldn't even keep his head raised. He couldn't even roll over in bed by himself, let alone crawl. There's no way this kind of infant could be considered agile.

But on the other hand, considering that he was a level 0 baby, his other stats were pretty high, though not as high as his Mana.

As expected of a Dhampir, he thought.

Next were his skills. From Vandalieu's knowledge of games, he knew that passive skills were ones that exhibited their effects without requiring conscious effort while active skills required conscious use.

『Superhuman Strength and Rapid Healing, huh. These are probably skills that I have because I'm a Dhampir. Something like racial traits that you see in games, I suppose. But as I thought, death-attribute magic isn't listed on there.』

His list of skills was mostly empty because he was still a baby, but Vandalieu was someone who had experienced thirty-seven years of life on Earth and in Origin. At least the skill of using elementary-level death-attribute magic that he had managed to learn in his previous life should have been there.

The reason it wasn't was probably the three curses listed next.

『The curse that prevents my experience from my previous life from being carried over, it's probably because of that. That's why I don't have my skills from my previous life or my life before that. The other two curses aren't exactly great news for me, either. Those will make it really hard for me to learn a job or level up.』

After all, these were curses that Rodcorte had placed on him in order to encourage him to kill himself. Knowing that they were extremely troublesome curses, Vandalieu let out a great sigh.

『But choosing to just die quietly isn't an option. As long as that's the case, I have to keep gathering strength so that I can survive. I'll keep trying to learn to use my death-attribute magic today as well, and... Ah... It's no use... I'm sleepy.』

Vandalieu, like any other six-week-old infant, was defeated by his sleepiness.

『You have acquired the Death-Attribute Magic skill! 』

This announcement echoed inside Vandalieu's head.

Three months after his birth, around the time he was finally able to support the weight of his own head with his neck, Vandalieu was finally successful in learning death-attribute magic.

『I've spent about two months failing to get my Mana to take the form of a spell. I guess this is the result of my hard work.』

With that said, the only spells he could use was『Sterilization』, a spell that exterminated microscopic organisms within its range, and『Bug Killer』, a version of the same spell that did the same thing to insects. The other spell he could use was『Magic Absorption Barrier』, a spell that created a barrier that absorbed Mana that it came into contact with, something that had no immediately no visible effects.

He wanted to show Darcia, his mother, that he could use magic, but that proved difficult. It would be simple to show her that he could『absorb』her spells, but she never used her spiritual magic in his sight.

She probably used spiritual magic to at least create fire to use for cooking, but...

『With this body that's only just become able to sit up, I can't exactly get a good look around the room.』

As Vandalieu exhales to sit up on his bed, his mother simply laughs, thinking「He's kind of like an old man」, but pays him no further attention.

『But I’m grateful that she’s at least taking me outside. I was about to die of boredom.』

Perhaps it was because he was now three months old; Darcia had started taking him outside in her arms on sunny days.

The reason for this was that she had decided that it would be a good stimulus for a growing child, and her stores of food were also getting dangerously low, so she was going outside to gather more.

But Vandalieu remembers the way she had been strangely cautious the first time she had taken him outside.

She had opened the door to the cave to allow just a little sunlight through and let it shine lightly on Vandalieu’s fingertip.

「What a relief! You didn’t inherit the Vampires’ weakness!」(Darcia)

As Vandalieu watched Darcia cry out in joy, he was reminded that his father was a Vampire. It would have been really troublesome if, as a Dhampir, he had even inherited his father’s inability to tolerate sunlight.

「Well then, let’s go outside with Mommy from now on, okay?」(Darcia)

As Darcia said that and took Vandalieu outside, the sight of the world beyond the cave moved Vandalieu to the point that he was at a loss for words (not that he could speak words in the first place).

『Oh... The world... Nature... It’s so huge!』

The outside of the cave was a forest. The air was fresh.

The sun was bright, the sky was a transparent blue, the clouds were pure white and the thickly growing trees were bright green.

It was the scenery of a forest with no particular features, but Vandalieu had spent twenty years imprisoned in a small room before being finished off by *Amemiya Hiroto* and Narumi. In his eyes, everything seemed to shine beautifully.

「Fufu, it seems you’ve taken a liking to being outside.」(Darcia)

His face was expressionless as usual, but Darcia understood from the fact that

he was gazing at their surroundings as if he was in a gaze that he was very happy. She began walking around and gathering food.

Of course, she didn't do dangerous things like hunting animals using her bow and spiritual magic. She gathered edible grasses, fruits and mushrooms and laid some traps to catch animals later.

Most of the food she gathered went into her own mouth, while a little was set aside to be made into baby food for Vandalieu.

『I have mixed feelings about this.』

Once a day, his young, beautiful Dark Elf mother said「say ah~」and fed him a spoonful of food. And with that, the amount of time she spent breast-feeding him decreased.

In order to survive from now on and make the journey from this area that was dangerous for a Dhampir to live to the Dark Elf village, weaning was necessary for Vandalieu. But even so, growing was a difficult task for him.

Incidentally, he enjoyed the taste of his mother's milk more than the baby food.

『The Death-Attribute Magic skill has been upgraded to level 2! The following new skills have been added: Status Effect Resistance, Magic Resistance, Dark Vision, Bloodsucking!』

Once Vandalieu reached five months of age, Darcia began leaving him in the cave for hours at a time to go out and gather food from the forest.

「In a little while, we'll be going to where Mommy was born. I have to make preparations for that, so even if you get lonely, bear with it, okay?」(Darcia)

Saying that, she left to hunt animals and went to the village, pretending to be a passing adventurer to buy supplies. There were times she didn't come home for half a day at a time, but it was necessary to get the supplies they needed to survive, so there was no helping it.

Leaving an infant alone at home for half a day would have been questionable on Earth, but Vandalieu himself had no complaints about it. Because everything was being done for his own protection.

With no help from anyone else, Darcia was raising an infant by herself. A troublesome half-Vampire child, no less.

Judging from the fact that Vandalieu had not seen his father even once, it seemed that there was no help coming from the Vampire community either. Vampires looked down on half-Vampires just as much as humans did, if not more. Half-Vampires were often the targets of persecution by Vampires as well. Even in Japan, where people had a sense of values as human beings, people of mixed foreign blood were discriminated against. It was no surprise that half-bloods of different races in Lambda experienced the same.

『At this rate, it doesn't seem like I'll be able to see my father's face.』

The reason being that he was probably no longer alive.

Thinking logically without taking emotions into account, it would be a much better choice for Darcia to abandon Vandalieu. Then she would be able to live a much more peaceful life.

That would make her life more carefree, free of responsibility. Once some time passed and her feelings died down, she would be able to live on as if nothing had happened. If she wanted a child, she could easily go to another country or back to the Dark Elf village and find a new man to create one with.

Despite this, the likely reason why Darcia had not abandoned Vandalieu was because she loved his father and Vandalieu himself.

『This is a bit of a cliché, but being loved is a truly happy thing.』

With this happiness driving him on, Vandalieu continued his hard work.

He spent his time awake practicing magic, strengthening his body by exercising his arms and legs and practicing using his voice. The result of this was that his Death-Attribute Magic skill had increased and he was able to cast with visible effects that Darcia could see.

「Wow, to think that you can use magic even though you're still a baby! Vandalieu, you're a genius, aren't you~♪」

How happy it made him for someone to be proud of his increase in skill, for someone to praise him.

Though his ability to use other skills seemed to be not the result of his hard work, but his growing up.

His Status Effect Resistance was a skill that granted him resistance against poison, sickness, fatigue due to lack of sleep, hunger and other various detrimental or fatal conditions that could be applied to him through magic. This was likely something he had inherited from his Vampire father.

His Magic Resistance, a skill that mitigated the damage and other effects that he took from magical attacks, was a racial characteristic of Dark Elves. His mother, Darcia, also had this skill.

The Dark Vision was a characteristic that both of his parents possessed, which allowed him to see even on completely starless nights as if it were daytime.

And finally, Bloodsucking was self-explanatory. His canine teeth had grown unusually quickly compared to his other teeth... It was a skill that he had acquired when fangs had grown on both the top and bottom side of his mouth.

「They've appeared, after all. Though it might be better for you not to, Vandalieu...」(Darcia)

As Darcia said this upon noticing that her son had grown fangs, she cut the head of the rabbit she had caught with a knife. And then she caught the dripping blood on a wooden plate.

「Here, try drinking this.」(Darcia)

『Mother, are you insane?』

In response to the iron-like smell coming from the plate that had been brought close to his mouth, Vandalieu looked up at Darcia with half-closed eyes.

On Earth, blood is sometimes used as an ingredient in sauces and eel or turtle blood is sometimes distilled into wine. I know that, but... Wouldn't feeding an infant the raw blood of an animal be considered child abuse? I think that would be the case, but she doesn't seem to want to change her mind.

『Well, I guess I'll try it.』

It would surely be disgusting. As he thought this, Vandalieu extended his

tongue and drank a little of the rabbit's blood. Surprisingly, he didn't think it tasted bad.

『Huh? I can drink this. It tastes like iron, but it's not as bad as I thought... In fact, it's delicious?』

It hadn't been distilled into wine or had spices added to it to mask the smell, but for Vandalieu, the rabbit's blood was as easy to drink as his mother's milk.

He was astonished, but Darcia explained as she stroked his growing hair.

「Vandalieu, you can drink blood like your daddy. But it doesn't mean you have to drink blood, so even if you're hungry, only drink it if Mommy isn't around, okay?」(Darcia)

I see, so I'm a half-Vampire after all. That explains why Dhampirs are shunned.

Well, for now, I'll just think of it as an increase in the variety of my baby food.

As Vandalieu approached six months of age, he gained the ability to crawl. That day, Darcia had left Vandalieu at home and made a long journey to a nearby town.

『I'm glad Mother has taken my unusual intelligence for an infant to be a good thing.』

Including the fact that he could use magic, Darcia's only response to Vandalieu's abnormality was「Amazing!」and she had not questioned it or expressed any bewilderment about it.

「Dhampirs are amazing, after all.」(Darcia)

Because she often said that, it was likely that she thought that all of Vandalieu's unusual characteristics are due to the fact that he was a Dhampir. He was very thankful that she had not investigated it any further.

After all, even if he wanted to explain it, he couldn't speak yet as he was only six months old. He was continuing his practice on using his voice, but he was frustrated that he couldn't form proper words yet.

If that wasn't the case, he would want to explain his situation.

『I'd explain everything about Rodcorte, my previous life and *Amemiya*

Hiroto.』

In light novels or manga that Vandalieu had read on Earth, it was common for characters that had been reincarnated in another world to keep that fact a secret. But he thought he should break that common pattern. That he should at least tell Darcia, as soon as possible.

Because she was his own mother.

『If this was a normal reincarnation or trip to another world, I'd consider keeping it a secret too. But my situation is different. Because soon, a hundred people from the same world as me will be reincarnated here with cheat-like powers.』

Amemiya Hiroto and the others, the ones who had abandoned him without even searching for him on Origin, the ones who had killed him. Once they died in Origin, they would surely be reincarnated here in Lambda.

Vandalieu didn't know when that would happen. When Vandalieu had died in Origin, they looked to be around twenty years old. So unless they were involved in an accident or something, it would take at least fifty years. But it wasn't certain that time flowed at the same rate in both Origin and Lambda.

It could even be that for each day that passed in Lambda, a year passed in Origin.

Well, it probably wasn't that extreme, but they would definitely be reincarnated in Lambda one day. Even Rodcorte himself couldn't prevent that from happening.

『The problem is what Rodcorte will say to them before they're reincarnated. I screamed to him that I'd kill them. So if they were to be reincarnated here before I died, he'd at least warn them about me.』

After all, Rodcorte's goal was to have them develop this world. It would be problematic if they died before that happened, so he would definitely warn them about Vandalieu.

In that case, they would see Vandalieu as a threat and be cautious of him.

In their first lives, they were Japanese people raised in the peaceful country of

Japan, so it would be fine if they wanted to talk about things or apologize for what happened in Origin.

But Vandalieu couldn't say for sure that there wouldn't be any of them who would kill him upon finding him, to simply eliminate the threat. Just as Vandalieu himself had led an unimaginably wretched life, they might have experienced something like that as well.

Even if they were heroes there, if they had to deal with evil terrorists or criminal organizations for extended periods of time, who knew what kind of state they would be in.

Yes, heroes. These were unlucky.

『I heard them just before I died, but if I'm not mistaken, they were notified that an Undead had appeared and come to kill me. If that's the case, they were probably putting their cheat-like powers to use and being international heroes or something. Like the ones in American superhero comics.』

And Vandalieu himself was a half-Vampire, a Dhampir.

If they displayed the pacifism, philanthropism and respect for human rights that they did as Japanese people, there wouldn't be a problem. But if they were affected by the anti-Vampire, anti-Dhampir values of Lambda, that would be dangerous.

Facing a hundred people with cheat-like powers as enemies wouldn't be an easy task.

The one getting caught up in all of this would be Darcia. It would be too dangerous and unreasonable to expect her to face that without knowing anything. This was why Vandalieu thought that he had to explain the situation to her as soon as possible.

『If Mother separates herself from me because of that reason, then there's nothing I can do about that.』

It was only for half a year, but Darcia was the first mother that Vandalieu had known. He had never been loved as much as she had loved him.

『Well, if possible, I don't want to be separate from her.』

For that purpose, my revenge on them... Well, it's impossible to forgive them or reconcile at this point, but I'd be content if they just kept their distance from me.

This was the extent to which Vandalieu was attached to Darcia. It was also partially because his thoughts had become strangely clear after he had been reborn, but he thought that he could give up on his revenge for the sake of his mother.

After I grow up a little more, I'll explain everything to Darcia. And then if I can use the knowledge and death-attribute magic that I have from my time on Earth and in Origin to live a fulfilled life, I'll be happy with that.

And if I can just watch those guys with cheat-like abilities put all their effort into this world, then that'll be fine.

Vandalieu thought this as he continued crawling across the floor to continue his physical training, but he felt suddenly hungry.

『I guess I'll just drink some blood.』

He lifted the rabbit that Darcia had captured alive from its cage. Though he was only six months old, he was still a Dhampir with the Superhuman Strength skill, so it was simpler than he thought.

He used『Sterilization』and『Bug Killer』on the struggling rabbit to sanitize it and then bit into it.

『Blood is delicious, but Mother's milk is still better.』

Sating his hunger by mercilessly sucking the blood from the convulsing rabbit, Vandalieu longed for his mother's breast.

That day, the time that Darcia was supposed to come back passed, but she did not return.

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race:** Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age:** 0.5 years old
- **Nickname:** None
- **Job:** None

- **Level:** 0
- **Job history:** None
- **Attributes:**
  - Vitality: 18
  - Mana: 100,000,600
  - Strength: 27
  - Agility: 2
  - Stamina: 33
  - Intelligence: 25
- **Passive skills:**
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 1
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 2 (NEW)
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 1 (NEW)
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1 (NEW)
  - Dark Vision (NEW)
- **Active skills:**
  - Bloodsucking: Level 1 (NEW)
- **Curses:**
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points directly

Chapter 2: Hard mode begins, insanity takes over

Even when Vandalieu opened his eyes the next morning, there was no sign of Darcia.

『This is strange... I have a bad feeling about this. Maybe I should go out to find her.』

Normally, it would be reckless for a six-month-old infant to go outside by himself, but if Darcia didn't come back by the end of the day, Vandalieu would have to venture outside either way.

There was still the one rabbit that Darcia had caught alive, but its blood would only last him until the end of today. He would have to make food suitable for an infant to eat by himself, but he was still only six months old. His stomach found it difficult to cope with food other than blood and his mother's milk.

『Infants eat a lot more than you'd expect. I need to eat five or six times a day, since I'm doing magic practice and physical exercises, so my energy expenditure is quite high.』

Because of this, Vandalieu needed to eat considerably more than a normal infant. If he simply stayed here like the infant that he was, it was possible that he would starve to death in a few days' time.

Because he was a Dhampir rather than a human, he wasn't sure how long it would take for that to happen.

『Well, I guess I'll start getting ready.』

Though he wanted to go out to find Darcia, his body was still unable to walk, let alone run, so he had to make various preparations. First, he had to secure a method of moving around.

『The first thing to do is... Get up.』

As Vandalieu gave this command in his head, the rabbit that he had killed by consuming its blood twitched and began to move.

He had not granted it life. He had used his magic to have the various spirits floating around nearby to possess the rabbit's corpse, turning it into an Undead.

It was a death-attribute spell that created Undead.

『Looks like it worked. I wasn't sure if I could do it or not, since my skill is still only level 2, but it seems it works fine if I use a bit more Mana to compensate. I guess it's because my skill level is low; I can only make a moving corpse. But I can still use it to move around.』

The rabbit didn't have any of the agility that it had when it was still alive; it simply moved. In Origin, he had planned to use this spell to escape. But he could only create these weak servants and they would be of no use against the strict security that he had been under, so he had given up.

The amount of Mana that he had needed to create this single Undead rabbit was far greater than the amount he needed for spells like Sterilization and Bug Killer. When Vandalieu checked his status, he found that his Mana had decreased by 10,000.

Using Sterilization once only cost him a single point of Mana, so the Mana cost of 10,000 was enormous in comparison.

『But one rabbit isn't enough. More of you, get up. You, you and you, get up. You as well, hurry and get up!』

The ivy that Darcia had used instead of rope began to crawl around like a snake.

The small knife that she had used for cooking began lightly floating in the air.

The shabby bed made of wood rattled as it began to shake.

Vandalieu could have spirits possess more than just corpses. He could make them possess inorganic substances such as ivy, wood and metal. The idea came from fantasy and occult works that he had seen on Earth – evil spirits that possessed weapons to move on their own without a bearer, cursed gems or vases and Poltergeists that that caused furniture to move on its own.

However, having spirits possess inorganic substances required several times more Mana than having them possess a corpse.

『I used nearly 1,000,000 Mana just now. My head hurts a little... I'll leave after I replenish myself.』

Vandalieu sucked the blood from the last remaining rabbit to replenish his Mana, turned that into an Undead as well and then left his home, riding on the bed.

『Get up, get up, get up, get up, get up! Which way is the town? Where can I find somewhere with lots of people?』

The bones of a deer, a mummified bear, a wild boar missing its head and internal organs and a human's corpse that for some reason only had a skeleton remaining. These servants carried Vandalieu's bed as he continued onward.

If anyone other than an adventurer or soldier were to witness this sight, they would surely tremble with fear.

An infant with silver hair and odd-colored eyes, one deep crimson and the other a bluish-purple, leading an army of Undead. A terrifying sight indeed.

But he looked more fearsome than he actually was.

The Undead corpses and bones of animals. The tools and furniture that had been cursed to be made Undead... Any one of these could be repelled by a single farmer wielding a hoe, and any adventurer would only consider them a group of small fry.

Knowing this, Vandalieu continued increasing the number of Undead at his command as he hurried forward.

『Mom isn't in this forest.』

He had commanded a winged insect fly around to search the forest, but there was no sign of Darcia. He asked the spirits that were floating amongst the trees, but they couldn't give him the information he wanted.

His head felt hot, as if it was steaming, and he felt a dizziness that would not subside. He no longer knew how many millions of Mana he had spent. But he couldn't shake off this bad feeling.

『I should have tested making Undead earlier! I should have had an Undead follow Mom around!』

If he had done that, he would know where she was. If something happened, he would be able to sense it straight away.

In fact, if Darcia had known that he was capable of doing these things, she might have decided to leave the forest on the journey for her birthplace earlier.

But he didn't test it. He had lived in peace, thinking that he would test it the next time his skill level increased. He had been spoiled by Darcia, his mother.

『Faster, to the town!』

He had around 50,000,000 Mana remaining. By the time his group of Undead reached Evbejia, the town closest to the forest, night had already fallen.

Evbejia was a small town built in between two villages, with a population of around 2,000. It was governed by Bestero, the Baronet.

It was surrounded by a wall to ward off monsters and there was no way to enter except through the four gates to the north, south, east and west. Unless one could fly through the air.

『You guys wait here. Bone Monkey, you carry me.』

He grabbed onto the back of an Undead he had made from the skeleton of a large monkey he had found in the forest, whom he had named Bone Monkey, and quietly approached the town's outer wall.

It was a town with a population of only 2,000, so it wasn't at particular risk of monster or enemy nation attack. Vandalieu could see holes in their guard system. If the person in charge of the security at the military facility in Origin could see this, he might feel sorry for these people.

Even so, the gates were closed and guards stood watch after nightfall.

There would be chaos if a human-sized skeleton monster approached them. That's why Vandalieu ignored the gates and headed for the walls.

And then he embedded some Mana and a suitable number of spirits into the stone wall.

『Make a hole, big enough for us to pass through.』

The portion of the outer wall, now an Undead wall, wouldn't disobey its master's command. Making small, grinding noises, it changed shape to create a hole to allow passage through.

49,000,000 Mana remained.

【The Death-Attribute Magic skill has leveled up!】

He was barely aware of this announcement inside his head; his dizziness was very severe now. His head felt as if there was a hammer continuously striking his temple.

『Bone Monkey, find an alleyway where there's no sign of any people.』

Bone Monkey continued forward, his bones rattling as they moved against each other. His movements were unrefined and showed no sign of consideration for Vandalieu who was clinging to his back, but it wasn't a problem. Vandalieu wasn't able to walk on his own yet, but his arm strength already exceeded that of a grown man. Holding onto Bone Monkey with both hands, he could easily support his own body weight of less than ten kilograms.

He looked around the dark, almost lightless town. Thanks to his Dark Vision, he could see as clearly as if it were in the middle of the afternoon.

『Find Mom.』

Sending out the Undead bugs to gather information, he listens to information from the spirits floating around the city that are conscious.

Normal spirits that hadn't been turned into Undead normally dissipated quickly after death unless they had an exceptional force of will. That was why Vandalieu thought there wouldn't be very many of them.

『... She's in the town square.』(Bugs)

Therefore, he was so surprised that his heart almost stopped when he heard this answer given to him.

『To the town square!』(Vandalieu)

Bones rattling again, Bone Monkey moved quickly.

And in the town square, Vandalieu saw Darcia.

She was there.

『Vandalieu... I’m sorry...』(Darcia)

As a spirit that looked as if it would vanish at any moment.

『Mom!』(Vandalieu)

『I’m sorry. Mommy died. But I didn’t say anything about you, Vandalieu.』(Darcia)

『What... happened...?』(Vandalieu)

Darcia’s spirit, covered in countless whip-marks, began her explanation.

She had come to here, to Evbejia, to gather information to prepare for the journey to the Dark Elf village, where the murder of even a Dhampir would not be allowed.

『After all, Vandalieu, you have one eye the same crimson color as your daddy’s, and one bluish-purple like your mommy’s. People would know that you’re a Dhampir with one look at your face.』(Darcia)

That’s why using the highway wasn’t an option. So there was a need to find a relatively safe alternate road where monsters wouldn’t appear.

But she had been betrayed. The Church of the god Alda knew her name and appearance, and one of their members reported that there was a female adventurer who sometimes came to the town, matching her description exactly.

Darcia had unsuspectingly entered the town only to be surrounded by hired adventurers and ambushed by the knights of Baronet Bestero and the monks of the Church. She had resisted, but eventually captured.

『I fought desperately, but there were adventurers that were even better with a bow and spiritual magic than me, so it was hopeless. After that, they whipped me, asking me, “where is the Dhampir that you birthed, you damn witch?”』(Darcia)

The Church had tortured Darcia severely. They had whipped her, broken her

fingers and pressed hot irons into her.

The pain must have reached all the way into her soul; even after becoming a spirit, the scars of the torture remain visible on Darcia's body.

『Even so, I kept quiet, I'm amazing, aren't I? I did well, didn't I? But the Church realized that torturing me was useless, so they burned me at the stake earlier this evening.』(Darcia)

In order to spread the news of their achievement, the news that they were ending the life of the woman who had succumbed to a vampire's seduction, they had executed Darcia publicly.

『So I was burned alive. After that, I wanted to at least go to see you after becoming a ghost, but the Church's High Priest Gordan sprinkled holy water over my ashes. Because of that, I could barely keep myself from disappearing, so I couldn't come to see you.』(Darcia)

As Vandalieu listened to Darcia's words, his vision blurred and he felt a sense of despair and powerlessness, as if his body were rotting away.

If he had left to look for her yesterday, he would have made it in time. If he had come here sooner, he would have made it in time.

While he had been carefree, doing nothing, they were whipping his mother's beautiful, chocolate-colored skin. While he had been satisfying his stomach with the blood of the rabbit, hot irons were being pressed into her.

And while he had been awkwardly wandering about the forest, she was burned alive in public as a criminal.

All that remained of her now was a smile pile of ash on the stone pavement of the town square.

【You have acquired the Mental Corruption skill!】

『If I had grown up faster, if I had trained myself in using magic earlier, if I had taken the time to gather information beforehand... If I had become stronger, Mom wouldn't have had to die!』(Vandalieu)

Maddening emotions swirled around Vandalieu's mind. His expression didn't change much, but his body was shaking in grief and tears of regret and anger

flowed endlessly from his eyes.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 2!】

Darcia watched him sadly.

In truth, she had not wanted to tell him about the horrible things she had endured before her death. But she hadn't been able to stay silent about it.

As a weak spirit on the verge of being extinguished, it was impossible for her to go against the wishes of Vandalieu, a death-attribute mage with an enormous amount of Mana.

And in front of her eyes, Vandalieu's Undead insects returned to him. They had brought back information about Darcia from all over Evbejia.

『My Lord, today's public execution was exciting, was it not?』(Steward)

『Indeed. Even if we did not catch the vampire itself, catching the Dark Elf who opened her legs to him is still a satisfactory achievement. My reputation with His Majesty and the Church grows better, and the day of my appointment to a higher position draws near.』(Feudal Lord)

『The day you can receive the Characters of Correspondence[1] from Baronet Bestero-sama is also near.』(Steward)

A feudal lord and his steward were happily envisioning a bright future for themselves while enjoying their dinner.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 3!】

『That damn witch, she didn't say anything about the Dhampir in the end.』(Feudal Lord)

『Hmph, I suppose she was trying to show her motherly love. She should have at least pleaded for her life when we burned her at the stake. She did not show any signs of repentance, right up until the end; she was truly a witch.』(Steward)

『She is surely burning in the flames of Hell now. So from tomorrow, we will be hunting the Dhampir using the Five-colored Blades?』(Feudal Lord)

『Would it not be fine to leave the infant? It has already been three days since the baby who still requires his mother's milk has been separated from her. I am

sure it is dead by now.』(Steward)

『Do not be so complacent! Even if it is a baby, half of its blood is that of a Vampire; we do not know what kind of powers it may have inherited! If his father had been of lower breed it would be another matter, but if he was a noble... or a pure-breed, what would happen if you left him!』(Feudal Lord)

『M-my apologies, High Priest Gordan.』(Steward)

『But we do not have the funds to hire the Five-colored Blades for long, and it would be unwise to add any more to our current achievements. I am sure that they are also not planning to associate themselves with us for much longer. They are adventurers, after all, different from us apostles of the God of Law and Fate, Alda. Have Ebvejia's hunters guide them on the hunt in the mountains and work together with the Baronet-dono's knights.』(Gordan)

『Yes, Sir.』(Steward)

In the Church, the High Priest and holy knights were calling Darcia a witch and cursing her while discussing how to dispose of Vandalieu.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 4!】

『Today's work was quite simple, huh. That Dark Elf was decently skilled with a bow and spiritual magic, but I'd say she was a D-class at most; she didn't stand a chance against us. Isn't that right, Blue-flamed Sword Heinz?』

『What's wrong, Heinz? You're acting a bit strange.』

『... No, it's nothing. I just have a really bad aftertaste about it.』(Heinz)

『You feel sorry for that Dark Elf? You're the leader of us B-class adventurers, the Five-colored Blades. Don't be going saying naïve stuff like that.』

『I don't know whether she succumbed to the Vampire's seduction or wanted to become immortal, but that Dark Elf was paying for her own mistakes. It's nothing to be concerned about.』(Female adventurer)

『That's true, but I was shown a letter of introduction from the earl. I suppose it couldn't be helped.』(Heinz)

『Well, let's use the gold we earned to get some drinks and food. It's just like eating the meat of the monsters we defeated, you know? That's how we can

show our respect for the dead.』

The adventurer group who had been hired to catch Darcia, the『Five-colored Blades』, were saying that they would use the gold they earned from killing her to treat themselves to a meal.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 5!】

『Cheers! A toast to the Baronet-sama and High-Priest-sama!』

『Hahaha, a toast to Orbie's moodiness as well!』

『Oi, who are you calling moody?!』(Orbie)

『You, of course, you right here. I'm proud to have a companion who would fall in love at first sight with a beautiful Dark Elf coming to the town and then follow her like a hunter after being rejected.』

『What, it's because of that that that we figured out that she was the witch on the wanted poster!』(Orbie)

『It was really a waste, though, huh. Burning a beauty like that at the stake. And now we'll be earning some extra money by going on a hunt for the Dhampir. The knights will probably be in command, but I'm sure we can get paid a bit for guiding them through.』

『What are you talking about, we're going to be the ones to catch the Dhampir. That way we'll be getting a big payout, not just a little bit.』

『You didn't tell them where the Dark Elf's hiding place was?!』

『Good job, Orbie! If we catch the Dhampir, we can sell him to the Church, the Mage Guild, slave merchants, wherever we like!』

The hunters who had betrayed Darcia were now laughing loudly as they planned to capture Vandalieu and sell him.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 6!】

『If you don't behave, you're going to be burned at the stake like the witch.』

『We can't find the Dhampir, huh. I'm a bit anxious, they should hurry and exterminate him.』

『Is there no chance the Vampire will come back for revenge?』

『It would be a big problem if our village's wine became known as the wine of the village the Vampire came from. I wish this problem would be taken care of already.』

And finally, the words of the townspeople... the people who led very ordinary lives. None of them had any sympathy for Darcia.

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 7!】

What a turn of events.

In all of his three lifetimes, Vandalieu had not thought even once that the world revolved around him, or that it was full of good will.

But he had never thought that it would be this cruel, this vicious.

Earth, Origin and finally Lambda.

This was his third life, but he had not experienced happiness even once. Would he forever be forced to endure the torturous feeling of having things taken from him?

In every one of his lives he had done nothing wrong, but had irreplaceable things taken from him and received nothing in return.

Even the god that he had discovered really existed had made no effort to help him.

『I'm sorry, Vandalieu...』(Darcia)

And then, right before Vandalieu's eyes, Darcia was about to be taken from him as well.

『It seems Mommy's at her limit now.』(Darcia)

Darcia's form, which was already faint to begin with, began to blur and her voice began to waver. Her spiritual form was reaching its limits on how long it could remain in this world.

『Wait! Mom, you can't go!』(Vandalieu)

Darcia would be going to the afterlife, into the hands of that god of transmigration, Rodcorte. If he found out that Vandalieu had lost his mother on Lambda, he would surely be laughing. Rodcorte would laugh at Vandalieu,

hoping that he would feel more despair, hoping that he would give up. Vandalieu did not want this, he couldn't allow it to happen, he couldn't bear it.

『I'm sorry. I wanted to talk to you like this a lot more. I wanted to see you grow big, turn into an adult. I wanted to see you find a wife, have children and become happy.』(Darcia)

【The level of the Mental Corruption skill has increased to level 8 – 9!】

『I got it, Mom.』(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had 45,000,000 Mana remaining. He poured all of it into Darcia's spirit.

『Eh, ah, ah, ah? Vanda – aaaah!』(Darcia)

In the same way as when he created Undead, he poured his Mana into Darcia, whose fleeting spiritual form looked as if it could disappear at any moment. It was like pouring water into a bucket with a hole in the bottom, but even with a hole, the bucket would be filled if a vast amount of water was poured into it.

『Next, I need a vessel that Mom can possess...』(Vandalieu)

He couldn't use a random stone, tool or bone. If he used something like that, it would be difficult for it to preserve Darcia's personality for long.

If it were possible, her original body would have been best, but her body was now a pile of ash.

『Isn't there something I can use?』(Vandalieu)

He had Bone Monkey search the pile of ash and found one of Darcia's scorched bones. It was a fragment small enough to fit into Vandalieu's tiny hand.

『This will do. Mom, inside here.』(Vandalieu)

Darcia, who was having an enormous amount of Mana poured into her, tried to defy her son's request.

This was for his sake.

It was tragic, but she was already dead. Even if she was turned into an Undead, it would be different from when she was alive. Being by her son's side

in such a form wouldn't be of benefit to him. In fact, it would have a negative influence.

That was why, even though she wanted to be by his side longer, she tried to separate herself from him as she fought back her tears, but –

【You have acquired the Death-Attribute Charm skill!】

I want to be by his side, I want to be by his side, I want to be by his side, I want to be with him forever! I don't want to separate myself from this child!

『I understand. I'll be with you forever.』(Darcia)

Darcia's mind was filled with one thought, and she willingly inhabited her own remains.

『With this, I've recovered Mom, even though it's just her spirit. I'll create a new body for her one day.』(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had gathered the Mana needed to maintain Darcia's spirit form and a vessel for her to inhabit. But it was just a bone fragment, after all. But she couldn't move of her own will and could do nothing but sleep until Vandalieu decided to speak to her.

That was why he definitely had to increase his skill with Death-Attribute Magic and create a vessel for her with which she could live a normal life, just as she had when she was alive.

『But before that, I have to get revenge on these guys.』

The Baronet and his servants, the Church, the adventurers, the hunters, the townspeople – Vandalieu would take revenge on all of them.

He would never be satisfied until he did so; it made no sense that they would suffer no punishment whatsoever. It would be far too absurd.

『But right now... I'm at my limit.』

He had less than a tenth of his Mana left. His head was hurting, he was thirsty, hungry and sleepy... He had demanded too much from his six-month-old body.

『I'm sorry, Mom. I'll avenge you later... Bone Monkey, go back the way we

came.』

Bone Monkey picked up Vandalieu in his arms and left Evbejia, bones rattling as he walked. The outer wall that had opened a hole for Vandalieu and Bone Monkey to pass through returned back to normal and the group of Undead that had been waiting followed after Bone Monkey.

The people were completely unaware that they had stirred the hatred of someone they shouldn't have.

【The level of the Rapid Healing skill has increased to level 2! The level of the Surpass Limits skill has increased to level 2! The level of the Status Effect Resistance skill has increased to level 2!】

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 0.5 years old
- **Title**: None
- **Job**: Ordinary person
- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 18
  - Mana: 100,000,600
  - Strength: 27
  - Agility: 2
  - Stamina: 33
  - Intelligence: 25
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10 (NEW!)
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 1 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Active skills**:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 1
  - Surpass Limits: Level 2 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Notes

1. I'm not entirely sure what this means, nor am I sure on the translation. I think it's some kind of honor/award.

Chapter 3: A hikikomori at six months old

Struggling to stay conscious, Vandalieu returned to his home in the forest with the Undead while clutching the fragment of his mother's bone that contained her spirit.

He felt as if he would die of hunger, but fortunately, a raccoon had been caught in a trap set by Darcia, so he drank its blood before passing out.

By the time he woke up, the sun had already risen.

『Good morning, Mom, everyone.』

As Vandalieu opened his eyes, he quietly greeted his new companions in the house... Though he only managed to actually let out an unintelligible noise that sounded like「Aueuh.」

『So, have the hunters come after me?』

Bone Monkey, who was standing next to the bed, shook his head. It seemed that his good fortune had not yet arrived.

『First, if I gather up all the information I learned yesterday –』

The knights of Baronet Bestero who governs Evbejia, High Priest Gordan and the holy knights under his command, the ones who believe in Alda, the God of Law and Fate, would begin searching the forest today to hunt Vandalieu down.

However, the hunter Orbie had not told them where this house was, so they would take some time before they found this place.

But the hunter Orbie himself, along with his companions, would come here first in order to obtain this rare Dhampir baby for themselves.

『Against them, my combat ability is... enough to take on the three of them, I guess.』

He created several hundred Undead yesterday. However, the majority of them were small animals such as mice and insects; there were only around

thirty of them that would be useful in combat, including Bone Monkey, but they were fundamentally weak.

When he was alive, Bone Monkey probably had the strength of an orangutan, enough to be able to easily tear off a human's arm. But that wasn't the case now. In fact, when Vandalieu had tested Bone Monkey's strength, he found that Bone Monkey was even weaker than himself. Though in this case, perhaps the abnormal thing would be Vandalieu's own strength, not Bone Monkey's weakness.

Bone Monkey was even less agile than a normal human. As for endurance, he would be resistant to arrows and knives due to being made only of bones and dead flesh, but if he were to be hit a few times with a hoe, he would fall apart.

On top of that, when Vandalieu somehow managed to check Bone Monkey's status screen, he had no passive skills or Undead skills.

The Undead that Vandalieu had at hand right now were all Rank 1. After all, they were all monsters that would be defeated by any untrained villager in Lambda in a one-on-one fight.

However, he had thirty of them. With that being the case, he could make something work out with a little ingenuity.

『For now, the insects will find the enemy. Bone Monkey and four others can guard me inside the house. The others –』

Vandalieu decided to turn the tables on Orbie and the other hunters first. He had wanted to hear about various things from Darcia, including information about his father, but it would be problematic if the hunters arrived while he was doing that. So he would catch them first before listening to what Darcia had to say.

Orbie continued through the forest, leading two of his hunter companions with whom he had been drinking yesterday. No matter how elite the holy knights were, they wouldn't be able to find the hiding place the Dark Elf had built right away.

They would definitely be able to catch the baby first. He was sure of it.

「Oi, I'll just make it clear that –」

「I know. I don’t plan on turning into bear or wolf food before we get rich.」

Being professional hunters, they were confident. This forest wasn’t some Devil’s Nest where monsters were prevalent, but it was inhabited by dangerous beasts such as bears and wolves, and even some weak monsters like Goblins also lived here.

Being cautious on the lookout for threats like these, they continued making their way through the forest.

「This is strange. Aren’t these the footsteps of a big monkey? And the ones here are... a bear?」

Fortunately, their caution had allowed them to spot the footsteps left by the Undead as they made their way back from Evbejia.

「You think so? Aren’t they a bit shallow for the footsteps of a monkey and a bear?」

However, in Orbie’s eyes, the footsteps looked too shallow. Footsteps left in the earth would be deeper the heavier its owner was, but these footsteps appeared to belong to a very light creature.

「The shape is weird, too. They look a bit small and the bear’s ones are missing some toes.」

The reason they appeared that way is because the creature who had produced them was an Undead made only of bones; its body weight was less than half that of when it was alive, it was missing the pad of its paw and several of its digits had been broken off.

The adventurers would take precautions if they were facing this strange monster as their main enemy, but –

「I’m sure they just look like that because there are multiple beasts’ footprints overlapping each other.」

Orbie and his companions had only experienced hunting monsters from time to time to earn a little extra money, so they didn’t think much of it. The knowledge that this forest didn’t have many monsters helped them push the footprints from their minds, thinking it was just their imagination.

「We're almost there. There's a cave dug out in a small cliff; that was her hiding place.」

「Alright, let's go catch that baby while it's still alive.」

And so Orbie and his companions reached Darcia's home.

The trees were sparse in front of the house, with small spaces in between them. There were traces of fire that had been used for cooking and other signs that someone had been living here.

「Hmm? There are quite a lot of things lying around.」

As the hunters looked around, they saw many tracks that looked as if they had been dug up, as well as ivy and animal bones scattered around.

「Shit, let's go inside.」

Clicking his tongue, Orbie opened the door to check whether the baby was still here.

『Uoooon~』

At that moment, the earth rose up with a resentful-sounding groan.

「W-what is this?! A golem?!」

「Yeah, it's an Earth Golem!」

The Earth Golem with a body made of dirt that had been lying in wait was now standing up.

「Hyiih?! There are Undead beneath the Golem!」

Underneath its body were the Undead skeletons of a wolf and a bear.

「R-run!」

「Where?! We're surrounded!」

Orbie and his companions who had approached the door were now surrounded by the Golem and Undead.

The weapons available to them were their short swords and their bows and arrows. Even if the rank of the Golems and Undead were the lowest possible, these were the worst weapons to fight them with.

「Uwah?!」

「A s-snake! No, it's ivy, the ivy is moving!」

And then the ivy on the ground that should have been dead began moving like a snake and winding itself around the hunters.

「Sh-shit! Let go, let go of me!」

Even as they drew their short swords to try and cut the ivy, the Golem and Undead pressed onto them and various pots began flying through the air and throwing themselves at the hunters' heads.

They couldn't escape. Orbie and his companions were captured alive.

『I guess it went well.』

Seeing the hunters bound by the Undead ivy, unable to speak, Vandalieu gave a sigh of relief.

He had spirits inhabit the ground outside the house to create an Earth Golem and then buried the Undead beneath it. The Undead and the Golem didn't breathe, and they simply smelled of dirt like the rest of the forest, so the hunters couldn't notice them if they were completely still.

The same applied to the ivy and pots. They wouldn't suspect that the discarded items scattered around the ground would turn out to be Undead.

『Well then, I want to hear what these guys have to say –』

Orbie and his companions opened their eyes wide in shock at the sight of Vandalieu riding on Bone Monkey's back, looking down at them. They had never imagined that the baby they had been planning to capture would be commanding Undead at this age.

This was the difference between Vandalieu and the High Priest Gordan, who reprimanded his subordinates.

『But first, I have to establish a way to have a conversation.』

Vandalieu, who was still only able to mumble unintelligible sounds that sounded like「auau~」couldn't converse with the hunters.

And so Vandalieu created a Sand Golem out of the gravel and sand.

『Mogomoga~!』

The hunters began making fearful noises at the sight of the human-sized golem rising up from the gravel and sand. They were likely assuming that they were about to be killed.

However, the Sand Golem did not raise its heavy fist above their heads; parts of it instead crumbled off in front of them to form words in sand on its body.

【Stop making so much noise, be quiet. Answer my questions.】

『Nice, it worked.』

He had thought that if it was possible to make turn part of Evbejia's outer wall into a Golem to change its shape, it would be possible to change the shape of the Sand Golem to form letters. This idea seemed to be a great success.

Well, he had to supply the Golem with a considerable amount of Mana, which took its toll on his mental endurance.

But the problem was whether the hunters would be able to read Japanese characters.

In order to test this, he unbound the hunters' mouths, who had now fallen quiet.

「... W-what do you want to know, you can ask whatever you want. But in exchange, spare our lives...」

「Y-yeah, we'll tell you anything we know.」

「We'll keep quiet about this place. So please let us go.」

And then they began pleading for their lives. It seemed that in Lambda, the spoken and written language was Japanese.

『That's convenient, but why is that the case? Now that I think about it, according to the knowledge Rodcorte shared with me, he summoned heroes from other worlds to Lambda in the past. Is it because of that?』

Well, he would figure that out when he had time later.

Vandalieu decided to question the hunters through writing and gather information from them. While they could read hiragana and katakana, it

seemed that they were mostly incapable of reading kanji (their initial pleading for their lives had been done by guessing the situation rather than being able to read Vandalieu's writing). Since this meant that Vandalieu would need to write more characters with the Sand Golem, it increased the amount of Mana he needed to spend and took a greater toll on him.

But not all of his questions would have favorable answers.

【What is a Job?】

「Huh? What, you want us to tell you our Jobs? We're hunters, of course.」

【What are Experience Points?】

「Eh...? Experience Points are Experience Points, right?」

【Who is Alda, the God of Law and Fate?】

「Ah, that's a god.」

What is a Job and what are Experience Points in Lambda? Vandalieu was asking simple questions, but the hunters were not giving helpful answers.

From the hunters' point of view, Vandalieu's questions were too simple. It was like asking on Earth,「What is air?」or「What is water?」Even so, if the hunters were educated and had enough vocabulary, they would be able to give useful answers, but Vandalieu understood that he couldn't expect this from these hunters.

『I'll ask Mom about stuff like that later.』

Darcia would answer any of Vandalieu's questions with an easy-to-understand explanation. After all, she was a mother raising her child.

【Tell me about Baronet Bestero and his knights.】

Vandalieu decided to change gears and ask information that they would know about the other enemies.

「The feudal lord who took over about ten years ago is a person with a lot of ambition. He doesn't have any other special characteristics; he's your typical nobleman. I haven't heard about anything that makes him different from the other nobles.」

「There are five knights; he uses them as soldiers as they're stronger than the rest of us. Though it seems they undergo training as well.」

「Th-that's why they're not that strong. In fact, why don't we get rid of them together? If we team up with you it'll be simple.」

Vandalieu decided to ignore that last part. It seemed that Baronet Bestero did not have many pawns and they were apparently not particularly skilled. This area was likely considered a peaceful region by its population.

At least, its population considered it as such.

【Just answer my questions. Tell me everything you know about High Priest Gordan and his holy knights.】

「The high priest and his holy knights are never in the town. They came to the town about half a month ago with wanted posters featuring a Dhampir and the witch that birthed it... that is to say, you and your honorable mother... Err, he's a clergyman who is famous as a Vampire-slayer, and with the holy knights, they're like a collection of elite individuals.」

「Yeah, for a clergyman, he's a ridiculously strong freak who used that strength to climb all the way to the position of High Priest. He's already killed multiple Vampire and their subordinates... Vampire-samas and their dedicated subordinates. He has already dealt with Vampire-samas that had lived for hundreds of years, and rumors have it that he's comparable to a B-class adventurer.」

「B-but if you team up with us, we're familiar with the terrain so outwitting him will be easy. See, so please make us your subordinates!」

『I see. That priest is a capable Vampire-hunter, huh... Next I want to know about the Five-colored Blades, but before that... This is a good time, so let's have a meal first.』

He had the Undead bring one of the three male hunters forward.

「W-what is this? You're making me your subordinate? We'll definitely be helpful to you, our skills with a bow are well-known around Evbejia... Hyiih! We'll really be helpful, we'll do anything for you, so please spare me!」

Bone Monkey had grabbed a hold of the man's head so that he cannot move his neck. He was begging for his life in a high-pitched voice, but Vandalieu wasn't listening.

His fangs plunged into the man's neck.

「Kyaaaah!」

「Johann!」

Ignoring the screams of the man called Johann and the other hunters, he greedily devoured the blood, filling his throat with it.

『It feels greasier than rabbit's blood, and it tastes a bit saltier as well.』

Of course, he would have preferred to be held by Darcia and drink her milk. But this was his first meal of the day, so he simply continued drinking Johann's blood until his screaming stopped and he fell limp.

『Fu... Ah, Bone Monkey, give my back a little pat. Yeah, right there... *Burp*~』

As Vandalieu burped, he showed the now deathly-pale body of Johann to the other hunters.

And then he directs words of sand at them once more.

【Didn't I tell you to just answer my questions?】

Seeing the dead Johann whose blood had been completely consumed and Vandalieu's expression that had not changed in the slightest after killing him, Orbie and the other remaining hunter simply nodded their heads.

They were facing a mere baby, but this baby had no childish naivety or pity. They finally realized that Vandalieu would not hesitate to kill them if they showed the slightest sign of disobedience.

【Now then, what do you know about the Five-colored blades and Heinz, the Blue-flame Sword?】

From that point, his interrogation of Orbie and the other hunter proceeded smoothly. The example he had made of Johann was incredibly terrifying.

The Five-colored Blades were a group of five adventurers and Heinz was its leader, a highly successful B-class adventurer even though he was still in his

teenage years.

The other members were C-class, so they were a group of capable individuals.

『As I thought, he and High Priest Gordan are enemies I can't defeat in my current state.』

The next thing he asked them about was the geography of this region – the area surrounding Baronet Bestero's territory and the places that High Priest Gordan and his knights would be searching right now.

The answers to these questions were quite helpful. He had asked the animal spirits inhabiting Bone Monkey and the other Undead as well, but he hadn't managed to get a good idea of the situation from them.

The spirits were more talkative than they had been yesterday, but they were originally animals and insects, after all. They didn't have the sense of distance and direction that a human could use as a reference.

There was no problem when they guided him around, but trying to make a map out of their information inevitably resulted in chaos.

『Well then, I should stock up on food and water while I have the chance.』

High Priest Gordan was searching a different place right now, but this forest was not that large. They would be able to search the whole forest within ten days.

With that said, trying to make a hasty escape would be a poor choice.

Due to the mismatched eye colors that Vandalieu possessed as a special Dhampir characteristic, he couldn't conceal his true nature so he couldn't approach any areas inhabited by humans. However, without somewhere safe to hide like the house in the cave, living outdoors would be too dangerous.

The reason for that being –

『I'm only six months old, so I need a lot of sleep. In fact, I'm quite sleepy right now.』

Despite the fact that one of his parents was a Vampire, no matter how high his attribute point values were, no matter how many skills he had acquired, he was still a baby. Though it was considerably better than when he was only a

month old, he was still frequently sleepy and found it difficult to stay up for long periods of time.

He could resist the effects of sleep deprivation with his Status Effect Resistance skill, but that would have negative effects on his development. Darcia wouldn't want that.

Therefore, Vandalieu decided to stay hidden until High Priest Gordan gave up the search. He had never imagined that he would be living a hikikomori's lifestyle at six months of age, but this was necessary to survive.

「O-oi, what's wrong? Don't you have anything more to ask?」

「If that's the case, let us go!」

Orbie and the other hunter began to make some noise, but their role as information sources had already been fulfilled. The ivy covered their mouths once more.

「W-wait! Please, let us go! I have a muguuh–」

I have a – what? A fiancé? A wife? A young daughter? An aging mother? Considering that he sold out a mother with a young son, what was he trying to say?

Even if he had something, it made no difference to the roles the hunters were to play.

Vandalieu informed them of this through sand letters.

【You are merely food for me.】

Two muffled screams came from the hunters.

Once upon a time, there were two great gods in this world.

The great black god, Diachmell.

The great white god, Arazan.

The two gods fought each other. Nobody knew which of them was good and which of them was evil. However, nothing existed but the two of them, so they fought each other.

It seemed that the conflict between the two gods would go on forever, but in

the end, Diachmell and Arazan defeated each other simultaneously.

The great black and white gods lay on top of each other and new gods were born from their shells.

Vida, the goddess of life and love.

Alda, the god of light and law.

Zantark, the war-god of fire and destruction.

Peria, the goddess of water and knowledge.

Shizarion, the god of wind and art.

Botin, mother of the earth and goddess of craftsmanship.

Ricklent, the genie of time and magic.

Zuruwarn, the god of space and creation.

These eight gods of the elements as well as the dragon-emperor god Marduke, the giant god Zeno and the beast-god Ganpaplio were known as the eleven founding gods.

These eleven gods did not use their power to fight each other like the great gods that came before them; they worked together and created the planet Lambda.

The eight gods of the elements created humans, modeled after themselves, and began to teaching and guiding them as their followers.

The dragon-emperor god Marduke created dragons, and the giant god Zeno created giants as their followers.

To provide food for them, the beast-god Ganpaplio birthed countless birds and wild animals and released fish into the seas.

The war-god Zantark and the goddess Botin gave birth to the Dwarf race, while the goddess Peria and Shizarion gave birth to the Elves. “People[1]” became a general term that applied to all sentient races, and the creatures that had been known as people up until that point came to be known as humans.[1]

The world created by these events was peaceful. The people believed in their

gods, the dragons and giants were wise; there was plenty of wildlife in the mountains for them to eat without fighting over territory and there were bountiful blessings in the sea.

However, the peace was shattered by the appearance of the Demon King Guduranis from the abyss beyond the stars.

After descending upon Lambda, Guduranis began a war to take over the world using the evil gods that were his servants.

The Demon King's tainted Mana gave birth to monsters such as Orcs and Goblins that had never existed in Lambda before, and the Demon King used them to fight the other gods.

Though the people of Lambda had polished their fighting skills for competition and hunting the wildlife that sustained them, they were thrown into chaos as they had never experienced a fight to the death and the gods were driven into a corner. The war-god Zantark, the dragon-emperor god Marduke, the giant god Zeno and the others fought bravely with their followers and the genie Ricklent bestowed magic upon the humans and gave them commands, but they could not turn the tides of the battle. The beast-god Ganpaplio put up a good fight, but was eventually destroyed.

To fight the Demon King's forces, Zuruwarn, the god of space and creation, summoned seven heroes from other worlds.

The seven heroes taught the people techniques for fighting, gave them the knowledge to make great weapons and fought bravely at the frontlines themselves.

And so, through battle after battle, the Demon King was finally destroyed and sealed away; not even a single piece of his body remained. The evil gods that were his subordinates lost their powers; some were destroyed and others were sealed away into a death-like state.

However, the final result was difficult to call a victory.

The war-god Zantark was cursed by the evil gods and fell into darkness; Peria sank into the depths of the oceans and Shizarion returned to the wind. Botia was sealed deep within the earth while Ricklent and Zuruwan entered a deep

sleep to regain their power.

Marduke was torn to pieces and Zeno's heart was destroyed. Their followers' powers weakened; the number of dragons grew fewer and the weaker drakes increased in number.[2] The giants became monsters that worshipped evil gods.

Finally, there were only three heroes left and the population of the people had decreased to the point that even if the Elves and the Dwarves joined the remaining humans, who had a considerable population before the conflict, they were barely able to maintain a single city.

The remaining population was not enough to sustain civilization and culture. Even after the Demon King was defeated, the surface of Lambda was overrun by monsters that had been corrupted by his Mana during the conflict with his forces and Devil's Nests existed all over the place. The surviving monsters began to breed and multiplying endlessly.

Alda, one of the two gods who still had power left, chose to work with the heroes to guide the surviving people. However, the goddess Vida believed that creating new races of people and having them join the other races would be a faster way to restore Lambda.

Vida was the goddess of life and love. Her powers were more suited to creating new races than for battle.

First, she mated with the Sun Giant Talos, who had retained his noble spirit and virtues without becoming a monster. She gave birth to a race of Titans with robust, large bodies that could barely fit in human towns.

Next, she mated with Tiamat, the most powerful of the surviving dragons that had been Marduke's followers, and gave birth to a race of Drakonids, humans with the power and horns of a dragon.

And then, with the kings of the beasts that had followed Ganpaplio, she gave birth to a great variety of beast-people, and with the sea-god Tristan, who had been Peria's right-hand man, she gave birth to Mermen.

Following that, she mated with an Elf that had been in her service at that time, giving birth to the Dark Elves, who had the same Mana that Elves did while also possessing outstanding physical prowess.

Alda criticized the goddess's actions, saying that they would only plunge the already-ruined world into further chaos. As the god of law, Alda could not stand idly by as Vida gave birth to new races, one after another.

But Vida believed that her actions were correct, so they could never come to an agreement in their discussions.

Finally, Vida mated with monsters to give birth to Lamia, Scylla, Arachne, Centaurs, Harpies, Devils and other monster races.

And then she infused the power of the life attribute into one of the heroes who had fallen in the battle with the Demon King, Zakkart, to turn him into an Undead. She mated with him to give birth to Vampires.

The original Vampires had powers that rivalled that of gods in every aspect. And they were able to share this power with the other races. By giving their blood to others, they could turn them into Vampires.

But Alda was outraged at the fact that Vida had mated with monsters and given birth to Vampires.

With the three remaining heroes, he set out to exterminate Vida, who had given birth to a race that would overthrow the balance of the the world, and the race that she had given birth to.

Of course, to protect the new race of her children, Vida and the revived hero Zakkart fought against Alda and his followers. However, by the smallest of differences, she was defeated and was dealt a deep blow, fell from her position as a god and disappeared into the Devil's Nests with the hero Zakkart.

Alda was victorious, but he did not have the strength to eliminate the remaining Vampires. In addition, the goddess of the life attribute had now disappeared, and Alda now had to take up her role despite the fact that his own body was now exhausted.

Alda now called himself the god of light, law and life, and his followers praised him as the God of Law and Fate. But even 100,000 years after the battle with Vida, the world was still in a state of chaos.

『This is the legend of the origins of Lambda.』(Darcia)

『Thanks, Mom. That was very helpful.』(Vandalieu)

After Vandalieu finished preparing to hide in the house, he asked Darcia, whose spirit was residing inside the bone fragment, about how the world of Lambda came into existence.

He had continued creating Golems from the earth and rock of the cave, instructing them to stand guard there. In order to prevent the house from caving in, he had the Golems made from the earth and rock from deeper within the cave to move towards the entrance, while digging the cave deeper towards the back. And then he released the spirits from the Golems so that they sealed the entrance.

He could change the Golems' shapes as long as he had Mana, so he had thought that he would be able to use them for construction, and he was right.

He had left broken furniture and vases when he sealed the entrance in order to make it appear as if the cave had collapsed. But he was just praying that High Priest Gordan wouldn't give an order like,「Dig out the cave until you find that Dhampir's corpse!」

He had already filled up the cave over fifty meters from the entrance while expanding it deeper, something that would normally be impossible without ordering some large-scale construction or hiring an earth-attribute mage.

He had left a fist-sized hole to allow air to pass through, so there was no problem there. He didn't need any lighting, thanks to his Dark Vision skill.

Vandalieu was prepared for his new underground lifestyle.

And now he was talking to Darcia to pass the time.

『So this is Mirg, a country in the northwest part of the Bahn Gaia continent that's a part of the Amid Empire. The Empire and its countries worship Alda, the God of Law and Fate, as the official religion. No wonder it's so dangerous.』

Alda was a god who had fought Vida over the races she had given birth to, saying that they would throw the world's balance out of order. It was no wonder that a half-Vampire would be subject to persecution... no, extermination.

The Amid Empire and the Adventurers' Guilds in its countries, where the Church of Alda had a strong influence, had extermination requests openly on display. Incidentally, the part used as proof of extermination... The proof of extermination that was required was a deep crimson eyeball.

It made sense to hide in the forest in such a situation.

It seemed that Dark Elves like Darcia, as well as beast-people, Drakonids and the other races that Vida had given birth to following the battle with the Demon King were also targets of persecution.

In the Amid Empire and its countries, only humans, Elves and Dwarves were accepted as "people"; Titans, Dark Elves and beast-people were discriminated against as "demi-humans". The most conspicuous discriminatory behaviour was that "people" were only used as slaves if they were criminals, while there were no restrictions on the buying, selling, ownership and use of "demi-human" slaves.

Including Vampires, the races that Vida had given birth to by mating with monsters were, of course, simply exterminated as monsters. Though the reality was that for every Vampire and Lamia that the adventurers and soldiers of the Amid Empire killed, there was a dead adventurer or soldier killed in retaliation, and even civilians suffered casualties.

The followers of Alda claimed that this was proof that they were evil, that their god was right. Meanwhile, Vida's followers believed that the reason they had become monsters that harmed humans was because they had lost the guidance of the goddess. In other words, it was all Alda's fault. This argument had apparently continued for many tens of thousands of years.

『Next, tell me about my father, Vampires and Dhampirs.』(Vandalieu)

『Alright. But it's time for your afternoon nap, so I'll continue when you wake up.』(Darcia)

『Okay~』(Vandalieu)

『You have acquired the Golem Creation skill!』

- Name: Vandalieu

- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- Age: 0.5 years old
- Title: None
- Job: Ordinary person
- Level: 0
- Job history: None
- Attributes:
  - Vitality: 18
  - Mana: 100,000,600
  - Strength: 27
  - Agility: 2
  - Stamina: 33
  - Intelligence: 25
- Passive skills:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 2
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 1
- Active skills:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 1
  - Surpass Limits: Level 2
  - Golem Transmutation: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Curses
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Notes

1. The actual terms for these are “humans” and “mankind” respectfully, but

having the term “humans” include Elves and Dwarves will be confusing so I’ve made this adjustment.

2. This term is actually just “dragon” as well, but with different kanji (that means the same thing and is read the same way). I’m translating 龍 to dragon and 竜 to drake to differentiate.

Chapter 4: Love for the sun

The Goblin collapsed as its skull was caved in with a dull noise.

「Hmph. Are Goblins the only enemies that are going to come out?」

The High Priest of Alda, the God of Law and Fate, hurled abuse at the Goblins as he beat them to death with his favorite mace.

「High Priest Gordan, is it not likely that the Dhampir either escaped with his Vampire father or was buried alive when that cave collapsed?」

So said one of the holy knights under his command, but Gordan was not satisfied.

Bormack Gordan was originally a commoner, but he was now a great man who had climbed to the position of High Priest by his thirties using his faith, physical strength and his magic of the life and light attributes.

Now he had a burning obsession with exterminating Vampires, Lamias, Scylla and the other monsters that Vida had given birth to.

『Alda, the God of Law and Fate is the only one with authority in the world of Lambda and he has determined that the mere existence of these creatures is evil. It is our duty as his followers to destroy them!』

Like the other zealous followers of Alda, Gordan earnestly believed this with no doubts. He felt no shame in having killed the Dark Elf or in his current task of hunting down her Dhampir son; he was proud, believing that his actions were those of justice.

For that reason, he had been conducting a very thorough search of this small forest to find the Dhampir, but the search had run into problems.

Unable to contact the hunters who had sold out the Dark Elf to lead them through the forest, he had hired other hunters and joined forces with the feudal lord’s knights, but they had only encountered wild animals like wolves, bears and boars and the occasional weak monsters like Goblins that came out to

attack them.

Five days after they had began their search, they discovered a cave that someone appeared to have been living in that had collapsed, but they hadn't been able to find the Dhampir's corpse.

Gordan had thought to dig out the whole cave, but had no choice but to give up on that idea because of the risk of it collapsing on top of them. If they had a construction specialist or a Dwarf miner at hand, it would be a different story, but there was no demand for a construction specialist in this area right now, so they were unable to hire such a person.

The reason they continued searching the forest for two more months despite this was that the hunter that had sold out the Dark Elf and two of his friends had simply gone missing after setting out to hunt the Dhampir.

Three hunters who were all familiar with the geography of this area had all gone missing. On top of that, their corpses still hadn't been found.

Gordan's intuition told him that this was not the result of some coincidence or unfortunate accident, but something had taken revenge on them.

『The Dhampir in question is apparently still a baby, but it's not out of the question. There was a reported incident in the past where a three-year-old Dhampir slaughtered a party of D-class adventurers.』

Giving up here would mean allowing evil to take root and grow in the future. He had to hunt the Dhampir down and turn him into ash.

「High Priest Gordan, it is impossible for us to make our search of the forest any more detailed than we have already done.」

「Baronet Bestero has withdrawn his knights already as well.」

However, not everyone shared Gordan's zeal or saw the impending threat that he did. The feudal lord, Baronet Bestero, had dispatched five knights and half of his soldiers to help with the search, but now he grimly refused to offer any help at all.

He could not allow the soldiers and knights that were needed to uphold public order to spend too long searching the forest.

In fact, he criticized the continuation of the search, asking,「Is there no other work that the High Priest could be doing for the people?」

「... I know that the inhabitants of Evbejia have expressed their discontent.」

This forest was an important source of resources for the people of Evbejia and the High Priest had told them,「You cannot enter the forest while we are searching for the Dhampir, as it is too dangerous.」It was only natural that the people of Evbejia were unhappy about being unable to enter the forest for two whole months.

「No, it is not only the people. The adventurers are not happy either. Well, they are F-class and E-class adventurers of no importance.」

「They are taking their complaints to the Guild, saying that they are having their work taken away from them.」

The monsters such as Goblins that the adventurers received payment to exterminate had heavily decreased in population during Gordan's search of the forest. Of course, this resulted in a sharp drop in the income of those adventurers.

In addition, Evbejia was a central point of commerce between villages and towns so there were many merchants and wealthy travelers requesting escorts, but as the adventurers accepted those requests, there were less adventurers operating inside Evbejia itself. Naturally, the Adventurers' Guild was not pleased by this.

Baronet Bestero didn't approve of the number of adventurers decreasing either. High Priest Gordan and his men were keeping the population of Goblins in check for now, but they were not permanent residents of this town. After they left, he had no way of knowing if enough adventurers would return to control the population of Goblins, who reproduced very quickly.

「What are you saying we should do?! Surely you're not going to suggest we spare the Goblins that come and attack us!」

「Like I said, perhaps it is time to give up? My words are not those of the feudal lord, but there are plenty of other places that could benefit from our presence.」

「Muh...」

In reality, while they were spending their time here, the Vampires were moving in the shadows. Other monsters of Vida were also causing harm to the people.

Was it acceptable to continue spending time searching for this Dhampir with no leads to follow?

「We have no choice. We will leave Evbejia the day after tomorrow.」

The red evening sun shone on Gordan's bitter face.

He had a strong feeling that the Dhampir would be laughing at them in the nights to come.

That Dhampir, Vandalieu, spent the afternoon that High Priest Gordan left sunbathing to his heart's content.

「Sunlight... Love you...」

He proclaimed his love for the sunlight. He had recently become able to speak, though it was not completely coherent yet.

Living for that long underground had been harsh on him.

He had thought that it would be for one month at most, but Gordan and his men had persisted for two whole months and Vandalieu had spent all that time living in the dark, surrounded by earth and rocks.

He had used his death-attribute magic to prolong the lives of the two hunters, but they only lasted about half a month. After that, he had Bone Monkey and the other Undead to crush the wheat grains and dried meat that Darcia had left behind and soak it with water to make baby food for him to stave his hunger off with. When he could no longer stand that, he desperately looked for insects in the dirt to eat.

His search led to the discovery of a stream of underground water; he had thought the cave would flood and he would drown, but it ended up being a fortunate event. His water supply had fallen low and the discovery of this underground water had allowed him to clean his diapers.

Up until then, he had made a Golem out of the earth to change shape and dig

a hole, drop in used diapers and then bury them. Having run out of the ones that Darcia had made before, he had been forced to use diapers made from the clothes taken from the dead hunters, and even those were running out.

He could use death-attribute magic to sterilize himself, but he couldn't stand having soiled himself. As a person, that was not acceptable.

He had been living on earthworms and sap from tree roots for the past few days. Thanks to a new skill he had learned,【Danger Sense: Death】, he could find the ones that weren't fatally poisonous, but as he consumed them, for some reason, his Status Effect Resistance skill's level increased. There was likely something in the food he ate that was poisonous, though not enough to kill him.

『I don't ever want to have to live a life where I can consider catching a mole to be a miracle ever again.』

He firmly told himself that.

Vandalieu, being a Dhampir, could see in the dark just as well as he could in the middle of the day. But that didn't mean he didn't need sunlight. After all, he was half-Dark Elf.

He had been worried that he was going to die of vitamin deficiency-related diseases.

『High Priest Gordan, adventurers of the Five-colored Blades Party, please be well.』

Vandalieu earnestly prayed for the well-being of High Priest Gordan and his men, who had left Evbejia and Baronet Bestero today, and the『Five-colored Blades』that had left two months ago.

『Please don't die until I kill you.』

He earnestly prayed for them to not be killed by someone else or die by accident or illness.

『The limit for a human to be in the dark is around ninety hours? If you're trapped in darkness for that long, apparently it causes some mental problems, but I seem to have endured it surprisingly well.』

His sunbathing had calmed him down. Relieved that his mental condition had not changed over the past two months, he had the Undead set traps to catch rabbits and other small animals.

When he checked his status, a skill with an ominous-sounding name called Mental Corruption had been upgraded all the way up until level 10; was this because he had sworn to take revenge? Well, it also seemed to serve as a mental stability skill, so he didn't think much of it.

As for his Death-Attribute Charm skill, he thought it was a skill that he had used in Origin. There were several occasions when the elderly researchers in Origin that had treated him as a guinea pig died of strokes, became spirits and then completely changed their personalities and apologized to him in tears.

He hadn't thought badly of them for it; if it weren't for his conversations with the spirits in Origin, his mind would have crumbled long before his body died.

However, when Orbie and his companions had approached him as spirits after they died, he had felt only disgust for them.

Vandalieu did not want to let them pass on peacefully, so he had forced them to inhabit a stone pillar that was supporting the cave, and they were still there now.

『For now, I guess I have to stay quiet and hidden until I grow a bit bigger.』

Over the past two months, Vandalieu had grown teeth other than his fangs. He was now also able to walk, though with poor balance due to the relatively large size of his head.

But he still needed to sleep for long hours and wasn't able to run. He was capable of only an unsteady waddle, so even if he spent a whole day walking he wouldn't cover much distance.

If he wanted to leave this place, he still needed more time to either grow up or make preparations.

Because of that, he had to postpone his revenge on Baronet Bestero, his knights and the people of Evbejia.

He had already thought of how he was going to do it and had the confidence

that he could pull it off, so he was feeling impatient, but it was something that he had to endure.

『It's already winter, huh. Now that I think about it, I still haven't asked Mom about this world's history. But before that... can I catch some prey whose blood I can drink?』

Though he had finally come outside, it seemed that he would die of starvation in the cold of winter. Vandalieu let out a sigh at the harshness of this world.

In Lambda, Vampires were divided into four different categories.

First, there was the Vampire born between Vida and the Undead hero Zakkard, who had long since perished and had his name forgotten, the【True Ancestor.】

The ones who had directly received the blessing from the True Ancestor or those who were his direct descendants were known as【Pure-Breeds.】

Those descended from the Pure-Breeds with Vampire blood that had thinned over the generations were known as the【Noble-born.】

And finally, those given the blood by the Pure-Breeds and Noble-born and taken as servants did not inherit the Vampires' magical abilities such as their charming gaze; they inherited only their physical abilities such as their superhuman strength and regenerative capabilities. They were known as the【Subordinates.】

Generally, the closer a Vampire was related to the True Ancestor, the stronger their powers were. But Vampires had considerable individual differences, so some Subordinates who were even more powerful than Noble-born Vampires also existed.

The common features among all Vampires were their weakness to sunlight and the anti-Undead life-attribute magic taught among the followers of Alda. The other feature was the need to drink blood to sustain themselves.

Vandalieu's father was a『Pure-Breed』's『Subordinate.』He wasn't even one of the exceptional ones that were stronger than the Noble-born; he was simply a normal human who had been turned into a Subordinate. His name was Valen. He had originally been a thug living in the slums.

The only thing that was not ordinary about Valen was his resistance against the sun. He had been even more resistant to the sun than most humans, so his Pure-Breed master valued him highly. He had ordered Valen to carry out various tasks and gather information among the people.

That was when he met Darcia.

Just like in old love stories, the two of them had fallen in love at first sight.

However, in the modern age, Vampires were also divided into two factions. There were the conservatives who continued to believe in Vida, who had been defeated by Alda, and the extremists who had converted to follow evil gods. The latter overwhelmingly outnumbered the former.

If Valen's master had belonged to the conservatives, there wouldn't have been any problems with the love between him and Darcia. But as an extremist, he was strongly opposed to the dilution of the Vampire blood with that of other races, even if that race was another race created by Vida.

Making use of his special trait that allowed him to use his powers even during the day, he eloped with the pregnant Darcia, but in the end, he fought with his pursuers to protect his unborn son.

And so Darcia, who managed to escape to this forest, gave her son half of his father's name and half of her own name.[1]

『So, that's why I'm named Vandalieu.』(Vandalieu)

『That's right. Do you like it?』(Darcia)

『Yes, I like it. It's a very good name.』(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu, who for the first time in a while was able to eat something other than insects and tree root sap, listened to her story about his father that she had already told him dozens of times.

『That's good. I'm sure your father would be happy, too. We'd agreed that we'd name you Vandalieu if you were a boy and Varcia if you were a girl. Err, so, where was I? Ah yes, I was telling you about the Vampires.』(Darcia)

With a smile, Darcia began to repeat the story that she had just finished telling. Her memory was prone to quick failure.

After the death of her body, her spirit was deteriorating as it spent time in this world. There were cases where spirits would retain their personalities even after a hundred years if they were tenacious or harbored strong hatred and strength of will, but she felt regrets about the fact that she had been reunited with Vandalieu as she was about to pass on.

Even though she was inhabiting a piece of her own remains, her spirit could not recover.

『... Even so, if I keep supplying her with Mana, she'll last a hundred years.』

As he listened to Darcia talk, he decided to find a way to make her a new body within that time.

Despite the few problems that she was having with her memory, Darcia could still clearly remember things from when she was alive, so she told Vandalieu everything she knew.

Lambda's time and calendar were the same as Earth's, with twenty-four hours in a day, twelve months of 360 days in a year.[2]

The reason Japanese was spoken was because it had spread from the heroes who had spoken Japanese in their original birthplaces after they survived the battle with the Demon King. Currently, only common Japanese terms were used and commoners could only read hiragana and katakana. The ability to read kanji was limited to nobles and merchants who had received a higher degree of education.

Experience Points were a quantification of the life experiences that a person had been through. The people of Lambda increased their Experience Points little by little as they lived their lives. Of course, defeating monsters would grant Experience Points. However, the amount of Experience Points gained through certain experiences depended on one's Job.

Jobs were apparently the『Blessings of the Gods』that existed since before the Demon King appeared. The people were feeble when compared to gods, so they were given Jobs in the hope that one day they would grow to be able to stand alongside the gods.

Jobs determined attribute points and adjusted how new skills were acquired,

and if a Job's level was raised to 100, one could change Jobs.

For example, if someone reached level 100 as an apprentice warrior, he could change Jobs to a warrior.

As well as than warriors and mages, there were farmers, craftsmen and the like. People with Jobs like warrior and mage would gain most experience from defeating monsters and enemies in battle, while farmers would gain most experience by doing everyday farm work or doing agriculture research and craftsmen would do so by crafting things.

『Well, it would be strange for someone with a warrior Job to gain a lot of experience by doing farm work. It would also be strange for a craftsman's skill at crafting things to increase by defeating monsters.』

In other words, it was a system to encourage warriors to be warriors and farmers to be farmers; everyone should work hard in their specialized fields.

Incidentally, monsters had no Jobs but had levels, and apparently evolved or transformed into a higher-rank monster upon reaching level 100.

Therefore, it had been possible for Vandalieu's father, Valen, to survive long enough and evolve from a Subordinate to a higher-rank monster. If he had managed to do so, he might have survived.

『Now I know just how bad the curses that Rodcorte gave me are, the ones that prevent me from gaining existing Jobs and gaining Experience Points for myself.』

Cannot learn existing Jobs... In other words, the curse prevented him from attaining a Job whose existence was already known, so it was troublesome. If he didn't discover some new, unknown Job, he would forever be Jobless.

The curse that prevented him from gaining Experience Points on his own was likely even more serious. While others could steadily increased their levels, no matter how hard Vandalieu worked to train himself or study, he wouldn't gain even a single point of Experience.

『Eight months have actually passed since I was born. I've gone through much harder experiences than the typical infant; I've trained myself in magic, used it in practice and finally even captured Orbie and those other hunters, but I

haven’t leveled up.』

At this rate, he would reach adulthood and still be level 0. Being a Dhampir, his attribute points were high, but it would still be impossible for him to work as an adventurer and a soldier.

With that said, it would also be difficult for him to work as an industrial worker like farmer or craftsman.

With no Job, he would not have any adjustments for how he would acquire new skills. In other words, he would have to work several times harder than regular craftsmen to compete with them.

In addition, Vandalieu was aware that he had poor communication skills.

He had no talent for communicating with people; he had been born with anxiety problems.

『The more I think about it, the more I get the feeling that I’ve been cornered in this life... I’ll stop thinking about it, then.』

Let’s go to sleep. They say that sleeping children grow up well.

Vandalieu had Bone Monkey put out the fire that he had started by making Wood Golems out of two pieces of firewood and having them rub against each other. Wrapped in furs, he went to sleep, leaving the other Undead to keep watch over him.

He drifted off, thinking that the lullaby that Darcia’s spirit was singing to him sounded nice, but wishing he could feel her warmth.

Incidentally, Darcia didn’t know of any Dhampirs other than Vandalieu and Dhampirs themselves were very rare. Therefore, she didn’t know anything about Dhampirs and he had been unable to ask her about them.

- Name: Vandalieu
- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- Age: 8 months old
- Title: None
- Job: Ordinary person
- Level: 0

- Job history: None
- Attributes:
  - Vitality: 21
  - Mana: 100,001,200
  - Strength: 31
  - Agility: 4
  - Stamina: 30
  - Intelligence: 27
- Passive skills:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 1
- Active skills:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Surpass Limits: Level 2
  - Golem Transmutation: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- Curses
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Notes

1. Valen is ヴァレン/Varen, Darcia is ダルシア/Darushia, and Vandalieu is ヴァンダルー/Vandaru. Vandalieu's name in Japanese is a combination of the first and last syllables of Valen's name and the first two syllables of Darcia's name.

2. Yes, it says 360, not 365. ¯_(ツ)_/¯

Chapter 5: An idea - If I can't get stronger, then those around me should get stronger instead.

『Time for training.』

Vandalieu told this to his undead servants after making them line up in front of the cave.

Because of Rodcorte's curse, Vandalieu couldn't level up or change Jobs, thus making it impossible for him to become stronger on his own. So he tried to change his way of thinking and thought:『If I can't become stronger, then I'll just make my servants stronger.』

His reasoning was that if the undead following him were stronger, he could become capable of doing a wider range of things.

『Going to the town with them might be difficult, but Mom did say that there were some adventurers that had Jobs in which monsters did their bidding, like Tamers, Lesser Mages and Summoners, so it'll work out somehow.』

In the future, he wanted them to have enough strength to fight monsters easily, but for now, if they could carry him and run with the same speed they had when were alive, it would be enough to get out of this forest and go on a journey.

『They can't even defeat wild wolves and bear as they are now, let alone monsters. Just the other day, my Bone Goblin was broken by a living Goblin.』

The Undead that he had recently created were all very weak. Well, that was to be expected since he had a group of level 1 Undead. Well then, why didn't he just create stronger Undead? That reason was that he didn't know how to make Undead above level 2.

In his previous life when he had awoken to the Death Attribute, he hadn't

experienced turning anybody into Undead except himself.

『The researchers at that facility would have never given me the chance to gather servants. When I awoke, my control over both my body and my magic had already been taken away long ago. If they hadn't done that, I would have found out about the various things they were researching, like immortal soldiers. Well, that facility ended up failing anyway.』

He decided to change gears and check the fighting potential of his servants. Excluding the bugs that he used for gathering information, he lined up the Undead that looked like they could fight.

Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf, Bone Man, Bone Bear and Bone Bird. These were the ones that seemed suited the task. There were also Bone Boar, Bone Rabbit, Bone Goblin and so on. But the only ones who were complete, without missing or broken bones, were these five only.

『Well then, let us start the...training? Wait, what should I even make them do?』

Vandalieu, who suddenly realized that he had no idea about what to make Bone Monkey and the rest do, was at a loss for words.

Even amateurs had an idea about what do when training in order to become strong.

One would run to increase stamina and do strength training to increase muscle strength.

One would learn the moves of martial arts or unarmed combat and then have sparring sessions to get practical experience, and so on.

But what would be an effective, Experience-Point-earning training for the Undead lined up in front of Vandalieu?

Running? It would be pointless. They have no heart or lungs, and in the first place, what would be the point in the untiring Undead aiming to gain more stamina?

Strength training? No, still no use. They had no muscles in the first place, having bodies solely made up of bones, so what exactly would they be trying

“exercise” by doing push-ups and sit-ups?

Unarmed combat and martial arts? Vandalieu didn’t know any, so there was no way to teach them.

Sparring? The mental capabilities of the Undead were too low; if he had them fight, they would keep fighting until they were in pieces. It would just become a contest for one of them to crush the other.

To begin with, Vandalieu himself never received any real training for fighting. On Earth, he did a moderate amount of exercise, but it was on the level of practising judo in physical education class in middle and high school; certainly not something that could be used in a real battle. In Origin, well, nothing more needed to be said.

『Maybe I can ask the spirits of Orbie and those hunters… No, it’s impossible.』

Those guys knew how to use bows. And the Undead didn’t yet have enough mental capacity to use bows. There’d be no point in teaching them.

『Let’s check their status for now.』

Though Darcia had failed to check Vandaleiu’s status when she tried, he was easily able to check the status of the Undead. What had been impossible for even a parent to do was probably possible because the Undead were in a subordinate relationship with Vandalieu. Darcia didn’t know much about the Jobs that let one control monsters like Tamer or Lesser Mage, or the skills related to them, so there was no way to be sure why.

The status of the Undead was the following:

- Name: Bone Monkey/Bone Wolf/Bone Bear/Bone Man/Bone Bird
- Rank: 1
- Race: Living Bones
- Level: 0
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
- Active Skills:
    - None

『They're weak… Too weak.』

The Undead all belonged to the same race, regardless of what creature's bones had been used to make them, and they all had the same status.

Living Bones: Corpses that moved despite having become only skeletons after death. They had no other special characteristics.

They did move, but their movements were clumsy and their strength was far below that of an average adult male. As for agility, they weren't capable of running; their movement was slow. In addition, they couldn't use the abilities and skills that they had while they were alive.

The bones themselves were hard, but it would be easy to defeat them by attacking their joints.

They had almost no intelligence or instincts, and at most they would make practice dummies for apprentice adventurers.

In short, they were undead that couldn't be relied on in battle.

『So how am I supposed to make these guys stronger? I created them two months ago and they're still level 0. I guess that means that they haven't done anything that would gain them Experience Points as Living Bones. Then what *would* gain them Experience Points?』

Swordsmen would gain Experience Points through battles and training, farmers through farming and weaponsmiths through forging weapons. So what would Undead need to do to gain Experience Points? How did monsters normally gain Experience Points?

『By killing humans, maybe?』

It occurred to him that they would need to harm humans as monsters would do, but… Even if this would work, it would be difficult to do in practice.

Vandalieu would feel no remorse no matter how many of the people of Evbejia he killed, but if he killed people and then the Adventurers' Guild sent out a request for him to be exterminated, he would be forced back to his underground lifestyle.

He might be able to escape using the Undead as a decoy, but complete

skeletons of large animals like Bone Monkey's weren't easy to find. They weren't servants that he could use carelessly.

『Well, let's try killing things like rabbits and mice.』

Because Vandalieu had needed fresh blood as a replacement for his mother's milk, the Undead had captured animals like rabbits in traps, but kept them alive. Vandalieu would then bite them with their fangs to suck out their blood.

If the Undead killed the animals themselves, they might be able to gain Experience Points.

The next day, the Undead successfully captured a Goblin alive.

High Priest Gordan's expedition had decreased their numbers, but not completely wiped them out. There was a reason the Adventurers' Guild was always requesting the subjugation of Goblins.

「Gyiih~! Gyageeh!」

There was no way to know whether the Goblin was trying to be menacing or hurling insults at them in the Goblin language, but it was shouting in an annoying voice as the Undead held it down.

『So this is a Goblin…』

Vandalieu looked at it with excitement, though his face was expressionless. It really was a fantasy world, he thought.

Goblins. They were the typical small-fry monsters found in numerous fantasy works and it seemed like Lambda was no exception.

It was lower-rank monster that not only lived in Devil's Nests that were inhabited by monsters, but also lived in normal forest and even grasslands. Its body had dark green skin with a height reaching around the chest of a grown human and it had long ears like an elf, but its face was incomparably ugly.

Its strength was about the same of an average human, if not a little less, and it wasn't particularly agile. Its mental age was the same as a three-year-old, and it armed itself with a tree branch while using the hide of an animal to cover its body for protection.

It was at Rank 1 and stronger than a single of the Living Bones Undead, but if

alone, it was so weak it could be taken down by a farmer with a hoe. However, there was several superior types as well, so it was wise to be cautious.

But the thing Goblins were feared for the most were their reproductive capabilities and adaptability.

When breeding, Goblins birthed at between three to eight children at once. The newly born children became full adults in six months. The Goblins could keep on increasing in numbers regardless of if they were in the middle of a scorching desert or in the middle of winter.

『Oh and there's also the setting that often occurs in fantasy works where they kidnap human women. Though apparently it's not as common as Orcs doing that.』

He considered the knowledge Darcia had given him, but he thought it unlikely that the Goblin in front of him could do that. Simply because it didn't have the strength to.

『For now... all of you, go ahead and deal the finishing blow together.』

His initial excitement was over; now it was time to see if the Undead could gain Experience Points or not.

「Giyaahhhhh!」

Bone Monkey and Bone Man hit and kicked the screaming Goblin on its head, Bone Bear and Bone Wolf bit and scratched it, while Bone Bird pecked at it. It was a gruesome method, but since the Living Bones couldn't finish off the Goblin in one hit, it couldn't be helped.
Within ten seconds, the Goblin stopped moving. Vandalieu checked the status of the Undead.

- Name: Bone Monkey/Bone Wolf/Bone Bear/Bone Man/Bone Bird
- Rank: 1
- Race: Living Bones
- Level: 24~32
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
- Active Skills:

    - None

They had leveled up from level 0 to level 2.

『Oh, they leveled up! Now it's clear that Undead can gain Experience Points from killing living things.』

Having found out that even the Undead that he created using death-attribute magic could gain Experience Points, Vandalieu was both relieved and elated at the same time. With this, the prospect of living as an adventurer somewhere away from the influence of Amid Empire and the Church of Alda wasn't impossible. He felt really good.

『Hmm? I feel a little too good… status.』

He was a little curious, so he tried checking his own status.

- Name: Vandalieu
- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- Age: 8 months old
- Title: None
- Job: None
- Level: 3 (Up!)
- Job history: None
- Attributes:
    - Vitality: 24
    - Mana: 100,001,203
    - Strength: 29
    - Agility: 4
    - Endurance: 31
    - Intelligence: 29

- Passive skills:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
    - Rapid Healing: Level 2
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3

    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 3
    - Magic Resistance: Level 1
    - Dark Vision
    - Mental Corruption: Level 10
    - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 1

- Active skills:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 2
    - Limit Break: Level 2
    - Golem Creation: Level 2

- Curses
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing Jobs
    - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

A surprising change had occurred.

『My level has gone from 0 to 3!? The curse is still active, so why?』

In the 8 months that he spent after being born on this planet, Lambda, his level had not increased at all no matter what he did. Even when he practised death-attribute magic, or killed rabbits by sucking them dry, or even killed Orbie and his partners in the same way.

He checked his status again; there was no mistake. However, the “Unable to gain Experience Points independently” curse was still there.

Then why? As Vandalieu was thinking about this, an explanation came to him.

『Maybe, when Bone Monkey and the others gain Experience Points, a portion of that goes to me?』

On Earth, there had been games with systems where when friendly monsters or the clones of the protagonist gained Experience Points, the protagonist gained a portion of that those. Had something similar happened here?

『The effect of the curse just stops me from gaining Experience Points on my own, but gaining Experience Points by having the Undead under me earn it for me is effective… For curse a god cast on me, that’s too big of a loophole.』

To overlook that fact that Vandalieu could get around the effect of the curse that had been cast in order to drive the death-attribute-wielding Vandalieu to suicide by having the Undead gain Experience Points for him. It was such a big loophole that he thought it was some kind of trap for moment. Rodcorte wouldn’t even have to think for a second to realize that Vandalieu could create Undead.

However, the more he thought about it, the more Rodcorte seemed like a simple fool.

『Now that I think about it, what he is doing is basically just passing all the work to us. Giving strength and opportunities to us… to everyone excluding me, and then offering no detailed instructions or following up with us afterwards. In that case, it would be natural to think that he wouldn’t be able to predict something like this.』

It was likely that Rodcorte was viewing Vandalieu and Amemiya Hiroshi from a place that was far above. It wasn't like a nobles-and-peasants relationship, it wasn’t even in the same dimension. It was like the relationship between a player playing a simulation game and the player character inside the game. That was the extent of the gap between them.

That was why even though he had put Vandalieu through such a terrible experience, he had merely thought “That was wrong of me” and nothing more. That was why, on top of that, to make Vandalieu give up on his revenge, Rodcorte thought nothing of trying to drive him to despair so that he would commit suicide.

That was why Rodcorte didn’t think too deeply about Vandalieu. To him, Vandalieu was just one character among a hundred and one characters.

『That’s why it was a curse like this. At this rate, I might be able to do something about my Job too.』

Vandalieu felt delighted and invigorated, but at the same time, remembering all those thing made his wrath against Rodcorte flare up again. And then he renewed his vow to never commit suicide, a vow that he had made to himself many times before.

Incidentally, he went ahead and had the corpse of the Goblin buried. The

blood of Goblins tasted bad, there were no raw materials to be gotten from it, and since he wasn't an adventurer, he couldn't collect a bounty on it so there was no point keeping its body parts as proof of killing it. He thought about turning the corpse into Undead, but thinking that increasing the numbers of bodies that needed training would be a hassle, he said goodbye to it.

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When the sun had completely sun below the horizon, a bonfire could be seen burning in front of the cave in the forest.

Five Undead with bluish-white flames burning in their empty eye sockets were gathered around the red fire. And then there was the child that looked like a toddler with such white skin that one would shiver at the sight of him, even in the red glow of the fire.

In addition, the spirit of a beautiful, yet scarred Dark Elf appeared beside that toddler, as if cuddling him.

If a traveller happened to come across the scene, such fear would be instilled in him that he would run away as fast as he could.

The Dark Elf's spirit slowly opened her mouth.

『~♪』

It was an awkward song. It was said that it was the song that the heroes had sung on their birthdays long ago, and it was still sung on birthdays in Lambda to this day.

Kakakakak, Kashakashakasha.

The Undead that had nothing but bones, instead of the song began making sounds with their teeth and beaks, or their hand or feet bones in rhythm with the song.

『Happy first birthday, Vandalieu!』

Receiving the blessings of the spirit, the toddler breathed in, and whispering a few choice words, blew in the direction of the bonfire.

「Heat Leech.」

The bonfire which was robbed of its heat by the magic spell imbued in the breath promptly went out. The surroundings became pitch black, but the hearts

of the ones present were shining like the sun.

『Happy first birthday, Vandalieu. Your Mother is really happy.』

「Thank you, Mother.」

The humidity of June in the country of Mirg was less than that of early summer in Japan. Vandalieu had turned exactly one year old today. They were gathered here to celebrate his birthday, but he couldn't deny that it was less than glamorous compared to the birthday parties in typical households in both Earth and Origin.

There was no cake and no presents. Their feast consisted of soup, with stock made from the bones of a raccoon with its meat finely minced and cooked with some spices.

And, of course, the fresh blood of a raccoon.

Though he had forcibly made the hard, smelly meat of the racoon into something edible, it was in no way an excellent meal. For a Dhampir like Vandalieu, it could be said that the blood was the only saving grace.

『I'm really sorry. If your Mother was still alive, I'd have made you a proper feast.』

Nonetheless, Vandalieu was happy.

「There's no need to apologize, Mother. I'm very happy.」

Vandalieu had lived on both Earth and Origin, but this was the first time he was experiencing someone celebrating his birthday. In Origin, no researcher would celebrate the birthday of a guinea pig. To them, it was probably nothing more than increasing the number in the age field of their data records by one.

On Earth, he had lived with his uncle's family, but was told「You're going to becoming a very responsible adult in the future, so if we start celebrating your birthday or christmas while you're a kid you'll become spoiled」and thus received no presents or cake. He had never even been congratulated once, even though the uncle did celebrate his own children's birthdays.

For Vandalieu, this was his first birthday party.

『Vandalieu…』

「Besides, today is a very memorable day when a lot of happy things happened.」

Vandalieu said to Darcia, who had become teary eyed and reminded her about the other memorable things that had happened.

First of all, he had become able to speak properly. This was a surprisingly important thing, because by being able to speak words, he was finally able to chant the spells he was casting.
Up until now, he had been unable to chant the spells, and had been forcibly activating them by using an absurd amount of Mana. Therefore, each spell used Mana several times more Mana than it normally would and its potency was less than half of what it would normally be. If he hadn't possessed such an abnormally huge amount of Mana, he would not have been to come as far as he did.

However, since he did come this far without reciting the spells at all, as soon as he was able to speak, he gained the【Chant Revocation】skill, which allowed him to cast spells without chanting them.

Apparently, it was such a rare skill that even Darcia was shocked, although she was a little bit depressed by the timing.

In addition, Bone Monkey and the other Undead had reached Level 100 and increased their rank to 2.

- Name: Bone Monkey/Bone Wolf/Bone Bear/Bone Bird
- Rank: 2
- Race: Bone Animal
- Level: 0~7
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
- Active Skills:
    - None

- Name: Bone Man
- Rank: 2
- Race: Skeleton

- Level: 4
- Passive skills:
  - Dark Vision
- Active Skills:
  - None

As usual, there were no skills except Dark Vision, but there were great benefits that had come with increasing their rank.

The overall attributes of Bone Monkey and the other Undead, which had now become Bone Animals, had increased to match the values they had as when they were alive. In addition, they now not only obeyed Vandalieu's commands, but had their own intelligence of normal beasts.

Bone Man was the only one that had changed into the Skeleton race after the rank up, but that was a given since he was made of the bones of a human. He had the strength and agility of an average human, and from the viewpoint of adventurers it was still a small fry, but for Vandalieu it was a reassuring addition to his forces.

If he made him wear the leather armor that he had obtained from Orbie and the other hunters and then equip him with a dagger and wooden shield that he had made by creating a Wood Golem, he could prepare a fine skeleton warrior. Right now, it was practising using a bow.

Incidentally, Vandalieu had also reached level 100. However, since it was the level 100 of "None" Job, his attributes did not increase that much. Although he had technically fulfilled the requirements for a Job change, he didn't have access to the facilities required for a Job change, namely the special rooms that could be found in various guild or temples, so it was meaningless.

Finally, even though his forces had come together somewhat, Vandalieu thought that it was still too early to exact his revenge on Evbejia. His power was still far too little. Even now, starting and completing his revenge would be possible. But he wasn't sure that after that he would be able to run away from Evbejia and reach a place far away from the Mirg country where a Dhampir could live peacefully in a town. He must get his revenge on Evbejia and feel satisfied afterwards, so for now he was amassing power and supplies.

「I'm thinking of starting to hunt bandits from tomorrow.」

Bandits. They were not monsters, but rather armed factions of criminals that worked as robbers in the outskirts of towns.

In other words, they were humans.

How was the goal of amassing power and supplies related to taking the initiative to kill humans? There was very logical answer to this.

「Recently, no matter how many hares or raccoons the Undead kill, their levels don't go up, and there no monsters stronger than Goblins in this forest. But Evbejia is the center of the path that leads to other villages, and if we search for some bandits, I'm sure we'll find some. If we kill the bandits, that'll become Experience Points for the Undead, while the supplies they have hoarded will become ours. Two birds with one stone, I think.」

And on top of that, in this world, there was no law against killing bandits and taking their loot for yourself. On Earth and Origin, killing and taking their stolen good made you a full-fledged criminal. However, in Lambda, even if a normal citizen killed a bandit, he would not be treated as a criminal. On the contrary, you were praised as having done a good job and no one called you a「killer」or told you that you「took away their human rights.」The stolen goods were treated as the rightful property of the one who took down the bandits. If the original owner really wanted to regain his possessions, it was thought that he should independently negotiate with the one who took down the bandits.

『But, isn't taking down bandits dangerous? Even D-class adventurers do it in a group.』

Darcia spoke to Vandalieu, worried about him. He smiled at her reassuringly.

「I'll prepare a proper ambush, so it's okay. Besides, I already have an idea of where I can find some bandits.」

And so, from the next day, at the age of one, Vandalieu began to do work by himself that even D-class adventurers did in a group.

- Name: Vandalieu
- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)

- Age: 1 year old
- Title: None
- Job: None
- Level: 100 (LEVEL UP!)
- Job history: None
- Attributes:
  - Vitality: 34
  - Mana: 100,001,223
  - Strength: 32
  - Agility: 7
  - Stamina: 33
  - Intelligence: 45

- Passive skills:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 3
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Chant Revocation (NEW!)

- Active skills:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Surpass Limits: Level 2
  - Golem Transmutation: Level 2

- Curses
  - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
  - Cannot learn existing Jobs
  - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Chapter 6: Bandits provide good leveling experience

The seven bandits sat in their simple hideout, drinking the alcohol that they'd stolen from their victims today.

「Today's haul was pretty good, wasn't it?」

「Yeah, if we take it to the village everyone else will be happy as well.」

It looked as if they were farmers sharing a drink after finishing their work in the fields, but they were definitely bandits.

The proof of that was the fact that the wine that they were drinking was taken from merchants who had been too stingy to hire adventurers to escort them, along with their lives.

Their equipment was old; their leather armor had numerous patches where they had been previously repaired and their weapons consisted of handmade spears, woodcutting hatchets, bows and arrows – they were incredibly poorly equipped. In addition, they hadn't received any formal training; if you looked at it one way, their method of fighting came from experience in real battle and brawls. If you looked at it another way, they were just a group of people who merely swung their weapons around.

In fact, most of their jobs were Farmer, so they hadn't received training for battle. The reason that they were bandits was their poverty.

The young men from a village that had become poor for to various reasons had left the village to commit crimes. Such cases were not rare in Lambda.

「Well then, I suppose someone should stand watch so we can sleep.」

The bandits' base simply consisted of several tents put up in a meadow with long grass, in a spot where they had cleared some of the grass away. They did have a lookout tower, but they didn't seem to have any intentions of using it.

In fact, there was nothing in this meadow but wild deer, so they were safe as long as they kept a fire lit. The reason they still kept watch is because sometimes a stray Goblin came to attack.

But even such a Goblin would scream loudly as it approached them, so they had little motivation to stand guard.

That was why they had no way of knowing if any enemy were to approach them quietly, concealing the sound of their footsteps.

「Hic, I've drank a little too much – UOH?」

The bandit on watch who had apparently drank too much wine was snatched up by Bone Bear's paw that had risen up from the wall of grass and disappeared.

Muffled sounds came from inside the tents, but nobody came out. Instead, Bone Man, Bone Monkey and Bone Wolf with Bone Bird on his back emerged from the long grass.

And behind them was Vandalieu.

「There are six left. Finish them quickly.」

The air was filled with the sound of rattling bones.

The bandits never returned to their village.

For Vandalieu, finding the hiding place of bandits was easier the more atrocious their crimes were, as he could use the spirits of their dead victims as sources of information.

The victims who were attacked by their bandits and had not only their belongings taken, but also their lives. Their regret and hatred towards their assailants was fierce, and having bugs find the spirits was a simple task.

Even if the spirits were far away, he could use the【Spirit Communication】technique to summon them to hear what they had to say.

And then he would send out the Undead using the information he got from the spirits, and the hideouts would be found within a few days.

With this method, Vandalieu had already found four groups of bandits

operating in the area around Baronet Bestero's territory.

After finding them, he continued to gather information such as how many of them there were and how they were armed. The villager bandits that he had attacked today were the smallest, most poorly equipped group out of the four.

「Nice, the training's successful. Good work, everyone.」

Vandalieu was emotionless as he confirmed that the bandit group had been exterminated, but he was in a good mood as he praised the Undead.

Of course, the Undead, being made of only bones, were unable to smile, but the blue glow in their sockets seemed to flicker in happiness. Their MVP was Bone Bear, who had killed the one on lookout duty with a bear hug and then buried another bandit with his claws.

Bone Man had stabbed two of them to death with his dagger, and Bone Monkey and Bone Wolf had taken one each, strangling and biting them to death.

「Err, it'll be fine. You'll be able to fly soon!」

Bone Bird was the only one to be depressed. Vandalieu had made a Golem of the earth and buried one of the bandits from the neck down, and Bone Bird had defeated this bandit by diligently stabbing him with its beak repeatedly.

With only one wing, it was just a burden, but there was no helping it. Bone Bird couldn't fly.

It was obvious that wings made of only bones and no feathers would not be able to fly.

「If you keep gathering experience and rank up again, you'll definitely be able to fly. Believe in yourself!」

As Vandalieu encouraged Bone Bird, it flapped its wings with a rattle to express its happiness, as if to say that it would try its best.

After looking at Bone Bird happily and giving it a pat on its skull, Vandalieu examined the treasure that the bandits had gathered.

The first thing that caught his eye was the wagon with three barrels of wine still left in it. They were the leftovers of what the bandits had been drinking.

Evbejia prided itself on its wine, so it was probably of reasonably high quality.

「... I wonder if there's anything else.」

But to a one-year-old, it held less value than water. He had no way of selling it for money and his companions were all made of bones, so it was completely useless. At best, he could perhaps use it for cooking.

No, it was probably possible for him to drink it. Even as a one-year-old, Vandalieu possessed the Status Effect Resistance skill at level 3, so he would likely not become drunk unless he consumed a very large quantity of it.

『No~♪ You can't drink alcohol at the age of one. What if you become a drunkard later in life?』

However, his guardian would not allow it, so he decided not to drink it.

「Well, I might as well take at least one barrel back. There's even a wagon for it. And next is -」

Vandalieu searched around the wagon and inside the tents, but concluded that they were「completely broke」compared to normal adventurers or soldiers. They had apparently stolen cloth purses from the merchants who had normally stored copper and silver coins in them, but there was a whole pile of pouches filled with only seeds and oats that would normally be fed to pets and livestock on Earth. There were some dried river fish. The rest were items for the bandits' daily necessities.

The special feature was perhaps the vase filled with about five kilograms of salt.

It was a considerably meagre treasure, but perhaps that was to be expected. They were merely seven men that were normally farmers.

They would have been unable to aim for targets with a larger payout - the kind that would hire adventurers as escorts.

But for Vandalieu, it was a decent harvest in its own way.

「This is a great result. I was getting sick of eating only meat and blood, and the salt that Mom had ran out ages ago. And I'm glad I got my hands on some cloth.」

Vandalieu's lifestyle up until now had been sustained through hunting the deer in the forest. Darcia's emergency stores of wheat, cheese, vegetables and salt had been used up relatively quickly after her death. In the first place, it was only one person's worth and it was for the journey that she had been planning, so it was only an amount that she would have been able to carry.

And as Vandalieu developed, the amount that he ate also increased.

It would be problematic to use blood for all of his dietary needs, and if he became too much like a vampire, he would become weak to the sun so that would be problematic. That was why he wanted to eat normal food as well. But meat that was simply cooked after having its blood extracted was dull as well and there were times when he could only get his hands on the meat of raccoons and foxes and such, whose meat was not tasty. Though it was much better than the times he only had Goblin meat available.

The clothes he was wearing were not really clothes, but furs that he had wrapped around himself.

He was like a barbarian child.

「If I use the bandits' spare clothes, I might be able to make proper clothes for myself. There's also money, but… well, will I get a chance to use it?」

The Amid was the currency of the Amid Empire and its countries. One Amid was worth about a hundred yen on Earth. There was a half-Amid copper coin, a one-Amid copper coin, a ten-amid copper coin, a 100-Amid silver coin, a 1,000-Amid gold coin and a 10,000-Amid platinum coin.[1]

In addition, there was apparently also paper money used only by wealthy merchants and nobles, notes worth 100,000 Amid and 1,000,000 Amid. To be more accurate, they may not be actual notes, but something like handwritten government bonds.

The bandits had saved up about 1,000 Amid, about twice the monthly income of a worker living in an urban area.

But if Vandalieu were to enter a town, guards or adventurers would kill him without any questions asked, so it was doubtful whether he would get a chance to use it.

However, it might be possible to exchange it after moving to another country, so he decided to keep it.

「Hmm? What's this pouch?」

He realized that there was another leather pouch beneath the pouches containing the money. It was light and something clinked around inside softly when he moved it.

He untied the string and looked inside to see two transparent, colored stones inside. They looked like some kind of gem, but they were not very pretty.

「Mom, do you know what this is?」

『These are Magic Stones. You can collect them from monsters, and from this size and color, I think they're from Goblins. If I remember correctly, they sell for ten Amid each.』

The Mana in monsters' bodies crystallized in the moment they died, and the Magic Stones were apparently the result of that. They were used as ingredients in various magical items and spiritual medicines such as potions, or used as sources of power for even normal people with low Mana to use magical items.

If used as sources of power in this way, they became normal stones after the Mana they contained was depleted, so they were consumable items. But with alchemical refining, Mana could be imbued into the stones again, so they could be used over and over.

Nobody would bother refining the Magic Stones of Goblins and they would be used as disposable items, which was why their value was low.

『Incidentally, it's more common for low-rank monsters to not even drop Magic Stones when they die. The probability for a Rank 1 monster to drop one is about one in a hundred. On the other hand, higher-rank monsters are almost certain to drop Magic Stones when they die. Rank 5 monsters and above will definitely drop them.』

Incidentally, Darcia had apparently thought it pointless to tell Vandalieu about Magic Stones earlier because he had been fighting nothing but a few Rank 1 Goblins at a time.

Also, it seemed that there were some low-rank monsters that easily dropped Magic Stones, and also monsters that dropped Magic Stones of far higher quality than their original rank. But to Vandalieu, who was focusing on hunting bandits for now, this was all just information for future reference.

He wanted to register with an Adventurer's Guild and become an adventurer as soon as possible.

「Finally, let’s check the status of Bone Man… Oh, just by killing two of those weak Bandits, you’ve gained thirty levels. You too, Bone Bear. The rest of you too. Just by killing a single man each, you’ve gained more than 10 levels!」

Just by ambushing and killing one or two bandits that had failed as farmers and couldn’t even fight properly, their levels had risen this much. The amount of experience they got from Goblins or the monsters in the forest couldn’t even be compared to this amount.
If this applied to not just the Undead but all monsters, than that meant that humans were a very good source of experience of the monsters. It would also explain why monsters were so aggressive against humans.

「Alright, I’ll wipe out all the Bandits in this area and increase everyone’s levels.」

After seeing this explosive increase in level, he couldn’t go back to hunting small monsters.

There were still many Bandit groups left in the area around Baronet Bestero’s territory. One of them had the same number of people as the one they had killed today, one of them had more than ten people, while another one had around twenty.

The Undead would surely reach Rank 3 after they were all exterminated.

『Since you were able to kill us, the guys to the south will be a piece of cake.』

『The guys west of here are from three villages over. They have a lot of people, but it should still be easy.』

『But the guys up north are professional bandits. Their leader was apparently a guard in some city, and I’ve heard that he’s gathered himself a bunch of strong underlings. They extorted some money out of us as well.』

While learning some information from the spirits of the dead bandits, Vandalieu used the Earth Golem to bury their bodies. After loading up their loot on the wagon, Vandalieu left, leaving the tragic scene behind him.

***

Around a month had passed since Vandalieu's first Birthday. It was the season in which he had to get rid of mosquitoes every evening using【Bug Killer】, and he was finally ready to take on the largest and most highly-trained bandit group in Baronet Bestero's territory. They moved while making sure no travelers or guard patrols on the highway found them and trained in forests or in areas with high, thick grass to polish their skills.

「Our opponents are in a different league from the bandits we've been killing up till now. Their leader is a ex-soldier, and his subordinates have been trained under him to some extent. In other words, we can't just raise our weapons and scare the enemy, we actually have to『fight』them.」

「Ooooooooh~」

「Gururuuuuu~」

The Undead listening to Vandalieu literally had fires of determination burning in their eye sockets. Because of the experience they had earned from killing all the bandits, Bone Man had increased his rank to become a Skeleton Solider, while Bone Monkey, Bone Bear and Bone Wolf had become Bone Beasts.

They had also gained the skill【Superhuman Strength】and, perhaps because they had been killing bandits by ambushing them, they had also gained【Silent Steps.】When this skill was used, the sounds of their bones hitting and grinding against each other completely disappeared. In addition, Bone Man had gained the skills【Swordsmanship】,【Archery】and【Shield Technique.】

They were all still level 1 skills, but the results were pretty good considering that they had obtained them after fighting in practice battles against golems for a month.

「...」

Bone Bird, however, was still at Rank 2. But it was at Level 90, and if today's plan went well, it would also rank up.

「That's why we need to be extra careful today. We have a lot of spare bones for you, but make sure your skulls are not damaged or broken. Also, if there are any humans that don't look like bandits… For example, humans that are tied up with rope or humans that are in cages, don't kill them. Lastly, we'll begin the plan as soon as I cast the support magic.」

Speaking in his usual indifferent tone and expressionless face, Vandalieu didn't show his internal nervousness at all as he cast the spells.

「First,【Enhanced Bloodshed】to their weapons, fangs and claws. Then【Energy Absorption】to their armor and bones.」

【Enhanced Bloodshed】was a magic spell that boosted the attack power of whatever it was cast on; even shields and armor could damage the enemy if they came in contact with them.

【Energy Absorption】was a defensive spell that could absorb magic, heat, electricity and even motion energy, and in Lambda it was effective against both magical and physical attacks.

Both of these spells had very strong effects, but since both were not that hard to use with the Death Attribute, mastering them was easy for Vandalieu.

「Ooooh…」

The first to move among the Undead surrounded by dark blue magic was Bone Man. He headed towards observation tower the bandits' base - a small gathering of simple huts surrounded by a wooden fence - loading an arrow into the bow taken from Orbie and his companions and pulling back the string.

The bandits in the observation tower were holding bows with quivers on their backs and seemed completely unmotivated.

「Man, we're really unlucky. Getting guard duty on the day before we're supposed to withdraw.」

The bandits were planning to take all that they had earned up till now and move to a new location. They were planning to pick up the ransom money for the hostages along the way and then go on to a new territory or even a new country, and start their jobs as bandits all over again.

Other bandit groups had been disappearing lately and they had heard rumours that a Lord had become fed up with the deterioration of public order on the highway and put together a subjugation team. If that was the case, then it really was time to leave.
They had decided to get rid of things that would get in the way of traveling, and were in the middle of a party to consume all of the excess food and liquor they had in one go.

These bandits were the unlucky ones that were unable to participate in the party, and they were too distracted by their own misfortune to notice anything.

「Gahhh!?」

Bone Man's arrow cut through the night and buried itself in one of their throats. Letting out a short scream, he lost his balance and fell from the tower.

Seeing one of their own guards fall down with a arrow in his neck, the bandits that had been drunk and enjoying themselves woke up from their stupor.

「E-enemy attack!」

「Wake up, you bastards! Get your weapons!」

As they bandits tried pick up their axes, maces and spears…

「Guwoooon!」

「Uooooooooh, uooooooh!」

Destroying the wooden fence and scattering splinters all over the place, Bone Monkey and Bone Bear charged in.

「I-it's the Undead! Monsters! We're being attacked by monsters!」

「Calm down, you idiots! Those of you specializing in axes and maces, move forward! Those who have swords and spears, fall back! Archers as well!」

The leader of the bandits calmly gave his subordinates clear instructions, a halberd in his own hands.

This man had experience fighting with Skeletons and Zombies from when he was still a soldier. He knew that his subordinates could deal with Undead effectively if they used blunt weapons like clubs or axes rather than bladed

weapons like swords or spears, even if they weren't very skilled at fighting.

「A few Rank 1 or 2 monsters are no match for twenty of us! Get 'em!」

The bandits' morale that had been withering because of the sudden attack and death of one of their own was recovered thanks to the instructions from their boss. They rushed at the boorish Undead who had rained over their festivities.

「Guoooooo!」

「Ghyaa!?」

A bandit that had raised his axe went flying as Bone Bear stood up on its hind legs and delivered an attack with its front paws.

With a crunch, Bone Monkey crushed a bandit's skull like an egg.

The fangs of Bone Wolf pierced the legs of the bandits, and when they fell down it ripped out their throats.

「Oooh… Oaoooooh~」

Bone Man put away his bow and drew the long sword that he had taken from the other bandits they had defeated to cut his way into the bandits' ranks.

「Hiiii!? Gyaaah!」

Bone Man against the bandits. Both sides had never received any formal training in swordsmanship, and soon Bone Man came out as the clear winner.

Their fighting skill was about the same, and the longsword that Bone Man was using was an iron sword with a crude casting. In fact, the enemy's weapons were of better quality.
However, the strength of a Rank 3 Skeleton Solider was far above that of an average human, and especially because of the【Superhuman Strength】skill, Bone Man was far stronger than the bandits.

As humans lacked physical strength and special abilities, they honed their skills and learned martial arts and magic in order to fight against monsters. A human going up against a monster while possessing the same amount of skill as the monster had no chance of winning.

「Ooooh...」

Bathed in the blood of his enemies, Bone Man shivered from the feeling of getting experience by taking a life, and wanting to earn even more, jumped at his next prey.

「Boss! These aren't Rank 2 monsters!」

「We can't handle them! Help us, boss!」

Hearing the pitiful screams of his subordinates as their number decreased, the leader clicked his tongue.

『Those useless fools! If it's come to this, I have to get away by myself.』

The bandit leader chose to run without hesitation. He didn't think about fighting the Undead for his men for even a second.

He didn't even have enough skills to even fight one-on-one with a Rank 3 or higher monster in the first place.

He had certainly been a soldier at point in his life, and even had a level 2 skill【Halberd Technique】that allowed to him to use the Halberd. But in the end, he was just an ex-security guard. According to the Adventurer's Guild, his fighting prowess was at most a E-class.
It was said that to win a fight one-on-one with a Rank 3 monster, you needed to be at least D-class.

If he made well use of his subordinates, he could defeat maybe one of the Undead. But there were four Undead. No, five.

「...」

The leader noticed Bone Bird, who was finishing off the bandits that had fallen unconsciousness by stabbing them with its beak, but considered that to be an exception.

Even if he did manage to defeat one of them, there would be no point as they would be finished off by the rest. There was no point in retaliating if there was no hope of winning.

「All of you! Don't back down, push forward!」

Giving that unreasonable order to his men, the leader himself began backing off carefully so as not to be noticed by them. He would just jump in the carriage he had taken from the merchants and run away. If he could get away, he form another bandit group.

「Get up.」

His hopes of getting away were shattered as a wooden wall grew from the ground behind him.

「Uoh?! W-what?! An alchemist?!」

He had heard a shrill voice like a small girl's through the dying screams of his men and the resentment filled roars of the Undead. He realized that this was the doing of the owner of the voice, and looked around for it's owner.

He found him almost immediately.

A small child stood some ways away, wearing a rag. It was easy to tell that he was a baby.

「Are you telling me this is all this kid's doing!?」

The leader's eyes opened wide, but there was no denying the child's – Vandalieu's – strangeness.

The white hair and odd-colored deep crimson and purple-blue eyes. And even on this bloodstained battlefield, the weak, ghost-like presence. If the child hadn't said anything, he could approached the bandit leader all the way up to his feet without the leader noticing.

「A-are you the one controlling these Undead? I-in that case, I give up. I surrender. I'll let you have all the treasure, go ahead and hand me over to the Adventurer's Guild or wherever.」

Throwing down his Halberd, the leader put up both hands and gave up.

If he couldn't win, he would run. If he couldn't run, he'd live by giving up. Stubbornness and pride wouldn't get you even one Amid.

「Surrender?」

「Yeah, that's right.」

Forcing a smile to his face, the leader replied to Vandalieu who spoke in a flat tone.

「There's a bounty on my head. And I also have information about the other bandit groups in this area. And the half the money made from selling criminal slaves goes to your pocket. Don't you see? If you capture us alive, it's a lot more profitable for you.」

The things that the leader said were all true. This was man that was willing to sell off other people in the same trade if he was able to live.

Also, depending on the severity of their crimes, the bandits that were captured alive were sold off as criminal slaves. Most of them were overworked in mines and the army, doing odd jobs and labor. Half of the profits earned from them were not to be underestimated, and depending on the number of bandits captured alive, it could be worth even more than all the treasure that the bandits had gathered.

「... Are you an idiot, perhaps?」

But what came was an insulting reply; a baby asking about his mental capacity.

「Wh-what did you say!?」

「As you can see, I am a Dhampir. If I took you to the Adventurer's Guild to hand you over, I would just be killed. I would be dead before you could be sold as a criminal slave.」

In the Amid Empire and its countries, where the people worshipped Alda, the God of Law and Fate, Dhampirs were treated as monsters rather than people. Even if he entered the city with the intention of handing over the bandits, the guards or adventurers would prioritize dealing with the Dhampir over the bandits.

The bandit leader was not an adventurer and he was unaware of the Dhampir panic that had happened a while ago, so he was late in realizing that he was talking to a dhampir.

「Th-then make me one of your subordinates! I'll be really useful. Your Undead are pretty strong, but you do need one human subordinate as well,

right?!」

In that moment, Vanadalieu's impression of the bandit increased slightly as he thought that he was more clever than he looked.

In fact, Vandalieu had been been feeling the same thing from quite a while back. The Undead that followed his every command. The spirits of Darcia and the others. Their presence alone could not solve the small inconveniences of his day-to-day life.

However, using the man in front of him to solve them was unthinkable.

「While it is true that I need a living companion, I don't need a bandit who would sacrifice his men to run away. But I can make you one of my subordinates after you've died.」

Pointing at the leader that had first expressed hope and then despair, Vandalieu asked Bone Bear and the others.

「Do it.」

「P-please wait! I-I don't want to die!」

「...? Wasn't it same for the people that you killed?」

This man was oblivious to many things. By the time this thought occurred to Vandalieu and he turned around to talk to the leader again, Bone Bear had already crushed his neck.

「Gu, guru?」

Crap, did I kill him too early? Bone Bear seemed to ask, but Vandalieu waved a hand to say「It's fine, it's fine」and exhaled heavily.

「Ahh, that was nerve-wracking. It was my first time talking to anyone besides Mom, so I was pretty nervous.」

He had suffered from stranger anxiety in all three worlds: Earth, Origin and Lambda. He wished that he could have avoided having this kind of face-to-face conversation in this bloodstained place.

「The smell of blood is so strong that I'm getting hungry. But I don't want to get closer to being a vampire by sucking the blood of the bandits, so I have

resist. Resist… For now, I'll check if there are any survivors.【Sense Life.】」

To distract himself from his hunger caused by the smell of blood, he used a death-attribute spell that detected all the life in the vicinity.

Ignoring the reaction from bugs, weeds, germs and fungi, he searched for reactions from animals, humans containing magic or large monsters.

There were… three large animals behind the large hut, probably horses. There was also a reaction from the basement of the hut. From the reaction, it was human.

He had heard from the spirits that the number of bandits had been nineteen. The number of corpses was also nineteen.

「There's someone in the basement of the hut, is it a new guy?」

『N-No, that one is not my subordinate. It's a peddler I caught a few days ago. Ugeh. I let him live because it seems like he has a family business or something in a town over in Viscount Maggio's domain, and ransom money can be e-expected. M-my n-neck.』

Because of the shock and fear he had received at the time of his death, the neck of bandit leader's spirit was still twisted. Vandalieu wrinkled his eyebrows as he processed the information he had given.

Things had become a little troublesome.

- Name: Bone Man
- Rank: 3
- Race: Skeleton Soldier
- Level: 39
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Active Skills:
    - Swordsmanship: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Shield Technique: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Archery: Level 1 (NEW!)

    - Silent Steps: Level 1 (NEW!)

- Name: Bone Monkey/Bone Wolf/Bone Bear/Bone Bird
- Rank: 3
- Race: Bone Beast
- Level: 24~32
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Active Skills:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1 (NEW!)

Notes

1. TLN: 1 Amid = $0.87USD

Chapter 7: Unlasting revenge complete, now, work hard

The merchant Rudy considered himself to be blessed.

As the third-born son of Viscount Maggio's noble merchant family, he couldn't inherit the household, but he had been raised without suffering discrimination at the hands of his parents and two older brothers. He had received the same high-level education as the first and second sons and had been prepared to become independent from an early age, as he couldn't inherit the household.

And so once he became an adult, Rudy began to gather experience as a merchant. He had received a one-off support fund from his family to become independent and had experienced various hardships to get to where he was today.

This was now his third year as a merchant. His business had succeeded to a point where he was deciding whether he should use the money he had saved to buy a carriage and invite other merchants to form a caravan, or settle down somewhere and open his own store.

However, Rudy had been captured several days ago and thought his luck had run out.

He had hired E-class adventurers as escorts, but they had been killed by the sheer numbers of a bandit group with twenty members. He regretted not hiring more escorts, but it was too late now.

He had his goods and money taken, and when his life was next, the words he had shouted were「My family will pay a ransom for me!」It was the worst way to beg for his life.

But dying proudly was not a merchant's job. He would cause trouble for his family, but he had to do whatever he could to survive and rebuild his business.

He could repay the ransom his family had paid for him by earning more money through that business.

It would be best if a group of adventurers or knights appeared gallantly to exterminate the bandits, rescue him and return his stolen goods and money. But the world was apparently not such a nice place.

As he thought that, a sound reached the ears of Rudy, who had been living a simple lifestyle in a dark, damp dungeon.

『Has someone come underground?』

Rudy, becoming aware of the soft sounds of someone coming down the ladder, lifted his body from the crude, slightly smelly blanket to peer through the wooden bars, but it was pitch-black and he couldn't see anything.

If it were one of the bandits coming down, there should be a candle and signs of living magic. He had thought it was just his imagination, but he could hear the footsteps of someone steadily approaching.

Those footsteps stopped in front of his prison. However, in the darkness, he still couldn't see anything.

「W-who is it?」

In response to his high-pitched, fearful question, a voice came from towards the ground.

「Ah, I apologize. I had not realized that it is dark down here.【Demon Fire.】」

Whoosh. A blue, fist-sized flame lit the dungeon.

「?! A g-ghost?!」

Standing in front of Rudy's eyes was a small infant with disheveled white hair and candle-wax-like skin, wearing rag-like clothes.

Rudy had assumed that this lifeless-looking figure must be an Undead child that had been killed by the bandits and come back to haunt this place. He clutched his blanket tightly and began to tremble.

「... No, I am alive.」[1]

When Rudy screamed, Vandalieu had wondered『Can this person see spirits

too?』But when Vandalieu realized that it was he himself that had scared Rudy, he lowered his shoulders. He thought that Rudy shouldn't be so afraid of him when he had come down here to help, and sullenly put his own appearance out of his mind. He gathered his thoughts again and continued.

「I have taken care of all the bandits that captured you. And as you can see, I am not an adventurer, but a Dhampir.」

As Vandalieu spoke with a disinterested tone, Rudy began to gradually calm down. But he realized that his position hadn't changed for the better and his face turned pale.

「A Dhampir… so does that mean you're going to kill me?」

Dhampirs. In the country that Rudy was born and raised in, they were treated as monsters and targets of extermination. The priests of Alda in particular did not hesitate to label them as special kinds of Undead.

Therefore, it was not just a matter of Vandalieu not feeling any obligation to rescue him like an adventurer or knight would. It was highly likely that he would be silenced now that he had seen the Dhampir's face.

However, the Dhampir child before him shook his head.

「No. If you are willing to stay quiet about me, I have no intention of killing you.」

「R-really?」

「Yes. You were captured once by bandits, but you succeeded in escaping during the conflict with another bandit group. Please spread that story. Please do not say a word about me to anyone.」

Rudy was only half-convinced. Though it was understandable, as from his point of view it was as if he had met a virtuous devil.

Vandalieu himself actually knew that it would be better to silence the merchant. But he had a reason for not killing Rudy if he could help it.

『I want to make my normal activity as good as possible. For the future.』

That was his simple reason.

It was fine to kill bandits for his own protection, as nobody would consider it a crime even if he were to kill every last one in all of Lambda. However, killing a pitiful victim like Rudy for his own protection would be the act of a fiend.

Vandalieu thought that this kind of behavior, even if nobody found out about it, would have a terrible influence on his own personality.

His uncle's family who had mistreated him on Earth, the terrorists who had used a bomb to blow up both themselves and the ferry, the researchers in Origin who had performed human experiments on countless humans including himself - all of these people were simply evil lunatics in Vandalieu's eyes.

He couldn't become an evil lunatic like them.

Because he hated them, he felt that he didn't want to be like them. But even more importantly, Vandalieu wished to live the happy life that he had never had a taste of on Earth or in Origin. This was to make that wish come true.

A prosperous, comfortable lifestyle and warm relations with the family and friends around him. Could an evil lunatic build and maintain such a lifestyle?

And though it was still about half a century away, one day *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others with cheat-like abilities would be reincarnated here. If he turned to evil, it was likely that they would purge him in the name of justice.

Because of their cheat-like abilities, Vandalieu had the feeling that even if he left no witnesses, they would somehow dig up and expose the crimes of his past. There would probably be some of them who could read a person's mind or see into the past or otherwise expose his crimes directly, and they would be very skilled with magic.

Therefore, Vandalieu wanted to avoid having to kill victims like Rudy.

「If that is all, then I understand. Since I am not an adventurer or anything.」

And fortunately, Rudy wasn't a fanatical worshipper of Alda, so he accepted Vandalieu's conditions and chose to live.

The other wise decision that Rudy made was not to look down on Vandalieu because of his age. He was fearful and careful of this child whose height did not even reach his own waist.

With that said, it was the natural response for Rudy.

Vandalieu's mature tone that didn't match his appearance and the ominous aura that he was giving off. It was clear that he was not just an infant.

With a clank, the padlock was removed with the key that the bandit leader had been holding. Now that Rudy was free, he gave a sigh of relief, but -

「Ah, if you tell anyone about me, I will send evil spirits after you. So please do not change your mind.」

With a pale face and chattering teeth, Rudy nodded in response to the threat that Vandalieu made just in case.

Rudy climbed the rope ladder to the surface and shuddered violently as he saw the bandits' corpses on the ground, the blood-covered Undead and Bone Bird who was now covered in pale, bluish-white light after increasing in rank, letting out ominous cries of joy.

And then he swore that he would definitely keep this a secret, even if he was offered a mountain of platinum coins.

Rudy drank the alcohol that the bandits had been drinking to mask his fear as he retrieved his belongings that the bandits had stolen. In addition, he had been told「I can't use living horses」so he had been given the bandits' horses. And then he tied the wagon taken from other bandits to the horses and left.

He was traveling alone with no escorts, but Vandalieu had exterminated all of the bandits that had made this area their territory, so as long as he wasn't unfortunate enough to encounter a group of Goblins, he would be able to reach his destination.

He had unexpectedly received horses, so now he would be buying a carriage, forming a caravan of merchants and expand his business, but this was irrelevant to Vandalieu.

Vandalieu spent the remaining time until daybreak to replace the chipped bones of the Undead with spare parts: the animal and human bones that he had been collecting up until now. He also played with Bone Bird, who had increased in rank and gained the ability to fly with its new spirit wings and buried the dead bandits. And then he slept soundly until noon.

He left Bone Man and the others to see Rudy off.

No matter how much of a stranger Rudy was to Vandalieu, he thought he should at least do that.

And then Vandalieu woke up and ate the bandits' leftovers for lunch.

On his menu was salted meat, bread and cheese. There were dried vegetables in place of a salad, and a soup with salted fish. For dessert, he ate fruit that he had obtained from the forest.

「Even bandits eat better than I do...」

As he ate, Vandalieu realized this and became a little depressed.

After having attacking bandits and taking their food, his dietary situation had improved significantly; he no longer had to eat the hard, smelly meat of raccoons and foxes. However, when he had tried to use the Cursed Tools and Undead cookware to cook the food, it hadn't gone well.

The Cursed Tools had been made by evil spirits possessing them and were monsters that moved on their own, but they had no strength or dexterity. Because of that, they weren't suited for cooking.

In that case, it was possible to have Bone Man do it, but the spirits inhabiting him were not that of humans, but of small animals such as insects and mice, so he didn't understand the concept of cooking. When ordered to「cut the vegetables」, he had swung his sword at the vegetables with full force, cutting straight through the chopping board.

The fact that he had learned to use a sword and bow was more than enough development for him.

As for Vandalieu himself -

『No! To be cooking when you're only one year old! What will you do if you burn yourself?!』

「But Mom, I think directly eating dried meat and burnt bread is bad for a one-year-old child's digestive system. Though I have several times the jaw strength of a regular one-year-old.」

『No means no! What will you do if you burn yourself?!』

「... I'll use water and【Heat Leech】to cool it down.」

Since the Death Attribute was the opposite of the Life Attribute, he was bad with things like healing. He did have an ability that could heal, but it was a strange one that only worked for「healing fatal wounds and serious illnesses, but not injuries that do not endanger one's life.」

If he burned his whole body, he could heal it, but if he was burned just enough to form a scar on his hand, it would be hard for Vandalieu to heal it with his current abilities.

『Then you can't!』

「Alright~」

This was probably because Darcia had thought「I have to be careful not to let him get burned while he's still a small child」while she was alive. This notion had possibly gone a little wild after her death.

But Vandalieu had only just turned one year old and his arms and legs were short. There was definitely the risk of an unexpected injury if he tried to use a pot, so Darcia wasn't wrong to warn him.

As a result, Vandalieu was now heating water using embers created by having pieces of firewood rubbing against each other, and having the Undead add broken bread and torn pieces of dried meat into it. This had become his daily meal.

The taste was… well, better than raccoon and fox meatballs.

「It's fine. Once I grow up, I'll earn a lot and hire a skilled chef to make me delicious meals every day. Err, more importantly, today's harvest is…」

First of all, there were the bandits' weapons. All of the other bandit groups that he had defeated earlier had been using handmade spears made by attaching knives to the ends of wooden sticks, and their clubs, bows and arrows were all of low quality. But this group wasn't called the biggest bandit group just for show. Every one of them had been using good weapons.

They were made with normal iron, but they weren't the inferior quality made by just pouring molten metal into a cast, no. These had been properly forged by

a craftsman. And although some of of them had become chipped over time or broken by Bone Man and others in the fight, some of the bandits had been killed swiftly without the time to retaliate, so their weapons were still spotless.

The same applied to the leather armor the bandits had been wearing. Compared to the leather armor of other bandit groups, which had been repaired over and over, this was still in very good condition.

They had surely attacked the wagon of a weapons merchant previously.

There was also the treasure in the carriages. He had returned all of Rudy's belongings, but there was still a considerable amount left in the three-horse carriage.

There was about 50,000 Amid in money and a small amount of accessories, though it was hard to discern their exact value. There was also a small pile of a high-quality cloth with a pretty color and two barrels of seemingly high-quality wine. In addition, there was the sugar, which was a valuable ingredient as it was not produced in the country of Mirg.

Finally, there were the bandits' spare weapons and food.

Including the carriage, all of this was likely worth more than 200,000 Amid. It would be about 20,000,000[2] Japanese yen if converted, and although it was a lot of money, it was not quite enough to be called a fortune. However, looting that much money in this area where the only town around was Evbejia was quite a feat.

Though in this case, instead of praising the bandits for their skills, it might be more appropriate to blame the ineptitude of the guards.

『With that said, everything other than the food is useless for me.』

Vandalieu would still have no opportunity to spend the money, and trying his best to make clothes out of the cloth had ended in the rags he was wearing right now. As he was unable to fully utilize the treasure the bandits had gathered, his situation hadn't changed.

But Bone Man could use the weapons and armor and the leather armor could be taken apart to make defensive gear for Bone Monkey and Bone Bear.

However, with this amount of treasure, the problem was how to transport it. He had given all of the horses to Rudy and only the carriage itself remained. Even if he wanted to have his Undead to pull it, the carriage would have to be altered.

Vandalieu had an idea.

「Now then, who should I get to do it?」

As Vandalieu murmured and looked around at the spirits around him, there were not only the spirits of the bandits who had just died. To his surprise, the spirit of a thin middle-aged man whose appearance from when he was alive was preserved stepped forward.

『Please allow me, Sam! In my lifetime I held the posts of caretaker of horses and coachman for a nobleman. My skills in handling a carriage are second to none!』

It was fortunate for Vandalieu that the spirit of Sam, who had apparently handled carriages during his lifetime, had not moved on yet. The fact that his spirit had maintained his appearance from while he was alive without needing Mana supplied to him meant that he had considerable emotional strength as well.

In a way, Sam's spirit was the greatest find out of all the treasure here.

『Vandalieu-sama, you have avenged myself and my daughters! My daughters, who were treated as playthings and then killed! In our gratitude, my daughters and I will serve you for the rest of your life!』

The two spirits standing behind Sam with their heads bowed were likely those of Sam's daughters. Their burnt, black bodies were barely recognizable as those of women, so Vandalieu couldn't be certain.

The bandits had probably gone too far using them as playthings and they had become unsellable, or perhaps the bandits had no connections with any slave traders. They were likely killed for one of these two reasons.

From the fact that the spirits of the bandits were trembling as Vandalieu looked at them, this was probably correct.

「Well then, I'll leave it to you, Sam.」

Firmly deciding that he would use the bandits' spirits until they were no more, he sent Sam's spirit to the carriage.

「Get up.」

As Vandalieu gave this command and poured Mana into the carriage, it began to creak.

「... Go forth.」

And with those words, the carriage's wheels began to turn, even without the horse that was normally essential in its function. Seeing this, Vandalieu gave a satisfied nod.

「Making a Cursed Carriage with Sam, success. With this, I've gained a method of transport as well. Well then, I'll have it run Goblins over to level up on the way back to the forest.」

***

Two days later, the highway patrol stepped into the bandits' base after receiving the information from Rudy, but all they saw were the piles of dirt where the bandits had been buried and the beasts and Goblins that had dug them back up greedily.

Tracks made by the wheels of a carriage continued off outside, but they assumed that these were those of the bandits that had been victorious in this conflict and didn't bother investigating any further.

The commanding officer of the patrol tilted his head when he realized that there were no hoofprints accompanying the carriage's tracks, but it wasn't something worth mentioning in his report.

Baronet Bestero had been in a good mood for the past year.

After that witch had been caught and executed, only good things had been happening. Yes, the High Priest and his men had occupied the forest for the next two months and three hunters had gone missing, but those were trivial things.

Though the Dhampir's corpse had not been discovered, its death had been

accepted and Bestero had received a medal from the king of Mirg. WIth that, the scorn from the feudal lords of the surrounding areas that he was merely『the feudal lord of a countryside with no redeeming features but its wine』had been drowned out.

Even this year's wine and the grapes that were used as ingredients for it had turned out well, and the bandits that had caused headaches and threatened the public order had been dealt with near the beginning of summer.

He was a little dissatisfied that it wasn't resolved by the highway patrol, protege knights or even adventurers. But the bandit problem had been a serious one, so he was happy that it was dealt with, even though it had been done through disputes amongst the bandits themselves.

The best thing was that he had been promoted.

Though it had not been formally decided, he had received private word that he would soon be summoned to the the Amid Empire's imperial capital.

The position of Baron that his great-grandfather, the first-generation Baronet Bestero, had longed for. That would be his soon.

Knowing this, even if the liquid in his glass was not wine but vinegar, he would surely drink it happily. That was how joyful he was now.

On a humid summer night, there was a shadow prowling around outside Evbejia's outer walls.

「Go in, go in, go in.」

Vandalieu was followed by countless spirits, and he began to have them possess the outer wall one by one.

Even if someone were to see Vandalieu now, they would have no idea what he was doing. Unless one had an aptitude for death-attribute magic or was a Necromancer, they wouldn't be able to see spirits that had not turned into monsters and Undead.

The guards might have shot arrows at him if they saw him, but their job was to prevent monsters and criminals trying to enter the town over the outer walls. It was not their job to deal with monsters and criminals that appeared outside

the walls at night. Their attention was focused on the gates and the areas surrounding them.

The chances of them spotting an infant moving around some distance away from the outer walls without even holding any source of light were incredibly low.

It would be possible for adventurers or experienced knights with a Mana Detection skill to notice him. However, though Vandalieu himself was not aware of this, his Mana was difficult for others to sense due to his aptitude for the death-attribute magic.

Therefore, a person with a level 1 or 2 Mana Detection skill wouldn't be able to sense his magic, even if he were to cast a magic right in front of their eyes.

Even with a level 3 or higher skill, it would be impossible without great concentration, but because there were no Devil's Nests with strong monsters around Evbejia, it's Adventurers' Guild's members were D-class at best, so there were none with a level 3 Mana Detection skill.

After making a half-circle around Evbejia's outer wall, Vandalieu exhaled heavily.

「With this, I'm done… It's taken me two days, but the preparations are finished. Now I can achieve my revenge with one word. But let's leave it until tomorrow morning.」

***

The next day, the morning sun shone upon the people of Evbejia just as it had yesterday and they were completely oblivious.

Oblivious to the fact that today was the day that Evbejia's name would be known not only in all of Mirg, but across the entire Amid Empire.

Known as the『town of the mysterious incident.』

「Collapse.」

A sound came from the five-meter-high walls that had protected the town from monsters such as Goblins, dangerous wild animals and bandits.

As the guards showed puzzled expressions, the outer wall crumbled with a

loud noise.

『UOOOOON!』

It seemed that the outer wall had collapsed, but one by one, large, human-shaped creatures began to form and let out evil-sounding roars of malice that echoed out into the blue sky.

And then, with thundering footsteps, they began to walk away.

「W-what?! What just happened?!」

「Commanding officer! The outer wall has turned into a Golem!」

「I can see that!」

Even as the commanding officer of the guards was shouting, the gate that the guards had been watching became part of another Golem and began to walk off.

「Don't just stand there, stop those Golems!」

「But commanding officer, they're rampaging around, just walking away. It would be a different story if they were walking towards the town, but at this rate, even if we don't do anything...」

The bewildered commanding officer's subordinates did not seem eager to obey his command. But that was to be expected; who would want to stand before Golems made from five-meter-high stone walls?

And how would the guards even fight the Stone Golems with their iron spears? Looking at it from the guards' point of view, it wasn't surprising that they were questioning the sanity of their commanding officer.

「You fool! That's the town's outer wall! Without that, how do you plan to protect the town from now on?!」

However, the guards were taken aback as the commanding officer pointed out this big problem.

Without those outer walls, the wild boar, wolves and bears that came out at night would enter the city, eat the crops and livestock and attack people. Goblins and bandits would be able to enter the town as they pleased.

Though there were enough guards to watch over the few gates of the town, they definitely lacked the manpower to guard the entire circumference of the town.

They had now become aware of this problem, but there was nothing that they could do about it.

「B-but...」

The guards showed their uneasiness, but no matter how grave the situation was, they couldn't simply increase their manpower.

They couldn't do anything but watch the backs of the Stone Golems that had once been their town's outer wall as they left.

The outer walls suddenly turned into Golems and walked off. Everyone in Evbejia noticed this, but they couldn't immediately do anything about it.

Baronet Bestero froze in terror, the knights and soldiers were in a panic, the Adventurers' Guild's personnel were running around in a hurry and shouting to send out an emergency request and the townspeople were simply dumbfounded.

However, that wasn't the end of it.

「The dirt, the dirt has turned into a Golem!」

「That's my vineyard! That's the dirt from my grape vineyard!」

「Wait, my wheat field! Wait!」

The earth of the fields, along with the crops and trees that were growing in them, turned into Golems and followed in the footsteps of the Stone Golems that had left the town just a little earlier.

The farmers saw this and desperately chased after them.

Even though the Golems were just made of dirt, the farmers were quite brave to try to stop the Golems that were larger than themselves. But because they were farmers, they couldn't simply allow the Golems to leave.

Not to try to recover the crops and trees sprouting from the Golems' backs, but because the dirt itself that made up the Golems' bodies was most

important to them.

The earth was important in agriculture. They had spread fertilizer and ploughed the fields to ripen their produce for many years; it was essential to them.

If they lost it, they would have to rebuild that earth from scratch. On Earth and Origin, one could get their hands on fertilizer immediately, but in Lambda it would take time.

For the farmers who owned vineyards, it was even more serious, as they would have to raise their trees from scratch as well.

And not only the fields, but -

「Uwah! The feudal-lord-sama's house! The house is collapsing from the second floor and becoming a Golem?!」

「The Adventurers' Guild as well! My friends are in there!」

The feudal lord's house and the Adventurers' Guild building became Golems and began walking outside the town as well.

The Golems' movements were slow, but their their bodies were large so their strides were long. The townspeople, knights and adventurers who wanted to stop the Golems were now on a chase to recover the rubble of their buildings.

Vandalieu watched all of this, feeling satisfied.

The outer walls, the fields, the Adventurers' Guild and the feudal lord's house. Having all of the various spirits possess these and wait for his signal had been difficult. The outer walls alone had taken two days and the fields and the Adventurers' Guild had taken a day each.

But once it came to starting it, he only needed to say one word. Like dominoes that had been painstakingly arranged finally falling down, it was a very satisfying revenge.

「Look, Mom. The guys who laughed at you are all crying with pathetic looks on their faces now.」

With its outer walls and structures turning into Golems, Evbejia was now in a situation from which it couldn't recover. Even if they defeated the Golems and

retrieved the rubble that had once been the buildings, they would still need to do repairs.

Much of the rubble would be unusable; the only thing that could somewhat be gathered up and returned to normal would be the earth of the fields.

Evbejia would have to rebuild those tall, thick walls. Unless this was done, the town would not function, not in the world of Lambda in which dangerous monsters roamed.

Of course, the guards would have to be prepared while the repairs were ongoing. Hiring more guards, putting out more requests for adventurers, ordering materials from stonemasons and arranging for the workers would take a great amount of time and, most importantly, money.

So much that the reconstruction of Baronet Bestero's house would have to wait, no matter how much he tried to use for bribery.

Of course, he would beg for help from Mirg's government, and then his position of Baron would disappear.

In addition, Vandalieu had even extended his reach into the wine warehouse.

He had applied【Decomposition】magic to the barrels of wine in the warehouse and caused it all to spoil. And then he had used【Sterilization】to kill every single particle of yeast that was preserving it.

Nobody had noticed it yet, but Evbejia's entire industry had been obliterated. It would take literally decades to rebuild it.

『Mhmm, thank you for what you've done for me, Vandalieu. It was hard, wasn't it? To do this kind of gentle revenge.』

Darcia's spirit looked lovingly at her son who possessed a vast amount of Mana. There would be many who would demand what was gentle about this revenge. But considering Vandalieu's magic and Mana pool, it could be called gentle, just as Darcia had said.

If he had the Golems that he had made from the outer walls go into the town rather than outside, he could have caused large amounts of damage to the town and many would have died. Including the Golems made from the feudal

lord's house and the Adventurers' Guild building, catastrophic harm could have been caused.

Because High Priest Gordan and the Five-colored Blades, led by Heinz, had left this town long ago.

He could have used【Deadly Poison】to contaminate the well water or simply used【Disease】magic to start an epidemic.

If he had wanted to, he could have killed every single person in Evbejia.

Darcia had thought it kind of him to not do this, and he had even waited until morning before causing the outer walls to crumble.

「I just did to them what they did to me.」

Vandalieu didn't confirm or deny Darcia's words. But he hadn't intended to show compassion for the townspeople. In his mind, there was not a single guiltless person in Evbejia. Every single one of them were criminals who had watched Darcia's execution and laughed as if it were some kind of show.

That was why he had done the same to them.

「From now on I'm going to spend years, decades to get you back, Mom. I'm going to make a new body that will match your spirit. I've made it so that these people have to work for decades to return to their original lifestyle, that's all.」

There wouldn't be a single casualty directly caused by this event. He had even thought about the order in which the Golems began to move, with the walls first and then the buildings, so that they wouldn't collapse partway through.

He had only destroyed things that could be repaired.

『You're right, you gave them a chance. Vandalieu is a gentle child, after all.』

If one thought of it one way, he had inflicted damage that would take decades to repair, but… Darcia, who had been charmed by the Death-Attribute Charm skill, had no intention of pointing that out.

As Darcia patted his head with her hand that he could not feel, his eyes narrowed a little.

「Well then, let's get going. Bone Bird, I'm counting on you.」

「Geeeeh~」

Letting out a cry that sounded like a person being strangled, Bone Bird, who had become a Phantom Bird, spread its bone wings.

Putting away the fragment of Darcia's bone near his chest, he took hold of both of Bone Bird's legs.

The bone wings, covered in shining, blue-white spirit feathers, began to flap and Vandalieu flew through the air to return to the Cursed Carriage where Bone Man and the others were waiting.

- Name: Vandalieu
- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- Age: 1 year old
- Title: None
- Job: None
- Level: 100
- Job history: None
- Attributes:
    - Vitality: 34
    - Mana: 100,001,247
    - Strength: 32
    - Agility: 7
    - Stamina: 33
    - Intelligence: 45

- Passive skills:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
    - Rapid Healing: Level 2
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 3
    - Magic Resistance: Level 1
    - Dark Vision
    - Mental Corruption: Level 10
    - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 2

    - Chant Revocation

- Active skills:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 2
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)

- Curses
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing Jobs
    - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

- Name: Bone Bird
- Rank: 3
- Race: Phantom Bird
- Level: 17
- Passive skills:
    - Dark Vision
    - Spirit Feathers: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Active Skills:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Swift Flight: Level 1 (NEW!)

Notes

1. Vandalieu is speaking rather politely to Rudy, compared to the tone of his self-monologue.

2. Roughly $175,000 USD

Chapter 8: Encountering an optional gate and challenging it

After the mysterious incident in which Evbejia's outer walls turned into Golems, the people of the city began working on the large scale construction to rebuild it with heavy hearts. The Adventurers' Guild set E-class adventurers to carry out human wave tactics to defend the city and the country's government requested for renowned mages and adventurers to be dispatched in order to investigate the incident. Meanwhile, the mastermind behind all of this was in the midst of an enjoyable journey by carriage.

He was sitting on the hide of a beast spread out inside the carriage in place of a cushion, listening to the cries of insects as he murmured to himself about how it would be autumn soon.

「Now that I think about it, this is the first time I've been on a journey.」

Technically, he had gone on a school trip while on Earth, but the ferry had blown up partway through and he had drowned, so it didn't count. In any case, he remembered that it wasn't exactly enjoyable.

Speaking of journeys -

「A different atmosphere from your everyday life, new experiences, rare sights, delicious food, talking with family or friends… No, that's not a journey, it's a trip.」

『How is a trip different from a journey?』

「If your goal is to have fun, it's a trip. If not, it's a journey.」

Dictionaries back on Earth probably defined it differently.

『So that's how it is. Vandalieu is much more knowledgeable than his mother.』

Darcia gave a small, happy-sounding laugh. Hearing only this conversation,

one might think that it was the start of a happy family trip.

However, the mother was the ghost of a Dark Elf, with traces of gruesome torture visible on her slightly glowing body. And the child that was sitting in the carriage had shining red and bluish-purple eyes; he was a one-year-old Dhampir with even less of a presence than the ghost.

The carriage that they were riding on was moving without a driver or horses to pull it. It was a Rank 2 Undead monster, the Cursed Carriage. Flying in circles high up in the sky and keeping watch was the Rank 3 Phantom Bird, a bird with a body of bones surrounded by a bluish glow. And protecting the carriages on all sides were the Rank 3 Skeleton Warrior, and the Bear, Monkey and Wolf Bone Beasts.

This group that was proceeding forward in the middle of the night looked like a monster parade, a small-scale pandemonium. If there were any adventurers nearby, the only two responses they would have to them would be to either attack or run away.

「I think I'll go to sleep now… Before the sky gets brighter, I need to hide somewhere.」

Knowing this, Vandalieu and his party only traveled on the highway at night. They were heading to the Orbaume Kingdom, which had been in conflict with the Amid Empire for centuries.

The original plan had been to head to the village where Darcia had been born and raised, the place she had been living when she was still alive, but Darcia herself stopped them.

『I think it's better not to go to my birthplace. Since I went and died, there is no way to prove that Vandalieu is my child, and I'm not sure that everyone would believe my words as I am now.』

Vandalieu's skin was as white as a dead man's. His ears were pointed, but because of his skin color, one would not think that one of his parents was a Dark Elf.

According to Darcia, the relationship between Elves and Dark Elves of Lambda was not a good one. There were some Elf clans that had friendly relations with

Dark Elves, but they were a minority; most Elves hated Dark Elves and regarded them as “the filthy Elves birthed by Vida”.

And there was no need to even question what the Dark Elves thought about the people that hated them. If Darica herself had been alive, they would have believed her, but unfortunately, she had died. She did exist as a spirit, but the only ones who would be able to see her other than Vandalieu would be those who possessed rare jobs such as Spiritualist.

『Also, I don’t know if they’ll forgive your father or not. Your father was the subordinate of a Vampire that believed in evil gods.』

The Dark Elf race had been birthed by the goddess Vida and most of them lived while worshipping Vida and the Spirits while also intermingling with the other races created by Vida. Therefore it made perfect sense that they were also friendly with Vampires and Dhampirs, but only those that believed in gods other than Alda or the evil spirits.

There are also races of monsters such as Lamias and Scyllas that share a parent with the Dark Elf race, but if they were made obedient by tamers, it wasn’t a problem. But the evil gods that were once the Demon King’s subordinates are still enemies. Those who worshipped them, even if they were of races given birth to by Vida, were considered traitors.

「...It’s a tough world we live in, mother.」

『Yes, that’s why I think it would be better if we headed towards the Orbaume Kingdom.』

The Orbaume Kingdom and the Amid Empire made up the two halves of the Bahn Gaia continent.

The continent of Bahn Gaia was sometimes called “Warhammer of Zantark” because of the fact that it was shaped like the letter T. The warhammer’s “handle” part was thought to be the place where the fallen hero Zakkart had faced his end for the second time, an area filled with high mountains and countless Devil’s Nests. It was unexplored territory where even adventurers had never set foot.

The “head” part of the warhammer was divided into two: In the west was the

Amid Empire, and in the east was the Orbaume Kingdom. They had been fighting one another for centuries to take over the other and unite the continent. The Orbaume Kingdom had formed from the alliance of many smaller countries that rebelled against the Amid Empire around five hundred years ago.

But since it was a union of countries now, it needed to be managed properly. For this purpose, they had made an electoral system called selective monarchy where the royal families of the participating nations became dukes and then a king was selected from among these. The term of the king was ten years, and reappointment was possible only once. However, since the reappointment of a king was common, the effective term period was usually twenty years.

Politics in the Orbaume Kingdom changed depending on the personality and policies of the new king, but whatever the case, Alda's teachings, the state religion of the Amid Empire that was the enemy nation, should be weak.

『It seems like there are Beast-men and Titans among those who can be selected as kings, so a Dhampir such as Vandalieu should have no problem.』

Darcia had never been to the Orbaume Kingdom herself, so she couldn't be sure. But since there were Beast-men and Titans among the candidates for king's position, it was certain that the Vida's offspring there were treated very differently compared to the ones in the Amid Empire.

And so they were headed towards the Orbaume Kingdom, but they were unable to follow the straightest, shortest path there. They had heard that a war between the Orbaume Kingdom and Amid Empire was close.

『Uhehe, this is a secret okay? It's special, national-secret-level information, okay~?』

The spirit of a spy of the Amid Empire who had died several months ago and gone slightly insane told them this.

Vandalieu actually wondered whether he should believe him or not, but it would be terrible if he ignored him only to find that the war had already started when he reached border between Mirg and Orbaume. Of course, there would be increased security, and even if he managed to get through it to sneak out of this country, he wasn't sure if he could sneak into the next.

Convincing a suspicious soldier that they weren't spies of the enemy would be no easy task. In fact, the soldiers would immediately assume that they were a small group of Undead. There would be no Monster Tamer that they could spot with a single glance, so instead of「Let's try talking to them first」they would surely think「Let's get rid of them first.」

「If I'm lucky, they'd take me into custody, but I don't want the Undead that I took the time to raise to be destroyed, and who knows what they'd do if they found Mom.」

Vandalieu was just a fourteen-month-old child, so if they didn't pulverize everything including the carriage from long range using offensive magic, he would probably be taken into custody, but that was impossible for the Undead.

As for Darcia, she was unlikely to be discovered as there was probably no soldier with the Necromancer job, but if they took the bone she was residing in and buried it, she might just disappear this time.

For that reason, they were not heading north-east to the Mirg country that was closest to the Orbaume Kingdom's border, but were rather heading south-east towards the southern part of the continent, the area covered in high mountains and Devil's Nests.

「Crossing high mountains and Devil's Nests will be difficult, but it's still better than coming into contact with humans.」

This was also often true on Earth too. Humans were the most fearsome creatures of all, and this was probably true for his situation right now.

Incidentally, the reason why Vandalieu hadn't trained any Golems or Zombies till now was because he had been planning for this journey.

The movements of Golems were sluggish, and if he made them big to cover for that, they would be conspicuous, even in the middle of the night. Zombies were the same; their movements were also very sluggish. In movies on Earth, he had seen Zombies that could run at the same speed as athletes, but you shouldn't expect fiction-like things in reality. Yes, this world was a fantasy world, but it was also reality.

Also, in the case of Zombies, he would have to use the corpses of the bandits

or Orbie and his companions, and they were hardly faces that he wanted to look at all day. This was another very important factor.

And so, Vandalieu's little group was composed of just bones.

Vandalieu's travels, except for the fact that they couldn't move around while the sun was up, was progressing smoothly. During the day, they hid in forests away from the highway, and resumed their travels once night fell. If there were some peddlers or adventurers that were travelling along at night, they would go off the highway and continue on, and do the same when there were guard stations or checkpoints in the way...

Even though they were making steady progress, their pace was less than half that of a normal traveler, but that couldn't be helped.

「I want to hurry and be able to travel boldly in the middle of the highway.」

He hadn't done anything wrong (except for his revenge); it was such an unfair world.

He had to worry about the risk of beasts, monsters or even bandits attacking them if they travelled off the highway, though that was quite rare. Just from seeing Bone Man or Bone Monkey protecting the carriage from far away, beasts and bandits would be discouraged from approaching.

The wild beasts such as wolves and bears instinctively feared monsters except in cases where the monster was plainly weaker than them. Bandits were the same. Their targets were merchants and travelers, not monsters.

Of course, by defeating monsters you could expect some gains like ingredients and experience points. But if they had the skills to take on monsters, they would be working as adventurers, not as bandits.

And as for monsters themselves, there weren't many monsters that attacked other Undead monsters, especially skeleton types that were made of just bones.

The primary reason for a monster attacking another monster was to feed, but skeletons didn't have any edible parts.

There were other reasons such as territorial disputes and self-defense, but

Vandalieu and the others never invaded the habitats or entered too far into the territory of other monsters, so the monsters would not do much other than wait and see.

「Gigyaaah!」

Well, from time to time monsters with low judgment capabilities decided to attack them.

Bone Wolf dragged a twitching, almost-dead Goblin in front of the carriage's wheels.

The Goblin was crushed with a loud crunch.

「We haven't been able to gain levels these days by killing monsters like Goblins, huh.」

Vandalieu didn't pay the Goblin any attention as he left it behind. He didn't bother searching for a Magic Stone, let alone the right ear that adventurers took to prove that they had killed the monster.

Darcia had told him that because the chances of finding a Magic Stone on a Rank 1 monster was less than one in a hundred, even many higher-rank adventurers didn't bother searching monsters like Goblins for them. Since Vandalieu had no way of even exchanging the Magic Stones for money, he decided to follow their example.

What concerned him more was the difficulty he was having in raising the levels of his Undead.

When they were Rank 1, their levels increased even when they killed a single monster together, even sharing the experience between all of them. But now, killing numerous monsters without sharing experience didn't even yield one level.

The Rank 2 carriage still increased in levels after running over some Goblins, but the levels of the Rank 3 Undead weren't increasing at all.

「I suppose I have to kill more bandits after all. Though I want the carriage to be Rank 3 before we cross the mountain range.」

『Vandalieu, Rank 3 is normally considered quite strong, you know? It would

take several normal Rank 2 people to drive away one Rank 3 monster.』

A Rank 3 monster was so threatening that it could still trample one-sidedly over a group of normal people. At the very least, even normal citizens who were proud of their fighting skills or physically strong town guards wouldn't stand a chance.

「But Mom, there aren't going to be any normal people in the place we're going to, and since I can't get any stronger myself right now, I want everyone to get stronger instead.」

『I suppose that's true~ though you're able to make Golems quickly, so you'll be fine.』

This mother of Vandalieu's was an easy-going person, even after death.

The Amid Empire had been founded by the descendants of Bellwood, a hero who was guided to this world long ago.

The hero Bellwood had stood on the frontlines with the people who were forced to do battle against the Demon King's forces, and fought bravely. Within ten days of coming to this world, he had defeated a Dragon and rescued a nobleman's daughter and the First Lady who had been captured.

Within a month, he had repelled a large army of Giants together with the Second Lady who was a warrior. Within half a year he had fought the Knights of Darkness that the Demon King had sent while protecting the Third Lady who was a Priestess and prevailed. And finally, after ten years, he defeated the Demon King, even as Zakkart and the other heroes were lost, bringing peace to the world. It is said that he and the other surviving heroes offered their wisdom to help rebuild what had been destroyed.

Much of the heroes' wisdom had been lost, but what remained was the hiragana, katakana and kanji that was the commonly-used writing in this world, and the Amid Village that eventually became the Amid Empire.

And Balschmidt, the great First Emperor of the Amid Empire who appeared tens of thousands of years later, was a direct descendant of the hero Bellwood.

「It sounds made-up and unpleasant.」

Vandalieu closed the book that had been mixed in with the bandits' treasure and threw it away violently.

In Lambda, where the technology for printing presses didn't exist, every book was a written copy. Therefore, they were quite high-class items.

But Vandalieu didn't see even a single copper coin's worth of value in the tales written about the actions of Bellwood, the hero who had founded the Amid Empire, and the First Emperor Balschmidt.

Firstly, the whole thing sounded like nonsense.

The proof that the First Emperor of the Amid Empire was a direct descendant of the hero was incredibly questionable. Surely there was no way to prove a relationship with an ancestor who had lived a hundred thousand years ago. The book had covered this up with stories about destiny, prophetic dreams and an illusion of the hero himself appearing and speaking to the emperor.

Secondly, it was unpleasant because it made Vandalieu feel envious.

The hero Bellwood… He was probably known as Suzuki in Japan[1]. He had manifested cheat-like abilities or something as soon as he arrived in Lambda, and within ten days he had been known as a Dragon-slaying hero who had rescued the princess. Within a month, six months, he had continued piling up achievements and connections and after ten years, he was known as a great hero.

What was Vandalieu compared to that? He couldn't help but to ask this question to himself.

Fifteen months had passed since he was born. The only member of the other sex that he had talked to was his own mother. It seemed impossible that he could become a great hero within ten years.

Of course, the hero Suzuki probably endured hardships and suffering of his own; he had survived the battle with his life on the line, after all. Even so, Vandalieu is all too aware of the difference between receiving a god's blessing and being cursed by the god instead.

「This is all Rodcorte's fault as well.」

『You're right, it's all this god Rodcorte's fault. But even so, I'm a little thankful. It was that god who made you my child, Vandalieu.』

「Mom...」

His splintered heart began to heal a little. Vandalieu reconsidered, thinking that perhaps he should at least be thankful to Rodcorte for making Darcia his mother.

But if it weren't for Rodcorte's curse, he would be able to use death-attribute magic at the level that he had been using it just before he died for the second time in Origin. He would be able to employ countless Golems freely, manipulate many spirits simultaneously, turn an entire lake of water into deadly poison or reverse the process, turning deadly poison into pure water. If he had been able to do all these things, perhaps Darcia wouldn't have had to die. When he thought about that, any gratitude that he might have felt towards Rodcorte was blown away.

The carriage that had been proceeding along a side road to avoid being spotted suddenly stopped.

「What is it?」

Due to his【Danger Sense: Death】magic, he knew that they weren't in an emergency situation such as being surrounded by enemies or attacked by a powerful monster. That magic detected not only poisonous mushrooms and plants, but also the bloodlust given off by monsters and humans.

Therefore, he shouldn't be in a dangerous situation… or so Vandalieu thought as he poked his head out from inside the carriage to see a gate that led underground.

「A gate? A base used by bandits… it's a little too well-built to be something like that. Is it some kind of ruins?」

As Vandalieu tilted his head sideways, it was Sam who told him what the gate was.

『Goshujin-sama, I believe this may be a Dungeon.』

「A Dungeon?」

『Yes, it is a Dungeon.』

Because Vandalieu was inside the carriage, he couldn't see Sam, but he could hear his voice clearly.

Dungeons. They were originally breeding facilities created by the Demon King to multiply his monster subordinates and increase their individual strength. Afterwards, Ricklent, the genie of time and magic, used his secret magic to turn them into places that humans could use to train and obtain materials.

The basic principle behind their appearance was that when a certain place was corrupted with a certain amount of magic, there was a corresponding probability that a Dungeon would form. Their shape, size and degree of danger varied greatly, and some of the first Dungeons that had appeared over a hundred thousand years ago still hadn't been discovered yet.

There were Dungeons that only consisted of one floor that couldn't be distinguished from a normal cave, home to only weak monsters like Goblins, but there were also enormous fortress-like Dungeons with over a hundred floors, crawling with high-rank monsters that even A-class adventurers would have a tough time getting through.

And as the requirement for the formation of a Dungeon was for magical power to contaminate the earth, most Dungeons existed only in Devil's Nests…

「Is this place a Devil's Nest?」

『Probably not. If this were a Devil's Nest, we would be seeing a lot more monsters coming out. This is likely a rare Dungeon that has appeared outside a Devil's Nest.』

As Darcia said, Dungeons forming in normal forests and fields were rare, but not unheard of. But in such cases, the Dungeons were often not very dangerous.

But if left alone for too long, the monsters multiplying inside the Dungeon would eventually emerge from it and turn the surrounding area into a Devil's Nest.

There were apparently continents in Lambda whose entire land surface and surrounding oceans had become Devil's Nests due to this process repeating

numerous times.

「So then there should be a lot of monsters in here that aren't too strong. Judging from the grass growing thickly in front of the gate, it seems that adventurers haven't been here in a while… Alright, let's stop by and go inside.」

Dungeons. The fantasy-like sound to the word and the sense of adventure excited Vandalieu.

Though the ones who would actually do the adventuring and fighting the monsters would be Bone Man and the other Undead.

That couldn't be helped, since he was still only fifteen months old.

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Around the time that Vandalieu was preparing to enter his first Dungeon, Degan, the guildmaster of the Adventurers' Guild in the town of Terow was watching three adventurers glaring at each other with a troubled look on his face.

The three people here were each a leader of an adventurer party that was well known here in Terow.

Cashew, the leader of the D-class adventurers' party, the『Wind Chasers.』Barn, the leader of a similar party called the『Steel Wings.』And Miranda, the leader of the『White Stars.』

It was safe to say that none of them were famous on the national level in the country of Mirg, and none of their abilities surpassed the D-class level. However, in this modestly-sized commercial town of Terow where there were no Devil's Nests nearby, they were top-class adventurers.

In fact, they had repelled bandit attacks numerous times and overcome the explosive increase in the Kobold population. They were known as heroes here in Terow.

They had accepted a request to exterminate a lost Ogre together and searched the forest near Terow, and had discovered a Dungeon on the way back.

Only the members here, the town's feudal lord and his aide knew about this,

but Degan was ecstatic as this was a big opportunity to develop the town.

Indeed, the Dungeon was dangerous. If left alone, monsters might emerge from it and advance onto the town.

But if adventurers were to venture into it from time to time to thin out the monster numbers, it was essentially a chicken that laid an unlimited amount of golden eggs. The fact that monsters spawned without limit meant that there was a limitless amount of raw materials to be obtained from them, as well as precious plants and ores that could only be found inside Dungeons. Not to mention the treasure chests that appeared in Dungeons that could yield valuable magic items.

Adventurers seeking this Dungeon would gather in the town, and in turn, merchants seeking the gold that the adventurers would spend would also gather here, and thus the town would develop.

And if the Dungeon was cleared in this way, it would become a resource with greater returns than the risk.

With that said, there were also Dungeons in Lambda with only monsters such as Goblins that yielded only small amounts of raw materials and treasure boxes with poor contents, the kind of Dungeons that only caused trouble just by existing.

Would this be one of those failures, or a great success? Most importantly, adventurers would need to be deployed into the Dungeon to determine how dangerous it is, and there was an unspoken understanding that the adventurers who had discovered the Dungeon would have the first rights to it.

Of course, in cases where adventurers that were not hunters or otherwise not confident in their abilities discovered the Dungeon, they could sell the rights to explore the Dungeon first through the Adventurers' Guild.

In cases where multiple adventurer parties discovered the Dungeon together, they often negotiated with money or performed the first exploration together.

「We『Wind Chasers』will explore the Dungeon first!」(Cashew)

「What are you saying! We『Steel Wings』are more suitable for the task!」(Barn)

「Leave it to us, the『White Stars!』The rest of you can go and collect some Goblin ears or something!」(Miranda)

However, it seemed that these adventurers had no intention of coming to a compromise, and expecting them to join forces seemed hopeless.

「This is a problem. Though I suppose that they were competing against each other since the very start...」(Degan)

For a long time, these three adventurer parties had been competing with one another for the title of the best adventurer group in the town. However, they had a proper sense of morals as adventurers, so they had worked together to overcome the Kobold population problem in the past, but that was all.

The Dungeon that had been discovered had no evidence that any monsters had wandered outside from within, so there was no hurry to explore it. Also, Dungeons that appeared outside of Devil's Nests were generally not very dangerous and small in size.

Therefore, there was no need to cooperate; any one party could take the Dungeon on without a problem.

In fact, if the first exploration of the Dungeon was successful, the party that completed it would be viewed favorably by the Adventurers' Guild and may even be able to increase their rank to C-class. It was a chance for one party to surpass the other two.

「We『Wind Chasers』have members that are good at disarming traps! The best your party's Thieves can do is conceal their presence and scout, hardly suitable for exploring a Dungeon!」(Cashew)

「What the hell are you saying, Cashew?! Your party has no Healers; exploring a Dungeon relying only on potions is too dangerous! In that regard, we『Steel Wings』have two Healers who can heal injuries, remove poison and cure diseases on the spot!」(Barn)

「What are you talking about? It seems that in short, you have a bad balance in members. I'll tell you this, we『White Stars』are a perfectly balanced party with one person on attack and one on defense, an Archer and a Thief, an offensive Mage and a Healer! You should leave the first exploration of the

Dungeon to us!」(Miranda)

Seeing these three giving each other angry looks, with a fistfight that could break out at any moment, Degan pressed his fingertips against his eyebrows.

「You three… we've been having this conversation for three days now.」(Degan)

Perhaps this would be settled faster if a fistfight really did break out. It took everything in Degan to resist the temptation to suggest this.

Notes

1. The kanji for the name 鈴木/Suzuki is literally "bell" and "tree/wood"

Chapter 9: The second life that begins after death

My name is Sam. I was once a coachman who looked after horses for a certain nobleman.

Serving a nobleman is not as prosperous a lifestyle as commoners may think (well, I am a commoner myself). However, I had to take care not to embarrass my master, lest his reputation be questioned, and so I was provided with a proper uniform and I was guaranteed meals to eat each day.

In that regard, I was indeed blessed.

I am especially happy with the fact that I met my wife who was working at his mansion, and under my master's encouragement, I wed her and was blessed with two daughters.

My older daughter Saria was well-mannered, and my younger daughter Rita grew up to be energetic and cheerful.

And then my daughters also entered the employment of the same noble family as I, and we were truly happy.

However, one winter, my wife was among those afflicted by an epidemic and passed away within a few days. Before I even had time to recover from the sadness of that event, my master lost his footing on the stairs and also passed away, and someone else took his place.

The one who succeeded that noble family seemed to be unhappy with the previous generation's ways. They declared that they would be changing the servants, and my daughters and I were dismissed.

I thought that for me, who has only looked after horses and been a coachman all my life, it would be possible for me to live as a coachman for a stagecoach in the city, and decided to boldly enter an unfamiliar land.

My daughters, too, followed me in hope of finding good marriage proposals and employment in the city.

However, in the midst of our journey, we were attacked by a group of bandits. My daughters were violated by those beasts before my very eyes, and then we were killed. Our bodies were burned so as not to attract animals and monsters, and then thrown away. That must have been incredibly harsh; Saria and Rita still have their appearance from the time that they were burned.

Of course, we resented those bandits. We lingered here, intending to stay until we saw their destruction. If there had been a Devil's Nest nearby, we might have been transformed into evil spirits by its Mana.

However, we simply felt pure hatred for those men, and the days went by with us not being able to do anything.

And then one day, my current master Vandalieu-sama and his servants attacked their hideout and slaughtered them all.

So I myself am now one of Goshujin-sama's servants. One would never expect to be living a second life after death.

And the fact that this horse-caretaker and coachman is now in a dungeon is very surprising.

『Goshujin-sama, I have heard that strong monsters appear more frequently inside Dungeons than outside. Please let me know if you feel that it is too dangerous.』

My new body is the carriage that the bandits stole from me. However, it is a three-horse carriage with its width as its only redeeming quality, and other than the cloth roof overhead, it is no different from a wagon.

But since I am haunting it, despite it being a horse-drawn carriage, it can move backwards if needed. It is therefore easy to make an escape.

「Alright. By the way, I was thinking about this earlier... Can you not call me Goshujin-sama?」

My master Vandalieu speaks to me from the back of the carriage, but what would he like me to call him instead?

『Would Obocchan[1] be preferable?』

「No, that's not it...」

『Vandalieu is just shy. After all, there aren't many spirits who would speak to him of their own accord like you, Sam-san.』(Darcia)

『Is that so? I see.』

As Vandalieu-sama's mother Darcia-sama says, none of his servants other than me can talk to him. This is not a matter of courtesy or manners; they are actually unable to speak.

Bone Man and Bone Monkey are haunted with the spirits of small animals, not people. They can convey their general feelings, but not speak words.

「Gyaaaah!」

Also, nobody but Vandalieu-sama can see them, but he is also being followed by countless spirits, including my daughters. However, though they would respond if Vandalieu-sama were to talk to them, they are unable to speak to him themselves.

This is because when one becomes a spirit, it is very easy to become dominated by a single emotion, and without intervention, it is normal to repeat the same behavior endlessly. My daughters are no exception.

「Gehyiii!」

『However, since I am Bocchan's servant, it is only natural that I should show respect to you. And... If I were to behave like Bone Man and the others, you would be displeased, would you not?』

Bone Man's outward appearance is that of a human skeleton. However, since the spirits inside him are those of small animals, Bocchan sometimes pats him and spoils him in his free time.

「Gigyagagagaga!」

Since Bocchan can see spirits, he does not seem discomforted by this, but there would be a problem if it were me.

『If I, a middle-aged man in his forties with thinning hair, were to say

“Bocchan, pet me~♪” or something of that sort, he would most certainly feel hesitant about that.』

「Ah... Indeed. Then, “Bocchan” will be fine.」

He looks strangely unsatisfied, but we have come to an agreement.

「Gugeeeh!」

Incidentally, the unpleasant death cries that have been rising up are those of the Goblin Soldiers that I have been running over.

Goblin Soldiers are Rank 2 monsters, Goblins that have developed enough intelligence to hold weapons.

Rank 1 Goblins also wield sticks sometimes, but they are nothing more than tree branches; one cannot say that they have any kind of technique.

Even if a Goblin were to luckily get its hands on a sword or a spear, it would swing it no differently from a tree branch.

Goblin Soldiers are Goblins that are capable of wielding a sword like a sword, a spear like a spear and a stick like a stick. However, their skill is amateur-level, and any skilled, experienced adventurer or soldier would be able to defeat them one-on-one.

They are quite similar in appearance to regular Goblins, so apparently there are incidents where farmers and hunters carelessly try to drive them away and become overwhelmed.

However, these Goblin Soldiers are not worthy enemies to face Bone Man, Bone Wolf and Bone Bird who have already become a Rank 3 Skeleton Soldier, Bone Beast and Phantom Bird.

As they appear, they have their heads split by a sword, are torn to pieces by fangs and shot down by spirit feathers.

The Undead throw the ones that are still barely breathing in front of my wheels. Thanks to this, I am also able to attain some Experience Points.

「Gegih, gigigigigigeh!」

Their organs are crushed with a squelch and their bones crunch and crumble

beneath the wheels. What a – wonderful sensation.

『Though I am embarrassed to admit it, I may become addicted to this.』

「I hope you don't, it would be a problem if we were to run someone over by accident. Ah, but it's alright to run over bandits.」

『Thank you very much.』

I will crush bandits beneath my wheels. My heart beats with excitement just imagining this.

Incidentally, Bone Monkey and Bone Bear are protecting the back of the carriage while prudently checking to see if any Magic Stones have been generated. Since they are Rank 2 monsters, around one in five monsters drop Magic Stones.

『For Goblin Soldiers and Goblin Archers to be appearing on the first floor, it seems that this is a rather dangerous dungeon after all.』

Goblin Archers are Goblins that wield bows and arrows instead of melee weapons, and are also Rank 2 monsters.

「... I don't feel any danger, though.」

『It may seem that way because the Undead are defeating them as soon as they appear, but it is quite unusual to encounter more than fourteen monsters right after entering a Dungeon. Well, this is also my first time being in a Dungeon as well.』

Darcia-sama was an adventurer in her past life, but it seems that she acted solo, so she does not have any experience in clearing Dungeons.

『However, this number of monsters may be because not many adventurers have attempted to clear this Dungeon.』

『That happens?』

『Occasionally. When there are wars and the adventurers have to work as mercenaries, or when there is a large-scale emergency request and more people are needed, or when there is no profit to be had from a Dungeon so adventurers are unmotivated to clear it.』

「Well, if the only monsters that appear are Goblins, then it's not likely that they would be rewarded for their efforts. Humans are creatures that don't act if there is no benefit for them.」

『You are wise, Bocchan; you do not seem like a one-year-old child at all, so please take care around other people.』

『You're right, but he does keep talking like an adult. Even though he never actually became an adult in his previous life or the one before that, so I wonder who he learned it from. Ah, it seems that I've reached my limit today, so I'm counting on you, Sam-san. Good night, Vandalieu.』

『Certainly.』

「Good night, Mom.」

Even as Darcia-sama goes to rest in the bone that contains her spirit, we continue our expedition into this Dungeon.

However, there are no fierce battles unfolding, and our exploration goes smoothly.

The first level's walls and floor were made of stone and only Goblin Soldiers and Archers have been appearing. There were fourteen of them, but the only casualty we have suffered was a chip in the blade of Bone Man's sword.

Our spoils are six Magic Stones.

The second floor seems more like a natural cave, and though the first floor's ceiling was glowing a little, the second floor is pitch-black.

Adventurer parties would normally use torches, lanterns or the【Torch】spell, but all of us, including Bocchan, possess the【Dark Vision】skill. We can see more clearly in complete darkness than in dim lighting, so this is actually more beneficial for us.

The monsters that are appearing are monsters that are like animals and bugs whose body lengths have grown over a meter, such as Giant Bats, Giant Moles, Giant Worms and Giant Spiders. Goblins are not appearing here. All of the monsters other than the Giant Spiders are Rank 1, and even if we were to find ourselves in a nest of the Rank 2 Spiders, we would defeat them easily, so we

do not have much trouble at all.

However, there are no raw materials to be obtained and these monsters are particularly unsuitable for eating.

The only thing we attained was a single Magic Stone from a Giant Spider.

The third floor that we have descended to is a wetland. Despite our surprise, the sight and smell of water and dirt are real. When we look up at the sky, there is even a sun-like light source.

While we are still wondering whether we could possibly still be underground, Darcia-sama awoke and informed us,「Dungeons are apparently these kinds of places.」

If she says so, then that must be the case, I thought. But Bocchan had his head tilted to one side for a while.

Putting that aside, the monsters appearing on the third floor are all Rank 1 monsters that one might expect to see in a wetland, such as Giant Slugs, Big Frogs, Giant Leeches, Giant Lizards, so I assumed that it would be easy for us.

However, we encounter Rank 2 monsters further in. Acid Slugs, slugs that release acidic mucus. Poison Frogs that secrete neurotoxins from their tongues. Dagger Finches, small birds with quick movements and a sharp beak that could easily pierce a human’s body.

Though these monsters are Rank 1 and 2, they are clearly much more dangerous enemies than Goblin Soldiers. However, they still have no chance against Bone Man and the others, who are Rank 3.

Our only casualty was Bone Man’s sword, which fell to pieces when he swung it at an Acid Slug, mistaking it for a Giant Slug.

Having Bone Man’s weapons degrade every time he cuts one of the Acid Slugs down is a waste, so Bocchan buried them alive using Mud Golems; the rest of the enemies were easily defeated. Poison does not work against the Undead who are made of just bones, and even when the Dagger Finches poke holes in the bones, the damaged bones are easily replaced.

Of course, the same applies for me, since my body is a carriage. Having some

holes poked in my canopy does not affect me in the slightest.

「The one who has to sew it back together later is me, though.」

『I apologize, Bocchan.』

Our harvest is seven Rank 2 Magic Stones as well as the hind legs and internal organs of the Giant Frogs and Poison Frogs. And the beaks of the Dagger Finches. These beaks can easily become a knife blade or a spearhead just by attaching a handle.

The hind legs of two species of frog are a great delicacy, and their organs are used as ingredients in medicines.

The dismantling of the monsters was conducted by Bone Monkey and Bone Man. They crushed several organs and broke a number of beaks, but overall it went quite well.

『Will you make medicine, Bocchan?』

「I don't know how, so that's impossible. For now, I'll use the【Preservation】spell on them and keep them in a sack.」

Using death-attribute magic, it is possible to preserve for several years the organs that would normally spoil very easily. How very convenient.

「I'll have grilled frog legs for food today. First, let's start a fire.」

『Bocchan, you will not use【Demon Light】?』

「Unfortunately,【Demon Light】doesn't produce any heat. Actually, it absorbs heat, so it'll actually get colder.」

But it seems even death-attribute magic is not omnipotent. Though at least he can stay cool in the summer.

Bone Monkey burned one of the legs, but Bocchan said they were delicious as he enjoyed them.

「It tastes better than rabbit blood.」

Bocchan, that comparison is not helpful at all.

The fourth floor is another cave, and the monsters that appear here are all Undead. They are not Rank 1 Living Dead and Living Bones, but powerful Rank 3

Skeleton Soldiers, Zombie Warriors, Bone Beasts and Wraiths that are immune to physical attacks.

『Oh, such terrifying undying beasts.』

「Sam, you're an Undead as well.」

『Now that you mention it, you are correct.』

It seems that we are in for a difficult battle this time, but as I am about to suggest that we return to the previous floor to think of a strategy, something surprising happens.

The Skeletons and Zombies move aside and make a path for us.

「I can pass through?」

The Skeletons with blue flames in their eye sockets and the muddy-eyed Zombies give a groan as if to answer Bocchan's question, and drop their weapons.

Their rusty weapons drop onto the ground with an echoing clang, and there is no further response from these Undead.

「Sam, everyone, let's move on.」

『Is this alright? Perhaps it is some kind of trap?』

「I don't sense any bloodthirst, so I think it's fine.」

I trust in Bocchan's【Danger Sense: Death】magic and proceed onwards, and the Undead really do not attempt to attack us.

Other than slowly picking their weapons back up as we pass, they show no further movements.

『I'm sure those guys came to like Vandalieu, too!』

『As expected of Bocchan.』

「Well, isn't it just the normal effect of my【Death Attribute Charm】skill? Though I didn't expect it to work on already-raised Undead.」

This fourth floor contains nothing but Undead monsters that show no signs of wanting to attack Bocchan, so we continue our expedition with no obstructions.

Of course, we do not attain any Magic Stones and such either, but compared to having to fight against Rank 3 monsters, this is a welcome turn of events.

『Vandalieu, it's a treasure chest. Treasure chests really appear in Dungeons, don't they~?』

『So it seems. Just who would leave them there?』

『I don't know about that. Maybe they're the Demon King's traps to lure humans into danger, or the Genie Ricklent's way of motivating humans to improve themselves by giving them the treasure chests as a reward for their training; there are a few theories.』

It seems that treasure chests appear in Dungeons depending on the floor. It is unknown as to why they appear, but valuable goods are contained within them and they are fuel that warms the hearts of adventurers.

Of course, the treasure chests are locked and sometimes there are traps set on them. Getting through those is the Job of a Thief, but we have no Thieves among us.

「Well, I guess we'll open it... Awaken.」

Even so, Bocchan finds a way. Even without a Thief, he can have spirits haunt the treasure chest itself and have it open the lock and undo the traps itself.

It costs ten thousand Mana to open one treasure chest. Therefore, this is a method well-suited for Bocchan, who possesses a tremendous Mana pool.

「The contents are... What is this? On first glance, it seems like poison.」

What is contained in the treasure chest is a blue fluid in an expensive glass bottle. Oh, if this isn't a Potion, and quite a high-class one!

『Bocchan, this is no poison. It is a Potion!』

「A Potion, you mean an item that heals injuries?」

『That's right, if you drink it or apply it to wounds, they heal right away, so they're essential items for adventurers.』

『Yes, Darcia-sama. I have never seen such a high-quality product, even in the noble family that I once served!』

Potions have a number of grades, and the typical 5th-grade Potion heals for thirty Vitality. Most merchants and soldiers carry one of these with them, and adventurers and mercenaries always include them as part of their inventory.

However, 4th-grade Potions are more expensive, and noblemen have 3rd-grade potions in reserve. Of course, these Potions have effects reflecting their high price.

『You can tell a quality of a Potion by its color. The brighter blue it is, the higher quality. If it's darker, it's lower quality. This color should be a 2nd-grade Potion, I suppose.』

『To find a 2nd-grade Potion, one must find it at a store in a large city such as the imperial capital of the Amid Empire, or order it directly from a skilled Alchemist. The price for one of these will not be any lower than 100,000 Amid.』

「100,000... How is its effect?」

『It won't let you regrow a limb that's been cut off, but it should heal most wounds you apply it to.』

『If you drink it, it will heal not only your injuries, but also relieve fatigue and restore a little Mana. It will also cure some poisons and illnesses.』

「What about the taste?」

『... The higher quality the Potion, the worse it tastes.』

『Indeed, there was a legendary adventurer who once drank a high-grade Potion and fell unconscious due to its terrible taste. When he opened his eyes, he said that it would have been better if he had died.』

With that in mind, I cannot blame Bocchan for mistaking the Potion for poison at first.

「They say that good medicine is bitter to the tongue, but isn't that a little *too* bitter?」

I did not have the experience of drinking a Potion while I was alive, and I am fortunate that I am unable to drink it now.

It seems that Bocchan has also realized that this Potion is not to be consumed.

Following this, we found more treasure chests and attained the treasure inside. All of the items contained inside them seemed considerably high-class items. With that said, I cannot be sure, as I am but a horse-caretaker and a coachman, and cannot judge the value of some items.

「This is... probably a Magic Item. This is probably also a Magic Item. Ah, this is just a gem... no, could it be a Magic Item?」

『Bocchan, you are saying “probably” quite frequently.』

「I’m just over a year old; I hope you’re not expecting me to have a good eye for judging these things.」

『But if you include your previous life and the one before that, are you not almost forty years of age?』

Several days ago, Bocchan told Darcia-sama, my daughters and myself about his circumstances. Though it was surprising to hear, he possesses a tremendous Mana pool for a one-year-old, even if he is a Dhampir. Furthermore, he is using some unknown magic that nobody has taught him. These things are far more surprising.

Of course, Bocchan also explained the future risks that he faces, but neither Darcia-sama nor I feel any intention of separating ourselves from him.

To me, Bocchan is my savior and master. Bocchan requires my carriage, so how can I abandon my duty?

Furthermore, if I were to separate myself from Bocchan, I would be nothing but a stray Undead monster.

「That might be true, but there was no magic on Earth, and even though there was magic in Origin, I never touched a Magic Item. Well, to be precise, I never touched a Magic Item other than laboratory equipment.」

That is why Bocchan says that he had no chance to become good at appraising items or detecting Mana.

We find items one after another. A knife, a dagger, a broadsword, silver accessories, a ring with a gemstone embedded in it. However, Bocchan cannot tell anything about them other than that they have some Mana imbued in

them, so he cannot tell how valuable they are.

Also, Darcia-sama informed us,「Treasure chests often contain normal knives and stone necklaces, so we should be satisfied that we are finding any Magic Items at all.」

And as we descend into the fifth floor, we find ourselves in another home of the Undead.

「... Koooh.」

「Bumoooh...」

They are Rank 4 Undead, even stronger than the Rank 3 Undead that appeared on the fourth floor.

A skeleton warrior with its entire body dyed red by the blood of its victims, a Red Skull. An Orc Zombie that has even more brute strength than when it was alive. A Zombie that can use magic even after it has become Undead, a Lesser Lich.

And finally, a Living Armor that bears the hatred of the dead, moving around even though nobody is wearing it.

「Koooh.」

「Ah, thanks. Excuse us.」

However, like the Undead on the fourth floor, these Rank 4 Undead move close to the wall to open the way for Bocchan.

「Ah, stop, Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf. I have a feeling there are traps on the floor.」

The only obstacles in our way are the traps set in the Dungeon. However, with Bocchan's【Danger Sense: Death】, we can detect and disarm them.

「I feel death in that wide space on the floor, so it's probably a pitfall? If I make a Golem and cover the floor, we should be fine.」

He makes a Golem from the wall and covers the floor with it, nullifying the trap. This method of dealing with traps is only possible for Bocchan.

「Well then, shall we continue?」

We discover even more treasure chests on this fifth floor than the fourth floor, and attain a number of treasures.

And then we open a conspicuously large door to find an enormous room in which a very powerful monster has been waiting.

It is a Skeleton General, over two meters tall, wearing golden armor. It is holding an axe that could easily cut a cow in half, and a shield as sturdy as a castle wall.

It is so impressive that it is difficult to believe its body is made of only bones; it is enough to send a chill down a spine that I do not possess.

And around the Skeleton General are ten suits of Living Armor, like knights serving their master.

『This must be a Dungeon Boss.』

According to Darcia-sama, who has just awakened, Bosses always appears in a Dungeon.

Bosses that appear at the bottom floor are particularly difficult to defeat compared to Bosses that may appear on other floors.

「Ooooh...」

「Thank you for your courtesy. Eh? You're giving that to me? That's helpful, but is that really alright?」

But like the other Undead we have encountered so far, not only does the Skeleton General let us pass, but he also offers the sharp-bladed axe and shield in its hands in his devotion to Bocchan.

「I feel bad for receiving a weapon and shield for free, so I'll give you this in return.」

Bocchan retrieves a battleaxe and large shield from inside the carriage and hands it to the Skeleton General. They are among the better-made items that the bandits were using, but they are not Magic Items. They are normal equipment made of metal.

「Just these won't quite do, so...」

With that, Bocchan produces a large amount of Mana from his body. It takes great effort to not have my consciousness swept away by its pressure. Bone Bird stops flying and falls onto the ground.

Right before my eyes, Bocchan's Mana is poured into the battleaxe, the large shield, and also the Skeleton General and Living Armors.

「OOOOH!」

The Skeleton General trembles in pleasure as its white skull is dyed black, and the Living Armors begin to emit a sinister aura.

『Bocchan, it seems they have ranked up... Just what have you done?』

「I just used【Enhanced Bloodshed】and【Energy Absorption】with about ten thousand times more Mana than usual... Why is that? Maybe death-attribute magic is just too compatible with Undead. Next time I'll try it on Bone Man and the others.」

If he can cause monsters to rank up by expending 100,000 Mana, it will be easy for Bocchan, who possesses over 100,000,000 Mana, to strengthen his followers; this is a wonderful discovery.

「I'll try making Living Armor when I get my hands on some good armor, too. Bone Man can't equip metal armor, after all.」

Because Bone Man's body is made of only bones, he can equip flexible armor like leather armor, but he cannot wear metal armor. It is too large for him as he has no flesh, and the armor would shift around too much and get in the way as he moves his body.

Because of that, we cannot use metal equipment except for shields.

The nearby Skeleton General is wearing full plate armor made of metal, but he is a high-rank monster; there is surely some trick behind that.

But rather than trying to figure it out, it is more important for me that Bocchan is planning to make more new Undead.

『Bocchan, if you are planning to do this, please use my daughters. I believe if you were to give them bodies, they would be able to speak as they did when they were alive.』

I think that it would be pitiful for my daughters to be spirits with the appearance of burnt corpses forever, so I take this chance to request that Bocchan uses them.

『Saria and Rita were just maids, so they do not know how to handle weapons, but they can do housework. They are not professional chefs, but they can cook basic things.』

Bocchan blinks and falls silent, and then gives me a reply:「Alright.」

「But this is only going to happen if I get some good armor, so I think you're going to have to wait a while. I can't go into towns to buy some, and most bandits wear leather armor.」

『I understand. Thank you very much, Bocchan.』

I do not know how many months or years it will be, but the day may come where this father and his two daughters can talk to each other like they once did. That is enough hope for me.

However, it seems that wish will be granted sooner than expected. Behind the door past the Skeleton General is a treasure storage room containing about as much treasure as the amount that we have already collected so far.

Inside there are two sets of「good armor」that Bocchan wanted.

『Oh, if this isn't another Magic Item!』

Suits of metal armor with Mana imbued in it. They are designed for female use; where other suits of armor are usually unrefined in shape, these suits of armor have elegant curves and there are decorations embedded into them.

A non-adventurer such as myself would have no idea just what kind of magic is imbued in these or what kind of ability they have, but I do know that they are beautiful suits of armor.

『Bocchan! Please make my daughters into Living Armors using this!』

「... I just want to make sure, you're alright with this? With these suits of armor? Are you really sure?」

For some reason, Bocchan seems dissatisfied. As I reply,『Of course』, he looks at the armor again with half-closed eyes and whispers.

「... No matter how much this is a fantasy world, I didn't expect there to be suits of armor shaped like high-leg leotards and bikinis.」

『High-leg leotards? Bikinis? Is this what armor of this shape is called on Earth?』

「No, they're swimsuits... I wonder if there are swimsuits in this world. Well, I suppose it's fine. Now that I think about it, it's not worth hesitating over.」

And so Bocchan places Saria in the armor that he referred to as a high-leg leotard and Rita in the one he called a bikini, pours Mana into them and successfully creates Living Armors.

Unexpectedly, the required amount of Mana was over ten times that needed to create Stone Golems, but I am grateful that my daughters have received new bodies.

However, this treasure storage room is a dead end; there is no staircase that continues to the next floor. It seems that this Dungeon is only five floors deep.

Our first Dungeon expedition is finished, and the Skeleton General sees us off as we return the way we came.

On the way back, I crush more Goblins that attack us and attain one of our original goals in coming here – I have now evolved into a Rank 3 Ghost Carriage, which is a happy event.

The most difficult battle I faced in this Dungeon was that with the stairs that I had to go up and down. Bocchan turned them into Golems and made them into a steep slope that I forced my way up and down, but it was rather difficult. I had Bone Monkey and Bone Bear support me when I went down them, and push me when I climbed up.

Now that I have attained the【Rough Road Travel】skill, it is no longer a problem. I wonder why skills are obtained just when the time you need them most is already over.

Today's spoils:

- Rank 2 Magic Stone x14
- Goblin Archer arrow x47

- Giant Frog hind leg x16
- Poison Frog hind leg x5
- Dagger Finch beak x9
- 2nd-grade Potion x2
- 3rd-grade Potion x7
- Iron knife (weak Mana) x3
- Iron dagger (weak Mana) x4
- Buckler made of unknown material (moderate Mana) x1
- Steel broadsword (weak Mana) x1
- Round shield made of unknown material (moderate Mana) x3
- Tower shield made of unknown material (moderate Mana) x1
- Longsword made of mysterious metal (moderate Mana) x1
- Steel spear (weak Mana) x3
- Chainmail (weak Mana) x1
- Half-plate armor made of mysterious metal x1
- Claymore made of mysterious metal (moderate Mana) x1
- Glaive made of mysterious metal (moderate Mana) x1
- Halberd made of mysterious metal (moderate Mana) x1
- Steel battleaxe (weak Mana) x1
- Skeleton General's fine battleaxe (slightly weak Mana) x1
- Skeleton General's fine kite shield (slightly weak Mana) x1
- Various accessories (weak ~ moderate Mana) x many

Normally, we would also receive income from the proof that we killed the monsters, but because we are not adventurers, that is impossible for us.

- Name: Sam
- Rank: 3
- Race: Ghost Carriage
- Level: 3

- Passive skills:
  - Spirit Form: Level 1 (NEW!)
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1 (NEW!)
  - Rough Road Travel: Level 1 (NEW!)

    - Impact Resistance: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Precise Driving: Level 3

- Active skills:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - High-Speed Travel: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Charge: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Ghost Carriages】

These are Undead consisting of a spirit that had lingering regrets in this world and now inhabits a carriage as an evil spirit. Their appearance is that of a carriage driven by horse and coachman made of mist, but the main body of the evil spirit lies in the carriage itself; the horse and coachman are but a manifestation of its spiritual body.

Because of this, the only way to defeat them is to purify the evil spirit or destroy the carriage itself.

Their main method of battle is a ramming attack using the carriage, or rather, this is heir only method of attacking.

However, depending on the type of carriage, there are some with armaments such as spikes attached.

Riding in them is usually impossible as they are often reckless, but if they are ridden, they are said to be very comfortable as they possess the Rough Road Travel and Impact Resistance skills.

As proof of defeating one, a carriage component with a Magic Stone is used. The raw material that can be obtained from it is the Mana-imbued carriage itself. It is seldom used as is, but when disassembled, its components have various uses.

To carry the carriage intact, one would need a horse or a carriage of his own.

Ghost Carriages are fundamentally rare monsters, and do not normally appear in Devil’s Nests. All known incidents of Ghost Carriage appearances that

have occurred were stagecoaches of abandoned areas that have turned into Devil's Nests.

Sam has attained Precise Driving and Silent Steps, which Ghost Carriages cannot normally attain, with the acquisition of the former being due to Sam being a professional coachman during his lifetime and the latter from moving around stealthily since becoming an Undead.

Thus, he has more skilled movements than normal Ghost Carriages and can move around very quietly.

Skill explanation:

【Spirit Form】

This is a skill that allows half-materialization of the soul or spirit, something that does not normally exist physically. The materialized spirit form is visible to the eye and can be touched physically. Though physical attacks do affect the spirit form, over two-thirds of their effects are nullified. Attacks using Magic Items or consecrated weapons are effective.

There are various ways to use the half-materialized spirit form; lower-level use extends to only using it to connect bones in place of cartilage. Just by attaining the skill, one can use it to replace muscle that has rotted and fallen off in order to strengthen the body, or decayed fur and scales in order to improve defense.

To give an example, Bone Bird's materialization of its spirit form over its bone wings allows it to generate the lift required for flight, and it can fire parts of the spirit form as projectiles. Another example is Sam, who has now increased in rank to become a Ghost Carriage, who can use his spirit form to take the shape of a horse to increase the carriage's horsepower.

Yet another example is how the Skeleton General wears his metal armor; the space between the bones and the armor is filled by its spirit form.

Another application of this skill is to manipulate the spirit form without materializing it to have it crawl under another person's skin or penetrate walls.

Notes

1. Means “young master.” For some reason, the respectful “o” at the start of this does not appear in the rest of the chapter; Sam uses “Bocchan” for the rest of the chapter.

Chapter 10: Armor in both hands, speaking of dreams

A week after Vandalieu left, Cashew, leader of the『Wind Chasers』who had obtained the rights to explore the Dungeon first from the Adventurers' Guild, entered said Dungeon with his companions in high spirits.

The prestige and advancement for their party that came with the rights to the first exploration were not the only reasons that they wanted it so badly. The treasures inside the Dungeon were a big draw for them as well.

The Ranks of the monsters that appear in Dungeons and the quality and value of the items that one could obtain from them are fixed to some extent. However, that only applies for Dungeons that have already been discovered and have adventurers enter them regularly.

The longer a Dungeon went with nobody entering and clearing the monsters out, the more the monsters multiplied and killed each other, increasing the levels of those who won such internal conflicts and possibly even increasing their Rank. This would make the Dungeons more difficult, but the value of the items inside would also increase accordingly.

This would be especially true of this Dungeon, as it was an unexplored Dungeon that nobody had ventured into. The first exploration of any Dungeon is a high risk venture, but one that yields high reward.

For this reason, Cashew and his companions had checked their equipment and prepared for the dangers, while at the same time anticipating great rewards for their efforts.

However, what they found was disappointing. On the first floor, only Goblins appeared, with a few Goblin Soldiers and Archers mixed in. They lit their lanterns and proceeded with caution through the second floor, and it gave them no trouble. The third floor was a simple matter of watching their steps through the mud.

「Most of the monsters appearing are Rank 1. There's the occasional Rank 2, but they're few in number.」

「Isn't this one of those low-difficulty F-class dungeons?」

Dungeons are Ranked by the Adventurers' Guild based on their difficulty. This sets a standard for how many adventurers of the same class would need to form a party to clear it.

An F-class Dungeon is the easiest of Dungeons, a labyrinth used as a training ground for novice adventurers.

Of course, the rewards that could be harvested from such a Dungeon would be nothing but pocket change for Cashew and his companions, who were D-class adventurers.

「But why have the Dungeon's stairs turned into ramps? The hardest part about this Dungeon is getting up and down those.」

「Who knows? Maybe it's to train your legs?」

However, once they passed the third floor, they no longer had the leisure to make such idle chat. As they descended into the fourth floor, they were forced to fight for their lives.

「OOOOOOOOOGH.」

「DIIIIIIIIIE!」

「Why are there Rank 3 Zombie Soldiers and Wraiths coming out all of a sudden?!」

「Cashew! There's a Skeleton Archer aiming at us from further inside!」

「Hyiih! There's even a Stone Golem coming this way!」

Up until the third floor, Vandalieu had cleared the monsters once, so there were few Rank 2 monsters. However, he had not defeated a single monster on the fourth floor.

In addition, the Stone Golems that Vandalieu had created to avoid traps had been added to the Dungeon's repertoire of monsters.

And since Cashew and his companions did not possess the【Death Attribute

Charm】skill, the Undead attacked them fiercely.

Cashew's party, the『Wind Chasers』, were aiming for a promotion to C-class, so they had fought not only Rank 3 monsters but even Rank 4 monsters in the past, and they had even combined all of their members' strength to defeat a Rank 5 monster on one occasion. They were veterans that would be able to defeat Rank 3 monsters, even if they were outnumbered two to one.

However, they were not strong enough to be able to continuously fight against an endless swarm of them.

「Shit! We're retreating for now!」

Deciding to make a tactical retreat before sustaining too many losses, Cashew and his party returned to Terow and gave up on conquering the Dungeon on their own, joining forces with the『Steel Wings』and the『White Stars』before challenging the Dungeon once more.

With fifteen D-class adventurers gathered together, they were to get through the fourth floor without difficulty and barely managed to conquer the fifth floor. However, they fought an incredibly difficult battle against the Rank 6 Black Skull General and the ten Rank 4 Cursed Armors.

In the end, they were forced to retreat as well and the Adventurers' Guild commissioned a C-class party for the first clearing of the Dungeon. However, those C-class adventurers were disappointed.

「I had high hopes since this was an uncleared Dungeon, but this is all we get, huh.」

They defeated the Black Skull General safely, but there was no treasure desirable for C-class adventurers in the treasure storage room; the items there were only worth loose change in their eyes.

The weapon and shield used by the Black Skull General was using a problematic Mana absorption ability during the battle, but they fell to pieces as soon as he was defeated, so the adventurers were unable to claim them for themselves.

Undead monsters have a higher chance to yield Magic Stones, but most monsters at Rank 4 and above drop Magic Stones anyway.

They would dismiss this Dungeon as a failure in their disappointment and put it behind them, but they would have never imagined in their wildest dreams that an infant who was not even an adventurer had ventured into the Dungeon and cleared it before them.

Afterwards, this Dungeon was classified as an E-class dungeon and the explanation given for the fact that powerful monsters had appeared below the fourth floor was that the Dungeon had simply been left alone by adventurers for too long.

And then the Dungeon was used to train new adventurers.

***

They were products carefully created by adding metal armor on the outer surface of a monster's hide, but lined with soft monster fur so as to not damage delicate skin. In addition, the mana imbued in them granted all kinds of resistances, so even though they appeared to be thin, fragile items, they were actually sturdier than the average plate armor.

The blue high-leg leotard armor has a V-shaped split above the pointed crotch region, leaving the navel and important internal organs beneath it completely exposed. The chest part would probably only cover two-thirds of one's breasts, and the back is also left bare until just above the buttocks.

The bikini armor is just as lacking in surface area. It also does not cover more than two-thirds of the breasts, and the bottom part is cut quite low, as if it has been taken into consideration that a beast-person with a tail may wish to wear it.

But unlike the swimsuit-like torso portions, the shoulder armor, wrist covers and leg guards are properly made. This imbalance causes the wearer to have an immodest appearance, though perhaps they would be a stimulating sight for anyone who sees them.

Though, this only applies if a woman is wearing it.

「It wasn't anything to be concerned about after all.」

Vandalieu gave an earnest nod as he examined the high-leg armor and bikini armor before him.

Indeed, they were just suits of armor.

The high-leg armor housed the spirit of Sam’s eldest daughter, Saria. The bikini armor was inhabited by his second daughter, Rita.

Both of them were of marriageable age, and according to Sam, they were his two adorable daughters who took after their mother.

『...』

However, now that they inhabited these suits of armor, only these suits of armor could be seen, even for Vandalieu, who possessed an affinity for the death attribute.

However, since their spirits had the appearance of burnt corpses, this was probably for the better.

He had also said this when he had used his daughters to haunt these suits of armor to create Living Armors – Even though these suits of armor were very revealing, not even the tips of his Sam’s daughters’ pinky fingers would be

exposed if they were to be inhabiting these, so there was absolutely no need to worry.

Even if one were to try to peek at their chests, they would see not cleavage, but the inner lining of the armor on the other side.

「Well, I guess it's good enough that I've increased my number of Rank 3 allies. Now then, let's get on with the experiments.」

With these words, Vandalieu began to pour an excess amount of Mana into Saria and Rita. The two of them soaked up hundreds of thousands, millions of Mana colored black with the death attribute.

『...!』

The two of them began to tremble, as if writhing in agony, but even after this continued for quite a while, there was no further change. When Vandalieu checked their statuses, neither their levels nor their Rank had changed. They were still a Living High-Leg Armor and a Living Bikini Armor.

Although for some reason, this process apparently felt pleasant for them.

「As I thought, it's no good.」

He had tried the same thing on Bone Man and the others, but they hadn't undergone any change... Though he did get the feeling that their bones were shinier and the cracks in them had disappeared afterwards.

But the Skeleton General and the Living Armors he had encountered in the Dungeon had become visibly stronger.

『Maybe you haven't met the requirements for them to increase their Rank.』

「Requirements?」

『Yes, I'm not very knowledgeable about how monsters increase their Rank, but if it's like how people's Jobs work, I think there are requirements besides increasing their level.』

According to Darcia, Job changes sometimes required several conditions other than reaching a certain level. For example, even if an adventurer with the Apprentice Mage Job reached level 100, their skill with magic had to be of a certain standard to advance to being a Mage – to be precise, they required at

least one skill at level 2 or above.

There are other examples that are not limited to skill requirements. A Job change to Knight requires one to be knighted and one must possess a magic sword in order to become a Magic Swordsman; certain ceremonies or prestige and possession of certain items could also be requirements.

Also, one needs to be a beast-man to become a Beast-fighter, a requirement that one must be born with.

Darcia's suggestion was that perhaps there were similar requirements for monsters to increase their Rank.

「So then, that Skeleton General and those Living Armors had reached the required level to increase their Rank, but weren't able to do so because they didn't meet the other requirements. And then when I poured my Mana into them, those requirements were fulfilled and they increased Rank, is that right?」

『That might be the case.』

「I see.」

It did make sense now that Darcia said it. Goblins did not become Goblin Mages and then learn how to use magic; Goblins with talent for magic who then became proficient with it increased their Rank to become Goblin Mages.

In other words, there was no easy shortcut such as pouring Mana into the monsters to have them increase their Rank.

「Well then, if any of my Undead don't increase their Rank after reaching level 100, I'll try it out then. Saria, Rita, thanks for participating in my experiment. Make sure you practise using weapons with everyone later.」

As Saria and Rita were maids, they naturally had no knowledge about fighting. Therefore, it was necessary to have them undergo training so that they could learn the skills that they needed.

For that purpose, Vandalieu decided to have them choose weapons for themselves. As they were beginners, he had expected them to choose swords or spears, but...

『...』

Saria chose a halberd and Rita took a glaive. They were the items that they had discovered in the Dungeon, and though Vandalieu was unsure exactly what effects they possessed, they were considerably powerful Magic Items. However... he had the feeling that they were not exactly ideal for amateur fighters.

「Are you sure you want those?」

In response to Vandalieu's question, Saria and Rita swung their weapons through the air and reassured him that it was fine. Perhaps it should be expected of Living Armors, but they were able to lift these heavy weapons in a way that they would definitely not have been able to do in their previous lives.

「If you say so, but if it's too difficult, make sure you change to a sword or a spear. If you prefer heavy weapons, there's a cudgel as well.」

As Vandalieu said that, the two of them happily (probably) began their training to polish their skills with Bone Man and the others.

It was a general rule that skills leveled up as one used them, so they were to make use of the fact that Undead needed no sleep or rest in order to carry out their training.

With that said, nobody present knew how to use a halberd or a glaive, not even Vandalieu, so the training simply consisted of trying swinging it downwards, stabbing it forwards like a spear and slashing sideways.

This was far less efficient than real battles, but being on a continuous journey while also constantly looking for sources of Experience Points such as Goblins and bandits would be too tiring for Vandalieu, even if the Undead could handle it. Also, he wasn't particularly keen on contributing to the maintenance of peace in the country of Mirg.

「Well then, I'll take care of these walnuts that we picked up yesterday.」

The sun was still high in the air and Vandalieu wasn't feeling tired, so a nap could come later. Being the only one to slack off didn't sit well with him either, so he began preparing some walnuts.

He had more than enough food, but having salt as his only option for seasoning was getting dull, so he planned to make sauce using the walnuts.

He had a vase full of walnuts that had been picked yesterday afternoon. They were still unripe and the fruit was still intact, so eating them as they were was out of the question. He spread them over the ground.

「They'll need about a month or so, huh.【Decomposition.】」

And then he used death-attribute magic to speed up the decomposition process by a month. The unripe fruit turned black and muddy.

Washing away this decomposed fruit with spring water that he had used Golems to collect caused the seeds to come out. Peeling their shells finally yielded the walnuts, but he had to be careful not to be impatient and crush them by accident. If that happened, the broken fragments of the shell would become mixed with the walnuts and less of the walnut would be usable.

And so he used Earth Golems to cook them lightly, using a fire that he created by making Golems from firewood and having them rub against each other. Doing this made it easier to break the shells.

『Now all you need to do is split the shells with a knife once they've cooled down.』

So Darcia advised. As a member of a race that lived in the forest, she was knowledgeable about how to use things that the forest provided.

Vandalieu used【Heat Leech】to cool the walnuts down and then used his nails to split the walnuts. Darcia had told him to use a knife, but lately he had become able to grow his nails to a certain length at will, so he decided to put this ability to practical use.

「In the future, I might have to use these to fight or something.」

His late father had been a master of close-quarters combat, and had been good at fighting using his claws. Could this be a hereditary trait as well? As Vandalieu wondered this, Darcia opened her mouth as if she had just thought of something.

『Future, huh... Do you have something you want to become in the future, Vandalieu?』

「Future? I want to become a high-class adventurer, build up achievements

and become a nobleman. And then I want to become well-known in society.」

『... The first part is childish, but I have to question the second part.』

「But that's what I need the most, societal fame.」

Vandalieu answered her question while loudly splitting the walnut shells with his nails.

「When *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others are reincarnated here in the future, even if Rodcorte tells them about me, they won't be able to do too anything reckless if I'm well-known in society.」

Vandalieu had recently come to realize that he had something in common with *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others – unable to return to Earth, they would have to live on Lambda until they died.

Even with cheat-like abilities, *Amemiya* and the others would not so easily be able to make the entirely of society their enemy. By being reincarnated here, they would have parents and siblings in this world. They would also likely find friends, and perhaps even lovers.

If Vandalieu was well-known in society, they would not be able to lay their hands on him carelessly, as that would cause trouble for their family and everyone involved with them. If Vandalieu was a nobleman, even more so.

「Mom, if I have political power and fame, society will become my shield.」

『Hmm, I think I meant something different with my question. If you didn't have to worry about that Amemiya[1] person and the others, what would your dream be?』

「If I didn't have to worry about those guys...」

Vandalieu realized what Darcia was trying to ask. In short, she wanted to know his future dreams, what he wanted to become and what desires he wished to see fulfilled. Innocent dreams, such as children of Earth wishing to become major leaguers or soccer players or movie stars.

However, the problem was that Vandalieu was not a dreaming child.

He had a feeling that he admired pilots, a long time ago. However, after coming to live with his uncle's family, he came to admire bodybuilders. He

dreamed of owning log-like upper arms and clear abdominal muscles. He imagined that if he became this strong, he could escape his uncle's control.

But he felt that this still didn't answer Darcia's question.

So what was the answer? In Origin, all he could dream of was his own freedom.

「... I want to be happy, I guess.」

After thinking for a short while, the answer he came up with was a very simple one.

As Vandalieu mashed the peeled walnuts on top of the stone plate, he looked into the distance.

「I want to be happy, build up a warm family and relationships with others and live in luxury.」

It was such a common, vague dream, but it was what Vandalieu truly wanted. It was the ideal that he had yearned for, even before he died on Earth.

With that said, the luxury he had in mind wasn't driving around in a Cadillac or Ferrari with a beautiful woman in a passenger seat, wearing top brand clothes and wristwatches, or owning a mansion in the center of the city.

Vandalieu hadn't consciously realized it yet, but he had a deep-rooted complex when it came to luxury.

On Earth, when he was called Amamiya Hiroto, his uncle had raised him sternly so that he could become independent once he became an adult.

For this reason, he had prohibited any good treatment towards Hiroto and disallowed him any luxuries. Leaving him as the only one to not receive any Christmas or birthday presents was only the beginning of this.

And so, during Vandalieu's time on earth, he had been denied everything that his uncle had deemed a「luxury.」

Games and toys were luxuries, so even if he borrowed them from friends, he was not allowed to play with them. Whatever was trending at the time was a luxury, so it was banned. Everyone has a yoyo? Spinning tops are popular? Collecting erasers of different shapes was a game? All banned. If you have any,

throw them away right now.

Steaks and cakes were also luxuries. Hamburger patties are steaks, so they are a luxury and are banned. Don't eat them, even when the school provides them. If you eat it, you have to throw it up. Bulk packs of products? Making a saving is a luxury, so those are banned. Steak-flavored snacks are banned. Ah, what a pain, but sweet foods are also banned.

Eating out is a luxury, so it's banned, whether it's fast food or whatever. Traveling is a luxury, so school trips are banned, spending leisure time doing what one wants is a luxury, so you have to stay at home by yourself, new clothes are a luxury...

As if allergic to luxuries, his uncle had banned every single luxury possible. If the cup ramen and buns from the convenient store so much has had the words「luxury」or「high quality」on them, he would be struck with an open palm and be shouted at with words such as「Indulging in such luxuries when you don't even have parents, don't act so spoiled!」

It was the absolute worst after a documentary about needy children overseas aired on television. He didn't do anything, but he was suddenly shouted at and asked why he wasn't feeling embarrassed about being so spoiled when there are children suffering like this around the world, and then received multiple strikes.

Because of this, all his clothes were handed down from his uncle's children of the same age, and at some point he began having to cook all his own food. His normal behavior was strange, so he was unable to make any friends and nothing good came from having his teachers notice him.

In addition to this, his uncle believed that striking a child with a fist might be considered abuse, but using an open palm is discipline, so his uncle never regretted his own actions.

Of course, his aunt and cousins did nothing to stop his uncle; abandoning him was safer for them than trying to interfere.

If this treatment was because his uncle's family were poor themselves, then it could be justified. However, they had money. They had Vandalieu's inheritance from his parents and their life insurance. Also, the reparation fees paid by the

person who had caused the accident that took their lives.

The total amount was enough to raise three children from birth, put them all through private university and still have money left over.

In such conditions, the treatment of Vandalieu was inexcusable.

He managed to save money from his part-time job to go on the high school trip, but the boat was sunk by terrorists which only added insult to injury.

It was even more infuriating to think that his uncle had promised that the remainders of his parents' inheritance would be his once he left the house, but now his uncle's family would keep all of it.

And then he had lived his second life in Origin as a laboratory animal. He didn't even have freedom in this second life, let alone luxuries.

That was why Vandalieu wanted to become happy and live in luxury in this third life. First of all, he wanted to live in a society where he could spend money.

「I'll decide what's a luxury and what isn't when I arrive in the Orbaume Kingdom, though.」

『Really? I think if you become a high-class adventurer, you'll become rich just from that.』

「Yeah, it's fine. I'll kill High Priest Gordan and Heinz properly.」

『Y-yeah, thanks. But you don't have to force yourself, you know?』

「Alright. I'll become strong enough to be able to kill them easily, alright, Mom?」

『So is it alright for me to feel relaxed about that? Still, don't push yourself, okay?』

For some reason, Darcia had the feeling that Vandalieu didn't quite understand what she was trying to say, but she gave up, knowing that her chances of making him understand were low. In fact, becoming a nobleman in the Orbaume Kingdom meant that it was likely that High Priest Gordan and Heinz, who lived in the Amid Empire and its nations, would become his enemies anyway.

If Vandalieu decided that it was necessary to kill them, then it probably was.

The walnuts were complete after adding some herbs that he had obtained from the forests. Vandalieu wanted to add nice-smelling oil to this, but he had no such oil available. Still, knowing that tonight's dinner would taste better, he gave a satisfied sigh.

「It sure would be nice to eat some rice instead of burned, hard bread.」

Thankfully, Vandalieu's uncle's luxury allergy hadn't extended to banning rice. Vandalieu hadn't thought anything special about eating rice when eating it on Earth, but now that it had been more than twenty years since he had last eaten it, he missed it.

『Rice? I think I heard that they make it in the Orbaume Kingdom. The countries are sometimes called Amid of Bread and Orbaume of Rice.』

「Seriously?!」

The Orbaume Kingdom scored some points in Vandalieu's heart.

Vandalieu turned sixteen months old in October. As autumn began to turn into winter, he finally reached the eastern end of the country of Mirg.

Further east than this, the land was ruled by nature and filled with Devil's Nests. Vandalieu had to get through that and then cross the mountain range.

However, as it was ill-advised to attempt to cross the mountain range during winter, Vandalieu decided to hide in the surrounding forests while attacking nearby bandits until spring, just as he was doing now in a thicket near a Devil's Nest, waiting for the sun to go down.

This was Vandalieu's plan.

「Now that I think about it, I've never been skiing before. With my current physical ability, I wonder if I'd be able to learn it quickly.」

On Vandalieu's status screen, his physical ability, even the Agility that had been his lowest attribute, was now higher than that of a normal adult male. However, it would be reckless for an inexperienced person to attempt to ski on a normal slope.

『Skiing? Is that also something from Earth?』

Sam, the dim white silhouette sitting in the coachman's chair, speaks up. This was his spirit form that he had now that he was a Ghost Carriage. He was holding the reins of similarly spiritual horses.

His body was not well-defined, like a ghost in a ghost photograph, but Vandalieu thought that it was much easier to talk to him now compared to before, when he wasn't visible at all.

「It's a sport on Earth. You put planks on your feet and slide down snowly hills. You don't have it in this world?」

『I have never heard of it. Though I have heard of sledding.』

After talking to Sam and Darcia, Vandalieu came to realize that on Lambda, sports such as the ones on earth didn't really exist. To be more specific, there were no sports that one enjoyed for the sake of competition and leisure. They competed in swordsmanship and archery skill, but on the assumption that such skills will be used to fight monsters and participate in wars. The same went for athletics and horse-riding.

The only exceptions were the things that royalty and noblemen learned for the sake of knowledge.

Ball sports such as baseball and soccer, and leisure sports such as surfing and skiing didn't exist in Lambda.

It could be assumed that this was because there were many powerful monsters, so there wasn't as much freedom as there was on earth. It was better to become able to fight than to waste one's physical ability on such sports.

With that said, even if competitive sports were not developed, it was surprising that sledding had not progressed into the invention of skis after ten thousand years. This sort of thing was probably the reason that Rodcorte considered this to be an inferior world. Well, it was possible that there was a snowy country that Sam didn't know about.

「Sam, skiing is –」

As Vandalieu began explaining what skiing is, he heard a faint voice.

「A woman's scream?」

『That is what I thought it sounded like.』

And then the wind brought a faint, pleasant scent that stimulated Vandalieu's appetite. The smell of blood.

In the direction that this wind came from, a woman had let out a scream and was bleeding. In other words, she was being attacked by something.

『What shall you do?』

The reason Sam asked this was because Vandalieu's party's options were not limited to the normal ones of「go to help」and「avoid getting involved.」

In the country of Mirg, all of them were considered monsters that should be exterminated. It was easy to imagine helping this poor woman and being thanked by being brought to an adventurer group that had received a request to exterminate them.

Therefore, if Vandalieu logically considered the risks, he would ignore the scream and continue on with his journey.

With that said, now that Sam had learned about Vandalieu's personality and goals, he doubted that Vandalieu would choose such an option.

「Sam, head upwind. Bone Bird, scout up ahead. Bone Man, Saria and Rita, get in the carriage.」

Vandalieu's decision was『for now, help out if it seems dangerous, and then think about what to do afterwards.』

It seemed like a wait-and-see approach, but he couldn't decide「let's help her」and bring the woman back to life if she had already been killed. But on the other hand, he could easily choose the alternative of「let's stop helping her」at any time and kill her to make sure she didn't talk.

Therefore, this choice was logically correct, Vandalieu thought.

「Geeeh.」

Bone Bird gave a cry as it flapped its spirit wings and took off into the air, and Bone Man, Saria and Rita who had been busy with their combat training jumped into the carriage.

『As you wish, Bocchan.』

The spirit horses began to run at a gentle pace. Sam was one of the few Undead who could speak to Vandalieu, and though he offered his opinions sometimes, he never opposed Vandalieu's commands.

And then Vandalieu magically linked Bone Bird's vision to his, allowing him to see what Bone Bird saw.

As Bone Bird flew higher and higher, he could see several humans doing something at the boundary at which the forest ended and a grass-covered plain began.

Because Bone Bird had no eyeballs, or perhaps because Vandalieu's magic was still not advanced enough, its vision was worse than that of a living bird.

Even so, he could vaguely make out the humans' situation. There were five of them in total... no, six.

Among them, three of them were standing. One of them was collapsed on the ground. One more was straddling that person, and another was crouching down next to her.

Other than the one lying on the ground, all of them were men. Three of them were wearing metal armor. One was in leather armor and the other was in robes. It was one of the ones in metal armor was straddling the person on the ground.

Judging from the fact that their equipment was all different, they were likely adventurers. They did seem quite cautious about their surroundings, but that caution was directed towards the Devil's Nest to make sure that no monsters came out of there to attack them; they were not expecting any attack to come from the thicket.

Made of only bones and a faintly glowing spirit form, Bone Bird would be difficult to spot in the middle of a sunny day, so there was no chance that it would be noticed while it was scouting.

The one lying on the ground was a woman with long hair and an unusual skin color... grey-brown. She was half naked and bleeding.

The man crouched down next to her reached his hand out to her chest.

「Sam, use Silent Steps and go as fast as you can. Let's kill them all, guys.」

This scene caused Vandalieu's blood to rush into his head. And then he calmly decided to kill slaughter all of these men. They seemed to be adventurers, but they were a lowly, bandit-like group.

Vandalieu felt sad. To think that there would be more guys like the Blue-flamed Sword Heinz in a place like this; did the adventurers of this country have no morals?

『Certainly, Bocchan.』

Sam swung the reins up and down, and the carriage's speed suddenly increased. However, this didn't cause the carriage to shake, and the sound it produced was unbelievably small.

The【Rough Road Travel】skill made it possible to use the【High-Speed Travel】skill even on the unpaved surface of the field. The noise that was supposed to be produced by the hoofs of the spiritual horses that were a part of Sam's body was erased by the【Silent Steps】skill. In addition, the carriage should have been shaking violently, but this was prevented by the【Impact Resistance】skill.

Sam was a carriage filled with cheats. Vandalieu thought that he could become a high-class limousine.

Bone Bear, Bone Wolf and Bone Monkey were running alongside the carriage at wild speeds.

「Bone Man, you wait for my signal and then use your bow to get a pre-emptive strike on the one in leather armor. He's probably a Thief, so he'll be hard to track down if he gets away. Sam could probably chase him down, but just in case. I'll make the robed one that looks like a Mage powerless. The rest of you, take each of the armored ones on two-on-one.」

As Vandalieu spoke, he gave a sideward glance at Bone Man, who was nocking an arrow in his bow.

「Right, let's save that girl.」

That was the good thing to do.

- Name: Saria
- Rank: 3
- Race: Living High-Leg Armor
- Level: 1

- Passive skills:
  - Special Five Senses
  - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 2 (NEW!)
  - Water Element Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)
  - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)

- Active skills:
  - Housework: Level 2

- Name: Rita
- Rank: 3
- Race: Living Bikini Armor
- Level: 1

- Passive skills:
  - Special Five Senses
  - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 2 (NEW!)
  - Fire Element Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)
  - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)

- Active skills:
  - Housework: Level 1

Monster Explanation:

【Living Armors】

These are suits of armor inhabited by evil spirits. Most of them are inhabited by spirits of soldiers, knights or adventurers who experienced fighting with armor on during their lifetimes, but few of them retain their memories and personalities. Most of them simply attack the living indiscriminately.

Their strength depends on the armor they inhabit and the weapons they hold,

but Living Armors made from chainmail and half-plate armor are Rank 3. Ones made from full-plate armor are classified as Rank 4.

There are rare cases where Living Armors are made from Magic Items, but in those cases, the Rank depends on the features of those Magic Items.

As proof that one has eliminated a Living Armor, the Magic Stone that almost always drops regardless of the Living Armor's Rank is used. The materials that can be obtained from Living Armors are the armor that was possessed and the weapons and shields that were used. Since they are covered in Mana, there is a chance that these items become Magic Items. Using these items as they are is dangerous, as there is a chance that the bearer becomes cursed, but purifying them makes them safe to use.

Saria and Rita are inhabiting suits of armor that are Magic Items, but as they are maids who never experienced using weapons during their lifetime, their skill levels and Rank are appropriately low.

However, this does not harm the functions of the armor itself, so their defensive and resistance skills are unaffected.

Skill Explanation:

【Mental Corruption】

This is a skill that represents mental derangement, the depth of one's trauma and the severity of phobias. It also functions as a skill that protects one's mind from the effects of poison, curses and magic.

However, many organizations that encourage the acquisition of this skill are connected to underground organizations or are underground organizations themselves. In urban areas, this skill is considered to be an illness, and specialized facilities exist to treat it.

Many individuals who possess this skill are abnormal sadists and murderers, soldiers and adventurers who have experienced horrific battles and assassins who have become unable to feel discomfort and guilt when killing people. However, as there are also many artists and inventors who possessed the skill and have left behind their names and deeds in history books, there are few

cases where one is imprisoned simply for possessing the skill.

Notes

1. It seems I mistranslated *Amemiya*'s name. To be fair, it can be read in multiple different ways and there is no way of telling the correct reading unless the phonetic reading is given (which it wasn't until this sentence). Both Vandalieu's Japanese name and his doppelganger's name are actually pronounced "Amamiya" - in other words, exactly the same. I'm going to leave *Amemiya* spelled this way to help differentiate (and continue italicizing it).

Chapter 11: Did you think you'd save a beautiful girl?

That day, Zadiris was holding a study meeting with the young girls from the village to teach them about grasses, fruits and mushrooms that could be used for making medicine or food.

Many of the race that Zadiris and her group belonged to did not place a high priority on passing on their knowledge, but she knew the importance of teaching the younger generation these things and often talked about it to the people around her, so the people of her village were likely aware as well.

The reason she was only bringing girls with her was the great difference in appearance and characteristics between the two sexes in her race. Males were well-suited to fighting and manual labor, while women did work that required thinking. Though this was a general rule, she had already taught the smarter men in the village enough, so she didn't bring them with her today.

Of course, just because monsters weren't attacking didn't mean that she let her guard down. Zadiris herself was confident in her strength and magic, and their study meeting was happening just at the edge of the forest. Strong monsters wouldn't appear, and at this time of year, adventurers shouldn't come this way either.

「She went that way!」

「Shit, she's fast! Don't let her get away!」

However, the reason things had turned out like this was because she had let her guard down after all.

They were found by a group of five adventurers.

「Be careful, she's a Mage, a high-class one! Don't let your guard down!」

「I know! We let all of the others escape; if we don't catch this one we won't

make it through the winter!」

Zadiris had succeeded in using her magic to confuse the adventurers and allow the other girls to escape. However, she had expended too much Mana in doing so – to the point that it would be difficult to defeat the adventurers if she fought them now.

With that being, the case, her only option was to run, but –

「Haah, haah, haah.」

Her breathing became quick, like that of a dog or a wild animal. Her heart was pounding painfully, but she couldn't do anything about it.

『To think that I've run out of breath already! I guess I can't win against time.』

As Zadiris lamented her old age, an arrow flew across just to her side. As the adventurers took aim at her, she reflexively spun her body to the right.

「AH!」

Three seconds later, her feet were standing on empty air. She was at the edge of a cliff. It was a small cliff on the boundary of the forest. It was a cliff of a height such that one wouldn't die by jumping off it, and one would normally be able to make a safe landing in the forest.

However, this time it was fatal.

Zadiris, losing her balance, hit the cliff's slope like a ball and began rolling down.

「Ugh...」

She crashed into the ground and landed face-down. She tried to stand up, but she couldn't put any strength into her legs and arms. Despite the fact that her life was in danger, they demanded rest and refused to obey her commands.

She was already winded, but this was the effect of leaving the Devil's Nest. She was really feeling her age taking its toll on her.

『Well, this is fine. The clan will not perish just because I am gone.』

Her successor had already been nominated. There were reliable men. She had managed to let the young ones with the future on their shoulders escape.

Considering that she had only ten years or so remaining in her life, hadn't she done pretty well? It was probably better for her to die already, before she became any more senile than she already was.

Several laughing voices and sets of footsteps came closer. It was the adventurers. From here, they would certainly finish her off and collect the Magic Stone and her body parts that would become raw materials.

She didn't really care about this; she had done the same thing countless times herself. She hadn't gone out of her way to do so, but she had even killed adventurers in the past.

She harbored no grudge against them. They should finish her quickly.

Zadiris quietly stayed face-down and closed her eyes, but the adventurers grabbed her legs and turned her face-up.

If they wanted to kill her, they could have stabbed her in the back, so why? As Zadiris thought this, she opened her eyes to see the adventurers looking down at her with vulgar smiles on their faces.

「Heh, I thought this while we were chasing her, but isn’t she quite the pretty woman?」

「You think so? I like mine a little more grown-up.」

「Nobody asked about what you like. What's important is whether we'll be able to sell her at a high price.」

Zadiris had thought that they were perhaps inspecting the materials that they would be harvesting before they killed her, but upon hearing the word "sell", she realized that this was not the case.

「The females of these creatures can be sold to underground slave traders for quite a lot. Thanks to that, we'll be able to take it easy during this year's winter.」

The adventurers hadn't been chasing her around to kill her and harvest raw materials from her, but to capture her alive and sell her to a slave trader.

Zadiris opened her eyes wide. Being defeated and killed was one thing, but she wouldn't allow herself to become a sex slave and treated as a plaything until she died.

「You bastards!」

「Oh, she understands language. I suppose that's to be expected of Mages; this one should sell for even more than the market price.」

Zadiris bared her fangs and glared at them, but the smiles of the adventurers looking down on her only widened. She mustered what was left of her strength and tried to take at least one of them down, but one of the adventurers stabbed her with a knife.

「Guh! Ah, AAAAAAAAAGH!」

Violent pain flooded through Zadiris's body.

Her vision turned pure white, and she couldn't help but let out a girlish scream.

「It hurts, huh? You guys are pretty tough when it comes to dealing with pain, but this knife is a Magic Item with the Pain Up enchantment; being cut by this knife will hurt three times more than usual.」

「A little while ago, we caught a bandit and all we had to do was give him a light cut with this knife for him to spit out where his base was.」

「Guh... Haah... Haah...」

By the time Zadiris had recovered a little from the violent pain, her willpower fell along with the tears from her eyes.

「Heheh, I bet you've done it plenty, right? With that being the case, isn't it alright to have a taste of the goods before we sell you off?」

「Hey, if you're not careful, you're going to get scratched.」

「It's fine, but don't go overboard. And be quick about it, it'll be a pain if other monsters were to come.」

One of the adventurers lowered himself onto Zadiris to straddle her and began taking off her clothes. He exposed her grey-brown breasts and grabbed hold of them, but she didn't give the response that the man desired.

「Tch.」

Dissatisfied, the man reached for the knife that was still stuck inside Zadiris.

「Hyii!」

Thinking that she would experience that intense pain again, Zadiris tried to scream, but –

「Gyah!」

The Thief that had been watching to make sure that no monsters came out of the forest gave a hoarse grunt.

There was an arrow protruding from the Thief's back. Zadiris immediately thought that her allies from the village had come to save her. It seemed the adventurers thought the same.

「They've come to save her?!」

Including the man that was straddling Zadiris, the Warriors among the adventurers pulled out their weapons and faced the forest. However, the robed Mage gave a shout as he pulled the arrow out from the Thief.

「You morons! It didn't come from the forest, it's from behind us!」

Before the Mage's eyes was a carriage moving at incredible speed while making very little sound, and a group of beasts made of bones.

「U-Undead monsters?! Why are they coming from the plain and not from the

Devil's Nest?!」

「Who cares! More importantly, there's one of them with a bow and arrows, hurry up and get in front of me!」

Shouting at his flustered shield-holding companion, the Thief who had managed to avoid a fatal wound thanks to his leather armor put a Potion to his mouth.

And as the adventurers prepared to have him recover from his injury, Vandalieu's army attacked. Bone Man nocked another arrow into his bow and fired a second shot, but the Thief managed to dodge it. It couldn't be helped, as Bone Man's skill with the bow was level 1.

Vandalieu's options for long-ranged attacks were too limited. Perhaps he should have had Saria and Rita learn archery as well.

As this thought ran through his mind, he released his spell towards the Mage who seemed to be chanting an incantation.

「...【Magic Absorption Barrier.】」

A black mass of Mana flew towards the Mage. He immediately tried to block it with some kind of defensive spell, but the black mass absorbed and nullified it completely.

「U-uwah! That Ghost Carriage used some kind of strange magic! What the hell is this?!」

The black mass covered the Mage like a dome, but for now, it seemed that it wasn't doing him any damage.

「Don't worry about that, hurry up and chant your spell!」

The ones at the front holding swords, spears, axes and shields stepped forward to meet the enemy, but in the next moment, their well-prepared front-line crumbled.

『Haah! If you will not fall back, then I shall trample you!』

Sam, sitting in the driver's seat of the Ghost Carriage, gave a shout as he ordered an increase in speed. The faint, white horses gave a neigh as the carriage closed in on them at incredible speed.

『CHAAAARGE!』

「R-RUUUUN!」

As the man with the shield gave a shout, the adventurers all jumped out of the way of Sam's path. No matter how powerful their defense was, even if they possessed shielding techniques such as【Stone Shield】and【Stone Wall】, they wouldn't be able to stop the【High-Speed Travel】+【Charge】combo of Sam, a three-horse carriage.

Because they reacted quickly, they succeeded in avoiding Sam in time, and Sam performed a magnificent drift turn just two meters away from Zadiris's feet. This was something that he was only able to do because the spirit horses were a part of him.

The carriage should have been shaking violently, but thanks to the【Impact Resistance】skill, everyone inside was able to remain standing with the exception of Vandalieu.

「Gaaaah!」

「Guoooh!」

And as the adventurers' formation collapsed, Bone Wolf, Bone Bear and Bone Monkey attacked. The adventurers seemed quite skilled; each of them managed to avoid the first attack and retake their stances with their weapons ready.

「Geeeeh!」

「Oooooh.」

With Bone Bird's Talon attacks coming from above and Bone Man joining the fray after leaping out of the carriage, things weren't just looking bad for them; it was downright disastrous.

「W-what are Rank 3 monsters doing outside the Devil's Nest?!」

「How the hell should I know?!「【Single Flash!】」

「Oi, how long is that support magic going to take?!」

One of the men somehow managed to block a swing of Bone Bear's front paw

that was powerful enough to break his shield, another had his basic swordsmanship skill【Single Brandish】avoided by Bone Monkey, and the last was shouting at the Mage that seemed to be taking forever to cast his support magic without turning back to look at him.

「O flames, gather forth in my hand... It's no good! My magic, my Mana is being absorbed so I can't use magic!」

The Mage was clearly chanting a spell, but every time he drew his Mana forth from inside his body, it was taken away from him. That was the effect of Vandalieu's【Magic Absorption Barrier.】If one attempted to use magic within the barrier, the Mana was stolen away before the spell could be completed.

To overcome the effects of such a barrier, one must release a sheer amount of Mana that the barrier simply couldn't absorb, use an anti-barrier spell or simply move at a speed at which the barrier cannot follow him. But only a master Mage would be able to overcome the Barrier that Vandalieu had poured an overwhelming amount of Mana into.

Of course, it was impossible for this Mage with his current mana pool and magic.

「D-damn it! What's with this guy?! Where am I supposed to attack?!」

On one side, the Thief was fighting against Saria and Rita. Normally, the Thief with inferior pure fighting ability would be at a disadvantage fighting against two monsters head-on.

However, Saria and Rita were barely able to swing their weapons, and it was not difficult for the agile Thief to avoid their attacks.

But it was difficult for the Thief to attack them with his dagger. If they were normal Living Armors, defeating them would be simple. By inserting the dagger into the gaps between the armor pieces and destroying the joint between the helmet and the torso, he would be able to separate them into pieces.

Unfortunately for him, neither Saria nor Rita possessed a helmet portion. In Rita's case, the torso proportion of the armor was already separated into two pieces.

Trying to separate the armors into pieces would be impossible, as the Living

High-Leg Armor and Living Bikini Armor were already in pieces.

「Where's the head, where are the vital points, goddamn it! Gyah!」

He tried to stay calm, but his companions at the front were at a disadvantage already. Their Mage had been made useless. And then the bewildered Thief let out a scream that sounded like a dog as Sam sent him flying like a rubber ball.

The adventurers, given no chance to turn the battle back around, lay on the ground as corpses.

The only casualties for Vandalieu's party were several broken bones on Bone Wolf and Bone Bear, and Vandalieu's own injury that he sustained while rolling around in the carriage.

『I-I am terribly sorry, Bocchan.』

「... I said it's fine. It'll heal soon anyway.」

There was a deep, bleeding gash on Vandalieu's forehead, but as he possessed the【Rapid Healing】skill, it would heal within a few days.

As for the broken bones, they were easily repaired as Vandalieu had recently discovered that he can use death-attribute magic to restore them.

In the end, their losses were basically non-existent.

「Fuh, looks like I need to reflect upon my actions.」

However, Vandalieu was reflecting on his rash decision to attack these adventurers.

The reason he won this battle easily was because his surprise attack had gone well, he had used death-attribute magic that they had never seen before and because they weren't all that skilled.

He had checked the Guild Cards that were the identification documents issued by the Adventurers' Guild, and according to those, these adventurers were D-class. If they had been C-class or higher, it was likely that he would have had the tables turned on him.

Attacking adventurers whose strength he couldn't judge at a glance was a dangerous move.

However, the option of leaving a girl to be attacked by these thugs was out of the question.

「Next time, we'll do our surprise attack better.」

End of self-reflection.

Leaving the tasks of stripping the adventurers of their belongings, taking care of their corpses and gathering information from their spirits until later, the first thing to do was to help the girl who had been attacked.

When he had used his【Sense Life】earlier, she had not been in a state where she might die soon, but she had been greatly weakened. This was where the Potions that he had acquired in the Dungeon that he had kept just in case came in handy.

「Ugh...」

Zadiris was fully prepared to be killed at this point. It was not her allies who had killed the adventurers, but Undead. So she thought that the Undead would kill her next.

「Are you alright?」

So she had thought, but time passed and the Undead didn't attack her. Not only that, but an infant with blood dripping from his forehead was speaking to her.

She was astonished, bewildered and fearful that this infant might be some kind of dead person's ghost. And because of the strong, stinging pain from the wound in which the knife was still inserted, she was unable to answer his question.

As Vandalieu looked down at Zadiris, he thought,「Her skin color is unusual, but she is a cute girl, huh.」

She seemed to be in her mid or late teenage years. Her lovely features and wet eyes made Vandalieu want to protect her. Her physical appearance was such that she would have easily been able to make a debut as an idol on Earth.

Her grey-brown skin was unusual, but this was another world, after all. It might not even be considered unusual here.

Even her exposed breasts –

『Ah, I shouldn't look at any more than that.』

Vandalieu quickly averted his eyes away from the girl's chest. Leaving his mental age aside, his physical body was that of an infant, so fortunately he had not yet experienced sexual desire, though it would have been fine as long as his gaze didn't become a lewd one.

Well, his eyes were as lifeless as those of the Undead, and his gaze instilled fear more than embarrassment and disgust.

Not realizing this, Vandalieu thought that the treatment of her wound came first, and reached out for the handle of the knife.

「Wait, stop...!」

But this knife was a Magic Item that increased the pain it inflicted. Knowing that pulling it out would cause that violent pain once more, Zadiris tried to stop Vandalieu's hand.

「...【Painlessness.】」

Knowing that she was in pain, Vandalieu used death-attribute magic to erase the pain that she experienced.

「?!」

As Zadiris was bewildered by the sudden disappearance of the pain, Vandalieu pulled the knife from her abdomen in one movement. And then he poured the 3rd-class Potion on the wound.

The wound closed in a ridiculous fashion. The deep opening that pierced through her flesh closed before his very eyes to become new, smooth skin. There was not even the slightest sign that there had been a wound there.

Surgically treating such a wound and the plastic surgery required to remove the scar left afterwards on Earth would take a great deal of time and effort, but on Lambda, it was done by applying a single Potion. In this regard, Lambda was more advanced than Earth, thought Vandalieu.

Though he probably wouldn't have thought so if he knew just how much that 3rd-class Potion was worth.

「My name is Vandalieu. Should I prepare water to wash your body and clothes to change into?」

He spoke to the girl looking up at him with a dumbfounded expression. She was probably in a state of shock; it was to be expected, as she had just been stabbed by a thug and almost raped.

『On Earth, a female police officer would handle this kind of situation...』

The only females here were Darcia (whom only Vandalieu and the Undead could see), and Saria and Rita (who simply appeared to be floating suits of armor, so one might not immediately assume that they were females). Therefore, by process of elimination, the only one who could offer Zadiris support was Vandalieu.

(Though I think that I'm definitely the wrong person in the wrong place for this job.)

In both lifetimes on Earth and in Origin, he hadn't really interacted with members of the opposite sex, so there was no way that he could handle a delicate task like supporting a sexual assault victim.

As if proving this correct, tears welled up in the girl's eyes. Her face had been wet with tears and sweat since before her wound was healed, but she appeared as if she was going to burst into tears again.

「Ugh... Uwaaaaaah!」

And sure enough, she burst into tears and held onto Vandalieu tightly.

She was so forceful that Saria and Rita reflexively attempted to recover Vandalieu from Zadiris's arms. Vandalieu waved them down with his hand, and was being hugged at her mercy... That wasn't quite right.

She was much stronger than she appeared.

She wasn't forceful enough to break his bones, but it was hard to breathe. Her fingernails were digging into him.

(I-it's quite painful... But it's nothing compared to the reconstruction surgery and human experiments I endured in Origin.)

He tried to endure it, but he really didn't have the freedom to be happy about

being hugged by a cute girl.

「You really saved me. You saved my life. Not only did you defeat the adventurers, but you even used a precious Potion on my wound, I do not know how to thank you.」[1]

「I see...」

***

Vandalieu and his party were making their way through the Devil's Nest. They had waited until Zadiris had calmed down, stripped the adventurers of their equipment and then ventured into the Devil's Nest.

「My apologies, the village is a little further.」

In order to take Zadiris home.

The reason that her village was in the middle of a Devil's Nest ruled by monsters was that she belonged to a race generally considered to be monsters.

「We Ghouls are resistant to pain, but that Magic Item put me through hell. On top of that, they were going to turn me into a sex slave and sell me off... Humans are scary.」

Indeed, Zadiris was a Ghoul.

Judging from the color of her skin, Vandalieu had thought that she might not be one of the races of people, but he hadn't imagined that she would be a Ghoul.

However, as Vandalieu sat in Zadiris's lap wrapped in her arms, he felt uncomfortable with just how different she was to the image of Ghouls that he had in his mind.

「Ghouls are not Undead?」

The image of Ghouls in Vandalieu's mind was that of Undead monsters with long claws and fangs, strength greater than that of Zombies, and a love for feasting on dead flesh.

However, he could feel the comforting warmth from her body that he hadn't felt since Darcia had died, and his【Sense Life】skill detected life in her. She

might not be a human, but she was definitely a living creature.

『Bocchan, we ordinary people are told that Ghouls are higher-class Zombies, not very different from Vampires.』

According to Sam, Ghouls were treated like an inferior species of Vampires. They lived and had children. However, they were powerful monsters that attacked people, had great physical strength and resistance to pain and secreted venom at the claws of their hands and feet.

And they apparently turned freshly-killed corpses into members of their own kind in some evil ceremony.

「Hmm, we are not higher-class Zombies, but you are half-correct, Sam.」

But according to Zadiris, the reality was quite different.

Ghouls were apparently not an inferior species of Vampire, but their lesser relatives.

「To put it simply, the founder of us Ghouls was the twin brother of the founder of Vampires, or perhaps his younger sister. That means that Ghouls are also children of the goddess Vida.」

「But Ghouls weren't mentioned in the legend that Mom told me?」

「Well, I do not know the details, but this is something I heard from the eldest member of the generation before last.」

According to the legend that Vandalieu heard from Darcia, Vida birthed Lamias, Scyllas, Harpies, Arachne and Centaurs, but nothing about Ghouls being among those monsters.

Well, it wasn't like Darcia knew everything, and it was the kind of story whose contents would differ slightly from region to region.

It seemed that the Ghouls of Zadiris's village believed in Zadiris's story... But that didn't mean that they were particularly friendly towards humans. Nobody would want to try to become friends with people that branded them as monsters and tried to kill them.

In fact, Zadiris had killed numerous adventurers in the past, and lost companions to them.

「But to think that they would sell me as a sex slave. If I was simply going to be killed, I would have accepted it and given up.」

Becoming a target for the sexual desires of humans had apparently been a shocking experience for Zadiris. However, unbeknownst to her, the reality was that this kind of thing was not unusual in underground societies.

If a monster species existed that only differed from humans by their skin tone and a small part of their bodies, then it was only natural that humans would think to buy and sell the females of that species as sex slaves.

「For heaven's sake, it is not as if they would think the same about a female Orc. Do you not agree?」

In response to this question, Vandalieu looked up at her and shook his head sideways.

「I think you are very attractive.」

Even after learning that Zadiris was a Ghoul and re-evaluating her, she was still lovely in Vandalieu's eyes.

He thought that her yellow pupils and grey-brown skin were exotic, and her fangs resembled yaeba[2] so he found them cute. With her young-looking, curved cheeks and captivating lips, it wouldn't have been strange if she became Vandalieu's first love if he had been a little older.

Vandalieu felt like he was missing out, but putting that aside, Zadiris would have been worth an incredible amount as a slave.

「So it is possible that those men attacked you not because they are fine with any women, but because they had their eyes on you from the very beginning. You should be careful from now on... Is something wrong?」

「N-no, it is nothing.」

In response to Vandalieu saying that she was attractive, Zadiris's heart began to throb violently for some reason.

Despite thinking, (Wait, wait, what am I thinking about a child young enough to be called a baby?), her heart didn't stop pounding.

(W-what a strange boy. He commands the Undead and uses unknown magic.

And when he stares at me directly, I feel strange... C-could this be the charming gaze of the Vampires?!)

Her knowledge about Dhampirs was far from complete, so she somewhat misunderstood her own feelings towards Vandalieu.

「It seems that is indeed the case; I shall have to take care from now on. I must also warn the women of the village. Someone like me with few years left to live was targeted; there is no guarantee that the younger ones will not be targeted as well.」

Zadiris was the eldest member of the Ghoul community. She was apparently two hundred and ninety years old this year. And the lifespan of a Ghoul was apparently three hundred years. It seemed that she was not lying when she said that she didn't have long to live.

When Vandalieu had used his【Sense Life】skill, he had felt a weak reaction from Zadiris. This was not because of the knife that she had been stabbed by at the time, but because of her age.

「... Though I don't think adventurers would be able to tell a Ghoul's true age.」

Though she had the lively skin of a teenager without a single wrinkle, Zadiris gave a sigh as Vandalieu said this to her.

「Hmm, I suppose one becomes accustomed to this fact as one lives life as a Ghoul. Us Ghoul women's physical appearance stops changing at the age we bear our first child, but most people in the village have a good idea of how old the women are. Hmm? What is wrong, boy? Are you sleepy?」

「No...」

Vandalieu looked down and sighed, feeling disappointment in response to Zadiris's words for a reason that he himself didn't know.

「Is that so? In that case, I would like you to promise me something now... Would you keep the fact that I sobbed like a small girl a secret? Of course, Sam-dono as well.」

「I don't mind.」

『I simply obey Bocchan's commands.』

「Hmm, my endless thanks. Ah, it seems that something has approached us while we were talking.」

Though they had been having calm conversation, Vandalieu's party was traveling through a Devil's Nest right now. It was inhabited by monsters in far greater density and numbers than in ordinary forests and wastelands. But as Bone Man and Bone Wolf were guarding Sam's surroundings, only a single foolish Goblin had attacked them and been quickly cut down.

Using【Sense Life】as Zadiris instructed him to, he felt reactions from about a dozen human-sized or slightly larger creatures about fifty meters ahead. However, there was no reaction from the constantly-active【Danger Sense: Death】, so it seemed that it was not a group of bloodthirsty monsters waiting to ambush them.

『Bocchan?』

「Just keep going forward for now, I suppose.」

Because they were in a forest, having Bone Bird scout from the sky was likely to be ineffective, so he simply decided to wait and see what would happen. From the shadows of the trees and bushes, monsters emerged.

The monsters had a roughly human-like shape. However, their heads were those of lions – proud, ferocious-looking kings of the forest with bare fangs and disheveled manes.

The skin below their necks was grey-brown, and the length of their arms stood out to the eye – their arms were so long that their fingers would reach the ground even if they stretched their backs up to stand up straight. However, one could also not overlook the fact they possessed the tough, flexible musculature of wild carnivores.

Even though the Goblins were humanoid monsters just like them, these were clearly different from Goblins.

However, for some reason, these monsters approached not with the intent to kill, but feelings of bewilderment.

「Ah, everyone, you have come out to greet me.」

With those words, Zadiris stood up, still holding Vandalieu in her arms.

「Elder-sama, we were going to help... But why have you brought Undead with you?」

「We are happy that you are safe... But what are these things?」

The monsters spoke with a low tone that sounded like growling, but also quite skillfully considering that they were doing so with the mouths of lions. As Vandalieu was feeling just as bewildered as they were about the current situation, Sam whispered to him.

『Bocchan, I have heard that Ghoul male and fe... Men and women are greatly different in their appearances. Though this is my first time seeing it for myself.』

Zadiris completely resembled a human other than her fangs and the color of her skin. But on the other hand, the appearance of the men was not human at all, even though they were all of the same race.

「Yes, I was in danger when adventurers attacked me, but I was saved by this boy. The Undead are under this boy's command.」

「That small boy defeated the adventurers?!」

「And he commands the Undead...?」

In response to Zadiris's words, the Ghoul men exchanged looks of disbelief. Well, even Vandalieu thought that the truth would be difficult to believe right away.

And then an enormous Ghoul appeared from deeper within the forest, even larger than the other male Ghouls, standing two meters tall.

He was wearing leather armor made from the hide of a monster, and his mane was adorned with a brilliant bird-feather decoration.

On his back, he carried an enormous battleaxe that looked as if it could cut a bear in half. This Ghoul was likely the leader among the males.

「Vigaro, you came out as well. I have told you many times that the chief of the village should not leave it so easily.」

「You're still the chief, Zadiris. If the chief is in danger, then it's only normal for

me, the leader of the warriors, to step forth.」[3]

「You are the effective chief. Even if I die, as long as you are still here, the village will thrive on.」

「*Effective chief? The village will thrive on?*[4] What kind of nonsense are you saying? Did you hit your head when the adventurers attacked you?」

「... I will retract my words. You clueless fool, you shall need to train that brain of yours for a while later.」

「*Retract?* I'll have you know, I've been training my brain. And before that, I defeated an Orc with a head-butt!」

As Vigaro threw out his chest with pride, Zadiris gave a deep sigh. Her breath tickled the back of Vandalieu's head. Still, the Ghoul called Vigaro possessed log-like upper arms. How did one acquire that much muscle? Vandalieu really wanted to know.

「So what are you planning to do with that child?」

「Of course, we will make him welcome at our village. This boy is very generous; he says that he will even provide the meat for us to have a banquet. There is no problem with that, is there?」

「Grr...」

Vigaro tilted his head in response to Zadiris's reply. In normal circumstances, she would never allow a member of another race to enter the village, even if he had saved her life.

In the first place, since the Ghouls lived in a Devil's Nest, every other species existed simply as their enemies and prey. It wasn't unusual for Ghouls of separate villages to kill each other in some cases.

That was why Zadiris and Vigaro advocated for the exclusion of outsiders. For the sake of survival, this was the correct choice.

Vigaro had noticed that Vandalieu was a Dhampir. He was also interested in the meat that Vandalieu was supposedly offering. However, his feelings of danger about having the location of the village known by an outsider were stronger.

He felt no hostility at all from Vandalieu, who was looking up at Zadiris with eyes as lifeless as the eyeballs floating in Orc soup... No, something was strange.

He wanted those dead-looking eyes to look at him; he wanted to do something for this child. Vigaro consciously realized that he was beginning to feel this way.

「If it's too much trouble, then we can just be on our way...」

As Vandalieu said those words, Vigaro and the Ghoul men under his command let out a small growl as they felt the sensation of their chests tightening. They felt feelings of guilt, as well as discomfort at the fact that Vandalieu would simply leave if they did not stop him.

「It's not too much trouble! We'll lead you to our village, please let us welcome you there!」

Vigaro immediately shouted this response. The other men cheered in agreement.

「Vandalieu[5], you're our guest, so we'll welcome you. GRRRRRRRRR!」

And then Vigaro looked up at the sky and let out a beast-like roar. As Vandalieu was shocked by the loud roar that caused the air to vibrate, Zadiris spoke to him.

「He is communicating with the people in the village. He is telling them that the chief is safe, there is a guest coming and that they should make preparations for a feast.」

And so Vandalieu was welcomed into a friendly community for the first time in his life.

- **Name:** Zadiris
- **Rank:** 5
- **Race:** Ghoul Mage
- **Level:** 100
- **Job:** None
- **Job level:** 100
- **Job history:** None

- **Age:** 290 years old

- **Passive skills:**
  - Night Vision
  - Pain Resistance: Level 3
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 2
  - Increased Mana Recovery Rate: Level 4

- **Active skills:**
  - Light-Attribute Magic: Level 4
  - Wind-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - Mana Control: Level 5
  - Alchemy: Level 2

- **Status Effects:**
  - Old age

Monster Explanation:

【Ghoul Mages】

These are Ghouls that have learned magic past a certain level. Their skills are beyond those of inexperienced adventurers, and they are still excellent at close-quarters combat due to their physical ability and the paralyzing venom of their claws.

They are more intelligent than other Ghouls; most Ghoul Mages are in high societal positions such as being the head of a family or a staff officer. Because of this, there are almost none that act on their own, and they often have multiple subordinate Ghouls serving them. For this reason, the Adventurers' Guild recommends that adventurers form parties if they are planning to eliminate them.

The item that one uses to prove that he has eliminated a Ghoul Mage is the Ghoul's right ear. Materials that can be harvested include the claws of all four

limbs, the eyeballs and tongues that are infused with Mana, the liver which can be used in medicines, and the spinal cord which can be used as a catalyst in alchemy. Ghoul Mages are among the most dangerous of Rank 5 monsters, so there are many adventurers who believe that the reward for eliminating them and the amount that the ingredients sell for is not worth the effort.

As many Ghoul Mages are female, they are worth a lot in the underground slave market. However, selling them this way requires one to capture them alive, which is more dangerous and more often than not, the Ghoul Mage can turn the tables on the hunter. The Ghoul Mages bought and sold in the underground market often teach magic to the other female Ghouls, causing them to increase their rank.

In order to increase in rank and become a Ghoul Mage, a Ghoul requires a level 3 skill in at least one attribute of magic.

Zadiris possesses excellent mastery over magic for a Ghoul Mage, but her Stamina and Mana have declined as a result of her own age, which means that her effectiveness in combat has significantly decreased.

Notes

1. The way/tone in which Zadiris talks is like that commonly used by old men (word choice – for example, using pronouns such as 儂/washi and 主/nushi, ending sentences in じゃ/ja instead of だ/da). It's very difficult for me to convey this in an English translation. If it helps some of you imagining it, some female anime characters that speak like this off the top of my head include Shinobu from the Monogatari series and Horo from Spice and Wolf (note that both characters are actually hundreds of years old). Incidentally, Vandalieu talks to her in a respectful tone used when speaking to elders.

2. Yaeba are fang-like canine teeth that are considered cute in Japan. You can Google Image it if you want to know what I'm talking about.

3. Vigaro speaks in an informal tone towards Zadiris, in case it's not clear through my wording.

4. These are written in kana instead of kanji, which indicates that Vigaro simply

doesn’t understand the words that Zadiris is using, rather than disagreeing with them. To be fair, she is using some pretty difficult/obscure language. I’ll italicize these if there are more of them.

5. Not sure how he knows Vandalieu’s name.

Chapter 12: Carnival in the Ghoul community

Warning from the author:

This chapter contains elements of cannibalism. Readers who are uncomfortable with this, please proceed with caution.

「A toast! A toast to the savior of our chief!」

「Delicious, the meat that the savior gave us is so good!」

Vandalieu had saved the chief Zadiris, and the Ghoul community in the Devil's Nest had welcomed Vandalieu on the authority of Vigaro, the leader of the warriors.

The Ghoul village was far larger and more civilized than Vandalieu had expected.

The trees of this forested Devil's Nest were densely packed, but they had been cleared away to create a plaza, and pit-houses with roofs made using the leaves of trees were lined up in rows.

Vandalieu wondered if the buildings didn't get too humid, but as this wasn't the Amazon rainforest or a subtropical region, it was probably not a problem.

A well dug in the ground served as their water source, and there were fields for growing food, though they were primitive and only large enough to be called household vegetable gardens. There was also alcohol made from fermenting plants harvested in the forest, and a warehouse where meat from the prey they hunted was preserved and stored.

The Ghouls' lifestyle was similar to the people of indigenous cultures that lived in forests that Vandalieu had seen in TV programs on Earth. At the very least, they were far more civilized than monsters such as Goblins and Kobolds that relied entirely on hunting and gathering to sustain themselves.

『And they're living far more human-like lives than I have.』

Vandalieu, who also relied entirely on hunting and gathering other than the spoils from the bandits, realized just how important it was to have a stable lifestyle after seeing how the Ghouls lived. A person only lived a normal life when the necessities of life like food and water were readily available.

And the Ghouls were using the meat as well as the bandits' wine that Vandalieu had offered to host a banquet.

There were about a hundred of them in total. There were around ten members absent on a several-day-long trip to hunt Goblins, so that number was going to increase even further. Vandalieu wasn't particularly well-informed on how monsters lived, but it wasn't difficult for him to imagine that this was the most civilized of the monster villages in the Devil's Nest.

Incidentally, the leader of the warriors hunting the Goblins was apparently Zadiris's youngest daughter. For some reason, though she was a woman, she was born with more talent as a warrior than as a mage.

And so the Ghoul men with lion-like heads and arms that were longer than their legs and the Ghoul women who were no different to humans other than their grey-brown skin praised Vandalieu, who had saved Zadiris and offered them food and drink, as they enjoyed the feast. This sight was enough to calm Vandalieu as he thought,「I did good.」

Even though he knew where the meat had come from, that feeling didn't change.

Eating together with everyone made the food taste better.

「Vandalieu, you should eat too.」

Vigaro offered him a skewer with some well-cooked meat on it, but Vandalieu shook his head.

「I'm a little hesitant about eating human meat.」

Indeed, the meat that Vigaro on the others were roasting on skewers and boiling with herbs was the flesh of the five adventurers that Vandalieu had killed when he saved Zadiris. In other words, it was human meat.

Though the Ghouls weren't Undead as he had thought that they would be, their love for eating human flesh was just as he had imagined.

「Really? They're more delicious than Poison Toad legs, you know?」

Vigaro tilted his head as he eyed the roasted Poison Toad leg that Vandalieu was eating, but Zadiris, who was sitting next to Vandalieu, chided him.

「Do not be so forceful about it; Vandalieu is a Dhampir, so even if he drinks human blood, he does not consume the flesh.」

「Is that so? Then how about alcohol?」

「Vandalieu is only one year old; alcohol is nothing short of poison for him. Are you trying to test his resistance skills at a banquet?!」

「One year old?! Is that right? I thought he just had a small body and he was surely older.」

Vigaro opened his eyes wide in surprise, but it was not strange for one to think that Vandalieu was older than he looked based on the way that he talked. In fact, it was to be expected that one would make that assumption.

「Well, he is a boy who uses magic, tames the Undead and defeated five adventurers. It is not strange for you think that he is merely an adult with a small body, but...」

「Is that so? I'm still just an inexperienced one-year-old boy, though.」

「Doesn't look that way.」

「It does not seem that way.」

Zadiris and Vigaro spoke at the same time as they shook their heads. But Vandalieu thought,「They're probably right,」and paid no further attention to it.

In fact, even if one ignored the magic and Undead, nobody would look at Vandalieu and think that he was an innocent one-year-old. He was expressionless, with lifeless, dead-looking eyes and his presence was difficult to notice. As Darcia had been killed when he was only six months old, his hair had grown freely since then, and the only thing he was wearing was an inadequate cloth rag.

No matter how one looked at him, he would appear to be a ghost.

「Chief, may we greet the savior?」

「Please, we are begging you.」

But it seemed that wasn't the case for the Ghoul women. Several Ghoul women were gazing at Vandalieu with their sparkling yellow eyes.

As Vandalieu received their attention, he simply blinked. In all his lifetimes up until now, he hadn't been popular with anyone other than spirits, so he was surprised.

「Hmm, boy, these are the youngest of the women in the village; I am currently teaching them various things.」

The women that Zadiris was introducing did indeed appear young. Most of them appeared to be in their mid or late teenage years. However, Zadiris, whom these women were calling their chief, had the appearance of a young girl.

「How cute; his hair looks like a mane!」

「Such pretty eyes, they're different colors as well!」

But they were certainly younger than Zadiris mentally. As soon as Vandalieu was introduced to them, they began taking turns to hold him in their arms, as if competing against each other.

「H-hey, you should not be so rough with him.」

They were lifting him into the air by the legs and holding him upside down; it was quite the rough treatment for a one-year-old. But Vandalieu was a Dhampir, stronger than a grown man, so he was unharmed.

Though he was unharmed, it wouldn't have been surprising if he found such treatment unpleasant. However, Vandalieu showed no sign of anger towards their treatment of him.

『Huh? Could it be that I'm... popular?』

He had never been pampered by members of the opposite sex in any of his previous lives. Now that he was in his third life, he was experiencing romantic

popularity for the first time?! Vandalieu's thoughts had stopped completely in this moment, so he wasn't in a state to get angry over how roughly he was being treated.

All of these Ghoul women were beautiful and as they were living in a village in the Devil's Nest, their clothing left much of their skin exposed. Even human men would have a hard time keeping their eyes off them.

If they didn't mind the fact that the Ghoul women were eating human flesh, that is.

「My name is Vandalieu. Nice to meet you.」

Vandalieu didn't care in the slightest.

Thinking about it, it wasn't as if those human adventurers had attacked and tried to rape a human girl and then tried to sell her off as a slave. The one that they had attacked was Zadiris, whom society had labeled as a monster.

Of course, selling her as a slave was illegal, but for that they would have only been charged with「bringing an untamed monster into a town」; it would be a very different charge compared to illegally selling a human girl as a slave.

And at the moment that Vandalieu attacked, those adventurers were merely trying to rape a female monster. That was not an illegal act. What kind of country would enforce a law that made it illegal to sexually assault a female monster? Well, perhaps such a law would be enforced, but only to prevent strange diseases from spreading.

Ethically, it might be frowned upon by female adventurers and guild receptionists. But it wasn't technically against the rules.

In the first place, adventurers existed to exterminate monsters and protect the people. And though the Ghouls could trace their roots back to the goddess Vida, they were defined as monsters in the Amid Empire and its nations.

So it was perfectly legal for them to rape monsters before killing them.

Therefore, Vandalieu killing the adventurers was an unwarranted attack, and taking the equipment from their bodies was exactly what bandits did.

However, thinking further, one would ask,「so what?」

The reason for that: Vandalieu was a Dhampir. In the Amid Empire and its nations, he was not considered a person, but a「monster.」

In other words, he was in the same boat as Ghouls. He was a creature that attacked and harmed humans.

With that said, what was so strange about him attacking a group of careless adventurers, killing them all, stealing their equipment and sharing their flesh with his companions afterwards?

In any case, for those adventurers, Vandalieu was in the same category of creatures as Goblins and Poison Toads. There was nothing unusual about what happened to them.

If Vandalieu had been planning to fight for Dhampir rights in the Amid Empire, then he might have been concerned about it, but... he had no intention of doing that. He wouldn't do it even if someone begged him to; it was such a troublesome task.

He felt more intimate with the Ghouls welcoming him than he did with humans. If the Ghouls were so happy about eating human flesh, then should he have been saving bandits' corpses? He should do that from now on.

「I wish my child would become as strong as Vandalieu, too. He's already thirty years old, but he's still dependent on his parents.」

「Hey, can you stroke my tummy? So that my child will grow up to be as strong as you.」

「My name is Bilde. If my next child is a boy, can I name him after you?」

Suddenly, Vandalieu's heart dropped. They were apparently all mothers or women who were about to become mothers. Their stomachs were still flat, so he hadn't noticed.

He hadn't really thought that he would be able to form relationships with them, nor did he really hope for it. In any case, he was still just a one-year-old child. Even so, he felt his mood plummeting.

At the same time, he felt a hatred for his own personality for being disappointed over such a thing that he hadn't felt even when killing the

adventurers.

「Hey! He is already tired and limp, hurry and let go of him, you fools!」

But from someone else's point of view, it seemed that he had simply lost his strength.

Ghouls are Undead monsters that were Rank 3 at lowest. They show greater intelligence and societal structure than subhuman-type monsters such as Goblins, Orcs and Kobolds, and the physical appearance of the two genders are very different.

All of them possess yellow eyes and grey-brown skin, are physically strong, secrete paralyzing venom from their claws and enjoy eating meat. They are creatures full of vim and vigor, also possessing resistance to pain and poison.

The males have the heads of lions and are suited to being warriors, as they surpass the females in physical strength and the potency of their paralyzing venom.

On the other hand, the females resemble beautiful women and though they are physically weaker than the males, many of them possess qualities suited for using magic, and most of them are able to cast simple spells.

However, females that are excellent warriors and males that were mages also exist.

Sometimes, Ghouls perform a special ritual to transform human corpses into a member of their own.

High-level Ghouls such as Ghoul Warriors, Ghoul Berserkers and Ghoul Mages exist, and in the past, even higher-level Ghouls such as Ghoul Tyrants and Ghoul Elder Mages have been seen.

『This is all that I know about Ghouls... Do you plan to stay in the Ghoul village until spring?』

「Yes. Also, Mom, Ghouls aren't Undead; they originated from Vida like Vampires.」

Darcia had a worried look on her face, but as Vandalieu replied to her, he was expressionless as usual.

『That's what makes me more worried. If they were Undead, they would be more friendly because of your skills, but that's not the case, you know? If they get hungry and try to eat you, what will you do?』

To Darcia, who had only just woken up and so had not seen the Ghouls for herself, that was a very real possibility that she was worried about.

「I think it's fine. Probably. At the very least, I don't feel the『presence of death』here like I did when I snuck into Evbejia.」

Because of the Ghouls' friendly behavior, he let his guard down to some extent, though not completely.

However, neither Darcia nor Vandalieu himself had realized that his Death-Attribute Charm skill was working fully on the Ghouls.

「Also, I need to wait until spring in a suitable place regardless. Zadiris and the others have told me I can stay here as long as I like.」

Vandalieu had already confirmed with the top members of the community that it was alright for him to stay in the village until spring. The charm-type skill and the meat offering had been greatly effective.

「Also, I want to have Zadiris teach me various things in the time leading up to winter.」

『That can wait until you get until the Orbaume Kingdom... I can't say that, can I?』

「Yeah, because I've realized that there is a problem with the Guild Cards.」

Vandalieu ran his eyes across the five Guild Cards that he had left in the carriage, which was now considerably emptier now that he had given the Ghouls the alcohol. The Guild Cards were something that all of the adventurers had been carrying, and they had the adventurers' names and their D-class status written on them.

Of course, he was planning to dispose of them later, but he had heard some very important information from the adventurers' spirits, so he had done a little research before that.

Guild Cards had the function of displaying one's status to other people.

Normally, one would have to use a special spell or Magic Item to see the status of others.

The owner of a Guild Card could apparently adjust how much of their status was displayed. They could decide whether to display just their name and current Job, or show their Job History up until now, or even show their attribute values and skills. That was up to the owner of the cards.

However, when creating a Guild Card for the first time, all information is revealed to the Guild staff member.

「Which means, the moment I become an adventurer, my skills and curses will be revealed.」

『Hmm, that's quite a problem. Normally you would be happy since they would pay you a reward.』

The Adventurers' Guild paid out rewards to adventurers who discovered and acquired unknown Jobs and skills.

And the【Death-Attribute Magic】and【Death-Attribute Charm】skills that Vandalieu possessed were unknown skills.

Darcia had first heard of them when Vandalieu had explained about his previous two lives. To be more accurate, she had learned of her son's skills and noticed that there were skills that she had never heard of before.

『You'd also become famous the moment you register at a Guild. And you'd definitely get noticed by the Mages' Guild. I think even your curses would receive a lot of attention.』

「But I can't forget my skills or remove my curses, so I think it's best if I gain some knowledge, skill and strength before I register myself.」

For Vandalieu to survive in this world with no parents, he needed to secure his own social position, and for that, he needed to register at a Guild. And since every guild used Guild Cards, Vandalieu's skills and curses would become known.

However, as Guilds were organizations that protected their members, Vandalieu wouldn't be unjustly imprisoned or kidnapped for the sake of

investigating his unknown skills and curses. Even though Vandalieu possessed unknown skills and curses, nobody would be able to do anything about it, whether they were Guild members or not.

At least, not officially.

Vandalieu knew well that not everybody in this world upheld rules and morals.

『I suppose there's no choice. It seems that Zadiris person can use magic, so have her teach you lots of things. Even if you can't learn the magic itself, I'm sure you'll learn something that you can apply to your death-attribute magic.』

「Yes, Mom.」

And so Vandalieu came to spend some time living in the Ghoul community.

【The Death-Attribute Charm Skill has increased to level 3!】

【You have acquired the Strengthen Followers skill!】

At first glance, it was a blue-purple, fin-shaped, inexplicable object. It gave a wet sensation when touched, and it was partially soft.

At the very least, it was an object that one would not presume to be food.

Was it really edible? Was this some kind of joke? Vandalieu wondered this as he tentatively tried a mouthful.

It had an unusual texture and its flavor was a strange mix of bitter and spicy, and a bizarre scent that was neither unpleasant nor pleasant ran through his nostrils.

If he hadn't asked what it was made of, he wouldn't have been able to tell whether it was meat, fish or even a vegetable.

「How is it, Van? How does the Gobu-gobu taste?」

「... It's delicious.」

As the tall female Ghoul who called him by a shortened nickname asked him his opinion, Vandalieu gave an insincere compliment without thinking. His seemingly incurable lack of communication skills was displaying itself once more.

「Van, what have you been eating up until now? None of us Ghouls think that this stuff is delicious.」

But as Vandalieu was expressionless as usual, the compliment didn't have any effect. As he tried to say something back to the female Ghoul who was watching him with pity in her eyes, he realized that his diet wasn't something that he could readily mention.

「... The rear legs of big frogs.」

Other than his mother's milk and blood, those had been the most delicious.

「Well, there are a number of tasty monsters and fruits to be found in Devil's Nests. You're only a year old, so don't worry about it.」

The name of the Ghoul talking to him and patting his head was Basdia. She was the leader of the warriors who had been out to hunt Goblins and come back in the early morning, Zadiris's youngest daughter.

She was a beauty, over 190cm tall with toned muscles and feminine curves, appearing to be in her mid-twenties. On Earth, she might have been a beautiful athlete or martial artist.

And she also resembled Zadiris. Anyone seeing the two of them would think that they were sisters, born a long time apart. Anyone would assume that Zadiris was the younger sister, and Basdia the older one.

「Humans don't make Gobu-gobu, huh. Can you eat a lot of delicious things in human villages? That would explain why the adventurers were so delicious.」

「No, I think they just don't know how to make Gobu-gobu.」

「They don't know? Why is that? The ingredients can be found anywhere; don't adventurers often hunt them?」

The ingredients that could be found anywhere that Basdia was referring to were Goblins and Gobubu grass juice.

Gobubu grass was a purple-colored weed known as the Goblins of grass. When crushed, it released a purple juice. It was a kind of magic grass, but it wasn't directly harmful. It simply grew in people's fields, sucking up all the nutrients in the process. This made the grass the natural enemy of farmers.

And though it was a magic grass, it wasn't tasty enough to be used in food and it didn't have any medicinal uses, so it was quite a problematic plant.

Its high rate of reproduction and the damage it caused without having a single beneficial use led to it being named Gobubu grass.

And everyone knew that Goblin meat smelled terrible and wasn't particularly edible. The same went for their blood and organs. Goblin blood tasted so bad that if Vandalieu had the choice between drinking Goblin blood and crushed insect juice, he would choose the latter.

Such Goblin meat was pickled for a whole day in the juice produced by crushing Gobubu grass. This neutralized the smell of the Goblin meat, producing something that was neither tasty nor disgusting. This Gobu-gobu could be preserved for around a year.

「During times when we can't find prey to hunt, we make do with this Gobu-gobu.」

「It doesn't take as much time or skill to make as dried meat, and it makes a convenient emergency food that you can store... But humans wouldn't go so far just to eat Goblin meat.」

As Vandalieu said, rather than devising a way of somehow making Goblin meat edible, humans would rather focus their efforts on farming or hunting more delicious creatures.

「Is that how it is?」

Satisfied with this explanation, or perhaps having given up on trying to understand it, Basdia returned to her task of chopping up Goblin meat that had already had its blood drained with a butcher's knife. She still had to make Gobu-gobu with a dozen more Goblins' worth of meat.

Basdia was the most skilled among the young Ghouls, even including the males, but her social position within the village wasn't very high. The social status of Ghouls was determined by strength for men, and skill in magic and number of children birthed for women. Basdia was unskilled in magic and hadn't given birth to a child yet, so no matter how skilled she was at fighting, she would never be able to rise to the top positions.

Vandalieu thought about how the people of Earth would furiously label this way of thinking as discrimination as he ate the rest of the Gobu-gobu. Well, he didn't have time to complain about the society of Ghouls, who were technically monsters.

「I want to hurry and give birth to a child so I can become important. If that happens, I won't be hunting Goblins and making Gobu-gobu, but going out to hunt more worthy prey and focus my spare time on becoming stronger.」

Housework, making various everyday things, maintenance of the fences that surrounded the houses and villages and such were apparently tasks for Ghouls of low social position, and hunting Goblins and gathering Gobubu grass for making Gobu-gobu were included in that.

Surprisingly, Ghouls that were able to create weapons and armor were respected in the village, even if they were weak or had no children.

「You want to become important and strong?」

「Yeah. I like strong people, so I want to become strong.」

Basdia looked like a female warrior at first glance, and her personality matched her appearance.

「There's also my age to think about.」

Basdia had apparently turned twenty-five this year. The physical appearance of Ghoul women didn't stop changing until they birthed their first child, so she was worrying that her physical age might double Zadiris's at this rate.

As Vandalieu looked at her... looked up at her, he thought that she didn't need to worry about that.

「If you were a little older, Van, I would receive your seed.」

「Bugh!」

「What's wrong, did the Gobu-gobu get stuck in your throat? Are you alright?」

Basdia dropped the butcher's knife that could decapitate a cow in surprise and raised Vandalieu into the air. She had no signs of embarrassment showing on her face.

「No, I was just surprised that you said such a ridiculous thing in such an earnest tone.」

Nobody could blame Vandalieu for being surprised at Basdia suddenly saying that she would receive his seed. However, Basdia gave a puzzled turn of her head.

「According to Mother, when there is a Ghoul woman who's struggling to get pregnant, sometimes we capture a human man alive and have him give his seed in exchange for letting him leave alive. Apparently the seed of other races like humans have a higher chance to produce a child. Human men are cooperative about it, so this is apparently quite successful.」

「Well, if their lives are depending on it, I'm sure it's no surprise that they cooperate.」

If any man was given the choice between dying and making a child, wouldn't he choose the latter? Not to mention that Ghoul women were exactly like human women other than their skin color and eyes. On top of that –

「Ghoul women are all attractive, too.」

All of the Ghouls that Vandalieu had seen since yesterday were beautiful. If their lives would be saved *and* they would get to have sex with one of these Ghouls, wouldn't any man repeatedly shout「YES!」unless they had an incredibly firm sense of virtue or believed in the god Alda?

At the very least, Vandalieu knew that he would do so.

「Even from humans' point of view? I'm happy about that, but that's impossible for me.」

「Why is that?」

「I'm already twenty-five years old. In the human race that most adventurers belong to, once you are past twenty-five years of age, you are made fun of as a middle-aged woman.」

As Lambda's medical technology was underdeveloped compared to Earth's or Origin's, the life expectancy was short. There was magic instead, but the only ones who could leave their fates in the hands of magic were those with some

degree of wealth. And few mages were able to use magic related to obstetrics and gynecology.

And in this world, producing offspring was an important task. As mechanical technology was underdeveloped, the driving force in all industries was people. People plowed the fields, made the clothes, cut the stones used to build houses, fought to defend their countries – all of these required the people's labor.

Therefore, it was common for the average person to be married before the age of twenty-five. It wasn't uncommon for female adventurers to pass that age before marriage, but that was because those female adventurers were wealthy and had connections, or actually had partners that they weren't officially married to.

Of course, the pregnancy rate for women in this world wasn't lower than for those of Earth; one could still bear children in their forties, but women past their mid-twenties were called middle-aged women, encouraging them to hurry up and have children.

But Basdia had no way of knowing these exact societal circumstances, so her perceptions were based on vague stories that she had heard from Ghouls who had eavesdropped on human conversations.

「I don't think it's something you should worry about too much. I think you're still very young, Basdia-san.」

Vandalieu wasn't particularly knowledgeable about human society either, so he had wondered,「Aren't the humans of this world worrying about their age too much?」As he had only lived on Earth as a high-school student and only made it to the age of twenty in Origin, it was difficult for him to understand the importance of leaving descendants behind.

「I'm happy that you're saying that.」

As Basdia smiled, she looked truly beautiful and attractive. Vandalieu was close to her beautiful skin as she was holding him, and if he was an adolescent, he would probably be unable to help but to stare at the deep cleavage between her breasts.

The fact that she could become so beautiful while eating only meat was probably because of the biological differences between Ghouls and humans.

「Now that I think about it, I heard from Mother that you are able to use unusual magic, Vandalieu. Isn't there a spell that you could use to make yourself able to give me your seed? I have heard that there is a life-attribute spell that can cause the rapid growth of one body part.」

「... I think that's a bit impossible.」

However, it seemed that Basdia's complex was deeper than Vandalieu had thought. He thought about capturing a bandit or adventurer alive and offering him to her next time, but that in itself made him feel uncomfortable.

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「I see, I am sorry that my daughter asked the impossible of you.」

Zadiris, hearing Vandalieu's story in her own house, lowered her head a little. Of course, her daughter producing a child was a matter of great concern to her as well.

「It will take around ten years for you to grow old enough to give her your seed normally, Vandalieu. At her current age, she will be able to wait that long. I may have pressured her too much in my desire to see my first grandchild... I am more surprised that you know what "seed" and such words mean, boy.」

「Well, I don't think it's that unusual.」

Now that Zadiris mentioned it, a normal one-year-old infant wouldn't understand the meaning behind having one's seed asked for. Realizing this, Vandalieu gave a vague explanation. He had good impressions of Zadiris, Vigaro and Basdia, but he was still hesitant to tell them about his past lives.

「More importantly, what do you mean by first grandchild...? Well, I suppose I understand even without you explaining.」

Vandalieu, hearing the pleasured voices of men and women coming through the gap between the leaf ceiling and wooden walls of the pit dwelling, gave a shrug of his small shoulders.

The owners of the voices were Ghouls of the village. It seemed that Ghouls

didn’t have a system or the values for marriage, and it was common to spend the night with multiple members of the opposite sex.

This was because of the fact that Ghouls lived in a dangerous Devil’s Nest, the fact that the women’s aging didn’t stop until they became pregnant, and the fact that it was very difficult for them to get pregnant despite their long lifespans.

If every Ghoul had only one partner, the village couldn’t be maintained.

Vandalieu guessed that this was the reason that Zadiris didn’t have a grandchild yet.

She had apparently given birth to two males before Basdia, but since DNA testing didn’t exist in this world, there was no way to be sure that they were the fathers of any children.

In fact, at the banquet yesterday, nobody had introduced their husband, wife, grandchildren or grandparents.

「Indeed, that is how it is.」

Zadiris didn’t deny it. This was how Ghoul society worked.

「Well, I know who Basdia’s father is.」

「Who is it?」

「It is Vigaro.」

Basdia was twenty-five years old. That meant that Zadiris had been 265 years old when she had given birth to her. At that age, even Ghouls were considered to be very old, and considering the physical burdens, it was unusual for one to produce children at such an age.

However, at the time, they had fought Kobolds and drank the alcohol that the Kobolds had stolen from humans.

「That alcohol was much stronger than the alcohol we make in the village. I became drunk on it and the next time I opened my eyes, the sun was rising and I was in the same bed as him.」

「... I see.」

It was the story of a conception without a single trace of romance.

「You should be wary of alcohol, boy. Even if you drink, do not become consumed by the alcohol. Now then, shall I teach you the basics of magic?」

Though weakened by her old age, Zadiris was a Ghoul. Of course, she couldn't use death-attribute magic, but the basics that she could teach were likely to be beneficial for Vandalieu.

And while Vandalieu was learning the basics of magic from Zadiris, Bone Man, Saria and Rita were being taught how to fight by the Ghoul warriors.

Sam, Bone Bird and the other Undead were helping with things around the village. Helping with the hunting in the Devil's Nest gained them Experience Points, speeding up their growth.

And so Vandalieu began his first non-self-taught lessons.

- **Name:** Vigaro
- **Rank:** 5
- **Race:** Ghoul Barbarian
- **Level:** 78
- **Job:** None
- **Job level:** 100
- **Job history:** None
- **Age:** 167 years old

- **Passive skills:**
  - Night Vision
  - Pain Resistance: Level 4
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 4
  - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1

- **Active skills:**
  - Axe Technique: Level 4
  - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 2
  - Commanding: Level 3
  - Coordination: Level 2

- **Name:** Basdia
- **Rank:** 4
- **Race:** Ghoul Warrior
- **Level:** 17
- **Job:** None
- **Job level:** 100
- **Job history:** None
- **Age:** 25 years old

- **Passive skills:**
  - Night Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 2
  - Pain Resistance: Level 2
  - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 3

- **Active skills:**
  - Axe Technique: Level 2
  - Shield Technique: Level 1
  - Archery: Level 2
  - Javelin Technique: Level 1
  - Silent Steps: Level 1
  - Coordination: Level 1

- **Status Effects:**
  - Infertility

Monster Explanation:

【Ghoul Warriors】

These are Ghouls with enhanced fighting ability. They lead small groups of Ghouls and, in cases where other higher-ranking Ghouls aren't present, entire tribes.

They not only fight with their venomous claws, but they are proficient in the use of unarmed fighting techniques and weapons, and employ martial arts in

battle. As their appearance is not very different from regular Ghouls, there are cases where unsuspecting adventurers are overwhelmed by them, so caution must be taken.

The right ear is used as proof of exterminating them. Materials that can be obtained from them include their fangs, claws and their livers which can be used in medicine.

For a normal Ghoul to become a Ghoul Warrior, he or she must possess multiple martial-type skills at level 2 or higher. However, most Ghouls meet that requirement before reaching level 100.

As Basdia has more physical ability than talent for magic, she focused on that and became a Ghoul Warrior. Though this has caused her to receive the status effect of infertility, it has had no negative effect on her attribute values or skills.

Monster explanation:

【Ghoul Barbarians】

These are Ghouls that have increased their Rank and then polished their martial skills and increased their Superhuman Strength skill even further. They possess larger bodies than most Ghouls, and enjoy swinging their weapons to mow down their enemies in battle. Many Ghoul Barbarians lack intelligence, thinking only about combat.

Because of this, most of them have low social positions and are simply made use of by Ghoul Mages. The qualities of Ghoul Barbarians are possessed only by males; there have been no confirmed cases where a female Ghoul has become a Ghoul Barbarian.

The right ear is used as proof of exterminating them. Materials that can be obtained from them include their fangs, claws, tendons that can be used to make bowstrings and their Mana-soaked manes.

For a Ghoul to become a Ghoul Barbarian, he must possess the【Superhuman Strength】skill at level 3 or higher and a level 4 skill in the use of a two-handed weapon.

Unlike other Ghoul Barbarians, Vigaro is relatively intelligent and stands in a

position to become the next chief. In addition, he has an exceptional ability for commanding others, so while most Ghoul Barbarians enjoy fighting alone, Vigaro always leads his companions to battle.

These factors make him more difficult to defeat than most Ghoul Barbarians.

Chapter 13: The surprises that shorten a lifespan too much

「Well then, first of all, can you tell me about the magic you use and the skills you know, boy? Of course, if you do not wish to tell me, I will not press you any further.」

「No, I trust you... There'll be a hundred or so guys who know about it in the future anyway.」

In order to learn the basics of magic, telling Zadiris about his magic and skills was necessary for Vandalieu. He would be able to receive guidance and advice based on her knowledge and experience.

However, that meant giving Zadiris information regarding his death-attribute magic. Even normal adventurers and monsters would be hesitant about freely giving away information regarding their skills. This was because doing so revealed all of one's weaknesses.

However, sharing that information with people that one trusted was not uncommon. For adventurers, keeping one's skills a secret from party members would impede teamwork. But for monsters, this may be another story.

And though it was still some decades away, there would be a hundred people coming from Origin and reincarnating here, and all of them would know about Vandalieu's death-attribute magic.

Even if by some miracle Rodcorte didn't tell them about Vandalieu's death-attribute magic, there would likely be data left at the laboratory that he had been imprisoned in, and Magic Items created using his death-attribute magic were already widely circulating in Origin. At that time, those items were advertised as having been created not through death-attribute magic, but independently-developed life-attribute magic, but surely their true nature would have been discovered by now.

Therefore, it could be assumed that *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others found out about Vandalieu's death-attribute magic after he died in Origin. It was extremely unlikely that they wouldn't know about it.

That was why Vandalieu couldn't see a reason to keep it a secret from someone like Zadiris, whom he trusted.

「A hundred people? Well, in any case, about your magic, boy –」

Right now, Zadiris was under the impression that Vandalieu's magic was a special kind of life-attribute magic. At first, one would think that the Undead were completely unrelated to life-attribute magic, but in Lambda, the only ones who could control the Undead were life-attribute mages.

They forcefully poured life force into corpses, creating creatures with fake life that moved artificially. Since such Undead were forced into this unnatural state, they were fundamentally weaker than Undead that appeared in Devil's Nests and Dungeons.

Zadiris had thought that Vandalieu was using a special spell that overcame these limitations, so she was rendered speechless when Vandalieu told her about his death-attribute magic.

「D... Death attribute? A new... A ninth attribute? Such a thing really exists... No, I suppose it is true. You actually control the Undead and cast spells that I have no knowledge about.」

In Origin, the death attribute was the eighth attribute, but unlike Origin, the time attribute existed in Lambda, so that made the death attribute the ninth attribute.

「So you're surprised after all?」

「That goes without saying! Any monster that knows the potential value of a new attribute's magic would show interest!」

For monsters, magic was a power that allowed them to survive, as well as rise up in a society where the strong stood on top.

Nobody would know how to fight against a user of unknown spells. Since the entirety of the death attribute was unknown, there would be any number of

ways to kill an enemy on sight with no reaction.

Like Origin, in Lambda, one cannot learn magic for an attribute unless he or she possesses an affinity for that attribute. That applied for monsters as well, so not all monsters would be capable of this, but there was a very real concern that monsters with “mage” in their race title could somehow steal the techniques.

「I see. The reason that adventurer mage couldn’t cast spells was because of this death-attribute magic.」

Zadiris shuddered as she recalled how the mage among the adventurers who had attacked her had died. As a Ghoul Mage herself, it was easy for her to imagine the horror of having one’s magic taken away as a mage. It would be equivalent to taking away a swordsman’s arms and telling him to kick his enemies to death.

Thinking this, she felt a little sympathy for the adventurers, though it was far too late for that now.

「In that case, since I only have affinities for light and wind-attribute magic, I cannot directly teach you death-attribute magic, but I can help you make use of the magic that you do know. Magic is such an art that I can do this.」

At first, one would assume that the fire attribute and the water attribute are opposites. However, the essence of the fire attribute is heat, while the water attribute’s is in liquid and cold.

Therefore, a master mage of the fire attribute would be able to freely increase the heat to burn something, or lower it and freeze it. A master of the water attribute would be able to manipulate molten lava like his own arms and legs, since it is a liquid.

A user of the earth element would be able to manipulate mercury and lava, while a user of the wind element would be able to use the flammable components of air to create a large explosion.

「Things regarding this were written in a book that the chief showed me when I was a child.」

Zadiris had gained that knowledge from books looted from adventurers. For

monsters, books could only be obtained by stealing them from humans or other monsters, so they were hard to come by.

「In other words, the important thing is not the number of attributes that you have an affinity for, but how much you increase your skills. Of course, it is convenient to be able to use multiple attributes. However, there are cases where adventurers skilful enough to cast spells of multiple attributes, but only have superficial knowledge of those attributes, are defeated by Goblin Mages that can only use the fire attribute.」

「Now that you put it that way, I'm starting to feel motivated.」

For Vandalieu, to whom the researchers of Origin had said「you should focus only on death-attribute magic and your Mana pool」, Zadiris's teachings were refreshing and a source of happiness for him. He even began to feel passionate about it.

Though there was no change to his outward appearance as he was expressionless as always.

「And what is necessary for that skill is Mana. The amount of Mana you possess is directly related to the length of time you are able to cast your spells. How much Mana do you have, boy? I will have to adjust the length of our lessons based on that.」

「Ah, yes, it's around a hundred million.」

「I see, a hundred million... What?!」

As Zadiris was astonished once more, she wore a facial expression suitable for her young appearance that Vandalieu thought was adorable.

「A-a hundred million... Is that true? I do not even possess ten thousand, but you, boy... No, considering that you are using unknown magic as well, it is... not that unusual, I suppose?」

Zadiris was bewildered by the unbelievable number given in Vandalieu's self-report of his Mana pool. Normally, one would laugh this off as a poorly-told lie, but the child in front of her eyes had a persuasiveness that prevented her from doing so.

At the very least, that was how Zadiris felt.

And in any case, Vandalieu would not benefit from telling such a poor lie. Exaggerating his Mana pool a little to impress her would be one thing, but a hundred million was a number that was beyond exaggeration. And since he was about to undergo lessons to learn the basics of magic, such a lie would be quickly exposed.

「... Well, it is fine. I will understand your Mana pool soon enough, boy.」

Zadiris managed to swallow her surprise, with difficulty. Meanwhile, Vandalieu realized from her reaction that having a Mana pool of a hundred million was abnormal after all. He decided not to mention it too much if he ever found himself in human society... though it would be exposed if he registered himself at a Guild.

「Well then, what magic-related skills do you possess?」

「To start off, I have the【Chant Revocation】skill. And the【Golem Transmutation】skill, does that count as a magic-related skill?」

「... Boy, just how much do you plan to shorten my remaining lifespan? In fact, I should ask you to teach me the basics I need to learn the【Chant Revocation】skill. And I have never even heard of this【Golem Transmutation.】」

Vandalieu had heard about how rare the Chant Revocation skill was from Darcia, but seeing as even Zadiris was surprised, despite having lived for nearly three hundred years, it seemed to be rarer than he had thought.

However, since Zadiris seems to have the【Alchemy】skill, he had thought that she would know about his【Golem Transmutation】skill. He had assumed that Golems were created using Alchemy, based on the fiction that he had read on Earth.

「Even if you want me to teach you the basics for【Chant Revocation】, all you have to do is use magic in a situation where you can’t chant to cast spells, you know?」

「The only one who can do that is you, boy, thanks to that Mana pool of yours.」

In order to cast a spell without its chant while maintaining the same effect, dozens or even hundreds of times the Mana would be required. Therefore, even skilled mages would be able to perform such a feat only once a day, if at all. Vandalieu was only capable of repeating this to the point of obtaining the skill because of his abnormally vast Mana pool.

The only others who would be capable of obtaining the【Chant Revocation】skill normally were incredibly talented mages who had mastered multiple magic-related Jobs and legendary monsters.

「At this rate, it seems that I will not need to teach you the basics after all. I am sure that your ability with no-attribute magic and the【Mana Control】skill is perfect, is it not?」

As Zadiris spoke in a tone that sounded as if she had lost her confidence, this time it was Vandalieu's turn to be surprised.

「What is no-attribute magic?」

「How is it that you do not know what it is? It is the most fundamental, basic magic!」

Zadiris was surprised again as well.

As its name suggests, no-attribute magic is magic that uses Mana before it has changed into any attribute. Since no attributes are involved, anyone can use this magic as long as they have Mana, so it was common for mages to first learn no-attribute magic to learn the fundamentals of controlling one's Mana.

No-attribute magic is weaker than magic with an attribute, and only consists of simple spells, but since it is simple, it is also easy to learn and use.

「Even we who live in the Devil's Nest know it.」

「I don't know it because I'm self-taught.」

And the biggest reason that Vandalieu didn't know about it was because No-attribute magic hadn't existed in Origin, the world in which he had lived his previous life.

Did it really not exist, or did the researchers at the laboratory deliberately not tell him about it... The chances of it being the latter were eighty or ninety

percent, but he had no way to confirm that now. Vandalieu decided to ask *Hiroto* and the others when they reincarnated here, if he got the chance.

At the very least, the researchers had never mentioned No-attribute magic to Vandalieu. Their spirits likely knew, but other than answering Vandalieu's questions, they had only talked nonsense.

If Vandalieu had supplied them with Mana like he was doing for Darcia now, then perhaps they could have been preserved without having their personalities collapsing, but at the time, he had been unable to use his own Mana freely.

Of course, Darcia knew about No-attribute magic. When Vandalieu asked her about it later, she told him that she had simply assumed that Vandalieu had known about it and not bothered teaching him.

『You were able to use magic without anyone teaching you, Vandalieu, so I was sure that you knew about it...』

Something like that.

「Well then, we shall start with No-attribute magic, I suppose. It took me three years to obtain the skill; I am sure it will not even take you a year, boy. With your Mana pool, you will not have any problems practicing all day, after all.」

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Vigaro, leader of the Ghoul warriors, suddenly spotted a weed growing near his foot and knew that spring was coming soon.

For Ghouls, who didn't use calendars or civilized agricultural techniques, seasons were nothing more than things that they could feel around them. Humid air and pouring rain meant a rainy season; hot weather was summer; when it became a little cooler and more fruit was available than normal, it was autumn; when the air became dry and cold, it was winter.

And when it became warm again and these weeds whose names they didn't know began to grow, it was spring.

「It's already been half a year since he came, huh.」

Considering the number of years and months that Vigaro had lived, half a year wasn't a significant amount of time. However, in that short period of time, life

had changed in the village that Vigaro had lived in for over a hundred years.

As thanks for taking care of him, Vandalieu had used death-attribute magic to preserve the Ghouls' food. With a spell called【Preservation】, raw meat that even the Ghouls with their strong stomachs couldn't eat after several days lasted for several months.

Up until now, the only preserved food the Ghouls had used were Gobu-gobu and meat dried on sunny days, so this was a source of great convenience. The Ghouls no longer had to go out to hunt every day, which meant they had more time to train themselves, and there were fewer cases of injuries as well.

Well, Ghouls were a race that were sloth-like in nature, so this caused some individuals to slack off as well. That was kept in check by Zadiris who had been teaching the importance of studying and putting one's effort into things, and Vigaro who knew the importance of those intuitively.

「And the meat that he prepares for us is incredibly delicious.」

Vandalieu applied the【Maturation】spell on the raw meat that the Ghouls ate, just before it was served. To produce the same effect on earth, one would have to cure the meat for days or weeks in a room with carefully regulated temperature and humidity, but with this spell, it was possible to produce such meat in this village that had nothing but pit dwellings and a warehouse.

This was nothing short of a blessing for the Ghouls.

Perhaps thanks to this delicious meat, their bodies felt healthier and they somehow felt even stronger than before.

It seemed that Vandalieu planned to leave once it was spring, but there were many, including Vigaro, who wanted him to stay in the village.

If he were an adult, they would offer him several women for his personal use, but such an offer was rather difficult to make to a child less than two years old.

However, it seemed that the lessons for his skills with Zadiris would take some more time, so he might end up staying until summer.

Vandalieu was a good person, so Vigaro wanted his studying to go well, but at the same time, Vigaro wanted him to stay as long as possible. What a

complicated mix of feelings.

While Vigaro was dealing with these difficult emotions, his apprentices were hunting a powerful enemy.

「WOOOOOHHHHN!」

「GAAAAH!」

「Kill the ones with the bows – no, the one with the staff first!」

Vigaro's apprentices and their prey were engaged in a group battle.

But their prey were not adventurers. Vigaro and his warriors attacked adventurers less frequently than Vandalieu had imagined, and adventurers didn't come to the Devil's Nest very often in the first place.

When the current chief Zadiris was younger, there had been an incident in which two thirds of the village's population were hunted down by a group of adventurers, so not attacking adventurers unless necessary was a law in the village. If adventurers were discovered, the Ghouls hid and waited until they passed by, and only fought if the adventurers attacked them.

Ghouls knew the delicious taste of adventurers' flesh and how valuable their equipment was, but they knew even better than that just how terrifying adventurers could be.

But it was unknown how adventurers were dealt with by other Ghoul villages.

And though Vigaro and the others were unaware of this, the reason that few adventurers came to this Devil's Nest was because of its location.

The size of this Devil's Nest and the monsters that appeared in it was perfectly suited for D or C-class adventurers to venture into. However, the nearest human town was three days' travel away.

And there was another similarly-sized Devil's Nest only a few hours away from that nearby human town that even had multiple Dungeons.

Therefore, it was natural for the adventurers to focus on the Devil's Nest that was closer to the town, since it even had Dungeons as well. Of course, leaving this Devil's Nest alone and allowing the monsters to multiply and overflow out of it would be a big problem, but the Adventurers' Guild had decided that the

risk of that happening was low.

The reason for that was that the Devil's Nest that Vigaro and the other Ghouls lived in had many demi-human-type monsters. It was filled with villages of Goblins, Kobolds, Orcs as well as Ghouls, and they often fought each other, so even if adventurers didn't come to thin out the monster numbers, the monsters regulated their own population.

That was why the humans had decided that it wasn't necessary to come all the way out to this Devil's Nest. It was a problem to leave it alone completely, so the Adventurers' Guild regularly sent out requests to survey the area. So the only adventurers that came here were ones who accepted the request thinking that they could gain great profits here, since there were no competitors – such as the adventurers who had attacked Zadiris.

For these reasons, the village Ghouls fought against adventurers less than once a year. If one were to ask what Vigaro's apprentices were fighting, the answer would be Kobolds.

「WOOOOHHHN!」

「GRRRR!」

Kobolds were like dogs standing on two legs, a little smaller than humans. They were about as strong as humans, or perhaps slightly weaker. However, they were very agile, more intelligent than Goblins and adept in group battles.

They were Rank 2 on average, and the higher-rank ones had race titles like Kobold Chief, Kobold Geronimo, Kobold Mage and Kobold King.

The apprentices were fighting thirty normal Kobolds armed with daggers and bows, four[1] Rank 3 Kobold Chiefs who were a little larger and armed with swords and spears, as well as a single Rank 4 Kobold Mage wielding a staff.

Thirteen of Vigaro's apprentices, as well as three animals and a bird opposed the Kobolds. They were at an overwhelming disadvantage in terms of numbers, but Ghouls are Rank 3 monsters. They were winning the battle through quality over quantity.

Despite that, it was a tough battle – were they not performing well?

As Ghouls had a low birth rate, they couldn't afford to carelessly lose members and decrease their own numbers. Vigaro was prepared to step in himself if needed, but believed that they could win in the end.

His apprentices had several strengths to play to.

『Halberd Technique, Single Flash!』

The blade of a halberd swung with incredible force cleanly decapitated a Kobold directly in front, as well as the one next to it.

『Onee-chan, leave the right side to me! Naginata technique, Double Thrust!』

The blade of a glaive pierced through the throat and stomach of a Kobold coming from the right, protruding from the Kobold's back.

『There are a lot of them, and they're fast. Everyone, keep attacking and stay calm!』

『Leave their front lines to us, and be careful not to get surrounded!』

This was the work of the Living High-Leg Armor Saria and the Living Bikini Armor Rita. They had spent half a year learning how to fight from Vigaro and the others. As a result, they had gained fighting skills, though they were still level 1, and they were able to use their weapons.

They had learned to cover their weapons in Mana and then release it upon attack, making their attacks more powerful.

A master would be able to use techniques to perform dozens of stabs in an instant and cut a piece of metal to shreds using just an iron sword, but for beginners with level 1 skills, the『Single Flash』that was more powerful than a regular sweeping attack and the『Double Thrust』that performed two stabbing attacks was the limit.

However, it was clear from the results that even beginner-level techniques were effective enough in battle.

They had also become able to speak as a result of increasing their level. This was a cause of great happiness for not only Sam and Vandalieu, but for Vigaro and the other Ghouls as well. They had been bewildered as to how to communicate with these strange, faceless suits of armor.

『GOAAAAH!』

『UOOOOON!』

And Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf and Bone Bear had advanced from being Rank 3 Bone Beasts to Rank 4 Rotten Beasts.

The three of them were now so strong that ordinary Kobolds couldn't be considered worthy enemies for them, but they were serving as a rear guard for the apprentices that were training.

From time to time, they released a poisonous breath to keep the Kobolds in check and howled to intimidate them.

『Gueeeh.』

『To think that I would be able to see my children's growth even after our deaths. I am a lucky fellow.』

Bone Bird and Sam were with Vigaro, watching the battle. Bone Bird served as a scout, while Sam's service would be needed after the battle.

「WOOOHHN!」

Realizing that its allies were in a disadvantageous situation, the Kobold Mage began reciting a chant in its own language. A spear of fire appeared in front of it. As a Mage, it was intelligent enough to know that a wide-area attack would hit its own allies, so it had chosen a spell that was powerful, even though it would only hit a single target.

Burning the very air around it, the fiery spear was released. Its target was one of the strange Living Armors that were wielding long weapons.

The flaming spear flew through the air, weaving in between the other Kobolds, and closed in on the Living Armor.

Rita performed a downwards slash of her Glaive at the spear of fire.

『Chest!』[2]

The fiery spear disintegrated and the flames scattered about like broken fragments.

Normally, a weapon of steel wouldn't destroy a spell, no matter how heavy

the weapon was. However, the Glaive that Rita wielded was a Magic Item, obtained in the treasure store of an unexplored Dungeon. It had the ability to cut through a spell on the level of a flaming spear.

Of course, it was better than taking a direct hit, but Rita couldn't avoid the flames that had scattered about. However, the suit of armor that Rita possessed had a resistance to fire. And since the suit of armor made up her entire body, she suffered no burns as long as the armor resisted the fire.

「Gyaugh!」

「Gyain!」

The final result was one exactly opposite to what the Kobold Mage had intended – the only ones caught up in the scattered flames were Rita and the several Kobolds that she had been engaged in combat with.

『YAAAAH!』

And then Rita gave a great swing of her glaive, scattering the Kobolds who had flinched from the burns they had received and stepping into the opening in the enemy lines.

「GRRRR!」

As if to prevent her from doing as she pleased, two of the Kobold Chiefs stepped in front of her. They were equipped with armor and shields made from the carapaces of bug-type monsters.

Rita swung her glaive downwards at one of them.

The Kobold Chief raised its shield immediately, stopping the glaive with a loud clang. And then its dog-like face twisted in a smile. It had successfully defended her attack, and the other Kobold Chief would use the opportunity to attack Rita.

『Single Flash!』

However, Saria, who had been standing behind Rita, separated the Kobold Chief's body's top half from the bottom half with a sideways slash of her halberd, straight through Rita.

If Rita was a normal, living creature, then she would have certainly been harmed. However, she was a Living Armor. In the space that normally contained

the internal organs, there was only empty air.

Seeing its companion collapse with its blood and organs scattering about onto the ground, the other Kobold Chief froze.

『Ready!』

『YAAAH!』

And then Rita and Saria attacked with their glaive and halberd. As if proving that it deserved its title of Kobold Chief, their opponent blocked the glaive with its shield and avoided the thrust of the halberd.

「GAAH!」

However, it had no way to deal with the subsequent attacks of the Ghouls' talons, and ended up joining its companion in death.

「GYAAUUUN!」

There had originally been four Kobold Chiefs; now their numbers were halved and their front line had collapsed. Knowing that defeat was inevitable, the Kobold Mage gave the order to retreat, but it was too late.

「The meat is getting away!」

Deciding that the apprentices had got enough training, Vigaro stepped in. With this as a signal, Bone Bird who had been watching the battle up until now attacked the Goblin Mage from the sky, and with the three Rotten Beasts leaping into combat as well, it didn't take much time for all of the Kobolds to be defeated.

And then some of the Ghouls watched the surroundings while the others took the Kobolds apart. The first thing they did was strip them of their weapons and armor. Kobolds mainly used things like daggers as their weapons, which were unsuitable for the physically strong Ghouls, but it was possible to attach them to the ends of sticks to create spears. It was also possible to take their armor apart and reshape them for Ghoul use.

The Kobold Chiefs had normal swords and axes, and their armor was more than just fur clothing; it was made of lightweight carapace which made it very useful. The staff used by the Kobold Mage would be considered a treasure for a

Ghoul capable of using magic.

Though the Kobold's furs couldn't be used for trading in the way they would be in human society, they made for good carpets in this Devil's Nest where commodities were limited, and they could even be used to make clothes for the next winter. The Kobold Chiefs' fangs could be used for knife blades and spear tips, and the Kobold Mage's Mana-infused eyeballs and internal organs could be used in medicines.

And of course, their meat could be harvested.

Incidentally, the right ear that is used by adventurers as proof of extermination were completely ignored. That was to be expected.

「We'll take the Kobol fruits and leaves before we go, too.」

Kobol fruits were the special fruit of the Kobol trees that only grew in the areas of the Devil's Nest that the Kobolds lived in.

Their external appearance was that of a blue, round fruit the size of a baby. They were valuable in human society because of their pleasant, crunchy texture and sweet-sour taste.

The Ghouls ate them raw or squeezed them to extract the juice, but as they had other important uses, they made sure to collect them whenever they hunted Kobolds.

Of course, transporting thirty-five Kobolds and their Kobol fruits was a great task, but this is where Sam provided his service.

『We're counting on you, Father.』

『Yes, leave it to me. But have you drained their blood properly?』

『Of course. And Onee-chan and I will wash you properly afterwards, so don't worry about it.』

Thanks to Sam the Ghost Carriage, the Ghouls' transport capacity was greatly increased. Unlike normal carriages and carts, Sam dealt with rough roads well and moved on his own without any external help, so he was perfect for transporting goods across the Devil's Nest.

He even contributed some strength in battle, being able to easily run over and

kill one or two normal Kobolds. Adventurers conducting large-scale hunts in Devil's Nests would surely be jealous of Sam's abilities.

But the adventurers of the Amid Empire would avoid him, as he was an Undead.

「Today is baked Kobold. It's delicious, you know. I hope your master likes it, too.」

Vigaro hoped that Vandalieu liked the meat enough to stay in the village. Vigaro's true feelings were obvious, and Saria and Rita thought the same.

『Bocchan's training has not yet finished, so we are planning to stay awhile longer. We will be in your care for some more time.』

『Learning magic is apparently hard, huh.』

「It hasn't even been a year since he began, right? That's about normal.」

Vigaro himself didn't possess the qualities of a mage – strictly speaking, he did; he was the individual that would become the next village chief, after all. However, he would need ten years of intense, everyday training to become able to use magic. He was aware of the troubles the women of the village put themselves through in order to learn magic. If he remembered correctly, there hadn't been a single Ghoul woman who had become a fully qualified mage with less than five years of training.

With that in mind, Vandalieu would surely stay in the village awhile longer. Feeling more satisfied with this realization than the harvest that they had gathered today, Vigaro led Sam and the others back to the village.

Kobold meat tasted unpleasant.

It wasn't as bad as Goblin meat, but possessed a smell worse than the meat of domesticated animals that didn't disappear even with liberal use of herbs and spices. Even if the smell wasn't there, it was very tough and sinewy; it was difficult to call it edible.

Therefore, nobody in human society thought of eating Kobold meat unless they were desperately starving. However, for the Ghouls who lived in villages in a Devil's Nest and gathered their food through hunting, it was different. They

had discovered a way to process Goblin meat to make it edible, and in the same way, they had devised a way to cook Kobold meat.

They cut the Kobold meat into pieces of appropriate size and placed thin slices of Kobol fruit on top. Then they wrapped the whole thing in Kobol leaves and baked it.

This made the Kobold meat surprisingly tender, removed the smell cleanly and though the resulting taste was peculiar, some individuals enjoyed it.

It wasn't amazingly delicious, but it was pleasant enough for even humans to eat normally. If a professional chef were to prepare the dish, it would surely be even tastier.

If this recipe were to be discovered by human society, it could cause a great sensation – or perhaps not. Kobol fruits sold for ten Amid each, or if converted, about a thousand yen.[3]

But considering that Kobol leaves didn't even have a market price, and yet removed the smell and toughness of the meat considerably, the poor people who find it hard to afford food from day to day would perhaps be glad to eat this.

「Well, it wouldn't make a good business, but a good social welfare measure.」

Vandalieu didn't even know if such poor people existed in Lambda, but this thought occurred to him as he ate the Kobold meat.

Adding walnut sauce to the final product made it taste even better, and when he recommended the sauce to Zadiris and Vigaro, they were overjoyed. Surprisingly, despite the Ghouls' dedication to advancements in cuisine, it seemed that they hadn't managed to invent sauces. This was perhaps due to a difference in the Ghouls' culinary culture from that of humans.

Thus, Vandalieu's primary task at the village was to make more of this walnut sauce. Fortunately, walnuts could be harvested all year long in this Devil's Nest, so the ingredients for the sauce were available at all times. Several Ghoul women helped him with its creation, so there wasn't too much work. In fact, he found it enjoyable.

The problem was that his salt store was running low. Vandalieu decided he

should find some bandits to attack again. He might even be able to make walnut miso[4], as long as he had salt.

Vandalieu thought that he should try making cookies with the acorns that fell all year round like the walnuts. There was a small river conveniently located close to the village, so he could use that to remove the harsh taste of the acorns. He was beginning to want carbohydrates as well instead of just protein, so he thought that he should make an attempt at this.

「I wonder if I'd consider this as contributing to society, or becoming a member of society. I feel that each day is so fulfilling.」

「You are again speaking words that make me forget that you are not even two years old. But you are being of great help to us.」

Zadiris gave a bitter smile, but she couldn't deny the size of Vandalieu's contribution to the Ghoul village. Even outside of making the walnut sauce, the assistance in battle that Saria, Rita and Sam offered to Vigaro and the other warriors was significant, even after taking into account that they were receiving training in return.

Saria and Rita were merely spirits of maids, but since they inhabited suits of armor that were Magic Items, their strength in battle was already greater than that of the Ghouls that were made of flesh and blood.

And since they were originally humans, they were more diligent than Ghouls, so they had a positive influence on the young men.

Zadiris and the other Ghouls were aware that since they were under Vandalieu's control, their contributions were Vandalieu's contributions.

Zadiris had taken a liking to Vandalieu, which was one of her personal reasons for wanting him to stay in the village, and even if he couldn't stay forever, she wanted him to stay for as long as possible. But that didn't mean that she held back on their training.

「But your training with no-attribute magic still needs more work. Well, your progress is not particularly slow, either.」

「Materializing and using Mana before it's been affected by any attribute is harder than I had imagined.」

Because Vandalieu was already able to use death-attribute magic, he should be able to learn the far more basic no-attribute magic very easily. It would be a lie to say that Vandalieu hadn't made this assumption, but it had turned out to be a very inaccurate one.

The task of maintaining Mana in its original form, shaping it and then casting a spell was more difficult than Vandalieu had thought. When he used death-attribute magic, he applied the attribute to his Mana unconsciously, so it was difficult not to do that automatically.

In the first place, the only thing that Vandalieu had going for him was his vast Mana pool, as well as the imagination and way of thinking that had been produced by reading various fictional works on Earth. His talent for magic itself was mediocre.

He had trained his death-attribute magic during his short time in Origin, but those were in do-or-die conditions that were enough to twist his personality, with the coercion of the researchers that reached the upper limits of inhumanity. Without those, Vandalieu was but an ordinary person.

But he had the advantage of being able to practice magic for longer than the average person, thanks to his vast Mana pool.

「Well, it took me three years to obtain the【No-Attribute Magic】skill myself. You do not need to rush yourself. Here, you can have my portion of meat.」

Zadiris smiled as she offered Vandalieu the remaining meat on the leaves. She likely thought of their relationship as that between a grandparent and grandchild, but in reality, they simply looked like siblings born some years apart.

「Is it really alright?」

Vandalieu eyed the meat that Zadiris offered him. It seemed that she had barely touched the meat at all.

「Yes. I do not have much of an appetite. The elderly do not move around much, so we do not need to eat a lot.」

Though Zadiris didn't have a single wrinkle on her face, when she wasn't training Vandalieu or the young girls of the village, it was common for her to say,「I am tired」and rest.

She looked like a thirteen or fourteen-year-old girl, but Zadiris was over two hundred and ninety years old. It was understandable for her to behave as such at that age, but...

『I can see the shadow of death.』

Vandalieu could see the shadow of death on Zadiris's face, alongside her gentle smile.

It wasn't enough that she would die at any moment, but she might only last a few more days. The shadow of death was thick enough that even if things progressed slower, Vandalieu knew that she wouldn't live long enough to see his second birthday.

Though Ghouls had a lifespan of three hundred years, it wasn't strange to think that an individual's lifespan could be a little shorter than that. In fact, it was impressive that she had survived this long in a Devil's Nest, where every creature had to fight for its own survival. It would be a peaceful death for this individual, who had no blood-related grandchildren of her own.

Pretending like nothing was wrong and seeing her off like this was probably the correct, natural thing to do.

「Zadiris-san, can we be alone for a moment?」

However, that might not be the natural thing to do. Defying the laws of life and death was something that Vandalieu would have preferred to attempt after increasing the levels of his skills a little more, but he decided to give it a try.

Even if it was for a reason like taking responsibility for shortening her lifespan by surprising her so much not long ago.

- **Name:** (Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf, Bone Bear)
- **Rank:** 4
- **Race:** Rotten Beast
- **Level:** 7-10

- **Passive skills:**
  - Night Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

- Spirit Form: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Active skills:**
  - Silent Steps: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Breath【Poison】: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Rotten Beast】

These are Rank 4 monsters. They contain miasma in their bones as a result of the malice of the spirits that inhabit the bones of the Bone Beasts, as well as the malice of the creatures killed by them. Some of the bones that make up their bodies are blackened and are as strong as steel. Regardless of what animal's bones they are made of, they are able to release a poisonous breath.

For D-class adventurers, they have little to fear fighting against a single Rotten Beast as long as they have a way to deal with the poison breath, but depending on the original animal the Rotten Beasts are made of, they may retain their instincts to move in groups. Therefore, the Adventurers' Guild recommends that adventurers form parties to exterminate them.

Skill explanation:

【Coordination】

When owners of this skill cooperate, their efficiency and effectiveness is greater. When building something, they make fewer mistakes and their pace of work is faster, and in battle, their offensive and defensive abilities are increased.

The effectiveness of the skill depends on the levels of the skill and the number of individuals that possess the skill.

It is less common for adventurers that operate in small groups to obtain this skill, and more common for soldiers and construction workers that work together in larger numbers.

In the case of monsters, they cannot gain this skill even if they work in large

numbers unless they possess a sense of companionship and unity with each other, so Goblins and Orcs cannot gain this skill. Monsters such as Kobolds, Ghouls and wolf-type monsters often possess this skill.

Notes

1. This number is actually 5 here, and then later on in the chapter it changes to 4. I think 4 is the correct number, and this is a mistake on the author's part so I'm leaving it as 4 here.

2. I have no idea what this "chest" is supposed to mean. It's チェスト/chesuto, written in katakana.

3. $9.20~ in USD.

4. I Googled this, and apparently this is a thing.

Chapter 14: The lessons of applying anti-aging to the teacher

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At Vandalieu's sudden request to be alone, Zadiris opened her eyes wide in surprise.

「Alone, you say?」

「Yes, it's a very important matter.」

As Vandalieu spoke to Zadiris with an unusually firm tone, Zadiris wondered whether he had decided to finish his training and leave the village.

She had heard that he was headed for the country of Orbaume, beyond the mountain range to the east of this Devil's Nest. However, he had not yet finished learning no-attribute magic, Mana Control or Alchemy. Zadiris wouldn't tell him to make this village his home, but she wanted him to stay a little longer.

「Very well. Let us speak in my house.」

Thinking that she should persuade him to stay longer somehow, she picked up Vandalieu in her arms and headed for her own home.

「... I can walk myself. I'm going to be two years old soon.」

「You are not two years old yet, boy. Did you not say that a while ago and trip over a stone?」

Vandalieu had thought that he had come closer to adulthood now that he was nearly two years old, but from others' point of view, he was but an infant who had come just a little closer to becoming a young boy.

They entered Zadiris's pit dwelling in which Vandalieu normally received his lessons on magic. Inside, there were alchemy-related tools that Zadiris had invented herself, as well as a crystal ball that apparently had some use sitting in a conspicuous spot.

If there were a cauldron, then this might have been the perfect description of

the home of a witch straight out of a fairy tale, but such a cauldron was absent.

「Say, boy. If possible, I wish to teach you all of the spells that I know.」

Zadiris spoke with a serious expression as she sat down on the rug. They were not words of gratitude for saving her life or of wanting to repay his contributions to the village, but words expressing her expectations of him.

「Boy, you have no real talent in the normal sense of the word. I am sure that you have noticed yourself that you are learning slowly. However, you possess a lot of insight and sense that compensates for that.」

The insight and sense that Zadiris spoke of were ideas from the fictional works that Vandalieu had read and seen on Earth, the information that he had obtained from spirits in Origin and the power of imagination that was derived from those. Vandalieu, being aware of this, didn't think that it was insight or sense or anything worthy of praise.

「Most importantly, you possess that outlandish amount of Mana. If you were to devote yourself to study, it would not even take you a hundred years to become a great mage that I could not even compare to.」

Simply possessing a lot of Mana didn't make one a powerful mage, but the size of one's Mana pool was still a component that couldn't be ignored. In this world, the level of a skill increased the more one used it. Therefore, a large Mana pool was essential to support the repeated casting of magic necessary to increase the level of one's skill.

For humans, the bonuses to skills they received from magic-related Jobs were important, but even those Jobs required certain skills to be at certain levels to obtain the Jobs in the first place.

And so, for both humans and monsters that wished to become mages, the first step was to learn basic magic and do everything they could to increase their Mana pools. In the case of monsters, it was common to give up without being able to put in the effort required or die before becoming a mage, so a lot of it depended on their talent for magic.

In that regard, Vandalieu was very fortunate. He didn't need to go through lessons to frantically increase the size of his Mana pool. No, one's Mana pool

naturally expanded even without lessons. At any rate, he was not even two years old yet and his Mana pool exceeded a hundred million. As he grew older, it would increase by tens of millions more... or perhaps even increase by another hundred million.

And so even if he learned somewhat slowly, Vandalieu had enough talent for such concerns to not be a problem.

Those were the expectations that Zadiris had for him. He wouldn't be just her successor, but something far greater.

「That is why I wish for more time. I am aware that you are on a journey with a purpose, but will you not give me a little more time?」

「Yes, please leave it to me.」

Vandalieu gave an immediate reply.

「Oh, so you have come to see my side of things!」

Though Zadiris found the way Vandalieu had worded it a little strange, she was happy with his response. However, as he continued speaking, she realized that there had been some kind of misunderstanding.

「Well then, I'm going to begin treating you right away, so please lie down and make yourself comfortable.」

「T-treating?」

「Yes. Please leave it to me.」

On one hand, Vandalieu looked full of motivation. Since he had an aptitude for death-attribute magic, he could see... the shadow of death on Zadiris's face, the presence of death around her. That was why he had decided to extend her lifespan.

Vandalieu had thought that the greatest obstacle to doing this would be Zadiris's own wishes.

Zadiris had been saying things like「I do not have long to live」and「I already have a successor ready」; she hadn't seemed particularly fixated on staying alive. Vandalieu had been worried that she might reject the idea of having her life extended by magic.

However, she was now saying,「Give me more time.」

If she had said,「I will let things run their course」, or「It is best for me to pass naturally」, or doubted Vandalieu when he told her that her death was close, he wouldn't have known what to do. But to think that Zadiris would be aware of her own impending death and even put enough trust in Vandalieu to ask him to extend her life. Vandalieu was moved.

Realizing what a happy thing it was to be trusted by someone else, he felt like crying.

However, it was just a misunderstanding.

「This is necessary for you to learn more magic from me, is it?」

「Yes. There is no other way.」

Zadiris's age was at a point where she might last as little as a few days, or a month at most. The only way to continue learning magic from her was to extend her lifespan.

「Alright. But what are you doing?」

Zadiris laid down, face up. This reminded Vandalieu of the first time he met her. Just like now, he was trying to save her life back then.

「I'm going to make you a little younger.」

「Eh?! Make me younger? There is no way such a thing is possible...!」

With a bizarre sensation, Zadiris watched as Vandalieu's hands and arms sank into her stomach, all the way up to his forearms.

「Kah...! Haah?!」

Zadiris opened her eyes wide in surprise and was rendered breathless by the foreign sensation of having her internal organs being stroked by a pair of cold hands.

「Right now, I have used【Spirit Form Transformation】on my hands to directly examine your body's situation. I know it is a little painful, but please bear with it.」

Cold sweat formed on Zadiris's face as she looked up at Vandalieu to

complain to him with her eyes, but he didn't notice as he was focused on what he was doing. It was actually his first time examining someone else's body using【Spirit Form Transformation】, so he didn't know just how painful it would be for the subject.

However, he had a good understanding of how to do it correctly. Like a veteran surgeon.

When he was being toyed around with by the researchers of Origin, they had forced him to use【Spirit Form Transformation】to examine various things. This included other living subjects like himself and lead containers of nuclear waste. The Mana produced by Vandalieu had been used to create Magic Items that allowed the use of【Spirit Form Transformation】and greatly advanced medicine and science in Origin.

Putting that aside, he was examining Zadiris's body right now. The【Spirit Form Transformation】had taken Vandalieu's arms out of physical existence and they were now plunged into her abdomen. He imagined his arms dissolving into a liquid-like state and getting carried away by Zadiris's circulatory system, flowing into every corner of her body.

And then Vandalieu's arms melted smoothly, just as he had imagined. His Spirit Form was directly linked to his mind, so this kind of thing was possible when using【Spirit Form Transformation.】

『... I feel like it's easier than it was in Origin; is that because my mental strength has increased? Or is it because doing this of my own will is different from being forced to do it?』

Vandalieu was surprised that it was so simple, but this wasn't the time to lose himself in his thoughts.

「Guh, agh... Haah... Haah...」

He had noticed the agony that Zadiris was in. He cut unnecessary thoughts from his mind in order to get the treatment finished as quickly as possible.

Blood, blood vessels, brain, heart, nerves, stomach, liver, kidneys, pancreas, small intestine, large intestine, ovaries, uterus, bones, muscles, lymph, skin. Their locations and shapes were mostly identical to humans. The only

difference Vandalieu could see in Zadiris's body was that there were glands that produced the paralyzing venom that was secreted from her claws.

Other than the fact that the function of her organs were weakened, her condition was satisfactory. In short, there were no loose blood vessels, aneurysms, cancer or anything like that that might be a cause of death, and no sign of any viral of fungal infection.

It seemed that the cause of her impending death was old age after all.

Since the cause was old age, the methods of dealing with it were difficult but simple to understand. First, Vandalieu had to choose from one of three methods. The first was using death-attribute magic to halt the breakdown of Zadiris's cells while having another mage use life-attribute magic to revitalize her organs to restore their declining function. This technique had been used in Origin, but there were no life-attribute mages available, so this method was impossible.

Since Vandalieu could only use death-attribute magic, he was only capable of speeding up or slowing down cell death. Unlike life-attribute magic that controlled life itself, he couldn't grant vitality to another.

『If it were a wound, I would stop cell death while applying a Potion, but surely even Potions aren't powerful enough to cure old age. Well then, on to the second method.』

The second method was to take measures to support her life – using a spell to directly preventing her from getting closer to death. That was a simple, sure method that would work. At the very least, as long as Vandalieu cast the spell on her regularly, Zadiris could continue living in her current state.

『But I reject that method.』

Looking at it another way, that method would only maintain her current situation. If he was treating a hemorrhage or an allergic reaction, he could postpone her death and let her body's natural recovery mechanisms get her through it, but in the case of dealing with old age, it was simply delaying the inevitable. Zadiris would never recover and forever be in her weakened state.

And since Vandalieu would need to cast the spell regularly, Zadiris would die

soon after he left the village.

There would be no point in such a treatment option. Such a method would allow Vandalieu to continue learning magic from her, but leaving aside what he stood to gain from this, he didn't want Zadiris to die.

That left one option. The most difficult method, something that researchers on Origin had failed to accomplish, the「reversal of age」that mankind always dreamed of.

It was a technique that removed the『age』from the cells and caused『restoration of youth.』In the experiments in Origin, restoring the youth of individual parts of the body such as the skin, blood vessels and bones had succeeded, but there had never been a successful experiment that reversed the aging of the entire body.

But those had been experiments conducted by someone else controlling Vandalieu's body and mind. And though his ability with magic had decreased since dying in Origin and being reincarnated in Lambda, his Mana pool had grown.

『Let's try with the usual forceful approach.』

First, he let his transformed Spirit Form arms diffuse throughout Zadiris's entire body.

「Ugh...!」

Conscious of Zadiris's moaning, he tried to be as careful as possible as he let his Spirit Form diffuse into her capillaries, her skin cells and the ends of her nerves.

「...【Youth Transformation.】」

And then he began to pull the『death』from her body.

「Ah...?」

Masters of the fire attribute controlled not flames, but heat directly. They are able to freely increase heat to melt a steel bar, or decrease heat and freeze the surface of an ocean.

In the same way, as a user of death-attribute magic, Vandalieu controlled

death directly and theoretically should be able to freely control whether a creature lived or died.

「Kuh... fuh...!」

Like gently scooping up dirt that had gathered over time, Vandalieu steadily removed the death caused by old age from Zadiris's cells.

And slowly but surely, Zadiris's age began to reverse. The energy returned to her cells and her organs began to work vigorously once more.

「This takes a lot more Mana that I'd thought it would.」

The Mana cost of every other spell that Vandalieu had cast up until now was incomparable to the amount of Mana he was spending on this process. It was costing him ten million Mana for each year of Zadiris's age that he reversed.

「B-boy, w-wha... What are you... kuh!」

Fortunately, Zadiris seemed to not be in the discomfort that she was in before, but in pleasure. Since Vandalieu had to reverse the aging on her whole body evenly, he had to patiently and calmly maintain the spell properly, which was easier to do knowing that Zadiris wasn't suffering.

「For now, I've made you a little younger.」

「Made me younger?! Such a thing is not... ah, uhyii, aaah!」

「To be more accurate, I've simply removed the aging from your body, so you won't turn back into a child or anything like that.」

It wasn't as if he had reversed time; even though he had reversed her age, there was no way she would turn into a fetus or anything of the sort. Removing one's aging was simply the opposite of moving one closer to death.

If Vandalieu did the same to an aged human, the process would likely stop in the mid-teenage years. Though if he studied harder and came up with different methods, he might even be able to turn a human back into a zygote.

「Kuaaaaaaah!」

Unable to contain herself, Zadiris let out a high-pitched voice.

The pleasant feeling of one's stiff muscles and pain being relieved spread

throughout her entire body, not only in her limbs and torso, but even inside her head. She couldn’t keep her mouth closed against this intense pleasure that was greater than being treated by an expert masseuse. And as she let out all the breath from her lungs, that pleasure suddenly stopped.

「Haah... haah... haah... Boy?」

As Zadiris regained control over her breathing and looked over at Vandalieu, he was lying on his back. The arms that had been in Spirit Form inside Zadiris's

abdomen were now back to their normal, physical state.

「... It's been a while since I used my Mana to its limit. I'll sleep a little.」

Vandalieu's Mana pool was completely exhausted from reversing Zadiris's age by ten years, so he had quickly returned his arms to their physical state and collapsed, and now he was making the noises of a sleeping person.

「... It would not have killed you to explain yourself a little more.」

Zadiris whispered these words as she felt her own eyelids grow heavy as well. The fatigue that she had felt the past few days had disappeared, but a feeling of exhaustion, as if she had just finished some heavy exercise, lingered in her body.

It was a very strange sensation.

The aging of all the cells of her entire body had been reversed, and this exhaustion was the side effect of her body undergoing such a large change in such a short period of time. However, as Ghouls stopped physically aging at the time of their first pregnancy, the process didn't affect her physical appearance. If Zadiris had been a human, she would have likely passed out on the spot.

「Well, it is fine. It seems that you have done something that benefits me, and I am sure that nothing bad will happen. Now, let me sleep a little as well.」

Cuddling closely to Vandalieu who was already asleep, Zadiris fell asleep on the rug.

And a young Ghoul warrior by the name of Banad who had spotted the chief of the village and the guest who was being treated like a full member of the community disappear in the middle of the feast was standing outside Zadiris's house, swallowing his saliva.

He had seen Zadiris and Vandalieu entering her pit dwelling. And when he had put his ear against the wall, he had heard Zadiris's moans and screams of pleasure.

「Who would have thought that the chief and Vandalieu would... To be able to do it at that age, Dhampirs are amazing.」

Banad whispered to himself with an expression of awe on his lion-shaped

face. He should stop the others from treating Vandalieu as a child. Vandalieu was already a fully-fledged adult... no, a king.

The next day, as Zadiris ate with a large appetite, she showed amazement at what death-attribute magic could do when Vandalieu explained what he had done, but also scolded him for not explaining what he was doing first.

「However, that makes little difference to the fact that you have saved my life twice now. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am grateful enough that if you were a tamer, I would gladly be tamed by you and become your servant. Now then, how shall I return the favor?」

The races that Vida had spawned that had originated from monsters could be tamed. The chances of being tamed successfully were low, as they possessed human-level intelligence and they had originated from a goddess. However, if the individual desired to be tamed, it was a different story.

More than just wanting to repay Vandalieu for saving her life by giving him her own, Zadiris said those words because she had become interested by the idea of following him wherever he went.

Though her heart throbbed in a way unfitting for her age, she couldn't decide this easily because of her social position.

「I'd be happy if you came with me, Zadiris-san, but wouldn't the village have problems if you did that?」

As Vandalieu pointed that out, Zadiris came out from her fantasies and back to reality.

「Well, you are right. The village would do well without me, but there is not yet a mage to replace me, so that is a source of concern.」

She did think that the village would be fine without her, but now that her life had been extended, she had new desires. She wanted to teach her skills to other young women as well as Vandalieu, and she was worried about whether her youngest daughter Basdia would be able to have a child.

「And I still haven't learned No-Attribute Magic or Mana Control yet, so I'll be in your care a little longer.」

「Oh, I see. I am relieved to hear that. Well then, let us hurry and begin our lesson.」

「... My Mana hasn't recovered completely yet, so please wait a little longer.」

After that, they ate Gobu-gobu for breakfast and then began another lesson.

However, from today onwards, their lessons would end in another session of age-reversal treatment for Zadiris.

One's Mana pool increased as one's level increased, but like other attribute values and skills, it also increased with use.

However, since Vandalieu's Mana pool was so vast, this method of increasing his Mana pool had been mostly impossible for him. Vandalieu's Mana exceeded one hundred million. To use up all of that Mana, a spell that cost ten thousand Mana would need to be cast ten thousand times.

Assuming that each cast took ten seconds, ten thousand casts would take a hundred thousand seconds. That would be twenty-seven hours. It would take over a whole day.

However, casting【Youth Transformation】on Zadiris took only ten minutes, even if he cast it until he used up all his Mana and fainted.

And so he had no-attribute magic and Mana Control lessons in the morning, and in the afternoon, he made walnut sauce and acorn powder. After that, he took an afternoon nap like an infant should. In the evening, he had a continuation of the lessons from the morning, and before going to bed, he performed the【Youth Transformation】on Zadiris at her house until he fainted. And then he would sleep. He began to spend every day living this cycle.

It was quite the hard schedule, but it wasn't so difficult after he came up with the idea to create Stone Golems out of a mortar and pestle. He broke the acorns into smaller pieces, washed them, dried them and then simply added the pieces to the mortar and ordered the pestle to spin, and it would automatically crush them into powder. It was even more ecologically friendly than the electric-powered mortars and pestles on Earth.

And of course, they decided to keep the【Youth Transformation】spell a secret. It wasn't that they didn't trust the other Ghouls of the village, and as Ghouls

had long lifespans, they wouldn't have much desire to become younger. After all, monsters often died fighting, not of old age. Individuals like Zadiris who lived out to the end of their lifespans were really rare.

However, the thought of adventurers capturing a Ghoul alive, interrogating them and finding out about the【Youth Transformation】was terrifying. An enormous bounty would be placed on Vandalieu's head, and countless adventurers and mercenaries would hunt Vandalieu down relentlessly. And if Vandalieu was caught, his freedom would be taken away in a variety of ways, and he would live the rest of his life as a pet that lived only to extend the lifespans of noblemen and royalty.

Neither Vandalieu nor the Ghouls, whose village would likely be destroyed by such events, would want this. That was why they had decided to keep it a secret.

「How is the expansion of your Mana pool?」

「It increases by less than one percent a day. I suppose it's something like, even dust can pile up to form a mountain[1], and perseverance results in improvement[1].」

「... But one percent for you, boy, is one million. Is that not a little too large to be referred to as dust?」

And so, day by day, Zadiris grew younger. As Ghouls were a race whose physical appearance didn't change, no obvious changes occurred. However, she began to move with vigor, her voice grew stronger and her eyes grew brighter – changes that even outsiders would be able to see.

Whereas she had rejected food in the past, her appetite had returned, and her skin and hair looked brighter.

Of course, the other Ghouls noticed this.

What could be clearly observed was that Zadiris and Vandalieu would be together in Zadiris's house for their lessons, and not come out until the morning. If one listened carefully, Zadiris's stifled moans of pleasure could be heard.

And Zadiris looked healthier and healthier, day by day.

As a result, an obvious misunderstanding occurred. Normally, the Ghouls would assume that a one-year-old boy wouldn't be able to do such a thing, but Vandalieu was of a different race. Wouldn't it be possible for an unfamiliar race to reach maturity at a different rate? Perhaps a Dhampir could do it at that age? He was far more mature than he appeared, too.

It didn't take long for the Ghouls to begin thinking this.

「I'm not sure if it's Dhampirs that are amazing, or Vandalieu who's amazing.」

「Maybe I should seduce him as well.」

「Rather than wishing I had a daughter, maybe I should have done something about it.」

「That old chief looks like a young girl now. Is that what it means to be in love?」

「I know it's strange coming from me, but isn't it at the point where we can call him the head of the family now?」[Vigaro]

「Vigaro, don't say that, you're the young chief here.」

「... And to think, when I'd asked him to stay here when he first came to the village, he told me it was impossible.」[Vigaro]

『I wonder if we should tell Bocchan about these strange rumors... However, it would be an impertinent thing to do if they were true.』[Sam]

『Father, should we try indirectly, casually asking him if the rumors are true?』[Saria]

『Uwah, I guess that's what you'd expect from someone who wants to be a nobleman. Does that mean that we have a chance as well?』[Rita]

Finally, Sam and Saria had begun to worry about the situation, while Rita made a carefree joke.

In July, with his second birthday coming up and full-blown summer approaching, Vandalieu finally obtained the【No-Attribute Magic】and【Mana Control】skills at level 1.

He was happy that he had been able to obtain these skills in less than a year

after having been told that it normally takes multiple years, but according to Darcia and Sam, level 1 in these skills was considered less than apprentice-level in society.

Incidentally, the mage among the adventurers who had attacked Zadiris had possessed a level 2 skill in【No-Attribute Magic.】

「I've got a long road ahead of me, I guess.」

Looking up at the sky, Vandalieu was in a bright mood. He felt proud. No-attribute magic was something that may not have existed in Origin, and if that was the case, then that meant that he was one step ahead of *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others who were still enjoying their second lives in that world.

It was a small step, but continuing these steps would lead directly to a safe future for himself.

Also, he had stopped the exercise in which he exhausted his whole Mana pool to cast【Youth Transformation】on Zadiris. This was because the age of Zadiris's body now matched its physical appearance.

「I do not know what would happen if you were to continue, and this is more than enough.」

「I suppose so, since you have over two hundred years now before you reach the end of your lifespan again.」

His Mana pool had increased quite a lot, and he would have liked to continue if possible, but there were no other Ghouls in the village over two hundred and fifty years old. And since going around using【Youth Transformation】on the other Ghouls would make it hard to keep it a secret, he had no choice but to stop.

If he got the chance to attack bandits again, it might be a good idea to cast【Youth Transformation】on them before finishing them off.

As Vandalieu thought about this, he split an acorn's shell and broke apart the flesh inside. As he prepared to wash it, he suddenly became aware of a Ghoul woman who was working with him.

No, he hadn't forgotten that the woman was there. Though the Ghoul

population was large for a group of monsters, it was low for a village; Vandalieu had already remembered the faces of each of the hundred or so Ghouls.

Of course, he hadn't become close friends with all of them, but he had become friendly enough with them to greet each other normally and have light conversations.

「Bilde-san, can I ask you something?」

Her name was Bilde. She was one of the Ghoul women who had pampered Vandalieu during the feast when he had first come to the village, though the treatment had been quite rough.

「What is it? Should I crush the acorns a little smaller?」

She looked at him in surprise. No matter how one looked at her, her stomach hadn't expanded at all. At that feast, Vandalieu recalled that she had said that she was pregnant.

That feast was in October, last year. Now it was July. Roughly nine months had passed. Vandalieu had no way of knowing how many months pregnant she had been in October.

「No, it's about your promise to name your child after me if it was a boy...」

Vandalieu had spoken up because he was curious, but was this question really alright to ask? He began to doubt himself and his voice grew quieter and quieter as he spoke, but Bilde seemed surprised that he had remembered and didn't pay it any more attention as she replied.

「So~rry, the child that was in my belly back then, I failed to give birth to it. If I succeed with the next one, I'll name him after you, okay?」

「I see, then next time... huh?」

Bilde spoke with a giggle, narrowing her yellow eyes as she poked out her tongue and there wasn't a trace of seriousness in her voice. Vandalieu understood her words perfectly. He did a double-take out of surprise as he saw her expression, but it seemed that his eyes and ears were not deceiving him.

「Such a pity, you know, not even one baby was born last year.」

「Mine didn't even last two months~ Were you the one who lasted the

longest, Bilde?」

「Yeah, I almost reached three months.」

The other women also showed no sign of seriousness or covering their pain with light-hearted talk. It did seem that they were disappointed, but all things considered, their attitude was very carefree.

Perhaps there had been some uncontrollable circumstances... But they showed no signs of that, either.

「Ah, does that mean that I'm next after Chief Zadiris?」

「Wait, Van, in that case, let me be first –」

「Basdia-san, I have something I want to ask you. Come over here.」

As the conversation had rolled into a ridiculous direction, Vandalieu decided to consult Basdia, to whom he was closest to among the village members other than Zadiris and Vigaro.

From behind him, he could hear Bilde say,「After Basdia, I'm next!」and the replies of,「Can I go after you?」and「Eh, I should be after her!」This would have made him happy if it were physically possible for him, but since it wasn't, he ignored it.

「Van, I'm happy that you've chosen me, but to do it in the middle of the afternoon –」

「Basdia-san, there's something I want to ask you.」

Vandalieu interrupted the words of Basdia, who was misunderstanding something as he had suspected.

「You're wondering why Bilde and the others aren't grieving over the fact that they couldn't give birth to their children? Well, Van, that's because unsuccessful births are more common than successful ones.」

According to Basdia, Ghouls as a race had difficulty getting pregnant, and miscarriages in the early months of pregnancy were common.

The exact probability of pregnancy and the ratio of children born successfully were unknown. However, Ghouls had always said that only one in every five

children was born safely.

No matter how one thought of it, that rate of birth was far too low, but it was compensated for by the Ghouls' lifespan of three hundred years. At least, up until now.

「Bilde and the others aren't grieving much because that's normal... isn't it? Ah, there are some Ghouls who grieve over the loss of their children, but they're quite rare. I suppose the reason you find it strange, Van, is because grieving is normal for humans.」

It was normal for them, so they didn't find it very sad. If one were to ask someone on Earth, they would get angry and reply,「My child has died, how could it possibly be alright?!」However, this was another world and these were Ghouls. The circumstances were too different.

Ghouls had lived with this way of life for a hundred thousand years, and seeing the village's circumstances, it was obvious that they didn't interact with other races.

That was why they had no doubt in what they knew. If Ghouls lived together with other races, then perhaps they would grieve over the fact that many of their children were not successfully born compared to other races and doubt themselves. However, living on their own, they simply thought that things had always been this way and there was no helping it.

The time during which the miscarriages occurred was also a cause. They happened in the early months of pregnancy, before the mothers had expanding stomachs or produced milk. There was no ultrasound scanning in this world, but even if there was, the miscarriages occurred in the period of time where it wouldn't even be possible to determine whether the baby was a boy or a girl.

It was no wonder that they had such little reaction to losing their children.

「Well, at the very least, I don't think it's something that you should discuss with a bright look on your face. Probably.」

「You think so too, huh.」

It seemed that Basdia had also learned about the differences between Ghouls and humans during this conversation with Vandalieu.

「Up until now, we've only had Goblins, Kobolds and Orcs to compare ourselves to. And all we thought about the matter is that we don't like how they multiply everywhere, even though they're weaker than us.」

... A thought occurred to Vandalieu. Could it be possible that Ghouls' envy of Goblins and Kobolds was one of the reasons that they invented ways to eat them?

「I see. I've come to an understanding after having you think about it. I've always found it strange that I've never seen any children in the village.」

Vandalieu had never seen any Ghoul children in this village. He had never heard the crying voice of a baby. There were only Ghouls that he had thought were children, but were simply young-looking because they had conceived a baby at an early age like Zadiris.

He had felt strange about the fact that there were no children in this village, even though a hundred adult Ghouls living here. He had assumed that perhaps the Ghouls were still wary of him and the Undead, and hidden the infants and children somewhere.

However, he had become focused on the magic lessons and had forgotten all about this strange feeling and his doubts.

However, the simple truth was that there were just no children. If Vandalieu had assertively tried to find Ghoul children, Zadiris and Vigaro would have told him that right away. For them, it was a trivial matter of fact.

And now he understood why Ghouls were so proactive about sex.

It was difficult for them to get pregnant, and only one in five pregnancies ended in a successful birth. They had no choice but to be proactive about it.

「If that's the case, then it can't be helped, can it?」

Vandalieu intended not to say anything more regarding this problem.

This was a problem that the Ghoul race had shouldered for a hundred thousand years. Since the Ghouls had still managed to survive up until now, he thought that there was no need for him to rack his brains and come up with a solution.

In fact, seeing the village, he could see that this wasn't putting the Ghouls at risk. With that being the case, nobody had asked him to do anything about it so trying to do something would be needless meddling.

But if someone were to ask him to do something about it, it would be a different story.

「... You might be right in saying that it can't be helped, but there hasn't been a child born in this village for the past ten years. Mother and Vigaro are worrying about it as well. It's impossible with Mother's magic, but could something be done about it using your magic, Van? Of course, me wanting to become pregnant is one reason, but I also want to give birth to a healthy child if I do manage to become pregnant.」

Ah, someone asked him to do something about it.

「I understand. I'll try to think of something.」

So it was a different story.

- Name: Vandalieu
- Race: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- Age: 2 years, 1 month old
- Title: None
- Job: None
- Level: 100
- Job history: None
- Attributes:
  - Vitality: 42
  - Mana: 113,550,000
  - Strength: 37
  - Agility: 13
  - Stamina: 39
  - Intelligence: 60
- Passive skills:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2

    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 3
    - Magic Resistance: Level 1
    - Dark Vision
    - Mental Corruption: Level 10
    - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Chant Revocation: Level 1
    - Strengthen Followers: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Active skills:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 2
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 2
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Mana Control: Level 1 (NEW!)
- Curses
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing Jobs
    - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Notes

1. Both of these are Japanese phrases.

Chapter 15: The half-vampire solving the problem of declining birth rates and the noble pig-man burning with ambition

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「As well as taking lessons, I am thinking of making an effort to solve the problem of the Ghouls' declining birth rates.」

As Vandalieu told Zadiris this, her eyes opened wide.

「That is... well, a happy thing for us, but... I hope you are not going to propose that we kidnap women of other races and use a ceremony to turn them into Ghouls?」

「Is something like that really possible?」

According to the information circulating in human society that Darcia had heard, Ghouls were capable of doing this, but Vandalieu had dismissed it as a superstition.

「Yes, it is, though we have never done it in this village. The only females of other races we can abduct from this Devil's Nest are probably female adventurers, so the risk is quite high. And even if we succeed, that might cause other adventurers to come and exterminate us and we would have more important things to worry about than increasing our population by one female.」

Ghouls apparently possessed a way of transforming members of other races into members of their own race like Vampires, though it was less effective as it only worked on females. It was likely something that had been designed to balance the race's low pregnancy and birth rates.

But in this village, the Ghouls had not done this before as they had no way to get their hands on females other than adventurers, and they weren't desperate enough to increase their female count as to take that risk.

「But it is true that no children have been born here in ten years. We cannot ask you to make all of the older members of the village young again to maintain the village, boy, so we would be very grateful if you were to resolve this problem. The other villagers and I will be glad to assist you in any way that we can. And since you were able to use【Youth Transformation】, a spell that even masters of life-attribute magic cannot perform, I am sure you will be able to do it.」

It is a task that one would normally think to be impossible, but it was possible that this boy who only turned two years old just recently could do something about this problem. It was now natural for Zadiris to believe this.

「I will try and do whatever I can.」

Vandalieu meant exactly what he said, but nothing more. There was nothing to suggest that he would be able to do it for certain, and his medical knowledge was limited to medical dramas and school lessons from his time on Earth, and whatever he had managed to absorb from the scientists and researchers in Origin.

In other words, his knowledge applied to humans and worked under the assumption that things like ultrasound machines and microscopes from earth and life-attribute magic from Origin were available.

He wasn't even particularly knowledgeable about the field of maternity and gynecology in the first place. In all honesty, he didn't have any confidence.

However, Vandalieu's death-attribute magic had advanced Origin's medical standards so much that even Rodcorte himself had taken notice of it. With that being the case, doing something to treat the Ghouls' infertility wasn't impossible.

「But I have to keep it a secret from Mom.」

Darcia wouldn't approve of her two-year-old son getting involved in such work. Vandalieu experienced for the first time the feeling of a child keeping a secret from a parent.

A month after Vandalieu had decided to do something about the Ghouls' declining birth rates, he was using the blue flames of【Demon Light】to deal with

the heat of summer. Vandalieu quickly identified the cause of the Ghouls' low probability of becoming pregnant.

The method he used was to have ten Ghoul men and women「do it[1].」Before, after and also during the act, Vandalieu used【Spirit Form Transformation】and【Sense Life】to determine whether their genitalia, sperm, egg cells and organs were working correctly.

The cause that he found as a result was a simple, basic one.

First, the sperm of the Ghoul males only survived inside the females for around half a day. This was a much shorter duration than those of other races.

Next, the egg cells of the females only lasted six hours after ovulation. Again, this was much shorter than for other races. In addition, their menstrual cycles were similar to other races, meaning that ovulation occurred only once a month.

「In most cases, I guess the sperm or egg cell, or both, die before fertilization. That explains why they can't get pregnant unless they do it every day.」

Ghouls had no way of determining an appropriate timing in the menstrual cycle to try and conceive, so that contributed to the problem as well.

「I see~ That's how it was. But Vandalieu, why do you keep calling baby-making『doing it?』」

「... I'm still at an age where I'm hesitant to say it so frankly.」

Vandalieu was careful to not look at Bilde, who was lying on the bed made of tree branches woven together after having just finished「doing it.」

『I'm sure that on Earth, it would be the subject who finds this kind of research and treatment more mentally difficult than the researcher.』

For some reason, he was in a strange mood. No, he was happy that his work had produced results and he felt even more motivated. But strangely... He felt slightly downhearted? Like he was suffering? Why did he feel like this?

The reason for it was probably the fact that he was researching ways to treat the infertility of cute girls. He hadn't interacted with the other sex on Earth or in Origin, but now he was in this situation in Lambda. It was kind of unfair. Yes,

yes, it was Rodcorte's fault, everything was Rodcorte's fault.

「So don't you have to just stop those sperm and egg cell things from dying? Can you do it?」

As Vandalieu contemplated the problem with no expression on his face, Bilde made this suggestion. It seemed that she didn't really understand what sperm and egg cells were, but she was exactly right.

「I can.」

Indeed, lengthening the lifespans of the sperm and eggs was simple. With Vandalieu's death-attribute magic, he could even prolong the life of a fatally wounded person for days. It wasn't difficult for him to keep the tiny sperm and egg cells alive.

「Really?! Then you've solved it, yay~♪」

Bilde sprang up from the bed and cheered, waving Vandalieu around. However, Vandalieu disagreed with her. The method proposed was possible for him, but it was difficult to call it a solution.

A solution required more progress.

「Now then, I want to figure out a way to prevent the miscarriages...」

「But there's nobody in the village who's pregnant right now... Alright, we just have to get pregnant, then.」

Seeing Bilde's dazzling smile, Vandalieu was definitely feeling strange.

As a result of having the Ghouls mate while using death-attribute magic to keep the sperm and egg cells alive, Bilde and the other females soon became pregnant. He clearly felt the life in the fertilized eggs, and Vandalieu had now confirmed that the problem had been that the sperm and egg cells weren't surviving long enough.

And then Vandalieu figured out why Ghoul women frequently experienced miscarriages in the early stages of pregnancy.

The zygotes had low Vitality.

Using【Spirit Form Transformation】, he determined that Bilde and the

mothers had no illnesses or anything that could be an external cause. The zygotes simply had low Vitality.

The mothers had high Vitality, and it seemed that their bodies were mistaking the zygotes and fetuses in their wombs as a foreign entity and attacking them.

This was what was causing the miscarriages in the early stages of pregnancy.

And now that he knew the cause, the rest was simple. He would use death-attribute magic again, this time to prevent the deaths of the zygotes and fetuses. He could prolong their lives until they became able to sustain life on their own.

And in the month of December, where everyone's breath turned into white fog in the air, the results finally showed.

「When I told them that everything is okay now, Bilde and the other mothers were really happy. Of course, it's not just the mothers; everyone else in the village is happy as well.」

「Indeed. Because of you, boy, we are now able to welcome new members into our village. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.」

Basdia, Zadiris and Vandalieu had assembled in a pit dwelling.

「They should stabilize now after three months of life extension. Of course, as long as nobody does anything careless.」

As the Ghoul fetuses reached three months into pregnancy, they were full of Vitality. Vandalieu would observe until Bilde and the other mothers safely gave birth, but he no longer had to keep an eye on them every day.

Previously, Ghouls had to ask themselves whether they would get pregnant when they mated, and whether the pregnancy would make it past three months if they did.

「I see. It has been said that Ghouls have never reproduced outside of Devil's Nests, even in ancient times. But now, if things go well, we may be able to live outside the Devil's Nests.」

Monsters thrived in Devil's Nests, multiplying more vigorously than they would if they were living outside the Devil's Nests and their young would also

reach maturity more quickly. The struggle for existence was harsh, and no matter how many adventurers ventured into Devil's Nests to hunt them, monsters would always survive.

Ghouls, who were part monsters, also received effects from living in Devil's Nests. The fact that they were receiving such effects and still had declining birth rates had been worrying them.

That was why producing offspring outside of Devil's Nests had been a hopeless thought. That was why Ghouls lived in Devil's Nests that contained monsters stronger than them, even though there were also plenty of monsters that they hunted as prey.

「Now all that's left for me to do is become able to create a Magic Item that allows the use of the spells that prolong sperm and egg cell life and prevent the death of the fetuses.」

「Yeah, we can't rely on you forever, Van.」

Vandalieu had figured out a method of solving the problem of declining Ghoul birth rates, and it was realistic for him to accomplish. However, this had required him to cast spells on the Ghoul women every day.

As Vandalieu planned to go to the Kingdom of Orbaume, he could only do this for a limited amount of time. And... a continuation of the current situation would be mentally difficult for him.

「You are fairly quick to learn magic, but it seems that you are not so proficient at learning techniques like alchemy, boy.」

As Zadiris said, Vandalieu was aiming to learn alchemy, but it wasn't going well.

In Lambda, there are two types of【abilities.】One is the magic of the different attributes. The other is techniques such as alchemy and spiritual magic.

The magic of the attributes is simply one's affinity for attributes and how well he or she can use those attributes. For example, Zadiris possessed an affinity for the light and wind attributes, while Vandalieu possessed an affinity for the death attribute.

Techniques such as alchemy and spiritual magic represent different skills that applying the attributes that one possesses an affinity for in different ways.

For example, spiritual magic is a technique where one communicates with spirits of the desired attribute and transfers Mana to them to manifest an effect.

And alchemy is a skill where one uses Mana and spells to utilize various catalysts to produce medicines and create Magic Items.

As spirits of the death attribute didn't exist, spiritual magic was impossible for Vandalieu, but if he studied alchemy, he would become able to create Magic Items of the death attribute.

In fact, in Origin, Vandalieu's Mana had been squeezed out of him to produce countless Magic Items. Of course, his body had been taken control over at the time; he didn't know the techniques needed to create them himself. The techniques he had learned about from the spirits of the researchers in Origin relied on Origin's high level of science and technology and manufacturing machinery that relied on other Magic Items, so he couldn't apply it here.

That was why he was learning it from scratch under Zadiris's guidance, but it was proving more difficult than【No-Attribute Magic】and【Mana Control.】

「At this rate, I might not leave until the year after next. On another topic, Basdia, are you sure about your decision? Because I'm here for now, you could have a child if you wanted to.」

Unlike Bilde and the other mothers, Basdia wasn't participating in Vandalieu's research and wasn't pregnant right now. Vandalieu had curiously asked her about it since she had wanted to be pregnant so badly, but she had unexpectedly answered,「No, I'm good for now.」

「If I get pregnant now, after you learn alchemy, I won't be able to become an experimental subject for you to test whether the Magic Items you make work or not.」

「Well, I suppose that's true, but aren't you worried about your age and such?」

Ghoul women stopped aging when they first became pregnant. That was why

Basdia, who had never become pregnant yet, had the physical appearance of a twenty-five... no, twenty-six-year-old.

Though Vandalieu thought that she was beautiful and still looked young, so she didn't need to worry about it for a few more years.

「Are you sure? The results have already shown that the boy's methods are reliable, and he is suggesting that you have a child as well. And you do not need to be so worried about being an experimental subject later.」

「Mother, it's fine. Van said he doesn't mind my appearance even if I age a few more years.」

「... Those words sounds like the boy is your partner.」

「... That would take over ten years at a minimum, so please don't mind that and get pregnant already.」

There had been a misunderstanding circulating around the village that Vandalieu and Zadiris were in that kind of relationship, but that had been resolved already. Basdia turned her head and gave the two of them a confused look.

「I didn't phrase that right. I'm not thinking of making children with Van. I'm just looking for some kind of compensation for being an experimental subject.」

「Compensation?」

Vandalieu tilted his head in response to Basdia's words. Since he had come to live in this village, he hadn't interacted with a monetary economy at all... though it would be accurate to say that he had never done so in any of his lives.

「Ah, I do want to ask Van to be my partner for my second child.」

「... Isn't this quite a difficult request to make of a two-year-old boy?」

「It's fine; I'll just wait until you're able to do it, Van.」

「Hmm, is that not fine with you, boy?」

「No, it's not.」

Basdia's aging would indeed stop once she became pregnant for the first time. After that, she would stay young, even as she approached three hundred

years of age one day. Even if she waited until Vandalieu developed his secondary sex characteristics, her physical appearance wouldn't change.

However, Vandalieu couldn't imagine wanting to make children in his early teenage years.

「There's no way that I could grasp the responsibilities of being a parent in my early teenage years. And I'm not a human in the first place; I'm a Dhampir born between a Vampire and a Dark Elf. I don't know whether it's even possible for me to have a child with a Ghoul.」

「No need to worry; us races born of the goddess Vida are all able to produce mixed-blood offspring with each other.」

「Is that so? That's a relief, Van.」

「Ah, my excuse for reconsidering this idea has vanished.」

The problem was resolved quickly. The knowledge that the elderly possessed was not to be underestimated.

「And anyway, Van, you're a boy so I don't think you need to grasp the responsibilities of being a parent.」

「Indeed; the role of the male is to risk his life outside the village to hunt for food. Raising the child is a woman's work.」

「No, that only applies for Ghouls.」

Vandalieu supposed that this was how harsh Ghoul society was; the fact that Ghoul men had to risk their lives was very inconvenient for them.

「Well, we are Ghouls, after all.」

「I know. But there's no way of knowing whether the child will be a Ghoul or not. It seems that mating with humans definitely produces Ghoul children, but I'm a Dhampir.」

「Ugh, you got me there.」

But even as she said that, Basdia showed no signs of giving up.

「Then I won't ask you to do it as soon as you become able. I'm alright with waiting until you're willing, Van, since you'll probably live much longer than

humans. And I might have changed my mind by then, too.」

That last part was clearly a measure taken by Basdia to prevent Vandalieu from rejecting her on the spot, but Vandalieu knew that her mind would never change and gave a reluctant nod as he let out a sigh.

「When that time comes, please be the partner for my daughter, too.」

「Could you please give me a little breathing room? I don't think it's very admirable to be cornering a two-year-old boy like this at night.」

「Hmm, in that case, the father of my great-grandchild would be you, boy. Well, that is fine, too. Ah yes, boy. While you are at it, if I were to have another daughter in the future, could I ask that you be her first partner?」

「What are you saying, mother! Think about your age, you're over two hundred and ninety years old already! Didn't you say that you even had difficulty giving birth to me?」

「Hmm? Well, you are right, but I feel like I have become younger lately. I am sure I would be fine having a few more children.」

「Where the heck did that confidence come from?! Have you forgotten that time two years ago when you couldn't use your magic and were almost captured by adventurers, all because of your age?!」

As Zadiris dropped bombshells one after another with no sign of hesitation, Basdia was flustered as she tried to bring her mother, who would normally be close to the end of her life, to her senses. As she wasn't aware that Vandalieu had reversed her age to the point that her body's physical age matched its appearance, she showed no signs of calming down.

Vandalieu nibbled on a cookie made from acorn powder as he watched them. They are truly mother and child, he thought as Zadiris and Basdia who had been messing around with him earlier were now being messed around by each other. Also, he felt a little satisfied.

And as he swallowed the piece of acorn cookie in his mouth, he realized that this wasn't the time to be messing around.

Vandalieu has acquired the【Spirit Form】skill!

***

An arrow flew past, grazing Kachia's ear.

「Kachia, the Goblin Archers are aiming at us!」

「Do something, Rikken!」

「Don't ask for the... impossible!」

Five adventurers were fighting some Goblins... some monsters, including Goblins.

Kachia, the female adventurer who had barely avoided the Goblin Archer's Arrow, shouted panicked words. Rikken fired his arrow, but it was blocked by a Hobgoblin acting as a front guard for the Kobold Mage.

Indeed, it was not only Goblins; this group of monsters included Kobolds and Hobgoblins as well.

Monsters don't cooperate with monsters of other races in normal Devil's Nests except in Dungeons. It wasn't unusual for Hobgoblins to be here, as they have a symbiotic relationship with Goblins, but it was extremely bizarre for Kobolds to be joining them as well.

Monsters have no concept of helping each other. Even if a common enemy like a group of adventurers is present, they don't think of joining forces.

Monsters are nothing but natural enemies and prey to each other.

There are three exceptions. The first is when the monsters are being controlled by humans. However, there was no reason for such legendary Tamers to be unleashing monsters on these adventurers.

Then, the second exception.

「Could it be that the King has appeared or something?!」

Kachia swung her bastard sword at a speed too quick to be followed by the eyes, releasing a【Spinning Cut】that cut down two Goblin Archers.

「The King?! That's not a funny joke!」

Her shield-wielding companion dealt a killing blow to a Kobold Rogue with his trusty shield, but he couldn't deny that he had a bad feeling about the situation.

Monsters of different races cooperating happened when they were being controlled by an even more powerful monster. A stronger monster with the intelligence to dominate other monsters and greed that was even known to humans.

A demi-human-type monster dictator, bearing the title of “King”.

The appearance of such a monster is widely known within the Adventurers’ Guild as a disastrous event.

If such a monster has appeared, and these Goblins and Kobolds were cooperating to fight the adventurers, then –

「BUGOOOOOOH!」

As if to confirm these fears, a ferocious howl that sounded like a pig’s roar sounded out and a large group of monsters appeared from within the forest.

Orcs. Orc Knights, wearing armor and holding shields. And behind them, calmly looking in the adventurers’ direction –

「Shit! It’s the third possibility?!」

With his pride as a shield-bearer on the line, the man used the【Stone Wall】and【Stone Shield】martial skills consecutively to buy his companions enough time to escape, but it was like a single person trying to stand against an avalanche.

***

Sitting on a throne made of a Treant, a three-meter plant-type monster that even a two-meter-tall Orc would have to look up at, Bugogan listened to the reports from his advisors and sons.

「Bugih, bumohjigi, bugogoh, bumoh.」

It seemed that weapon and armor manufacturing was progressing well. He was being told that equipment had been distributed to all of the Orcs and slaves, and preparations were satisfactory. But it seemed that one of the Kobolds who were making them had become useless.

「Bumoooh! Bumomon! Bugiih!」

He was being told that his soldiers' training was going well, and if Bugogan ordered it, they would destroy any enemies with no fear of death. Of course, that was a given since they were of inferior races, but having usable pawns was better than having unusable ones, so he did his best to make sure they were as loyal as possible.

「Bugogogon, bugigi, bukebubohoho! Buhohoho!」

It seemed that there wasn't quite enough slaves. Goblins and Kobolds multiplied like flies, but their numbers had decreased considerably after they had been ordered to attack a Ghoul village previously and hadn't quite recovered yet.

Bugogan ordered them to gather more from random locations away from Ghoul villages.

「Bugogogoh, bumooooh, fubooh bugigyagyah.」

And as usual, it seemed that there was a lack of females. It would be fine if the useless, low-intelligence pawns were satisfied with Goblin and Kobold females. In fact, this was mostly how wild Orcs reproduced.

However, since there were more high-quality females here, it was likely that they saw them and couldn't hold themselves back.

「Bugoh...」

Bugogan let out a sigh. If a low-intelligence creature impregnated a female, the resulting offspring would be another low-intelligence creature, whether the female was a Goblin female or the female of a more precious race. Why couldn't they understand their position?

However, he was only a ruler because he could rule these low-intelligence creatures, and since they were his pawns, it was a fact that he needed increase their numbers.

「Bugoh, Ghoul bugogobumomomoh.」

If they attacked any more Ghoul villages, it was possible that the Ghouls would notice them, but that was not a problem. As Bugogan informed them that they would soon attack more Ghoul villages and capture their females

alive, everyone other than the Orc who had reported that there are not enough women gave vulgar smiles.

Even the Orc Mages, who were considered far more intelligent than normal Orcs, couldn't suppress their greed. Bugogan was exasperated by the Orcs' behavior.

Just why were these inferior races so weak, foolish and vulgar?

No, that was why they must be ruled by a high-class existence like Bugogan.

Indeed, they must be ruled by him, as he belonged to the higher class of Noble Orcs.

Patting his own golden, mushroom-shaped hair, Bugogan changed his way of thinking and excused the foolishness of his subordinates.

On very rare occasions, a leader bearing the title of "King" appears among Goblins, Kobolds or Orcs. But in such cases, this leader is only a King of the race that it belongs to.

In contrast, high-class races as a whole are superior to lower races. High Goblins, High Kobolds and Noble Orcs. Members of this race are far stronger and live much longer than those of lower races.

Their obese appearance is similar to the corrupt nobles of the past, so the Noble Orcs' race title ironically includes the word "noble", and they are Rank 6 at minimum. Considering that normal Orcs are typically Rank 3, their ability in battle is on another level.

They are highly intelligent and live about as long as humans. They can even use magic. And they possess a power that causes inferior races to obey them unconditionally. Even an Orc King that the Orcs elect themselves would bend his knee before any Noble Orc.

Bugogan came from a Devil's Nest ruled by such Noble Orcs... Not a small forest like this Devil's Nest, but a large Devil's Nest that covered the entire southern part of the Bahn Gaia continent.

However, he was the defeated loser of a power struggle that had occurred there.

Bugogan had survived and crossed the mountain range. Burning with the ambition of one who has been defeated, he turned into a conqueror.

He would have the lower races follow his rule, build his own empire and one day conquer the human nations. With that as his objective, he had put in much effort and gone through many hardships.

He had made all of the Orc villages in the Devil's Nest to come under his rule, eliminated the particularly foolish Orcs who were even less intelligent than monkeys, selected slightly more intelligent individuals and placed them in higher positions. He had them abduct Goblin and Kobold females to increase their numbers, and in order to have more competent subordinates, he used an ugly, filthy Goblin female to create sons.

He hid his existence from the Ghouls and adventurers as he gathered power. And now, ten years later, his empire was now a large force.

After culling the failures, he was left with three sons, and his Orc servants who had survived training numbered three hundred. There were a hundred each of the Goblins and Kobolds who were his slaves.

If the Adventurers' Guild were aware of these numbers, they would surely send out an emergency disaster containment request. There was no doubt that adventurers of B-class and above would gather from all over the nation. That was why Bugogan was careful not to be noticed by adventurers. He had ordered his subordinates to make sure to either capture or kill every single adventurer they attacked.

The other enemies that Bugogan was tired of dealing with were the Ghouls. Ghouls were individually about as strong as Orcs, but they were intelligent. Goblins and Kobolds killed other members of their own race if they belonged to different groups, but if the Ghouls were faced with a common enemy, they would forget their past quarrels immediately and form an alliance.

Bugogan didn't believe that the Ghouls could defeat them, but there was no way to avoid large losses of his subordinates. That was why he had been eliminating one small village at a time, letting none escape.

The most dangerous of the Ghoul villages was the village of a hundred Ghouls, led by an elderly Ghoul mage. There were many of them, and each individual

Ghoul was strong. Until Bugogan had taken control, the Orcs had been nothing but sources of meat for that Ghoul village that were easily provoked.

He didn't want to make trouble with such a Ghoul Mage's village. However, a Kobold slave had brought Bugogan some good news.

It seemed that the problematic Ghoul Mage was nearing the end of her lifespan.

「Bumomomomoh, fugoofugoohoh.」

Bugogan gave a command and the only non-Orc monster in this throne room, an old Kobold with white fur, stepped forward.

This old Kobold was a Kobold Shaman, a Spiritualist. Spiritualists were rare even in the large Devil's Nest to the south beyond the mountain range where Bugogan had come from.

It used its abilities to communicate with spirits and benefited Bugogan through the prophecies it made, thus protecting the position of the Kobolds in Bugogan's empire. The prediction that the old Ghoul Mage would die of old age soon was one of the prophecies made by this Kobold Shaman.

However, the Kobold Shaman's ears were drooping down and its shoulders were trembling. It was whispering in a small voice, but it wasn't communicating with spirits right now.

Listening to the Kobold Shaman's whispers, the Orc Mage translated its report for Bugogan.

『The old Ghoul Mage that was supposed to die of old age is still alive for some reason. She won't die unless she is killed. And I don't know why, but lately the spirits haven't been listening to what I tell them to do and I don't know what's happening inside the village.』

Hearing this, Bugogan stroked his own hair with his fingers as he contemplated the situation... and then picked up his beloved magic sword that was leaning against his throne and swung it down towards the Kobold Shaman.

「Gyabih!」

Wiping the blood from the blade of his sword with a cloth, Bugogan ordered

that the corpse of the Kobold Shaman, which had been split in half from the top of its head down to the waist in one attack, be added to the food supplies.

Since this inferior Kobold was being useful, he had appointed it to this position, but what was that report? The one who had been going senile wasn't the Ghoul Mage, but this Kobold. These creatures were nothing but two-legged mongrels.

「Bugogoh! Bubobio, bugobuon, buhoho, buhihibumo!」

Bugogan had thought that there would be nothing but bad news today, but there was also something good.

Bugogan's eldest son Bubobio had led some slaves and servants on a mission to take some adventurers as prisoners and had safely captured them.

Among the five of them, one of the males had died, but the remaining one male and three females were injured but captured alive.

At the news that adventurers had been captured, and especially at the news that there were three females, the servants became excited.

「Bugobu, buhihibu, buhohohibuhibuhi.」

However, he would first have them spit out whatever information they had about the human society that Bugogan would conquer in the future. After all, female humans used as mothers would break after being seeded once, and there were not many of them.

「Buhohoh.」

However, after that, the three females would become mothers and the male would become food. Since Bubobio had made a great achievement, Bugogan decided that he would be allowed to have one of the females for his personal use as a reward.

Both punishment and reward were needed to rule.

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One week later.

Vandalieu was breathing in the winter air that was surprisingly clear despite

the humidity of the forest, while crushing medicinal plants, minerals and magic stones into powder to use as alchemical catalysts when his movements suddenly stopped.

「Boy, if you do not concentrate, who knows when you will learn the skill... Boy?」

Zadiris, who had been watching him work, she was confused to see his hands unexpectedly stop.

Vandalieu was looking into empty air, nodding and shaking his head, making noises as if responding to someone speaking to him.

「Boy, have you finished stuffing the roots? Shall we stop the lesson here for today?」

Worried that she had been forcing too many lessons on Vandalieu, Zadiris called out to him uncertainly, but it didn't seem that he was hallucinating from being too fatigued. He turned his head to face her.

「I just heard from a Kobold Shaman's spirit that there's a large village of Orcs deep in this Devil's Nest, led by a Noble Orc, and he seems to think that this Ghoul village is a nuisance to him.」

Thanks to an information leak from this spirit, Bugogan had failed to keep himself hidden.

Notes

1. The verb used here is the most polite way to say "to do", it's pretty much never used in regular conversation

Chapter 16: Skills make one the Ghoul King

「So that's why I'm going to be participating in a battle with my life on the line. It's nothing out of the ordinary, so don't worry.」

『Vandalieu, I don't think there's a single parent who wouldn't worry after hearing such words from their child.』

「... So you don't want me to fight?」

『Hmm, it's true that you're always risking your life, and if you try hard, you won't die, Vandalieu... But you have to make sure you cooperate with everyone else properly, okay?』

「I know, Mom.」

The spirit of the Kobold Shaman that had been split in half vertically by Bugogan's magic sword spent seven days traveling to this Ghoul village. It delivered precious information about the Noble Orc who had established a large village and was now attacking other Ghoul villages and kidnapping adventurers while amassing military force.

Vandalieu had been worried that the Ghouls wouldn't believe this information, but they didn't doubt him. He was earnestly happy that they trusted him.

「Three hundred Orcs, and a hundred each of Goblins and Kobolds. What will we do? Can we beat them?」

「Hey, does that mean that there are three hundred enemies?」

「That's five hundred; you're an idiot, aren't you? You can't even add numbers?」

「Goblins, Kobolds and Orcs, they're all enemies of Ghouls, aren't they?! Each of us just needs to kill five of them, then we'll win!」

「Hey, are you including us in your numbers? We still have babies in our stomachs, you know?」

『Bilde-san is four months pregnant, so I do believe that strenuous movements such as those of battle would be impossible for her.』

「And their leader is a Noble Orc. No matter how weak he is for a Noble Orc, he'll be stronger than Mother and Vigaro.」

「What?! Basdia, are you saying that Vigaro would lose to him?!」

「Of course! It's obvious that I'd lose!」

「V-Vigaro, I'm sure you'd win.」

「Face the facts, you morons!」

Well, while Vandalieu was feeling happy about being trusted, the Ghouls were seriously discussing what to do about the large village of Orcs. This was only natural; their survival depended on the decisions they made here.

The Ghouls were seated in a circle around a fire in an open space, holding a large emergency meeting to decide the actions that the village would take.

「Boy, could you please confirm the enemy's numbers one more time?」

Since the Ghouls at the meeting weren't settling down, Zadiris asked Vandalieu to repeat the Kobold Shaman's information. Incidentally, the Kobold Shaman informant's spirit had collapsed soon after reporting this information to Vandalieu.

In order to gain revenge over the Noble Orc who had killed it, it had used its experience as a Spiritualist even after its own death to communicate with other spirits and make its week-long journey to this village. Nobody would know whether it was simply very determined for revenge on its killer, or affected by Vandalieu's【Death-Attribute Charm】skill from very far away.

Either way, now that it had delivered the information, it was now floating around Vandalieu, like it was dozing off.

「The enemies are three hundred Orcs, a hundred Goblins, a hundred Kobolds and a few dozen tamed beast-type monsters. There are about six hundred enemies in total. The chief is a Noble Orc and he has three sons. There are also

quite a few Orc Generals, Orc Knights and Orc Mages. The Goblins are Soldiers, Chiefs, Knights and Mages. But there are no Generals or Kings. Also, the enemy has attacked other Ghoul villages, captured the females and used them as mothers for their children, and they've recently started attacking parties of adventurers as well.」

The Ghouls grimaced at the news of the enemy's forces, their extreme actions and also the fact that members of their own race had been attacked, even though they belonged to other villages.

Both the normal Orcs and the higher race of Noble Orcs were races that only had males. That was why they used the females of other races to breed. In most cases, they used the females of Goblins and Kobolds, and they also sometimes used female cattle that they stole from villages. However, possibly because they were a race created by the Demon King and his servants to harm humans, they preferred female humans the most.

Though Ghouls were treated as monsters by humans, their females were exactly like human females other than the color of their skin and eyes. Since their roots could be traced back to the goddess Vida, from the monsters' point of view, they were just like humans.

Ghouls found it difficult to get pregnant unless Vandalieu cast his spells on them, and only one in five of their children were born safely. However, for some reason, if the father was an Orc, there were no problems.

... Though that wasn't a good thing at all.

(Is this because Orc breeding is parthenogenesis that looks like normal reproduction? Instead of Orc sperm fertilizing the egg cell, if the Orc sperm simply absorbs and takes over the mother's genes, then that would explain why the offspring never belongs to the mother's race... I suppose? I'm not even sure if genes exist in this world. Well, either way, none of this helps to solve the Ghouls' declining birth rates.)

Vandalieu was contemplating these thoughts, but the Ghouls had calmed down and began to discuss what to do once more after hearing his words.

There were four very different opinions expressed at the meeting.

「Hey, the Orcs are targeting human villages and cities, right? Then they have nothing to do with us, do they? In that case, we just have to sit here and do nothing.」

The opinion that the Ghouls should simply watch what the Orcs decide to do.

They felt sorry for the female Ghouls that had already been captured and the Ghoul villages that would be attacked in the future, but since they couldn't defeat the Orcs in battle, fighting them was too dangerous.

Well, Zadiris's village had no obligation to risk themselves to help the other Ghoul villages. It was cold, but it was meaningless for their village to come to ruin by trying to help others.

However, this would be a poor move. The Noble Orc leading the Orcs had been waiting for Zadiris to die. The reason for this was obvious – he was planning to attack this village once Zadiris died.

Groups of monsters were generally ruled as dictatorships, where the ruler decided everything. Since the ruler of these Orcs had been observing this village, there was no chance that they could avoid his attention.

Conflicts between humans could be resolved through peace treaties, but monsters didn't possess such concepts.

And even if the Noble Orc somehow decided to leave this village alone, what would come next? If the Orcs failed their attack on the humans, adventurers would come to this Devil's Nest in large numbers. They would hunt down the remnants of the Noble Orc's forces to ensure that no large group of Orcs would ever form again.

The nation of Mirg was the country at the front of the Orgaume Kingdom. Its army was likely powerful, and it would surely have many adventurers. The chance that the Noble Orc's plan would fail was close to 100%.

「How about running away while the Orcs are making their noise? ... I suppose not.」

There was a Ghoul suggesting this, but he rejected his own idea.

Of course, this was because it was unrealistic for a hundred Ghouls to be able

to run away. The forest of this Devil's Nest was quite spacious, but it would be difficult for a hundred Ghouls, including pregnant women, to run away unnoticed by the Orcs.

It was possible to escape to another Devil's Nest or simply outside of this Devil's Nest, but these Ghouls had lived in this Devil's Nest generation after generation and were unfamiliar with the geography outside.

Darcia and Sam were quite knowledgeable about it, but they only knew that escaping to a Devil's Nest on the Mirg-side would take over ten days, and even if they made it there, the chance of being discovered by humans was high.

And nobody knew what was around the mountain range. Just in case, Vandalieu had sent out small Undead such as insects and small birds to the mountain range today, but it would take them over a month to discover anything.

「Then are we going to surrender to the Orcs? Definitely not; we're better off dead than doing something like that.」

As Bilde said, the option of surrendering to the Orcs and falling under their control was out of the question.

The men would be used as slaves and soldiers like the Goblins and Kobolds, used to fight against the humans until they all perished. The women would become mothers for the Orcs.

That would be the worst possible outcome.

「Let's fight. Let's reach out to the other Ghoul villages as well.」

In the end, Basdia's view was the most realistic. They had to reduce the difference in numbers as much as possible, and then attack before they were attacked.

Vandalieu knew that they would be busy for the next little while.

「Well then, before that, there's something I need to say.」

Vigaro, the next chief, spoke in a serious tone, staring at Vandalieu.

「Vandalieu, you should leave this village as soon as possible.」

「No. Anyway, I have a suggestion –」

「Wait, wait! Don't change the subject!」

As Vandalieu immediately rejected Vigaro's request for him to leave the village, Vigaro became flustered for some reason.

「At this rate, you'll end up fighting the Orcs with us, you know?! Are you alright with that?!」

「That's fine with me. Anyway, my suggestion is –」

「That's not fine at all! Don't be so stubborn –」

「I won't leave.」

「Stop interrupting me!」

Vigaro had been doing nothing but interrupting people up until now, and now he was telling Vandalieu not to interrupt him. Vandalieu couldn't understand. Was saying,「That's fine with me」a bad idea? He supposed that it sounded self-important... to be safe, should he have replied,「I do not mind」?

Vandalieu pondered whether it was his choice of words that was the problem, but Vigaro scratched his mane and began shouting.

「This is a fight between us Ghouls and them Orcs! It has nothing to do with you!」

Vandalieu had stayed in this village for a long time, but he was not a Ghoul. And he had said that he would one day leave this village and cross the mountain range to get to the Orbaume Kingdom.

That was why he shouldn't tie his fate to that of the Ghouls. He was only a two-year-old child. He shouldn't get involved in a battle whose outcome was so uncertain.

「It does have something to do with me; you are all my companions and my family. By the way, could you listen to my suggestion now?」

However, this two-year-old boy did things at his own pace.

He said these emotional words in a flat tone with no signs of embarrassment, and then tried to change the subject once more.

「What can you even do in the first place?!」

Resisting the urge to smile after being told that the Ghouls were family to Vandalieu, Vigaro shouted this question at him. Indeed, if one were to divide the people of this world into the strong and the weak, Vandalieu would fall into the weak side.

His Mana pool vastly exceeded what was normal, and as a Dhampir, his physical strength exceeded that of a normal adult at the age of two. On top of that, he was able to use death-attribute magic that nobody in this world knew about.

However, that was all. He had no understanding of martial arts, and his knowledge of group battle tactics and strategy was all self-taught. There was no way that he would be a good tactician.

His vast Mana pool was nothing more than simple Mana. He couldn't use it to directly kill monsters, and no matter how much Mana he had, he would die if his Vitality dropped to 0.

The only ways Vandalieu could use his Mana was through Death-Attribute Magic and No-Attribute Magic. Death-Attribute Magic was limited in its options for direct attacks, and he had only just recently learned No-Attribute Magic and he was still inept with it.

If the enemies were mages, then he could use the【Magic Absorption Barrier】to render them useless, but the enemies were Orcs this time. Few of them were Orc Mages, and as a race, they relied on their physical strength to charge at their enemies with their weapons.

Vandalieu himself had been aware of all of this ever since Darcia had been killed. However, he was also aware that there was any number of things that he was able to do.

「First, me being here would contribute three Rotten Beasts, a Phantom Bird and a Skeleton Soldier as well as Sam, Saria and Rita.」

「Muh?!」

Sam and the others were all Vandalieu's servants. Of course, if Vandalieu were to participate in the battle against the Orcs, they would participate too.

Since they were all at least Rank 3, the military strength that they added wasn't small by any means.

「And I think when you reach out to the other Ghoul villages, having me around will be convenient.」

It was already known that Ghouls were affected by the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill, so Vandalieu pointed out that this would be useful. Knowing that he was right, Vigaro could only let out a groan.

「You should leave it at that, Vigaro. Everyone knows that you were thinking of what is best for the boy when you spoke.」

「Yeah. And Van is family to us as well, and the same goes for the others of our race, right?」

「Yeah, yeah! Vigaro, don't push yourself!」

「That's right, you can't say that he has nothing to do with it, even if you don't mean it!」

Vigaro was on his own.

「Y-you... Ah, I don't care anymore! I'm going to make sure you're so heavily involved that nobody will ever say that it has nothing to do you with you again!」

「It seems that the next chief has given his authorization, boy. So what is your suggestion?」

Finally able to talk, Vandalieu gave a sigh of relief and made his suggestion.

「It's nothing special, but I was thinking of distributing the equipment and Magic Items that I'm not planning to use in the near future to everyone.」

But judging from everyone's reactions, it seemed that it was something special.

In this world, Magic Items have grades.

From the bottom, they are lower-class (this is a poor way to say it, so these have also recently started to be called beginner-class[1]), middle-class, upper-class, special-class, legendary-class and mythical-class.

Lower-class items are things like swords that aren't as susceptible to rust as normal swords, leather armor that doesn't hurt the body if slept in, timers that ring an alarm after an hour, magical stoves similar to the portable gas stoves of Earth, magical street lights and the like; many of them are plain, everyday items that people from Earth wouldn't normally think of as Magic Items.

The real Magic-Item-like items start at the middle class, and many items that adventurers use belong to this class. Upper-class items are significantly more valuable and difficult to obtain, and special-class items are few and far between, treated as national treasures.

Items called Artifacts such as sacred swords that only chosen heroes can wield belong to the legendary-class, while the cheat-like items of myths are in the mythical-class.

The classification of Magic Items is dependent not only on their functions and the strength of the magic they contain, but also the effort and materials needed to create them as well as their rarity. Apparently, magical stoves were once considered middle-class Magic Items before mass-producing them was feasible.

「Oka~ay, line up, line up.」

The Magic Items from the Dungeon that Vandalieu was now distributing among the Ghouls were of lower and middle class.

When Vandalieu had first obtained the Magic Items, he could only tell that they were Magic Items and roughly how much Mana was stored inside them. Even after he learned the No-Attribute Magic【Appraisal】spell, he had no knowledge to make sense of the information, so he had continued hoarding them without knowing what kind of items they were.

However, he thought that the Ghouls needed to be stronger for a difficult mission like invading the large Orc village, so he gave them out.

Of course, for free.

This came at a great cost to Vandalieu, but he had simply been hoarding them with no way to sell them for money anyway, and he had simply received them from the Undead of the Dungeon or found them inside treasure chests, he felt no attachment to them as he hadn't struggled to obtain them. And so he

generously gave them away.

「This has a low-level agility enchantment, and this is a low-level stamina recovery accessory. Both are little more than consolation prizes, but they are indeed Magic Items.」

「Then please give those to Guda-san and Gibli-san.」

Vandalieu had Zadiris use【Appraisal】, and then distributed the Magic Items one after another. If he was in a large human town, he would be able to sell them at a thousand Amid each, a price not insignificant but not exorbitant either. Even so, they were precious items in this village in the Devil's Nest, so everyone accepted them.

(The happy feeling of giving presents to people is a fresh experience for me.)

On Earth, Vandalieu had no friends or decent family, and in Origin he had been a laboratory animal. Having his first opportunity to give presents to someone in Lambda, Vandalieu felt very happy.

「I'm going to give those Orcs a beating with this!」

「I'll give you a belly full of Orc meat to repay you for this bracelet.」

Incidentally, Orc meat was apparently tasty without any special cooking methods, unlike Goblin and Kobold meat. Its taste was similar to that of wild boar meat, so the Ghouls were looking forward to it.

「Give the special battleaxe that I got from the Skeleton General to Vigaro. And the kite shield is for Basdia.」

Vandalieu handed over the items that were the most valuable among the items that he had obtained in the Dungeon other than the suits of armor that had become Saria and Rita's bodies and the weapons that they used.

Vigaro thanked Vandalieu as he received the battleaxe, and then looked at him with a serious expression.

「Vandalieu, you should be the King.」

「... I'm sorry?」

「Us Ghouls join forces with other villages to fight against a common enemy.

When that happens, the one who stands at the top and gives the orders is the King. That should be you.」

「... I'm sorry?[2]」

From Vigaro's explanation, Vandalieu understood the role of the King, but he couldn't understand why he should be the one in such an important position. Vandalieu was confused, but Basdia looked happy at his response.

「I'm glad you've agreed, Van.」

「No no no, I didn't mean『yes』to agree, but『I'm sorry?[2]』」

「But Van, everyone else says you're the most suitable as well.」

「Who do you mean by "everyone"?!」

「Everyone other than you, Van.」

「When?!」

It seemed that they had been discussing it while the Magic Items were being distributed.

『Congratulations, Bocchan.』

『This is a great success for you~♪』

『We'll do our best, too!』

Sam and his daughters had apparently also participated in the discussions. It seemed that not a single person had any complaints.

Sam's faint, white Spirit Form raised his hand, giving Vandalieu a thumbs-up. Rita and Saria were also giving a rattling applause.

『Oh Vandalieu, you've become such a fine boy!』

Darcia had woken up without Vandalieu noticing and was now crying tears of happiness. Was she feeling like a parent whose child had been chosen as the class representative or put in the leading role in the school arts festival?

「No no no, let's not get ahead of ourselves. You might all be fine with it, but will the other villages agree? I'm a Dhampir, you know. I'm of a different race. Will they accept such a King?」

「It will be alright; that is not a problem.」

「Yeah, if it were a human then there'd probably be some opposition, but since you're a Dhampir, it'll be fine.」

「... Well, even I think that it'll probably be fine.」

The founder of Ghouls was thought to be the younger brother or sister of the founder of Vampires. A Dhampir whose blood was half-Vampire was something like a relative for Ghouls. In addition, Dhampirs were considered monsters by the Amid Empire and its nations.

And Vandalieu possessed the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill. Even Vandalieu knew that the other Ghoul villages wouldn't be strongly opposed to him being the King.

「And you do meet the requirements to be the King, boy, in terms of your ability and achievements.」

Vandalieu had once told Zadiris that he possessed the【Strengthen Followers】skill.

「Boy, the【Strengthen Followers】skill that you mentioned to me before does exactly as its name suggests, increasing the attribute points of your followers. Your followers are your Undead, and we will be your followers as well. In other words, if you stand at the top position as King, you will strengthen all of the Ghouls that follow your command. That skill is something like a King-specific skill.」

The【Strengthen Followers】skill is something that any monster bearing the title of "King" possesses. Thanks to this skill, the group of monsters led by the King is stronger than normal and their numbers are also greater.

Though Zadiris didn't know this, there was once a Goblin King who had obtained a level 10【Strengthen Followers】skill and his followers fought evenly against fully-armed knights, wielding only tree branches and wearing fur loincloths.

There was a reason that the Adventurers' Guild treated the appearance of a King as a disastrous event.

「You are the one who made an effort to correct our weakness of not being able to reproduce easily, did you not? You opened up our future and helped us prosper. You have already shown success in doing so as well. If these are not the achievements of a leader, then I do not know what are.」

Vandalieu felt that Zadiris was exaggerating with her words, but difficulty with reproduction was a problem that Ghouls as a race faced, and the fact that they couldn't increase their numbers had been a heavy restriction that prevented them from expanding.

If the other Ghouls knew that Vandalieu had a way to solve this problem, they would gladly gather to follow his command.

Having never imagined that solving the problem of the Ghouls' declining birth rates would lead to this, Vandalieu put a hand to his forehead. Vigaro seemed happy that things had gone well. He had made Vandalieu heavily involved as he had said he would, but he was slightly immature about it.

「I understand. I will become the King.」

And so Vandalieu became the Ghoul King before even becoming an adventurer.

『Vandalieu has acquired the Title[3] of【Ghoul King!】』

『The level of the【Strengthen Followers】skill has increased!』

***

The first job for this King was armor-fitting.

「Gudan, are there any tight or hard-to-move parts?」

「It's hard to move my elbows and neck, and my helmet is too tight.」

Ghoul men possessed the heads of lions and had arms so long that their fists would reach the ground even if they were standing upright. Since their appearance was so different from humans, they couldn't use the human-designed armor that Vandalieu had distributed without some adjustments.

Normally, a skilled craftsman and some time would be needed to alter them for Ghoul use.

「Now then, stand up.」

However, Vandalieu had thought of a method that didn't require either.

First, he would have the Ghouls put the armor on, and then turn them into Living Armor... to be more accurate, armor-shaped Golems.

「The shape of the armor is going to change, so try moving your arms and neck.」

With a creaking noise, the armor gradually changed shape with the use of the【Golem Transmutation】skill. It took less than ten minutes for the metal human-shaped armor to become suitable for Ghoul use.

It looked unrefined as it had no decorations, but it had plenty of function. There were some parts that the armor didn't cover because the Ghouls' arms were so long, but that would be fixed by using leather parts made from monster hides.

「Oh, it's become really comfortable! Thanks, King!」

「You're welcome. Next person~」

This work wasn't King-like at all, but since the village's craftsmen had only worked with monster hides, bones and horns before, they were unable to adjust the metal armor. That was why there was no option but for Vandalieu to do it himself.

The King-like work... visiting the other Ghoul villages and requesting for their cooperation would begin tomorrow. The villages had been established in a way that their hunting grounds didn't overlap, so they were quite far apart, and they thought of each other as rivals when there wasn't a common enemy, so even Zadiris didn't know their exact locations or numbers.

Vandalieu's insect Undead and spirit informants would help them estimate where they were.

This seemed like an unexpectedly slow plan, but the Noble Orc's village wouldn't act before spring and possibly even as late as summer, so they had time.

Of course, they wanted to save the captured female Ghouls as soon as

possible, but rushing things and getting defeated would be pointless.

Incidentally, the Ghouls didn't really think about saving the female adventurers that had been captured. Adventurers were normally enemies for Ghouls. Basdia and Bilde seemed to sympathize for them as women, but not enough to risk anything for them.

And Vandalieu had no desire to do so either. The adventurers of the nation of Mirg were enemies for him as well. He knew that it was possible that if he saved them, they would say something like,「Thanks for saving us, in return, we'll exterminate you, okay~♪」

(Well, if I saw them being tormented with my own eyes or if it turned out that they were people I knew, then I might think to save them.)

Vandalieu was aware that if he saw women being hurt, he would associate them with Darcia and his blood would quickly rise to his head.

(I suppose we'll do what we can quickly and efficiently, and if they're still alive after we win, then I'll save them.)

If he abandoned captured adventurers, he was worried about what the cheaters who would be reincarnated here in the future would say, so he did intend to save them in the end.

(Ah, now that I think about it, should I tell Zadiris and the others about my circumstances? Yes, I'll tell them after this. Zadiris, Vigaro, Basdia... Those three, I suppose. I'll make them heavily involved with me as well, just as they've done with me.)

As Vandalieu was thinking this strange revenge, the next person needing armor fitting came forward.

It was Basdia.

「Basdia? Is it tight somewhere?」

Vandalieu had been told to drop the honorifics now that he was King, so he omitted the "san" and Basdia replied with a casual「Yeah.」

He had thought that the women's armor wouldn't need adjustment, as Ghoul women had identical body shapes to humans.

「My chest is a little... no, very tight.」

「... Now that you mention it, most of the armor was designed for men.」

He realized that he needed to adjust everyone's armor after all.

『The levels of the【Golem Transmutation】,【Surpass Limits】and【Status Effect Resistance】skills have increased!』

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 2 years, 6 months old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: None
- **Level**: 100
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 47
  - Mana: 113,551,200
  - Strength: 40
  - Agility: 16
  - Stamina: 42
  - Intelligence: 75
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 3
  - Chant Revocation: Level 1
  - Strengthen Followers: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 3

    - Surpass Limits: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 1
    - Mana Control: Level 1
    - Spirit Form: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing Jobs
    - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

About Titles:

Titles are acquired when an influential individual and many other people recognize you as bearing that title. It is also known as a Written Name, Alias or Degree.

The effects of a Title depends on the reason the Title has been bestowed on the individual and the meaning of the Title, granting new related skills or increasing the levels of existing ones and strengthening their effects.

【Ghoul King】

This Title increases the effects of the【Strengthen Followers】and【Death-Attribute Charm】skills on Ghouls. Also, it increases the level of the【Strengthen Followers】skill and treats the value of the number of Ghouls under its influence as double when calculating other effects.

Skill explanation:

【Strengthen Followers】

This skill increases the attribute values of individuals belonging to a race under the skill bearer's influence. It also has the effect of increasing fertility and the rate at which the offspring of affected individuals develop.

This skill's level increases as the number of followers increases. The skill is level 1 below a hundred followers, level 2 at two hundred followers and level 3 at five hundred followers.

The humans, elves and dwarves that are designated as people in the Amid Empire cannot acquire this skill, but the new races created by Vida can acquire it in rare cases. However, the majority of creatures that possess this skill are monsters such as Goblin Kings.

Notes

1. I'm not entirely sure what this means, but it might have to do with the fact that 下級/kakyuu (lower class) can also translate to "junior"

2. This is "はい？/hai?" in the raw. This is sometimes used to ask the person to repeat what they said in a confused kind of way, so I've translated this to "I'm sorry?" However, "はい/hai" also translates to "yes" which has led to this misunderstanding.

3. This is "二つ名/futatsuna" which literally means "second name"; I previously translated this as "nickname" when it appeared early in the series. Now that I know what this actually is, I'm retranslating it to "Title" and applying this change to previous chapters as well.

Chapter 17: He was supposed to become the Ghoul King because of his skills

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The Noble Orc was planning to attack a human town. There was fear over whether he would order his large village of Orcs to attack the Ghoul village before doing so.

Vandalieu was to fight them with the Ghouls that were his family, bearing the Title of Ghoul King.

Vandalieu was in the midst of an alchemy lesson.

He crushed the contents of the mortar while pouring a certain amount of Mana into it. Incidentally, the contents were Kobold bones, Magic Stones from Kobolds, dried Poison Toad organs and his own blood.

He used the resulting product to draw a magic circle, and if it functioned as a Magic Item, he had succeeded. If not, then it would be a failure. Regardless of whether it succeeded or failed, he would repeat this process until he obtained the skill.

Though the contents of the mortar varied a little, the contents of his lessons did not.

An individual of a higher race of Orcs, the Noble Orcs, was leading a group of monsters five hundred strong including the Goblins and Kobolds under its command. There was a powerful enemy to face, but was it alright for him to be doing something like this after receiving the Title of Ghoul King?

While he was doing this, the Orcs were treating the captured Ghoul women and female adventurers as their playthings!

But Vandalieu continued crushing the contents of the mortar, not thinking about these things.

「If we panic and rush things now, it’s certain that only bad things will

happen.」

The Ghouls and Vandalieu knew this.

Of course, they were gathering information. Vandalieu had distributed Undead bugs to determine the location of the Noble Orc's village and find other Ghouls, and messengers had been sent to other Ghoul villages whose locations Zadiris and the others still remembered.

There was no need to move until such information had been gathered. The earliest the enemy would make a move would be spring. And it was still the end of December, not even halfway through winter.

Orcs had a gestation period of half a year when they bred and they only took another half year to grow into adults. This was why the Ghouls did plan to move as soon as they got the information they needed, so the enemy numbers wouldn't be too great.

「Still, this skill is quite hard to obtain.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu honestly found it difficult to learn. Several months had already passed since he began his alchemy lessons and he still hadn't obtained the skill.

「That is to be expected. In fact, you are quicker to learn it than most monsters, boy.」(Zadiris)

However, Zadiris encouraged him.

「Though if you were a human, that may not be the case.」(Zadiris)

The levels of skills generally range from 1 to 10.

Those with a level 1 skill are novices that have just learned the skill. For combat-related skills, this is the level at which the user can just manage to use the skill in real battle. Those with level 1 crafting skills would be at the level of an amateur hobbyist.

The average soldier possesses level 2 combat-related skills, and those with level 2 crafting skills are considered unskilled craftsmen.

Adventurers and mercenaries that possess level 3 combat-related skills are considered fully qualified. Craftsmen with level 3 skills are quite skilled, but not allowed to operate independently.

Those with level 4 combat-related skills are considered competent veterans in their fields. Level 4 crafting skills are the minimum requirement for an independent craftsman.

Those with level 5 combat-related skills are top-class users of those skills, and it is common for C-class adventurers to possess skills at this level.

Those with level 6 combat-related skills are fit to be instructors for nobles, and are close to being B-class adventurers. Those with level 6 crafting skills are able to run stores in large cities.

Those with level 7 combat-related skills are sought after by countries and noblemen; adventurers with skills at this level are B-class unless their behavior is considered greatly problematic. Craftsmen with level 7 skills have multiple people that apply to be their apprentices every year.

Those with level 8 skills are masters whose names are known across the entire country.

Those with level 9 skills leave their names in history. A-class adventurers possess skills at this level.

Level 10 skills are in the realm of superhuman abilities.

And there are rare cases where a skill surpasses level 10, becoming a transcendental skill. Possessing such a skill could make one worshipped by others. One would be called names such as Sword King or Flame Emperor, and be considered a god.

It would perhaps be equivalent to Miyamoto Musashi[1] on Earth. It is unlikely that Miyamoto Musashi could move faster than sound, fight for a week straight without eating or drinking, or cut through a mountain-sized rock that’s harder than steel, however.

These were Vandalieu’s estimations of how skills worked, based on what he had heard from Darcia and Zadiris.

With that in mind, it made sense that obtaining skills like alchemy or magic-related skills took numerous months.

However, in this world, there is a component that didn’t exist on Earth or in

Origin.

The bonuses to skills offered by Jobs.

The people of lambda can gain bonuses to learning skills by obtaining Jobs. This increases the rate at which one obtains and levels up skills.

Because of this, an amateur can become a master swordsman or craftsman in just a few years. In the case of swordsmen, though, many die before they can gain the Experience Points they need.

Looking at it another way, acquiring skills and leveling them up in this world without obtaining a Job is difficult. Even with an excellent teacher, the apprentice having an appropriate Job is almost a prerequisite for learning skills.

In that regard, Vandalieu was quite exceptional considering that he had learned skills and leveled them up without a Job.

Because of his curse, Vandalieu's experience from his previous lives didn't manifest directly in his skills. But he still remembered the feeling of learning skills and still had the experience which helped him learn them, and his vast Mana pool allowed him to practice magic dozens of times more than the average person.

Also, he received racial bonuses by being a member of the Dhampir race.

As proof of this, he hadn't learned any martial skills, which he hadn't experienced using at all on Earth or in Lambda.

「So in short, obtaining a Job would make it easier to acquire new skills.」(Vandalieu)

「Well, that is correct.」(Zadiris)

「... I've found another reason to hate this country.」(Vandalieu)

Changing Jobs required special rooms owned by organizations such as Guilds, so it was impossible for Vandalieu to acquire a Job in the Amid Empire where he was treated as a monster.

Even if Vandalieu was able to use such a room, his【Cannot learn existing Jobs】curse would likely make it impossible for him to change Jobs.

「But since pouring my hate on the country won't help me gain skills, I'll just have to keep working diligently.」(Vandalieu)

「Indeed. That is wise of you, boy.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris patted Vandalieu's head, but if she was aware that his【Status Effect Resistance】and【Surpass Limits】skills had increased in level, she would likely have him stop his diligent work.

These skills were increasing in level because of the Status Effect known as "overwork" that Vandalieu was affected by, and because he was pushing past the limits of what an infant's body could withstand, every day.

However, Vandalieu had no intention to stop pushing himself. This was something that hadn't changed ever since Darcia had been killed.

***

The next day, he learned where the other Ghoul villages were. There were ten of them in total. However, they only needed to make the multiple-day journey to visit four of them.

The other six had already been attacked by the Orcs.

『Th-the men were killed and the w-women... GRRRR!』

『GAAAH! My village, it's been burned down! THOSE PIIIIIGS!』

『It hurts! It hurts! Mother was screaming! It hurts! I can't breeeeaaaathe!』

『We attacked! The Ghouls! Bugogan-sama's orders! The Ghouls' venom, because of Orc-Mage-sama's magic, no work on us!』

Vandalieu listened to the words of the spirits of the Ghouls and Orcs who had died in battle that had followed his Undead insects back to the village. Many spirits were only capable of howling and crying because too much time had elapsed since their deaths and even those capable of speaking did so in fragmented sentences, but Vandalieu could piece together what had happened.

The Noble Orc Bugogan had apparently been attacking Ghoul villages one after another, starting with the smallest ones. Most Ghoul villages other than Zadiris's village had between thirty to fifty members. Groups of eighty or so slave Goblins and Kobolds attacked them, with the Noble Orc's sons in

command.

There were apparently some Ghoul villages that didn't have any strong individuals like Ghoul Mages or Ghoul Barbarians. In those villages, a Rank 4 Ghoul Warrior that might be in a middle-rank position in Zadiris's village acted as the chief.

It wouldn't be surprising for them to be annihilated in a one-sided battle when the Rank 6 Noble Orc attacked. And it seemed that the numerous Orc Mages were able to cast spells that granted resistance against the paralyzing venom that Ghouls secreted from their claws.

This magic would be cast on the Orc soldiers and some of the slaves before the battle.

The Ghouls' resistance had been fierce, killing many of the Goblins and Kobolds. But since the Orcs captured Ghoul females in the process, it was a net gain for them.

And so Bugogan had killed over a hundred Ghoul men and kidnapped over a hundred Ghoul women. Ghoul women had much sturdier bodies than humans, and made excellent mothers.

It seemed that Bugogan had used the Ghoul women in addition to the female Goblins and Kobolds to further increase the number of his Orc soldiers.

The Kobold Shaman hadn't known these things, likely because it was a Spiritualist who was never sent out onto the frontlines and because it was a slave.

「So it seems that the Orcs increase in number by about a hundred every year. I think a lot of them actually die in the harsh battles that they consider their training, but I think their breeding is accelerating, so let us tear out their entrails while they are still alive and scatter their brains across the ground.」(Vandalieu)

「Boy, I understand that you are angry, but you must calm yourself.」(Zadiris)

「Yeah, calm down. It's not good for us if even the young ones get heated.」(Vigaro)

「I'm not angry. I'm just empathizing with the spirits.」(Vandalieu)

「Isn’t that even worse?!」(Vigaro)

「Boy, the Mana that has leaked out of you has taken the shape of skulls and is rather terrifying.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris and Vigaro, Vandalieu’s close friends, stepped away from him in fear as countless black skulls swarmed around him.

Ghouls from outside this village were mere strangers to Vandalieu, and not people that he should have any particular feelings for. However, after hearing the words of the spirits, he couldn’t contain his feelings of anger towards the Orcs.

「Since Orcs are a race with only males, I think they cannot help that part of their behavior. If they don’t do what they’re doing, then they cannot maintain their own race. The instinct to reproduce is one of the three main needs[2], and it would be cruel to tell them to abstain. In fact, the ones to blame are the Demon King and the evil gods for making creatures that live and reproduce this way. But I also can’t help being angry.」(Vandalieu)

「... Vandalieu, I can’t tell if you’re calm or not. Also, what are the *three main needs*[3]?」(Vigaro)

「Even I do not know... Well, I am relieved to see that you do not seem to have lost control over yourself. In any case, there are four surviving villages, correct? Let us hurry and send messengers to them.」(Zadiris)

***

Tarea gave orders to the men of the village while sitting on a hand-made throne, looking down on those obeying her commands and feeling pleased with herself.

With golden pupils, gray-brown skin and claws stained purple with paralyzing venom, she was clearly a Ghoul woman. However, one could possibly tell from the fact that the letters of her name contains no dakuten[4], she was a Ghoul who was originally a human.

As a human, Tarea was the daughter of a skilled smith. She had inherited his qualities and displayed promising talent at a young age, and people had

expected her to one day be an exceptional smith, even more skilled than her father.

However, a large company expanded into the city that she lived in and her parents lost their store. And then they made a mortifying decision. They sold Tarea as a slave.

Tarea was indeed a talented girl, but she also had two younger brothers. In those days, the ones who succeeded the family, whether it was a noble family or a commoner family, was always a son.

Even though Tarea's younger brothers also had clear talent and ability... No, *because* they did, her family decided to sell her and take back their store.

Tarea was talented, but she also had a refined physical appearance. As a young girl, she already possessed a body that was highly attractive to men, and so she was sold at a high price.

After being sold, she was forced to work as a prostitute and suffered deep emotional wounds from her family's betrayal and the circumstances she now found herself in. She was forced to serve arrogant clients countless times, and in the end, she was unable to bear it and decided to escape.

She found an opening to kill her client and escape the brothel, leaving the city. As she fled, she ran into a Devil's Nest to throw off her pursuers.

And so she managed to escape, but she was then caught by Ghouls.

Tarea despaired as she thought she was going to be eaten alive, but the group of Ghouls that captured her was small and lacked females. What they desired from her was not her meat, but for her breeding function as a woman.

Tarea was transformed from a human into a Ghoul by a ritual. Having already lost her willpower to resist, she opened her body to the Ghoul men and came to spend every day obeying their commands.

Because she had become a Ghoul, even if she escaped, she would be killed if spotted by humans.

And because she was originally a human, she didn't know any techniques to make use of her newly-gained superhuman strength and paralyzing venom.

For Tarea to survive, she had no choice but to obey the commands of the Ghoul men. But did she have a future if she kept living on like this?

Her eyes were clouded with despair, but her days of living such a life changed when she laid eyes on the fur of a Huge Boar that the men had hunted and brought back.

As Tarea stroked the fur, she remembered her past and whispered about how it would make good armor. Hearing that whisper, the Ghoul men said,「Make it, then.」

She obeyed them, creating Ghoul-fitted leather armor of the same quality that one would find sold in human cities, using the limited materials available.

From that moment on, Tarea's position in this group of Ghouls changed to the person destined to become the next chief.

Tarea made pieces of equipment one after another out of the materials brought to her by the Ghoul men. Even though she had transformed from a human into a Ghoul, her talent had never stopped shining.

A Giant Scorpion's carapace would become a shield; an Iron Turtle's shell would become armor; an Impaler Ox's horns would become a spear.

The warriors in the group of Ghouls Tarea belonged to were as well-equipped as adventurers and they kept hunting monsters one after another, becoming strong enough to even kill adventurers who attacked them.

Having regained her willpower, she used techniques she had learned during her times as a prostitute to control the men and make them submit to her. She taught the other women who were jealous of her how to make the men submissive, thus gathering them under her.

And a hundred years after she became a Ghoul, Tarea rose to the top position in the group, despite being weaker than everyone else.

And more than a hundred years after that, the group of less than twenty Ghouls that had been on the brink of extermination now numbered over sixty. Other Ghoul villages desired Tarea's equipment and brought food to trade for it. The influence that Tarea's group of Ghouls had was even greater than Zadiris's village that had over a hundred Ghouls.

「Fufu, at this rate, I'll have control over this Devil's Nest in another ten years.」

Tarea sat on a comfortable throne carved out of a Treant, her body decorated with jeweled accessories taken from the corpses of adventurers, stroking her rich black hair and hiding her mouth behind a folding fan made from the shell of an Iron Turtle carved thin. With this appearance, it was completely appropriate to call her a Ghoul Queen.

... Though she had made everything herself by hand, strangely enough.

Tarea had no contact with Zadiris's village and hadn't learned about the large group of Orcs led by Bugogan, so she had no doubts that her ambitions would

become reality.

「For me, who was once a mere commoner and even fell as low as to becoming a slave, to rule this Devil's Nest full of monsters far more powerful than humans... Fufufu, my heart is dancing.」

「Tarea-sama, please make my shield.」

「Tarea-sama, my armor too, please!」

「Wait a little longer! Even if you do not ask me, I will make it for you!」

Wondering if the chief's morning work was finished, some Ghouls called out to her. Gloating to herself like this was Tarea's daily routine.

「Chief! We all worked together to defeat a Metal Slime!」

「What did you say?!」

And in the evenings, when the warriors returned from hunting, she would unconsciously stand up from her throne with her eyes sparkling.

And in front of her was the silvery mucus of a Metal Slime in a leather bag, as heavy as iron, and the Metal Slime's silver-colored core.

The moment she saw these, Tarea's cheeks turned red and her body swayed, as if she were a maiden reuniting with her lover after a long time apart.

「Oh my... The materials of a Metal Slime, which possess the properties of both a liquid and metal! What kind of weapon... no, armor? Ah, what should I do, I wonder what kind of lovely equipment I should make~♪」

Though her body was radiating her sex appeal indiscriminately, the words coming from her mouth had no sex appeal at all. But the Ghouls of her village were used to this already, so none of them were surprised. In fact, they were happy.

Tarea was a chief who skillfully created equipment, and perhaps because of the time she had spent as a commoner, she treated those below her well. As she was over two hundred and fifty years old, she had retired from her work as a woman, but even so, she was a popular leader among her people.

Tarea had become somewhat accustomed to the Ghouls as well, and enjoyed

a far more fulfilling life than the one she had as a human.

「Chief! There are reports from the lookouts that there is a carriage coming this way!」

A young Ghoul delivered this news in a flustered voice.

「! Adventurers, huh. How many are there?」

There was no way that there would be any monsters using a carriage in this Devil's Nest. In that case, it must be adventurers.

As if her previous behavior towards the Metal Slime ingredients had never happened, Tarea's expression became tense and a sharp glint appeared in her eye.

「That is, the carriage is surrounded by Ghouls and the carriage itself apparently looks a bit like an Undead.」

「... How many Ghouls were there? If it is one or two, there is a possibility that they have been tamed by a Tamer.」

Tarea thought that a Tamer may have positioned tamed monsters outside the carriage while concealing himself inside the carriage, but there were five Ghouls outside the carriage.

Ghouls were a race with their roots tracing back to the goddess Vida, but since they shared the same lineage as monsters, it was possible to tame them. However, they were far more difficult to tame than normal monsters. Only a first-class tamer would be able to simultaneously tame five Ghouls and an Undead carriage.

It was difficult to imagine that such a first-rate tamer would need to hide himself inside the carriage.

「The Ghouls from another village might have tamed a strange Undead creature... Any warriors still left in the village, come out. You must protect me.」

It seemed unlikely that five Ghouls and an Undead would come to attack this village, even if half of its warriors were absent at the moment, but Tarea gathered together some Ghouls to escort her and went out to the front of the village.

When she did, she saw exactly what she had heard in the reports – an Undead carriage surrounded by five Ghouls.

「Stop. Do you have some business with my village?」

As Tarea called out to them, surrounded by many of her own Ghouls, the carriage stopped.

「We want to discuss something. A common enemy has appeared, and all of the other villages that have relations with you guys have agreed to cooperate.」

「A common enemy...」

When a common enemy appears, Ghouls set up a system to work together. This is not because of some mere instinct, but because this is the best way to have the highest chance to survive. Though Tarea was originally a human, she understood this well. But because she was originally a human, she had her suspicions.

She suspected that they might be trying to absorb her village for the benefit of their own village.

The Ghouls around her seemed agitated at hearing the words “common enemy”, but she calmed them by snapping her folding fan shut and stared at the unfamiliar Ghouls.

「I don’t suppose that I could hear the details?」

Since becoming a Ghoul, Tarea had learned that most Ghouls had simple personalities. They didn’t possess strong personalities and weren’t suited to using conspiracy.

That was why it was most effective to ask the question directly, in an easy-to-understand way.

「Yes. I will explain the details.」

A small silhouette emerged from beyond the canopy of the carriage. Tarea noticed the small body and voice that could easily be hidden and overlooked among the Ghouls.

No, he couldn’t be overlooked.

He possessed such charisma that he compelled others to kneel before him, just by standing there.

Long white hair, blood-red and mysterious blue-purple pupils, and abnormally white skin. He was clearly not a Ghoul, but there was something that made it clear that he was an important person.

Before Tarea even realized it, the other Ghouls were already kneeling on the ground. Unable to resist, Tarea was about to sink her own two knees into the dirt, but Vandalieu spoke to stop her.

「Err, please be at ease. You're Tarea-san, correct? My name is Vandalieu, and I have been elected as the Ghoul King for this incident.」

The owner of this charisma felt earnestly ashamed that these Ghouls were kneeling before him.

Individuals possessing the Title of "King", such as Goblin Kings and Kobold Kings, command unconditional obedience from any members of their own race that they encounter and are able to add them to their ranks of followers.

That is because the weaker members react to the【Strengthen Followers】skill. Their instincts tell them to make themselves and the race as a whole more powerful by following the King's command.

The same thing... No, something even greater than that happened in the villages that Vandalieu visited. It seemed that the【Strengthen Followers】skill and the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill combined to form an incredible synergy.

「You're amazing, King.」

「I didn't think that they'd fall to their knees just by being spoken to.」

As Vandalieu's escorts said, there were a lot of amazing things about this situation. It was as if he had become an elderly nobleman in a historical play.

But Vandalieu wasn't happy to see adults with much larger bodies than his own kneeling before him; he felt guilty about it.

He had lived about forty years across his three lives, but he had only lived seventeen, twenty and two years in each of them respectively, so his personality and growth were fragmented. Vandalieu didn't think of himself as

an adult at all and had only thought of his Title of Ghoul King as an honorary position to improve the effectiveness of his skills, so he was greatly disturbed by the Ghouls' behavior.

He had learned of Tarea in other villages. She was someone who held influence in multiple groups of Ghouls and was even called the Ghoul Queen. Seeing even her almost kneel before him, he even felt guilty.

「These are the circumstances, so I humbly request that your village to lend us its strength as well, Tarea-san. Of course, I don't know if I can call this a remuneration, but I can prepare some things in compensation.」

As a result, he was speaking extremely politely.

Vandalieu's poor communication skills already caused him to speak humbly in order to avoid the other person becoming angry, and this only added to that.

「I-I see. So this compensation is...?」

「I cannot create them right now, but I can offer you items that increase the Ghouls' birth rate and preserve food for a long period of time.」

The things one could offer Ghouls, who didn't use a monetary system, were limited. The only things that Vandalieu could offer were the Magic Items to increase Ghoul birth rates and cast the【Preservation】spell that he would create in the near future.

「Is that true?!」

But upon hearing that the Ghouls' birth rate could be increased, Tarea and the other Ghouls let out voices of astonishment. The problem of low birth rates was something that affected not only Zadiris's village, but the entire Ghoul race.

Vandalieu said that he could solve this, so the Ghouls stared at him as if in worship.

『I think my Status Effect Resistance skill is going to level up again because of this stress...』

But Vandalieu couldn't say this out loud. Being told to「be friendly, but don't overreact」was too selfish a request.

「In that case, we will be happy to come under your command, Vandalieu-

sama.」

「... You can be more familiar with me; you can drop the honorific, or add -san, or call me “boy”.」

Vandalieu wanted her to stop adding -sama to his name, or at least wait until he was a bit older before doing so.

「Oh my~♪」

Why did she seem so happy?

「Well then, Van-sama. I, Tarea, will carry out your will and serve at your side.」

Vandalieu had no memory of asking for such a thing, but for some reason, Tarea had now become his close aide. He couldn’t understand why.

However, Tarea had discovered a new ambition.

The ambition of raising this Ghoul King to the top, expanding his ruled domain outside this Devil’s Nest and securing glory for herself as his aide.

『To think that such a chance would come for me when I’m over two hundred and sixty years old! Fufu, I was once at the very bottom, and now I will see how high up I can go. Until the moment I die!』

Tarea’s eyes glittered with her ambition. As if defeated by those eyes, Vandalieu turned his gaze towards the Spirit Form of Sam, sitting in the coachman’s seat, but...

『Bocchan, you are popular with the older women as always.』

Vandalieu received this compliment from Sam, but he had the feeling that this popularity wasn’t the kind of popularity he wanted.

『But once you become a nobleman, those kinds of people will often visit, so I think this is perfect practice for you.』

Darcia had seen straight through Tarea’s obvious ulterior motives, but she intended to simply watch as Vandalieu went through this experience.

Vandalieu’s one point of salvation was that the charisma that seemed to be affecting Tarea and her village would weaken, as they were now under the

influence of his【Strengthen Followers skill】and their instincts to obey him as monsters should be satisfied.

『The level of the【Strengthen Followers】skill has increased!』

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A strange woman moved through the Devil's Nest alone.

Her being alone was rare, but not unheard of. The Adventurers' Guild recommended forming parties in order to maintain the safety of the adventurers and the chance of successfully completing requests, but acting solo wasn't prohibited.

But if one looked carefully, her equipment and behavior was noticeably unusual.

The woman's equipment looked brand new and unreliable. She was equipped with completely unscratched leather armor that covered only her chest and waist, not protecting even the bare minimum that armor should, and a small shield about the size of her face.

But she showed no signs of fear as she proceeded through the Devil's Nest, slaughtering with a single swing of her sword the low-level monsters such as Horned Rabbits and Goblins that attacked her.

She didn't make any attempt to tear off the body parts of the monsters that served as proof of having killed them, or the parts that could be used as materials.

「I guess it's about time.」

A completely lifeless voice escaped her lips. As she did so, Orcs appeared around her. She was completely surrounded, and among her enemies she could see a Noble Orc with blonde hair and a body larger than those of normal Orcs.

Facing these Orcs who were breathing loudly through their noses, she didn't resist. Instead, she dropped her short sword to the ground as if throwing her weapon away.

There was no fear or any kind of emotion at all on her face.

- **Name**: Tarea
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Ghoul
- **Level**: 1
- **Job**: Prostitute
- **Job Level**: 100
- **Job history**: Apprentice Smith, Smith → Slave (Forced Job change at level 47), Apprentice Prostitute
- **Age**: 263 years old
- **Passive skills**:
  - Night Vision
  - Pain Resistance: Level 1
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1
  - Allure: Level 1
- **Active skills**:
  - Estimation: Level 6
  - Armor Smithing: Level 6
  - Weapon Smithing: Level 6
  - Seduction[5]: Level 5
  - Dancing: Level 2
  - Love-making: Level 2

Tarea was formerly a human girl gifted in both smithing skills and skills in the bedroom. She is a special individual who was transformed into a Ghoul via a ceremony. She creates equipment for the Ghoul men while also enticing them into submission. She teaches the other Ghoul women how to make men submissive as well as her smithing techniques, making the hierarchy very clear to them.

However, as she has never properly hunted prey before, her level as a monster hasn't increased and she is the weakest among all the Ghouls. But as a smith, she possesses more skill than a nobleman's personal employee or the most skilled smith one might find in a large city.

This is the result of over two hundred years of hard work and experience. But

if she had access to the latest tools, proper working environment and variety of available materials that living in a human society would offer as well as changing her Job back from Prostitute to Smith, her skill would likely increase even more.

About forced Job changes:

This is a special treatment for criminals and those who have fallen into slavery. Though it doesn't cause the loss of already-learned skills, the previous Job no longer has an effect on status and can no longer level up.

This is clearly displayed when one's status is checked at facilities such as Guilds, so it acts as a way to prevent slaves from escaping.

However, this was a practice used over two hundred years ago. In modern times, it has become more commonplace to put collars on slaves that only the owner is able to remove.

Notes

1. A legendary samurai/ronin
2. The other two are the need to eat and the need to sleep.
3. As a reminder, I'm italicizing words in katakana to indicate that Vigaro doesn't understand them.
4. Dakuten are a pair of dashes that change a hiragana or katakana character's pronunciation in Japanese. For example, た/ta is pronounced だ/da when those two dashes at the top-right of the character are added. Every single Ghoul name so far (Zadiris, Vigaro, Basdia, Bilde, etc.) contains two characters with dakuten, but Tarea's name doesn't have any.
5. The translation is really sketchy on this one. This is 枕事/makuraji? (I'm not even sure how it's read), the two kanji are "pillow" and "thing". Jisho and Google both give me nothing, so I'm left almost guessing what it means. Since the kanji for "pillow" seems to have a sexual connotation in other words, this is my best guess.

Chapter 18: The enemy of the enemy has begun moving, but preparations continue anyway

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The female adventurer who surrendered to the Orcs without resistance was bound with vines instead of rope and taken away.

The young Noble Orc had a vulgar smile on his face, pulling on the end of the vine as if she were his pet dog. The monsters following his command were also laughing.

They were likely happy because while this woman acted as a plaything for their master, their master's mood would be improved.

And so the female adventurer was dragged along by the Noble Orc and taken into the Orc Kingdom that his father had established.

Even though she would soon be forced to start giving birth to monsters until she died, the female adventurer had no expression on her face. However, nobody noticed this, even the Noble Orc himself.

It was impossible for monsters to read the detailed facial expressions of humans, and the Noble Orc had no interest at all in the woman's facial expression to begin with.

An oval-faced man sat deeply in his chair with his eyes closed, looking as if he was sleeping. Suddenly, his eyelids flew open and he pressed a handkerchief to his mouth.

「Oh, how repulsive...」

The bloody-smelling breath of Orcs, the laughter of Goblins, the cunning Kobolds. To top it all off, the pigs who were under the impression that they were high-class creatures. And, of course, the women who were being treated like cattle, unable to die even if they wanted to.

The man had been prepared to see this; he had known what he was being requested to do. Even so, he struggled to contain his nausea.

「Are you alright, Luciliano-dono?」

「N-nothing to worry about. Uegh... More importantly, steward-dono, please call for the viscount. I have something to report.」

「Certainly; I will summon the master. I am terribly sorry, but please wait while I do so, Luciliano-dono.」

The butler, who apparently had happened to come by to check up on things, made a cup of fragrant black tea before leaving the room. It was likely an act of consideration, offering Luciliano some tea to ease his nausea while waiting for the master.

With the wonderful aroma of the black tea filling his nostrils, Luciliano felt the disgusting scenery that had been burned into his mind start to fade away. He was careful not to forget it, however, as it was his job to remember it.

「Your reconnaissance succeeded?!」

Shouting loudly about this top-secret request, a handlebar mustache entered the room. No, a nobleman with a handlebar mustache entered the room. Quickly putting his cup down, Luciliano gave the nobleman a bow.

「I will now report, Viscount Berno Balchesse.」

This nobleman, Viscount Berno Balchesse, was the lord of this region and the one who had hired Luciliano.

He appeared to be a smart nobleman in the prime years of his life with no outstanding characteristics other than his magnificent handlebar mustache; he was not an incompetent man. He was your typical nobleman.

「My Live-Dead has safely infiltrated the Orc village.」

Live-Dead. This is a special kind of Undead... no, a creature classified as an Undead, created using life-attribute magic.

It is created by casting a spell on a fresh corpse whose heartbeat and respiration have only just stopped, restarting its biological functions.

Though its heart and lungs move, it is classified as an Undead because it does not have a soul, but it looks no different from a living creature. It is warm to the touch and one can detect signs of life from it using magic. It does appear to be an expressionless, flat-toned person, however.

Its only drawback is that the spell is directly granting life to the body, so it still requires food and sleep. Also, unlike Undead, it is affected by poison and illness.

Viscount Balchesse had hired Luciliano to use this Live-Dead as a familiar and borrow its five senses to confirm whether the rumors were true or not.

The rumors that were drifting among the adventurers... The rumors of a powerful monster haunting the forest-like Devil's Nest that was further away from the town.

For some time, adventurers venturing to the distant forest-like Devil's Nest hadn't been coming back. At first, these were dismissed as being due to the adventurers being unskilled, but a Thief acting solo had witnessed something terrifying. A Noble Orc leading Orcs, Goblins and Kobolds.

In many cases, the intelligent Noble Orcs who were a higher race of Orcs were capable of organizing groups of monsters, and there were several hundred of them around the world.

Luciliano's job was to determine whether the monster that the Thief saw was really a Noble Orc, and if it was, he was to also find out how many monsters the Noble Orc commanded.

「The Live-Dead I am controlling has been captured by a medium-sized company led by a Noble Orc and has been taken to their village. The location is about three days' journey from the edge of the Devil's Nest.」

「So, how many Noble Orcs are there?! How big is their group?!」

「So far I have confirmed that there are at least two Noble Orcs, the one in command of the medium-sized company and one that is the king of the village. However, it seemed that there are one or two more. I believe the total monster count is around four hundred or five hundred.」

「Three Noble Orcs, and five hundred monsters...!」

Viscount Balchesse looked as if he was about to faint after hearing Luciliano's report. Noble Orcs were Rank 6 monsters at minimum, and individually superior Noble Orcs were even said to be capable of slaying Dragons. There were at least two of these, possibly four or even more. With five hundred monsters under their command, even if Balchesse mobilized all of the forces in his territory... The knights, city guards and even the active adventurers in the region, defeat was the only imaginable outcome.

「However, I believe that the Noble Orcs, including the king, are not superior individuals. Ah, of course, I mean in comparison to other Noble Orcs. If you would allow me to express my personal opinion, I would think that the situation could be dealt with if you were to gather around two hundred C and D-class adventurers with a B-class adventurer in command.」

「Really?!」

As Viscount Balchesse heard these words, blood returned to his face that had been as pale as a sheet of paper. However, a moment later, he gave a sigh.

「Even if that is the case, this is a serious matter. I must gather two hundred adventurers as well as a first-rate adventurer of B-class or higher. I am uncertain how well knights and soldiers can fight against monsters... It is beyond my capabilities to deal with this on my own. I must consult Marshal Palpapek.」

As a ruler, Balchesse had the power to request help from those in higher positions in situations that he couldn't deal with on his own. If he allowed his pride to get in the way, tried to deal with this problem on his own and then failed, he would not only be disgraced, but his entire territory would be overrun by monsters.

In that regard, Viscount Balchesse was a nobleman living up to his handlebar mustache.

「The Noble Orcs are apparently planning to move when summer comes. It seems that there is a group of monsters in the Devil's Nest that is not under their command, so they are acting to deal with that first. Those monsters are Ghouls, I presume.」

「So we have some time. Good work, Luciliano. I will pay the fee for your

services to the Adventurers' Guild, but I request that you still keep this situation a secret. It would cause a panic among the people.」

「Thank you very much.」

Luciliano felt relieved, having finally earned some traveling expenses. He had been saving money for a long time to escape the Amid Empire and its nations, where the Church of Alda's influence was strong and the use of Undead was restricted.

He had decided to head to the neighboring Kingdom of Orbaume, and then find a comfortable city to live in.

「Well then, you will accept my next request, won't you?」

However, Viscount Balchesse's words postponed his plans.

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Around the beginning of February, Vandalieu organized the surviving Ghouls of the Devil's Nest into an army to fight against the Noble Orcs.

Normally, a King would be in a heavily-defended stronghold, but Vandalieu had personally visited the other Ghoul villages to convince them to work with him.

The reason for that was to use the effects of the【Death-Attribute Charm】to gather the Ghouls smoothly, but...

「I wonder if I'm just some kind of handyman with the Title of King.」

「That's not true, King. By the way, our numbers have increased, so please build us some new houses, King.」

「Yeah, yeah.」

Vandalieu used the【Golem Transmutation】skill to have Wood Golems change their shape and build pit dwellings. He lacked the knowledge to build proper houses, but he had lived in pit dwellings for over a year, so he was familiar enough with them to build them.

The materials moved on their own to the places that he commanded them to and changed into the shape that he needed them to, so this method of

construction using Golems was very easy. As long as he had the materials, it took him less than ten minutes to build a single pit dwelling.

「Oh, amazing! Ten more houses, please!」

「King, we're expanding the village so please build some outer walls as well.」

「Yeah, yeah.」

He turned felled trees into Wood Golems and changed their shape to turn them into lumber. He turned the dirt on the ground's surface into an Earth Golem and made it move back to create holes, then began building the pit dwellings. As long as they were all in his field of vision, he could build ten pit dwellings simultaneously.

Would Vandalieu be able to make a living doing this in the Orbaume Kingdom? He didn't know whether that country actually needed pit dwellings, but he was relaxed enough to wonder about these things.

After finishing building the ten pit dwellings, he began to work on the outer walls. This was even easier than building homes for the Ghouls. All he had to do was build sturdy walls.

He just needed to give the command and the walls built themselves, so it was finished in only a few minutes.

「That's our King!」

「How splendid!」

『King, King, King!』

The Ghouls raised their fists in the air and began chanting for their King. Ghouls were a fundamentally lazy race, so they didn't hold back as they praised Vandalieu who was able to quickly complete all of the difficult work.

It didn't seem like they were interested in following his example, however.

「He~ey, Van. Mother is calling for you.」

「Alright. Well then, I'm leaving the rest to you.

Vandalieu gave a short bow before leaving. As the Ghouls no longer had to do any hard labor thanks to him, they continued praising him for a while longer.

The Ghouls had absorbed four villages including Tarea's village, and they now had over two hundred and seventy members. Half of them were women, and though they were few, there were some elderly individuals as well. However, Ghouls were a race whose members made excellent warriors up until they were nearly three hundred years old, regardless of gender.

The strongest Ghouls in these villages were Rank 4 Ghoul Warriors, and there weren't any strong Rank 5 or higher Ghouls like Vigaro and Zadiris, but thanks to Tarea, they were all fully equipped.

Armor made of Iron Turtle shells, possessing the defensive capabilities of full plate armor while being nowhere near as heavy.

A spear with the horn of a Lance Bull as its tip, capable of piercing through iron armor.

Even D-class adventurers wouldn't be this well-equipped. Though not all of their equipment were Magic Items, the combat capabilities of the Ghouls couldn't be judged by their Rank.

Humans are physically weaker than monsters and don't possess special abilities like monsters do. To defeat monsters, they rely on three major components. Those are their coordination with each other, their skills and their equipment. The Ghouls had obtained the last of these components.

However, there was also something that they were lacking.

「What do you mean, you can't fight properly at your age? Have you really lived ten times longer than me?」

「What about it? I have used my ability to smith equipment and the weapon a woman is born with to rise to this position in the world. A little girl who has never even given birth to a child should just stay quiet.」

Basdia and Tarea glared at each other. One was a 190cm-tall female warrior in her mid-twenties, while the other was a small Ghoul who appeared to be in her late teenage years. In reality, one was a twenty-six-year-old young woman while the other was a two-hundred-and-seventy-year-old female leader who had lived an incredible life.

For some reason, these two didn’t get along.

But the reality was that Tarea and the women of her village didn’t know techniques for fighting. They could not even use the magic that they were

supposed to have an aptitude for other than the spells that they used in their everyday lives, let alone combat-related skills. It was difficult to imagine that they would be useful in battle.

However, thanks to Tarea, they were a group of capable workers befitting of the Ghoul race. Though their skills weren't at Tarea's level, each of them were more than fully qualified as smiths and even now, they were creating more equipment for the warriors to use.

「V-Van will give me a baby!」

「Van-sama will, to this little girl?! Is that true, Van-sama?!」

「... It's true, though not in the way that you're imagining.」

They were referring to how Vandalieu would deal with the problem of low Ghoul fertility. But Vandalieu looked into the distance, wondering why these two were so hostile towards each other.

「You're being over-familiar with Van.」

「You are the one who is over-familiar with him, not even adding -sama to his name.」

They glared at each other with sharp looks. The loud grinding of their fangs was particularly Ghoul-like.

The two of them had been on bad terms with each other ever since Vandalieu brought Tarea back with him.

In order to curry favor with the Ghoul King immediately, Tarea had stepped on board the carriage, saying,「I have things to discuss with you regarding the upcoming battle.」And when Vandalieu took his afternoon nap, she had held Vandalieu in her arms until they arrived back in the village.

As Basdia came out to welcome him back, she saw this and got into an argument... and now things were like this.

No, Vandalieu had a good idea of what was causing this. But he couldn't understand why Basdia was so angry with Tarea, considering that Ghouls had no concept of marriage. Even if she felt as if her younger brother whom she was close with was being taken away, he couldn't imagine that she would act and

speak the way she was doing now. And why were the two of them competing so seriously over a two-year-old in the first place?

「How about acting your age for once?」

「Oh my, I apologize. Perhaps because I was originally a human, I act as if my age was the same as my physical age without thinking. I am jealous of you, since you have grown so old.」

「... All things considered, they're quite saggy.」

「S-saggy?! You are mistaken! They are not sagging, they are simply large!」

「Really? Mine don't hang downwards at all, though.」

Tarea lost her composure and began protesting angrily, and Basdia simply looked down at her calmly. Both of them were owners of plentiful busts, and in fact, Basdia's breasts were like cannonballs that projected forwards, showing no signs of sagging.

「You muscle-head!」

「You don't know? Van likes muscles.」

「Well, more than liking them, I admire them.」

Muscles were power, and those with power were strong. In other words, if Vandalieu could get muscles, he could graduate from being one of the people who were trampled over by others. Ah, how wonderful muscles were.

Whether they could hear Vandalieu whispering such thoughts to himself or not, Basdia and Tarea continued their quarreling. As Vandalieu watched Tarea shouting while Basdia dealt with her calmly, he could only imagine a future where the wisdom of her years would be defeated by the youngster. However, as Tarea refused to give up, that future was still distant.

The future where they would have a constructive discussion about how to deal with the Noble Orcs, when would that come?

「What can I do to make them stop?」

Though Vandalieu asked himself this question, Zadiris was whispering,「Try putting yourself in my position, where you have neither muscles nor breasts.」

Meanwhile, Vigaro was deep in thought with his arms folded... or at least, he appeared to be. As the chiefs of the other villages were lower than Tarea in the hierarchy, they seemed to be reluctant to say anything.

『You should stop them here, Bocchan.』

Sam was unable to leave the carriage that was his body, so Saria was here in this place, saying these words to him.

『You wish to become a nobleman, do you not, Bocchan? Then you must be able to do at least this much.』

「... I think the image of a nobleman that I have in my mind is going to go through a lot of changes.」

『Noblemen struggle with relationships with women. It was no different in the noble family that we worked for.』

The conflict between a wife and a mistress was apparently a sight to behold. This topic reminded Vandalieu of the stories he had heard when he was living in Japan about the Edo Castle's inner chambers during the Edo period[1].

Neither Basdia nor Tarea were his wife or mistress, but him being the cause of their conflict was a fact. Vandalieu knew that he should be the one to stop them, so he stood up.

「Hmph! I will settle this after one of the weapons that I created takes the Noble Orc's head off!」

「Yeah, after I use your weapon to do it.」

Why did they finish their argument just as he stood up?

***

「Well then, I want to build a plan to defeat the Noble Orcs now.」

Vandalieu was almost satisfied with just being able to say that without trembling.

Their current military forces were represented by around two hundred and thirty Ghouls and Vandalieu himself. Between the Magic Items that Vandalieu had distributed and the equipment that Tarea had created, they were all fully

equipped.

They were at a disadvantage in terms of numbers, but their equipment was clearly superior to that of the Noble Orcs' troops. No matter how many Orcs, Goblins and Kobolds the Noble Orcs gathered, their subordinates wouldn't become any smarter, so their equipment would only be a little superior to other groups of monsters.

But they were unsure whether that alone could counteract the difference in numbers and strength.

In regards to numbers, Vandalieu thought to mass-produce Golems and Undead, but as this was a forest, rocks to use to create the Stone Golems and Rock Golems that would be able to fight against Orcs were scarce, and so the idea of using Golems was rejected.

Undead created from the corpses and bones of monsters would be Rank 1, hardly of any use against Orcs, so Undead were also rejected.

There was also the option of creating more Living Armors, but using suits of armor to equip the Ghouls better was a more effective way to increase their strength, so that idea was also rejected.

It was a difficult situation.

「First of all, we are going to be the ones who attack them. I believe that this has already been decided.」

Everyone agreed with Vandalieu's words. Since they were at a large disadvantage in numbers and the enemy was a little stronger than them as well, there was no other choice but to attack first.

The Orcs that represented most of the enemy's strength were monsters with exceptional charging abilities and superhuman strength. Only humans who build strong fortresses would be able to defend against such enemies. The wooden walls surrounding the Ghoul village would only last seconds in a defending situation.

On the other hand, Orcs were also not suited to defending.

「We have already established where the enemy is positioned, and I have

already finished scouting them through the eyes of my Undead insects. The map that I produced with great effort is here.」

Vandalieu couldn't make out fine details through the composite eyes of insects, but they had been sufficient to figure out the layout of the buildings. The Ghouls stirred as they were presented with a map drawn by using dyes on an animal hide in place of paper.

「This is a map, huh?」

「What is this square?」

「You're amazing, Van, you can even draw a map, huh?」

「Van-sama, Ghouls do not normally use maps... I believe more explanation is needed.」

「... But my hard work...」

He had lived here for almost two years so he had forgotten just how much of a culture difference there was between humans and Ghouls.

Thinking about how much time and effort he had put into drawing the map easily made him feel depressed. Vandalieu used【Golem Transmutation】to make an Earth Golem out of the ground surface inside the pit dwelling and create a model of the Noble Orcs' village.

It was a satisfactory piece of work.

「Boy... If you had used this method from the beginning, perhaps you would not have had to put so much effort into creating a map?」

「Yeah...」

Vandalieu was quite depressed.

「Oh, this is amazing!」

「Is this earth-attribute magic?! But I've never seen someone with this level of fine control!」

「This is even more amazing, Van! It's much easier to understand than the map!」

His audience even valued this higher. Vandalieu decided in his mind that from

now on, he would simply make models like this instead of going through the bothersome process of drawing a map.

「Putting that aside, the enemy village has outer walls made of logs and two entrances, one to the west and one to the east. There are four watchtowers, one each at the north, south, east and west. However, they are manned by Goblins or Kobolds.」

「Orcs have heavy bodies. It's unlikely that they would enjoy climbing the towers.」

The average Orc was about two meters tall. Their body weight easily exceeded a hundred kilograms, and their weapons and armor would only add to that. Rather than them wanting to avoid climbing the towers, it was possible that they were unable to build towers that could support their weight in the first place.

「All of their buildings are generally made of wood. However, we should try to avoid using fire as much as we can.」

「Indeed; if a fire were to start, the captive women would burn to death as well.」

In the Orc village, there were over a hundred female Ghouls and over a dozen female adventurers held captive and being used as playthings. For the Orcs, they were precious mothers for their children, but it was difficult to imagine that the Orcs would risk their lives in battle in order to save them.

「They could even be used as hostages.」

「Yeah, that sounds likely.」

None of the people that Vandalieu had rescued so far had been used as hostages. That was because Bone Man and the other Undead were at the forefront of the fighting and the enemies had thought that hostages would be meaningless against the Undead, however.

In this battle, Vigaro and the other Ghouls would make up the main fighting force, so of course the Orcs would think of using the captive women as hostages.

「Therefore, our first objective is to secure the buildings here, here and here.」

They decided on rescuing the captive Ghoul women. Many of the Ghouls' spirits were begging Vandalieu to do so, and even Zadiris and the other Ghouls had decided that they should rescue them during the attack, so no objections arose.

「What are you planning to do with the human women?」

「We will rescue them, too. As for what to do with them afterwards, let's decide after we rescue them.」

Vandalieu gave this reply to Vigaro's question. Even though they were being held captive, the female adventurers were enemies to both Vandalieu and the Ghouls. There was no guarantee that they would feel grateful for being rescued; from their point of view, they might think that the situation hadn't changed than that their masters were now Ghouls instead of Orcs.

In fact, there was the possibility that they would run away in the confusion of battle, or in the worst case, even attack the Ghouls, but this was unlikely. There was no way that the Orcs were behaving in a gentlemanly way towards the women; they would be physically and mentally worn down and thus unlikely to be able to move very well.

Vandalieu also wanted to save them if possible because he wanted to give the cheaters reincarnating here in the future as few excuses to attack him as possible.

「Well then, on Vandalieu's signal, we'll charge in and then secure the women. After that, we'll kill the enemies until they start running away. This is fine, right?」

「In the end, they're just a group of monsters being ruled through fear. If we kill enough Orcs, the Goblins and Kobolds should start to flee.」

「The only race that Noble Orcs command absolute obedience over is the Orc race, isn't it?」

Leaders of monster groups generally ruled through fear. If presented with a greater fear than the fear of the ruler, the group of monsters would collapse.

Orcs would obey the Noble Orcs that were their superior race, but the Ghouls needed them to stay where they were. If they quickly ran away and built another large village in a few years' time, there would be no end to this cycle.

「And I think we should defeat the problematic Noble Orcs, with Vandalieu's support.」

Vigaro, the most combat-capable individual present here, suspected that he could fight evenly against a Noble Orc one or two Ranks higher than himself if he had Vandalieu's support.

「Until the Noble Orc that rules the village comes out, I will leave Vigaro and Zadiris in command. We will be conducting hit-and-run attacks.」

「I think it is questionable for a King to be conducting hit-and-run attacks, but that is indeed the most effective way to make use of your abilities, boy. However, you must prepare Undead for scouting as well as a way to communicate with the rest of us. None of us can hear the words of the Undead insects or the spirits other than you, boy.」

Vandalieu had been inaugurated as Ghoul King, but as he had said when he first accepted the Title, he didn't have the ability to command others in a group battle. For that reason, he planned to ignore his Title of King and simply conduct hit-and-run attacks during this battle.

「Be careful, Van. Your life doesn't belong to just you.」

「Yes, in regards to the Ghoul children, my life is more than just my own. I still have more things that I want to do as well, so I will take care.」

Vandalieu had to learn the【Alchemy】skill and solve the Ghouls' birth rate problem. After that, he wanted to try making walnut miso and acorn miso, and he wanted to create a Magic Item that cast the【Maturation】spell, and a refrigerator that used the【Demon Light】spell before he departed for the Orbaume Kingdom as well.

There were a lot of things that he wanted to do for the Ghouls, and there were also many reasons that the Noble Orcs needed to be killed. He had to be careful and not take any risks.

On top of that, he had to revive Darcia and achieve his revenge. There was no

shortage of reasons that he couldn't die here.

「Well then, let's leave in three days from now.」

***

Bubububububu[2].

Several insects flapped their wings loudly, flying further and further west.

There were Undead rhinoceros beetles, flies, dragonflies and ladybirds. Some of the insects among them were natural predators of the others, but they paid no attention to this as they continued flying.

These were the Undead insects that Vandalieu had released just in case.

Their mission was to find another Devil's Nest, for the very unlikely event that the Ghouls decided that they should run away. And their other purpose was to discover what was along the way, as Vandalieu would one day make the journey to cross the western mountain range.

Day and night, the insects flew on. Some were lost to birds and others to living insects, but still they continued. Crossing cliffs with rocks as sharp as blades and hills where terrifying carnivorous plants grew freely, they flew on and on.

And then the insects stopped a little past the mountain range, at a section of an enormous stone wall. It was so large that one might have thought that it was part of the mountain range itself, but there were cracks in its surface here and there, and parts of it had crumbled away. The insects flew near the wall's surroundings, investigating it, and then finally attached themselves onto it.

They had completed their mission. Now they were to wait here for their master to contact them. They would remain here until then.

- **Name**: Bone Man
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Skeleton Soldier
- **Level**: 100
- **Passive skills**:

    - Dark Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Swordsmanship: Level 1
    - Shield Technique: Level 1
    - Archery: Level 1
    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - Coordination: Level 1 (NEW!)

- **Name**: Bone Bird
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Phantom Bird
- **Level**: 98
- **Passive skills**:
    - Dark Vision
    - Spirit Form: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - Swift Flight: Level 1

- **Name**: Sam
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Ghost Carriage
- **Level**: 65
- **Passive skills**:
    - Spirit Form: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Rough Road Travel: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Impact Resistance: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Precise Driving: Level 3
- **Active skills**:

    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - High-Speed Travel: Level 1
    - Charge: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Name**: Saria
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Living High-Leg Armor
- **Level**: 82
- **Passive skills**:
    - Special Five Senses
    - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 2
    - Water Element Resistance: Level 2
    - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 2
- **Active skills**:
    - Housework: Level 2
    - Halberd Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Archery: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Coordination: Level 1 (NEW!)

- **Name**: Rita
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Living Bikini Armor
- **Level**: 81
- **Passive skills**:
    - Special Five Senses
    - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 2
    - Fire Element Resistance: Level 2
    - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 2
- **Active skills**:
    - Housework: Level 1
    - Naginata Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Archery: Level 1 (NEW!)

- Coordination: Level 1 (NEW!)

Notes

1. 1603-1868

2. Sound of flapping wings.

Chapter 19: Carrying out a dirty attack

The large village of Orcs ruled by the Noble Orc Bugogan was peaceful at night.

To be more descriptive, the screams of the captive Ghoul women and female adventurers could be heard, and one of Bugogan's sons, Bubobio, could be seen executing Goblins who had made small mistakes.

However, these were everyday occurrences and nobody paid them any attention. There were no signs of anything that wasn't an everyday occurrence... such as an attack by other monsters.

Peaceful days were more common than non-peaceful ones. This was the village ruled by a Noble Orc.

When creating villages in Devil's Nests, weak monsters such as Goblins and Kobolds tend to do so in places that are difficult to spot from the outside by digging caverns and tunnels. However, groups of monsters that include high-Rank monsters build their villages boldly on the earth's surface.

That is because they generally have no need to worry about the enemies outside the village.

The monsters created by the Demon King and the evil gods that had appeared from another world have no concept of living in harmony with other monsters. Some races even kill and eat other members of their own race.

However, monsters do not dare to attack monsters that are clearly superior to them. They have no interest in committing suicide. For example, most monsters wouldn't dare try and mess with a monster like a Noble Orc.

Other monsters would instinctively sense Bugogan's presence and avoid the village.

There were incidents of inferior monsters incapable of understanding this throwing themselves at the outer wall of the village, however.

Watchtowers had been built along the outer wall and bow-wielding Goblins and Kobolds were stationed on them to prevent that from happening.

「Gyih.」

「Kihihi.」

However, the guards in the watchtowers were not very diligent with their work. They were confident in the wall's durability.

Severed logs had been driven into the ground in a row to form a three-meter-tall wall. They were tougher than they appeared and resistant to fire. This was because the logs used to build the wall came from plant-monsters called Ents.

The wall was strong enough to withstand a ramming attack from a five-meter-long Mad Boar, providing a stronger defense than a stone wall would. Rather than defend such a wall, the Goblins were more interested in discussing when the Orcs would next hand them a used woman.

But that was a mistake.

Just a little before the moon was high in the sky, the outer wall that was supposed to be unyielding gave a creak. The startled Goblins readied their bows in panic, but there weren't any targets for their arrows to be seen. But every single log that made up the outer wall was creaking.

What on earth was this?! Right before the confused Goblins' eyes, the wall transformed.

『GYIIIIIIIH!』

『OOOOOOOOOHN!』

They transformed into Wood Golems that let out screams that sounded just like the high-pitched creaking of wood being split and roars that sounded like those of vengeful ghosts.

「Gyih... Gyahiih!」

As the outer wall that was supposed to protect the village from outside enemies turned into outside enemies itself, the watchtowers that the Kobolds had built fell to pieces and the Goblins were thrown into the ground.

The Goblins should have been vigilant. However, it was also true that even if they had been vigilant, there was nothing they could have done.

「The first stage is a success. For some reason, it was hard to have my Mana absorbed by the wood, but I did manage to create Wood Golems.」

Vandalieu nodded as he confirmed that the difficult-to-break outer wall had joined his own forces.

He had done the same thing as when he had turned the outer walls of Evbejia into Rock Golems, but because he had obtained the【Mana Control】skill and his【Golem Transmutation】skill had increased in level, things had gone more efficiently this time.

「Well, they're still only Wood Golems.」

「However, destroying the wall would have taken time. You have saved us that time while also attacking from every direction; it is not bad at all.」

Zadiris was holding a staff and wearing battle garments decorated with feathers. As she said, the preemptive strike was a great success. If the enemy village had only Goblins and Kobolds, this alone might have been enough to secure victory.

「BUGOOOOOOOH!」

However, the main force of the enemy was comprised of Orcs, who rampaged more like wild boars than pigs when their blood rushed into their heads. Though the bizarre situation of the outer wall turning into attacking Golems would render normal soldiers unable to move from astonishment for a while, the Orcs began fighting back immediately.

Making the decision on their own to charge in with their heavy weapons was a foolhardy action, but it was far more problematic than if they had stood still or started running around aimlessly.

「But those Wood Golems are holding up better than I'd expected.」

「They're harder than they look, huh. Van, is this the power of death-attribute magic as well?」

The Ghouls were unaware that the outer wall had been built from Ents and

were as hard as iron. As they saw the Wood Golems fighting better than they had expected, they assumed this was because of Vandalieu's magic and got fired up.

「Now then... GAAAARRRRRR!」

Using the howls that Ghouls use to communicate during battle, Zadiris gave orders each group. The contents of these orders were『Each group is to begin the attack! Eliminate the Orcs, capture the target buildings and secure the women!』

「GAAAH!」

「GRRR!」

The Ghoul warriors bared their fangs and growled to say affirmative, and then began their assault on the now-naked village whose outer wall had been removed.

They were using equipment that D-class adventurers would be envious of. In addition, Vandalieu and Zadiris had applied supportive spells on them.

Ghouls and Orcs were generally about even in strength, but with the equipment and supportive spells, they had the clear advantage.

「GROOOOOH!」

Among the battle was Vigaro, wielding an enormous battleaxe that one could tell was incredibly sharp with a single glance, closing in on an Orc that had cut down a Wood Golem with its two-handed axe.

The Orc's armor looked unusually simple, but this individual was likely an Orc General, as its body was bigger than normal Orcs. This Orc General's axe met Vigaro's.

「GAAAAH!」

「Bumogyugyoh?!」

The Orc's protruding nose was slammed so hard by Vigaro's shield that it caved in, and then its belly was sliced sideways, sending blood and organs scattering everywhere.

The Orc General was Rank 5, same as Vigaro. Normally, the battle wouldn't be decided so easily. But there was a large difference in their strengths due to the training that Vigaro did every day that wasn't reflected in his level or Rank, the support spells, the effects of the【Strengthen Followers】skill and most importantly, the battleaxe that was a Magic Item that Vandalieu had given him.

The effects of his everyday training, the【Strengthen Followers】skill and the Magic Item wouldn't decrease in effectiveness over time, but the effects of the supportive spells would wear off. To prevent that, the caster has to re-cast the spell, but Mana was not unlimited.

「Now then, I'll replenish your Mana.【Spirit Form Transformation.】」

This was where Vandalieu, who possessed a near-infinite amount of Mana, came in. He used【Spirit Form Transformation】on both of his hands, which branched out like the roots of a plant to connect to the bodies of the male and female mages, including Zadiris.

「Kuh...」

「Ngh...」

「Aah!」

Small voices rose up here and there... and one large moan, followed by heavy breathing. Putting that last sound out of his mind, Vandalieu released the no-attribute magic that he learned in Zadiris's village.

「【Mana Transfer.】」

The most useless spell among no-attribute nagic spells. Mana Transfer.

It is a spell that transfers colorless Mana that has not been stained with any element's color to the target, and at first glance, it seems very useful. However, during the transfer process, most of the Mana is wasted.

The efficiency of Mana transfer can be increased based on the caster's relationship with the target, the caster's mental state, magical compatibility between the caster and target, the race of the target and so on, but on average, it is about five percent. There have been recorded cases where twins who trusted each other and had good magical compatibility with each other

produced more Mana than the originally supplied amount, with a transfer rate of a hundred and twenty percent. But there were many cases where the amount of Mana transferred was less than the starting amount.

And currently, there were no discovered methods to consciously increase the transfer efficiency.

For this reason, it is very often more effective to use one's own Mana, rather than transferring it to someone else. If a hundred Mana is spent to transfer only five Mana, this is the natural conclusion.

However, Vandalieu possessed over 100,000,000 Mana.

To transfer a hundred Mana, he would spend two thousand. To transfer a thousand Mana, he would spend twenty thousand. To transfer ten thousand Mana, he would spend two hundred thousand. He possessed an amount of Mana so great that he wouldn't hesitate to do this.

「This is the Mana version of burning money to create light.」

「Boy, I do not think that one can burn gold and silver coins... Well, anyway. Everyone, use the Mana that the boy has given you to your heart's content!」

「Yes! Here we go, everybody!」

「I'm overflowiiiing!」

And so the Ghoul mages whose Mana had been replenished and the warriors who were guarding them pressed forward after the group who had charged in first. Vandalieu saw them off before clambering aboard Sam, who had been on standby at his side.

「Now then, we'll be doing hit-and-run attacks like we planned, so I'm leaving the rest to you. I don't think you can see them, but I have left Familiars attached to everyone, so please call for me if there's an emergency.」

「Mhmm, leave it to us.」

The Ghoul King Vandalieu's role had been to unite the Ghouls with the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill and strengthen them with the【Strengthen Followers】skill. But it had been decided that once the battle started, he would be conducting hit-and-run attacks with Sam.

He didn’t have the ability to lead, and he didn’t have a wide field of vision overlooking the battlefield, either. Instead, he did have the ability to cast the【Magic Absorption Barrier】, a death-attribute spell capable of effectively turning the Orc Mages, among the most problematic of the Orcs, into wooden dummies.

The best way to use this ability was to form a hit-and-run squad that made use of Sam’s mobility around the battlefield.

Though Vandalieu had the feeling that he was doing the most work even though he was the King, his morale was high.

He was part of a hit-and-run squad. In many fictional works, this role is left to the protagonist who then plays a very important part. How could he not get fired up?

「Sam, move out.」

『Certainly.』

The spirit-body horses neighed as Sam began to move. Rita, Saria and Bone Man were riding in the carriage, while Bone Bear, Bone Bird and the others ran alongside the carriage.

The hit-and-run squad that would be very problematic for the Noble Orcs charged into the village.

For the Orcs and Bugogan who ruled over them, receiving a surprise attack was something completely outside their expectations. It is appropriate to say that they believed that surprise attacks were something that they themselves used, not received.

Bugogan had considered the Ghouls and humans dangerous and moved so that they would not find out about him.

That was why unmotivated Goblins and Kobolds had been stationed as lookouts while the Orcs were either using the captured women as an outlet for their lust or simply being lazy.

Having been awoken by the sound of Wood Golems striding across the village and the screams of Goblins and Kobolds, the Orcs jumped onto their feet in a

panic. Rather than waiting for orders from the higher-ranked individuals, they simply began fighting where they stood.

An Orc General who had coincidentally happened to be outside the village tried to gather the Orcs around him, but was butchered by a single blow from Vigaro.

This only increased the Orcs' panic, and since their Orc masters were panicking, there was no way that the slave Goblins and Kobolds could move in an organized fashion. In fact, many of them were caught up in the wild swings of the Orcs' clubs and axes.

In the midst of this, the ones who recovered from this chaos were the relatively intelligent Kobolds. They gathered other Kobolds to form a group with Kobold Chiefs and Kobold Mages at their center, slipped through the Wood Golems that they had little chance of defeating in order to try to ambush the Ghouls.

「GAAAAAAAH!」

「GYAOOOOOH!」

But they were attacked by the Ghoul shock troops. Using their arms that were so long that they touched the ground even when standing upright, they ran on all fours like gorillas to rush in.

The male Ghouls with their lion's heads looked quite comical at a glance when they were running like this, but with their muscle strength increased by the【Superhuman Strength】skill, their speed was equivalent to a war horse's charge.

「UOOWAN!」

Against this speed, the only thing the Kobolds could do was fire a single arrow each. However, they had almost no effect due to Tarea's tough, light armor that didn't hinder movement, and the supportive spells cast on the Ghouls by Zadiris and the other mages.

「GYAIN?!」

The Ghouls closed in on the Kobolds and swung their prided claws, mowing

these hindrances down. Even the Kobold Chief that had been in charge was unable to resist as it was slaughtered.

「GAAAAH!」

With their bodies stained in the blood of their enemies, the Ghouls roared as they attacked even deeper into the village. To humans, they may have appeared to be nothing but bloodthirsty beasts, but those who understood the battle language of the Ghouls would know that this roar meant,「We've come to save you」, and these Ghouls were warriors searching for their precious women.

『Bocchan, there is a group of Goblins ahead!』

「Push –」

『Certainly! I shall push through them!』

A three-horse carriage pulled by blue-white horses charged into the Orc village. The carriage was equipped with spikes made from the carved fangs of monsters, effectively turning it into a chariot capable of attack.

That alone was quite impressive. But the most fearsome thing was the coachman, Sam, with his blood-red eyes shining, a white-blue face and a grin that exposed his teeth.

「Gyabuh!」

「Gyahyiih?!」

「Gyugeh! Gegegegegeh!」

The Goblin Soldiers and Knights readied their spears and shields to try and stop the carriage, but they were unable to stop its momentum at all. They were trampled by hooves, gouged by spikes and caught up in the carriage's wheels.

Normally, there would have been some damage done to the carriage as well, but numerous Ent parts had been used to rebuild the carriage, so there wasn't even a scratch.

『Fuhahahaha! This is truly exhilarating, Bocchan!』

『Father, you're getting carried away, you know?』

『Yay! Go, go!』

『Don’t you get carried away too, Rita!』

Thanks to the group of Ghoul craftsmen under Tarea’s instruction, the carriage that was Sam’s body had been substantially remodeled with the extravagant use of monster materials.

It was similar to performing surgery to turn a human into a cyborg with no anesthesia, but according to Sam, there was no problem changing up to ninety percent of the parts as long as his body remained carriage-like in shape.

Vandalieu had been replacing broken and cracked bones for Bone Monkey and the others, but he hadn’t thought that replacing almost all of the bones wouldn’t cause problems, so he was surprised by this.

Though Sam was still a Rank 3 monster, one could clearly see the effects of the reconstruction on his effectiveness in battle.

『Bocchan! This time, there is a group of Orcs in front!』

There was a group of three Orcs straight ahead, breathing wildly through their noses, armed with a club, an axe and a spear. Like Sam, they were Rank 3, and as their individual body weights easily exceeded a hundred kilograms, they were far heavier than Goblins.

Their heads were those of pigs and they had plenty of fat on their bodies, and beneath that were powerful, thick muscles that protected their bones and organs. Their bones themselves were far more durable than those of humans.

Saria and Rita fired arrows upon which Vandalieu had cast【Enhanced Bloodshed】, but they were unable to penetrate the walls of fat and muscle, instead only making the Orcs angrier. The magic cast on the arrows should have been decreasing their vitality, but it wasn’t having any visible effect.

Vandalieu opened his mouth to suggest going around to avoid them.

「Safety –」

『Certainly! Prioritizing safety first, I will run them down!』

How absurd! Before Vandalieu could say this, Sam increased his speed. Planning to kill the three horses and then destroy the carriage, the Orcs readied their weapons.

「Bugooh!」

【Single Flash】,【Bisection】,【Double Thrust】– these were level 1 and 2 martial skills that even novice adventurers could use, but used by the inhumanly strong Orcs, they were incredibly powerful... But in this case, they had picked a bad opponent to use them on.

As the club, axe and spear touched the blue-white horses, the Orcs only felt the sensation of cutting through a thick liquid; their weapons passed straight through them.

「BUGOH?!」

「BUGYAAAAH?!」

The unexpected consistency of the horses' bodies caused the Orcs to lose their balance from their attacks, and then their lives were ended as they were sent flying like rubber balls by Sam's【Charge.】

At first glance, the three horses pulling the carriage simply look like blue-white horses. However, they were only a part of Sam's body manifested by his【Spirit Form】skill; they were Astral-type monsters that were mostly unaffected by physical attacks. No matter how hard a mass of steel was swung at them, it would be meaningless.

The Orcs, not knowing this, lost their balance and had no way of withstanding Sam's【Charge.】

『Truly! Truly exhilarating! Each time I crush the life out of an enemy, I am filled with power!』

「Ah, you're gaining Experience Points. You can earn as many Experience Points as you like, but please drive safely.」

『Certainly!』

Sam had been the spirit of a kindhearted old man, but the joy of gaining Experience Points was steadily causing his pupils... his whole eyes to shine with a piercing light. It was evident that people could easily change, though his daughters didn't seem to mind as they thought their father was very cool.

But could a single carriage act as both a high-class limousine and as a tank of

annihilation? Vandalieu questioned Sam's future, but hearing a loud cry from Bone Bird, he directed his attention to other things.

『GAAAAAH!』

『AOOOOOOHN!』

The battle was proceeding well behind him; Bone Bear was using his strength to gouge out Orcs' stomachs and Bone Monkey was delivering final blows to other Orcs weakened by Bone Wolf's poisonous breath.

Bone Bird was reporting each individual Orcs' movements from the sky above, moving precisely around the battlefield to attack the Orc Commanders, causing more chaos in the enemy ranks.

「My army is overwhelming, isn't it?」

Feeling like a true commander, Vandalieu felt relaxed enough to say a line like this. The reason for that was the spirits of the enemies gathering to him after being killed, one after another.

They were not only the enemies killed by Sam, Bone Monkey and the rest of the hit-and-run squad, but also the enemies defeated by Vigaro, Basdia and the other Ghouls.

In other words, half of the enemies had already been defeated. There wasn't a single spirit from his allies.

The enemy had lost around fifty percent of their numbers, while Vandalieu's side had sustained no losses. If their enemy was a human army, they could firmly believe that they would be victorious.

「But our enemy is a group of monsters. The Noble Orcs haven't come out yet, either... I suppose it's time to make proper use of my『Lemures[1].』」

Sam's carriage ran freely around the village, but at present there seemed to be no allies in the midst of fierce battle. The buildings in which the captive Ghoul women were being held were already fully under their control.

However, the Noble Orc boss had yet to show himself. Wary of this, Vandalieu began to make use of one of the fruits of his lessons with Zadiris, the『Lemure.』

Each attribute of magic has a spell that creates a familiar. Mana dyed with an

attribute is made to hold a shape and a spell formula is written to make the familiar obey the caster to create something like a remote-control drone that uses Mana to move.

Their abilities and shapes vary greatly depending on the caster; many of them resemble small animals such as butterflies made of flames and small birds made of wind.

The shape Vandalieu had chosen was a skull that could fly through the sky.

『Ooh...』

The resulting Lemure was in the shape of a mostly-transparent skull. Other than the basic abilities that all familiars have such as being able to share its five senses with its master, it was hard to spot, and also had one other ability.

「BUGAAAH! BUOOOH!」

『BUOOOOOOOH!』

An Orc General leading Orc Knights appeared in front with perfect timing, so Vandalieu decided to test it out.

『Muh, Bocchan, shall we avoid them?』

The way they held up their shields was the same as the Goblins had done earlier, but Sam knew that the power of their charge would be vastly different, so he calmly asked Vandalieu this question. However, Vandalieu gave the brief reply of,「Charge.」

『Certainly!』

Sam used【Charge】for the third time. Seeing this, the Orc General's pig-like face twisted into an expression of ridicule.

He was able to perform a【Shield Bash】capable of sending even a five-meter-long Mad Boar flying, and he had two Orc Knights supporting him.

This carriage charging directly at him from the front would definitely be broken to pieces.

Confidently believing this, the Orc General and his subordinates quickly moved to perform their【Shield Bash】skills.

But right behind them, they felt a terrifying bloodthirst... the presence of death.

If they didn’t do something about it, they would be killed! The Orc General felt this biologically fundamental fear in the core of its heart. He and his subordinates quickly turned around and raised their shields to face this dreadful enemy.

However, after turning around, they saw nothing there.

「Bu-bugoh?」

That powerful bloodthirst had vanished, leaving the Orc General and his subordinates dumbfounded.

「Buhibegoh?!」

And then Sam ran them down.

No matter how good the Orcs were at charging the enemy down or defending against attacks, they couldn’t withstand being run down from behind with their shields not even raised.

「Bu... Buhih...」

The fact that the Orc General was still alive was perhaps to be expected from a Rank 5 monster. He attempted to get back onto his feet unsteadily, but did not succeed.

「Sam, stop. And then reverse.」

『Certainly.』

After running the Orc General over, Sam’s wheels began to turn backwards, stopping the carriage. And then the carriage began accelerating in the reverse direction.

「Bugeh!」

With an expression as if he was thinking that it was impossible for a carriage to move in reverse, the Orc General’s life was ended as he was run over a second time.

As the Lemure disappeared, it released a powerful bloodthirst that attacked

the target's survival instincts.

It performed no physical attack, only releasing this bloodthirst. It was perhaps only just enough to cause a heart attack in the weak-hearted elderly. In normal situations, it was probably only an annoyance.

However, there was no greater disturbance than this in the middle of battle. Its effectiveness only increased against more powerful foes that were more sensitive in detecting bloodthirst.

「If only I'd been able to make Lemures in Origin... No, I suppose nothing would have changed.」

Well, it was better to focus on the present than on the past.

And then Vandalieu ran through the wide, tall, Orc-sized passages of the village, choosing intelligent monsters such as Goblin Mages, Kobold Mages and Orc Mages and rendering them useless with the【Magic Absorption Barrier】, one by one.

At the same time, he distributed Lemures around the place to support the Ghouls and prepare for the appearance of the Noble Orcs.

And less than a minute later –

「Noble Orcs are three-meter-tall Orcs with blonde hair, right?」

『That is what I have heard.』

「I've found them. Three of them.」

One Noble Orc was in front of Vigaro, blocking his advance.

The second was closing in on the rear guard that Zadiris was leading.

The third was headed towards the group of warriors that Basdia was in.

Each of them was larger than the Orc General that Sam had just run over, with golden hair that gleamed in the moonlight.

They were likely the sons of the Noble Orc that was the leader of the village. According to the Kobold Shaman's spirit, they were Rank 6 monsters whose abilities were far above that of an Orc General.

They were far stronger than any of the Ghouls, including Vigaro and Zadiris.

「... Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf, Bone Bear and Bone Bird, go and back up Zadiris, I'll have the Lemures guide you there. Sam, we're going to head to where Basdia is.」

***

Luciliano was reluctantly investigating what the Noble Orcs were doing tonight as well, through his Live-Dead.

He had originally wanted to hurry and be on his way to the Orbaume Kingdom, but Viscount Balchesse's grand chamberlain had discovered that as long as Luciliano's Live-Dead familiar was still in good health, he was able to borrow its five senses.

And thus Luciliano was in the difficult situation of having to accept the viscount's direct high-priority request in exchange for a purse packed full of gold coins.

『Th-this is torture... The viscount and Adventurers' Guild are trying to destroy my healthy heart!』

Luciliano possessed life-attribute magic that was unique and unparalleled in its ability to gather information on the Noble Orcs' movements at no risk. However, there was a simple reason that he hated it so much.

Upon receiving Viscount Balchesse's request, Luciliano had turned the fresh corpse of a female into a Live-Dead. For some reason, the Noble Orc Bugogan had taken a great liking to it.

Luciliano, who had learned the language of the Orcs, had involuntarily let out a scream when he heard Bugogan declare,「I will grant this female adventurer the great honor of giving me my fourth son!」

Sharing the five senses of the Live-Dead during that process meant experiencing being raped by a Noble Orc from the woman's point of view, something that could be called an assault... no, a disaster for his eyes.

In this vast world, there were apparently some with peculiar tastes who would feel aroused at the sight of beautiful women being sexually assaulted by beasts and monsters, but he had never heard of a fetish where one would want their vision to be filled with the sight of a hideous Orc breathing wildly through

its nose.

Even though Luciliano possed the Title of【Degenerate】, he had no such tastes, at least.

Fortunately, the Live-Dead's sense of touch was almost non-existent and its sense of smell was weak, so his task had still been somewhat bearable.

『Still, I managed to hear a variety of bits of information. I suppose even monsters loosen their tongues when they talk to themselves in bed.』

Bugogan had no suspicions regarding the Live-Dead that Luciliano controlled. That was to be expected; for Bugogan, the Live-Dead was an instrument that would give birth to a son that wasn't rebellious and showed no reaction to anything. Thus, he talked to himself for Luciliano to hear, making his everyday complaints, and even talking about his grudge towards the Noble Orcs of his home who had rejected him.

As Luciliano was relaying all of this information to the viscount and the viscount's associates, his pockets were considerably full.

Tonight, too, he had convinced himself that this was necessary to get valuable information and was looking up at the straining Bugogan through the Live-Dead's eyes. Suddenly, in the middle of this sexual encounter, a servant Orc barged in.

It seemed that there was a large-scale attack being conducted on the village.

『I did think it was unusually noisy... So it wasn't the Orcs getting drunk and rampaging around.』

The attacking enemies were Ghouls, and the battle was not going favorably. Numerous Orc Generals had already been defeated, and the number of Orc Mages had grown smaller as well.

「BUGAAAAH! BUGIGI BUBOBIO!」

Bugogan roared to express his rage at the fact that his army that he had worked so hard to grow was being taken apart. He ordered Bubobio and his other sons to deal with it and stepped back from on top of the Live-Dead. It seemed that he was planning to prepare for battle himself as well.

『This... I need to report to the viscount.』

The Ghouls would probably be defeated in the end, but the Noble Orcs should sustain large losses. In that case, their plans to attack the city between spring and summer would be postponed.

If the Orcs' forces were weakened, it might be possible that less than a hundred adventurers would be needed; perhaps only one or two B-class adventurer parties would be enough.

『I hope the Ghouls overdo it a little and destroy this Live-Dead in the process.』

If that happened, he would be paid and then dismissed, leaving him free to leave on his journey.

As if answering Luciliano's request, the sounds of battle coming from outside Bugogan's house grew even fiercer.

Notes

1. Not to be confused with the primates (lemurs). Lemures are shades/spirits of the dead in Roman mythology. In fact, the monkey lemurs are named after the Roman spirit lemures. You can Google "lemures" if you want to find out more.

Chapter 20: Let us smash the noble pigs' noses

「UOOOOH! You pig-headed cowards! Do you not have the courage to come and face me?!」

With a disheveled mane and bared fangs, Vigaro let out a roar and jeered at the Orcs. Though the Orcs and Goblins standing in his way likely didn't understand his words, they retreated as if they were afraid of him.

Vigaro's role in this battle was to act as a diversion.

One glance at Vigaro was enough to tell that he was highly-ranked among the Ghouls. Leading a group of ten warriors including female mages, he made a show of rampaging around, defeating every enemy that came into his sight. The plan was to have a separate group including Basdia rescue the captive women while this was happening.

It was a simple plan; if their enemies were humans, they would have quickly realized that it was a diversion. However, it worked against monsters.

Aggressive behavior is something that all monsters have in common. With members of their own race being killed by Vigaro and his group, they could not help but to focus their attention on him. Orcs in particular were a race that were quick to become enraged, and Vigaro had even quickly defeated the leaders like the Orc Generals. There was no time for them to gather their troops together.

A rare kind of Orc called an Orc Tamer set monsters like Wood Wolves, Huge Boars and Giant Pythons on the Ghouls, but even those were easily crushed. They were nothing compared to the Undead led by Vandalieu.

(I didn't have a hard time at all fighting against the Orc Generals that are supposed to be of the same Rank as me. Rather than me having become stronger, this is Vandalieu's work.)

The effects of the【Strengthen Followers】skill and the battleaxe that was a Magic Item that Vigaro had been given. Even the various supportive spells cast on him by the mages were still active because Vandalieu had transferred his Mana to the mages to recast them.

And when Vigaro and his group had encountered Orc Mages and Goblin Mages that would have been difficult opponents, Vandalieu had appeared out of nowhere to release a black fog that surrounded the enemy mages and sealed their magic.

That was why they were experiencing such an overwhelming victory with not even a single injury, let alone a casualty.

The Ghouls did feel a little shameful to be completely dependent on this child, but Ghoul society placed value on ability. It was only natural for superior individuals to stand at the top.

And Vigaro understood that Vandalieu was superior to himself.

Without a doubt, Vigaro had the advantage in muscle strength and physical ability. In battle techniques, too. However, Vandalieu had the overwhelming advantage when it came to magic and Mana. And above all, he possessed the【Strengthen Followers】skill, the skill that a superior individual should have.

(I have the capacity to become the chief of a hundred Ghouls, and Vandalieu has the capacity to stand above me.)

Vigaro understood this. However, he couldn't help but to feel pathetic. As he was now, wasn't he pathetic for someone serving under Vandalieu – no, for someone who was Vandalieu's family member?

「BUGAAAAAAH!」

That was why when Vigaro heard a roar even more powerful than an Orc General's, both corners of his mouth twisted upwards in a smile.

There was a young Noble Orc whose body that was over two meters tall made Vigaro look small in comparison. His features seemed to be made out of pure ugliness and pride other than his brilliantly-shining blonde hair.

As his rage-filled pupils spotted Vigaro from a height of three meters, his

expression softened into one of scorn.

He would scatter these insolent small-fries in place of his useless subordinates.

That was clearly what he was thinking.

「A Noble Orc!」

「Vigaro, what are we going to do?!」

Seeing not an enemy of the same Rank as Vigaro like an Orc General, but a powerful Noble Orc that was clearly a superior foe, even these elite Ghouls couldn't conceal their unrest.

Vigaro was a Rank 5 Ghoul Barbarian, and this enemy was a Rank 6 Noble Orc. Though the number was only different by one, the actual difference was significant. Generally, in battles between monsters, if two monsters face off head-to-head starting at healthy conditions, the higher Rank one will win unless the other monster has some significant advantage.

No matter how much experience a fox has and how much it practices its skills, there is no way it can win a head-on fight against a tiger. Vigaro himself had once said that if he were to fight a Noble Orc, he would definitely lose.

「What are we going to do, you say? ... WE FIGHT!」

But right now, he didn't feel as if he would lose!

Letting out the roar of a lion, Vigaro closed the distance between himself and the Noble Orc. Looking down at him, the Noble Orc performed a sideways sweep with his own axe that was even larger than the axe that Vigaro had received from Vandalieu.

Vigaro crouched close to the ground as if crawling to avoid the blow that could have sent his head flying if it connected. He felt anger at the fact that some of his mane was cut off, but before paying too much attention to that, he used three of his limbs to leap sideways.

「BUGIH!」

The reason Vigaro did that was because the axe that was supposed to pass over his head instead came swinging down with a loud crash.

Normally, axes have bad balance and after swinging them once, time is needed to prepare one's stance again. Regaining one's balance immediately after swinging an axe is impossible. But the Noble Orc's incredible physical ability made it possible.

「BUOOOOH!」

It swung its axe consecutively with no technique, only pure physical strength. It seemed that there were plenty of openings in between, but if Vigaro were to let up his focus on evasion to attack that opening, he would likely be cut to shreds.

Vigaro kept dodging the attacks nimbly.

One of his hands was still holding his axe while the other gripped the earth and helped him kick his body off its surface to avoid the Noble Orc's attacks.

Each of the Noble Orc's swings contained terrifying power, and its physical strength made them quick as well. But each of its movements was obvious and linear.

Against an opponent like Vigaro, it was like telling him,「I'm going to attack like this, right now」, before every swing.

「GAAAH!」

「BUHIHI!」

「WAAUUH!」

Vigaro, the Noble Orc, and the warriors that each of them led were engaged in battle.

Vigaro had an idea of how the battle was progressing through the Ghouls' battle language, but the Noble Orc's head was completely focused on his Ghoul opponent in front of him.

Why wouldn't any of its attacks land on him?!

He was one of his great father's sons, the strongest of them all, Bugibulio! Why could he not land a single attack on something like this Ghoul?!

For Noble Orcs, male Ghouls were just small fry and female Ghouls were

nothing but meat pots! So why were such Ghouls making him embarrass himself in front of his subordinates and slaves?!

「BUGAAAAAAH!」

With his rage and irritation taking over, the Noble Orc unleashed the martial skill,【Bisection.】It was a level 2 martial skill but even if a human were to use it, it would be powerful enough to cut down a tree in one strike. If a Noble Orc used it, it was capable of smashing a boulder.

However, the more powerful the Noble Orc's attack, the larger the opening following it was.

Vigaro avoided it and made great use of the chance at a counterattack that he had finally found.

「【Axe Whip!】」

Vigaro's long arm bent loosely like a whip.

「BUOH?!」

The Noble Orc immediately tried to bend backwards to avoid it, but Vigaro's long arm bent once more and his axe inflicted a deep cut in the Noble Orc's right arm.

「GAAAAAAH!」

Vigaro's right hand left the handle of his battleaxe. And then he gripped the mid-air battleaxe with his left hand and –

He used his martial skill once more.

「Bu-buhyiih!」

The Noble Orc deflected the axe aimed at his neck with his own axe. But after Vigaro's axe was repelled, his arm suddenly changed direction and severed the Noble Orc's right leg, which the Noble Orc hadn't been paying attention to.

Unable to keep his balance, the Noble Orc toppled over sideways. This time, Vigaro's axe dug its way deep into his neck and decapitated him.

The【Axe Whip】technique in which the user increases the flexibility of his arm and flings it like a whip, and the【Triple Axe Whip】technique in which the

process is repeated consecutively. These were martial skills taught only to the long-armed Ghoul men.

「Uoooooh! Who’s next?!」

Vigaro let out a roar of victory and stamped down on the head of the Noble Orc, which was still wearing the screaming expression at the moment of his death. Seeing this fearsome sight, the Orc knights began to fall apart and flee for their lives, but... there was no way that these slow Orcs could get away.

The few remaining Goblins and Kobolds followed their masters into the grave.

「Grrr! How’s that, Vandalieu? Your family is strong!」

There was a small child who had called the Ghouls his family, gotten involved in a battle he didn’t need to get involved in and even took on the Title of King. Even now, he was working harder than any of the Ghouls. How could Vigaro call himself a young chief, a warrior, if he didn’t produce results that could make that child proud?

Standing in a pitter-pattering rain of blood, Vigaro gave a pride-filled roar.

***

Bugogan’s third son, Budibis, had absolute confidence in his own beautiful looks and his skill with a bow.

He wasn't proficient in close-quarters combat like his brothers. But he believed that a noble should not clash with their inferior prey directly and become stained in an unsightly way by their blood. He believed that a noble should shoot their prey from a distance with elegance.

「Bugoh, buhihiih?!」

When he had heard a report that there was a group of Ghouls being led by a female Ghoul, he could only think of how fitting the prey was for him.

That group apparently contained many female Ghouls. His only thoughts were of capturing them, picking out ones that he fancied, presenting the other attractive ones to his father and distributing the rest among his subordinates, thus placing him in a superior position to his brothers.

「Buhiiiiih! BUGYAAAAAH!」

He had no intention of letting his guard down. He had given five Orc Knights the honor of serving as his advance guard, and also brought with him ten Orcs and thirty small-fry Goblins.

At first, things were going well. The warriors serving as Zadiris's advance guard were unable to completely stop Budibis's subordinates, and his arrow powerful enough to pierce straight through an adventurer in full plate armor was only barely stopped by the female Ghouls' wind-attribute Magic.

At this rate, the female Ghouls would run out of Mana in less than five minutes, and then the Orcs could push into them. Budibis was confident in his victory.

And then much more than five minutes passed and the female Ghouls had showed no signs of running out of Mana.

「GUOOOOOOOH!」

「GEEEEEEH!」

Instead, a group of Undead attacked from the side. With clouds of the Rotten Beasts' poisonous breaths floating around and a Phantom Bird's long-ranged fire from its spirit wings raining down, Budibis and his subordinates were shaken.

In the opening created by the Undead, the female Ghouls rallied, causing even more unrest in Budibis's forces, and then the Rotten Beasts rushed in.

The female Ghouls had been supposed to run out of Mana long ago, but they were releasing spells towards Budibis even now. Budibis's subordinates who were supposed to have pushed into the female Ghouls were instead pushed into, and turned into twitching, bloodstained corpses.

「Buhiiiih! BUGIBULIO! BUBOBIO! BUOOH!」

With his face that he conceitedly believed to be beautiful twisted in fear, Budibis called for help from the brothers that he secretly looked down on and the father that he despised. However, what reached out to him was not the helping hand of his family members, but the cold hand of death.

「Tch, how noisy!【Great Wind Blade!】」

The enormous, greatsword-sized blade of wind created by Zadiris's spell cut Budibis in half horizontally as he tried to make an unsightly escape.

Budibis managed to take a few more steps with the top and bottom half of his body still intact, but then his strength gave out and he collapsed, his organs spilling onto the ground.

「Fuh... Surprisingly, he was not a greatly difficult foe, but he was a noisy rascal with a scream that pierced the ears. Boy, we are fine now.」

As Zadiris exhaled, a semi-transparent, thin, string-like object detached from her shoulder. This was Vandalieu's Spirit Form that had been transferring her Mana.

He had apparently attached it to Bone Bird and had it bring it to her.

Without even seeing Bone Bird off, Zadiris raised her staff high.

「Everyone! There are few enemies left! But do not let down your guard!」

***

A short while earlier...

The group of Ghoul warriors including Basdia quickly finished securing the building containing the captive Ghoul women.

There had been Orc guards here as well, but it seemed that their primary job had been to make sure none of the other Orcs did anything excessive to the women rather than to prevent the women from escaping. As they hadn't planned on killing members of their own race, they weren't very well-equipped.

And the ones who had come here to procreate had been even more poorly-equipped; they might as well have been fully naked.

The outer wall turning into Wood Golems had caused the village to fall into a state of chaos; most of the Orcs had tried to run out of the buildings while Goblins and less intelligent Orcs tried to get into them. Basdia and her group had charged in during the middle of this large traffic jam and cleaned them up quickly before things escalated into a proper battle.

The women inside the buildings were in a terrible state. In order to keep captive the Ghoul women who possessed the【Superhuman Strength】skill, their bodies had been immobilized by being half-buried in boulders, likely with a spell cast by the Orc Mages or Noble Orcs. In addition, it seemed that they had been tormented; there were whip-marks on their skin.

There were some women who weren't in this state, but they had been treated just as horribly – their hands and feet had been deliberately broken.

Ghouls had much more vitality compared to humans, so they functioned as tools to give birth to Orc children with no problems even if they were treated horribly. That was why they had been treated this way.

The human women in the same building... The Ghouls expected them to be in better conditions, and that expectation was correct. They couldn't say this out loud after seeing their actual situation, however.

Unlike most monsters, the Ghoul women had a sense of values. Perhaps this was why they were not rendered mentally crippled, even after receiving such deep emotional scars.

「What do we do with these women...?」

But the human women seemed completely broken. Their eyes were lifeless and their bodies were limp, like corpses.

Even though the humans were mortal enemies for the Ghouls, as a fellow

woman, Basdia couldn’t help but to sympathize for them.

She wanted to do something for them, but...

「GRRRRR!」

Hearing words from her allies’ in the Ghouls’ battle language, Basdia recollected her thoughts.

The meaning of those words were,『A powerful enemy is approaching.』

「BUOOOOOH!」

Basdia came out to the front of the buildings to see an enraged Noble Orc with fangs bared, as well as Orc Knights guarding him with shields raised.

「GRRRRRRRRR!」

Her companions didn’t hesitate to call for reinforcements. None of the Ghouls here, including Basdia, possessed outstanding ability in combat. They could easily defeat Orc Knights, but a Noble Orc would be too difficult.

Even factoring in the supportive spells and difference in equipment, there was no way that this group of Rank 3 and 4 Ghouls could win against ten Rank 4 Orc Knights led by a Rank 6 Noble Orc.

In fact, they would be trampled one-sidedly.

「Did their leader decide to dedicate some of his forces to recapture the women? I would have thought that they would be headed to where Vigaro and the others are.」

Seeing the Noble Orc arrogantly looking down upon them, Basdia couldn’t help but to wonder this out loud. In fact, the reason the Ghouls had come here was so that the Noble Orcs and their subordinates wouldn’t use the Ghoul women as hostages.

But on the other hand, there was nothing more of value here.

Even if the Noble Orcs defeated Basdia and the other Ghouls here, the battle would definitely not go well for the Orcs as the groups led by Vigaro, Zadiris and Vandalieu would be able move about freely.

Recapturing the women would increase the Orcs’ morale to some extent, but

it would not increase their strength in battle.

Common sense would have told the Orcs that it would be a better decision to leave Basdia's group alone, instead dealing with Vigaro and Zadiris's groups. Of course, most monsters didn't possess common sense, but everyone had expected that at least monsters with the Noble Orcs' intelligence would have made that decision.

「Bubuh, bufufufu.」

However, the young Noble Orc looking down on Basdia and her group, Bubobio, was a Noble Orc that defied those expectations.

He was aware that the battle would not turn around with just the efforts of his subordinates and slaves, but had confidence that if he stepped into battle himself, he could win.

Like his brothers, he led his subordinates to act separately from them and add achievements to his own name. The thought of helping his brothers didn't occur to him at all; his head only contained thoughts of defeating them and currying favor with his father.

「Gubububuh.」

That was why Bubobio had chosen to secure the women. There were no Noble Orc or Orc women; they were races made up entirely of males. In order to preserve themselves, the females of other races were absolutely necessary.

If he were to recapture the women for the village, it would become a highly-valued achievement.

That was what Bubobio thought. It was a choice not to win the battle, but a choice brought about by the thought of gaining the greatest achievement to his name while exercising the least effort.

It was only natural for him to decide against what would be considered common sense.

「BUOOOOOH!」

Pointing the tips of their prided greatswords in the direction of the Ghouls, the Orc Knights raised their shields and lowered their center of gravity in a

prepared stance.

「Grr! (They're going to charge in!)」

「Garr! (Buy some time!)」

They had to somehow hold out until reinforcements arrived. Basdia and the other Ghouls hardened their resolve while the ten Orc Knights simultaneously charged in while using their【Shield Bash】skill... Or as they began to, the ground surface began to move.

『UOOOOOOOHN!』

The ground turned into dozens of Earth Golems that stood to face the Orc Knights.

But there was no way that these brittle clay-doll-like Golems could stop the【Shield Bash】of Orcs that weighed over a hundred kilograms. They should crumble instantly, but...

「BUGYAAAAAH?!」

Before the Orc Knights clashed against the Earth Golems, their legs were caught in holes in the ground, causing them to fall down.

Earth Golems were made from the dirt on the ground. It was only natural that holes with the same volume as the Golems would form.

And then the Earth Golems collapsed on top of the fallen Orc Knights, burying them alive.

「...」

「...」

After seeing these unbelievable events unfold, both the Ghouls and Bubobio were silent.

「They were more effective than I thought, these Golem-made improvised pitfalls.」

『Oh, such tremendous technique! As to be expected from you, Bocchan.』

『You even gave them a burial. Though we'll have to dig them up again later.』

With the rattling of carriage wheels, Vandalieu and Sam appeared.

「V-Van?」

「Yes, it's me. Ah, there's still the Noble Orc left, so let's not let our guard down.」

「Y-you're right.」

「And the enemy's head is still intact, so please defeat him quickly.」

「Well, that goes without saying... Wait a minute, you want me to defeat him?!」

「Yes, from an Experience-Point perspective.」

Basdia was flustered and surprised, but Vandalieu requested that she defeat Bubobio as if it was the obvious thing for her to do.

「It's alright, I'm going to support you.」

「No, I think it's impossible for me to defeat a Noble Orc even with you supporting me!」

「It's impossible because you think it's impossible. Even that shitty professor that valued results over anything said that.」

「And you're alright with learning from those words?!」

「But you know, he was really a rotten-brained, idiot professor.」

Even though Vandalieu was the laboratory animal, the professor should have been the one taking responsibility when the experiments didn't succeed, but he always said things like,「You don't have enough spirit...」He was a nagging, disagreeable fellow. The only time Vandalieu had a positive feeling towards him was when he let out his dying scream.

Looking at Bubobio, Vandalieu recalled that professor's blonde hair.

「It's fine; if I support you, Basdia, you won't die. He's coming this way now.」

「!」

With a sigh, Basdia raised her axe. Bubobio stood before her, trembling with rage.

「BUGOOOOOOH!」

Bubobio was enraged at the fact that Vandalieu and Basdia had forgotten him and were having an enjoyable conversation together. With a roar, he raised his greatsword. As he did so, the ground beneath which the Orc Knights were buried began to crawl.

Vandalieu was calm. He knew that he hadn't managed to dig holes deep enough to kill the Orcs instantly, so he had been expecting that they would emerge eventually.

「Rita, Saria and everyone else, please finish off the ones that are buried. Basdia, let's defeat the Noble Orc together.」

「Kuh, alright!」

Still wondering if she would really be alright, Basdia stepped forward.

From behind her came the screams of the Orc Knights who had managed to finally crawl out of the ground, only to be slaughtered by a glaive, halberd or Ghoul claws.

「BUOOOOH!」

Bubobio charged towards Basdia with the force of a brick wall. And then he swung his greatsword towards her head with a speed too fast to be seen by the eyes.

『Evade to the right.』

Basdia obeyed her instincts to dodge that lethal attack that her eyes couldn't follow.

「Buh, BUOOH!」

As if dissatisfied that his lethal attack had been evaded, Bubobio forcefully pulled his greatsword back and performed a thrust.

『A half-step to the left.』

And in the next moment, Basdia had evaded that thrust as well.

「Buh... BUOH! BUOH! BUOOOH! BUGOGOOOH!」

As if panicking now that he had been dodged a second time, Bubobio began

unleashing attacks one after another.

A sideways-sweeping【Single Flash】, a diagonal【Flowing Cut】from above, a【Triple Thrust】aimed at Basdia's neck, stomach and leg.

If any of these brutal attacks landed, they would have been fatal regardless of Basdia's well-trained body and high-quality armor.

But Basdia evaded them all.

Just how?! How could this female Ghoul move so fast?! Why did Bubobio's blade not find its target, even though he was supposed to be unrivalled?!

The expression on Bubobio's face had gone beyond anger, and there was now even some fear of Basdia.

(How am I able to dodge these attacks?!)

And even Basdia was surprised. Indeed, after the battle so far, she had seen that Bubobio wasn't particularly highly skilled. He was about as skilled as she was.

However, there was a vast difference in their basic physical strength. If Basdia was lucky, she would be able to dodge one or two attacks, but having these attacks unleashed one after the other should have ended in her being chopped to pieces.

But for some reason, Basdia had known what she needed to do to avoid dying.

She had sensed that she needed to move right, immediately did exactly that and the greatsword had swung down at the spot that she had been standing.

She had sensed that she needed to take half a step back, and then the tip of the greatsword had passed right in front of her.

As if she could see the future, she had known what she needed to do to survive. It was as if she had acquired the【Future Sight】skill.

(I see; this is Vandalieu's support!)

A cool, soft hand was supporting her. It was this hand that was telling her how to avoid being killed.

Vandalieu's arm, which he had used【Spirit Form Transformation】on, had fused with Basdia's back. Through that arm, Vandalieu applied the【Danger Sense: Death】that was constantly active for himself to Basdia.

【Danger Sense: Death】was a skill that detected the danger of death, which meant that it could definitely detect each of Bubobio's lethal attacks.

【Danger Sense: Death】wouldn't detect the attacks of a Kobold's sword whose individual swings inflicted only light damage. If Bubobio had simply kept his composure and mixed feints in with his attacks, things might not have turned out so one-sided.

However, the enraged, impatient, scared Bubobio was unable to keep his composure and repeated only these lethal attacks that would kill in one hit.

The three brothers, Bubobio, Bubidis and Bugibulio, were weak compared to the Noble Orc race as a whole.

Rather than them having been born this way, their weakness was a result of the environment that they had grown up in and Bugogan's failure to train them adequately.

Since they had been born after Bugogan had made his escape from his home into this Devil's Nest, they had been surrounded by nothing but servant Orcs and slave Goblins and Kobolds from the moment they were born.

They had made most things work with the physical strength that they were blessed with from birth, and all the enemies they had faced were foes that were easily defeated by swinging weapons at them, not requiring them to improve their techniques.

Naturally, they neglected their studies and since they faced only lower-Rank enemies, their levels didn't increase and their combat-related skills didn't go beyond level 3.

The rivals that they did compete against were their brothers that were just the same as themselves, so rather than working hard, they simply competed over who could get the easiest achievements.

If this had been a harsh environment such as the large Devil's nest to the south that housed many other Noble Orcs and other monsters that could

challenge them, Bubobio and his brothers would have been forced to work hard to survive.

The Noble Orcs thought that children who could raise themselves were superior, while children that required the parents to directly raise them were inferior. If Bugogan had discarded this notion and trained his sons himself, then perhaps they would have had high-level martial and magic skills.

Instead, what he had produced were three foolish sons who had only experienced easy victories against weaker foes.

They hadn't had any problems with this until now. Their enemies were all inferior, after all.

However, Basdia and the other Ghouls were far more diligent than the Orcs in training themselves.

Vandalieu and Tarea had even provided them with equipment even better than that of adventurers.

Factoring in the supportive spells and the effects of the【Strengthen Followers】skill, this was more than enough to overcome a Rank difference of one.

Even then, Basdia would have a hard time defeating a Noble Orc without taking any damage. But with Vandalieu's support, she wouldn't die.

Since a one-on-one battle would only end when one of the participants died, the outcome of this battle was already clear.

「Buhih, buhih!」

Now out of breath, the Noble Orc's movements became noticeably slower and it stopped using its martial skills. Using martial skills normally consumes Mana, but in this case, it also drained Stamina as well.

「【Bisection!】」

「Bugiiiiiih!」

And then Basdia went on the attack and Bubobio's arm was severed by her axe.

She unleashed a merciless series of martial skills, as if returning the favor. 【Strong Flash】,【Instant Response】,【Single Flash.】

As Bubobio tried to turn and run, he toppled forward as Basdia's axe, empowered by the weapon-throwing skill【Lightning Attack】, buried itself in the back of his head.

「I defeated him... I defeated him, Van! I defeated a Noble Orc!」

Basdia was likely exhilarated at the fact that she had gained a large amount of Experience Points by defeating this powerful enemy. She rushed over to Sam's carriage and picked Vandalieu up and started swinging him around.

「You defeated him, you defeated him, so please put me down.」

He was happy that Basdia was so overjoyed, but having his vision shaken up, down, left and right wasn't a pleasant experience. The other Ghouls wouldn't stop cheering, either.

But it was fortunate that Basdia had gained the Experience Points, just as he had planned.

Vandalieu couldn’t gain Experience Points on his own because of his curse,

and even if he could he was already level 100 so it would have been pointless for him to gain the Experience Points himself. That was why he had wanted Basdia, who could use the Experience Points, to defeat the Noble Orc.

「Now, we have to deal with these guys' dad –」

「BUGOAAAAAAAAH!」

An angry roar came from the largest house in the village, interrupting Vandalieu. At the same time, the walls of that house began to collapse from the inside, but even the sounds of the walls falling were drowned out by the roar.

A Noble Orc well over three meters tall appeared. He was holding a magic sword with a two-meter-long blade and wore an extravagant suit of armor.

Even Vandalieu and the group of Ghouls that was with him could see this Noble Orc.

They were rendered speechless. The happiness that they had felt moments earlier had vanished, and they were now trembling in fear instead. But it couldn't be helped; this was a true Noble Orc. This was a monster that could rival a Dragon.

Vandalieu took this opportunity to slip away from Basdia's arms and analyzed how much of a threat Bugogan was with【Danger Sense: Death.】

He wondered how they would win this battle.

If he cooperated with Basdia to fight him... No matter what he did, Basdia would die.

If he waited for Zadiris and used magic as their primary way to fight... No matter what he did, the rear guard including Zadiris and the Ghouls of the advance guard would die.

If he used Vigaro at the center of his tactics... No matter what he did, no matter how good or bad his luck was, Vigaro would die.

If he used Zadiris, Vigaro and Basdia as the primary fighting force while also combining the strength of himself, Sam and the other Undead... He thought he could win. But no matter how good their luck was, some of them would die.

If Vandalieu stepped forward to face Bugogan alone, with everyone else just

supporting him... There was more than a fifty percent chance that he would die, but only a ten percent chance that the others would die.

「Well then, please lend me your support.」

Before anyone could express their surprise at these words, Vandalieu used the no-attribute spell【Flight】to float into the air, and then flew towards Bugogan with the speed of a bullet.

Chapter 21: An unsightly, humorous boss fight

Up until he heard his foolish, idiotic sons' dying screams, Bugogan had finished his preparations for battle, but remained seated on his throne.

The reason for that was because he was the ruling king. The king was not supposed to step out onto the battlefield. That was the job of his achievement-hungry sons, their subordinates and the slaves.

That was why Bugogan had simply sat on his throne, reprimanded the failures that were his subordinates and ordered his sons to join the battle.

And then he became aware that his servants and slaves had perished, and his sons had been slaughtered.

At that moment, Bugogan's rage exceeded its limits.

「BUGAAAAAAAH!」

He unsheathed his prided magic sword and stood up from his throne and destroyed the walls of this building that had taken longer to build than the other Orc dwellings, but was still nothing more than a shabby house.

Sending splinters of wood flying, he gave yet another roar. His rage wouldn't settle down at all.

How much effort had he put into increasing the numbers of the foolish Orcs to this extent?

No matter how stupid, foolish and inexperienced they were, how long had it taken him to create sons?

It hadn't been easy to gather slaves, women, weapons and armor, either.

All of that hard work was about be nullified in a single night.

He couldn't hold himself back any more.

These insolent Ghouls who had attacked his village! He would slaughter all of the males, capture every single female and have them give birth to as many Orcs as had been killed tonight!

As Bugogan lost himself in his rage, he saw something flying towards him with incredible speed.

Bugogan didn't think it was more than something in the background until it was about ten meters in front of him.

And even now that he had noticed that it was there, he forgot his rage for a moment and wondered what this thing was.

It looked like a human child with long, white hair, white skin, a right eye as red as blood and a bluish-purple left eye. For a moment Bugogan thought that this was a young female Ghoul, but the ears that could be seen protruding through its hair were pointed. Did this creature possess Elf blood mixed into its veins?

The reason Bugogan was confused at this child's appearance was that he felt nothing from it.

No presence, no sound, no smell, no bloodthirst, no hostility, no fear. He felt nothing at all.

If someone explained it to him by saying that he was having a hallucination, he would have believed it. This creature that he felt absolutely nothing from was so bizarre that he thought it might disappear if he closed his eyes and open them again.

Still floating in the air, it held its arms out as if to block his path, wrapping black Mana around itself.

Finally, Bugogan realized that this was an enemy.

The Noble Orc Bugogan. The Ghoul King Vandalieu. The scene of the two of them preparing to fight each other looked incredibly stupid.

At first, while Vandalieu was covering himself in black Mana and casting his【Impact-Negating Barrier】and【Magic Absorption Barrier】, Bugogan was simply staring at him blankly.

「Fugoh!」

As Vandalieu finished casting his spells, Bugogan gave a short chant. A spear of earth suddenly appeared from below Vandalieu. It looked as if it was going to turn him into a skewer, but the moment its tip touched the【Impact-Negating Barrier】, it turned back into fragile dirt.

Combined together, the【Impact-Negating Barrier】and【Magic Absorption Barrier】absorbed all of the power from any attack that originated outside the barriers. Electrical energy would be absorbed from lightning, heat energy would be absorbed from flame and, of course, Mana would be absorbed from spells.

Bugogan's spells were quickly rendered useless.

「Bufu, bugah!」

With that, he had likely discerned the effect of the barriers. Thinking that unarmed combat would be more effective than magic, Bugogan raised his magic sword.

「Bugagah!」

And in the next instant, he had closed the distance between himself and Vandalieu. With a speed that was unbelievable coming from his enormous body that was three meters in both width and height, he swung his magic sword down.

His attack looked like it could cut a rock in half as if it were paper, but it was blocked by the【Impact-Negating Barrier】and didn't even land a scratch on Vandalieu. The【Impact-Negating Barrier】absorbed not only the Mana, but also the kinetic energy of the weapon.

Kinetic energy is the energy needed to make a physical object move. To move a ten-kilogram dumbbell, ten kilograms of energy is required[1]. As that kinetic energy was absorbed by the【Impact-Negating Barrier】, Bugogan's magic sword could not reach Vandalieu who was behind it.

In response to the strange sensation of having his weapon repelled by a soft wall, Bugogan's face twisted in confusion.

With Bugogan's blade stopped right in front of his face, Vandalieu looked at

Bugogan with no expression on his face, but this is what he was thinking.

(This is bad, I'm going to die.)

On the surface, it seemed that Vandalieu was surrounded with an impenetrable defense. However, that impenetrable defense wouldn't last forever.

(Stopping that one preliminary attack that wasn't even a martial skill or anything cost me fifty thousand Mana.)

Vandalieu had been using his Mana excessively since the battle began; he had already spent half of it. He still had more than 50,000,000 remaining, but... If Bugogan attacked with a martial skill, it would cost tens of thousands of Mana to block it... Possibly even hundreds of thousands.

Of course, martial skills also consumed the user's Mana, so they couldn't be used endlessly. However, Bugogan could also use magic, so he would have much more Mana than his sons. And his Stamina would be even greater than that.

If Vandalieu ran out of Mana and his barriers disappeared, he would have no way of escaping Bugogan's attacks.

(I'm weak, after all.)

Are you strong? If someone were to ask Vandalieu this question, he would answer,「No, I'm weak.」

He could use death-attribute magic that nobody else could use.

He possessed over 100,000,000 Mana.

Because he was a Dhampir, at two years of age, he possessed more physical strength than an average adult man.

But he was weak.

If one were to separate everyone in Lambda into the strong and weak, Vandalieu would undoubtedly fall into the weak category.

Death-attribute magic was more restricted than other attributes of magic; there were limits to what Vandalieu could accomplish with it. There were

almost no spells that dealt direct damage to the target like【Flame Spear】, 【Earth Axe】and【Wind Strike.】Its defensive capabilities were being demonstrated by Vandalieu right now, but since he could never go on the attack, he would be defeated eventually.

And whether he had 100,000,000 Mana or 200,000,000 Mana, he would die if his vitality dropped to zero.

His physical strength was barely stronger than an adult man's; there was no way that it would be a match for this monster that could even challenge a Dragon.

That was why Vandalieu was weak.

Vandalieu did not possess a permanent strength that worked in any situation.

But that didn't mean that he had the choice to give up and die.

「Get up.」

First, he turned the ground beneath Bugogan's feet into Golems to try to destroy his footing. His plan was to stop his movements until Basdia and the others got here, and then have them throw endless long-ranged attacks until Bugogan died.

「Buh!」

However, Bugogan quickly crushed the Earth Golems under his feet as they began to move. He stomped downwards with the unarmed martial skill【Kicking Strike】, and each stomp caused multiple Golems to crumble.

It was only a tactic to buy time, but Vandalieu was surprised that he could only buy a few seconds by spending tens of thousands of Mana.

Next, Vandalieu fired the no-attribute magic spell,【Mana Bullet.】This was a simple spell where he hardened his Mana into a ball and threw it at his target, but since it didn't have any attribute, it was a spell that one could expect to work to some degree against any enemy.

He fired off multiple【Mana Bullets】the size of his own body containing about ten thousand Mana each, aiming for different parts of Bugogan's body with different timings, and then topped it off with a single, extra-large【Mana Bullet】

containing a hundred thousand Mana.

Regardless of Bugogan's huge size, this barrage would send Bugogan flying to the edge of the village if they hit.

But Bugogan blocked all of them with his magic sword.

「BUOOOOOOOOOH!」

He moved his magic sword with incredible speed to repel every single【Mana Bullet.】The martial skill【Instant Response】increases the user's reaction speed. Bugogan used a superior version of the spell,【Super Instant Response】, and a defensive spell where the user deflects magic with a sword called【Magic Breaker】consecutively while channeling Mana through the blade of his weapon.

Vandalieu was astonished to see him perform this feat that even a first-class swordsman would find difficult. He was the father of that weak Bubobio; why was he this strong?

Vandalieu's【Mana Control】skill was low relative to the amount of Mana contained in the deflected【Mana Bullets】, so the Mana quickly dispersed without affecting the nearby terrain. For some reason, Vandalieu could sense something inside the house that Bugogan had emerged from with his【Sense Life】spell, so he was being careful about where he fired.

「BUOWAH!」

After repelling all of the【Mana Bullets】, Bugogan raised his magic sword in the air and used the martial skill,【Cross Cut.】The【Impact-Negating Barrier】made an unusual sound.

The barrier hadn't been able to absorb all of the destructive power in the magic blade in an instant, so the blade had made it halfway in.

(I can't hold back here.)

It seemed that Bugogan had intended to finish things with this attack, so his eyes were wide open in surprise. Vandalieu looked down at him as he poured Mana into the【Impact-Negating Barrier】to repair it and strengthen it even further.

The【Cross Cut】executed by Bugogan was strong enough that it would cut the

average knight or adventurer into four pieces.【Cross Cut】was a martial skill that actually had a lower skill level requirement to be effective than【Super Instant Response.】Bugogan was capable of using even more powerful martial skills than this.

(If he'd suddenly decided to go all-out, I might have died.)

The【Impact-Negating Barrier】protected Vandalieu's body from almost any attack, but there was a way to break through it. A single attack focused on one point, containing too much energy for the barrier to absorb. Pushing through by force, the kind of tactic that the main character of a story might use against the villain.

Vandalieu had loved such plot developments when he had lived on Earth, but the problem was that he was on the receiving end of it, and it might actually be possible for Bugogan to accomplish it.

There was no way that Vandalieu could die here, fail to avenge and revive his mother and become some stepping stone for a Noble Orc's ambitions.

He had to think of a way to kill him. He decided to position a Lemure behind Bugogan.

And then he would unleash a【Mana Bullet】at the same time the Lemure released its bloodthirst.

「Bugih?!」

The Lemure vanished, releasing a powerful bloodthirst. It was something that Bugogan couldn't ignore, even with an enemy right in front of him. The more powerful the warrior, the more sensitive to bloodthirst he would be and the more his body would react automatically.

And then the plan was to simply use【Mana Bullets】to turn him into a bee's nest, but...

Bugogan used【Super Instant Response】once more to increase his reaction speed and put his huge, flexible upper body to use as he performed a【Sword Dance.】This was a martial skill in which the user attacks in any direction. Bugogan attacked both behind him where the bloodthirst had come from, as well as the【Mana Bullets】coming from the front.

「BUGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAH!」

The magic sword that gleamed as it reflected the moonlight flashed in every direction; it even looked beautiful as it cut the black spheres of Mana into pieces.

And then Vandalieu felt a premonition of his own death. He quickly thickened his【Impact-Negating Barrier.】

「GAGAH!」

Bugogan pointed his magic sword towards Vandalieu and released a【Piercing Thrust.】A few millimeters further, and Vandalieu would have touched the cold blade. The thrust was so fast that Vandalieu would never have reacted in time if it hadn't been for his【Danger Sense: Death.】

Bugogan was able to deal with the bloodthirst of a Lemure and the【Mana Bullets】simultaneously, while also launching an attack. Bugogan's strength in battle exceeded Vandalieu's expectations.

(Now that it's come to this, what killing methods do I have –)

Release pathogens into the air with the【Incurable Disease】spell? Rejected. It would take time for the disease to infect Bugogan and produce symptoms. Vandalieu would run out of Mana before then.

Create poison with the【Deadly Poison】spell and then administer it to Bugogan? How? The simplest method would be to somehow inflict a wound and then apply the poison onto it, but it was difficult to inflict that wound in the first place.

Distract him with Golems? Vandalieu decided to give it a try.

Bugogan clicked his tongue and pulled back his magic sword. Before he could attack again, Vandalieu used【Flight】to fall back while whispering,「Get up.」

『OOOOOOOOOHN!』

『GISHIIIIIII!』

Earth Golems rose from behind, Wood Golems rose from the debris scattered around the area and the fallen Goblin and Kobold corpses rose as Living Dead.

At the same time, Vandalieu turned the ground beneath Bugogan's feet into Earth Golems to destroy his footing and even released a Lemure's bloodthirst and unleashed【Mana Bullets】simultaneously.

「BUGAAAH!」

Bugogan chased after Vandalieu.

He cut the Golems and【Mana Bullets】down with his【Sword Dance】while using【Kicking Strike】to crush the Golems under his feet.

Bugogan released a【Kicking Strike】with each step he took. Was he not afraid that the ground he was standing on would collapse? The ground shook with a loud thud each time his feet contacted the ground.

Just as Vandalieu wondered whether this would become a contest of who would run out of Stamina and Mana first, he heard the voices of his allies.

「Fire!」

『Bocchan!』

Suddenly, arrows and spears, poison breath, Spirit Form feathers, arrows of fire and stone, and attacks of ice and wind all rained down on Bugogan.

It seemed that Zadiris and the rest had arrived.

「GAAAAAH!」

Bugogan repelled these attacks with his extravagant armor, tough muscles and his magic sword. His magic sword even scattered the magic and poison breath attacks. He wasn't unharmed, but he had only taken damage on the level of superficial scratches.

(Not good... This situation is not good.)

Everyone had arrived at the scene, and they still had no way of dealing the decisive blow. Bugogan was fixated on killing Vandalieu for some reason, but would he give chase if Vandalieu were to run? No, in the worst case scenario, Bugogan would simply target everyone else instead.

Those targeted by him would have no way to survive.

(I can't let everyone be killed.)

Vandalieu might be able to have them stay in this world as spirits like Darcia. Sam and the other Undead might be fine as long as their souls were intact and he just repaired the bodies that contained them.

But what if that magic sword had the ability to cut through Spirit Forms?

No way, definitely not. He couldn't allow that to happen, he couldn't let any of that happen.

He had to kill this guy before that.

But how would he kill Bugogan? How could he get past this ridiculous defense to inflict a fatal wound?

Vandalieu thought so hard that steam might start rising from his head, and then he came to a sudden realization. He thought of something that Bugogan could neither evade nor block.

It was simple. It was nothing special.

He just needed to take a fatal wound himself.

Vandalieu deliberately made his【Impact-Negating Barrier】thinner. And then Bugogan's magic sword pierced through it and landed a diagonal slash on Vandalieu's torso.

***

Though Vandalieu wasn't aware of this, Bugogan seemed to be on the offense, but he wasn't in a comfortable position. In fact, from Bugogan's point of view, he was the one being driven into a corner.

The unknown foe before his eyes gave off no presence whatsoever and unleashed lethal attacks one after another with no signs of bloodthirst.

Each of the【Mana Bullets】that Vandalieu was freely releasing contained at least as much as the entire Mana pool of the average first-class mage. Their power was lessened by the fact that his control over his Mana was imperfect, but they were still powerful enough that if Bugogan took a direct hit, his bones would be smashed and several of his organs would rupture.

In fact, every time Bugogan deflected one with his magic sword, his arms received an impact that he couldn't completely shake off and placed a heavy

burden on his wrists that he couldn't ignore. How much longer could he endure these attacks?

And on top of that, there were unknown invisible enemies releasing a bloodthirst, the ground surface and debris nearby had begun to move and corpses had risen up as Undead. Even if he wanted to use magic to deal with these, there was a strange black substance surrounding him that prevented his Mana from manifesting outside his body, making it impossible to cast spells.

He had no choice but to simply use consecutive martial skills, mustering all his Mana, Stamina and more importantly his willpower and emotional strength to deal with this and execute his own counterattack. But then the enemy's reinforcements arrived.

It was such a desperate situation that Bugogan wanted to shout,「You've got to be kidding me!」

Of course, aiming at any enemy but Vandalieu or trying to make an escape were both out of the question.

If he let this enemy out of his sight, how would he block those【Mana Bullets?】Because Vandalieu was erasing his presence completely, Bugogan could lose sight of him even if he focused on him.

If he turned his back on Vandalieu, he would take a direct hit from a final Mana Bullet and die.

What Bugogan thought was most terrifying about Vandalieu was that『expression.』The motionless eyes that watched him. They looked incredibly inhuman and showed no emotion.

Not fatigue, fear, impatience or anything else.

Seeing that, Bugogan thought that Vandalieu was composed. Didn't this guy look as if he could continue fighting for another whole hour, or even another whole day? If Bugogan didn't land an effective blow now, wouldn't he run out of strength and be killed?

Bugogan could see his own defeat and death.

「BUGAAAH!」

Believing that he was being driven into a corner one-sidedly, Bugogan thought that his only way to survive was to somehow kill Vandalieu, use what was left of his Stamina to scatter the Ghouls and then make an escape.

And then one of his countless attacks reached Vandalieu's body. It wasn't deep enough to slice Vandalieu's torso in half. But as Bugogan felt the sensation of his blade cutting through Vandalieu's ribs and sternum to reach his organs, he involuntarily gave an unpleasant sneer.

「VAN?!」

「BOY!」

Hearing the Ghouls' screams, Bugogan was confident in his victory.

He had expended most of his Stamina and Mana, but he still had a quarter of each left. That was plenty to scatter these inferior creatures. If he could, he would have wanted to slaughter them all, but that would have to come later. As long as he survived here, he would be able to build another kingdom. He would gather more subordinates and slaves and create more sons. This time for sure, he would create the strongest kingdom.

Licking the incredibly warm blood that had sprayed onto his face, Bugogan... fell to his knees.

(Looks like it worked. My blood spraying conveniently like that helped a lot.)

Vandalieu was on the ground, unable to breathe because his lungs had been cut. So he lay there silently, healing his own wound while watching Bugogan who was on his knees.

The moment he was cut, he had used【Spirit Form Transformation】to transform his heart and spine into spirit form. Because his back was intact, his arms and legs could still move. It was a harsh sensation, as he was bleeding a lot, but he wouldn't die as long as he didn't asphyxiate.

In order to close his wounds, he poured hundreds of thousands of Mana into the no-attribute magic spell,【Fortify Regeneration】, with the mending of his lungs as the highest priority. He was fortunate that Bugogan's weapon had been an incredibly sharp magic sword. Because the wound was a clean cut, it was easy to heal.

「*Cough!*」

「Boy, do not move! I will treat you right now!」

「UOOOOOH! I'LL TAKE REVENGE FOR VANDALIEU ON THIS PIG!」

『Wait, I was just spitting out the blood that had gotten into my trachea. I'll be able to breathe again in a few minutes. And Vigaro, I'm not dead.』

『Bocchan, only we can hear your communication through thoughts.』

『I do know that.』

「Sam, what is Van saying?!」

『Ah, everyone, everything is fine. Bocchan's wounds will heal momentarily.』

The plan that Vandalieu had executed was to receive a deep wound that he could manage to heal on his own, while using【Deadly Poison】to turn the blood that sprayed from that wound into a toxic substance, and apply that toxic blood onto to Bugogan.

Bugogan hadn't expected that his enemy's blood would have turned into poison. He had been showered in Vandalieu's blood that had transformed into a poison so potent that it would permeate through the skin, and even licked it with his tongue and swallowed it.

His arms and legs began convulsing, his vision blurred, he lost consciousness and then had a heart attack. Under the effects of this incredibly deadly, poisonous blood, Bugogan couldn't even maintain his grip on his magic sword. He fell to his knees and then crumpled onto the ground.

『First, the finishing blow must be dealt to that Noble Orc. And be careful not to come into contact with Bocchan's blood –』

「Gahaah...」

「Vigaro?!」

『Hmm, this should have been left to us, as we are unaffected by poison. Very well, please excuse me.』

Sam's carriage wheel ran over the fallen Bugogan's neck with a crunch. And so he brought an end to the Noble Orc Bugogan who had been burning with ambition, but perished without any honor or proud achievements to his name.

The battle between the Ghoul King and the Noble Orc who had both overestimated each other's strength came to an unsightly end.

The battle was over, but there was still work to be done.

「Now that I think about it, someone did say that the hardest part would come after the battle.」

Dealing with the aftermath of war, so to speak.

The first thing that needed to be done was, of course, casting【Detoxification】on Vigaro to negate the poison in his body.

To prevent monsters that might be attracted by the smell of the large amount

of blood spilled in the ruins of the village, Ghouls that had a relatively large amount of Stamina remaining were stationed as lookouts. The Ghoul women were in charge of caring for the ones that had been kept captive.

They searched the buildings that were still intact to check whether there were any survivors. And then they had to prepare bedding to sleep in tonight.

There was enough work to make their heads spin.

Even Vandalieu, who had sent Bone Bird back to the Ghoul village as a messenger, only had twenty percent of his Stamina and Mana remaining. But he wasn't resting, either.

「There's a full-bodied richness to it, and yet there is a persistent aftertaste that lingers in the throat.」

Fortunately, there was plenty of food lying on the ground all over the village. Vandalieu was draining the blood out of the Orc meat, and drinking it while he was at it, replenishing his Stamina and Mana.

The outer wall made of Ent materials had reverted to simply being logs. Tomorrow, the task of turning them back into Golems would be waiting for Vandalieu... Though there was something even harsher waiting for him as well.

「Boy... We are busy right now, so I will leave it until later, but there is something I want to say.」(Zadiris)

「Me too.」(Basdia)

『I suspect that Darcia-sama also has something to say. She simply cannot remain silent about what happened today, after all.』(Sam)

「... Alright.」(Vandalieu)

The plan of allowing his enemy to cut through his own flesh, organs and bones in order to dish out his blood as poison had succeeded, but it had made Zadiris, among others, very angry.

『To be honest, it's scary when people get angry at me so I don't like it, but...』

Vigaro hadn't been angered after finding out about Vandalieu's plan. Instead, he had complimented Vandalieu by saying,「Vandalieu is brave. Now that's what I call a real man.」So Vandalieu managed to comfort himself, telling himself that

it might not be so bad.

「Vandalieu, we will leave the remonstrations for tomorrow, so I wish to consult you regarding what to do with the human women.」

「We ask them not to say anything about what happened and then release them near the town... This isn't a situation where we can do that, is it?」

「Hmm... Even if we were to release them near the town, they are in a state where they would likely sit there in the same spot until they die.」

「I see.」

It seemed that there would be no happy ending where everyone would live happily ever after, even after the evil monsters had been defeated.

- **Name**: Bugogan
- **Rank**: 7
- **Race**: Noble Orc
- **Level**: 100
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 4
  - Endless Sexual Stamina: Level 3
  - Lower Race Domination: Level 3
- **Active skills**:
  - Swordsmanship: Level 6
  - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 5
  - Armor Technique: Level 5
  - Earth-Attribute Magic: Level 4
  - Fire-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - Magic Mastery: Level 3

Notes

1. If you've ever done high school physics you'd know that this is wrong in so many ways...

Chapter 22: During the aftermath of war, the number of followers increases

The woman lay on the bed like a living corpse, staring at the ceiling.

『I suppose it should be over now?』

To say that she was like a living corpse is not merely a simile, but reality. This woman was something known as a Live-Dead, a freshly-deceased corpse that had vitality forcibly poured into it to restart its heartbeat and respiration.

It was the familiar of the【Degenerate[1]】adventurer Luciliano, who had made use of the Orcs' strong urge to reproduce to keep an eye on the Noble Orcs' movements.

The Live-Dead's five senses were not very sensitive, so its sense of hearing was primarily used for gathering information. The sounds of swords clashing, war cries and dying screams coming from outside had stopped.

『The Ghouls put up more of a fight than I would have imagined. Doesn't this mean that we don't have to gather a large group to exterminate them?』

There had been a group of over five hundred monsters living in this village. That was why Luciliano's employer, Viscount Balchesse, needed to put himself at the mercy of Earl Palpapek, a marshal of the Mirg nation, to gather a large-scale extermination force.

However, if the battle with the Ghouls reduced the Orcs' numbers by a third, hiring ten C-class adventurer parties would be enough. The Orc messenger had brought the news that all of Bugogan's sons and most of the higher-ranked leaders like the Orc Generals and Orc Mages had been defeated, and his ridiculously loud voice had reached the ears of the Live-Dead.

If that's the case, the only enemy that would pose a threat to C-class adventurers would be Bugogan, and even he was only Rank 7. That was the same Rank as an Earth Dragon, but he was still a foe that could be defeated if C-

class adventurers formed a party and fought him together.

Hiring those C-class adventurers wouldn't be cheap, but far more affordable than gathering an extermination force of hundreds. Even if they suffered casualties, losing a few hired hands wouldn't be a problem, unlike losing soldiers and knights.

That was what Luciliano was thinking, but his thoughts were interrupted as something entered the house that had been destroyed by its owner in rage.

The footsteps were too quiet for it to be Bugogan returning after his victory, and there were multiple of them. Were they Goblins who had become lost in the confusion of the battle?

「There it is, it's a human.」

「... Is this thing alive?」

But the creatures that appeared were the lion-headed Ghouls. Luciliano opened his eyes wide in surprise.

『It can't be, the Ghouls won against the Noble Orcs?!』

Luciliano had heard that there were no superior Ghouls like Ghoul Tyrants or Ghoul Elder Mages in this Devil's Nest. The Ghouls defeating the Noble Orcs was a result that he had never expected.

No, Luciliano wasn't the only one. Nobody would have thought it possible for a group of several hundred monsters ruled by a Noble Orc to be annihilated in an internal conflict within the Devil's Nest.

However, no matter how hard it was to believe, the Ghouls did not disappear from Luciliano's sight.

「It moved a little just now. It's alive.」(Male Ghoul)

「Alright, let's take it to where the other humans are.」(Male Ghoul)

「Wait, at least cover her body before carrying her.」(Female Ghoul)

A Ghoul woman appeared from behind the two Ghoul men as well. She covered the body of the Live-Dead that was still naked after being abandoned by Bugogan mid-rape, using the furs from the bed.

Luciliano watched this act of consideration with cold eyes.

『Now that the Ghouls have won, rescuing the captive women is impossible.』

The fact that Ghouls ate human flesh was common knowledge for everyone, not just adventurers. There was no doubt that the Ghouls would now use the human women captured by the Orcs as food for a feast to celebrate their victory.

Or perhaps they would use the ritual to turn them into Ghouls, but either way, saving them was now impossible.

『Well, considering how things would go for them even if they were rescued, I am sure that they would be happier being killed here.』

They were victims who had been defiled by Orcs; Luciliano knew that there was a high chance that they would never be happy even after they were rescued.

After even a month of being held captive by the Orcs, they would have suffered deep scars not only in their bodies but also in their minds from the Orcs' terrifying sexual desires and rough treatment. It would be difficult for them to recover on their own. In that state, it would probably be impossible for them to be adventurers again, and even if they wanted to, their equipment had all been taken by the Orcs.

It might not be so bad if they had funds saved at the Guild, but the captured female adventurers were all D-class. They were unlikely to have enough savings to buy new equipment.

Even if they gave up and retired, they would be considered filthy and never receive marriage proposals if people found out that they had been defiled by Orcs, and even finding normal employment would be difficult.

If they were normal village girls, then they could still rely on aid from the government. From Luciliano's point of view, Viscount Balchesse was fair as a nobleman. He probably wouldn't look after the adventurers for their whole lives, but he would at least support them for a year or two. But these women had been adventurers. People chose to be adventurers at their own risk, and whatever happened to them was their own responsibility. The prospect of

receiving aid from the government was dim. At best, they might receive a month's worth of living expenses.

Heroes saving women captured by monsters and living happily ever after was something that only happened in fairy tales.

Of course, it was still better than it had been in the past where they might have been executed as『witches who let monsters use their wombs』or treated as『spoils of war』by the adventurers and sold to slave traders.

As Luciliano pondered the uncertainties of the world, the Ghouls began carrying his Live-Dead away. It would likely be eaten in the near future, but fortunately, the Live-Dead had no sense of pain so Luciliano wouldn't have to suffer.

That was why he intended to get as much information as possible before the Live-Dead was destroyed.

『The ground outside is covered in Orc, Kobold and Goblin corpses. But I don't see any Ghoul corpses.』

Luciliano, who hadn't been watching the battle, had little idea of what had happened outside. In order to compensate for that now, he moved the Live-Dead's eyes around to investigate the surroundings, but all he saw was information that put him... information that would put his employer, Viscount Balchesse, and Earl Palpapek in a dark mood.

As far as he could see, the Ghouls hadn't sustained any significant losses, and there were over a hundred of them. And for some reason, every Ghoul was well-equipped and some were holding weapons that seemed to be Magic Items.

「This is all thanks to the King. The strongest King of all, the one who defeated the Noble Orc boss one-on-one!」

「Long live the Ghoul King! Long live Vandalieu!」

And then Luciliano heard the Ghouls shouting these words in excitement over their victory.

In summary, a Ghoul King possessing outstanding leadership and commanding skills had appeared, with a way of supplying the Ghouls with

equipment far better than the average soldier, and he had even defeated a Rank 7 monster in one-on-one combat.

『... If this Live-Dead is destroyed, I'm going to refuse doing any more of this work even if I have to get on my knees and beg.』

Luciliano would definitely refuse getting involved in a battle against over a hundred Ghouls led by such a King. No matter how many gold coins he was paid, he couldn't use them if he were to die.

He suddenly realized that the village's outer wall had disappeared, and its logs were now rolling around on the ground here and there. Was this the Ghoul King's doing, too?

『But I did hear that the Title of Ghoul King is only held when multiple Ghoul villages form an alliance...』

The Live-Dead was gently put down on the floor of a relatively undamaged building.

「Wait here. Vandalieu will be here soon.」

With those words, the Ghoul that had been carrying the Live-Dead left. The fact that he wasn't staying to keep an eye on the Live-Dead was likely because the Ghoul didn't even consider it an enemy.

『Well, for Ghouls, this Live-Dead is food rather than an enemy.』

Over a dozen women had been gathered here. They were all human; all of them had dead-looking eyes and bruises on their limbs and faces.

「Aah... Ah... Nnh... No...」

「Uu, uwah... Hic... Aah...」

「Kill me... Please... Kill me already...」

Even Luciliano who was sometimes referred to by his Title of【Degenerate】wanted to block his ears as he heard the sobbing and lifeless whispers. It seemed that these were indeed the female adventurers that had been held captive.

As adventurers, they should have been both mentally and physically tough

compared to the average woman, but they had been utterly broken.

Luciliano didn't want to see them being eaten alive, so he hoped that they would be killed quickly first.

「?!」

As he was thinking this, he was suddenly startled. He just noticed a child in his vision that was staring at him.

The odd-colored crimson and bluish-purple eyes gazed at him intently. The child was very young, not more than three years old. What was it doing in a place like this?

『Is this thing a Dhampir? What is a Dhampir child doing here? Where are its parents? There were no Vampires among the Noble Orc's subordinates; could it be on the Ghouls' side?』

These questions ran through Luciliano's mind, but the Dhampir child's words blew all of them away.

「Why are you inside there? That's someone else's body, isn't it?」

『He can see that this is a Live-Dead?! That's impossible; my technique isn't something that can be seen through so easily!』

The Dhampir drew closer to the astonished Luciliano.

「The spirit of that woman is right beside you. She's telling you to give back her body and stop defiling her.」

『He can see spirits; he's a Spiritualist!』

Luciliano was an outstanding life-attribute mage, but as he didn't possess the Job of Spiritualist, he couldn't see spirits. That was why he had never noticed the spirit of the corpse that he had used to create this Live-Dead floating beside him.

Luciliano gave up on trying to keep himself hidden. But he still had some room to work with. He was using magic to borrow this Live-Dead's senses; he wasn't in this place himself.

By bringing his consciousness back, Luciliano could escape from this Devil's

Nest. It was no concern to him at all what this Dhampir did with the Live-Dead after that.

「Please don't run away.」

However, the Dhampir's hand plunged into the Live-Dead's body. That cold hand grabbed hold of Luciliano's consciousness.

「Gah?! W-what did you do?!」[2]

Luciliano tried to return his consciousness back to his real body, but for some reason, he couldn't. He let out a scream at this feeling of pressure and discomfort.

「Could I ask you to answer my questions?」

Luciliano tried to resist without responding, but since his consciousness was transferred to this Live-Dead right now instead of his original body, he couldn't use magic properly.

「I-I am an adventurer. I used this Live-Dead to investigate this Orc village.」

With the dangerous sense of not knowing what would happen to him, Luciliano decided to confess.

「... Please tell me all the details.」

Vandalieu learned a lot from Luciliano. The lord of this region, Viscount Balchesse, and Earl Palpapek who was a marshal of the Mirg nation had already discovered the existence of Bugogan's large village and his ambition of attacking the town. There were already movements to organize a large-scale extermination force under Earl Palpapek's leadership. Hearing this, Vandalieu felt a headache coming on.

He had thought that the Ghouls could keep living in the Devil's Nest without a problem once they eliminated the Noble Orcs. Once the Orcs were eliminated, the ones standing at the top of the food chain in this Devil's Nest would, of course, be Zadiris and the other Ghouls.

However, the humans had learned of the threat that Bugogan posed and that information had even made its way to their upper echelons. Now that they were planning to send a large extermination force, Vandalieu's hopes came

crashing down.

「Would the marshal cancel that plan if he knew that the Noble Orcs' village has been annihilated?」

In response to this question, Luciliano hardened the Live-Dead's face in silence for a moment, and then answered as if giving up.

「I-I am just an adventurer. I do not give orders or make decisions. But I do not think that the marshal would cancel his plans.」

Vandalieu sighed. It was just as he thought.

The Noble Orcs that had posed a direct threat to human society had been destroyed today. Their Orc subordinates that were mainly Orc Generals and Mages had all been killed, and even if a few Orcs or slave Goblins and Kobolds had escaped, they weren't much of a threat.

However, from the perspective of the marshal and Viscount Balchesse who ruled this region, all that had changed was that the threat was now Ghouls instead of Orcs.

It was a large army of Ghouls that had destroyed a group of over five hundred monsters including multiple Rank 6 Noble Orcs, led by a Ghoul King. Who was to say that these Ghouls wouldn't be a menace to human society?

Since Ghouls and Orcs were both monsters to humans, the mere existence of a group of hundreds of monsters in a Devil's Nest only three days' journey away from the town was a threat to them.

And if it became known that a Dhampir was among that group of Ghouls, there was a high chance that the Church of Alda would intervene. More specifically, a clergyman specialized in dealing with Vampires, like High Priest Goldan.

That might be a chance for Vandalieu to kill High Priest Goldan, the killer of his mother. But he still didn't have the confidence to say that he had the power needed to do so.

While he did burn Darcia at the stake, Goldan apparently had strength equivalent to a B-class adventurer. If that was true, then if he were to fight one-

on-one against a Rank 7 monster like Bugogan, he would almost certainly win without having to use a clever scheme like Vandalieu's one to allow his own flesh and organs to be cut.

So Vandalieu wouldn't be able to defeat him unless he got extremely lucky. And luck was the one thing that he lacked the most.

That's why he didn't hesitate to let this chance slip by. In fact, he proactively wanted to avoid it.

(But I have no way of avoiding it.)

His face, including the odd-colored eyes that were the distinguishing characteristic of Dhampirs, had been clearly seen by Luciliano.

He had only temporarily transferred his consciousness to this Live-Dead to borrow its five senses. His real body was in a distant town. Vandalieu had no way of preventing him from talking.

Luciliano had earnestly spat out the information that Vandalieu wanted to know out of fear of being unable to escape and not knowing what could happen to him, but the most Vandalieu could do was prevent his consciousness from returning from the Live-Dead to his real body. And even that required Vandalieu to constantly have his arms under【Spirit Form Transformation】plunged into the Live-Dead, so he couldn't keep this up for hours.

It was completely impossible for him to continue holding Luciliano inside the Live-Dead without sleep or rest until Luciliano's real body died of starvation.

With that being the case, the remaining options were to appeal to Luciliano's emotions, bribe him or threaten him into silence... Vandalieu dismissed the option of appealing to his emotions. He didn't know what kind of human Luciliano was, but even if he was a kind-hearted person, he had been doing this because he had accepted a request for it. If he were to keep quiet about Vandalieu and the Ghouls and then they were discovered later, the Adventurers' Guild would do more than simply punish him; he would likely have a bounty put on his head.

He probably wouldn't agree to put himself in that danger.

Vandalieu also dismissed the option of bribery. No matter what Vandalieu

promised Luciliano, he would find the legitimate payment that he received from the nobleman who was hiring him to be more desirable.

The last option was to threaten him, but this wasn't effective, either. Luciliano was afraid of Vandalieu for now, but once he returned to his own body, Vandalieu wouldn't be able to lay a hand on him.

Threatening him with only words was possible, but Vandalieu was convinced that this would only have the opposite effect.

(What kind of adult would be scared by the threats of a child who's less than three years old?)

He was actually quite scary due to his appearance and the aura around him, however.

Having decided that preventing his existence being known to the humans would be impossible, Vandalieu returned to his first question.

「I understand why you're inside this human. So, did you kill this person?」

This person... This Live-Dead looked young, and quite healthy considering that it had been held captive by the Orcs. There were no signs of a fatal wound having been treated, either.

Vandalieu could only imagine that she had been deliberately killed.

Did you kill this woman for the purpose of creating this Live-Dead? Realizing that this was the question being asked, Luciliano shook his head.

「No, I... only transformed a corpse prepared by the viscount into a Live-Dead! This woman, I don't... know how she died!」

『What this guy is saying, is it true?』

Vandalieu asked this question to the original owner of this Live-Dead's body, but she only replied with,『My body was stolen!』and,『Give my body back! Don't defile it anymore!』He couldn't get a definitive answer.

It seemed that over a month had passed since she died, and during that time, she had watched her own body being raped by Bugogan over and over. Vandalieu couldn't blame her for being in this broken state.

「... I understand. I will let you go for now. But the next time I see you, I will kill you.」

「!」

As Vandalieu released the grip of his hand, Luciliano's consciousness quickly left the Live-Dead. The terrified expression disappeared from the Live-Dead's face and it became completely motionless.

Vandalieu thought that it had returned to being a corpse, but it was still breathing and its heart was still beating. It would likely stay as a Live-Dead until the Mana that had been put into it ran out, even after its owner left the body.

『Thank you, I was able to get my body back.』

「You're welcome. What will you do from now?」

『From now? I... I'm already dead, so from now...』

「Don't you want to be reborn?」

『Eh? What do you mean by that? Everyone who dies will one day be granted a new life by a god and be reborn.』

It seemed that the concept of the circle of transmigration existed in Lambda. Rodcorte's name wasn't known, but everyone knew about the idea that the souls of the dead would one day be born anew.

So of course, she considered it common sense that if she left this world and entered the afterlife, she would be reborn one day. She was wondering why Vandalieu felt the need to even ask her this question.

「What I'm trying to say is, do you not want to be reborn and have a new life right now?」

『Right now? Is something like that possible?』

「Yes. I can't bring you back to life. But fortunately, there is a new life inside you.」

Vandalieu had noticed the presence of a tiny life that couldn't even be called a fetus yet inside the Live-Dead lying limp on the floor.

He was asking her if she was willing to reside inside that and be reborn.

『You're telling me to become an Orc?!』

The woman's spirit was friendly towards Vandalieu because of the effects of the【Death-Attribute Charm】and the fact that he had recovered her body, but she still had to refuse Vandalieu's suggestion.

Even though she had already died, it would be torture for her to be reborn as the child of the one who had raped her body, an Orc, no less. In fact, if Vandalieu had simply asked her,「Would you like to go to the afterlife or be reborn as an Orc right now?」her immediate choice would have been to go to the afterlife.

「It's alright, I will remove as many of the Orc genes as I can. You won't become an Orc.」

『You can do something like that? If there's any Orc blood in a child, that child will definitely become an Orc, you know?』

「I can do it. I have a little experience with this.」

However, Vandalieu had experience in the selective breeding of animals, plants and humans. To be more accurate, he knew that he could do this with death-attribute magic.

Among the experiments in Origin, there had been research to see whether it was possible to use death-attribute magic to kill off certain parts of certain genes, resulting in selective breeding. And these experiments had succeeded.

He had killed the horse genes in a half-donkey, half-horse mule fetus to produce a foal that was purely a donkey.

Seeds that were resistant to disease and cold but weak to heat and seeds that were resistant to heat but weak to disease were bred together, and then Vandalieu had cut the unnecessary parts out of the genes of the resulting offspring to produce seeds that were resistant to disease, cold and heat.

He had performed the same thing in domestic animals and human zygotes that had been produced by the sperm and eggs of people of different races, with a success rate of over ninety percent.

Thanks to these experiments, the military nation that owned the laboratory

that Vandalieu was held captive in developed its agriculture and animal breeding and overcame a large number of hereditary diseases, becoming renowned as a great country for medical care.

(I'm not sure that things went so well for them after I died, though.)

Holding back this dark thought in his chest, Vandalieu continued to explain the process to the woman's spirit to ease her mind about it.

「The perfect time is just before or just after the egg cell has been fertilized, but it has already been some time since it attached itself to the womb, so I can't make you completely human. But I should be able to make you close enough to a human that you would never be considered an Orc.」

『So that means I'd become like a beast-person?』

「... I've never seen a beast-person, so I can't say for sure.」

The woman's spirit fell silent. She seemed to be deep in thought.

Vandalieu simply waited until she came to an answer. He wasn't helping her purely out of his own goodwill. It would be convenient for him if she chose this「rebirth.」

Vandalieu's goal was revenge, to survive against the cheaters who would be reincarnated in this world, and to revive his mother, Darcia.

One of the methods he had thought of for that last goal was to have Darcia possess a fertilized egg, as they had a high affinity for spirits, to have her undergo a pseudo-reincarnation. But it was best to have as many cards in his hand as possible.

There was no guarantee that the process would go well in Lambda as it had in Origin. He didn't know whether creatures in this world even had genes and DNA, and even if they did, they might not have the same structure as the creatures in Origin.

He was intending to use this woman as an experimental subject to find out.

That was why Vandalieu simply waited as she contemplated the choice. If he told her his circumstances, the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill's effect would force her to nod her head. But that didn't mean that he wanted to lie to her,

either.

How hypocritical. Vandalieu himself was aware that it was hypocritical. That was why he thought that if she agreed to do this, no matter what the result, it would still be true that he had helped her with her new life.

『I have made my decision. Please allow me to be reborn.』

「I understand. I will do everything I can.」

He used【Spirit Form Transformation】on his arms once more and buried them in the Live-Dead's abdomen. And then he poured Mana into the fetus smaller than the tip of his pinky finger that was living inside the womb, determining its current state.

He could sense almost no human genes in the fetus. The genes were mostly those of an Orc, and if the child was born now, it would certainly be a Noble Orc.

As Vandalieu had guessed before, the reproduction of Orcs and Noble Orcs was different from normal creatures; the Orc's genes absorbed the mother's genes as the child developed.

With that being the case, he simply had to reverse that relationship. He weakened the Noble Orc's genes with death-attribute Mana and stopped the weakening of the human genes, stimulating them to become stronger. If he just stopped the fetus from dying now, it would grow into a mostly-human child.

『... I'm glad I learned the Mana Control skill.』

Doing this without any kind of scientific equipment was very difficult. This wasn't something that could be done by simply pushing his Mana through by force.

If he did that, this fragile fetus would be destroyed. He had to delicately sort through the genes and apply the treatment to each cell, one by one.

「Well then, let's meet again.」

And then he had the spirit of the woman whose name he didn't know possess the fetus. That suddenly reminded him, there had been controversy on earth over when someone possessed a soul – did a person have a soul right at the

moment of fertilization, from some point during the pregnancy as a fetus or from the moment that he or she was born?

In Lambda, in this particular case, this person possessed a soul starting right now, Vandalieu thought. It wasn't a particularly meaningful thought.

And then he transferred additional Mana to the Living Dead. Because he didn't know how much Mana Luciliano had given to it, he had to prevent its heart from stopping before the woman was reborn.

Now he had to decide what to do with the rest of the female adventurers, but...

「King, why are you so popular with women?」

「... Maybe it's the influence of my skills.」

From even before Vandalieu conducted his all-out cross-examination on Luciliano, the female adventurers had been clinging onto Vandalieu.

「Aah...」

「Please... Please...」

With the half-naked women clinging onto him, the Ghouls who were just passing by assumed that Vandalieu was simply popular with the women, but the reality was quite different.

The female adventurers were in a state where their minds had been broken and they were simply like living corpses with death as their only hope. To them, the death-Attribute Mana around Vandalieu looked like a Shinigami's scythe that had come to grant them salvation.

The【Death-Attribute Charm】was supposed to have no effect on the living, but it seemed that it did affect humans who truly desired death, even if they were still alive.

As the women who were clearly not sane surrounded Vandalieu and silently begged him to kill them, he felt his own sanity being scraped away.

His ability to concentrate had probably increased from not looking at the women clinging onto him as he talked to the woman's spirit and performed the genetic therapy earlier.

However, no matter how much he averted his eyes from them, they wouldn't simply disappear. There were those waiting for the Ghoul King Vandalieu's decision on what to do.

「First, let's say that killing them is out of the question.」

For Vandalieu, the women were his enemies as they were adventurers of the Mirg nation, but he couldn't bring himself to kill them when they were in this state.

「Releasing them near the city would –」

「NOOO!」

「Don't, just kill me, please kill me!」

「... Not be a good idea, I see.」

Vandalieu wasn't familiar with how this world worked like Luciliano was, but he did understand that releasing the women in this state wouldn't be an act of salvation for them.

He had thought that perhaps they would have families or lovers waiting for them in the town, but that didn't seem to be the case. They either didn't have special people, were on bad terms with their families or perhaps their companions had been in their party when they came here and were killed by the Orcs.

Even so, caring for them in the Ghoul village wasn't an option, either.

They were currently under Vandalieu's charm, but there was no telling whether they would stay under it if they regained the will to live. In fact, it was likely that Vandalieu's skill would be rendered ineffective if that happened. They could regain their sanity and become enemy adventurers once more.

Vandalieu pitied the female adventurers, but the safety of the Ghouls still took priority.

「Well then, will you become Ghouls?」

That was why it was only natural for Vandalieu to suggest this option. He had heard from Zadiris before that a ritual could be performed to transform human women into Ghouls.

Tarea was a living example of that.

「Become Ghouls...?」

「Yes, and become my followers –」

Before Vandalieu finished speaking, light returned to the female adventurers' lifeless eyes.

「I'll become one, I'll become a Ghoul...」

Like carnivores with prey right in front of them, the piercing light in their pupils, pupils, pupils, pupils, pupils – all of them were smiling, but rather than looking as if they had found some new hope that would save them, they looked as if they had been broken beyond all recognition and transformed into completely different people.

「Me too, turn me into a Ghoul...」

「I'll become one, I'll become one too, make me your follower...」

And so all of the female adventurers chose to become Ghouls and the number of Vandalieu's followers increased by thirteen.

「It seems that the boy has successfully convinced those adventurers to become Ghouls. Since we cannot return them to human society, the only other thing we can do is welcome them as our brethren.」

「That's true, but there was one woman that he was unusually deep in conversation with. It looked like he was using magic, too.」

Zadiris and Basdia had come to tell Vandalieu that there was the option of transforming the female adventurers into Ghouls, but they had ended up watching him from a short distance away.

「You are right. And that woman stopped moving right after their conversation, as if she had died. I suppose we should go and ask the boy to explain the situation once things have settled down.」

Zadiris watched the female adventurers jostling around and extending their hands out towards Vandalieu like the dead gathering around the spider's thread that descended from Paradise[3] as she waited for them to calm down.

Notes

1. I made a translating error in chapter 19 regarding this title; Luciliano actually has this title (It was hard to tell because Japanese sentences often omit the subject). I've gone and fixed the mistranslation if you are curious enough to check (and even remember what my original translation was).

2. Some of his speech is written in katakana where it should be hiragana; I think it's supposed to express that Luciliano's speech is abnormal/impaired when speaking through the Live-Dead.

3. This is a reference to a Japanese short story called "The Spider's Thread". There's a Wikipedia article on the story, so you can look it up if you're curious.

Chapter 23: The truth I learn as I approach three years of age, and the enemy of my enemy is an enemy

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It was a clear February morning, with the smell of blood on the cool morning breeze.

「UOOOOOH!」

A deep war cry echoed out.

As Ghouls who were busy removing the organs from Orc, Goblin and Kobold corpses and preparing them for breakfast glanced at the source of the war cry in surprise, Vigaro looked up at the morning sun.

「O-oi, hasn't Vigaro grown bigger?」

「It can't be, he Ranked up?!」

Vigaro's body that was already over two meters tall to begin with had grown a size bigger. His lion's head was more masculine, his fangs were thicker and stronger, and the muscles of his limbs had grown larger while maintaining their flexibility.

His appearance was that associated with individuals that were legendary to the Ghouls, individuals who hadn't existed in this Devil's Nest for several hundred years.

「Berserker... A Ghoul Berserker!」

Vigaro had been a Ghoul Barbarian with long years of experience as a warrior. In last night's battle, he had defeated multiple Orc Generals that were of the same Rank as him as well as the Noble Orc that was a Rank higher, earning him a large quantity of Experience Points. At the same time, the level of his skills had improved as well, so it seemed that he had met the requirements for his Rank to increase.

Though it wasn’t as great as the legendary Ghoul Tyrants, the Ghouls cheered and shouted Vigaro’s name as they witnessed the birth of a Ghoul Berserker, who were said to be able to slaughter a hundred human soldiers alone.

Five minutes later, Vandalieu was receiving remonstrations first thing in the morning from three beautiful women.

Some might be jealous of him, but if one were to voice that to him, he would likely reply,「In my profession at least, this isn’t a reward.」

「Listen, boy. You are indeed our leader, but that does not mean that you must take on the role of finishing the enemy’s leader.」

「It’s true that I would have only been a hindrance in a fight against that Noble Orc, but you didn’t have to suddenly fly out to face him on your own. If you had brought your allies and received their support from the beginning of the fight, then maybe you wouldn’t have had to rely on such a dangerous plan, right?」

『That’s right, I thought I was going to faint when Sam told me what happened! Vandalieu, you’re still a child who’s not even three years old; that was going too far!』

Only Vandalieu could see and hear Darcia, who was scolding him the most, so Zadiris and Basdia were under the impression that only the two of them were remonstrating him, however.

「Yes, I’m sorry.」

Making no excuses, Vandalieu sincerely apologized. Looking back on it, it was indeed reckless for him to charge at Bugogan on his own; there had to have been other ways. He had made Zadiris, Basdia and, most of all, Darcia worry about him.

As Basdia said, if they had attacked Bugogan with everyone together from the beginning and used arrows, throwing weapons and magic attacks from a distance while Vandalieu slowed him down, it might have been possible to render Bugogan helpless, though it would have taken some time to finish him off.

This method would have worked even better if Vandalieu had applied【Deadly Poison】to the Ghouls' arrows and throwing weapons, too.

And though it would have been difficult to prevent Bugogan from killing anyone, the risk of someone dying was probably not all that different from the risk of Vandalieu dying when he allowed Bugogan to cut through his ribs, sternum and lungs.

After having a night to calmly think about it, Vandalieu had come to realize that other methods had been available to him.

And though Vandalieu hadn't been aware of it at the time, he knew that he had lost his presence of mind back then.

Well, that was only natural; it was his first real battle in a long time, and it was a large-scale battle, too. Vandalieu comforted himself by telling himself this as he prepared himself for long remonstrations.

『But this just shows how much you care about all of the Ghouls, Vandalieu, so I will overlook it just this once. But don't do that again, okay?』

「But it's also true that we weren't strong enough for you to have confidence in us. I actually fired arrows at that Noble Orc, but they were all cleared away by his magic sword. That can't even be called support; I couldn't create any openings. I'm sorry, Van. I made you do such a reckless thing because I'm still inexperienced.」

「Indeed. And thanks to you, boy, we did not suffer even a single casualty. Because you distributed your Magic Items, strengthened us with your skills, transferred your Mana to us and rendered the enemy mages helpless. If you consider these things, we had been demanding the unreasonable of you from the very beginning. I apologize, boy.」

「... Eh?」

However, though Vandalieu had expected them to be angrier at him, Darcia quickly forgave him while Basdia and Zadiris even apologized in return.

Vandalieu was shocked, but none of them took back their words.

「Err, is that all?」

As Vandalieu asked this question, the three of them blinked in surprise.

「Yes... You do not wish to be scolded any further either, do you, boy?」

Zadiris and the other two seemed surprised as to why he would ask this question, and Vandalieu replied without thinking.

「I don't, but the reprimanding I've faced up until now have been harsher and longer.」

In Vandalieu's past lives on Earth and in Lambda, he had never been blessed with old age.

The uncle who had raised him on Earth always delivered his reprimanding with a set combo of violence and angry shouting. And since he was concerned about maintaining outward appearances, he had always waited until they came back home to do so. On top of that, he had never listened to Vandalieu's side of the story or tried to understand why things had happened as they did. He had never pointed out how Vandalieu should improve himself other than saying, 「Don't ever do that again」, and even after reprimanding Vandalieu, he had never thought about how he should prevent Vandalieu from repeating his behavior.

And the reason for his reprimanding was,「You parentless piece of shit, you're being a burden to me by trying to have the same luxuries as a normal person, you have to be fucking kidding me!」so Vandalieu only felt anger and fear towards him.

When his aunt had reprimanded him, it was just long. She would complain endlessly in a dark tone, not making any sense as she rambled on and on. She wouldn't stop until she was satisfied or needed to do something else. The worst was when she had said,「You've made me waste so much time on scolding you」, and then spent the next few hours scolding him.

The teachers of his school had scolded him without putting much thought or effort into it whenever some kind of trouble occurred. Rather than trying to think about who or what had caused the trouble, it was easier for them to blame it on the boy who was always acting suspiciously and dressed in old, black clothes. In fact, that was how his elementary school class had been kept in order, and Vandalieu had just assumed that this was just the correct way for the school to handle things.

With those lessons in his mind, he succeeded in living a peaceful middle school and high school life, being as inconspicuous as air.

And then in Origin,「being scolded」had changed meaning to become「being punished.」

In Origin, Vandalieu had been a mere laboratory animal, and for the researchers who raised him, he was something that needed to be trained, not educated.

Fists were replaced with electrical shocks and remonstrations were replaced with words that were like knives that gouged out his lungs. Of course, they had no reason to listen to Vandalieu's complaints and the researchers always prioritized their own convenience first.

Even though he obeyed all of their commands, there were times where he was punished for absurd reasons like experiments where electricity was passed through his body, leaving him convulsing on the floor, to test whether his Mana's properties would change if he was subjected to extreme pain.

As a result of these traumatic experiences, Vandalieu had become extremely afraid of people becoming angry at him.

If it was someone he didn't mind killing, someone he wanted to kill, someone he was able to kill, then that would be fine. He wasn't scared of fighting and killing. But he was scared of those he couldn't kill becoming angry at him and reprimanding him.

Of course, he hadn't thought for a moment that Darcia, Zadiris or Basdia would act like his uncle or those researchers. But even so, he had been terrified.

『Vandalieu... I'm sorry, I'm really sorry for scaring you.』

Darcia had a rough idea about Vandalieu's past and what he had been through. She didn't have a physical body, but she wrapped her cold, spirit-arms around him gently.

『No, it's nothing you need to apologize for, Mom.』

It was a trauma that he had from his previous lives; it would have been unfair to expect Darcia to make an effort to be cautious about it. She was the first mother in this world to raise a child with memories of his previous lives, so there were no examples for her to follow.

However, as the other two were unaware that Vandalieu possessed memories from his previous lives, they could only make the incorrect assumption.

「Boy, I have never heard details regarding your mother...」

「What kind of person was she? I mean, normally, what was she like, and how did she act when she was angry at you, Van?」

Their eyes were sympathetic and their words were inarticulate. Seeing this, Vandalieu realized that they were thinking that his mother had abused him.

「No, that's not it, it wasn't my mother. This is the perfect opportunity so I'll tell you about my circumstances. Could I call Vigaro here?」

『Vandalieu, you don't need to worry about me. They can't see me, after all.』

「I do worry about it. You being misunderstood makes me sad as well, Mom.」

Vandalieu didn't want Zadiris or anyone else having the wrong impression of Darcia, and he had been planning to tell them about his circumstances anyway, so he decided to take this opportunity to tell them everything.

「I see, so that's what...」

The fact that Vandalieu possessed memories from his previous life and the one before that, and the fact that he had lived those lives in other worlds. The fact that a hundred people with abilities that surpassed common sense, abilities that Vandalieu didn't have, would be reincarnating in this world in the future. When Vandalieu told these facts to Zadiris and the others, they were surprised and, for some reason, they seemed to understand.

It was better than them not believing him, but Vandalieu was bewildered that

they believed him so easily, so they explained why.

「You are a child who possesses 100,000,000 Mana and uses death-attribute magic, something that has never existed before in this world. Even considering the fact that you are a Dhampir, having such an unbelievable past actually makes this more believable.」

「And you know too many things considering that you're not even three years old, Van. That would be the case even if Sam and the others were to teach you things. It makes sense if all of that knowledge is from your previous lives.」

「Yeah, it's just like those two said. I have nothing more to say to that.」

「... Ah, now that you mention it, that makes sense to me, too.」

「Well, it is still a surprise that there will be a hundred more people like you, boy.」

「A hundred people with over 100,000,000 Mana, huh...」

Zadiris and Basdia looked deep in thought with grave expressions on their faces as they imagined young men and women with 100,000,000 Mana becoming adventurers or knights and mages under the employment of human nations, but Vandalieu shook his head.

「No, I think they will have much less Mana than me.」

「What? Is that so?」

「Yes. The reason I have this much Mana is because I don't have anything else.」

Other than Vandalieu, Rodcorte had granted the one hundred reincarnated people cheat-like abilities and affinities for different attributes of magic. Vandalieu's abnormal amount of Mana was compensation for his lack of those things. Rodcorte had explained that Vandalieu's『empty frame』would store large quantities of Mana, but looking at it another way, this meant that the others didn't possess this『empty frame.』

Their frames had been filled with cheat-like abilities and different attributes of magic; there was no way that they could have an『empty frame.』

Most of them would probably have slightly more than the ten thousand Mana

that first-rate mages of Lambda would have. As Vandalieu said this, Zadiris and Basdia let out a sigh of relief.

「I see, that is reassuring to hear.」

「But still, they have cheat-like abilities, you know.」

「I do not know what exactly these『cheat-like abilities』might be, but the fact that you have 100,000,000 Mana is already beyond the bounds of common sense, boy.」

As Zadiris said, the mages of this world that could be called first-rate would have maybe slightly over ten thousand Mana. Even enormous monsters who could defeat A-class or S-class adventurers that were known as superhumans might possess only a hundred thousand Mana.

100,000,000 Mana was something that could be compared to the gods and the Demon King that had existed in the age of the gods.

「... Is that so? Well, if I could use magic of the normal attributes, then that might be the case.」

But the owner of that Mana, Vandalieu, still only had a weak sense of how vast it really was. He was unable to use fire-attribute or earth-attribute magic that was easy to make use of in battle, and since his skill with Mana Control was insufficient, he spent at least several thousands of Mana to cast one spell. He didn't feel like he could say that his own power was very cheat-like.

『You know, I think that it would be alright for you to have a little more confidence in yourself, Vandalieu.』

「Hmm, I'll do my best. Leaving that aside, I think that I might cause trouble for everyone if I stay as the Ghoul King. The guys who are going to be reincarnated here have only lived in worlds where humans are the only intelligent creatures, so I don't know how they'll act.」

The Status Screen and Skills of this world were systems similar to those used by games on Earth and in Origin. They might decide to slaughter all monsters in sight, like one might do in a game.

No, it would be fine if they slaughtered monsters. The problem was if they

decided to do the same for the races created by Vida, which were designated as monsters by the Amid Empire. That went without saying for the Ghouls who weren't even considered one of the races created by Vida.

And if they were Vandalieu's friends, then there was a real chance that they would enthusiastically start trampling over the Ghouls indiscriminately, even the women and children.

Thinking about it rationally, Vandalieu and the other hundred reincarnated people weren't on hostile terms. Rodcorte's mistake and misfortune had aligned, resulting in Vandalieu's reincarnation in Origin to be unknown to the rest of them, and they had simply dealt him the finishing blow as he was in an Undead state.

However, after he had been finished off in Origin, Vandalieu had declared that he would slaughter them all, so he didn't know what would happen. Even if they were originally reincarnated together, if one were to be asked to be friends with someone who had shouted that he would kill them, even Vandalieu would shake his head.

If Rodcorte was watching Vandalieu now and knew that his desire for revenge on them had disappeared, then it would be fine, but... that hope was slim.

『It didn't seem like that god was even keeping a proper eye on the world of Origin that we were reincarnated into.』

If Rodcorte had been watching, he could have at least sent a message to *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others to save Vandalieu. Because he hadn't even done that, Vandalieu expected nothing from him.

And so Vandalieu thought that he should give up his Title now that he had destroyed the Noble Orc's large village, but Zadiris and the others thought otherwise.

「Hmm... That might indeed be the case, but those one hundred people should be reincarnated here in the order in which they die in that world called Origin, not all at once, is that not right? In that case, then we are talking about something that will not happen for a long while, and each time they appear, they should not appear in large numbers. Am I wrong?」

When Vandalieu had been killed in Origin, they had looked to be in their early twenties. But they had been dispatched to exterminate an Undead that had appeared in the military nation's secret laboratory; they seemed to have been doing dangerous work.

So there was a chance that there were some who had made a mistake in their work and died half a year or a year after Vandalieu had.

However, they had the protection of their affinity for different attributes of magic, good fortunes and destinies as well as their cheat-like abilities; all of the things that Vandalieu hadn't received. They wouldn't die so easily. And because of the magic that hadn't existed on Earth, science in Origin seemed to have been more advanced than on Earth.

So unless they were killed or afflicted by serious illnesses such as cancer, they would live in Origin up until they were in their eighties or possibly even until they were over a hundred years old.

It was indeed still some time away.

And it was difficult to imagine that there would be multiple people dying simultaneously.

「And there is nothing to suggest that all of those one hundred people will be reborn in the Amid Empire and its nations. It could be that they are reborn in the country that you are intending to go to, beyond the mountain range, or even on another continent. There is no guarantee that they will be born to human parents. They could be born from the wombs of us Ghouls or one of the other races created by Vida.」

「Well, that might be the case, but...」

What Zadiris was saying was reasonable, so Vandalieu had no response. And then Basdia dealt the final blow.

「And there are plenty of enemies that are threats to us other than those one hundred people. If the humans were to dispatch B-class and A-class adventurers into this Devil's Nest, we could be destroyed. A high-Rank monster from another Devil's Nest might come here and build its power, just like that Noble Orc. Those one hundred people being reincarnated here doesn't give us a

reason to be separated from you, Vandalieu.」

It was as Basdia said. The Ghouls were the most powerful in this Devil's Nest. But if the Mirg nation seriously dispatched high-class adventurers, they wouldn't even be able to put up a fight.

「And if you weren't here, I don't know if we would have been able to win the battle against the Orcs. Even if we did, we would still be unable to have babies and we wouldn't be able to maintain the village. It doesn't make sense to run away because you're scared of something that's going to happen decades from now.」

「W-well, that might the be case too, but...」

This was reasonable too, so Vandalieu couldn't strongly deny it or make any points against it. For the Ghouls, things that threatened their existence naturally existed, so it was the obvious choice to fight to survive the threats rather than try to avoid them; prepare for them rather than live in fear of them.

「And if you left us and then those one hundred people starting hunting down monsters anyway, I think it would end up the same regardless. Considering that, it would be more reassuring to have you around, Van.」

「?! I hadn't thought of that...!」

Vandalieu was rendered speechless in surprise. The truth was that there was a high possibility of the reincarnated people hunting monsters on a large scale even if Vandalieu wasn't involved with them.

After all, they were strong people, and in the world of Lambda, monsters were evil. They would very likely hunt monsters to satisfy their sense of justice or simply to quickly gain money and fame.

Vandalieu was in shock, but surprisingly it was Vigaro whose decisive opinion changed Vandalieu's mind.

「I'm sure those guys are not even that strong to begin with, Vandalieu.」

Vigaro's words left Vandalieu dumbfounded. They would surely be strong. They would have power beyond all reason; they would be so strong that one would think it unfair. Those one hundred people, not even that strong?

「Of course they're going to be strong. Definitely far stronger than me.」

「But they can die, right? Then you will be able to kill them.」

Vigaro said this as if it was obvious, and Vandalieu reflexively began to object.

「There's no way that – ah!」

And then he suddenly realized. That's right, they could definitely die.

Rodcorte had granted those one hundred people cheat-like abilities, with the exception of Vandalieu.

He protected them with good fortune.

He guided them with a destiny.

However, Rodcorte's goal was to use these people who had died on Earth to develop the world of Lambda. The only reason he had reincarnated them in Origin first was to have them gain experience.

Things had been set up so that they would be reincarnated in Lambda as they died in Origin.

It would be a problem if they couldn't die. If they didn't die in Origin, they would never be sent to Lambda.

Therefore, among the cheat-like abilities granted to them by Rodcorte, there would be none that absolutely prevented them from dying or being killed.

They might possess cheat-like abilities that granted them tremendous offensive abilities, but if their defensive abilities were normal, they could be killed.

They might be able to move at ultra-high speeds, but they would die if made ill by the【Incurable Disease】spell.

They might have rapid regeneration abilities that would let them regrow severed limbs, but if their brains and hearts were destroyed simultaneously, then they would die.

They might have the ultimate defensive abilities, but if afflicted with【Aging】, they would die of old age.

None of these methods would be simple. It would be difficult; lives would

have to be put on the line in these battles.

But Vandalieu was a death-attribute mage. He was someone who could freely use magic to bring about death, or keep it at a distance. As long as his enemies were living beings that would eventually die one day, there would definitely be a way for Vandalieu to kill them, and he should have a means to accomplish that.

「I wonder why I hadn't realized such a basic thing until now...」(Vandalieu)

「It is only natural to fear those who have what you do not have.」(Zadiris)

「And they killed you once, didn't they? I can't blame you for thinking that you can't win against them.」(Vigaro)

Vandalieu fell to his knees as Zadiris and Vigaro correctly guessed the reasons he had feared those one hundred people so much.

「I've been thinking about it since I was born, for almost three years, but I never thought of that. Because you pointed it out, I have more hope for the future. Thank you.」(Vandalieu)

「It helps us to be allies with you. Don't worry about it.」(Vigaro)

Vigaro bared his fangs that were larger than they had been yesterday in a smile, looking as if he'd be satisfied as long as Vandalieu didn't bring up the idea of giving up the Title of King again.

「Well, we might be a hindrance for you when you're trying to become an adventurer and nobleman.」(Vigaro)

「When that time comes, I'll tell people that I have tamed you. If that doesn't work, I'll pile up so many achievements that they can't ignore me.」(Vandalieu)

「Oh, you've broken free, Van.」(Basdia)

Even he could kill those with the cheat-like abilities. As Vandalieu made this realization, his worries in life had been cut in half and his head felt clearer.

He still aimed to kill enemies like High Priest Gordan and Heinz, and he was confident that if he became stronger, he would be able to do it. Leaving Earth and Origin aside, he had skills in this world and even possessed 100,000,000 Mana. If he could master using this Mana, his revenge and killing the cheaters

would be possible.

There were steep mountains and valleys ahead of him in life, but he felt as if they had become a little less steep.

Feeling refreshed, Vandalieu remembered something that he had meant to say once the sun rose but hadn't said yet.

「Ah, I just remembered. The humans had been making preparations to exterminate the Orc village, and now they've found out that we've already done it. What should we do?」

「Boy... That is the more pressing concern.」

It seemed that the meeting would continue for some time.

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Luciliano was pale and feeling strained in the morning.

「That is the end of my report.」

He was on his knees, delivering a report to his employer, the mustached nobleman Berno Balchesse, and a row of knights.

And there was a middle-aged man with a medium build in the prime years of his life sitting at the head of the table. Though Luciliano wasn't specialized in combat, he was an adventurer who had completed numerous requests from noblemen over the years. This man wasn't the kind of person whose presence should cause an adventurer like Luciliano to be feeling nervous.

However, every time Luciliano stood before him, he felt his spine grow cold and experienced an unpleasant feeling of tension.

「That report is the truth, I presume?」

「Yes, Marshal Palpapek.」

The man's name was Marshal Thomas Palpapek. He held the court rank of earl, but that was the rank that he was given because this country of Mirg was a nation of the Amid Empire. In the Empire, the title of marquess was only held by royal family members of the Empire's nations.

He was a capable marshal whose abilities and achievements were so great

that if Mirg were an independent nation instead of being a part of the Empire, it would not have been surprising for him to hold the rank of marquess... or even duke.[1]

Since he had risen to this position, the Mirg nation had withstood attacks from the Orbaume Kingdom, public order had been improved and worked with adventurers to be involved in dealing with multiple large incidents in which monsters began overflowing from Devil's Nests.

「I see. The Noble Orcs have been annihilated and their subordinates have been scattered...」

「That is extraordinarily delightful news, is it not, Marshal-dono?」

Viscount Balchesse looked truly happy as he smiled at Marshal Palpapek. It somehow seemed that even his prided handlebar mustache had become shinier.

He was feeling relieved as there no longer seemed to be a need to spend large amounts of taxes to hire adventurers and dispatch soldiers and knights as an extermination force, causing casualties in the process.

There was a strong stereotype of noblemen treating those serving them as being disposable, but the ones who did that without hesitation were fools. Those with some ability as noblemen avoided casualties where possible.

Soldiers were needed to maintain the peace of a region, and if some of them died, they could not always be replaced immediately. It was different from temporarily-hired soldiers and guards, who only needed to be provided with equipment. One should desire a certain level of skill and loyalty from regular soldiers.

This was especially true for knights whose families had served noblemen for generations. If noblemen put the lives of knights to waste, they would be disgraced and lose favor from the knight families who would choose other masters.

Losses should be kept low, even for soldiers recruited from the lower-class populace. If the young people that were the able workers of society were to die in large numbers, the productivity of the region would fall and severe economic

problems would develop. And there was nothing good about causing dissatisfaction amongst the people.

Adventurers were a special case, as they worked in their occupation at their own risk. Even if ten or twenty of them were lost, a town as large as Viscount Balchesse's wouldn't be negatively affected at all. Hundreds of adventurers died every year in the nation of Mirg alone. Nobody would claim that this was the responsibility of the rulers.

But this only applied on a national level; if a large number of adventurers in one region were to suddenly decrease in number by too much, there monster numbers in Devil's Nests would be less regulated and the materials that adventurers obtained from monsters would become scarcer. There would be consequences for anti-monster measures as well as economic consequences.

And since adventurers were essentially wanderers, if there were rumors that a nobleman was forcing adventurers to accept unreasonable requests, they could simply turn away from that nobleman. That would cause long-term difficulties for the region.

Therefore, it was best to eliminate or at least reduce casualties. Of course, there were some things that needed to be done even if casualties were certain to occur. Exterminating a Noble Orc's group of five hundred monsters that was planning to attack the town, for instance.

The group of monsters was gone, eliminating the need to form an extermination force. This could only be a good thing for Viscount Balchesse. He wasn't interested in things like having the honor of exterminating powerful monsters.

However, it seemed that Marshal Palpapek thought differently.

「That cannot be said, Viscount Balchesse. Perhaps we should increase the size of the extermination force... No, more importantly, perhaps I should ask High Priest Gordan for his assistance in killing this Vampire.」

「Wha –?! How can that be, Marshal?! The Noble Orcs have already been killed; the danger has passed!」

「The danger has not passed. It has simply changed, from Orcs to Ghouls. A

group of Ghouls that won a battle against a group of five hundred monsters led by a Noble Orc. Though Luciliano has not confirmed this, there are likely Ghoul Mages... There is even a chance that there are higher-class ones, like High Mages or Berserkers. Or would you suggest that such a group of monsters is not a threat?」

Marshal Palpapek was right. For humans, Orcs and Ghouls were both monsters. The only differences were that Ghouls had females so they didn't need to abduct human women so frequently, and they didn't often come out of the Devil's Nests.

But these differences were enough for Viscount Balchesse's knights to disagree.

「But Marshal, there have never been any confirmed cases of Ghouls acting outside Devil's Nests, let alone in a group. Is it not safe to assume that the Ghouls will not come out of the Devil's Nest?」

「In particular, the Ghouls of that Devil's Nest do not even fight adventurers; they are relatively docile. And as the adventurer there reported, the monsters led by the Noble Orc were using the female Ghouls as mothers, were they not? Is this incident not simply the Ghouls taking revenge on the Orcs?」

The Ghouls that had the power to defeat the Noble Orcs and their subordinates were indeed threatening. However, it wasn't anything more than a struggle for existence that had occurred within the Devil's Nest; the conflict wouldn't spread outside.

Why was there any need to take the effort to enter that conflict in a place that couldn't even be seen from here?

Even Marshal Palpapek nodded, knowing that there was some truth to this argument.

「Indeed, if it is the Ghouls that have been there for a long time, that would be the case. However, has there ever been a group of Ghouls with a Dhampir child among them?」

However, in response to this question, Viscount Balchesse and his knights could only say that they had never heard of such a thing.

「And considering the situation, it is highly likely that this Dhampir is the Ghoul King... isn't that right?」

「Yes. Considering the situation, I cannot deny the possibility of the Dhampir being the Ghoul King Vandalieu.」

Luciliano, who had remained silent until now, offered his thoughts with a tone that implied that he wouldn't take responsibility if he was incorrect.

The Ghouls had said that Vandalieu was coming, and then the Dhampir child had appeared. If one considered this, it could be reasonably deduced that that child was the one called Vandalieu. And the other Ghouls had said that Vandalieu was the Ghoul King.

In that case, then the Ghoul King was a Dhampir child by the name of Vandalieu.

Even though he was a Dhampir, it was difficult to believe an infant that could not even be called a boy yet was the King that led a pack of Ghouls. But there was no basis for anyone to deny this possibility.

And on top of that, Marshal Palpapek shared a piece of shocking information.

「Actually, I have a good idea of just who this Dhampir named Vandalieu is.」

「What?!」

「Is this true, Marshal?!」

It seemed that even the knights serving Marshal Palpapek were hearing this for the first time; they were murmuring along with Viscount Balchesse and his knights. Even Luciliano raised his face in surprise.

「About three years ago. I am sure even Viscount Balchesse remembers the wanted posters of a Dark Elf who had succumbed to a Vampire's temptation circulating around our country. That Dark Elf's name was Darcia. And I had my own subordinates investigate the matter just in case, and in the process, I learned that the name of the Vampire who seduced her is Valen. It is not unusual for parents to use parts of own names to name their child.」

The son of Valen and Darcia, Vandalieu. Many commoners named their children in this way.

「But wasn't that Dhampir returned to the dirt?!」

「No, I believe the only one that was certainly executed was his Dark Elf mother. I heard that the corpse of the Dhampir child who was of breast-feeding age was never found in the end...」

「How irresponsible! Do those of the Church demand such extravagant donations for such crude work?!」

「However, even being half-Vampire, there was no way for an infant of breast-feeding age to survive without its mother. Could the name not be a mere coincidence?」

「But even the age matches. Is it not too much to be called a coincidence?」

The knights offered their own confused guesses. And then they were silenced by Marshal Palpapek's powerful voice.

「What we should fear is if the Dhampir Vandalieu, who is the Ghoul King, is not content with merely surviving and is sharpening his fangs for revenge. What will happen then? It does not even need to be said.」

The knights' expressions all hardened as they closed their mouths. Viscount Balchesse's face had turned particularly pale.

A powerful Ghoul army led by a Dhampir who harbored resentment towards the humans. No matter how one looked at it, this was a larger threat than the Noble Orcs' group of monsters.

Orcs were unintelligent and even if they were led by a higher race, their coordination was sloppy and there would be many openings to take advantage of.

However, Ghouls were far more intelligent than Orcs and they were a race that was even more proficient at fighting in coordination with each other than Kobolds. And unlike Orcs, among whom only superior individuals could use magic, most female Ghouls were capable of casting spells.

Their reproductive capabilities were far inferior to those of Orcs, but for the noblemen and knights gathered here, that was irrelevant information.

Since the Ghouls had defeated a group of over five hundred Orcs, the

noblemen had deduced that their numbers would be around the same or at least four hundred.

... Though in reality, the number of effective combatants was only around two hundred, including Vandalieu himself and the Undead that obeyed his command.

When that large army came attacking, its fangs would first be bared at this town that was close by to the Devil's Nest. Nobody could blame the ruler of that town, Viscount Balchesse, for looking as if he could faint at any moment.

「M-Marshal! Please grant me your assistance!」

「Of course, Viscount Balchesse. Let us immediately organize a larger extermination force and eradicate those Ghouls and that Dhampir from that Devil's Nest.」

Marshal Palpapek had managed to secure the organization of a larger extermination force while still having it done under the request of the local ruler. If this operation succeeded and he managed to exterminate the Dhampir that had escaped High Priest Gordan, who was renowned as a Vampire hunter, his fame would increase even further.

(Rather than try to keep guessing at the politics beneath the surface, I must get out of here!)

Luciliano didn't want to see that Dhampir's face again. Thinking about that, he continued to wait for his employer to grant him permission to leave.

- **Name:** Vigaro
- **Rank:** 6
- **Race:** Ghoul Berserker
- **Level:** 5
- **Job:** None
- **Job level:** 100
- **Job history:** None
- **Age:** 168 years old

- **Passive skills:**

    - Night Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 4
    - Pain Resistance: Level 4
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1

- **Active skills:**
    - Axe Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 2
    - Commanding: Level 3
    - Coordination: Level 2

- **Name:** Basdia
- **Rank:** 4
- **Race:** Ghoul Warrior
- **Level:** 63
- **Job:** None
- **Job history:** None
- **Age:** 26 years old

- **Passive skills:**
    - Night Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Pain Resistance: Level 2
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 3

- **Active skills:**
    - Axe Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Shield Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Bow Technique: Level 2
    - Javelin Technique: Level 1
    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - Coordination: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Status Effects:**

- Infertility

Notes

1. After some Wikipedia-work, I've discovered that earl is below the rank of marquess. Palpapek is only an earl because the position above that, marquess, is reserved for royal family members. Duke is above the rank of marquess. These parts were tricky to translate, but I'm pretty sure I got this.

Chapter 24: I, my allies and my enemies cannot be stopped once we start moving

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The day after finding out about the existence of a large pack of Ghouls led by a Dhampir through Luciliano's report, Marshal Thomas Palpapek was in the office of the villa that he was staying in, battling against a mountain of documents.

Normally, organizing and dispatching a monster extermination force would be the work of the region's ruler and Adventurers' Guild. However, in this case, the size of the extermination force was unusually large, and knights and soldiers of the nation's army would be participating as well as adventurers. The local ruler, Viscount Berno Balchesse, had handed over command to Marshal Palpapek and begged him for assistance.

Of course, that didn't mean that there was no work for Viscount Balchesse to do. But as everything was under Marshal Palpapek's jurisdiction, it was his signature that was needed as the final approval for each document, and if there were any mistakes, it would be his responsibility.

This arrangement had been decided this morning.

In order to increase the number of participating personnel beyond what was originally planned, order documents needed to be sent to request the use of knights and soldiers of the nation's army.

As the numbers of soldiers and knights were being increased, the budget for equipment also needed to increase.

On top of that, more provisions would be required to feed those soldiers and knights.

More spies needed to be dispatched to keep watch on the Devil's Nest.

The negotiations with the Adventurers' Guild were handled by the finance minister, not the marshal. Thus, everything needed to go through the noblemen

working under the finance minister, only adding to the height of the mountain of documents.

The silver lining was that the Amid Empire had recently won a battle over the Orbaume Kingdom while suffering few losses, so there were plenty of funds to work with.

Well, even requesting the use of that budget required the marshal to read through and sign yet another document.

「This looks terrible. Seeing you having to spend your already short lifespan on such tedious work, I cannot suppress my sympathy for you, Thomas.」

Noticing the cold night air and a voice coming from a window that he had no recollection of opening, Marshal Palpapek finished his signature that he was in the midst of writing before putting down his pen.

「If you feel that way, won't you help me? My immortal friend.」

As he looked up, there was a single bat in front of him.

「I believe that I have helped you plenty, my friend. Or could it be, Thomas, that you have realized the emptiness of being famous in human society and come to desire eternity?」

Flowing words spoken in a composed tone came from the mouth of the bat. Ordinary people would have been surprised at the bat that was calling the marshal by his first name, but the marshal gave an unimpressed response.

「No, I have no intention of becoming one of you, and I am sure that you people wouldn't want that, either. Do not speak such insincere words, Vampire.」

This bat was a familiar sent by a Vampire.

Marshal Thomas Palpapek was the second son born to the Palpapek family of earls. The shield-nation of Mirg[1] had been entrusted the role of being the nation with the most powerful army, defending the Empire from the Orbaume Kingdom's army for generations. Even considering the long history of the Palpapek family of earls and their involvement in Mirg's military affairs, Thomas had been an exceptional young man.

But no matter how exceptional he was, he was still only the second son. Even so, if the family's eldest son had been a great failure, then perhaps he could have become the one to succeed the family. However, though the eldest son was a little inferior to Thomas, he was still a fine man.

It was clear in everyone's eyes that Thomas was superior in both the literary and military arts. Thomas and the eldest son both understood this as well.

However, no matter how clear the difference between them was, because it was a「moderate」difference, the family would not go to the lengths of denying succession to the elder son to make Thomas an earl.

No matter which of the brothers rose to the position of marshal, strongholds, soldiers and knights wouldn't change. The vassals that had supported the Palpapek family of earls wouldn't change, either.

Including small-scale skirmishes, war with the Orbaume Kingdom continued to occur once every few years, but the shield-nation of Mirg was a shield, after all. The ones standing in the position of Mirg's marshal were only in charge of defensive battles; the ones in command of the glorious battles of invasion had always been the other marshals or generals of the Amid Empire.

And so, no matter how superior Thomas was to his elder brother, a future where he would succeed the family of earls was impossible.

At this rate, Thomas would be adopted as a son-in-law by a noble family with a court rank of baron or lower that had only daughters, or become a vassal who served his older brother.

At that time, a Vampire appeared before him.「Do you not want to succeed your family of earls? Can you bear the fact that your elder brother who is inferior to you will stand above you merely because he was born a little earlier?」Thomas collaborated with the Vampire who whispered these words to him, succeeded his family of earls in place of his elder brother who perished in an unforeseen accident and rose to the position of marshal.

「Kukuku, indeed. A collaborator in a nobleman's position as high as yours is precious, after all.」

The Vampire implied that without his position as marshal, Thomas would be

worthless. Unable to endure any more idle talk, Thomas spoke.

「You know what needs to be done, don't you?」(Thomas)

「I certainly do. It is to do with the Dhampir born between the traitor Valen and a Dark Elf woman, is it not? We went to the lengths of providing you with the information, but it seems that you have let him slip away, haven't you?」(Vampire)

Thomas wasn't knowledgeable about the details of Vampire clans and factions, but he did know that they were largely divided into two main factions: Those who followed the evil gods, and those who followed the goddess Vida.

And this Vampire belonged to the faction that followed the evil gods. However, they were not planning humanity's ruin or anything of the sort.

After the Demon King Guduranis was destroyed, the surviving evil gods who had lost their ruler broke up, acting on their own as they pleased.

There were those who searched for the fallen Demon King's sealed flesh in order to resurrect him.

There were those who plotted revenge against the humans and gods that had brought about the Demon King's ruin.

There were the lazy who simply indulged in inactivity and delicious food.

There were those who had decided that there was nothing of worth in this world and departed for others.

There were even those who struggled with the other evil gods for power.

And then there were those who had abandoned their original goals and simply did everything they could to satisfy their own desires. The evil god that the Vampire here was serving belonged to this group.

But for that evil god and the Vampires that served him, Dhampirs, which were half-Vampires, were apparently creatures that needed to be eliminated for various reasons.

Dhampirs weren't decisively problematic for them. If Dhampirs were to join the humans and begin hunting Vampires, it would be an eyesore. In order to preserve the noble pride of the Vampires. As an example to other Vampires in

the faction. Also, simply because it was interesting to torment and kill Dhampirs in front of other Vampires who spoke of things like romance and love.

Those were the reasons.

The owner of the bat in front of Thomas was a Vampire whose name and face Thomas did not know. He had been ordered by an even higher-ranking Vampire to hunt down this Dhampir that had been born between the Subordinate Vampire Valen and a Dark Elf.

These Vampires had finished Valen, but had deliberately allowed the Dark Elf who was pregnant with the Dhampir to escape. Of course, this was not an act of compassion.

The Vampires had wanted to see this Dark Elf and Dhampir die gruesome deaths at the hands of the humans. The evil god that they served would be particularly pleased by such a show.

That was why they had given Thomas information regarding the Dhampir. But in the end, only the Dark Elf mother had been killed and the Dhampir's whereabouts had been unknown. They had assumed that the child who was of breastfeeding age at the time would have starved to death somewhere after its mother had died.

But it had survived and now it was the Ghoul King in a Devil's Nest far from Evbejia. When contacted by Thomas with this information, the Vampire had felt the emotion of surprise that he had almost forgotten recently, and dispatched a familiar.

「... At that time, there were many uncertain factors.」(Thomas)

As the Vampire pointed out Thomas's shortcomings, Thomas made a sour-looking face as he remembered those times.

When Thomas first heard the information about the Dhampir, he had passed that information to a promising party of adventurers called the『Five-colored Blades』that were trying to capture the Dhampir at the time. Thomas had intended for them to build up achievements for themselves.

He had planned to use this opportunity to make strong connections, having the『Five-colored Blades』accept his requests in the future and making it known

that they were adventurers that were for the marshal's personal use, and if things went well, he would have made them his subordinates.

However, by coincidence, High Priest Goldan of the Amid Empire's Church of Alda had been staying in a village near Evbejia and intervened as a result.

In addition to that, the Dark Elf had never given up the Dhampir's location, even as she died. This caused High Priest Gordan to lose his temper. Ignoring the attempts of Thomas's subordinate to stop him, he executed her.

And then the『Five-colored Blades』that had been crucial to Thomas's plans had left Evbejia after the Dark Elf's execution without searching for the Dhampir.

Because of that, Thomas had no choice but to leave the search for the Dhampir to High Priest Gordan, whom he didn't have a single ounce of control over. In the end, he was unable to finish the Dhampir off, allowing the Dhampir the opportunity to survive.

「The most uncertain factor is how the Dhampir that was of breastfeeding age was able to stay hidden from the High Priest's search and survive until now.」(Vampire)

「Precisely. He even leads the Ghouls and seems to have undergone a Job change somewhere to acquire the Job of Spiritualist.」(Thomas)

「Spiritualist, you say? No matter how much he has grown, it is uncertain if he is even three years of age, is it not?」(Vampire)

「Indeed. Apparently he was able to see that the Live-Dead was a familiar being used by the hired adventurer.」(Thomas)

Thomas, Viscount Balchesse, the knights and the others were under the assumption that Vandalieu had known what the Live-Dead was because he had attained the Job of Spiritualist.

Not even in their wildest dreams would they imagine that Vandalieu was a user of death-attribute magic, magic that had never existed in this world until now.

「A Spiritualist... He has chosen quite a unique Job. I do not believe that his

father Valen had the talent. Then perhaps it is from his mother's blood? Well, it is fine. He will soon be exterminated. Isn't that right, Marshal-dono?」(Vampire)

「Of course. I will eliminate the problematic Dhampir along with the whole pack of Ghouls. I am even going to be calling those irritating religious fanatics of the Church of Alda for this, after all.」(Thomas)

For Thomas, it was absolutely necessary to meet the demands of the Vampires. He didn't desire immortality, nor did he feel any gratitude to them for helping him attain his court rank. He needed the Vampires' power for his plans.

Thomas's homeland, the shield-nation of Mirg, had always been a part of the Amid Empire ever since it was founded. The royal family of Mirg was considered only equivalent to marquesses in the Amid Empire; the nation was forced to endure difficult defensive battles and the glorious victories in battle were always stolen by the Empire.

Mirg was suppressed by the Empire even in peaceful times, and when it tried to build up strength as a nation, the Empire would interfere and hinder it.

Just when Mirg would manage to build up some strength despite that, a pointless expedition would be forced upon it for some reason or another and its power would be weakened again. The Titan extermination two hundred years ago had been particularly terrible. Many soldiers and heroes of that time were lost, as well as a holy lance that was a national treasure. They received no notable spoils of war in return, nor did they gain any new territory.

After having been treated so terribly, it was only natural for the royals and noblemen of the Mirg shield-nation to dearly wish for independency.

And Thomas's plan was to deliver that wish to his homeland with his own two hands. And then he would rise to a more important social position in the newly independent Mirg shield-nation... No, Mirg Kingdom.

For that purpose, he needed to increase the Mirg shield-nation's strength while weakening the Amid Empire, little by little.

The power of the Vampires, who viewed the Amid Empire as their enemy, was absolutely essential for that.

「But that would mean calling the High Priest, would it not? He is currently a candidate to become the next Cardinal. Are you planning to allow him to add more to his achievements?」(Vampire)

「Other than him, I am also planning to have the【Green Wind Spear】Riley participate as well.」

「Hooh, the man who left the【Five-colored Blades】that departed the Mirg shield-nation? I wonder how much use a C-class adventurer who obtained a Title because of the Heinz's work can be.」

「He is already a B-class adventurer. But if you are so concerned, why not join us as well? We are planning to journey across the plains for three days in the sunlight until we reach the Devil's Nest, however.」

「Kukuku, I must decline that proposition. We do have『confidence』in you, after all. More importantly, did you contact me just to report this information?」

「No, there is something I wanted to confirm, just in case. It is about the Dhampir. The Golem transformation incident in Evbejia... Is that not the Dhampir's work?」

The mysterious incident that occurred one year ago, in which a town's outer walls, the ruler's house and the building of the Adventurers' Guild had turned into Golems and walked out of the town.

The investigation was still continuing with the help of the Mages' Guild, but they hadn't even figured out just how the crime was committed, let alone caught the culprit. All they had managed to do was come up with theories that were full of holes.

Was this not the crime of the problematic Dhampir? That was what Thomas suspected. He had not mentioned it in the morning in front of Viscount Balchesse and Luciliano, however, because he had no positive evidence and even thought it was a preposterous theory himself.

「Do not be so foolish.」(Vampire)

In fact, Thomas's theory was nothing more than a poor joke to the Vampire.

「You humans consider Dhampirs dangerous as they have fewer weaknesses

than us Vampires, but it seems that you overestimate them. The qualities of a Dhampir, especially those to do with the abilities of a Vampire, are heavily influenced by the Vampire parent. If the parent excels in the use of magic, then the child will as well. If the parent has the ability to transform into a bat, then the child has a high chance of possessing that ability as well.」(Vampire)

「Conversely, if the parent is not particularly gifted in magic for a Vampire, then the child will have similar qualities. I know that much.」(Thomas)

As the Vampire and Thomas were saying, a Dhampir's talent as a Vampire depended on the Vampire parent.

The Vampires that followed the evil gods found it ironic that Dhampir children with the mixed blood of other races were the ones that inherited the Vampire parent's qualities so strongly, however.

「Though Valen was indeed exceptionally resistant to the sun, he was a Subordinate who was not particularly strong for his age other than that. I heard that he was only able to cast simple spells. His Jobs were Apprentice Thief, Thief and Fighter; it is unimaginable that he had dormant talents. And even if Valen did possess some qualities, a child that was one or two years old at the time would not have been able to make use of them.」(Vampire)

「I suppose that is true...」(Thomas)

「Is the mother not more suspicious? That Dhampir is apparently a Spiritualist. Perhaps he has borrowed the power of his mother's spirit?」(Vampire)

Those with the Spiritualist Job can communicate with spirits and gain knowledge from them. Those with advanced ability with the Job can take it a step further and use magic that those spirits had used while they were alive.

The Vampire wondered if the Dhampir, who had become a Spiritualist at a young age, could be making use of secret alchemy techniques that his mother had used while she was alive. But this time, it was Thomas who refuted his theory.

「I investigated the mother; she was a D-class adventurer and while she could use spiritual magic, she seemed to have no understanding of alchemy. I cannot imagine that she knew any secret alchemy techniques.」(Thomas)

「Then I am sure that it was just a coincidence that this incident occurred around the same time. Is your business with me finished? Well then, I will excuse myself. Even we who live for all eternity cannot afford to spend our time idly.」

With those words, the bat flapped its wings silently and took off out the window. Thomas snorted as he watched it fly away while closing the window, and then let out a whisper.

「A coincidence, is it?」

The shield-nation of Mirg was investigating the Evbejia incident not merely as something that concerned only that small town in some remote region, but as a major event that shook the whole country. The reason for that was because if what happened in that town were to happen at the citadel...

No matter how sturdy the forts, no matter how tall and thick the walls, all of it would be meaningless. No, if the Golems decided to attack the humans inside instead of leaving like they had in Evbejia, even an elite army would sustain heavy losses, unable to make free use of their strength.

The attacks would come from the walls, ceilings and floors. How would troop formation be maintained in such a situation?

To prevent such an event from occurring, the mystery of how the town's outer walls had turned into Golems had to be solved.

However, even the upper ranks of the Mages' Guild had been unable to come up with an answer.

In the first place, Golems were things that an alchemist spent effort and Mana to create.

In order to create a Golem, materials had to be prepared and divided into separate parts for the arms, legs, and torso, all kinds of catalysts and spirit powders needed to be applied for the different parts while casting spells, and then an artificial core needed to be implanted inside to make it move.

After all of that, one would have produced a Golem.

That was why it was impossible to make Golems from the outer walls of the

town that had already been built, the ruler's house and Adventurers' Guild building that had been in use and the earth of the fields that the farmers had been plowing every day to produce crops.

If there was an alchemist who could do this, then not only the shield-nation of Mirg but the entire Amid Empire would do their best to apprehend him. If that was impossible then they would cover up his existence.

「Indeed, it is just a coincidence after all.」

There was no way for a Dhampir who was three years of age at most to be such an exceptional individual. Thomas took on the facial expression of Marshal Palpapek once more as he picked up his pen and turned his attention back to the documents.

Perhaps if Luciliano had realized that Vandalieu had turned the Ent-made outer wall of the Orc village into Golems, if he had figured out that Vandalieu possessed an abnormally large Mana Pool, then Marshal Palpapek might have come to a different conclusion.

Well, even if he were to figure it out now, it would already be too late.

His mistake was the poor choice of relying on his【common knowledge】to deal with the【unprecedented】situation of a Dhampir child being a King that had united the Ghouls.

***

Around the time Marshal Palpapek was having a private conversation with a Vampire, Vandalieu and the other Ghouls were traveling back towards their home village.

The one hundred or so captive Ghoul women that they had rescued were in poor physical states after having been left in poor living conditions for so long and because their food intake had been deliberately restricted to keep their strength low. Some of them had limbs that had been broken and then healed at crooked angles. They weren't in any state to walk long distances.

The female adventurers who were aspiring to undergo the Ghoul transformation ritual weren't any better off; they were considerably weakened as well.

More than a hundred women in this state had to be carried through a Devil's Nest that monsters dwelled in. It was quite the difficult task.

The one carrying out the task was Sam and the other carriages created by Vandalieu.

「Get up, combine, transform.」

The remains of the Ent-made Wood Golems that the Orcs had destroyed. Vandalieu turned them into Wood Golems once more and used the【Golem Transmutation】skill to have them combine into a single piece of wood. And then, using Sam as a model, he created carriages from them.

Normally, making a carriage using only wood with no metal parts wouldn't go very well, but because the Ent logs were as hard as iron while still possessing the properties of wood, and because the entire carriage was a Golem, it moved without any problems. In fact, the wheels turned on their own without needing anything to pull the carriages.

Fortunately, there was an incredible amount of ruins lying around to be used as materials. Under Bugogan's orders, the Orcs had probably cut down enough Ents to make them extinct in this Devil's Nest.

「If you were to live in a human city, boy, I am sure you would be able to make a living doing this.」(Zadiris)

「Building carriages? The materials here are good, but I'm sure they're not particularly worth selling if you compare them to something built by a specialized craftsman.」(Vandalieu)

「No, I am talking about the lumber. In human cities, they pay gold to obtain lumber, don't they? With this technique, you could even create lumber from sawdust, could you not?」(Zadiris)

「I can definitely make lumber as long as the wood hasn't been burned to ashes, but...」(Vandalieu)

Unlike metal, one could not put a piece of wood that had already been cut into a furnace to melt it to have a piece of usable material again. That was why carpenters devoted their time to improving their technique.

However, if Vandalieu used his【Golem Transmutation】skill, he could freely turn already-cut pieces of wood back into a larger piece of timber, even though he didn't possess such techniques.

If he wanted, he could turn branches and sawdust produced by sawing fallen trees into lumber that could be used to make pillars or floorboards.

Even the Ghouls who possessed no monetary system knew that this was an innovative technique.

「But I don't really want to make that my occupation.」(Vandalieu)

「Hmm? Why is that? Could you not make a large profit by doing so?」(Zadiris)

As Zadiris asked the unenthusiastic Vandalieu these questions, he answered with a sigh.

「Getting to the point of being able to make a large profit seems like it will be very troublesome.」

What Vandalieu was able to do was essentially wood scrap recycling. Since it was a recycling process, the timber he produced would be second-hand goods. On Earth, people might think of it as regenerated wood and he might be able to play the ecologically-friendly game, but Lambda hadn't seemed to have even invented steam engines, let alone reached technologically advanced civilization. It was doubtful how much value ecologically-friendly products would have or if people would even understand the concept of ecological friendliness.

Considering that, what kind of price would second-hand goods made from scraps sell for...?

On top of that, this process was impossible without the【Golem Transmutation】skill. He would soon be learning Alchemy, but he wouldn't be able to create a Magic Item that would allow others to use this skill.

In other words, Vandalieu would have to do everything personally.

In the end, if he tried to profit by using the【Golem Transmutation】skill to create ecologically-friendly timber, there was a chance that he would be working long hours for little gain.

For Vandalieu, who had lived with a luxury complex, this was an unacceptable

choice.

「Well, if it was high-quality lumber like ebony on Earth, I might be able to earn a lot and I could do the same with building stones, so with marble... Ah, but if there is something like a Stonemasons' Guild, they might investigate the source of my stones. For lumber, there might be something like a Lumberjacks' Guild, too...」

「It seems that human society is complicated. Boy, let us leave the deliberation at that, shall we?」

Zadiris patted Vandalieu's head with these words, as he had begun to use his brain to contemplate the potential troubles.

Incidentally, the Ent lumber that Vandalieu had used to create the carriages was worth ten times more than common wood like cedar and pine in human society, but Vandalieu would not learn that for quite some time to come.

【Vandalieu has acquired the Carpentry skill! The level of the Strengthen Follower skills has increased!】

『Bocchan! Leave the women to me!』

And Sam's Rank had increased from the great amount of Experience Points that he had earned in yesterday's battle.

The Level 3 Ghost Carriage had run over and killed Rank 5 Orc Generals and the Rank 7 Noble Orc Bugogan in addition to the Rank 3 Orcs. There was no doubt that a huge amount of Experience Points had been poured into him.

Thanks to this, the dangerous spikes that Tarea had attached to the carriage had fused with the carriage's body, and he was now a Rank 4 Blood Carriage.

And with the skills he had gained when his Rank increased,【Size Alteration】and【Comfort Maintenance】, he was particularly useful for transporting the weakened women.

【Size Alteration】was a skill that changed the size of Sam's body, allowing him to grow from his original size of being a three-horse carriage to a four-horse carriage, or shrink to a two-horse carriage.

【Comfort Maintenance】was a skill that allowed him to maintain comfort

inside the carriage at all times, no matter what the conditions were like outside.

And thanks to the【Impact Resistance】skill, the carriage didn't vibrate at all when traveling normally.

His race had changed into a dangerous-sounding one, but Sam's convenient features were steadily increasing.

Because of the Experience Points earned in yesterday's battle, Vigaro and Sam weren't the only ones whose Ranks had increased. Many of the Ghouls had increased in Rank to become Ghoul Warriors or Ghoul Grapplers.

Among Vandalieu's servants, Saria, Rita and Bone Bird's Ranks had also increased.

Though Saria and Rita had Ranked up, their races hadn't changed; they were still a Living High-Leg Armor and Living Bikini Armor.

This was probably because the two of them hadn't been able to fully manifest the powers that their armor possessed before, but with the Experience Points that they had gained, they were now able to manifest them to some extent.

The fact that their races hadn't changed was because they had developed, but still weren't using the suits of armor to their full potential.

『I want to hurry and become a powerful monster, a maid who wouldn't have to let Bocchan allow his enemies to cut his flesh and bones in order to break the enemy's bones[2]!』

『I know that you want to say that that's not what a maid does, Bocchan. But both Rita and I are serious about this!』

It seemed that the two of them had been greatly shocked by the sight of Vandalieu lying on the ground, covered in blood with his torso cut open.

This had renewed their drive to become stronger. This was very promising news.

『Gueeeh.』

Bone Bird had become a Rank 4 Specter Bird. The Spirit Form that had covered its bones was even brighter, and from a distance, it would look like a sparkling bird of good omens.

But apparently the people of some regions considered the appearance of such a monster to be a bad omen. Vandalieu could only hope that there were no such regions in the Orbaume Kingdom.

And the heaviest luggage that would be problematic to transport back to the village... the spoils of war, the corpses of the enemies. But this problem was the easiest to solve.

After all, it was simple to have the spoils of war walk the distance on their own.

『Bufuuh.』

『... Giih... Bugiih...』

With the【Preservation】spell cast on them after draining their blood to suspend their decomposition, the Orcs, Kobolds and the corpses of the beasts that the Orcs had been using didn't need to be carried after they had been turned into Zombies.

In fact, since they could carry the weapons and armor they had used while they were alive and the belongings that they had stolen from adventurers, they were luggage carriers rather than luggage themselves.

Even though they were Zombies, their decomposition had been halted with death-attribute magic and not even one day had passed since they died, so their flesh and organs were still nice and fresh.

After getting back to the village, Vandalieu would take the spirits possessing them back out and they would turn back into normal corpses and there would be no problem in harvesting materials from their bodies and eating their meat.

But monsters didn't know this; to them, these were Zombies, not prey. And so the Zombies wouldn't be attacked by monsters and there was no need to have someone watch them to make sure monsters wouldn't take them away.

One problem was that the Zombies walked slowly, but since the weakened Ghoul women were being transported, it didn't matter that the Zombies were slow.

「Having Vandalieu turn all the prey that we hunt into Zombies from now on

would make them easier to transport back to the village!」

Vigaro and the others approved of this method.

After Vandalieu regained his composure from Zadiris's soothing words, he walked on, not paying any attention to the Zombie of Bugogan who was letting out a moaned『Bugoh...』

It's not that there was no space for him to ride on Sam or one of the other carriages. He was turning three soon, so he wanted to start building up his physical fitness.

『Say, Vandalieu. What do you think about me becoming an Undead or Golem? And then I would become strong and fight with you. Don't you think that would be wonderful?』

「I'm happy that you feel that way, but I don't know about that. If you stay in the same vessel for too long, the shape of your spirit can change so I don't know if that might affect me resurrecting you later.」

If a creature's spirit stayed in a certain vessel for a long time, the shape of its spirit would change to match that vessel.

For example, Sam was originally a human man, but if Vandalieu were to remove his spirit from the carriage that he possessed, his spirit would likely resemble the carriage, not his appearance from when he was alive.

That was how easy it was for spirits that had lost their bodies to change shape. Strong malice, hatred and lingering regrets were necessary for a spirit to maintain its original shape.

「And since you have almost no malice or hatred, I think you'd be influenced really easily by the shape of your vessel, Mom. That's why I think it's better not to do that.」

Honestly, Vandalieu couldn't believe that. The fact that Darcia had almost no hatred and malice.

How could she not lose herself to hatred and malice after having been killed in such a cruel way?

He had once asked her directly, but she had only told him,「Because Vandalieu

is alive and doing well.」

『I see, well then, make sure you don't do anything like letting your enemy cut your flesh and bones to break his bones[3], okay?』

If Darcia's words were true and Vandalieu still being alive was the reason she worried about him without feeling any malice towards those who had killed her, then that only made his desire for revenge on them burn even stronger.

『Don't do anything dangerous against the people who are coming with an extermination force this time, either.』

But now wasn't the time for that. It was nowhere near, not even close to the time for that. Vandalieu suppressed his desire for revenge back into the bottom of his heart.

「Yeah, I promise. I won't do anything dangerous.」

- **Name**: Bone Bird
- **Rank**: 4
- **Race**: Specter Bird
- **Level**: 37
- **Passive skills**:
  - Dark Vision
  - Spirit Form: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 2
- **Active skills**:
  - Silent Steps: Level 1
  - Swift Flight: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Projectile Fire: Level 2 (NEW!)

- **Name**: Sam
- **Rank**: 4
- **Race**: Blood Carriage
- **Level**: 72
- **Passive skills**:

    - Spirit Form: Level 3
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 3
    - Rough Road Travel: Level 2
    - Impact Resistance: Level 2
    - Precise Driving: Level 3
    - Comfort Maintenance: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - High-Speed Travel: Level 1
    - Charge: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Size Alteration: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Blood Carriages】

Chariots covered in an indescribable amount of death and hatred, so much that they are stained pure-red with the blood of both their enemies and allies on the battlefield and turned into Undead to become Blood Chariots… These are the carriage version of those.

Normally, the body of a carriage wouldn't be covered in such an indescribable amount of death and hatred, so Sam may be the first instance of a Blood Carriage appearing in Lambda.

Blood Carriages are Undead that feel only the urge to murder and think only of crushing living things to death, so they they do not allow anyone to ride them even if there is space for them to do so.

However, Sam allows people to ride him (mainly Vandalieu) and even does everything he can to make his journeys comfortable for his passengers. Perhaps because he has been training using his【Precise Driving】skill every night so that there will be no problems when they cross the mountain range in the future, he has acquired the【Comfort Maintenance】and【Size Alteration】skills.

In addition, his strength in battle has been improved due to the spikes and armor that Tarea has installed. Furthermore, this additional equipment was fused with the carriage that is Sam's body when his Rank increased.

Notes

1. The Mirg nation has always been referred to as the shield-nation of Mirg/Mirg shield-nation in this novel. I've omitted the "shield" part up until now because it didn't make any sense, but now that it's finally been explained after 20-something chapters, I'll start adding it to my translation.

2. There's a Japanese phrase that translates to something like, "Let your enemy cut your flesh and you will break his bones." It's apparently similar to the English phrase that goes, "Give an inch to take a mile." In Vandalieu's case, he let both his flesh and his bones to be cut to beat Bugogan, so this variation on the phrase is something of a pun/joke/humor thing.

3. The same phrase as earlier.

Chapter 25: The journey by carriage, pushing through the mountains

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As Vandalieu and the others made a triumphant return home, they were welcomed with cheers from the Ghouls who had remained in the village.

They had expanded the village beforehand in preparation, but since the population had increased by over a hundred Ghoul women who had been held captive, it now exceeded the village's limits. But nobody cared about that.

And then the rescued Ghoul women and adventurers were allowed to rest while Vandalieu undid the Undead transformation on the food and spoils of war that had walked here on their own two legs so that they could be properly dismantled.

The tongues and eyeballs of the Kobold Mages could be used as materials for Alchemy. The fur of the Kobold Generals could be used for armor and clothing, while their fangs would make good knives.

The only thing to be gained from ordinary Orcs was their meat, but the tendons of the Orc Generals could be used to make bowstrings. Meanwhile, the tongues, eyeballs and livers of the Orc mages would be used as more ingredients for Alchemy.

And every part of the Noble Orcs' bodies could be used as materials. Their meat would be used for food; their intestines would be used in Alchemy or to make medicine; their skin would be used to make leather items; their bones would be used to make armor or weapons; their genitals would be used in medicines that boosted sexual function; their golden hair would be used to weave stab-proof clothing.

And, of course, their Magic Stones.

If one were to bring these to an Adventurers' Guild, they could be paid a hefty sum for them.

「Ufufufu, materials~ materials~ I wonder what I should make~♪」

It's a bit gruesome but she's having a lot of fun, Vandalieu thought as he saw Tarea skillfully handling a knife to dismantle Bugogan into pieces while humming to herself. As he did so, she suddenly turned around.

「Come to think of it, Van-sama, what will you do from now?」

The knife dripping wet with blood and fat that she was holding close to her face was gruesome indeed, but it seemed that she was concerned about what Vandalieu's future plans were.

The Ghoul King was a role that only existed while multiple Ghoul villages unified against a common enemy; it was different to the King Title of other races like Goblins or Kobolds.

Now that the Noble Orcs had been defeated and the rest of the enemies eliminated, there was no point in Vandalieu continuing to be the Ghoul King, nor was there a reason for all of the Ghouls to continue to stay in one place. Tarea and her followers would return to their original village and go back to living their normal lives.

(That is precisely why I must take Van-sama back with me!)

Tarea held this thought in her heart as Vandalieu replied.

「About that, there is something I want to discuss tomorrow.」

「Eh?! Something you want to discuss with just the two of us~♪」

「No, with everyone.」

「I-I guessed that would be the case. Ho, hohoho...」

That night's dinner was a feast to celebrate their victory; the Ghouls praised each other's deeds over grilled skewers and soups made from Orc meat. The appetites of the women who had been held captive were particularly fierce.

They devoured the Orc meat greedily, as if in repayment for having been treated as playthings for so long.

Even the female adventurers who had only been desiring death had vigorous appetites. Right now, they only wanted to undergo the Ghoul transformation to

become Vandalieu's followers, so it seemed that Zadiris's advice of,「Your bodies won't be able to handle the ritual if you don't build up your strength a little」had been effective.

Vandalieu had never imagined that the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill would be effective on humans that had lost the will to live and only desired death.

「If I was on Earth right now, I could probably make a lot of friends just by standing near famous suicide spots.」

Well, if he actually did that, he would probably end up as the founder of a new religion, so even if he was on Earth, he probably wouldn't do it.

Vandalieu munched on a Noble Orc skewer as he thought about this.

The meat had been smeared with tare sauce[1] made from fruits and herbs that grew in the Devil's Nest before being cooked. Each bite filled his mouth with the meat's juice and melted fat, but the tare sauce provided it with a clean aftertaste; it was the kind of food that he could eat endlessly.

He couldn't help but to be emotionally moved by the taste of the meat.

Among the foods that he had eaten since reincarnating in Lambda, the wild boars had been tasty, but the meat of the Huge Boars that he had been eating since he starting living in this village had been even tastier. But the meat of the Noble Orc surpassed even that.

Even high-quality pork from Earth couldn't compare to this. It was so delicious that Vandalieu was sure of this, even though he had never eaten high-quality pork.

「Uu, I won, I finally won one against them...」

While eating the meat of the Noble Orc that he would definitely not have been able to taste on Earth, he felt proud of his victory against his uncle's family.

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The first step in the ritual to turn human women into Ghouls was to dig a hole in the ground large enough to contain all of the women undergoing it. Next, Ghoul blood and the venom secreted by their claws were added to the mud

while offering prayers to the goddess Vida.

And then more mud was put back into the hole, submerging the women.

They would then be transformed from humans into Ghouls after three days.

「It just looks like we're drowning them...」

Staring at the mud that Kachia and the other female adventurers had been submerged in, he repeatedly used his magic to check that he could still detect signs of their life; he couldn't help it. After all, in normal circumstances, they would be suffocating to death.

「There is no problem with this. This is the method that has been used since long ago. Though if we tried this on races other than humans, such as monsters or other races created by Vida, they would drown.」

「Van-sama, this is how I transformed from a human into a Ghoul.」

Hearing the approval of the two elders, Zadiris and Tarea, and sensing that he could still detect the female adventurers' signs of life after ten minutes, Vandalieu was convinced.

「More importantly, we must continue the discussion from the other day, must we not?」

「You're right.」

A night had passed since the victory feast, and the Ghouls' festive mood had faded away. They were gathered together and were waiting for Vandalieu. Including Tarea, they thought that Vandalieu would now begin discussing the allocations of the one hundred Ghoul women whose home villages had been destroyed and now had no place to go and the female adventurers that were being turned into Ghouls, the promised Magic Items that would increase the birth rate of Ghouls and Vandalieu's future.

The women who had been made pregnant by the monsters would heal back to normal a few months after childbirth, and there wouldn't be a problem allocating ten of them to each of the other villages. And they had even just obtained so much food that it would actually decompose before they could finish it all if it weren't for Vandalieu's method of preserving it.

The female adventurers would probably all be treated as Vandalieu's spoils of war. That way, it wouldn't take any time or effort to teach them various things after their transformation into Ghouls, and Vandalieu had achieved enough to deserve that.

It was strange that one of them wasn't undergoing the ritual and under Vandalieu's personal care; that was probably Vandalieu's favorite.

Vandalieu had promised to distribute the Magic Items when he made them. Zadiris's and Tarea's villages would compete for which village would have Vandalieu stay with them, so there was no need for them to say anything about that.

The great number of Ghouls gathered here expected that these were the topics that would be discussed.

However, Vandalieu proved those expectations wrong with the tone of his first word.

「Everyone, please listen to me calmly. By summer at latest, there will be a large army of humans coming here to kill us all.」

***

It was April. About two months after the news that the Noble Orcs' village had been annihilated by a pack of Ghouls led by a Dhampir, an extermination force of a thousand, organized under Marshal Palpapek's leadership, invaded the Devil's Nest forest.

There were three hundred D-class adventurers and a hundred C-class adventurers. There was also a brigade of Holy Warriors of Alda with High Priest Gordan as their leader, the B-class【Green Wind Spear】Riley who had formerly belonged to the Five-colored Blades as well as the soldiers and knights.

For the sake of perfection, the marshal had wanted to hire several more B-class adventurers, but gathering too many adventurers of B-class or above in one place would cause problems in dealing with monsters elsewhere, so he had gathered capable C-class adventurers instead to create an extermination force of this size.

「Heheheh, sorry, but the Dhampir is mine. Back then, I had to let it escape

because Heinz didn’t agree with me, but I’m free now. I’ll add this to my list of achievements.」

「Do as you wish! As long as the blood of an evil Vampire and witch is stamped out, the god will give his blessings no matter who performs the task!」

The grinning Riley and High Priest Gordan whose mouth was turned down at the corners were the centerpieces of the extermination force, and everyone expected these two to defeat the higher-Rank Ghouls and the Dhampir.

Even the other adventurers and knights followed their commands.

Both of them were top-notch among adventurers, and since they possessed the strength of B-class that surpassed the boundaries of human capabilities, it was only natural that they were being treated this way as the extermination force contained no adventurers of A-class or higher.

Marshal Palpapek had constantly stationed Spies between the town and the Devil’s Nest to make sure that the Ghouls didn’t come to attack the town, but the Ghouls had shown no movements until now.

「The Ghouls are expecting us to come to them. I can only pray to my god that they do not strike you when your guard is down, turning you into Experience Points for them.」(Gordan)

The fact that the Ghouls weren’t coming out of the Devil’s Nest despite knowing that the humans were on the move no doubt meant that they had prepared themselves and were planning an ambush. That was the conclusion that the leaders of the extermination force, including High Priest Bormack Gordan, had come to.

That was why all of the members of the extermination force looked nervous.

「I don’t need you to tell me that. They’ll just become stepping stones for me to surpass that naïve Heinz.」

Since Riley had left the Five-colored Blades, the number of direct requests and the way the Guild treated him had changed remarkably. He was still an obscure individual, so he was desperate to build achievements for himself by accepting the marshal’s request. That was why the expression on his face was that of excitement, not nervousness.

His head was full of thoughts of raising the Dhampir's severed head in the air, deepening the trust that Marshal Palpapek had in him, having a successful career and becoming a marquess's personal knight and spearmanship instructor.

And so the extermination force entered the Devil's Nest and began searching for the enemy. They knew where the Noble Orcs' village was, but the locations of the villages of the Ghouls who had destroyed it were unknown.

Since it was a dangerous Devil's Nest, they had hesitated to send in adventurers to investigate the Devil's Nest beforehand. They couldn't send Spies in, as they were weaker in combat despite their information-gathering abilities. The reason for this was because they had concluded that the Dhampir was a Spiritualist.

Spiritualists could communicate with the spirits of the dead to gain information. If the Spies and adventurers were discovered, they would be killed mercilessly and then the Dhampir would gain information from their spirits. Since the dead were talkative, they had to be careful about losing personnel.

The search for the enemy was difficult.

「We've only found Goblin and Kobold villages. We've encountered two or three Orcs, but not a single Ghoul has been seen.」

「Yeah, and other than that, there's been Huge Boars, the Mad Boars that are superior to them, Impaler Bulls, Iron Turtles, Giant Rats... nothing but beast-type monsters.」

It wouldn't have been unusual to at least come across a small platoon of Ghouls keeping an eye on this area, but the extermination force couldn't seem to find any Ghouls.

No, they did find a Ghoul village, but...

「No good, all we found there were Goblins who had settled in.」

There was nothing left in what seemed to be the remainder of a Ghoul village that they found.

「The Ghouls are definitely gathered all in one place, waiting to ambush us!

This is bad, even though we have a thousand people, if they were to come attacking all at once...」

「So what! I'm going to take revenge for Rikken, my younger brother!」

The older brother of an adventurer thought to have been killed by Orcs made this angry declaration, but nobody reminded him that it was the Orcs, not the Ghouls, who had killed his brother.

「Well, the women might have survived, but...」

「There's a high chance that they've been turned into a Ghoul, right? We have to save their souls as soon as possible.」

The male adventurer didn't object to the words of the devout Alda follower. Even he agreed that after being treated as playthings and then turned into Ghouls, they would be happier simply being killed.

The extermination force set up an encampment in the place where the Orcs' village had been as they continued their search of the Devil's Nest.

However, their search turned up only monsters that weren't Ghouls, and even after several days, there were no signs of the Ghouls coming to attack them.

Of course, that made no difference to the fact that they were staying in a dangerous Devil's Nest, but since they had more than enough manpower gathered to deal with the normal monsters appearing in this forest, the air of tension around the extermination force began to loosen.

「More carriage wheel tracks. What could this mean?」

「Doesn't that mean that we've passed through here before?」

「You idiot, the carriages are back at the encampment.」

The extermination force was using multiple carriages to transport supplies. Even though this Devil's Nest was a forest, there were five-meter-long Mad Boars rampaging around and knocking down trees, so there were plenty of large animal trails that carriages could travel through.

However, those carriages were either back at the encampment set up in the ruins of the Orc village or outside of the Devil's Nest entirely, going back and forth from the town to bring in more supplies. There was no way that those

carriages could be using this animal trail that was in a completely different direction from the town and encampment.

「Then what are these wheel tracks? Do they look like monster footprints to you?」

「Adventurers probably passed through here a long time ago. The lack of horse hoof-prints is proof of that; the rain's washed away everything except the deep wheel tracks.」

The soldiers and adventurers here decided that this man's deduction was reasonable, so they didn't bother reporting it to the higher-ranking individuals of the extermination force.

Parties of adventurers brought carriages into the Devil's Nest from time to time to transport large quantities of materials. Defeating Orcs and Huge Boars would yield a lot of meat, while cutting down Ents would yield valuable timber, but carriages were necessary to transport these items that would weigh hundreds of kilos through the Devil's Nest.

There were space-attribute mages that could transport luggage in a subspace, and there were also Magic Boxes created through Alchemy by these space-attribute mages. But both of these were rare, so the vast majority of adventurers didn't have access to these.

And so these members of the extermination force assumed that these wheel tracks had been made by such adventurers.

They would discover that this was an incorrect assumption two weeks later. By that time, Marshal Palpapek and Viscount Balchesse had grown increasingly impatient and the extermination force's tension had all but vanished.

「There are carriage wheel tracks leading outside the Devil's Nest?! Why did nobody realize this earlier?!」

Gordan shouted in rage at the subordinate who had delivered this news.

「Since the wheel tracks were heading in the complete opposite direction from the town, towards the Boundary Mountain Range, nobody paid it any attention. And while Vampires might use a carriage, nobody had thought that the Ghouls would be...」

Monsters like Goblins and Orcs generally didn't use carriages. No, they couldn't use them. They didn't possess the knowledge required to build them.

Monsters like Vampires who hid in human societies and lured humans to cooperate with them had ways to obtain carriages, but the only cases in which Goblins and Orcs possessed carriages were when they plundered them from humans.

They would use the carriages roughly without being able to perform maintenance on them and often eat the animals needed to pull them, so the carriages usually broke and were abandoned or taken apart for materials to build houses.

Even though Ghouls were far more intelligent than Goblins and Orcs, the same should have applied to them. That was why even the experienced adventurers hadn't come to the conclusion that the Ghouls were using carriages for transport.

The knights and soldiers who had been instructed to listen to the advice of the adventurers had thought the same as them.

But they had searched the Devil's Nest over and over without finding a single Ghoul, and the Ghouls had never attacked. And there were deep wheel tracks leading outside the Devil's Nest, as if dozens of carriages had all passed through the same place.

There was only one possible conclusion.

「Shit, that Dhampir used carriages to run away with the Ghouls?! How did nobody notice, what the hell are the spies doing?!」

Riley shouted these words, but everyone knew the answer to his question, including himself.

The Spies had been keeping a proper lookout. Between the Devil's Nest and the town.

What Marshal Palpapek had been cautious of was the potential of the Ghoul advancing on the town from the Devil's Nest, not the possibility that they would escape in the opposite direction towards the Boundary Mountain Range to the east.

That was why all of the precious Spies had been positioned to the west, between the town and the Devil's Nest.

「To think that the Dhampir leading a pack of hundreds of Ghouls would run away without fighting... We've been tricked!」

High Priest Gordan let out these words with a frustrated groan, and the extermination force's expedition came to an end.

But other than him and Riley, who had missed out on a chance to add more achievements to his name, the rest of the extermination force returned to the town with expressions that were happy rather than bitter.

They had also missed out on the chance to gain money and add achievements to their own names from defeating the Ghouls, but they had collected quite a lot of materials, Magic Stones and body parts that served as proof of having killed monsters from defeating the other monsters in the Devil's Nest. And since the nation had funded the expedition's expenses, they hadn't lost anything.

The knights and soldiers had been getting paid higher salaries for being on a dangerous expedition, and they had been eating the meat of Mad Boars and such that they wouldn't normally get to eat often, so they were very satisfied.

Viscount Balchesse was dancing for joy inside when he heard the news that the Ghouls had escaped towards the Boundary Mountain Range and the extermination force hadn't sustained any casualties. If soldiers and knights had died, he would have had to pay money to their families as compensation and find replacements for the lost personnel.

He was a little uneasy about the fact that the Ghouls hadn't been exterminated and the threat hadn't completely disappeared. But beyond the mountain range, there were countless Devil's Nests so large that his entire territory could easily fit inside them, and the monsters living inside them weren't on the level of Noble Orcs. It had been told since the age of the gods that numerous Dragons, which were designated as disaster-level monsters, lived there.

He had a strong feeling that there wouldn't be much difference if a few hundred Ghouls were added to those monsters.

Viscount Balchesse was more interested in the forest-like Devil's Nest, whose monster population had been largely decreased by the one-thousand-strong extermination force. Since there were no longer any powerful monsters living there, if the rest of the monsters were hunted down and mages were hired to purify the tainted Mana there, there was a chance that this Devil's Nest could be transformed into prosperous farmland.

With thoughts like these running through his mind, he didn't have many brain cells spare to devote to worrying about the Ghouls and Dhampir.

「To think that they would run away...」

With an expression as if he had swallowed dozens of bitter bugs[2], Marshal Palpapek dispatched Spies to check whether the Ghouls had really run away towards the mountain range, and then turned his attention towards other things.

Now that the Ghouls had escaped, he would have to enter a political battle with the finance minister who would be making complains such as,「Was such a large budget really needed?」and,「Could it be that you were simply planning on using the nation's funds to help purify the Devil's Nest in the viscount's territory and turn it into usable land?」

The one who had benefited the most from this incident was Viscount Balchesse, whose territory had increased and could potentially benefit greatly in an economical sense.

And because the adventurer who had obtained the information regarding the Dhampir Vandalieu had promptly vanished and the expedition had ended in failure, none of the information that he had provided was recorded in the written reports. The only place that information remained was in the memories of a few of the people involved.

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In the discussion on the day after the victory feast, Vandalieu told the Ghouls of the humans that were going to march on the Devil's Nest. Naturally, their angry response was,「We'll ambush those humans!」

「We've become strong! No matter how many hundreds of humans come, we

won’t be defeated!」

As Vigaro raised his fist valiantly into the air, many of the Ghouls agreed with him. Their levels had increased in the battle with the Orcs, and more than a few of them had increased in Rank as well.

Indeed, the Ghouls’ strength in battle had grown substantially. However...

「Sorry, Vigaro. We can’t win this battle.」

Vandalieu declared that they wouldn’t be able to win against the humans.

「Why not?!」

「King, we’re strong! We won’t lose to the humans!」

「With you here, we can win! Why are you saying we can’t?!」

「Let’s fight them together!」

The Ghouls’ opinion seemed to be unanimous, and Vandalieu chose his words carefully as he replied.

「Yes, we’ve become strong. If humans attacked with equal numbers as us, we would win. But unlike Orcs, the humans will make the preparations they need to defeat us, and they will come into the Devil’s Nest from outside to kill us. This time, we are the ones on the defense.」

A surprise attack like when they had attacked Bugogan’s village would be impossible.

The humans would gather numbers and add high-quality individuals among their army as well.

「And they will keep coming at us until we are defeated. If we defeat their first extermination force, they’ll send another, and if we defeat that one, another after that. There will be no end to it.」

Even if the first extermination force was successfully repelled, the shield-nation of Mirg would certainly not leave such a dangerous pack of monsters alone; they would definitely send in a second extermination force.

If this were a conflict between humans, there would be movements to find a middle-ground and suppress the conflict at this point, but Ghouls were

monsters to humans. And the Devil's Nest was only three days' travel from the town. There would be no compromise.

Unless the Ghouls did something about the entire shield-nation of Mirg, they wouldn't stop... No, the Amid Empire would step in before Mirg came to ruin. There was simply no end to this for Vandalieu and the Ghouls.

「It is as the boy says. Since the humans originally gathered their forces to exterminate the Noble Orcs, there will be numerous adventurers and knights strong enough to have defeated that Noble Orc boss.」

「Muh...」

As Zadiris voiced her opinion, Vigaro said no more, only giving a low growl.

But even as Zadiris spoke against Vigaro's advocacy for war, she had a bitter expression on her face. They had just managed to defend the village from the Noble Orcs; it was only natural for her to feel this way.

The Ghouls weren't even thinking of attacking the human town. They would be satisfied if they could just continue living in the Devil's Nest as they had been up until now.

Despite that, the humans were deeming them dangerous and sending an extermination force to kill them. For the Ghouls, it was absurdly unreasonable.

And though Vandalieu didn't show it in his expression, he felt ashamed. He felt bitter that he couldn't grant the wishes of the Ghouls he thought of as his family, the Ghouls who loved him so dearly.

If he could build dozens of sturdy fortresses, erect a stone wall surrounding the whole Devil's Nest and make an army of thousands of Golems, he would be able to protect this Devil's Nest.

「And we have people that we need to protect.」

Most of the women that had been rescued were pregnant; they were in no state to fight.

Of course, there were also Bilde and the other Ghoul women who were also pregnant with Ghoul children.

Nobody wanted to expose them to danger.

「Yes... What we want is the survival of the species. We should choose a defeat where we save as many people as possible over a victory where we sacrifice many and only a few survive.」(Tarea)

As Tarea spoke with a sigh, the Ghouls' desire for war subsided completely.

There were still many who truly wanted to fight. But Zadiris was clever, Vigaro was silent and Tarea was convinced.

In this situation, the Ghouls whose society was founded upon respecting the powerful couldn't voice their objections and simply had to agree.

「But what will we do from now? Hiding would be impossible, and even if we were to run...」

Ghouls needed a Devil's Nest to live in. The Ghouls' reproductive capabilities declined even further outside Devil's Nests and there wouldn't be enough prey to feed this population.

It would also likely be impossible for them to suddenly cultivate the land to start using agriculture for food.

「I have an idea of where we can escape to, though it's a bit far away.」

However, as Vandalieu explained about the Devil's Nest found by the Undead bugs that he had released in case the Ghouls were unable to defeat the Noble Orcs, the problem of where they would escape to was solved.

Their destination was a Devil's Nest ruin, past the western edge of the Boundary Mountain Range.

Best of all, he had discovered that there were Undead in that Devil's Nest. Because of Vandalieu's【Death-Attribute Charm】skill, they would instantly become allies.

With that being solved, discussions were over quickly and the Ghouls immediately began preparing for the big move.

「UOOOOOOOOOH!」

The first step was to deforest the Devil's Nest to the point of making the Ents that lived here extinct. Vandalieu used the gathered lumber to make carriages, Cursed Carriages, one after another.

『It seems that I have many kouhais[3] now.』

The spirits used for these carriages were those of the Orcs and other monsters that they had killed in large numbers several days ago, so they didn't possess skills like【Precise Driving.】But as long as they were sturdy carriages that moved on their own, that was enough.

And then the female adventurers completed their transformation into Ghouls. They didn't even get a chance to get accustomed to their new bodies before they and the pregnant women were loaded into carriages to leave the Devil's Nest.

Vandalieu had confirmed that there were no Spies in the direction of the mountain range using Lemures and Undead bugs, so it was not a particularly hurried departure.

And then it was April. Over a month had passed since the Ghouls had left the Devil's Nest forest.

As part of the leading group of the Ghouls, Vandalieu was sitting in Sam's carriage.

The road was steep, but the journey was going well apart from three problems.

「Surprisingly, the mountain range isn't anything special.」

「It's funny to say that while completely wrapped in furs.」

Cold-weather clothing for crossing the tall mountain range had been made from the furs of animals that they had hunted in the Devil's Nest forest.

Ghouls were far sturdier than humans, so they were mostly unaffected by altitude sickness.

The Ghouls' energy had decreased a little from having left the Devil's Nest, but that was compensated for by Vandalieu's【Strengthen Followers】skill. The mountain climbers of earth would question whether their current equipment was enough, but they could proudly say that it was.

The one thing that was more likely to be a problem than their equipment or materials was the road. Steep paths and cliffs that even mountain climbers

would have to risk their lives to climb were frequent.

「Boy, I'll leave the road to you.」

「Okay~」

However, as long as Vandalieu's Mana didn't run out, it wasn't a problem

after all.

After turning the mountain surface into Golems, he could just use【Golem Transmutation】to make roads that the carriages could pass through. If the roads were narrow, he would make it wider, and if there were steep cliffs, he would dig tunnels through them.

At first, Vandalieu had thought of using【Golem Transmutation】and his Mana to brute-force his way through the mountain range, tunneling under it instead of trying to cross over it. But a tunnel large enough to fit carriages going through could potentially cave in, and there would be huge problems if they came across an underground water reserve, so he decided against it.

And not long after the Ghouls passed through, the roads would turn back into narrow paths and steep cliffs. Worried that the shield-nation of Mirg's Spies might discover them, Vandalieu had made it so that they couldn't be followed and this turned out to be a great success.

In fact, several days later, the Spies dispatched by Marshal Palpapek around a month behind Vandalieu and the Ghouls were at the foot of the mountain range. They decided that further chase would be impossible and returned to the town.

So if there were any problems, they were... monster attacks, nursing the weakened Ghouls and the rush of babies.

Notes

1. Tare sauce is a kind of Japanese sauce used in grilled food, sushi, nabemono and gyoza.

2. There's a Japanese expression that translates to something like "as if having swallowed a bitter bug" that basically means "wearing a sour expression". In this case, "having swallowed dozens of bitter bugs" means his expression is very bitter indeed.

3. For those who don't know, kouhai means junior, opposite to senpai meaning senior.

Chapter 26: Overcoming the difficulties, standing before a new land

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This mountain range... Apparently, its official name was the Boundary Mountain Range. It wasn't the boundary between the Amid Empire and Orbaume Kingdom, but supposedly the boundary between the world of humans and the world of monsters. For this reason, the mountain range was mostly unexplored land and there were Devil's Nests all over it. Passing through it with these numbers would cause monsters to assume they were prey and attack.

However, since Vandalieu and the Ghouls were avoiding the Devil's Nests and building their own road through, the monsters that attacked them were the weakest ones living on the edges of the Devil's Nests.

「I defeated a wolf that looked like a hedgehog!」(Vigaro)

「I have never seen that monster before, have I? I wonder if it is tasty?」(Tarea)

「Looks delicious, looks delicious!」(Basdia)

In addition to that, they were monsters so unintelligent that they didn't understand how dangerous it was to attack a pack of hundreds of Ghouls, so they were killed immediately and offered their meat to use as food and fur to use to make more cold-weather clothing.

Their stores of Orc meat had decreased considerably recently, so this was very welcome.

However, there were still times when large monsters attacked.

「It's a flock of Wyverns!」

Today, a flock of Wyverns was attacking them from the sky. These creatures whose front limbs were also their wings were the lowest form of Dragon-type monsters and were less intelligent than other Dragons. Scholars in this world were disputing over whether they should be classified as demi-Dragons.

They didn’t breathe fire or use magic, but they were Rank 5 monsters that were exceptionally adept at maneuvering through the air with sharp fangs and claws that were just as dangerous as they looked.

If their flight could be prevented, they would be about as strong as a Rank 4 monster, but this was a mountain range at an (estimated) altitude of over two thousand meters. No matter how one looked at it, the Wyverns had the terrain advantage.

Despite them being unintelligent compared to other Dragons, they were plenty intelligent compared to animals. They gathered together and attacked in large numbers and aimed for the back of the line of carriages and other places where the defense seemed thinnest, so they were quite problematic.

There were five Wyverns in the flock today. It was quite a troublesome number to deal with.

「GAAAH!」

As a command came out in the Ghouls’ battle language, the warriors simultaneously fired their arrows while the women released various spells.

But since the Ghouls had been living in a forest and their prey had been creatures that would approach to try and eat them, their proficiency with long-ranged attacks was relatively low.

There were quite a number of Ghouls with the【Archery】skill, including Basdia, but their levels with this skill wasn’t very high.

「GUEEEEEEH!」

「GYAOOOOOHN!」

The one they could rely on at times like this was Bone Bird, who had become a Rank 4 Specter Bird.

Since Bone Bird had reached Rank 4 and was strengthened by the【Strengthen Followers】skill, even the Wyverns couldn’t let their guard down against it. As if instinctively sensing this, two of the five Wyverns flew towards Bone Bird. They had decided to commit two Wyverns of the flock to quickly take it down, rather than simply keep it busy with one Wyvern.

Preventing Bone Bird's movements would remove its biggest strength, its mobility, so the Wyverns had made the correct decision.

However...

『SHAAAAAAH.』

As the transparent『Lemures』vanished, they released their powerful bloodthirst.

「Gyaoh?!」

「Gyugiih?!」

The Wyverns were thrown into confusion by the bloodthirst that attacked their natural instincts. Three of them turned their bodies around to try and get away, while the movement of the other two faltered.

「Aim at those two!」

「Nikuuuuh!」

A flood of arrows and spells assaulted the two Wyverns. With their movements slowed, they were simply practice targets, and their scales weren't hard enough to block the spells and the arrows fired with the Ghouls' Superhuman Strength.

The three Wyverns had chosen to escape and defenselessly turned their backs towards Bone Bird. Bone Bird fired spirit feathers at one of them and mangled its neck with its talons.

「GYAAOOOOooh...」

Three Wyverns fell onto the mountain's surface while the other two fled in a hurry. Vandalieu raised his hand towards the two that were escaping, but then lowered his hand again without doing anything.

「You have to save your Mana, Van, so helping us with your Lemures is enough.」(Basdia)

『This great journey will become difficult if you were to collapse, Bocchan. Please take care of yourself.』(Sam)

「Yeah, I know.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had been thinking of testing whether he could use death-attribute Mana to erase the lift force that the Wyverns needed to fly. But since he was responsible for making the roads, if he were to collapse from running out of Mana, the Ghouls would have to stop moving while he recovered. If a landslide or something occurred in such a situation, it would be a huge problem. And so Vandalieu had to pay much more attention to his Mana pool than usual while they were crossing this mountain range.

Even Vandalieu's Mana pool of 110,000,000 Mana wasn't enough to face the entirety of nature.

「And I think that's plenty of meat.」

As the young Ghoul woman who had poked her head out from a carriage said, the three Wyverns would provide enough nourishment to keep the Ghouls' hunger and fatigue at bay for today. Though they were the lowest class of Dragons, they were still Dragons, so their meat was delicious and nourishing. Their organs could be used as materials for Alchemy, but they were nutritious to eat as well.

In addition, their scales, bones and wing membranes could be used as materials to make armor, while their fangs and claws could be turned into weapons.

「But to defeat three Wyverns out of five... If you took these to the Adventurers' Guild, you could live in luxury for a while.」(Kachia)

「Could you defeat them, Kachia-san?」(Vandalieu)

「No way. I wouldn't even want to fight one of them.」(Kachia)

Kachia shook her head as she spoke. She had been a female adventurer that Bubobio had captured and turned into his private property, but now she was a Ghoul. Noble Orcs were individually stronger than normal Orcs, but they weren't as fertile, so she had been rescued by Basdia's group of Ghouls before becoming pregnant and then undergone the Ghoul transformation ritual.

「The Guild considers us dead and I'd much rather be a Ghoul than treated as a woman that monsters used as their plaything. I don't even have a family, anyway.」(Kachia)

Back then, she had been mentally broken, but she had recently recovered enough to say such things. But it seemed that she still feared men to some degree, so she was riding in Sam's carriage.

Since Vandalieu was a child and Sam was an Undead, they were apparently fine for her.

They stopped to dissect the Wyverns' bodies and Vandalieu set Bone Bird and Lemures in the sky to keep watch.

The fact that they were under such dangerous attacks at least once a day showed just how harsh crossing this mountain range was. Normal adventurers wouldn't have lasted more than a few days.

If it weren't for Vandalieu's abnormal amount of Mana and the【Status Effect Resistance】skill that prevented him from being affected by altitude sickness, he wouldn't have lasted very long either.

But monster attacks were also an opportunity to obtain fresh food.

The next problem was more complicated.

「Gyah... Gyaaah!」

「Uu, kyauun!」

With the carriages stopped, a black Goblin child tried to take tottering steps to get down from the carriage, but instead fell onto the ground and burst into tears. Surprised by that, a black Kobold child burst into tears as well.

「Ah, hey, you can't get out of the carriage.」

「What is it? Are you hungry? You're such a greedy child, aren't you?」

Two Ghoul women each picked up one of these children and began to breast-feed them. They were this Goblin and Kobold's mothers.

Many of the Ghoul women Vandalieu had rescued from the Noble Orcs' village had been pregnant. Well, that was the purpose that they had been held captive for, so it was only to be expected.

Vandalieu had indirectly suggested that it would be possible for him to use death-attribute magic to cause abortions for them, but the mothers had

rejected his offer.

「If we care for them from the time they are born, they will grow up to obey us.」(Zadiris)

Apparently that's how it was. If times were peaceful, they wouldn't have gone so far as to use their own wombs to raise Goblin and Orc children, but in this time of crisis, they apparently declined abortion to increase their numbers as much as possible.

Because the villages of the Ghoul women that had been held captive had their men wiped out, they had to compensate for the loss in working force.

Incidentally, all of the Goblins, Kobolds and Orc children were born with black skin and fur. Goblins normally had green skin and Orcs had a light pink tone. Kobolds normally had black fur sometimes, but all of them being black was unusual.

Vandalieu guessed that his Mana was the cause of that.

Thinking that it would be bad if the fetuses that the Ghoul women had decided to give birth to were affected by the Ghouls' departure from the Devil's Nest, he used【Mana Transfer】to transfer his thick Mana to the pregnant women and their unborn children.

As a result, the fetuses developed at the same quick pace as they would have done in the Devil's Nest and were born healthy. Though they were black, for some reason.

It wasn't a bad thing, and nobody intended to complain that they were ominous or anything. But just in case, he examined them with【Appraisal】to find –

【Black Goblin Baby】

【Anubis Baby】

【Orcus Baby】

These were the names displayed for the Goblin, Kobold and Orc babies.

For some reason, they were new races.

「I wonder what this means? Tell me please, Darwin-sensei.」(Vandalieu)

「Who is that, Van? Was it one of the horrible researchers in that world called Origin?」(Basdia)

「No, it was a very famous person in the history of another world.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu, who had inadvertently created new races of monsters, looked up at the heavens with a distant gaze, but he was likely looking to the wrong person to answer his question.

「Well, it is alright, is it not? They seem cleverer than normal Goblins, stronger than normal Kobolds and more well-behaved than normal Orcs.」(Zadiris)

「Don't worry about it, those children just need to be trained by the men. That's how it was for me, too.」(Vigaro)

「Yeah, I've only been trained by Vigaro as well.」(Basdia)

Zadiris didn't seem deeply concerned with the birth of the new races, while Vigaro and Basdia told Vandalieu about the relationship that Ghoul men had with children.

Well, even if Vandalieu were to be concerned about it now, it was too late. He had already shared his Mana with all of the pregnant women.

『That reminds me, I used to give you milk like that too. You would be reserved at first, but then you would start drinking it in a daze...』

「H-hello, anyone? He suddenly seems to be in agony!」(Kachia)

『It is fine; Darcia-sama was just reminiscing of the times when used to breast-feed him. Hearing that is what is causing Bocchan his agony.』(Saria)

『Bocchan, you're still a child so there's nothing to be embarrassed about. Please have some more confidence.』(Rita)

As Kachia couldn't see Darcia, she was naturally surprised to see Vandalieu silently agonizing over something. But this was just a regular scene for Saria and Rita.

Even Zadiris and the other Ghouls who couldn't see Darcia weren't surprised at this point.

The problem of the rush of babies was that Darcia would reminisce of the past, causing Vandalieu to suffer in embarrassment!

But this rush of babies would soon be over. Monsters reproduced quickly; the women who had been held captive would give birth to the last of the children soon. Monster children developed quickly, so they would stop being breast-fed a month after that.

「Vandalieu, if the child in my belly is a boy, can I really name him after you? There are two pairs of dakuten[1] in your name, so it'd be perfect as a lucky charm.」(Bilde)

As Vandalieu could tell from looking at the large abdomen of Bilde, who had been pregnant for seven months, she and the nine other Ghouls pregnant with Ghoul children would be giving birth soon.

Incidentally, Ghouls apparently developed at the same pace as humans.

「If I solve the birth rate of Ghoul children, I'll be dealing with this for years more to come...」(Vandalieu)

As a spirit, Darcia's memories were a little broken so some things caused her to repeat the same words over and over again. As Vandalieu wondered if he simply had to get used to this, his eyes became distant again.

And the last problem was taking care of the Ghouls whose physical conditions had deteriorated from having left the Devil's Nest. They were paying attention to make sure that nobody was becoming sick. Tarea had become particularly weak.

「Uu, I am terribly sorry, Van-sama.」(Tarea)

Tarea had aged to the point that Vandalieu felt the urge to answer with,「You promised not to say that, otottsuan.[2]」

She had been healthy while living in the Devil's Nest. She had even been excited about the migration, but when they left the Devil's Nest, her body and mind had both grown weaker.

「How pitiful, show a little more spirit, will you?」(Zadiris)

「Kuh, it is just unnatural for you to be so healthy when you have aged even

more than me.」(Tarea)

It seemed that her old age was indeed the cause of this. However, Vandalieu had used【Youth Transformation】to revert Zadiris's physical age to match her mid-teen physical appearance. Since Ghouls had the unique characteristic of not aging after pregnancy, nobody had noticed this, however.

「*Cough cough*, we were even able to obtain Wyvern materials, but I am in no condition to use them. When I was a human, I touched them once; they are materials that I yearned to use.」(Tarea)

「Once we arrive at the new Devil's Nest, you'll become healthy and be able to make equipment again.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu patted Tarea's back and comforted her while checking to see if he could see the shadow of death. When her time came close, he intended to use【Youth Transformation】on her as well.

Having strange rumors float around would be a cheap price to have Tarea regain her health.

「Thank you very much, Van-sama. But instead of worrying only about me, you also have to take care of that girl.」

Tarea pointed at the Live-Dead that was lying down nearby. The Live-Dead that Luciliano had abandoned showed no signs of movement other than its heartbeat and breathing; since it was just like a living corpse, it needed someone to take care of it.

The Live-Dead was an Undead in the sense that it didn't have a soul. But since its body was living, it would starve to death if it didn't eat, become sick if left in unsanitary conditions and develop bedsores if left lying in the same position for too long.

Even though it didn't have a soul, treating it like that wouldn't be pleasant to see and might even have negative effects on the unborn child.

The Live-Dead had been made pregnant by the Noble Orc Bugogan and Vandalieu had thinned out the monster genes and had the spirit of the woman whose corpse had been used to make the Live-Dead possess that fetus. That fetus was now developing inside the Live-Dead.

It was only the second month of pregnancy, but there was already a small bulge in the Live-Dead's abdomen, perhaps due to what was left of the Noble Orc's genes.

「... Well, taking the Wyverns apart will probably take a while, anyway.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu pulled the Live-Dead next to Tarea along with the entire rug that it was lying on. Kachia silently wondered how those thin arms and legs were so strong, but he also possessed the【Superhuman Strength】skill. Since his physical strength already exceeded that of an adult man, there was no need to use magic for a task like this.

Since everyone else around were Ghouls who had been born with the【Superhuman Strength】skill and Undead, Kachia was the only one to be surprised by this, as she had been a human until two months ago.

「What shall we talk about today... Oh yeah, let's talk about what we're going to do at the Devil's Nest we're going to.」

Taking no notice of Kachia's feelings of surprise, Vandalieu began talking to the Live-Dead, or more accurately, to its abdomen.

In a television program on Earth, he had seen that talking to unborn children was good prenatal care. If he remembered correctly, it was a documentary about how geniuses were born.

Though Vandalieu's uncle had banned luxuries from Vandalieu to a bizarre extent, he was surprisingly open-minded about things that he didn't consider luxuries. Thanks to this, Vandalieu was able to watch television, though not often, and even access the internet... His uncle's standards of what was a luxury and what wasn't varied from day to day, so Vandalieu had to be cautious and didn't feel a shred of gratitude towards his uncle for that, however.

When they arrived at the Devil's Nest, they would repair parts of the ruined city, find beast monsters with delicious meat. If there were remains of an old public bathhouse then Vandalieu wanted to repair that too and soak his body in the baths, and next time he would definitely succeed at fermenting walnuts and acorns to make something close to miso. Vandalieu talked to the baby about these bright future prospects without mentioning the bitterness of his past

lives. He accidentally let some of his knowledge from other worlds slip, causing Kachia to tilt her head in confusion at the mention of miso, but Vandalieu took no notice of it.

「When we are doing things like this, we really seem like a family, don't we?」(Tarea)

「... What kind of family structure is this supposed to be?」(Kachia)

Tarea smiled as she spoke while Kachia questioned her words. It was easy to tell at a glance that all of them were of different races, but if one ignored that, then perhaps the scene could be imagined as the older sister (Tarea) and younger brother with a large age-gap (Vandalieu) looking after the pregnant mother (the Live-Dead).

「Muh, that Tarea, getting ahead of me and calling Van her family.」(Basdia)

「Hah, do not worry about it. I am sure she thinks she has become his grandmother.」(Zadiris)

「I can hear you, you know! Uu, Van-sama, I am being teased by Zadiris who is thirty years older than me~」(Tarea)

「Yes, yes, everyone is my family.」(Vandalieu)

And so the Ghouls' journey across the mountain range went smoothly, thanks to Vandalieu's skillful management of his Mana.

***

【You have acquired the Engineering skill!】

Half of the month of May had passed and it was now the time of year that people on Earth would have just finished enjoying Golden Week when Vandalieu and the Ghouls finally arrived in front of the Devil's Nest ruins.

The Devil's Nest ruins were in a basin between two mountain ranges, wide enough to take three journeys to cross by foot. It was easy to imagine that when people had lived here, there were crop fields expanding in all directions.

「It took us about three months to get here. To get to the Orbaume Kingdom, I'd have to cross another mountain range so let's say it takes another three months... Even if the Mirg shield-nation hadn't sent that extermination force, it

might have taken me about a year.」(Vandalieu)

「No, I think it would have been even faster if you, Sam and the Undead were to travel alone.」(Basdia)

Vandalieu, who was now almost three years old, gave a sigh as he thought about how far away the Orbaume Kingdom was.

And then he got fired up again, knowing that this was where it really began.

From here on out, he would enter the Devil's Nest ruins and work hard with everyone to make it a place that the Ghouls could live in.

Vandalieu looked up at the Devil's Nest ruins that had a mysterious atmosphere to it that would strike fear in the hearts of novice adventurers.

There were tall stone ramparts that had once been sturdy, but now they were crumbling in places and eroded by the plant life. What had once been a town was visible beyond them, a tragic sight of countless ruined buildings.

And the white castle that was still towering into the sky somehow resembled a fleshless skeleton.

But what was even more ominous about it was that despite it being a ruin with nobody living there, there was a thick presence floating in the air. The stirring of trees could be heard despite there being no wind, and harsh cries echoed across the ruins.

It froze the spine to think that these noises weren't necessary made by living things.

This Devil's Nest definitely contained monsters that even Zadiris and Darcia wouldn't know about. And some of those monsters might be of a high Rank.

Vandalieu had confirmed that there were a lot of Undead, but that didn't mean that all of the monsters would be Undead. It was even possible that Dragons inhabited this place, and there might be dangerous Dungeons as well.

This was the place that the Ghouls had to build a village to live in and find a source of food and materials.

Vandalieu had used the Undead insects to survey the area, but there were a lot of things that he couldn't see properly through the shared vision of the

insects' compound eyes and many of them had been unexpectedly crushed by monsters or mysteriously stopped responding to him.

From here, Vandalieu would have to use his own eyes and ears to challenge this dangerous, unknown world.

「I've started to get excited.」

This unknown adventure caused Vandalieu's heart to throb not in fear, but excitement.

Since he had always lived in a limited world on Earth and in Origin, he felt excited every time he visited an unknown land. He didn't like that they had only come here because they were running away from the extermination force, but that didn't make the new world that expanded into the horizon before his eyes appear any duller.

「Well then... Let's set up camp just a little outside the ruins.」(Vandalieu)

「Everyone, make preparations to set up camp!」(Zadiris)

「Station some lookouts! We're close to a Devil's Nest, so don't let your guard down!」(Vigaro)

And so the Ghouls earnestly began their preparations to set up camp.

Because a new adventure was awaiting them, they had to make sure that their physical conditions and Mana were at their maximum.

Incidentally, after the rush of babies, the population of the group was closing in on six hundred.

Orcs were generally born one at a time, but Goblins and Kobolds were typically born in groups of three, and apparently that didn't change even if they were born from the wombs of another race.

And so there were around fifty Black Goblins, a hundred Anubises and sixty Orcuses.

Their population now exceeded what Bugogan's village had achieved.

「King, help me with my study.」

「King, King! I picked up a strange bone! I'm giving it to you!」

「Fugoh? King, did you get smaller?」

And perhaps because of the influence of the death-attribute mana that they had received before they were born, or perhaps simply because they learned from their parents, they were very attached to Vandalieu.

Vandalieu was happy about this, but...

「I wonder if a nobleman can be a Ghoul King on the side?」

Vandalieu whispered these words to himself as he looked up at the Orcus that was already larger than him at the age of two months.

End of Volume 1

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 2 years, 11 months old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: None
- **Level**: 100
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 48
  - Mana: 113,807,904
  - Strength: 42
  - Agility: 17
  - Stamina: 47
  - Intelligence: 89
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 3
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 4
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1

    - Dark Vision
    - Mental Corruption: Level 10
    - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 3
    - Chant Revocation: Level 1
    - Strengthen Followers: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 3
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 2
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 1
    - Mana Control: Level 1
    - Spirit Form: Level 1
    - Carpentry: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Engineering: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing Jobs
    - Unable to gain Experience Points independently

Monster explanation:

【Black Goblins】

These are a new race of Goblins created by having death-attribute mana applied to them before birth. Their base Rank is Rank 2.

Their abilities are greater than those of Goblins, and all of their attribute values are also higher. As they possess the【Dark Vision】,【Status Effect Resistance】and【Enhanced Agility】skills from birth, they can move around in complete darkness as if it were in the middle of the day, they are resistant to poison and illnesses and they are very fast.

They are smarter than regular Goblins, possessing intelligence equivalent to that of Kobolds, and if taught, any individual Black Goblin can learn martial skills and use weapons.

Normal Goblins have a lifespan just short of twenty years, while Black Goblins

can live about twice as long.

Only their fertility and urge to breed are weaker than those of normal Goblins, possessing lower levels in the【Breeding】and【Endless Sexual Stamina】skills, and some do not even possess these skills at all. Black Goblin children also take longer to develop to maturity.

While normal Goblins living in a Devil's Nest require only a month to reach adulthood, Black Goblins require six months.

They are physically a little larger than normal Goblins, and as their names suggest, they have black skin. They have pointed ears and slanted eyes like normal Goblins, but they have a somewhat more human-like appearance.

As this race has only just been born, it is unknown if there are any superior races of Black Goblins.

If one were to report the existence of Black Goblins to the Adventurers' Guild with proof, they would be rewarded handsomely for reporting the existence of a new race of monsters, but that would be difficult at present.

Skill explanation:

【Status Effect Resistance】

This is a skill that provides resistance against not only poison, illnesses and curses, but also fatigue, stress, sleep, hunger, asphyxia, pain and any other condition that causes the skill's owner to not be in peak form. However, it does not provide resistance against the effects of having expended too much Mana or wounds caused by taking damage.

Those with a high level in this skill can always be in peak form despite any negative effects they may be under. However, it does not nullify the negative effects, so there is a limit to this skill's effect.

Those who possess this skill are Centaurs, Titans, Drakonids, Demons and others of the races created by Vida, so most who do possess it do so from birth.

After acquiring this skill, one can increase its level by experiencing things that affect his or her status.

However, it is difficult for one who does not possess this skill from birth to acquire it. The reason for this is that one would need to endure negative status effects for a certain amount of time.

According to the Adventurers' Guild's records, there are two ways to do this. One method is to come under the effects of poison and illness at the same time and endure that, and the other method is to acquire separate resistances for each and integrate them together to gain the Status Effect Resistance skill.

According to those records, there has never been a person who has survived the first method, and none have acquired the skill in less than ten years using the second method.

In addition, the effects of the【Mind Corruption】skill cannot be mitigated by this skill. This is because the status of one's mind being corrupted is considered a normal status for that individual.

Notes

1. I've mentioned this before. Dakuten are a pair of dashes that change a hiragana or katakana character's pronunciation in Japanese. For example, た/ta is pronounced だ/da when those two dashes at the top-right of the character are added. All of the Ghoul names so far (Zadiris, Vigaro, Basdia, Bilde, etc.) contain two characters with dakuten, with the exception of Tarea and Kachia because they were originally humans. Vandalieu's name happens to have two characters with dakuten as well.

2. Okay, this is a weird one. Here's the result of my best attempt at Googling the origins of this. おとっつあん/ototsuan is a term for "father" that was used in the Meiji era (1868-1912) and the entire line seems to be a cliché/overused line in historical drama films. This is basically just a very roundabout way to say that Tarea is really old.

Note from the translator:

I've made an experimental change with this chapter in that I've put character name in a bracket after every dialogue line (I did this sometimes previously when it was REALLY unclear who's talking, but I've done it for every line of dialogue in this chapter). In Japanese, it's not really necessary to specify who is talking because it's often immediately clear by each character's distinct manner of speech, pronouns used, word choice *etc.* I do my best to convey their tones in the English translation, but it's not always easy to do that, so I think it's helpful to include the character's name after the dialogue. Let me know what you guys think in the comments.

The second volume starts with the next chapter, and it is titled: "The Sunken Continent's Capital, Talosheim" (pronounced Tah-loss-hyme, not Tah-low-shame).

A HUGE thanks to you guys who have read and enjoyed the series and, of course, everyone who has donated and supported the translation so far. I can safely say that not many translators would choose to translate this series because of its insane chapter length, and indeed the translation was difficult at times, but the readers are what made this translation effort possible. If you guys are enjoying the series and want to make it more popular, spam the 5 star votes and leave reviews for it on novelupdates.com if you haven't done so already! XD

Yoshi

Credits

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