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The Death Mage that doesn't want a fourth time

Volume 2: The Sunken Capital of the Sun, Talosheim

Chapter 27: In a new land. Apparently I am the Prophesized Holy Son

The Spies that Marshal Palpapek had sent out to follow the Ghouls' tracks came back soon after reaching the Boundary Mountain Range, just as he had expected.

The report they gave was a strange one, something like,「The mountain range was too precipitous for carriages to pass over, but for some reason there were traces of carriages passing over them.」

Could the Dhampir have turned the carriages into special Magic Items? No, probably not.

「However, the fact that they crossed the mountain range is a fact. With that being the case, giving further chase would be impossible.」(Thomas)

After receiving this report, Thomas Palpapek readily gave up on the Dhampir extermination that the Vampire had requested of him.

In the first place, for him, dealing with the Dhampir wasn't something that he absolutely had to succeed in doing.

It was not as if the Vampires would kill him for failing; he would not lose his own life. His position as the marshal and his court rank as earl were solid and firm.

He would simply use another opportunity to fulfill the Vampires' requests, endure the finance minister's unpleasantries and focus on dealing with this political opponent. This mistake was certainly one that he could recover from.

Of course, he was angry at the Dhampir and his pride had been scarred. But even so, Thomas Palpapek wasn't a naïve enough man to try to finish the Dhampir with no regard for the costs.

「That is how it is. Sorry, but I will not be able to assist you people any further

with finishing this Dhampir.」(Thomas)

That was why he wore a calm expression as he delivered this information to the Vampire's familiar that had come to his room as usual. Though the Vampire often mocked Thomas with his words, he would have also expected that Thomas would give up on the chase.

Defeating that Dhampir shouldn't be a completely necessary task for the Vampires, either.

「... According to your theories, that Dhampir is the Ghoul King and he is now headed beyond the mountain range, correct?」(Vampire)

That was why Thomas felt a little surprise when the Vampire spoke not words of ridicule, but this question in a sour tone.

「That is right.」(Thomas)

「Tch, things have become troublesome. Oi, you really cannot assist us any further? You cannot try to make something happen?」(Vampire)

Even through the familiar, Thomas could hear clear impatience in the Vampire's voice that he never would have expected. It was as if the Vampire had made some huge blunder.

「Send out a request for adventurers, or stir up that religious fanatic, you cannot do anything?」(Vampire)

「To be making suggestions that you yourself know to be impossible, you seem to be quite flustered.」(Thomas)

Indeed, it was possible to send out a request to the Adventurers' Guild without mobilizing the soldiers and knights, as long as the funds were there. However, one would have to risk their life just to cross the mountain range. What kind of whimsical people would accept a request that required them to cross this mountain range that contained an unknown number of Devil's Nests, eliminate a Dhampir who was traveling with hundreds of Ghouls and then cross the mountain range again to return home?

Even if he offered enough money to bring his family of earls to ruin, it was likely that none would accept it.

Even the renowned religious fanatic High Priest Gordan had wanted to give chase, but the Church had persuaded him otherwise and he had already left this land for his next holy task.

「What is the matter? Are you saying that there is something special about this Dhampir?」(Thomas)

「... It has nothing to do with the likes of you!」(Vampire)

With a shout that didn't even attempt to conceal the Vampire's irritation, the familiar took off through the open window. Thomas had a puzzled expression on his face, but he decided that if it had nothing to do with him, he was better off not knowing. And so he stopped giving the matter any further thought.

Even though there were dealings between him and the Vampires, it was not as if he wanted all secrets to be shared. In fact, there were many things that he was better off not knowing.

There was certainly something special about that Dhampir. If there wasn't, there was no way that it could have survived as a breast-feeding infant and then brought the Ghouls together.

However, this level of「something special」wasn't enough for Thomas to pay the Dhampir any particular caution as the nation's marshal. The Orbaume Kingdom contained powerful monsters. This country was constantly exposed to a huge number of threats. The Dhampir was only one more threat added to that number.

It was not a pleasant incident, but it was nothing to become flustered about and make a commotion over.

As long as the nation's military strength and economic power were gradually increased while keeping their guard up, there was nothing to fear.

No matter how much power that Dhampir and the Ghouls amassed, they wouldn't be able to destroy a fortress in a single instant like a high-Rank Dragon would.

Noticing that the black tea in his cup had gone stone-cold, he called a servant to replace it. He decided that after drinking this tea, he would take a rest and stop paying any further thought to the Vampire who seemed like he would be

busy soon.

The Vampire whose familiar had flown out of the marshal's house... Sercrent Ozba was a man whose appearance suited his position as a nobleman of Vampire society.

But right now, he was clicking his tongue over and over, scratching his head and violently swirling the red liquid inside his glass.

「Foolish, so foolish, damn it all!」(Sercrent)

If other Vampires could see Sercrent loudly grinding his fangs together, they would question his nobility, but he didn't have the luxury of worrying about his manners right now.

As Thomas Palpapek had guessed, the appearance of a Dhampir wasn't a threat to the Vampires who followed the evil gods. It was an event[1].

Leaving cases where the parent was a Pure-breed aside, Dhampirs didn't pose a threat when the Vampire parent was a Noble-born or Subordinate Vampire. They would simply execute both parents, and the one who had succeeded in doing so would be praised by the high-ranking individuals that ruled the faction.

It was just a game like that.

However, there were some exceptions.

Those exceptions were when the Dhampir matured to adulthood, amassed his own power or headed to the Bahn Gaia continent's southern region... The warhammer's handle that was separated from the head by the mountain range.

Sercrent had been commanded by the Pure-breed Vampire that was his『parent』to at least prevent these from happening.

As adult Dhampirs possessed roughly the same strength in battle as their Vampire parents while having almost none of the weaknesses of Vampires, there was a high chance that they would become troublesome enemies.

If such Dhampirs gathered power, they would be able to use their strength to create powerful organizations. There had been a case where an entire country was ruined and the Vampire community hiding that country's shadows was annihilated. The leader of the mercenary group that had achieved this feat was

a Dhampir. Though that fact wasn't widely known in human society, it was a well-known story among Vampires.

And the southern region of the continent beyond the Boundary Mountain Range was still inhabited by Vampires who followed the goddess Vida. Though their overall numbers were low, many of them were surviving Pure-breed Vampires. There were even whispers that some of them had fought alongside the True Ancestor against the god Alda and the heroes a hundred thousand years ago.

If Dhampirs were to join the faction of Vampires that followed Vida, in the worst case scenario, there could even be a war between the two factions. Though it was difficult to believe, the Vampires of the Vida faction felt no shame in recognizing Dhampirs as Vida's children, even if they possessed mixed blood. There was no knowing what they would do.

But Sercrent didn't have to worry about that. The traitor, the Subordinate Vampire whose only redeeming quality was his strength against sunlight, had already been dealt with. He had passed information about the Dark Elf mother to Marshal Palpapek, and as a result, that religious fanatic had burned her at the stake.

He had not managed to finish off the crucial one, the Dhampir, but there was no way for an infant of breast-feeding age to survive on its own.

That should have been the case, but for some reason, it had appeared in a Devil's Nest and was even leading a pack of Ghouls. Even so, the marshal had mobilized the army to eliminate it, so Sercrent had thought that would be the end of it.

That was why he hadn't stepped out to deal with it personally, nor had he dispatched his subordinates to do it.

However, Sercrent's expectations had proved to be naïve. The Dhampir had somehow led the Ghouls across the mountain range.

It was possible that they were simply traveling along the mountain range while slipping through the sight of the marshal's Spies, but even Sercrent knew that relying on that possibility without any confirmation was dangerous.

「This cursed, audacious, mixed-blood child! You have done things in the wrong order!」(Sercrent)

How could he gather power before even becoming an adult and cross that extremely dangerous mountain range?! Sercrent murmured these words, to which Vandalieu would undoubtedly reply,「Because you guys drove us into a corner!」Deciding to report to the Noble-born Vampire that was his superior, he stood up and rearranged his disheveled hair with a comb.

He really didn't want to report his failure, but he was bound by magic in such a way that he couldn't neglect to do this.

Sercrent was the one pulling on the strings attached to the back of the Mirg shield-nation's marshal, Earl Thomas Palpapek, but he was just another Vampire in a management position.

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「Ah, jeez, why have the materials been processed so badly?! There's pieces of meat still stuck to the Wyvern hides, and this Needle Wolf fur is full of holes! I am sure you just used your claws to make this mess. Did you forget about all the times I told you to use knives?!」(Tarea)

After coming down from the mountain range, Tarea had become incredibly lively. She seemed to have become a different person after her condition had improved.

It was almost enough to make Vandalieu think that her weakness had simply been caused by altitude sickness. However, Tarea's old age hadn't changed, so he would use【Youth Transformation】on her once things had settled down.

「Well then, we'll be going to take a look inside the Devil's Nest.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had recovered his Mana after resting overnight and had decided to do a reconnaissance inside the Devil's Nest before bringing everyone inside. He could have scouted with Lemures and Undead bugs, but he would be able to see the most with his own two eyes.

And there was also a need to test how much the Undead of the Devil's Nest ruins were willing to obey him.

The scouting members were Vandalieu, Sam, Saria, Rita, Bone Bird, Zadiris and several Ghouls of Rank 4 and above.

The rest of the Ghouls would be protected by the Ghoul warriors led by Vigaro as well as Bone Monkey and the rest of the Undead.

「Leave everything to us!」(Vigaro)

「Make sure you come back safely, Van. It's a man's job to go out, hunt prey and then return to where the women are waiting.」(Basdia)

「Yes. Basdia, please take care of her as well.」(Vandalieu)

Leaving the Live-Dead in Basdia's care, Vandalieu departed with his party. He looked as if he was going on an excursion, but he was aware of the heavy responsibilities placed on him.

In the Devil's Nests ruins that he was stepping into, he had to secure a source of food for the six hundred or so Ghouls and monsters. Vandalieu was the one who had led them here, after all.

Since Vandalieu could stop decomposition with death-attribute magic, there was no cost to preserving food other than some of his Mana, and it seemed that there was a clear stream of water flowing from the mountain range into the waterways of the ruins, so water wouldn't be inconvenient to find either. Even so, his heavy responsibilities were heavy indeed.

「Do not be so nervous, your shoulders are stiff... They are very stiff, boy.」(Zadiris)

「Ah, right there, fuu... This is heaven.」(Vandalieu)

The boy who would soon turn three years old was having his shoulders massaged by the woman who would turn two hundred and ninety three this year (post-Youth-Transformation). Now that Vandalieu thought about it, this might have been the first time he was experiencing someone massaging his shoulders. His eyelids fluttered in response to the intense pleasure.

「Ah, no, I can't fall asleep when we're about to leave. Sam, let's go.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu immediately erased the sleepiness that he was feeling with his

passive skill,【Status Effect Resistance.】

『Certainly.』(Sam)

And so Vandalieu and his party stepped foot into the Devil's Nest ruins.

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The Devil's Nest ruins consisted of smaller Devil's Nests with different properties. The central area was a Devil's Nest with no signs of life other than vines and moss, and it was surrounded by a Devil's Nest of ruins that had been swallowed by a forest.

Though they were all part of the same ruins, since there were clearly different regions, it was highly likely that the monsters that appeared in the regions would be different.

And that quickly proved to be true.

「JUGAAAAAH!!」

With a strange-sounding roar, a monster that looked like a three-meter-long wolf with countless needles growing from its back attacked them. It was one of the monsters that had attacked the Ghouls on their journey across the mountain range; Vandalieu and the Ghouls had been calling them「Needle Wolves.」

They were about Rank 3 in strength and though they were wolf-like in appearance, they didn't form packs and mostly appeared on their own.

『EIYAH!』(Rita)

「Gyubih?!」(Needle Wolf)

And though they were ferocious, they were not very intelligent. Normal adventurers would struggle to deal with those fangs, claws and the needles that covered the fur of their backs, but it was a foe that the Living Bikini Armor Rita could easily turn the tables on.

Incidentally, though the Needle Wolves were like wolves, their meat was rich and delicious. Also, the fur on their bellies was soft and fluffy, making it perfect to use in clothes and rugs.

「I've just thought of this, but could it be that these things aren't hedgehog-like wolves, but wolf-like hedgehogs?」(Vandalieu)

『That could be the case; they do not form packs, after all.』(Sam)

Well, either way, one Needle Wolf provided almost two hundred kilograms of food including its organs, so they were good prey to hunt.

As the Ghouls prepared to drain the blood from the Needle Wolf, a spray of water came from the river... the waterway.

「SHAAAAH!」

Three sharks with bodies over two meters long leapt at the Ghouls from the water with their mouths open, teeth bared.

「UOOOOH?!」(Ghoul)

「Fish aren't supposed to fly!」(Ghoul)

Stepping in front of the Ghoul warriors who were surprised at the sight of flying sharks attacking them, Zadiris chanted her【Air Attack】spell, creating a fist of air that punched one of the sharks hard.

Vandalieu blasted a second shark with a【Mana Bullet】with as much Mana as he could fit into it, while Rita took the head of the third with a【Single Flash】from her glaive.

『Father, this is my first time seeing fish this large.』(Rita)

『This may be a dolphin or a whale creature that I have heard stories about.』(Sam)

「Hooh, Sam-dono, you are well-informed. In the Devil's Nest that we came from, there were no such large fish or aquatic monsters. And you lot, why did you lose your presence of mind just from seeing these whales fly?! Have you all been slacking since your Ranks increased?!」(Zadiris)

「S-sorry, Chief.」(Ghoul)

「Grr, we have embarrassed ourselves. Next time, we won't be surprised by flying whales.」(Ghoul)

「No, I think they're sharks?」(Vandalieu)

Sam had always lived in an inland area with no nearby ocean and only knew about aquatic creatures from what he had heard from others, while Zadiris was only familiar with river fish. As Vandalieu explained that they were sharks, not whales, he remembered seeing a low-budget movie with similar scenes. He named these monsters「Flying Sharks.」

「For now, let's avoid draining monster blood near the waterways.」(Vandalieu)

Since sharks were sensitive to the smell of blood, if they drained monster blood near the waterways, they might have to fight an endless stream of Flying Sharks.

Draining the monsters' blood was only to make them weigh a little less anyway, since he could preserve the meat using death-attribute magic.

They decided to get away from the waterway, take apart the Flying Shark whose head had been cut off and take only the liver and fillets of meat with them. They tossed these in the back of Sam's carriage along with the Needle Wolf before continuing their journey.

『Bocchan, why are we taking the fillets with us?』(Sam)

「If you prepare it right, I think it's a food ingredient that's good for the body.」(Vandalieu)

If Vandalieu recalled, shark fillets were good if they were dried after having the skin removed? He had a good feeling that they would be high-quality ingredients... Though he didn't have high hopes for the liver oil as they weren't deep-sea sharks.

They headed deeper into the Devil's Nest, aiming for the region that the Undead appeared in, and as they passed by a half-collapsed building –

「Ah, an enemy attack from inside the building.」(Vandalieu)

Just as Vandalieu said that, a number of large creatures covered in scales jumped out of the building.

They possessed eyes with vertical-slit pupils like reptiles, mouths filled with teeth just as sharp as the Flying Sharks and stood upright on their rear legs that

had claws like knives. They were only around two meters tall, but other than that, they were exactly like dinosaurs.

However, Vandalieu pinpointed where they were hiding in advance with【Sense Life】, so though they were planning to take the Ghouls by surprise, the Ghoul warriors reacted immediately and defeated them one-sidedly.

「Oooooh...」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu gazed at the motionless dinosaurs with an emotionally-moved expression on his face.

He had felt the same way when he saw Wyverns for the first time, but this was a real dinosaur... Creatures that could only be seen as extinct fossils on Earth and in Origin.

In elementary school on Earth, Vandalieu's uncle had forced him to cancel his participation in the school excursion to the museum. For him, dinosaurs were a symbol of prehistoric times, and seeing an impressive dinosaur skeleton in a museum one day was one of the things he had wanted to do before he died.

「Boy, I think we should be moving on...?」(Zadiris)

「King, these huge lizards, do they taste good?」(Ghoul)

『Let me see, they do not seem to be of a Dragon race...』(Sam)

However, for Zadiris and the others, since they were not Dragons, they were simply Rank 3 or 4 lizard monsters, so they were puzzled to see Vandalieu acting like this.

「... If we can collect enough to use as materials and have some left over, maybe I can make skeleton specimens for my own personal museum.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu only realized the confusion of the others quite some time after his dreams grew.

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After the dinosaur... Raptor attack, Vandalieu and his party were attacked several more times.

They were attacked by small-fry monsters like Goblins that could be found anywhere and enormous Dragonflies. Even the Ents that Vandalieu had only rarely encountered because of the deforestation by Bugogan's village had slow movements, so they were not difficult enemies to defeat as long as they were careful of the branches and vines that they swung to attack.

They also fought some stronger monsters of Rank 4 and above including another Raptor attack, an enormous, five-meter-long Saber Tiger and a Horn Bull that attacked by shooting the thirty-centimeter-long horns that grew all over its entire body.

And what they learned through all this was –

『There are quite a lot of monsters in this Devil's Nest.』(Sam)

『Really. It's good that there is a lot of prey, but we're hardly making any progress.』(Saria)

There were so many monsters, and most of them were ferocious. Monsters attacking of their own accord made it more convenient for Ghouls to hunt them, and if they were of this strength, small groups led by Ghouls of Rank 4 or higher wouldn't have any problems defeating them as long as they didn't let their guards down.

But since the attacks were so frequent, Vandalieu's party hadn't even traveled one kilometer since entering the Devil's Nest ruins. Even taking into account the fact that there were crumbled buildings and roads that they couldn't pass through because they had been overgrown with vegetation, it was a pace so slow that it was hard to say that the search was making any progress.

「Is it because adventurers don't come here that there are so many monsters?」(Vandalieu)

「That is probably part of the reason, but there are probably no Ghouls in this Devil's Nest. That is why even though the Needle Wolves are unintelligent, the Goblins that are supposed to be cowardly and seemingly intelligent monsters like Raptors attack us. They do not know how powerful we are.」(Zadiris)

Adventurers didn't come to thin the monster population in these Devil's Nest ruins that was sandwiched by the Boundary Mountain Range on both sides.

That was why the monster population here just kept growing.

In addition, since Ghouls didn't inhabit this Devil's Nest, the monsters didn't know how strong Zadiris and the Ghouls were and simply attacked these「intruders.」

If these theories were correct, the Ghouls would have to hunt the monsters in the adventurers' place for a while. If the monsters learned how strong the Ghouls were and stopped attacking them, this place could become a perfect environment to build a village in.

「Well, it seems that most of the monsters have stopped attacking us already.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris glanced at the line of Living Dead walking in succession behind Sam – Vandalieu had turned the prey that wouldn't fit into Sam's carriage into Undead.

Many monsters were ferocious and wouldn't even hesitate to kill other members of their own race. Even so, they would not bare their fangs aggressively at members of their own race unless they were starving, cornered or the conditions greatly favored them for the fight.

The sight of members of their own race that had been killed and turned into Undead was easy-to-understand proof to the monsters that Vandalieu and his party were stronger than them.

Needle Wolves and Goblins still continued to attack them recklessly, however.

「Also, let's make sure to avoid the waterways as we proceed.」(Vandalieu)

「Indeed, those creatures were sensitive to the smell of blood.」(Zadiris)

Wary of the Flying Sharks, the line of Undead proceeded to make their way towards the center of the Devil's Nest ruins.

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The center of the Devil's Nest ruins that they arrived at was indeed in ruins, but at the same time, it was a pleasant sight that could be called a work of art.

An enormous castle still towered towards the sky, and surrounding it were numerous buildings that still retained much of their past glory.

And as if to make up for the almost complete lack of life in the area, there were human-skeleton-shaped monsters all over the place.

『Skeletons, and with that size, they must be those of the Titan race that I have heard about. It appears that this was once a country of Titans.』(Sam)

The height of the Skeletons was well over two meters, and some were even around three meters tall. They didn't simply possess a long and narrow spine; their bones were thicker and more solid-looking than those of humans.

And though Vandalieu and the Ghouls hadn't noticed it from the outside where the damage to the buildings had been severe, but the buildings and implements in this Devil's Nest were all built very large. The large buildings made of stone had a typical height of four or five meters between the floor and the ceiling. Closer inspection of the bucket-like object that one of the Ghoul warriors had picked up revealed that it was actually a broken cup.

If Kachia was here, she might have remembered that two hundred years ago, there had been a nation of Titans here. The Amid Empire had ordered the Mirg shield-nation to attempt an invasion to wipe the Titans out.

Titans. They were the first race that the goddess Vida had birthed following the battle with the Demon King.

After the giant god Zeno's heart was destroyed, the Sun Giant Talos was the only one of his followers with a noble spirit and sense of virtue that didn't turn to worship the evil gods. The Titans were the race born between him and the goddess.

They possessed large, robust bodies; Titan shield-bearers were even more reliable than castle walls, and yet it was said that if the Titans were to go on the attack, any castle walls would crumble before the might of this warrior race.

「Well, it's my first time seeing the real thing, though.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had been born in the shield-nation of Mirg that was part of the Amid Empire, which discriminated against the races created by Vida. He had never even entered a town through the front entrance before. This was his first time seeing Titans.

He wasn't the only one. Adventurers belonging to a race created by Vida were

rare in the Amid Empire, Sam who had been the employee of a nobleman, Zadiris and the other Ghouls were also seeing Titans for the first time.

「... The real thing you're referring to are just bones though, King.」(Ghoul)

However, it seemed that there was someone who disagreed that seeing only a Titan's bones was the same as seeing a Titan.

「There are some that aren't made of just bones, you know.」(Vandalieu)

But that Ghoul went quiet as Vandalieu pointed at a Titan Zombie emerging from deep inside one of the buildings. Well, it was possible that he still didn't agree but just thought it was pointless to point it out again.

More importantly, he was more concerned about whether they could be so relaxed surrounded by hundreds of Undead, but like in the Dungeon that Vandalieu had once visited, there was no problem.

Many of the Undead were armed with rusted greatswords, axes or spears with broken tips, but they didn't raise them and simply moved out of the way to create a path for Vandalieu and his party. One after another, they kneeled and bowed their heads.

This behavior extended to Zadiris and the other Ghouls as well; they didn't show any signs of hostility.

「The Undead are really being submissive even though they have not been tamed. It is one thing that they are not attacking us, but to see them behaving so defenselessly towards us is a surprise.」(Zadiris)

「Yes, I was surprised the first time this happened, too.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had been prepared to use his magic in case these Undead would be hostile towards the Ghouls who weren't Undead like Sam, but it seemed that this was a needless worry.

This was just to make him feel at ease, but he used the no-attribute magic spell【Appraisal】to find –

【Skeleton Warrior (Titan), Rank 3. A monster created by a Titan warrior turning Undead after being killed. Hates all living things, especially those that killed it.】

The information he found was unexpected. Since his no-attribute magic was level 1, when he had tried to use the same spell on the Raptor corpses, yesterday, it only gave him,【The corpse of a dinosaur-shaped monster】, so he hadn't been expecting anything this time, so he was surprised by the information provided.

As he tried this on the other kneeling Skeletons and Skeleton Soldiers, he learned short descriptions about the monsters in addition to their names.

However, as he tried using【Appraisal】on random weeds, it only gave him, 【Weed: A weed.】

It seemed that when Vandalieu used【Appraisal】on Undead, he could learn information beyond what the level of his skill normally allowed him to learn.

『So, Bocchan, what shall we do?』(Sam)

「Let's see, I think they'll listen to what I say, so first I'll ask them if there's someone like a mediator for the Undead and bring up the idea of migrating.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu considered the information that he had learned from using【Appraisal.】Unlike Bone Man, who Vandalieu had created, these Undead seemed to be corpses possessed by the spirits of the original owners of the bodies.

Vandalieu thought that he might be able to communicate with them, but nobody would normally think of the idea of negotiating with the Undead.

But Zadiris and the other Ghouls were accustomed to Undead Sam who they could easily converse with and understand, so they voiced no objections and Vandalieu's idea was, in fact, correct.

From a partially-collapsed temple-like building deeper in the ruins, a monster that looked different from the other Undead appeared.

『Ooh... Could this be...』(Mysterious Undead)

An Undead that looked like a mummy whose body was made of nothing but skin attached to its bones, wearing a robe that seemed to be that of a priest despite its ripped sleeves and yellow stains, walked directly towards Vandalieu

and his party.

The three-meter-tall Undead let out strange groaning noises as it approached, perhaps as if emotionally moved or perhaps something else. The Ghouls raised their weapons in bewilderment, while Saria and Rita showed confusion on their faces... no, in their behavior.

But as if he hadn't seen this; he stopped in front of Vandalieu and collapsed onto his knees to kneel as he spoke.

『O Prophesized Holy Son[2], thank you for gracing us with your presence and descending upon the『Capital of the Sun』, Talosheim. Please grant salvation to us, who only await to return to dust!』(Mysterious Undead)

Zadiris and the other Ghouls only showed more confusion in response to the Undead's words, but Vandalieu simply looked at him silently.

With that said, he simply appeared calm because his eyes constantly looked dead with his expressionless face. In reality, he was incredibly bewildered, with the strange feeling that he would be receiving another Title.

【The level of the Death-Attribute Charm skill has increased!】

Monster explanation:

【Anubises】

These are mutated Kobolds, created by being submerged in death-attribute Mana before birth. Their base Rank is Rank 3.

All of their body's characteristics are superior to normal Kobolds, and their intelligence is no exception. They lack the claws that Kobolds possess on their hands and feet, but they are able to use their fingers more skillfully instead.

They possess the【Dark Vision】and【Status Effect Resistance】skills from birth, and they possess a large amount of Mana, so many of them possess greater aptitude for magic than normal Kobolds.

Their urge to breed and fertility is lower than normal Kobolds, being born in groups of three at most. While normal Kobolds need only three months to

develop to maturity, Anubises require ten months.

Their appearance is that of humans with dark skin and the black-furred heads and tails of dogs. If they conceal their heads and tails well, they could be able to disguise themselves as humans.

Though this is a conjecture, it is estimated that while the lifespan of normal Kobolds is about thirty years, the lifespan of Anubises is more than double that.

As the Anubis race has only just been born, it is unknown what kind of superior races of Anubises may exist.

If one were to report the existence of Anubises 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.

Notes

1. This is "event" as in like an in-game event.

2. It's still rather unclear what this term (which appears in the title of the chapter as well) actually is/means, I'll update it if it turns out later that I've got it wrong here.

Chapter 28: The conditions in which the first objective can be achieved

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「O Prophesized Holy Son, thank you for gracing us with your presence and descending upon the【Capital of the Sun】, Talosheim. Please grant salvation to us, who only await to return to dust!」(Mysterious Undead)

As the mummy-like Undead pressed his hands together in prayer with these words, Vandalieu was dumbfounded for a short while. He quickly came back to his senses when Darcia called out to him.

『Hey, Vandalieu, are you alright?』(Darcia)

「! Ah, yes. I'm fine, I was just a little surprised. Could you please explain? Err...」(Vandalieu)

「Of course, o Holy Son. I am the Lich Nuaza.」(Nuaza)

A Lich. These were people with magic-related skills that retained their knowledge and techniques after death and became Undead monsters. This Lich, named Nuaza, continued speaking.

「The tragic sight before the Holy Son right now is the Titan race's fortress city-nation of Talosheim, renowned as the【Capital of the Sun.】This city flourished through the secrets left behind by the fallen hero Zakkart and the blessings of the goddess Vida. But as you can see, due to the destruction in the wake of the sudden invasion by the Mirg shield-nation two hundred years ago, it is now a Devil's Nest. Please grant salvation to us, who only await –」(Nuaza)

「I'm sorry, but could I have you explain the details further?」(Vandalieu)

Conversing with this Undead required patience, but it was also important to interrupt it and guide the conversation from time to time.

To summarize Nuaza's explanation, the Titans had participated in the battle between the goddess Vida and Alda a hundred thousand years ago. Though

they were defeated, the surviving Titans gathered here and built this city-nation.

This place was in the middle of the Boundary Mountain Range that was mostly made up of Devil's Nests, and the hours of the day that this place received the sun's light were short. But thanks to the secrets and knowledge left behind by the hero Zakkart, the city received abundant blessings from the sun.

And then the Titans used their naturally robust bodies to open up the land, cultivated it, made affluent fields of crops, used the name of their ancestor to name the city Talosheim, the【Capital of the Sun】and worshipped the goddess Vida and the hero Zakkart.

They trained their bodies, improved their martial skills, stepped into Dungeons in search of materials they lacked to find an abundance of stone to use in building, and then erected a sturdy, beautiful, white fortress.

The Titans obtained stone, metal and meat by fighting monsters.

And then they discovered a tunnel in the eastern mountain range that had been built in ancient times, so they constructed a highway leading to the Orbaume Kingdom and began commercial trading.

The products of their Dungeons sold for high prices in the Orbaume Kingdom, bringing prosperity and wealth to Talosheim.

However, that prosperity was laid to waste by the sudden appearance of military forces from the Mirg shield-nation.

「With no prior notice, an army simply appeared one day over the mountain range and marched onto Talosheim.」(Nuaza)

The following is what could be deduced from the stories told later to supplement Nuaza's explanations by Sam and his daughters who had been employed by noblemen of the Mirg shield-nation in their past lives, and Kachia who was waiting for Vandalieu and his party's return.

About two hundred years ago, the Mirg shield-nation was ordered to wipe out the nation of the Titans in the name of the Amid Empire and the Church of Alda.

To preserve the relationship between the shield-nation of Mirg, which had been building up its power as a nation, and the Amid Empire. To remove some of the power that the nation had gathered by forcing it into conflict with the Titan nation. To act in accordance with their religious worshipping of the hero Bellwood[1]. These were the reasons behind the Mirg shield-nation's invasion.

Bellwood was the representative of the three heroes that had fought on the side of Alda, the God of Law and Fate. Vandalieu learned for the first time that Bellwood had constantly said that the heroes being carelessly brought here to share the knowledge and technology from other worlds was robbing the people of this world of the opportunity to make progress on their own. He believed that while it might produce good results in the short-term, it would have disastrous effects in the long term.

Because of this, Bellwood had frequent disagreements with the hero Zakkart, who was doing his best to spread the knowledge, technology and culture from his own world, such as finding rice seeds and using magic to selectively breed them to advance the cultivation of rice, before Zakkart was revived as an Undead by the goddess Vida.

And so with the battle between Alda and Vida as an opportunity, Bellwood and the other heroes went around and destroyed as much of the technology and culture that Zakkart had built as possible.

The Amid Empire that considered themselves Bellwood's descendants and the Church of Alda that praised him as a saint lived with policies and doctrines based around him and his beliefs, even today. Of course, only the heroes and the god that summoned them could tell which technologies were from other worlds and which were developed in this world, so the Amid Empire used ambiguous criteria to determine which technologies were left by Zakkart and which were not.

Incidentally, this is the justification that the Amid Empire used for its attempted invasions on the Orbaume Kingdom, whose civilization utilized the cultivation of rice.

With these political and religious reasons, the Mirg shield-nation's forces, led by the military personnel of the Amid Empire, completed the difficult task of

finding a safe route across the Boundary Mountain Range and marched on Talosheim with an army of over ten thousand.

It was certain that the Amid Empire wanted to take the riches of Talosheim for itself, in addition to the above-mentioned reasons.

And for the reluctantly-dispatched troops of the Mirg shield-nation, the Titans were not humans, but a race inferior to humans birthed by the corrupted goddess. There was no doubt that they pillaged and slaughtered the Titans with no mercy.

A large number of Talosheim's villages were burned and taken, but their warriors' bravery and excellence didn't shine only when fighting against monsters.

They didn't have any experience in large-scale battles against other civilizations, but their warriors' swords cut down the Mirg shield-nation's soldiers with ease, and their knights' shields crushed the flesh and bone of the Mirg shield-nation's knights, along with their thin spears.

Best of all, there were numerous heroes in Talosheim.

The【Sword King】Borkus, who could defeat any monster, no matter how powerful, with a single sword.

The【Saint of Solace】Jeena, the young leader of the Church of Vida who excelled in the use of life-attribute magic.

Ogbahn, the【Hungry Wolf】who preferred solitude and had solo-cleared every single Dungeon in Talosheim.

Barigen, the【Dual-Halberd】who held a halberd in each hand and swept through his enemies like a windstorm.

Zandia, the young Second Princess who possessed an affinity for every attribute of magic in spite of the Titan race's general inaptitude with magic, the one renowned as the【Tiny Genius.】

『Do all of their names contain dakuten[2] because Titans are a race created by Vida, just like Ghouls?』

So Vandalieu thought, but reading the serious mood, he didn't mention it out

loud.

Because of these heroes, Talosheim was able to push back the Mirg shield-nation's advancing army, but the enemy had a hero as well.

The hero that participated in the war to reinforce the Mirg shield-nation's forces, the A-rank adventurer who was a candidate for the next ascendancy to S-rank – the【Divine Spear of Ice】, Mikhail. With him joining the fray, the scales tipped in the Mirg shield-nation's favor once more.

「The legendary magic spear of ice that was one of the Mirg shield-nation's national treasures,【Ice Age】, was a legendary-class Magic Item said to have been created as a weapon for heroes by an ice god who served Peria, the goddess of water and knowledge. With this weapon in the hands of Mikhail, the Titan warriors fighting alongside the heroes fell, one by one. The fortress walls were finally broken and the savages of the Mirg shield-nation poured into the city.」(Nuaza)

The only thing the people of Talosheim could do was to have the women and children who couldn't fight escape through the trade tunnel to the Orbaume Kingdom with their First Princess and her bodyguards.

「Though I was but an apprentice, I fought until the very end as a member of the Church of Vida. However, without being able to send a single arrow flying into the detestable Mikhail or defend Jeena-sama or Zandia-sama, I died.」(Nuaza)

And the Mirg shield-nation didn't stop their destruction and pillaging after Nuaza died. Mikhail attempted to destroy the treasure of the goddess Vida that had been hidden deep beneath Talosheim's royal castle.

But the goddess had personally stationed a Dragon Golem underground to protect the treasure. Even Mikhail, whose ascendancy to S-rank had been all but confirmed, could not destroy the treasure.

In fact, the Dragon Golem's right arm and wings were destroyed, half of its tail was cut off and its head was crushed, but at the cost of all of Mikhail's companions being slaughtered. Mikhail himself sustained a serious wound; all he was able to do was to throw his magic spear at the still-moving Golem to imprison it briefly, and then use that opportunity to escape with his life.

Though the Mirg shield-nation was victorious, they were exhausted due to the fierce resistance of the Titans and the hero that led them was on the verge of death. Unable to maintain their occupation of Talosheim, they decided to make a retreat.

Even if they slaughtered every last Titan in Talosheim, there would be no end to the monsters attracted from the nearby Devil's Nests to the city by the smell of blood.

Nuaza didn't know what became of the victorious Mirg shield-nation and Amid Empire after that, but it wasn't a victory that they could have celebrated.

The desperate medical treatment of Mikhail was unsuccessful; he died several days after his return to the Mirg shield-nation. Many of the Mirg shield-nation's other elite individuals had also perished in the battle, and many had become unable to continue serving as soldiers.

On top of that, since Talosheim's First Princess had escaped with the truly valuable treasures and all of the city's funds, the amount of money and goods that the Mirg shield-nation gained were lower than the estimate that they had made before the war. It didn't even compare to the enormous cost that they had paid for their victory.

And since the First Princess had made it to the Orbaume Kingdom, the Kingdom learned of the invasion of Talosheim and dispatched soldiers against the Mirg shield-nation and the Amid Empire as divine punishment for the immoral, unjustified attack on the nation of Titans that it had been allied with.

During the battle of Talosheim, the Mirg shield-nation had sent reinforcements from border due to the unexpected difficulty of the battle. The border's defenses were easily broken through because of the lack of soldiers; many of Mirg's fortresses fell and its cities were occupied.

The Amid Empire was forced to hastily dispatch soldiers in order to protect the country that was supposed to be its shield.

The Amid Empire had been steadily invading the Orbaume Kingdom and expanding its territory, but with this defeat, all of the land that it had conquered was taken back in one movement. Most of the wars that had occurred in the last two hundred years were apparently the Amid Empire's

efforts to recapture that land once more; it had finally gained some new territory in the most recent one.

The population of monsters in the Boundary Mountain Range had been controlled by the adventurers of Talosheim, but with Talosheim's destruction, their numbers suddenly multiplied and monsters overflowed from the Dungeons now that there was nobody to clear them.

As a result, the Devil's Nests expanded and it became difficult for the Mirg shield-nation to even go near the Boundary Mountain Range, let alone find a safe route back to Talosheim to take back the national treasure lost there.

In summary, the invasion of Talosheim was a historical failure for the Amid Empire and the Mirg shield-nation in particular.

When Nuaza learned this, despite having the face of a mummy, he broke into a smile that covered his whole face –

「Serves them r–!」(Nuaza)

He accidentally overdid it and almost passed on to the afterlife.

Since his nation had fallen and he had lost his own life, it was only natural for him to feel this way.

Vandalieu was exasperated at the foolishness of the Amid Empire and the Mirg shield-nation.

They shouldn't have attempted a sudden, brute-force invasion. Talosheim had a tunnel in the mountain range to the east that allowed safe passage to the Orbaume Kingdom. They should have instead maneuvered between Talosheim and the Orbaume Kingdom, formed a non-aggression pact with Talosheim without necessarily having the intention of breaking it and then passed through the tunnel and launched a surprise attack on Orbaume.

If they had done that, they could have purchased materials, including provisions, to maintain a supply line while taking an advantageous battle.

As they had prioritized their strange national policies and religious beliefs, the Mirg shield-nation had lost far more of their strength than expected and suffered a counter-attack from the enemy nation instead. Even Vandalieu, who

didn’t even possess any experience with military simulation games, could come up with this plan. Was the Amid Empire run by idiots?

It wasn’t as if Vandalieu agreed with Rodcorte, but he really thought that this could only be expected from the Empire of an inferior world.

「Mhmm, mhmm. The Mirg shield-nation and the Amid Empire never do anything good. They should just all die out.」(Vandalieu)

「Boy, I do believe that Sam-dono and his daughters were humans of the Mirg shield-nation...」(Zadiris)

『Bocchan, there are some humans like Kachia-san in the Mirg shield-nation, so I don’t know about killing all of them.』(Saria)

『That’s right. Well, we were chased out of that Devil’s Nest by the Mirg shield-nation, but that doesn’t mean that all the people there are bad.』(Rita)

『We were born in the Mirg shield-nation, but if you were to order it, Bocchan, I would not hesitate to run over and kill my fellow countrymen. But please do not forget to keep your views open.』(Sam)

「Holy Son, even we only feel hatred for the Mirg shield-nation and Amid Empire of two hundred years ago. For us Titans, that is long enough for parents’ and grandparents’ generations to have passed; for humans, it is long enough for even their great grandparents’ generations to have passed. Even the goddess tells us not to direct our hatred towards their descendants.」(Nuaza)

『That’s right, Vandalieu. Don’t forget the kindness that you showed in Evbejia. I’ll be happy as long as you don’t forget how to be kind.』(Darcia)

As the hatred that had been gathering at the bottom of Vandalieu’s heart like sediment was dragged out and manifested itself in his words, he received remonstrations from every direction. Incomprehensible. No, he could comprehend it, and he knew that what everyone was saying was right.

「Yes, I’ll moderate myself. By the way, what is the Prophesized Holy Son?」(Vandalieu)

Putting a lid on the hatred in his heart, Vandalieu pressed Nuaza to continue. Nuaza explained what had happened to the Titans after the war.

Half of the Titans revived as Undead within a month from the hatred of being killed and the fact that their bodies weren't buried. Seeing the soldiers of the Mirg shield-nation who had also revived as Undead, they began killing each other again, even though they were already dead.

And they were victorious. However, their feelings of wanting to protect their home country were strong even after becoming Undead, so they didn't leave on an expedition to take revenge on the Mirg shield-nation.

However, they were anxious about whether the First Princess and the people had managed to safely escape to the Orbaume Kingdom, so some of them headed towards the tunnel.

But the tunnel had been collapsed with its entrance sealed. They had planned right from the beginning to use a hidden mechanism to destroy the tunnel to prevent the Mirg shield-nation's army from giving chase once the Titans had already traveled through.

The fact that the tunnel had been sealed meant that the First Princess and the others had made it through. The Titans had no way of knowing what difficulties she and the others were facing in the Orbaume Kingdom, but they decided to trust in the Kingdom that was their allied nation and Duke Hartner, with whom they had done business directly.

They were Undead, and though they believed that they had retained their sense of reason, they didn't know if that was true or how long it would last. If they were to chase after the First Princess and the other Titans in this state, they would be more likely to hinder them than to be of any help.

The great majority of the Undead Titans thought this way.

Even so, some left to cross the mountain range and never returned. A few dozen of the Titans that didn't chase after the First Princess lost their attachment to this world and faded away.

And so when Nuaza and the other Titans returned to the city of Talosheim that no longer had living citizens, they simply spent their days guarding the ruins.

『That was the slow road that led to our ruin.』(Nuaza)

There were numerous Devil's Nests surrounding Talosheim, and Dungeons that the adventurers used to venture into day after day in search of materials.

But Nuaza and the other Undead gathered at the center of the ruins, at the royal castle and in the area around it, never venturing outside. Of course, they didn't go out to hunt monsters themselves or venture into Dungeons.

Because of this, the monsters continued to multiply and the corrupted Mana released by those monsters, the source of evil, accumulated and expanded the Devil's Nests for two hundred years and finally even reached this place, the center of Talosheim.

If any monsters other than the Undead Titans entered the central area of Talosheim, Nuaza and the others would exterminate them. Their skills... their Ranks as monsters were quite high. They were monsters created by the spirits of elite Titan warriors inhabiting the remains of their own bodies, and their memories and personalities from while they were alive were preserved to a certain extent, as Nuaza's were.

For them, killing a hundred or two hundred of the monsters overflowing from the Devil's Nests that they used to hunt in and the Dungeons that they used to clear was nothing but a way to pass the time.

However, perhaps because of a problem related to their mental or emotional states, there were none proactive enough to attempt to purify the Devil's Nest that had spread into the ruins.

Though since they were monsters themselves in the first place, they wouldn't have been able to purify it entirely.

In the Devil's Nest that gradually encroached into Talosheim, the monsters multiplied at a rate far beyond any normal creatures. And as the monsters multiplied, the struggle for survival between them grew fiercer and as the powerful monsters survived, they were the ones to multiply and increase in number.

In contrast, the number of Undead of Talosheim might decrease, but was never able to increase.

Regular groups of Undead would turn the corpses of the adventurers or

monsters who killed them into Undead; their numbers would increase by the number of people that they killed. But adventurers visiting this place were non-existent.

And since Nuaza and the Undead Titans had retained their personalities from when they were alive, they didn't see the Undead monsters as their companions and killed them the moment they began to move.

One day, when a group of a thousand or more powerful monsters closed in on this place, Nuaza and the other Undead of Talosheim would return to dust.

『We believed that this would happen one day. As the years and months went by, our numbers gradually decreased. There is no purpose for stray Undead who have forgotten their regrets and hatred to exist. While acting as gravekeepers of our own land, praying that the Princess and the others who made it to the Orbaume Kingdom would find good fortune, we have simply waited to be destroyed. However, that one fateful day, the goddess gave us a prophecy.』(Nuaza)

It happened when Nuaza finished the fifty-year-long process of restoring the statue of the goddess that had been destroyed by the Mirg shield-nation's soldiers.

『From the west shalt cometh a white child, leading my forgotten children. That child shall guide thee to prosperity and glory.』(Nuaza)

Nuaza heard a voice filled with a deep love, and he instinctively felt that this was a prophecy from the goddess.

At the same time, he remembered a legend that had been passed down from their ancestors. The founder of Vampires was born between the goddess Vida and the hero Zakkart. When he was defeated by the hero Bellwood, he left behind a certain prophecy.

『Though I may perish here, I shall be reborn once more, rise up with my brothers and bring ruin to the disciples of the arrogant god!』(Vampire founder)

And then Nuaza was certain that the white child of the prophecy was unmistakably the legendary founder of the Vampires.

And more than a hundred years after the prophecy was made, Nuaza had met

a white child emanating a divine aura (the effects of the Death-Attribute Charm), leading the Ghouls who were a race created by Vida but treated as monsters by human society.

「O Holy Son, you are the white child in the prophecy, the second coming of the son born between the goddess and the hero. Rise up with us, and bring prosperity and glory –」Nuaza)

「No, let's wait a minute, you're getting the two prophecies mixed up.」

As Nuaza was overcome with emotion, Vandalieu hastily restrained him.

He had been bewildered at being referred to as the Prophesized Holy Son, but with this strange prophecy made by the Vampire founder added onto that, simply being bewildered about it would be dangerous. At this rate, he might become forced to become the leader of an anti-Alda resistance.

Vandalieu hated the god Alda and those who followed him; he did consider them his enemies, but they were so powerful that he was hesitant even to fight against just a single High Priest and his dozen or so subordinates.

No matter how composed and rational Undead looked, they were fundamentally creatures driven by desires and urges. If they got too excited, their minds mind turn towards,「Let's attack the Mirg shield-nation!」

And Vandalieu doubted this prophecy, rather, the one made by the Vampire founder.

There was a chance that the prophecy was something that Nuaza had simply hallucinated after becoming an Undead, but its contents matched Vandalieu and the Ghouls too perfectly for that. He had no intention of guiding the Undead to prosperity and glory, but what Vandalieu and the Ghouls would achieve from now on might lead to prosperity and glory for Nuaza and the other Titans.

If Vandalieu had heard a prophecy while he was living on earth, he probably wouldn't have believed it, but since he knew that a god did in fact exist (even if that god was a good-for-nothing god), it wasn't strange to imagine that the gods whose names appeared in myths would give prophecies to those who followed them.

But why were the prophecy of the goddess and the prophecy made by the Vampire founder getting mixed together? They didn't seem related to each other at all.

「Hmm, Vandalieu is indeed white, and we Ghouls do have our roots in the goddess Vida. While the goddess's prophecy may refer to us, I do believe that the prophecy of the Vampire founder's rebirth is unrelated.」(Zadiris)

It seemed that Zadiris agreed with Vandalieu and began to remonstrate Nuaza, but Nuaza didn't seem to be fazed in the slightest.

『It matters not. For us who cannot rid ourselves of our attachments and turn to dust, nor scorch our souls with hatred, who have only submerged ourselves in our feelings of resignation, your mere arrival gives us hope, o Holy Son.』(Nuaza)

Vandalieu wasn't unhappy to have a person(?) that he had only just met for the first time to trust in him so much, but his feelings of confusion were stronger. He had no plan or strategy to lead them and say,「I understand, prosperity and glory is right this way.」

However, it was convenient that Nuaza and the Titans had a good impression of him, considering his original plans.

「Well then, would it be alright if I brought the six hundred or so Ghouls that I led here to move into Talosheim?」(Vandalieu)

「Ooh! You would reside in our city, Holy Son?! These are the ruins of a dead nation; nobody would object. Isn't that right, everyone?!」(Nuaza)

In response to Nuaza's question, the Undead Titans who had been kneeling silently suddenly let out cheers that sounded like groaning.

『We will welcome the Holy Son and his companions! UOOOOH!』

『Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah! Gaah, ah, ah, ah!』

『Kill them! Kill them! Kill all who would get in their way!』

『Kill them all!』

A moment ago, the ruins had been silent like a graveyard, but now it was full of delight and bloodthirst. The Undead Titans lifted their weapons into the air,

stomped their feet, their fighting spirit welling up as if they were about to head into battle right this moment.

It was such a change that one had to question where their docility had gone, the fire of their emotions were inextinguishable once sparked. This was just another quality of Undead creatures.

Most Undead had such fires sparked in them from the moment they rose, so not many knew about this, however.

「B-boy? It seems that some of them are saying quite dangerous words...?」(Zadiris)

「They mean they're going to kill everyone that gets in the way of our migration into Talosheim.」(Vandalieu)

『I concur, but there is such a thing as over-enthusiasm...』(Sam)

『That sounds very convincing when Father says it, doesn't it?』(Saria) [Sarcastic]

「Let's see then, those who are willing to help, follow us.」(Vandalieu)

And so several hundred Undead Titans charged into the Devil's Nest that separated the center of Talosheim and the temporary camp that the Ghouls had set up outside, with enough force to stomp the ground flat.

They slaughtered the Needle Wolves and Raptors that attacked them while cutting down trees that were in the way. Though the distance they covered was only around two kilometers, they turned the fortress city-nation from the center to the front gate into a safe ruin where not even a single mouse moved.

Was it Vandalieu that was amazing for inspiring them, or were they the amazing ones for being able to do this just from the uncertain hope that Vandalieu had offered them?

「I think it's the latter.」(Vandalieu)

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After that, since there was now a safe path through, Vandalieu led the pack of Ghouls, who were surprised by the Undead who seemed driven crazy by their fighting spirit, in their migration into the center of Talosheim.

They had chosen the central area that contained many buildings that had been government buildings such as the royal castle, the church and government offices instead of a residential district. This was because the sturdy buildings of the central area were in better condition.

The central area had been exposed to the fierce battle that had taken place two hundred years ago, but what the Mirg shield-nation had focused on trying to destroy was the Church of Vida and, most importantly, Vida's treasure that had been hidden below the royal castle. That was why they didn't destroy the buildings made of solid stone.

In addition, the Undead had been guarding the buildings of this central area for two hundred years, not allowing monsters to take up residence and damage them, so they would be usable once cleaned.

The Titans' buildings were too large for the Ghouls, their furniture and implements had all decayed except for those made of stone, and the things that were left didn't match the Ghouls' size, so a considerable amount of remodeling was still required and new furniture needed to be built.

But there was a mountain of materials to be found here.

First, the timber from the trees that the Undead titans had cut down was gathered and lined up.

「【Wither.】Get up. Cut. Get out.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu used the death-attribute magic spell【Wither】to remove some water from the trees and have them dry up, turned them into Wood Golems, used【Golem Transmutation】to have them cut themselves into appropriate sizes and then removed the souls possessing the wood again.

With this method, the Devil's Nest's trees turned quickly into usable timber. And then the Ghouls built partitions between rooms and furniture. The Ghouls were originally native to a Devil's Nest forest; since they didn't need particularly elaborate furniture, this work was finished in several days.

Vandalieu went around using【Golem Transmutation】to repair parts of the buildings that had fissures and parts that had crumbled. Seeing this, the Undead Titans who had been craftsmen while they were alive exclaimed,『We won't

lose, either!』and,『We cannot allow only the Holy Son to perform all of the labor!』They dropped their weapons and began to work as well; this was something that Vandalieu hadn't included in his calculations.

Speaking of things not included in Vandalieu's calculations, Nuaza had said that he was only an apprentice priest. As such, he was only the Church's representative among the Titans (Those of priest status or above either never revived as Undead or had already faded away). He wasn't in a position to make decisions and speak for all of the Undead Titans.

Therefore, there was a considerable number of Undead Titans other than the ones who had helped with the migration still remaining in the buildings. Most notably, one of Talosheim's heroes, the【Sword King】Borkus, had turned into an Undead and was apparently still guarding the inside of the royal castle.

That was certainly one capable person... capable corpse that Vandalieu wanted as his ally.

「If I could have him act as a mediator for the Undead, there will be fewer troubles between the races after I get to the Orbaume Kingdom, too.」(Vandalieu)

The Ghouls had already secured plenty of living space, so there was no need to have Borkus vacate the royal castle. Even so, Vandalieu requested Nuaza to accompany him to convince Borkus to become his ally and headed towards the royal castle, giving a puzzled look towards Zadiris, Saria and the others who had refused to follow him.

【The level of the Strengthen Followers skill has increased to level 5!】

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

【You have acquired the Cooking skill!】

Monster explanation:

【Orcuses】

These are mutated Orcs, created by being submerged in death-dttribute Mana before birth. Their base Rank is Rank 4.

Their physical strength is about the same as that of Orcs, but their tenacity,

endurance, dexterity and their intelligence in particular is superior to Orcs.

They possess the【Dark Vision】,【Superhuman Strength】,【Physical Damage Resistance】and【Bad Eating】skills from birth. Because of these, once an Orcus becomes an adult, his offensive and defensive capabilities exceed those of a fully-armed Orc even if the Orcus has no weapons and armor equipped.

However, they possess lower levels in the【Endless Sexual Stamina】and【Breeding】skills, and some do not even possess these skills at all. Their reproductive abilities are only a little superior to humans.

Their appearance is that of an overweight human with a black or grey-furred wild boar's head, and only male individuals exist at present.

Though this is a conjecture, their lifespans are estimated to be roughly equal to those of humans.

As the Orcus race has only just been born, it is unknown what kind of superior races of Orcuses may exist.

If one were to report the existence of Orcuses 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.

Notes

1. This hero was the one who founded the Amid Empire, mentioned in chapter 8. I incorrectly translated his name as Berud back then (fixed now).

2. Dakuten are the dash-things in hiragana and katakana that I've already mentioned. Like the Ghouls' names, all of these Titan heroes' names contain at least one pair of dakuten.

Chapter 29: The Black Ghoul King and the One-Armed Sword King

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While Vandalieu was in the royal castle with Nuaza to recruit the【Sword King】Borkus, the main members of the group that knew Vandalieu well, except for Sam, were gathered in a certain room in one of Talosheim's buildings.

「It seems that everyone has gathered here besides Sam-dono who cannot leave his carriage.」(Zadiris)

「So, Zadiris, what were you planning after gathering us all here?」(Tarea)

「If I'm not mistaken, nobody called for you to be here, though.」(Basdia)

Elegantly hiding her mouth behind a folding fan that she had made herself from Ent wood, Tarea gave a small laugh in response to Basdia glaring at her through half-closed eyes.

「I cannot miss this meeting after hearing that we are gathering to form a plan to comfort Van-sama, after all.」(Tarea)

「Muuh, I do not recall saying anything of the sort, just where did you hear this? Well, it is fine.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris had planned to have a discussion with only those who knew about Vandalieu's circumstances... His past lives, the god, the one hundred people who would be reincarnated here. But since Vandalieu seemed to trust Tarea considerably, Zadiris decided that there would be no problem long as she was careful with her words, and started the meeting.

「Now then, the reason I have gathered everyone here today is to make you aware that the boy needs rest, and because I wish for you to cooperate with me in making the boy rest.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris brought up the topic of discussion, but this only caused confusion to stir among the people in the room.

『Rest, did you say? Bocchan is sleeping well every night.』(Saria)

『Yeah, he's always sound asleep.』(Rita)

Saria and Rita, who were attending the meeting on Sam's behalf, spoke their opinions. Vandalieu was in fact sleeping well as the two of them said. He didn't even turn over in his sleep, and his breathing was soft.

There had been more than a few instances where they checked his pulse to make sure he hadn't suddenly died.

「That's right, Zadiris. Vandalieu hasn't shown any sign of being tired, and if he was tired, he'd definitely say so himself that he needs to rest.」(Vigaro)

「You're right. When he was making sauces and preserved food, he didn't seem any different from usual.」(Basdia)

As Vigaro and Basdia said, neither Vandalieu's behavior nor his facial expression showed any signs of fatigue. He had never even said,「I'm tired」, or,「I want to rest.」

He sighed often, but that usually because things weren't going his way rather than because he was tired. Because his breaths were so quiet in the first place, there were also a lot of times where nobody could even notice him sighing.

『And everyone is treating Vandalieu with care. He really is a hard worker, but I don't think we're forcing him to do anything unreasonable.』(Saria)

Darcia, who was awake at this time, was also participating in the meeting by having Saria relay her words.

In response to the trust that Darcia expressed through Saria, Zadiris gave a small groan and shook her head.

「I am sorry to betray that trust that you have in us, but we are demanding the unreasonable of the boy. Recently, I massaged the boy's shoulders half-jokingly, but they were... stiff. He didn't dislike it; he called it『heaven』and almost fell asleep.」(Zadiris)

「I was wondering what you were going to say, but you just wanted to boast that you are skilled at giving shoulder massages? Anyone would feel sleepy after having their shoulders massaged.」(Tarea)

「The elderly should at least take five seconds to think before opening their mouths. Remember that the boy is only just about to turn three years old.」(Zadiris)

Everyone was taken aback by Zadiris's words.

Vandalieu was an infant who felt pleasure from having his shoulders massaged, in other words, his shoulders were stiff... No normal child of that age would have stiff shoulders.

「And just think. Think about how much the boy does in a single day. Incidentally, he does not stop his lessons in Alchemy until he has completed at least four hours.」(Zadiris)

Vandalieu spent four hours a day in lessons where he would crush materials in a mortar, mix them together, knead them and pour Mana into them.

「... He also makes sauces from walnuts and herbs, and cookies with acorns and other tree fruits with everyone. We ran out of salt and he was worried about finding an ingredient to replace it. He did come up with the idea of turning the mortar and pestle into Golems so that it wouldn't take too much time or effort, but...」(Basdia)

Even the work he did while chatting with people took a considerable amount of time.

「He did take care of us during our migration. He used Lemures and Undead insects to watch our surroundings, and most importantly, he created roads for us and then returned them back to how they originally were. Currently, he is making lumber out of the trees and repairing the buildings, isn't he?」(Tarea)

『Also, he is practicing no-attribute magic until late in the night. He performs small tasks with【Telekinesis】while practicing his Mana Control skill.』(Saria)

『Eh?! Bocchan wakes up early in the morning to practice his death-attribute magic, doesn't he?!』(Rita)

『That can't be! Then when is Vandalieu sleeping?!』(Darcia)

「That is what I mean. The boy possesses the【Status Effect Resistance】skill, so he is likely enduring the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation. He even seems

to possess the【Surpass Limits】skill as well.」(Zadiris)

As Zadiris was saying, with the skills that Vandalieu possessed, even an infant's body could endure the effects of fatigue. Even to the point that Vandalieu himself wouldn't really notice that he was pushing himself past his limits.

Because of his resistance skills, even if he was fatigued his body still moved normally, so he would be under the impression that he was still fine. That was why he could endure being sleepy, so even the time that he did spend sleeping so that his development wouldn't be negatively affected grew shorter, as he would always think,「This much sleep will be enough.」

But the resistance skills only allowed him to endure this. They wouldn't remove his fatigue or help him quickly recover from it. And so, in reality, his fatigue was accumulating.

「And... I've only just realized, but Van rarely shows any emotion in his expression. I'm able to tell how he's feeling to some extent from his tone, behavior and the air around him, but...」(Basdia)

And as Basdia said, Vandalieu's accumulated fatigue almost never appeared in his facial expression. His face was always white, almost enough to be called too white.

It wasn't white in an attractive sense; he always looked unpleasantly pale, as if he had smeared candle wax over his cheeks. That was why it was impossible to tell how healthy he was from the color of his face.

And Darcia, Sam, Saria and Rita had all been unaware of Vandalieu's overwork. That was because they were all Undead without bodies of flesh, so they didn't feel fatigue themselves.

Mental fatigue may have been another story, but even though Saria, Rita and Sam had only been Undead for less than three years, they had already become unable to recall the sensation of being physically tired.

In addition, Darcia was spending more than half of each day sleeping in her remains. Nobody could blame her for not knowing how much rest Vandalieu was getting.

「Nuh, then why doesn't Vandalieu try to get some more rest himself? It's true that there might not have been any time for him to rest while we were on our journey. But it's different the past few days. And even on our journey, I'm sure he could have at least rested for one day.」(Vigaro)

As Vigaro was saying, Vandalieu could have rested if he had wanted to. All he would have to do is tell everyone,「I'm tired today so I want to rest.」

After all, he was truly the King of the Ghouls right now, standing at the top of their community.

Of course, Vigaro, Zadiris, Tarea, Basdia – all of the important Ghouls – recognized Vandalieu as the Ghoul King.

If Vandalieu had stopped building roads during their journey across the mountain range, then they wouldn't have been able to continue traveling. But if they had chosen to stop at a spot where monster attacks would be relatively infrequent, Vandalieu could have rested for a day without a problem and nobody would have complained. After all, without Vandalieu, it would have been impossible for the Ghouls to cross the mountain range in the first place.

No, without Vandalieu, the Ghoul women would still be in Bugogan's custody and many of the other Ghouls would have perished after having their villages destroyed by the Orcs. The Ghouls had no reason to complain.

However, words expressing a desire to rest had never come from Vandalieu's mouth.

「Indeed. Why is that, I wonder?」(Zadiris)

Zadiris and the other Ghouls couldn't understand why this was. The Ghouls were a fundamentally lazy race. Though they would often need to tell each other,「Don't rest, keep training, work harder」, they would never need to say,「You can take a rest now, catch your breath.」

Ghouls rested plenty without being told to, and if they were tired, they would say so themselves. In this regard, Ghouls were indeed part-monster.

『Hmm, ever since Father became a carriage, Bocchan has been taking afternoon naps, but...』(Saria)

『I wonder if it's because of the resistance skills after all. I have a feeling someone told me that those born with resistance skills have poor awareness of the status effects that those skills grant resistance to...』(Darcia)

After careful consideration, this was the conclusion Darcia had come to.

As a Dark Elf, Darcia had been born with the【Magic Resistance】skill. This skill caused damage from offensive magic spells to be reduced and status effects caused by spells were less likely to occur and faster to recover from.

As a result, she had apparently experienced more than a few situations where she relied on her【Magic Resistance】skill too much and sustained severe burns, and situations where she was trying to taken an enemy alive in battle and cast a spell thinking,「I'm sure they won't die from a direct hit by a spell like this」, only for the target to be turned into a piece of meat.

Because of this, all Dark Elves were taught about resistance skills while they were children, including how much of an effect certain things would have if one didn't possess these resistance skills.

However, Vandalieu hadn't been taught this. It was very likely that he thought he could simply endure things because of the【Status Effect Resistance】skill, thinking,「I'm surprisingly not tired.」

『That's why he doesn't think to rest. And he might be thinking of the current situation as a state of emergency. Because after I died, a lot of things happened...』(Darcia)

He had been desperate to survive since his mother had died, and he had been doing his best to gain revenge after that. As a result, he had come to work with the Ghouls, but his original goal when he first met Zadiris and the others was to learn certain skills and then leave the Devil's Nest. And so he had worked hard in his lessons.

He had defeated the Noble Orcs, led the Ghouls across the mountain range and helped them find a new home. It had been a series of emergency situations.

Because much of Vandalieu's work hadn't required him to physically move his body, he might not have a good sense of having「done work.」

However, everyone here knew that using one's Mana caused fatigue.

「I understand that Van-sama is tired. So can't we solve this if we simply tell him to rest?」(Tarea)

They were now well aware that Vandalieu needed to rest. But then, wasn't the solution very simple? Tarea suggested that it might be so, but Zadiris shook her head.

「If that were the case, I would have already told him to rest long ago. But he does not really listen.」(Zadiris)

One time Zadiris had suggested for Vandalieu to take a rest, and Vandalieu did stop his Alchemy lesson. But it was with reluctance, as if he felt that he could keep going.

But he would continue practicing death-attribute magic while lying down, and just when Zadiris thought that he was taking a relaxing walk, he was performing needless repairs on the buildings of Talosheim. He was always thinking of the next thing he should do and doing them on his own.

When it seemed like he was playing with the Black Goblin and Anubis children, he was helping them with their studies and taking care of the Live-Dead. He barely rested at all.

He was also performing strange experiments to somehow make Bone Man stronger, as Bone Man was the only one of his Undead who hadn't increased in Rank despite reaching level 100.

「Now that I think about it, Van said that he wanted me to teach him unarmed fighting when he turned three. He said something about stories where one can become a master if he begins learning from the age of three.」(Basdia)

「WHAT?! Why is he asking you, Basdia, and not me?!」(Vigaro)

『Isn't that because your arms are clearly too long, so he would not be able to learn your techniques? You're the one who told us that unarmed combat for Ghouls is completely different for men and women, Vigaro-san.』(Saria)

「Vigaro, be quiet for a moment. Basdia, if you are going to teach him, you must be skillful with your words and make the boy rest. So that is how it is,

everyone. We must form a plan to have the boy take a break. I have spent so much time wondering how I could get the youngsters to train themselves diligently. To think that I would also have to strain my wit to have them rest themselves as well.」(Zadiris)

And so Zadiris and the others discussed how to make Vandalieu rest while he was away at the royal castle.

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With Nuaza's guidance, Vandalieu passed through the collapsed gate of the royal castle with some difficulty.

「... These tall stairs aren't kind to infants.」(Vandalieu)

The buildings of Talosheim were very rough on Vandalieu, as they had been built for Titans whose average height was 2.7m for males and 2.5m for females.

Climbing the stairs was an athletics exercise.

「My apologies; as you can see, the stairs for the use of other races have been buried in the rubble.」(Nuaza)

As Nuaza said this, he suddenly picked up Vandalieu with his arms that were only made of skin and bones. Even after becoming a Lich – a Lesser Lich, to be more precise – he hadn't lost his【Augmented Strength】skill, a transformed version of the【Superhuman Strength】skill that he had possessed while he was alive.

「We haven't used it up until now so I decided to leave it until later, but it's probably best to repair the royal castle as soon as possible.」(Vandalieu)

If Darcia and the others had heard this, they would have stopped him, but Nuaza replied,「It matters not as long as it is at your convenience, Holy Son.」

「It would indeed be fortunate if you were to repair it for us, but it is a castle where no soldiers or civilians live. And it will likely not collapse for several hundred more years.」(Nuaza)

For Nuaza and the rest of the Undead of Talosheim, the royal castle was an enormous gravestone for their nation. If it were to be repaired, they would be happy, but it seemed that they didn't desire it so badly that it would delay

Vandalieu's plans.

Even now, two hundred years after the fierce battle, there were parts of the city that had been destroyed and collapsed, but the royal castle built of building stones originating from Dungeons still stood tall. As Nuaza said, the castle would still be here several hundred years from now. Its impressive presence was enough to make anyone feel certain of that.

「... I understand. I'll do it if there is some spare time. So, where is Borkus-san?」

「He should be in front of the door of the audience chamber, which contains hidden stairs that lead beneath the castle. He has not moved a single step from that spot for two hundred years.」(Nuaza)

Before coming here to recruit the【Sword King】Borkus, Vandalieu had asked the Undead Titans, including Nuaza, what kind of person Borkus was.

According to them, he was the only one of Talosheim's heroes to revive as an Undead, and the most powerful among the Undead Titans right now.

His personality was –

『A heavy believer of justice and virtue; a cheerful, kind person. He loved to buy others drinks but was weak to alcohol himself. He was someone who did not hesitate to say that a woman's charm was in her chest, while a man's was in his muscles.』(Nuaza)

This is what Nuaza, who had apparently been among the intellectual group of Titans, had said.

The other Titans had replied –

『He was bald!』

『Strong! Strong! Strong!』

『His complaints about his wife and boasts about his daughter were too long. So annoying, so annoyiiiiing, but he's a gooood guuuuy!』

In summary, he was apparently a good person.

「I don't have any confidence in my muscles; is there any chance that he'll say,

『Come back the day before yesterday[1]?』」(Vandalieu)

「I am sure he will not. And speaking of muscles, I am only skin and bones myself.」(Nuaza)

「I suppose that's true.」(Vandalieu)

And after proceeding through the inside of the castle with cracked walls and floors littered with broken fragments of smashed reliefs[2] and broken pillars, they soon arrived at the audience chamber.

The【Sword King】Borkus was there, as if taking the role of the ruined door that had probably once been heavy and yet extravagant.

His three-meter-tall body was enormous even for a Titan, with his bloodless skin covering his organs and large, piled-up muscles. Even as an Undead, a powerful presence radiated from him.

Borkus had lost his right arm in the fierce battle with the【Divine Spear of Ice】Mikhail, and his enormous two-handed sword had been broken halfway up the blade, but he hadn't lost any of his strength.

Vandalieu was sure of this, even without using【Appraisal.】His constantly-active【Danger Sense: Death】was telling him,「Do not make him angry.」

『The youngster from the Church... Who is this unusual brat?』(Borkus)

The【Sword King】Borkus, whose skull was completely exposed on the right side of his head, glared at Vandalieu suspiciously. From the vigilant tone in his voice, Vandalieu knew that he was resisting the effects of the【Death-Attribute Charm】skill.

「This is the【Ghoul King】Vandalieu, the Prophesized Holy Son.」(Nuaza)

『What? Ghoul King, you say? So he's not a Dhampir, but a mutated Ghoul? To be a Ghoul King as a little girl, even if you disregard the strange air around her, means that she's no ordinary person.』(Borkus)

「No, I'm a Dhampir, not a Ghoul. Also, I'm a boy.」(Vandalieu)

『Is that so?』(Borkus)

Vandalieu hastily corrected Borkus's misunderstanding, but even though

Borkus had said that Vandalieu was「no ordinary person」, he didn't seem very interested.

『I don't know what you were thinking when you came here, but I have no interest in what you do... If you want to settle down, or take away the bodies of those bastards from the shield-nation, go ahead.』(Borkus)

Resting his broken sword on his left shoulder, Borkus looked down at Vandalieu. He seemed relaxed, but he would certainly bring that sword swinging down in an instant if anything were to happen.

From his behavior, it was difficult to imagine that【Death-Attribute Charm】was having any effect on him. In fact, it seemed to be making him only more vigilant.

『I hadn't thought that it would be this ineffective.』(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had never assumed that【Death-Attribute Charm】would affect every single Undead. Naturally, he had known that there was a possibility that Borkus would resist it.

He had thought about that possibility, but hadn't thought of any concrete plans on what to do if Borkus really did resist it.

If Borkus were to become an enemy and Vandalieu couldn't Charm him, he had to think of a way to defeat him.

If Vandalieu wanted to build up more forces, he had to think of another way.

But now that Borkus had declared that he wouldn't have any part in Vandalieu's activities, what should Vandalieu do?

(I suppose I have no choice but to negotiate normally.)

Well, that was the conclusion that Vandalieu arrived at.

「Borkus-san. There is something that I wish for you to help me with.」(Vandalieu)

『Sorry, but I refuse. I have things to do, you see.』(Borkus)

Rejection. It seemed that the recruitment negotiations had failed.

No, no, it wasn't over. It was too early to give up.

「Borkus-san, I can use death-attribute magic, a magic that has never existed in this world up until now. It might be possible for me to grant your wishes with this magic.」(Vandalieu)

In a negotiation, one has to present something that the other party desires and offer it to them in exchange for the other party fulfilling a request. Thus, Vandalieu thought to first find out what it was that Borkus desired.

Would it be revenge on the Mirg shield-nation? Or the restoration of his body? Or perhaps he wanted to find out what had happened to his daughter who had escaped into the Orbaume Kingdom?

『... Can a brat like you really do something like that?』(Borkus)

「At the very least, I've been able to do a number of things that weren't possible in this world before.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus asked his own question in return, but Vandalieu could give him a proud answer. This wasn't a matter of him having pride or not, but because he could use magic that had never existed before, he knew that it was only natural for him to be able to do things that were never possible.

Even the most basic of death-attribute spells like【Sterilization】and【Bug Killer】were apparently difficult to reproduce using other attributes of magic.

Hearing Vandalieu's answer, Borkus turned his face that had only one eye down towards the ground. And then he spoke without looking up.

『But you can't do something like removing the curse of a legendary-class Magic Item, can you?』(Borkus)

There were some legendary-class Magic Items that inflicted curses on their targets or their users that even first-class mages couldn't remove. Such curses could only be removed by another legendary-class Magic Item, a hero, any beings who could match the gods or the gods themselves.

Would that not be impossible, even for the Holy Son? Nuaza surreptitiously turned his mummified face towards Vandalieu with a concerned expression.

「A curse, you say? I can do that. I haven't used any Mana today, either.」(Vandalieu)

『You can do that?!』(Borkus)

「How can that be?!」(Nuaza)

As Vandalieu quickly answered that he could do it, Nuaza and Borkus simultaneously expressed their disbelief.

『It's a curse, you know, one from a legendary-class Magic Item! It's so powerful that it can't be purified no matter how many gold coins you pile up at the Church!』(Borkus)

「That is right! The High Priest-sama and Bishop-sama who I cannot even be compared to, and even the【Saint】Jeena-sama, could not purify such curses! Never mind purifying it, what would we do if you were to become cursed yourself, Holy Son?!」(Nuaza)

From the point of view of Nuaza and Borkus, Vandalieu was saying the impossible, so their reaction was only natural.

「Yes, I did it before... I was forced to do it, so I think I can. It's a curse after all, isn't it?」(Vandalieu)

However, from Vandalieu's point of view, it was only natural that curses could be broken, so he hadn't the slightest idea why the two of them were so confused.

Well, judging from their behavior, he had at least realized that in Lambda, curses were probably not something that could be so easily removed.

「Curses are basically Status Effects caused by Mana, aren't they? Depending on the curse, malice or hatred might be at the core of the curse, but the specific effects... Causing incurable illness, bringing misfortune or sealing certain actions – Mana is necessary to cause those kinds of Status Effects.」(Vandalieu)

Mana is fundamentally essential for curses to manifest their specific effects.

For instance, sending a doll that has been torn to shreds to a hated person is nothing more than a psychological attack. If that person has nerves of steel or doesn't fear anything, then this will have no effect at all.

Mana is necessary to turn a curse into something more than just a superstitious charm. Mana needs to be embedded into it through a ritual,

chant, a sacrificial offering or something of that sort.

This was the definition of a curse in the world of Origin, in which science and magic had co-existed.

「Death-attribute magic is capable of absorbing energy, including Mana, to extinguish it. So if the Mana that makes up the curse is extinguished, the curse can be removed.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu repeated the exact words that the researchers had once told him.

Curses had previously been incredibly difficult to remove in Origin back then. Vandalieu remembered how loud the excited researchers had been when the experiment had succeeded.

Well, the success of the experiments hadn't improved the way Vandalieu had been treated, nor would the researchers grant him any wishes, so Vandalieu had never appreciated how amazing it actually was to be able to remove... erase curses.

『So you mean to say that you can remove a legendary-class Magic Item's curse?』(Borkus)

「Yes. As long as it's not some incredibly unique curse.」(Vandalieu)

Even as Vandalieu gave this answer, he was silently puzzled. He couldn't feel any sign of Borkus being under the effects of a curse... other than the fact that he was an Undead.

『... Alright. If you can bring those guys back, I'll become your subordinate or minion or anything you want. I don't know if this has any meaning to it now, but I swear it by my honor as the【Sword King.】』(Borkus)

「Those guys?」(Vandalieu)

『Yeah. My companions who are still trapped by the curse of that damned spear of ice... Please release Jeena and Zandia-jouchan. I beg you.』(Borkus)

Borkus's head had been far above Vandalieu's own up until now, but now he lowered it to Vandalieu's feet.

「I understand」, Vandalieu replied as he looked down at Borkus's hairless head.

Monster explanation:

【Live-Dead】

These are special Undead created when life-attribute magic is used on fresh corpses that have not yet undergone rigor mortis to grant artificial life from the outside, resulting in a soulless body with biological processes such as the cardiac and respiratory functions restored.

As they are corpses without souls, they do not even possess the most basic intelligence and do not attack the living like Zombies. All skills that the owner of the body originally possessed while alive are lost, other than skills that he or she was born with. (From this fact, there are scholars who insist on the theory that skills are dependent not on the body, but on the soul. But they are in the minority.)

Defeating them is simple; if they are injured in a way that would be fatal to a normal human, they will die.

Their base Rank is Rank 0; they pose even less of a threat than a Slime or a Goblin. In addition, they do not spontaneously appear in Devil's Nests or Dungeons. All Live-Dead are artificially created by mages.

The reason mages create these Undead that only possess the most basic of biological functions is because their lack of souls makes them ideal for use as familiars and to act on the mages' behalf.

In such cases, the Live-Dead's physical abilities increase beyond its normal limits and it becomes a dangerous enemy.

There is a whispered story where the king of a nation suddenly passed away and the people had been deceived by being told that the king was not dead, but simply lying on the floor because he was feeling unwell. There is another, though its authenticity is questionable, where the head of a noble family passed away without a heir, and he was turned into a Live-Dead in order to make one.

As it is impossible to create Live-Dead who have sustained injuries that render biological functions impossible (including loss of blood), only corpses that have died spontaneously or of most illnesses can be used.

It is also impossible to create Live-Dead from the corpses of monsters or races that were created when the goddess procreated with monsters (Vampires, Dhampirs, Ghouls, etc.), as their corpses contain residual amounts of Mana following death.

Notes

1. This is a Japanese phrase that means something like, “Go away and never come back.

2. According to Wikipedia, reliefs are apparently some carved art/sculpture things.

3. Here's an explanation of the chapter's title, courtesy of ER:

   Black, in this case, refers to a 'black company,' (ブラック企業) or a sweatshop in English.

   Since Vandalieu is a workaholic and doesn't properly rest for beans, he is 'black.'

   Japanese is fun with its occasional adopted English word not meaning what they do in English.

Chapter 30: I’m fine with being the Prophesized Holy Son

The Undead Titans’ recollections of what happened after the【Divine Spear of Ice】Mikhail joined the attack on Talosheim were full of holes; they had never known the exact details up until now.

These were the events of what happened when they were killed, what happened before they became Undead and what happened right after that.

They only knew the historical facts, such as that Talosheim had fallen, that the heroes had been defeated and that Mikhail had attempted to destroy the goddess Vida’s treasure that existed below the royal castle but was heavily wounded by Vida’s legacy, the guardian Dragon Golem, and forced to retreat back to the Mirg shield-nation.

『I… Jeena, Zandia-jouchan and I, the three of us, ambushed that bastard in the audience chamber. The Adventurers’ Guild branch that had been built in Talosheim back then told me that I was an A-class adventurer. Jeena was promoted to A-class before the war, and though Zandia-jouchan was still B-class, it was said that she would definitely become an S-class adventurer in the future. Even though that guy had a legendary-class Magic Item, he was an A-class adventurer, just like me. I thought we could do it.』(Borkus)

Two A-class adventurers and a B-class adventurer, a total of three people, fought a single A-class adventurer. The odds were clearly in the favor of the former, and they should have succeeded in defending the chamber.

But Borkus continued speaking.

『In the end, things turned out as you know. I was called the【Sword King.】I had no intention of losing. I received supportive spells from the other two, and with this magic sword, I used my signature move【Dragon Slayer】to try and defeat him. But my magic sword... The magic sword that took the head of a Dragon in one attack was smashed by his spear. Damn it, how dare you – I

shouted something like that as I tried to swing a punch at him. But I couldn't. Heheh, it's no big deal, I just lost my dominant arm and my magic sword together.』(Borkus)

Adventurers are divided into classes from G to S. This isn't based purely on fighting strength; adventurers' success rate in completing requests and their normal conduct are also taken into consideration, and Jobs and possessed skills can have an effect as well. However, there are no overwhelming differences in strength between two adventurers of the same class.

But at that time, Borkus had learned the hard way that the A-class and S-class are exceptions to that rule.

The A-class is the realm of extraordinary people. Something like slaying a Dragon was nothing to them. But large differences in power could exist between A-class adventurers.

People of the B-class are beyond ordinary people but aren't quite extraordinary. An ordinary person with extraordinary qualities, just a little beyond those of the B-class. That is what the【Saint】Jeena was.

Undoubtedly an【extraordinary person】and a hero, but still an extraordinary【person】in the end, unable to break free of the restrictions of being a person. Falling short of being one of the inhuman figures in myths that were said to be able to reach the domain of the gods who fought against the Demon King's evil gods. That is what the【Sword King】Borkus was.

And Mikhail was a truly inhuman individual; an A-class adventurer possessing powers worthy of the S-class.

『Because of that, I ended up kissing the floor. And the next thing I knew, I had become an Undead. Then I turned around, and Zandia-jouchan was there. Only one part of her.』

With these words, Borkus pushed open the door of the audience chamber that he had guarded for two hundred years.

Chilling, cold air came from beyond the door.

There wasn't a single ray of light in the audience chamber, but with their【Dark Vision】, Vandalieu and Nuaza could see inside, clear as day.

The first thing they saw in the audience chamber was a hole, and a pillar of ice covering it. This hole was likely the entrance of the passage that led to the goddess's treasure beneath the castle.

And frozen inside the pillar of ice was a severed wrist that seemed to belong to a woman judging from how thin... judging from its shape.

「This is...! I had always thought that we had never seen their remains during these two hundred years because you had buried them, Borkus-dono. But this, could it be...!」(Nuaza)

『That's how it is. Their dead bodies are probably on the other side of this annoying block of ice. Judging from the size of this hand, it's probably Zandia-jouchan's. There's no doubt that she kept fighting that bastard even after I got killed and chased him underground with Jeena, even after losing her hand. And so I'm sure she was killed on the other side of this ice.』(Borkus)

The magical spear, the legendary-class Magic Item that was the origin of Mikhail's Title, contained powerful ice Mana. It was said to be able to freeze its enemies' souls, trapping them for eternity.

『I don't know what was on the other side of this ice. All I know is that there's no way to melt it. Even if I try to smash it, I can't make a single crack on it, and pouring oil on it and setting fire to it doesn't even leave a single scorch-mark. So, can you melt this ice?』(Borkus)

「I can melt it.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu nodded immediately. He had been examining it while Borkus and Nuaza were talking, and he could definitely feel Mana in the ice.

It seemed strangely different to a curse, but it was similar. If he extinguished the Mana, it was likely that the ice would melt in an instant and open up the entrance leading underground.

『I see. Then please do it. I don't know if their bodies have become Undead on the other side of this ice, and even if they have, they might have lost their sanity. But I'll never feel at ease until I say something to apologize to them.』(Borkus)

「I understand.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu released death-attribute Mana that absorbed other Mana, and the ice began melting right before their eyes, as if it were being exposed to some extreme heat.

In a matter of minutes, Zandia's hand had been freed and the passage underground had been opened.

「What do you think, Holy Son?」(Nuaza)

「... I don't see any shadows that might be their spirits. Please wait a moment; I'm going to see if I can figure something out by looking at this hand.」(Vandalieu)

『Hmm? Is this that forensic science thing? I heard that Zakkart had been aiming for that occupation in his original world.』(Borkus)

Apparently the hero Zakkart had been striving to become a forensic scientist when he lived on Earth. He seemed to have been quite the intellectual type.

「No, this is something more occult.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu raised Zandia's hand whose brown skin had received much love from the sun, though it was now as cold as ice.

『It would probably be bad if I were to say it's huge or heavy.』(Vandalieu)

The hand and wrist of the【Tiny Genius】was large.

This was not because Vandalieu was an infant, but simply because Zandia had been a large person.

Of course, as her Title suggested, she was probably small. For a Titan, that is.

The average height for an adult Titan was 2.7m for men and 2.5m for women. It was likely that Zandia was still a young girl, judging from the fact that Borkus called her「jouchan」, but wouldn't she still be over two meters tall?

So it was difficult for Vandalieu to say that it was thin or small.

『Well, leaving that aside, let's try to find any residual thoughts.』(Vandalieu)

Death-attribute magic allowed Vandalieu to read a person's residual thoughts from a part of their dead body. But he could only read such thoughts from corpses, and even if he could read them they often made no sense, he hadn't

had many opportunities to use this ability up until now.

Vandalieu pressed his forehead against Zandia's cold palm and closed his eyes.

He saw a man thrusting a distinctly sharp spear. Behind him was another man collapsed onto the ground, covered in blood and still clutching the handle of a broken sword.

Zandia collapsed. She was stabbed repeatedly by the spear, as if judgement was being brought down upon her. In the corner of her eyes, she saw another brown-skinned woman who had already been defeated before her. And just before her vision turned dark, she saw a man descending underground.

The man with the spear was Mikhail, while the defeated man covered in blood was Borkus. The other woman was likely to be Jeena.

However, if these residual thoughts were correct, Zandia and Jeena had died here in the audience chamber after Borkus was killed. They hadn't descended into the underground passage beyond the ice as Borkus thought they did.

But then why were their bodies not here? Even if one assumed that their bodies weren't trapped in the ice other than this one wrist and thus weren't preserved, at least their bones should have remained. And Borkus had been revived as a Titan Zombie long before his body turned into just a skeleton. There was no way that he wouldn't have noticed Zandia and Jeena's bodies if they had been present.

Had someone taken them away? Had they been disposed of in a way that didn't even leave the bones? But then why had this wrist and, more importantly, Borkus's body been left alone?

... Contemplating on his own would yield Vandalieu no answers.

「I saw in the residual memories that the two of them died before Mikhail went underground.」(Vandalieu)

『What?! What do you mean?! So those two aren't underground?! It's true that there were no signs of them coming out, but...』(Borkus)

「Then where could the two of them be?!」(Nuaza)

Borkus and Nuaza, who had been peering into the hole leading underground as if expecting Jeena and Zandia to emerge from it, turned around in surprise. But Vandalieu's reply was,「Who knows? I have no idea.」

「What I saw were the residual memories at the moment that this wrist was cut off. She might have been confused at the moment that this happened, or maybe what I saw isn't what actually happened, but an envisioned, hopeless future that burned itself into her mind. And even if what I saw is what really happened, it's still possible that they got up after that and chased after Mikhail.」(Vandalieu)

『So in other words, we won't know until we go down and have a look.』(Borkus)

「Yes. By the way, you wouldn't happen to know what might be beyond this point –」(Vandalieu)

『No idea. It's a sacred place, after all.』(Borkus)

「As I thought.」(Vandalieu)

「However, we have no choice but to descend into it to find out what happened. Let us go, Borkus-dono, Holy Son.」(Nuaza)

It seemed that there would be no problem entering the passage below the castle, even though it was a sacred place. Was that because it no longer mattered after Mikhail had set foot into it, or because Vandalieu was the Holy Son?

Peering down into the hole, Vandalieu saw rods of stone protruding from the wall, forming a spiral staircase.

With a Lemure leading the way, Vandalieu, Nuaza and Borkus descended the spiral staircase. At the bottom, there was a passageway that somehow seemed like it was part of a temple.

There were no special traps or trials waiting to hinder them. It was impossible to say whether this was because the goddess had utmost confidence in the Dragon Golem, or because Mikhail had already destroyed every obstruction besides the Dragon Golem.

However, they were surprised to see that there was a door, frozen solid in ice.

「The story I heard is that Mikhail was heavily wounded and barely escaped with his life, but could it be that he actually wasn't so desperate?」(Vandalieu)

To think that he would seal off the passage with ice in the middle of escaping.

Even as Vandalieu said that, he drained the Mana out of the ice to melt it. It wasn't very difficult work, but he would grow tired of it if he were to have to repeat it dozens of times.

「He might have been worried that the magic spear that he left behind would be stolen, or someone would finish off the Dragon Golem that he had half-destroyed and take the treasure.」(Vandalieu)

『Hmm? Now that I think about it, this ice and the ice that was in the audience chamber were made when that bastard ran away, wasn't it? How did he make it? Didn't he throw his spear at the Dragon Golem and run away?』(Borkus)

「Ah, now that you mention it...」(Vandalieu)

The ice that Vandalieu was melting right now was magic ice that wouldn't melt even if exposed to the red-hot hellfire. It was difficult to imagine that it had been created through a spell of one of the normal attributes of magic.

And this magic ice was something that could only have been created with the magic spear that had been the Mirg shield-nation's national treasure.

So then how had Mikhail, who had lost his spear and made an escape, sealed this door and the entrance to the passage in magic ice?

『I know it's strange for me to say this considering that I never noticed this for two hundred years, but isn't that strange? What does this mean?』(Borkus)

「What do you think of the theory that this ice was not created through the power if the magic spear, but is the product of a special spell that Mikhail devised himself?」(Nuaza)

「Or maybe the owner of the spear can freely pass through the ice, and he simply created it from the other side to make sure his enemy didn't follow him and then ran through it?」(Vandalieu)

Nuaza and Vandalieu came up with some theories, but they didn't seem to fit.

「In any case, the ice has melted, so let us continue. Incidentally, I do not see the spirits of those two.」(Vandalieu)

『Yeah. I'm sure they've probably gone off somewhere.』(Borkus)

Leaving the theories and guesswork aside, the three of them continued on. Their objective wasn't to find out what had really happened back then, but to find the Undead Zandia and Jeena or their corpses and spirits.

There was no end to the questions that piqued their curiosity, but thinking about them could come later.

『By the way, have you taken a liking to that?』(Borkus)

Borkus asked a question as he looked down at Vandalieu, who was clutching Zandia's wrist in both arms.

「Rather than having taken a liking to it... It would have been bad to just leave it up there.」(Vandalieu)

He couldn't stand the thought of abandoning it on the floor that was dirty with dust and whatever else, and Borkus and Nuaza had shown no signs of interest in taking it, so he had simply stopped its decomposition and brought it with him. There wasn't any particular meaning to it.

But Borkus didn't stop talking.

『So you don't like it?』(Borkus)

Vandalieu came to the realization that only yes and no were the acceptable answers, so he turned his gaze towards Zandia's hand and examined it.

The brown skin was smooth and it was a graceful-looking hand at first glance, but there were several calluses on it. They were certainly from Zandia holding a staff in her hands as she fought. The sweet fragrance of blood coming from the severed wrist tickled his nose, even after two hundred years.

「If I had to say whether I like it or not, I'd say I like it, I suppose.」(Vandalieu)

『You don't like the part around the wrist? She was always complaining that it was too thick or its shape wasn't nice.』(Borkus)

「Thick? Shape?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu looked at the wrist again, but... even if it were thick or unattractive in shape, there was no way for Vandalieu to tell. To begin with, the size was too different from what he was used to.

「It doesn't bother me.」(Vandalieu)

『Ooh, is that so, Jouchan liked older men, but she'd be happy to hear you say that! Well then, take good care of her.』(Borkus)

「... I'm sorry?[1]」(Vandalieu)

What was this guy talking about?

『Ooh, I'm happy to hear such a good response.』(Borkus)

「No, that's not what I meant, I'm asking you a question in return. What do you mean, take good care of her?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu got the feeling that he'd had this conversation before. Feeling a sensation of déjà vu, he looked at Borkus, asking for an explanation.

『Well, see, you still don't see their bodies or spirits even after coming all this way, do you? I'd be happy if they somehow miraculously made it out alive, but it's possible that somebody somewhere just carried their bodies out of here.』(Borkus)

The two of them were heroes, and Zandia was the Second Princess. It was definitely possible that the Mirg shield-nation had taken their bodies back to put their heads on display. Vandalieu hadn't heard such stories from Kachia, but it was possible that stories about the remains of enemies being put on display simply hadn't been passed down to the modern age.

『Which means, you're going to find their bodies for me, right?』(Borkus)

「... Well, I think that will take a considerable amount of time. I don't plan to return to the Mirg shield-nation for a while.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus's request had been to release the two of them from the magic ice. Since Vandalieu had indeed melted all the ice, he had the feeling that he could consider the request complete, but Borkus's eyes were saying,「I'm not satisfied with that.」

And since retrieving the corpses of the two heroes from the Mirg shield-

nation didn't seem like a bad idea, Vandalieu agreed to it. The end of the remaining half of Borkus's lips rose in a smile.

『Yeah, I'm fine with that. With that in mind, I think an extra reward would be appropriate. So once you get Jouchan's and Jeena's corpses back, you can make them yours.』

「I'm sorry?! Are you telling me to turn them into Undead?!」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu's surprised voice echoed against the walls of the passageway. However, he was the only one who was surprised by this.

「Oh, what a wonderful idea. I would expect nothing less of you, Borkus-dono.」(Nuaza)

Nuaza was supposed to be a priest, even though he was just an apprentice. But for some reason, he was trembling with emotion. There was no doubt that tears would be coming from his eyes if his body still had water left in it.

「Zandia-sama is Second Princess of Talosheim, and Jeena-sama is the leader of the Church of Vida. A marital union between them and the Prophesized Holy Son will surely bring prosperity and glory to us as foretold!」(Nuaza)

「Err, aren't you mistaking this with a political marriage or something?」(Vandalieu)

There was a high probability that both of them were already dead, and Vandalieu was currently holding Zandia's severed hand.

『There's no problem, right? That hand is the left hand, too.』(Borkus)

「Ooh, even an exchange of rings would be possible.」(Nuaza)

「It might be possible, but what are you trying to say?」(Vandalieu)

That he could marry them? Vandalieu remembered that there had indeed been a culture in Japan, though only for certain families, where unmarried and widowed relatives would be forced to marry. Had Zakkart introduced that culture to this world?

But Nuaza wouldn't listen.

「If Jeena-sama and Zandia-sama could become companions of the Holy Son

and one day help defeat the Church of Alda and its followers, I am sure that they would glad to be revived as Undead.」(Nuaza)

『Hahaha, then it's a rematch between the three of us and the Mirg shield-nation!』(Borkus)

「Wait, wait, you've got a lot of things mixed up. Even if the goddess's prophecy is true, the prophecy of the Vampire founder has nothing to do with me.」(Vandalieu)

Could it be that because their ears were so high up, these two weren't able to hear the words spoken by a child?

「What I was trying to ask is, do you not consider that to be desecration of the dead, or tainting of the heroes' honor?」(Vandalieu)

Even if Vandalieu ignored the values of Alda, the God of Law and Fate, on Earth and Origin there had been a strong notion that reviving dead people as Undead would be defiling them, an act against the will god.

There were no actual Undead on Earth, but there were plenty of myths, legends and folklore where they were considered a religious taboo.

The same applied in fiction. There were countless works where attempts to revive the dead not only failed, but also brought ruin upon the one who was trying to revive them. Even when a villain said to the protagonist,「I'll bring back the people most important to you」, the protagonist might give it some serious thought but always push that temptation aside in the end, looking towards the future.

The protagonist would never reply,「Are you serious?! Please do!」

Since magic and Undead did exist in Origin, that trend was even stronger. Creating Undead was outlawed; even experimenting with them was considered a crime.

The researchers of the military nation who had treated Vandalieu as an experimental animal had a broken sense of ethics in that regard.

And in reality, Vandalieu had no hesitation in creating Undead. If that wasn't the case, he wouldn't be trying to revive his mother, nor would he have created

Bone Man and the other Undead.

However, he hadn't forgotten that other people might dislike the idea of creating Undead.

That was why he had thought that the Nuaza, who had been a priest, and Borkus, who had been Jeena and Zandia's companion while they were alive, would be against raising them as Undead.

Vandalieu hadn't even thought about doing so because raising them as Undead against their will would worsen his relationships with Nuaza and Borkus. Though he would have recruited them if they were already Undead.

And so he was surprised as Borkus said the exact opposite, and Nuaza not only agreed with him, but happily recommended that he do so.

『Oi oi, just what are you trying to say about Undead?』(Borkus)

「That's right. The goddess herself raised the fallen hero Zakkart as an Undead, did she not?」(Nuaza)

「Ah... Now that you mention it, you're right.」(Vandalieu)

But it was true that this was told in the myths. It seemed that the goddess Vida was open-minded towards Undead... though the followers of Vida here were Undead themselves; there was no way of knowing how open-minded Vida's living followers would be.

Well, Vandalieu would just have to carefully ascertain these kinds of things after he left Talosheim and entered human society.

「Well, if you're fine with it then I don't have any complaints.」(Vandalieu)

If not only the【Sword King】, but the【Saint】and【Tiny Genius】were to become his allies as Undead, he could ask for nothing more. As long as they themselves were happy to do so, Vandalieu had no reason to refuse them.

『See, doesn't it motivate you when you think about how you can get some nice women if you put some effort in? That's just how men are.』(Borkus)

「I'm not even three years old, though.」(Vandalieu)

『I suppose you could say that whether you're three years old or a hundred,

your soul stays the same.』(Borkus)

「... That's different from the saying that I know.」(Vandalieu)

「Don't say that. The two of them were both very beautiful individuals, Holy Son.」(Nuaza)

No matter how beautiful they were, there was a high chance that there was nothing left of them but bones now.

Vandalieu thought of pointing this out, but he knew that anything he said to these two would be pointless, so he decided to keep quiet.

It is said that heroes enjoy sensual pleasures, but could pale colors still be considered sensual?[2]

As they quietly proceeded through the passage, they came across a door that was enormous even for a Titan like Borkus. Of course, it was sealed off by ice, but one part of the door had crumbled and they could see what was beyond it through the ice.

『That's the Dragon Golem, huh. As to be expected from something that was able to chase that monster away, even though it only managed to wound him. I'm getting chills just looking at it.』(Borkus)

On the other side of the door was a space so vast that the audience chamber above them would fit inside it dozens of times over. There was an enormous Dragon made of iron standing in its center.

At a glance through the ice, it looked pitiful. Its once-magnificent head and half of its supple, whip-like tail now lay broken on the floor as nothing but lumps of metal. Its right arm was broken off as if it had been gouged out from its shoulder, and there was a spear protruding from the center of its chest.

There were deep cracks all over its body; it looked as if it would collapse at any moment.

「Yes, we should give up on going inside. If I melt this ice, we're going to die.」(Vandalieu)

However, that Golem was still functioning. And that almost-destroyed Golem was capable of killing all three of them.

If Vandalieu melted the ice on the door, he would die. His【Danger Sense: Death】was telling him that.

「What is the likelihood that the two of them are beyond this point?」(Nuaza)

「If they turned into Undead, I think that the Golem would have destroyed them.」(Vandalieu)

『If they're corpses, they might be inside the ice.』(Borkus)

It seemed unlikely that the almost-destroyed Golem wouldn't attack Titans who had become Undead, and because the battle between it and Mikhail had occurred within this chamber, there was ice everywhere inside. The corpses of Zandia and Jeena could be inside any of those masses of ice.

「Has there ever been a known method of entering this place without being attacked by that Golem?」(Vandalieu)

「If I recall, I believe the King knew of a way, but...」(Nuaza)

Nuaza shook his head. It seemed that the King had either never become an Undead, or had returned to dust in the two hundred years that had passed since the war.

Even Vandalieu couldn't talk with the dead if their spirits didn't exist.

「Well then, let's postpone searching this room until we've become strong enough to defeat that Golem.」(Vandalieu)

『Right. It'd be impossible for me as well, since I've lost my dominant arm and my magic sword.』(Borkus)

Even if they were to defeat the golem, there was a high chance that the corpses of those two wouldn't be inside the chamber. But if they could confirm whether they were there or not, then they could think of the next place to look.

『Well, if their bodies aren't there, we could use the goddess's treasure to make them in advance. As for their souls, since you're a Spiritualist, you'll be able to summon them using Necromancy, right?』(Borkus)

「I'm not a Spiritualist, so summoning spirits that I've never seen before would be impossible, even with Necromancy. By the way –」(Vandalieu)

「Is that really true?! You seemed intimate with Undead like us, so I had believed that you possessed the Spiritualist Job, Holy Son!」(Nuaza)

『Yeah, that's a real surprise. Then how come you can see spirits and read Jouchan's memories from her hand?』(Borkus)

「More importantly! ... What did you mean by making their corpses with the goddess's treasure?」(Vandalieu)

『What did we mean, you say... The goddess Vida's treasure is an incomplete device that resurrects the dead, so what else could we mean?』(Borkus)

Long ago, the goddess Vida had attempted to revive the dead hero Zakkart in order to give birth to the race of Vampires. However, even though she was the goddess who governed life itself, it wasn't easy to bring the dead back to life.

The goddess performed a significant amount of trial and error for this purpose. The treasure that was here, below the city of Talosheim, was the result of one of those experiments.

She used this resurrection device to try to build a new body and bring back Zakkart with the same appearance that he had while he was alive. But though the body was successfully created, the soulless body was nothing more than a mass of meat, unable to receive Vida's power.

The only thing that this device was capable of was creating an unwounded corpse of the person that one wished to resurrect. Coming to this conclusion, the goddess sealed the device away. Even though it was incomplete, she believed that it might be of use to her children one day. She personally breathed life into a Golem to guard it so that it would not be misused by the remnants of the Demon King's servants.

「That's what's on the other side of that Dragon Golem... That's wonderful.」(Vandalieu)

A device that created an unwounded corpse of the person that one wished to resurrect.

If that was true, if Vandalieu were to place the spirit of the person inside the body created by this device, wouldn't that be a complete resurrection?

「Nuaza, I'm fine with being the Prophesized Holy Son, so can I use that device?」(Vandalieu)

He would obtain it at any cost.

And then he would revive his mother!

- **Name**: Nuaza
- **Rank**: 4
- **Race**: Lesser Lich
- **Level**: 100
- **Passive skills**:
  - Dark Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 2
  - Physical Resistance: Level 2
  - Spirit Body: Level 1
  - Mental Corruption: Level 3
  - Augmented Endurance: Level 3
- **Active skills**:
  - Life-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - Mana Control: Level 1
  - Staff Technique: Level 3
  - Shield Technique: Level 2
  - Armor Technique: Level 2
  - Masonry: Level 2

"Lich" is a generic term used to refer to any Undead that is able to use the exact same magic that it was able to use while it was alive as soon as it turns into an Undead. Thus, the term refers to both mages who mastered the secrets of magic and willingly transformed themselves into Undead, and others who became Undead by coincidence while retaining their memories, abilities and Mana that are only capable of casting beginner-level magic.

Nuaza is one of the latter, an apprentice priest-warrior in life, but he has not spent all of his time since becoming Undead on training and research. As a

result, his abilities are largely same as they were when he was alive.

This makes him an unusual Undead who is stronger when using weapons in physical combat, despite being a Lich.

As he has been mummified, he is covered in wrinkles and looks like an elderly person, but he was in fact a young boy in his mid-teenage years when he died. Thus, the other Undead of Talosheim sometimes refer to him as a youngster.

Incidentally, the【Masonry】skill is something he obtained after his death. After becoming an Undead, he learned the skill while spending the past two hundred years repairing the Church that had been destroyed by the Mirg shield-nation.

To increase in Rank, a Lesser Lich must possess a level 4 skill in a magic-related skill in addition to the generic level requirement.

Notes

1. 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.

2. First of all, there’s actually a Japanese phrase that implies that heroes like sex, something like “great men are great lovers”. The kanji/word meaning “color” can also have a sexual/sensual meaning and that’s the word used in the phrase, literally “heroes like colors”. The second part of the line is a play on those words, as in, “Vandalieu is pale-colored, but could he still be considered sensual?” I could be misunderstanding something, but this is about as well as I can understand/explain it. I’m regretting spending so much time translating/figuring out such an unimportant line...

Chapter 31: Forced to be white. What's resting, again?

Submerged in water, Vandalieu's fatigue faded away and he was enveloped in warmth.

He closed his eyes, stretched his arms and legs out and felt completely at ease.

It had been more than twenty years since he had taken a bath like this, but it reminded him that he really had once been a Japanese person.

『How many decades has it been since I soaked myself in a bath again? The last time was when I was a kid on Earth, I guess.』(Vandalieu)

Answering his own unimportant question, Vandalieu remembered what had happened after he learned that there was an incomplete resurrection device below the royal castle.

First, he had made a new arm for Borkus. Using【Golem Transmutation】, he gathered Borkus's broken bones that were lying in the audience chamber and restored their shape. After that, he placed the bones against Borkus's shoulder and poured Mana into them with the image of restoring the arm in his mind.

And then flesh sprouted and expanded from Borkus's shoulder and his arm was restored!

『UOOH, this feels disgusting!』(Borkus)

He received this kind of overreaction, however.

It seemed that death-attribute magic was capable of restoring not only the bones that made up the bodies of Bone Man and the other Undead, but flesh and skin as well. He decided to name this ability【Corpse Healing.】

But the right half of Borkus's face couldn't be restored. This was possibly because holding an image in one's mind was important when using magic, and

the image of Borkus's half-skull face had already left a deep impression in Vandalieu's mind.

『I don't understand the theory behind it, but don't worry. My right eye can still see even though the eyeball is missing, and I won't have any problems fighting now that I have my right arm. And I look sexier like this anyway, right?』(Borkus)

「Certainly.」(Nuaza)

『Shut up! The one I'm talking to is this brat!』(Borkus)

Though a little angry that Nuaza had agreed with him immediately, Borkus was very pleased. He was happy that his arm had been restored, allowing him to fight as he had done while alive.

Vandalieu was a little shocked to learn that there were people like Borkus, 『good people with bad mouths.』

Up until now, he had only known『bad people with bad mouths.』With this, he would possibly be more tolerant towards any bad-mouthed people he might meet in the Orbaume Kingdom... At least, he wouldn't immediately assume they were enemies and attack them.

After that, he decided to go over the Magic Items and materials that had been left in Talosheim one more time.

Even with Borkus's arm restored, he didn't get the feeling that they would be able to defeat the Dragon Golem underground; in fact, he got the feeling that they would be slaughtered if they tried. There was now a genuine need to build up fighting strength.

The really important items had been taken by the First Princess when she escaped the city, and most of the other notable items had been plundered by the Mirg shield-nation; not even the legendary-class and upper-class Magic Items that were Talosheim's national treasures remained.

「The only things left are 5th-grade potions and low-class Magic Items that you can find anywhere. Well, even if there were better things remaining, they'd be rotten and rusted by now.」(Vandalieu)

『Well, it's been two hundred years, after all.』(Borkus)

The only other things left were the items that the Undead Titans were wearing, but Vandalieu wasn't interested in making them hand those over.

『There's no other choice; I guess I'll go and get some from the Dungeons. Nobody's entered them since we died, right? Even the D-class Dungeons should be rolling in Magic Items. Oh yeah, what happened to the Adventurers' Guild?』(Borkus)

The Adventurers' Guild had been prepared for emergencies with large quantities of Potions in storage. Among them, there should have even been some Potions that temporarily raised the drinker's attribute values, but Nuaza shook his head.

「In the Adventurers' Guild, there was a battle between the enemy and the adventurers who bravely stayed in Talosheim and shared its fate. All of the Potions were consumed and every Magic Item was plundered. The only thing that was left undamaged was the Job-changing chamber.」(Nuaza)

「Eh? What did you just –」(Vandalieu)

『Tch, those outsiders really pushed themselves... I should have bought them more drinks.』(Borkus)

「You can still treat some of them to drinks. They have become Undead as well.」(Nuaza)

『Oh yeah! I forgot about them because I've been holed up in the royal castle for two hundred years! Ah, but there aren't any bars left.』(Borkus)

「Hahaha, that is true as well.」(Nuaza)

「Umm, is it true that the Guild's Job-changing room is still usable?」(Vandalieu)

Job-changing rooms in branches of each Guild were facilities that existed in every society. This was something that didn't change even if one journeyed from the Amid Empire to the Orbaume Kingdom or, of course, Talosheim.

And so the Mirg shield-nation hadn't bothered taking the time to destroy it, and it had simply been abandoned. In fact, Borkus, Nuaza and the other Titans

were no longer people, but monsters, now that they were Undead. Since they couldn't undergo a Job change, it was now a useless facility.

「Then the Ghouls and I can use it, right?」(Vandalieu)

However, this was good news for Vandalieu and the Ghouls, who had never been able to enter human society to use a Job-changing room.

To be more precise, it was definitely good news for the Ghouls. Though society had branded them as monsters, they were people of a race created by Vida. They could possess Jobs. Tarea and Kachia, who had transformed into Ghouls while possessing the Jobs that they had while they were human, were living proof of that.

Vigaro and Zadiris had been improving their skills up until now without Jobs. If they were to acquire Jobs and receive the Job-related bonuses to their attribute values and skills, they would certainly become significantly stronger.

However, in Vandalieu's case, he was under Rodcorte's【Cannot learn existing Jobs】curse so there was a high chance that he wouldn't be able to undergo a Job change even with the use of the Job-changing room.

But he had decided long ago that he'd try as hard as he could. The probably of him obtaining a Job wasn't zero.

And so Vandalieu returned to the Ghouls with a spring in his step, intending to share this good news with them, but a shocking announcement was waiting for him.

「I order you to rest until your birthday, boy.」(Zadiris)

After consulting everyone, Zadiris had decided that Vandalieu wouldn't listen if asked to rest in indirect ways, so she simply announced that he would be taking a rest.

「No, but the resurrection device, the Job-change!」(Vandalieu)

「It would defeat the purpose if you were to collapse before dealing with any of that! Your endurance is dangerously close to its limits, boy!」(Zadiris)

『That is right, Bocchan! This is a condition that will cost you your life!』(Sam)

『I'm begging you, please rest, Vandalieu! If you don't rest, I'm just going to go

back to the circle of transmigration!』(Darcia)

Vandalieu's words fell on deaf ears.

While they were contemplating on how to make Vandalieu rest, they had looked outside the window to see the usual hollow-looking Vandalieu approaching them, running in a strange way that they had never seen before. This sight had apparently made them think,『This is bad! We must make him rest right now!』

It seemed that Vandalieu had no talent in skipping with joy.

However, his pupils were always like those of a dead fish, so he didn't think that they needed to be so alarmed. Though he pointed that out and protested, it didn't change the fact that they were forcing him to rest.

They begged him in tears to give his body some rest, so he was unable to refuse.

Well, the Job-changing room wasn't going to run away and Vandalieu found it hard to imagine that they would be able to defeat that Dragon Golem right after undergoing the Job changes, so it might have been a good idea to recuperate his strength during the ten days leading up to his birthday.

And it wasn't as if he was being forced to rest without doing anything. He was still doing Alchemy training for an hour a day to make sure his skill didn't deteriorate, and he was doing a lot of other things to rest.

Repairing this public bathhouse, for instance.

Talosheim once had public bathhouses. Perhaps because of Zakkart's influence, the Titans were a race that liked bathing; there were five bathhouses in the city and there was even a large bathhouse in the royal castle.

However, the baths weren't cypress baths[1], but stone baths like the ones used in thermae[2] in ancient Rome and the saunas were western-style rather than Japanese-style.

The bathhouse hadn't been damaged too heavily. Though the Mirg shield-nation had attacked viciously, it seemed that they hadn't had the time to destroy bathhouses that didn't have temples or any facilities that would be

useful for defense in a battle. There were Magic Items that created small fires and some money and goods inside, but the Mirg troops had probably carried back as much as they could, taking things of even more value than these.

But after having been abandoned for two hundred years, all of the bathhouses, including the one in the royal castle, had been in a terrible state when Vandalieu first saw them.

Out of the city's five bathhouses, the three that were towards the edges of the city had been collapsed by the trees growing out of the Devil's Nest, and one of them had been hit by a stray spell and turned into a mountain of rubble.

The mushrooms had been growing all over the one that was intact. They weren't ordinary mushrooms, but monsters such as the Walking Mushrooms that had arms and legs growing out of them and the Poison Mushrooms that released toxic spores.

They weren't particularly strong monsters; they turned out to be very delicious once defeated and roasted. The Walking Mushrooms had a good consistency, similar to king trumpet mushrooms. The Poison Mushrooms were like shiitake mushrooms, perhaps?

In the end, he decided to repair the bathhouse in the royal castle. Well, even this bathhouse had its baths turned into ponds by leaks from the ceiling and several Skeletons had been soaking themselves in them, enjoying the water.

Using【Golem Transmutation】, he repaired the leaks in the ceiling and the cracks in the walls and tiles, and began to clean the bathhouse up. As to be expected of the royal castle of the Titans. With just that, the bathhouse became usable again, two hundred years after the war.

The Ghouls, who had never experienced anything other than washing themselves in cold water, took a liking to the culture of hot baths as well, and now they were lining up every day to wash away their fatigue in the royal castle's bathhouse.

『Once I finish resting, I'll have to repair the other bathhouses. Not matter how big the royal castle's bathhouse is, it gets packed in here. I only ever had showers in Origin, so this feels good... Hmm?』

As Vandalieu got the feeling that he could hear a deep-sounding scream, someone grabbed his head firmly and lifted him out of the water.

「Vandalieu! Were you drowning?!」(Vigaro)

「No, I was just putting my head underwater to warm it up.」(Vandalieu)

It would have been different if it was a bathhouse built specifically for members of other races who had migrated from the Orbaume Kingdom, but the bathtubs in the bathhouse of the royal castle that was built for Titan use were very deep.

It was a bathtub that a 2.5m-tall Titan woman would be able to use while standing up, so if the almost-three-years-old Vandalieu were to stand up inside the bathtub, his head would be well below the water's surface.

Well, when he had repaired the bathtubs, he had built stairs to create shallower regions as well, so he wouldn't drown unless he was careless or was trying to drown himself on purpose. Vandalieu had been submerging his head in the water on purpose.

「I was thinking of putting my head underwater and counting to a hundred.」(Vandalieu)

「You'd die, you know?!」(Vigaro)

「No no, I'll be fine for up to five minutes.」(Vandalieu)

Thanks to the his【Status Effect Resistance】skill, he would take over five minutes to die of asphyxiation. Using death-attribute magic, he could survive underwater even longer.

「Still, stop that; it's scary to watch. What would you have done if my heart had stopped?」(Vigaro)

「Oka~ay.」(Vandalieu)

Bathing by submerging his whole body underwater, officially prohibited.

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After Vandalieu finished bathing, he was deep in thought.

『Now then, what am I going to do to rest?』(Vandalieu)

There were still several days until his birthday. He was contemplating what to do to rest during that time.

Sleeping all day would be unhealthy, and spending the whole day eating was out of the question. Staring into space and sitting completely still to meditate... He wasn't interested in that.

When he tried to remember how he had passed the time up until now, he got the feeling that he just did things and time just passed before he knew it.

Training his No-Attribute Magic and Alchemy, making sauces with walnuts and herbs, crushing acorns into powder, polishing the bones of Bone Monkey and the other Undead. When he had been in the Devil's Nest forest, time would go by while he was doing these.

However, he was resting now, and he wasn't allowed to do tasks like these.

So he thought that he would pass the time by amusing himself, only to realize that there weren't many things that amused him.

Vandalieu didn't have access to the gaming consoles, PCs, televisions or smartphones that had existed on Earth. Toys and board games should at least exist in this world, but he didn't have those, either... Well, now that he thought about it, he didn't have access to many of these things while he was on Earth.

The survival-of-the-fittest lifestyle in the Ghoul village hadn't allowed for much room to develop such ways to amuse oneself. Even though the Ghouls had stripped the corpses of dead adventurers of their belongings, there weren't any odd-minded adventurers who would bring toys and board games with them into a perilous Devil's Nest.

... There were several books, but they were either spell tomes or manuals that described the ecology of monsters and the correct methods of dismantling them, and he had already read them multiple times.

He still had some books that he had taken from bandits before arriving at the Devil's Nest forest, but those were all practical manuals that he had already skimmed multiple times as well.

『That makes me wonder, how do the people of this world amuse themselves?』(Vandalieu)

Feeling curious, he went to ask Kachia who had once been an adventurer and Nuaza who had a good memory of details before his death, and they answered him cheerfully.

「Ways to amuse yourself other than board games and reading? Hmm, drinking, watching plays at a theater, watching street performers and stuff? If you were rich, you'd attend concerts... Ah, you could also listen to minstrels perform. And shopping, of course.」(Kachia)

Kachia's answer included the pastimes of the Mirg shield-nations' commoners as well as an example of what the richer members of society might enjoy. But the outdoor theaters of Talosheim were breeding grounds for monsters, the street performers were currently busy picking up their own bones and the city had no musical performers or minstrels to begin with.

「Other than the things that Kachia-san has mentioned, perhaps things like singing songs and gambling on things, such as whether a tossed coin will land on heads or tails? And praying to the gods at the Churches.」(Nuaza)

Vandalieu didn't think that the last item that Nuaza mentioned was a pastime.

Incidentally, Vandalieu intended to wait until he became an adult before drinking or gambling. He considered himself to have the kind of personality that made him easily fired-up and not suited to gambling, and even if he were to drink alcohol now, his【Status Effect Resistance】skill would turn it into a training exercise rather than a leisure activity.

「Err, then...」(Vandalieu)

「Then you should play with us for today.」(Kachia)

「Eh?」(Vandalieu)

「It's fine, just come.」(Kachia)

After that, Vandalieu passed the time by having Kachia and the other former adventurers teach him about the Adventurers' Guild, and teaching them how to play rock-paper-scissors in return.

And then he checked up on Bilde and the other pregnant women as well as the Live-Dead, did his alchemy training and the day ended.

The rock-paper-scissors that Vandalieu had taught Kachia and the others quickly spread throughout Talosheim, and one day, it would spread across the entire Bahn Gaia continent.

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The next day, Vandalieu visited the Black Goblins, Anubises and Orcuses in search of amusement.

Last night, before he went to sleep, he had thought,「That's right, I should play with the other kids now that I have free time.」

Since they developed quickly, their bodies were already larger than Vandalieu's, but they were the only minors in the community.

Vandalieu was sure that they would be playing tag and hide-and-seek, and they would gladly let him join in.

On Earth, his behavior had been unusual because of his uncle, so he'd had no friends. This would undoubtedly be a great opportunity to forget that lonely childhood.

... Though his heart would be broken if he were to be rejected.

Talking to Kachia and the others had been fun, but children playing together would be something different.

『Listen up, this is how you use a short sword!』(Borkus)

「Take good aim at your target! Good, now fire!」(Basdia)

「This is the club technique martial skill,【Skull Bash.】If it hits, even a head made of stone will have its contents crushed, but it creates a big opening on yourself so be careful when you use it!」(Vigaro)

So he had thought, but everyone was busy training.

They would one day have to go hunting in the Devil's Nest for themselves and for the others in the village, so they had to receive training from a young age and become strong.

It seemed harsh, but considering the lifestyles and cultures of other monsters, they were very blessed.

Monsters such as Goblins and Kobolds gave their children almost no education. They only taught the most basic of rules to maintain their groups, such as the rule of not disobeying their bosses.

They were expected to gain techniques and knowledge by observation or learn it themselves, and they had to either make or steal their own equipment and tools.

Goblins and Kobolds reproduced quickly, producing large numbers of children in a short amount of time. Even if two-thirds of their children died, it was sufficient if the surviving one-third made it to adulthood.

If the individuals with the ability to gather food on their own and the knowledge to build equipment or the luck to find it could survive, that was enough.

They didn't bother spending the effort needed to educate the inferior members of their race.

As for Orcs, many individuals only barely possessed the intelligence needed to use tools.

The concept of providing all of the Orcs with equipment as Bugogan had done was only possible because he was a Noble Orc, a member of a superior race.

Practice equipment had been given to the children and they could learn fundamental martial skills to build up their strength from the Ghouls and the Undead Titans.

And once they became adults, they would be provided with high-quality equipment created by Tarea and the other smiths using monster materials. They were in an extraordinary environment compared to normal monsters.

「Three threes are nine. Three fours are twelve.」

「Four fives, twenty. Four sixes, twenty-four.」[3]

The Orcuses were learning the multiplication table. Though some might consider this unexpected, races like Ghouls who lived as monsters were all capable of basic arithmetic. At the very least, their abilities to perform addition, subtraction, multiplication and division were flawless.

The reason for this was because they were necessary when calculating Vitality and Mana values. How much more damage could be taken before running out of Vitality, how many more times spells and martial skills could be used before running out of Mana. It was impossible to survive without making calculations like these.

And so it was only natural to be teaching these to the Orcuses as well.

Incidentally, the multiplication table was something that Vandalieu had spread amongst the Ghouls. He had thought that even if the Ghouls didn't know about it, the multiplication table would at least be known in human society, so he had been surprised when Kachia and the others told him that humans, at least those on this continent, didn't use it.

It seemed that Zakkart and the other heroes hadn't managed to spread *all* of their knowledge that they had brought with them from other worlds. Well, there had been a fierce war against the Demon King going on back then, so they probably had no time to spend teaching children.

Even the hero Bellwood who had been dead-set against the knowledge and culture of Earth being spread and established in Lambda wouldn't have gone around executing people for knowing about paper-scissors-rock and the multiplication table.

「Hmm? Are you free now, boy?」(Zadiris)

Zadiris had been teaching the children how to write using clay tablets instead of notebooks but it seemed that her lesson had just finished and she was now approaching Vandalieu.

「I will tell you in advance that I do not need any help. Making these Clay Golems for us is more than enough.」(Zadiris)

The Clay Golems that Zadiris was pointing at were the clay tablets that she and her students were using.

In Lambda, paper was considered a luxurious item; parchment made using sheepskin wasn't easily obtainable for the Ghouls living a primitive lifestyle in the Devil's Nest or the Undead Titans of Talosheim, nor could it be made.

Vandalieu had tried making paper from the fibers of suitable plants, but... he

found that it was impossible to make paper using【Golem Transmutation.】He was planning to try again after his skill increased in level, however.

And so he had turned clay obtained from digging holes in the ground into Clay Golems to use instead of notebooks. Wooden sticks were used instead of pens to etch characters into the clay, and once they were full, Vandalieu would give an order to the Golems and they would become clean, flat tablets once more.

Vandalieu had wondered if he would be able to make porcelain items using this technique in the future, but... it would be another matter if he was simply making porcelain for his own use, but if he was planning to make high-quality items to sell, he would have to worry about the quality of the clay and he would need to construct a furnace to bake the pottery, so he hadn't put any work into trying that.

Apparently porcelain had once been made here in Talosheim, but the city's only porcelain craftsmen had been the boss who was destroyed by monsters after turning into an Undead and his inexperienced son who escaped with the First Princess to the Orbaume Kingdom.

「No, I wasn't thinking about helping. I was thinking of playing with my fellow children.」(Vandalieu)

「Fellow children, hmm?」(Zadiris)

「Yes, my fellow children.」(Vandalieu)

「Well then, you will have to wait a little longer. Ah yes, why not play a board game with me?」(Zadiris)

「A board game?」(Vandalieu)

「Yes, it was gathering dust in a corner of a play room in the royal castle.」(Zadiris)

In Lambda, board games were considered a pastime of upper-class and intelligent people. Many board games had many pieces and the rules were difficult to understand; they weren't something that commoners could enjoy.

「Well, the board was apparently too heavy to move. There are fifty different kinds of pieces, and the players choose eleven of them to begin with.」(Zadiris)

The board games of Talosheim were no exception.

「Have you already learned the rules?」(Vandalieu)

「No, I have not been free enough to do so.」(Zadiris)

It seemed that she intended to learn the rules while playing. Wasn't there a rulebook to be found with the board and pieces?

「Well then, shall we play a simpler board game?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu turned one of the countless pieces of rubble that could be found anywhere in the Devil's Nest ruins of Talosheim into a Golem and began transmuting it.

「Hohoh~」(Zadiris)

It seemed that using magic for recreational purposes counted as「resting」by Zadiris's definition, and she watched what Vandalieu as making with great interest.

First, he made a game board with small squares carved on it and thin, circular pieces from white stone. He made the same number of similar pieces from a black stone, attached them to the white ones and he was finished.

「This is a game called Reversi[4].」(Vandalieu)

Indeed, it was the game of Reversi, made using a stone board and pieces.

「But it seems that there is only one kind of piece?」(Zadiris)

「Yes, that's why you can quickly learn how to play.」

There was only one kind of piece used in Reversi, and the rules were far simpler than those of shogi and chess. It was also far easier to create the necessary pieces using【Golem Transmutation.】

Most importantly, Vandalieu was skilled at Reversi. When his uncle's family went on family vacations and left him at home alone, he would secretly play with the Reversi set that belonged to his cousin. He had also played it over the internet.

He only knew how the various pieces moved in shogi and chess, and as for playing it... He had played it when taking IQ tests in the research laboratory in

Origin. Of course, he had not found it fun at all.

「This is a game where you flip the pieces that are between your own pieces, changing their color. The winner is whoever has more pieces of their own color.」(Vandalieu)

「I see, this is quite...」(Zadiris)

The stone pieces rattled as Vandalieu enjoyed his first game of Reversi in over twenty years with Zadiris. The stone pieces were heavier than the ones sold on Earth, but both of them were strong, so it didn't bother them.

Of course, Vandalieu won the first match, but...

「It seems that whoever takes the corners first has the advantage.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris noticed after one match what Vandalieu had taken years to learn.

After that, the matches were even from the second match onwards.

「Even though I was undefeated when I played by myself...」(Vandalieu)

「...」(Zadiris)

「Umm, please don't look at me like you're looking at some pitiful child, and if you feel sorry for me, don't take the corners.」(Vandalieu)

「This and that are separate matters. Competitions are cruel things, boy.」(Zadiris)

And as the two of them became engrossed in their matches –

「King, I want to play too!」(Black Goblin)

『Playing something interesting over here, aren't you? Let me in on this!』(Borkus)

「Oh my, a board game. How elegant! Might I ask you to teach me how to play, Van-sama?」(Tarea)

Before they knew it, the Black Goblins who had finished their training had gathered around them, and even the Ghouls and Undead Titans who were teaching them were watching curiously; Borkus and Tarea had gathered around as well.

And so Vandalieu ended up creating almost twenty Reversi sets today.

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「So today was a fun day as well... Did I manage to rest today?」(Vandalieu)

『If you had fun, then it’s fine.』(Darcia)

Vandalieu had the strange feeling that he ended up doing some work anyway after mass-producing Reversi sets, but Darcia gave a smile as if she didn’t mind.

In fact, even though Vandalieu had spent a hundred thousand Mana, it wasn’t even one percent of his total Mana pool. It was an amount that would quickly recover even if he didn’t rest.

『And Reversi is quite fun, isn’t it? Ah, put my piece there.』(Darcia)

「Oka~ay. Well then, I’ll play my piece here.」(Vandalieu)

The stone pieces made a pleasant, rattling sound.

『There were no simple, interesting board games like this one in the Mirg shield-nation. Ah, Saria, are you going to take the corner that I was aiming for again?』(Sam)

『Father, competitions are a cruel thing, you know?』(Saria)

『Nee-chan and Father don’t have any bone or flesh, but they’re waging a war of bone and flesh?!』[5](Rita)

「Hahaha, Borkus-dono. It seems that it is my victory once again.」(Nuaza)

『UOOOOH! Why, why can’t I win?!』(Borkus)

『That’s... because Master Borkus doesn’t take the corners, I suppose?』(Titan)

「He said something like, “How can a man do such small-minded things?” and refuses to put his pieces at the ends.」(Titan)

『Shut up! Nobody asked you!』(Borkus)

「You cannot win if you get too agitated, Borkus-dono.」(Nuaza)

Even while Vandalieu and Darcia were sleeping, the rattling of stone pieces against the stone boards and the voices of the Undead Titans enjoying the game of Reversi could be heard throughout the city of Talosheim.

If one were to hear rattling sounds in Talosheim, it was possible that they would not be the sounds of the Skeletons' bones moving against each other, but the sounds of Undead playing Reversi nearby.

- **Name**: Borkus
- **Rank**: 9
- **Race**: Zombie Hero
- **Level**: 5
- **Title:** Sword King
- **Passive skills**:
  - Dark Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 7
  - Physical Resistance: Level 5
  - Strengthened Attack Power while equipped with a sword: (Large)
  - Strengthened Defensive Power while equipped with non-metal armor: (Medium)
  - Intuition: Level 3
  - Mental Corruption: Level 5
- **Active skills**:
  - Sword King Technique: Level 1
  - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 7
  - Archery: Level 7
  - Armor Technique: Level 7
  - Surpass Limits: Level 5
  - Dismantling: Level 5
  - Commanding: Level 2
  - Coordination: Level 4
  - Teaching: Level 1
- **Status Effects:**
  - One-Armed (Status Effect removed)

An A-class adventurer, the【Sword King】Borkus who has become an Undead. As the original person's soul is inhabiting the original person's body, his Rank and the levels of his skills are high, but as he has not fought any battles after

becoming an Undead and has simply been guarding the audience chamber, his level is low and he is weaker than he was when he was alive.

The Undead of this world do not necessarily become stronger than they were when they were alive. In fact, it is more common for them to become weaker.

In addition to this, Borkus was in a pitiful state after having lost his dominant arm, his sword no longer being of use after having half of its blade broken and even his armor having being torn to pieces. He was in a condition where he could not use his【Sword King Technique】skill and his passive skills【Strengthened Attack Power while equipped with a sword: (Large)】and【Strengthened Defensive Power while equipped with non-metal armor: (Medium)】were not active.

Because of this, despite being Rank 9, he was only as strong as a Rank 7, in a state where he might have even lost a battle to the Noble Orc Bugogan. Since Borkus is proficient in a fighting style where he slays his enemy with a single attack, Vandalieu would have found Borkus to be the more difficult enemy, however.

But Vandalieu has now restored his dominant arm and given him Bugogan's magic sword, so his fighting strength has returned to a level that corresponds to his Rank.

As he possesses tremendously powerful skills, he is likely to be able to display fighting strength beyond his Rank once he becomes accustomed to being an Undead.

It is said that Zombie Heroes are monsters born when a person with a Title shows no sign of betraying the honor of that Title right up until the moment of their death. Their Ranks can vary; at present the lowest-Rank examples that have been confirmed are Rank 4, while the highest is Rank 10.

Individuals who have become other types of Undead generally cannot become Zombie Heroes by increasing their Rank.

The Church of Alda, the God of Law and Fate, teaches that defeating these Zombie Heroes is the greatest way of honoring the hero they once were. When a Zombie Hero is sighted, many adventurers aim to defeat it in order to gain honor and fame.

Zombie Heroes often carry the valuable equipment and personal belongings that former bearers of honorable Titles would have, and their bones and other parts are often considered high-quality Alchemy ingredients due the Mana they contain. Thus, adventurers would gain not only fame, but wealth as well from defeating these Undead.

Skill explanation:

【Sword King Technique】

This is a superior version of the Swordsmanship skill. When the Swordsmanship skill reaches level 10 and continues to gain experience, there is a chance that it transforms into a superior version.

It has been confirmed that the superior versions of the Swordsmanship skill include the Holy Sword Technique, the Sword Emperor Technique, Sword God Technique and Magic Blade Technique.

As few possess these superior skills, it has not been accurately confirmed just how much they vary in their special characteristics and power and which skills are superior to the others.

It is said in the Amid Empire that the【Holy Sword God Technique】possessed by the legendary hero Bellwood is the greatest skill of them all, but that is for political and religious reasons – It is not even certain that Bellwood's skill was named the【Holy Sword God Technique.】

Superior versions of other skills such as Spear Technique, Axe Technique and Unarmed Fighting Technique also exist; individuals who possess such skills are A-class at minimum.

Notes

1. Luxurious bathtubs made of cypress wood.
2. Bathhouses in ancient Rome.
3. They're doing some cute mispronunciations of some of the numbers (e.g. Using し/shi instead of よん/yon for the number 4 where the latter would be more appropriate, saying く/ku instead of きゅう/kyuu for the number 9, etc.)

4. It’s a board game also known as Othello, you can Google it.

5. This is a joke that plays on the Japanese phrase “war of bone and flesh” which means “family quarrel”.

6. The title of this chapter is related to chapter 29’s title (The Black Ghoul King and the One-Armed Sword King). Here’s ER’s explanation regarding this title, in case you missed it the first time:

   Black, in this case, refers to a 'black company,' (ブラック企業) or a sweatshop in English.

   Since Vandalieu is a workaholic and doesn't properly rest for beans, he is 'black.'

   Japanese is fun with its occasional adopted English word not meaning what they do in English.

Chapter 32: A journey of self-discovery and Rank up

Vandalieu was on his third day of rest, but the Undead Titans were busy at work, as if making up for all of the time that they had spent idle up until now.

「Lumberjacks cut treeeees!」[1](Titan)

『GYIIIIH!』(Ent)

Holding their axes in both hands, the Titans swung them into the trunk of a large tree. And then the tree... the Ent, the monster that the tree had transformed into, screamed.

The Titans took no notice of the Ent swinging its branches around as a final act of resistance, and in the end, the felling of the Ent was complete.

「Boss! What're we doing with this tree?」(Titan)

『Put it where we're gathering the timber! The Holy Son is resting for now!』(Titan)

「Roooger!」(Titan)

The Undead Titans cut off the Ent's smaller branches and carried these along with the trunk to the place where the timber was being gathered. These Titans had been『lumberjacks』while they were alive, and even though they were now only made of bones and rotting flesh, they worked at a brisk pace.

「We have to hurry and exterminate all of the other monsters in Talosheim!」(Titan)

「Yeah, since the Holy Son is here now!」(Titan)

『Aaah, I want to hurry and go get the salt!』(Titan)

They were working to clear the outer districts of Talosheim, which were being encroached upon by the forest of the Devil's Nests outside, and turn them back

into ruins. Vandalieu, the Holy Son, had told them that he would repair the buildings of Talosheim and restore them to their original state.

『Show him how we work!』(Titan)

With the former lumberjacks leading the way, the Titans defeated the monsters attacking them to defend their territory one after another, cutting down the trees as they went.

Before the Titans discovered the tunnel leading into Duke Hartner's[2] territory in the Orbaume Kingdom, Talosheim had been a city-nation isolated from the outside world by the Boundary Mountain Range.

The royal capital's population was five thousand, and there were only three small villages with populations numbering in the hundreds. Other than capable adventurers like the【Sword King】Borkus and the Knights' Order of the Church led by the【Saint】Jeena, there were no specialized military personnel or battle technicians.

All of the soldiers, including the city guards, did those duties as their secondary occupation; they normally worked as miners or fishermen.

Upon learning this, one would think that even for a country of Titans who were born with great physical strength and sturdy bodies, their military strength was too low. But the reality was different.

All of Talosheim's industries were dependent on the Devil's Nests and Dungeons, other than its agriculture.

Lumberjacks gathered lumber by felling Ents, Treants and High Treants in Devil's Nests and Dungeons.

Fishermen hunted aquatic monsters using tridents.

Even miners would obtain metals from veins in Devil's Nests and Dungeons that were crawling with monsters, so they had to fight and defeat the monsters in their way on their own.

The vast majority of Talosheim's population of five thousand was made of capable fighters possessing battle-related skills.

Even the farmers who should have been an exception to this possessed

enough fighting strength to kill any dangerous wild beasts that went after their crops with their bare hands; they were not to be laughed at.

After learning these facts about Talosheim, Vandalieu and the Ghouls wondered,「Why did the Mirg shield-nation pick a fight with a country like this?」

After all, over ninety percent of Talosheim's five thousand civilians were combatants capable of killing a soldier of the Mirg army in a single attack. Such powerful enemies would be waiting for them in a sturdy fortress of a city.

It was as clear as day that any country that attempted to capture Talosheim would suffer several times the number of losses that the Titans would.

Talosheim had few mages capable of using the Titans' unique magic as Titans possessed little affinity for the various attributes of magic, but even the Mirg shield-nation's army was largely made of knights and soldiers; they didn't have many mages either.

The Mirg shield-nation and the Amid Empire behind it seemed to have dispatched their troops after only looking at Talosheim's exterior appearance; they certainly hadn't done any detailed analysis on the city. As a result, though the Mirg shield-nation had been victorious, it suffered historically unprecedented losses including the loss of a magic spear that was a national treasure.

It was a foolish-sounding story, but regardless of these past events, the Undead Titans continued to clear Talosheim of non-Undead monsters.

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Around this time, Vandalieu was in the ruins of the Adventurers' Guild, reading a book. The archives of the Church of Vida and the small branch of the Mages' Guild had either been set alight or plundered, but the archives of this place had been left alone. Even now, two hundred years later, there were numerous books that were still intact.

The Church had probably been burned down because of the religious reasons behind the war, and though the Mages' Guild was small, there was a chance that those of the Guild had been conducting their own research, so the archives

had been plundered. But there had been no reason to destroy the archives of the Adventurers' Guild. Well, it could have simply been because the Mirg shield-nation had been forced to retreat before they were able to.

And one of the Undead Titans had told Vandalieu that there should be a book in these archives about Dhampirs.

Incidentally, there had been a Magic Item left in the Adventurers' Guild that was able to issue registration cards for those registered with the Guild, but it couldn't be activated. It seemed that only Guild personnel could use it.

If Vandalieu had been able to register himself here, he would have been able to become an adventurer while keeping his Title, skills and Mana pool hidden, but life wasn't always easy.

But investigating the details about his own race was more important.

「I can finally learn some things about myself.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu didn't know anything about himself other than the fact that he was born between the Subordinate Vampire Valen and the Dark Elf Darcia. He had always wanted to find out more about himself if he had the chance.

First, he wanted to find out his life expectancy so he would know how long he could be expected to live. This would allow him to plan his life out.

In the unlikely event that his life expectancy was shorter than a human's, it would be a big problem. He could extend his lifespan, using【Youth Transformation】on himself, but if Dhampirs turned out to be creatures that lived without aging and then suddenly died when they reached their thirtieth birthday, that would be problematic. It was unlikely, but Vandalieu wanted to know, just in case.

「... I can really read it.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu's eyes followed the text as he inhaled the scent of old paper. He learned that Dhampirs had the special characteristic of inheriting the qualities of their parents very strongly.

The pattern of inheritance apparently grew even stronger when both parents belonged to races created by Vida.

「So that means I have quite a bit of talent in unarmed fighting and archery, just like my parents.」(Vandalieu)

It was possible that Vandalieu had an aptitude for archery like Darcia and Valen's unarmed fighting techniques that relied on his claws. It was unlikely that he would be able to use spiritual magic, however, as he didn't possess an affinity for the other attributes of magic.

That would always be true unless spirits of the death-attribute, which had never existed before, suddenly started appearing. Lemures were familiars created using Vandalieu's Mana; they didn't count as spirits.

「Hmm? Could it be... I've inherited Father's resistance to the sun as well? In that case, won't I be fine making my body structure more Vampire-like by using【Bloodsucking】to drink more blood?」(Vandalieu)

Newborn Dhampirs possessed none of the weaknesses of Vampires, but repeatedly using【Bloodsucking】made their constitutions more like their Vampire parents. As a cost to the power they gained by doing so, they gained the Vampires' weaknesses as well.

However, Vandalieu's father had been a man known to be resistant to the sun. And apparently Subordinate Vampires only possessed special Vampire abilities related to the body, but they also possessed none of Vampires' other weaknesses.

This meant that Vandalieu could obtain the Vampires' power at no risk to himself.

「Alright, I'll drink lots of blood from now on.」(Vandalieu)

Up until now, he had succumbed to the temptation of drinking the blood of the monsters whenever their corpses were being drained of blood. There was no particular reason to resist this temptation, and if it led to him gaining power, there was really no reason to hesitate to drink it.

If he became able to fight with his claws like his father, his mother would probably be happy as well.

「And the main thing, the lifespan is... dependent on the race of the parent that isn't a Vampire?」(Vandalieu)

That was what had been written. The way Dhampirs lived varied greatly depending on their parents, and their lifespans also varied depending on the race of the non-Vampire parent.

If the parent was a human with a lifespan of 100 years, the Dhampir would live between 300 to 500 years; if the parent was a Dwarf with a lifespan of 200 years, the Dhampir would live between 600 to 1000 years; if the parent was an Elf with a lifespan of 500 years, the Dhampir would live between 1500 to 2000 years.

As a general rule, it seemed to be between three and five times the lifespan of the non-Vampire parent's race.

Incidentally, all of these values had been deduced by researchers of the distant past who had used life-attribute magic to investigate multiple Dhampir specimens. The information's authenticity was a little questionable. However, it seemed that Vandalieu would be able to live for a long time... as long as he wasn't killed.

「Now that I think about it, how long do Dark Elves live?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu wanted to ask Darcia, but she was currently asleep inside her bone fragment. He wandered around the archives, wondering if there might be a book written about Dark Elves, and fortunately he happened to find the book he was looking for.

About a third of it had been rendered unreadable by mold, but he was able to find out the piece of information that he wanted.

『Dark Elves were born as a race that the goddess Vida hoped would be stronger than Elves, so all of their abilities are superior to those of Elves. As such, their lifespans are long; they can live for a thousand years in contrast to the five-hundred-year lifespan of Elves.』

... At worst, Vandalieu would live three thousand years; at best, five thousand. As long as he survived, he could becoming a living witness to history.

「A length of time longer than the entire Christian Era... I can't imagine it.」(Vandalieu)

His sense of time was just as it had been when he was a human, so he

imagined that it could even become difficult to live for so long. At the very least, it seemed that it would be some time before he lived through the fourth lifetime promised to him by Rodcorte.

「I wonder what that god was thinking when he reincarnated me as a Dhampir? Well, he cursed me so that I would commit suicide in despair; I'm sure he didn't think about things like lifespans.」(Vandalieu)

In fact, if he hadn't been able to use death-attribute magic, he would have been finished the moment Darcia died. He wouldn't have had to even go as far as to commit suicide; he would have simply starved to death.

Even in the book, it had been written that the majority of Dhampirs died long before they reached the end of their lifespan. Considering that, Vandalieu could understand why he had been reincarnated as a Dhampir.

「Now then, I wonder if there's a book about adventurers?」(Vandalieu)

The Talosheim branch of the Adventurers' Guild was supposedly set up here by the Orbaume Kingdom's Adventurers' Guild, so the systems used by the Talosheim branch should be mostly the same.

The documents here were from two hundred years ago, but since many races like Dwarves and Titans lived for over two hundred years, things should be mostly the same other than some minor details... If the systems had changed drastically in the past two hundred years, Vandalieu would just have to consider himself unfortunate.

「Here it is... It seems to be mostly the same as the Mirg shield-nation's Guild.」(Vandalieu)

The systems and rules weren't much different from what he had heard from Kachia and spirits of the adventurers that he had killed. It seemed that Guilds were the same even when they were in different countries.

There were two differences. The first was the treatment of the races created by Vida, and the other was regarding the training school for adventurers.

In the Orbaume Kingdom's Adventurers' Guild, some of the races created by Vida, such as Dark Elves and Titans, were treated as people. However, the races created when Vida procreated with monsters such as Lamias, Scylla, Arachne,

Devils, Oni and, notably, Vampires – were generally considered monsters.

This was because these races often harmed humans or had long histories of conflict against human countries.

However, some friendly clans of these races also existed, and it was forbidden to harm members of clans that the nation had declared to be allied clans.

「... Hmm, even though they're enemies with the Amid Empire, the way they treat the races created by Vida isn't the exact opposite, huh.」(Vandalieu)

Considering the fact that the Orbaume Kingdom had been trading commercially with Talosheim, it was difficult to imagine that the goddess Vida was thought of in a very negative way. And the Orbaume Kingdom's relationships with each of the other races may have changed in the last two thousand years.

For now, Vandalieu decided that he would ask about these things once he entered human society.

「The next thing is regarding the adventurers' training school... I never imagined that I'd be going back to school in another world.」(Vandalieu)

In the Orbaume Kingdom's Guilds, there were educational institutions that trained adventurers, though such institutions didn't exist in the Adventurers' Guild of the Amid Empire and its nations.

That was because the Orbaume Kingdom had more adventurers, and also more Devil's Nests and Dungeons where adventurers worked.

Of course, the fact that being an adventurer came with occupational hazards was the same in the Orbaume Kingdom. If an inexperienced adventurer went on a reckless adventure and died, the responsibility wasn't on the country or the Guild.

People who became adventurers were people with great confidence in their abilities or those who were very poor... Orphans, those who had lost their jobs while still young or the third or fourth sons of farming or merchant families who had no chance of succeeding the family business, those kinds of people. Though this was cruel to say, they were such people that society would not suffer a great loss if they died.

However, in the distant past, a vast majority of newly-registered adventurers died within a year of registration, and many retired before reaching D-class or higher.

It would be problematic if the Adventurers' Guild was to build up a negative reputation due to these statistics and the number of capable adventurers stopped increasing. If the poor saw no hope in becoming adventurers and decided to turn to crime instead, that would also cause great problems for the nation.

In addition to this, if there weren't enough people to thin the monster populations in the Devil's Nests, not only would there be a shortage of valuable monster materials, but the monster populations could even overflow, jeopardizing the nation's safety.

And so the nation provided funds for adventurers' training schools to be established. The idea was to teach them at least a certain level of knowledge, train their fighting abilities and thus reduce the rate of casualties among new adventurers.

This experiment was a great success; the rate of newly-registered adventurers dying within a year of their registration dropped by eighty percent and the ratio of adventurers making it to D-class and above increased several times over.

In addition, the nation was able to use exceptional adventurers as special escorts and privately-employed mages; only good had come out of the establishment of these training schools.

After reading this far, Vandalieu looked up from the book.

「I guess I'm a bad person for thinking that this bit sounds suspicious.」(Vandalieu)

He could understand the rate of adventurers dying within a year of their registration decreasing, but what about the rate of adventurers dying within the second year? Just how much had the ratio of adventurers reaching D-class or above increased by?

In the first place, why were there no specific numbers given in the information?

「Well, whatever.」(Vandalieu)

The reason Vandalieu wanted to become an adventurer wasn't because of his ideals or because it was just his dream. It was merely the simplest way to secure himself a position in society, and he could even earn money by doing what he had been doing up until now... Hunting monsters and bandits.

Most importantly, it was the occupation that most easily allowed him to make a name for himself.

And so Vandalieu ignored the dark side of the Adventurers' Guild that he was starting to see, and lowered his gaze once more to read what had been written about the adventurers' training school system.

The schools were credit-based, and one could attend between one and three years. As long as one earned the minimum number of credits and had the headmaster's permission, he or she could graduate at any time.

There weren't any particular requirements to enroll at the schools; only the entrance fees and tuition fees needed to be paid. There was even a deferred payment system for those who couldn't pay these fees in advance where they would pay the fees off after graduating.

And the most important thing for Vandalieu was how the school system dealt with minors.

『However, minors cannot advance to F-class or above if they have not graduated from an adventurer training school.』

In the Adventurers' Guild, adventurers were separated into eight classes based on their abilities and past achievements. The lowest, G-class, were newcomers who possessed only their registration cards; the only requests they could accept were non-combat-related requests in the city... what would be referred to as manual labor in Japan. Even the pay was worse than in Japan.

Requests that could possibly include combat, even if they were requests like gathering medicinal plants outside, could only be accepted at F-class or above.

「Basically, if I want to aim higher and gain money and fame, I have to attend the adventurers' training school since I'm underage.」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu was currently almost three years of age, he was, of course, a minor. He had decided that he would only go to the Orbaume Kingdom after obtaining the resurrection device beneath Talosheim's royal castle and reviving Darcia, but he had no intention of spending more than ten years doing that.

Therefore, he would definitely still be a minor by the time he registered at the Adventurers' Guild.

「School... I wonder if I can live an enjoyable school life this time?」(Vandalieu)

He had no confidence at all to say that he could.

During his childhood on Earth, even his uncle was forced to allow him to receive compulsory education, and when he was on the verge of entering high school, his uncle had pressured him by saying,「You're only allowed to choose from public high schools. And if you fail your exam, then go and work.」But even so, Vandalieu had managed to attend high school.

However, because of his family environment around the time he was attending elementary school, he was unable to invite friends over to play and he couldn't even go to others' houses to play because he was scared of his uncle's fists. And he couldn't make any friends in the first place because of his strange behavior due to his abnormal emotional state.

On top of that, the teachers didn't think highly of him either and though his grades were normal, there was an image of him being a problematic child. Things never changed as he entered middle school, and by the time he entered high school and was able to rebel against his uncle to some extent, he had already given up on a「bright, enjoyable school life.」

Would he be able to make friends at this school? He still had no confidence that he would be able to interact well with anyone other than the Undead and Ghouls.

「I attract attention as a user of a newly-discovered type of magic, and become someone that my schoolmates look up to... No, I can't imagine that.」(Vandalieu)

He could only imagine his magic causing himself to be alienated and isolated even further.

「... I'm fine with being a loner. It's not like there are going to be any flashy school events, and since it's a credit-based system, if I don't find it enjoyable I can just get the minimum credits and graduate right away.」(Vandalieu)

And then all he would need to do was gather money and fame by going hunting for monsters in Dungeons with Sam and the other Undead, right? He had plenty of friends. He was the Ghoul King, after all.

In fact, wasn't he quite socially successful?

Building up such defensive walls in his heart, he closed the book. Ah, he really didn't want to go to school.

As he decided to go and play with Bone Man and the others to distract himself from his dark mood and put the book back in its place, another book caught his sight by chance.

「A study on Undead?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu picked up that book and decided to continue reading.

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The Undead created by Vandalieu, including Bone Man, played and trained around Sam when not fighting.

They would have practice battles against each other, dodge stones thrown at them by Bone Monkey and enjoy Bone Bird's acrobatic flying displays.

『Juuuh....』(Bone Man)

Vandalieu called out to Bone Man, who had been left behind by his companions as the only one unable to surpass Rank 3.

「I found a way that might be able to make you stronger today, so I'm thinking of trying it out.」(Vandalieu)

『Juuh...?』(Bone Man)

With a bow on his back, a sword at his hip and the leather armor and shield as his defense, Bone Man looked like a splendid skeleton soldier, but the spirits inhabiting his bones were those of rats.

Perhaps because of this, Bone Man's Swordsmanship and Shield Technique

skills were still level 1 and he seemed unable to increase them any further. After reading the book, Vandalieu thought that this might be the same reason that he was still Rank 3 even though he had reached level 100.

『There are a number of conditions that might need to be met to create a powerful Undead. The most common of these is for the spirits inhabiting the dead body to match the body itself, or otherwise possess a good affinity with it.』

In Lambda, there are cases where even after a dead body reanimated to become an Undead, the spirit inhabiting the body is not the original owner of that body.

Not only would the body be inhabited by someone else's spirit, but it is common for it to be inhabited by the spirits of small animals rather than a human. But in such cases, it would generally be a weak Rank 1 or 2 Undead.

A human spirit possessing the corpse of a beast wouldn't suddenly gain the beast's reflexes and fighting instincts; in fact, it would take all of its effort trying to move in a body with a different bone structure.

And if the beast possesses body parts that humans do not have... such as a long tail, wings or a second head, the human spirit would have too much to deal with.

It is the same when animal spirits inhabited a human's body; they wouldn't be able to use its hands correctly unless they were very intelligent animals, and the spirits of quadrupedal animals would find it difficult to walk on two legs. Using tools would be out of the question.

Perhaps it would be easier to imagine it as putting the brain of a human in a beast, and putting the brain of a beast in a human.

Considering that, the rat spirits inside Bone Man could be considered exceptionally skilled. It wouldn't have been an exaggeration to call them geniuses among rats.

Rats use their front paws skillfully, but even so, being able to use a bow and arrows, a sword and a shield was impressive. The rat spirits were clearly more intelligent than the average Goblin.

But unfortunately, there was a limit to their abilities. Well, since they were spirits, they could probably overcome those limits given hundreds of years, but Vandalieu wasn't willing to wait that long.

And so Vandalieu thought,「Since Bone Man is a human's body with a rat's brain in it, if I add a human's spirit into it, doesn't that solve the problem?」

He would carefully select human spirits whose bodies had died long ago, whose empty souls wouldn't contain any personalities, emotions or memories. Fortunately, this place was a historical battlefield and it was simple to gather such spirits.

「Now then, I'm going to add more spirits.」(Vandalieu)

『Juuh... Juuoooh...』[3](Bone Man)

As Vandalieu inserted the fragments of spirits, Bone Man's body absorbed more and more, like a sponge sucking up water.

Bone Man didn't seem to be suffering; in fact, his jawbone was clicking in pleasure and the fire in his eye sockets was flickering, so Vandalieu added more and more.

『Grrr?』(Bone Wolf)

『Geeeeh...』(Bone Bird)

As Bone Wolf and Bone Bird watched their companion with curiosity, more spirits began to possess the human bones that made up Bone Man's body.

And then it suddenly happened.

「Hmm?!」(Vandalieu)

Something seemed to click into place. It was the sensation of puzzle pieces being thrown randomly into a box and coming together by coincidence to complete the puzzle.

『JUUUUUH... Ah, my lord... my loooord...』(Bone Man)

Bone Man's body didn't show any obvious changes like his body starting to glow or releasing an ominous presence, and its appearance was still that of a skeleton soldier, but somehow, the dull, rat-like noises he had been making

were replaced by spoken words.

「Could it be, your Rank increased?」(Vandalieu)

Some monsters' intelligence drastically increases when their Rank increases. Though there are many cases where adventurers mistakenly attribute this to being the result of the experience gained by the monsters from leveling up or becoming smarter as a result of studying. But there are monsters that suddenly become able to use magic or speak words after leveling up.

Many of those are Undead.

The reason for this was that the souls become accustomed to the dead bodies they inhabit and regain their memories and techniques.

『Juuh, my lord.』(Bone Man)

Bone Man gave a rat-like squeak instead of a yes in reply to Vandalieu's question as he nodded.

『Because of your divine work, my lord, my Rank has increased and I have become a Rank 4 Skeleton Knight, juuh.』(Bone Man)

He spoke in a rich, flowing, baritone voice that would likely be terrifying if he were to shout. The squeaking at the end of his sentence was a little disappointing, however.

But where had his manner of speaking come from? His movements were unexpectedly refined... Perhaps there had been some knights of the Mirg shield-nation among the spirit fragments that Vandalieu had put into him, and that was the source of this.

Vandalieu thought he had carefully selected empty souls so that Bone Man wouldn't be taken over by some strange malice or hatred, but it was possible that their memories had been restored when they fused with the spirits already inside Bone Man.

It seemed that the【Death-Attribute Charm】was taking its full effect, but if he were to behave like a knight of the Mirg shield-nation, that might cause trouble with Borkus and the other Undead Titans of Talosheim.

「Well then, have you regained your memories of your past life?」(Vandalieu)

When Vandalieu asked to make sure, Bone Man nodded and replied,「Juuh, I remember.」

『It happened when I returned to my family with food to feed them. It attacked me and caught me by surprise. Unable to use any techniques, I was tormented, toyed around with and then it abandoned me without even finishing me off. It had already satisfied itself after killing my family; tormenting me was nothing but『amusement.』That fiendish cat! JUOOOOOOOH!』(Bone Man)

「... Hmm, cats do those sorts of things, don't they.」(Vandalieu)

The idea that humans are the only ones that take lives needlessly – Upon hearing Bone Man's story, Vandalieu learned that this idea was only a fantasy.

Leaving that aside, it seemed that the spirit fragments had only affected the tone of Bone Man's voice; he seemed to have no memories of the Mirg shield-nation, so there was nothing to worry about.

Incidentally, Vandalieu liked both dogs and cats and『owning a pet one day』was one of his dreams.

「But don't kill cats needlessly.」(Vandalieu)

『Juuh, certainly, my lord.』(Bone Man)

It was good that Bone Man was so obedient. A future mass-murder of domestic cats in the Orbaume Kingdom had been avoided. Vandalieu wasn't sure whether there were domesticated dogs and cats in Lambda, however.

Most of the day had passed already, so Vandalieu spent some time playing with Bone Man and the other Undead. He enjoyed himself, throwing monster bones for Bone Wolf and Bone Bear to compete over and fetch, grabbing onto Bone Bird's legs to take a leisurely flight around the sky and being groomed by Bone Monkey.

『JUOOOOOH!』(Bone Man)

Saria and Rita, who had returned from hunting, probably... tilted their heads in confusion at the sight of Bone Man sprinting at full speed, letting out a war cry. Though they couldn't do so physically or visibly.

『Bocchan, Bone Man is running... why is that?』(Saria)

『Some kind of training... It wouldn't be something like that, would it?』(Rita)

Bone Man's cardiopulmonary function wouldn't increase by running around at full speed.

「Ah, I had an idea to build this and he seems to have taken a liking to it.」(Vandalieu)

『... Why?』(Saria)

「The rat spirits that act as Bone Man's base probably had some hamster-like traits.」(Vandalieu)

『Ham... ster, as in star[4]?』(Rita)

Inside a hamster wheel that Vandalieu had thought to build by using【Golem Transmutation】on some spare wood, Bone Man happily spent the next short while running to his heart's content.

- **Name**: Bone Man
- **Rank**: 4
- **Race**: Skeleton Knight
- **Level**: 1
- **Passive skills**:
  - Dark Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 2
  - Enhanced Attribute Values: Loyalty: Level 1 (NEW!)
  - Spirit Form: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
  - Swordsmanship: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Shield Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Archery: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Silent Steps: Level 1
  - Coordination: Level 1
  - Commanding: Level 1 (NEW!)

Bone Man's Rank has increased after having new spirits added. Normally,

Skeleton Knights are monsters created by knights becoming Undead after death. Bone Man's base is made of rat spirits, but the fact that it has『sworn loyalty to a specific person』and the fact that the new spirits added to it included those of knights have caused it to become a Skeleton Knight.

Though his outwards appearance is no different, his Attribute Values and intelligence have increased significantly, and though he previously could not level up some skills no matter how much experience he gained, he can now do so.

In addition, he has gained the passive function of the Knight Job,【Enhanced Attribute Values: Loyalty.】This skill enhances the Attribute Values of the bearer as long has the bearer obeys the commands of the person he or she has sworn to serve (usually a lord); in Bone Man's case, his lord is Vandalieu.

Skeleton Knights often possess martial-type skills and commanding skills at a high level and can become a Rank 5 Skeleton General or a Rank 6 Skeleton Lord by commanding subordinates. But in cases where they are employed (before or after death) by someone who rules an entire nation, such as a king or emperor, they become Undead with court ranks attached to their names, such as Skeleton Baron.

Notes

1. This is a humorous use of alliteration in Japanese because "lumberjack" is 木こり/kikori, "tree" is 木/ki and "cut" is "切る/kiru". Basically there's a lot of syllables with the K sound.

2. Duke Hartner was mentioned in chapter 28, but I misread "Hartner" as "partner" in the raw when I translated that chapter so... yeah. In my defense, パートナ is partner and ハートナis Hartner; literally that little circle above the first character is the only difference and I just missed it. The sentence in chapter 28 that mentions him has been fixed now.

3. "Juuh" seems to be the sound a rat makes when squeaking in Japanese.

4. The last part of hamster is スター/sutaa, which sounds like "star".

Chapter 33: A new resolve on my third birthday

In the mountain range that towered over the eastern and western sides of Talosheim, the【Capital of the Sun】, the hero Zakkart left behind mercury mirrors that he had created using secret Alchemy techniques. The mirrors of liquid mercury reflected the sunlight towards the city, granting Talosheim the same amount of daylight hours as any place on level ground.

And so the long, thin rice that could be harvested three times a year (similar to the rice of India on Earth) was cultivated, filling the stomachs of the race that needed large amounts of food.

More than half of the country's territory was covered in Devil's Nests, but because of that, the crops grew quickly and yielded harvests three times as plentiful as crops growing in other lands.

However, during the war with the Mirg shield-nation, the fields became grasslands ruled by monsters and all of the mercury mirrors were destroyed.

Leaving that sad history aside, Vandalieu was working on making something to play with today as well.

「King, what're you making?」(Child)

Before he knew it, the Black Goblin, Anubis and Orcus children had gathered around him.

Only a few months had passed since their birth, but not a single one of them was smaller than Vandalieu now. He had heard that monsters developed at a quick pace, but seeing it with his own eyes was a shocking thing.

Hearing that the Black Goblins were actually developing slower than pure-breed Goblins was even more surprising.

「Is it a weapon?」(Braga)

「Not quite, Braga.」(Vandalieu)

Braga, one of the Black Goblin children, thought that the wooden disc-shaped object that Vandalieu was shaping with his【Golem Transmutation】might be a throwing weapon like a boomerang, but it wasn't a weapon.

「I know, it's a plate!」(Zemedo)

「Bugoh? To replace the leaves that Mom has been using recently?」(Gorba)

Zemedo, a young Anubis with the tough-looking head of a dog, and Gorba, an Orcus who was already the size of the average human adult, guessed that it might be a plate, but that was wrong as well.

「Then what is it? Tell us too!」(Memediga)

Zemedo's older twin sister... or younger twin sister? Memediga, who was his twin sister either way was curious as well.

「It's a toy」, Vandalieu told her.

『A toy?』(Children)

As his friends spoke simultaneously and turned their heads in confusion, Vandalieu adjusted the fine balance of the wooden disc. Finally satisfied with that, the last thing he did was to use what was inside a barrel that he had set aside... Rubber. He turned some of the rubber into a Rubber Golem and covered the disc in it so that it wouldn't hurt if it hit someone.

It was quite unrefined, but it was finished.

「This is a toy called a Frisbee.」(Vandalieu)

What Vandalieu had created was a Frisbee.

He had thrown sticks when playing with Bone Wolf, but he had thought it might be more interesting to use a Frisbee like people did on Earth.

In Lambda, sports and toys were underdeveloped. Every country held tournaments for athletics and combat, and there were even dolls and stuffed toys.

But there were no Frisbees or sports that involved the use of balls... Well, they might be out there somewhere if one looked hard enough.

And so Vandalieu had decided to try making one himself. Fortunately, there was more than enough wood lying around and even more fortunately, there were rubber trees, so Vandalieu made Rubber Golems from their natural rubber to use it for things like grips and cushioning material.

「This Frisbee, you throw it –」(Vandalieu)

「Hit people with it, and then you win by defeating everyone?」(Child)

「... It's a toy that you throw, catch and throw back to the person who threw it to you.」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu's friends seemed to have dangerous thoughts about the Frisbee, he wondered if he should have made balls first. But he generally disliked ball sports, so he didn't have much desire to make them.

Because he had been a loner at school, to him, ball sports had been nothing but「pain」inflicted onto him during physical education classes. They were nothing but a way to show off the achievements of popular people.

「For now, I'll show you the basics. Try throwing it.」(Vandalieu)

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That day, Basdia thought of calling out to Vandalieu after she got back from her session of monster hunting and training, and happened to come across this scene.

「Van?」(Basdia)

Vandalieu was chasing after a small disc that was spinning through the air.

He caught the disc and then threw it back towards the children, who were standing far away from him.

「Is this some kind of training? No, he's supposed to be resting, so are they playing?」(Basdia)

Basdia thought for a moment that they were undergoing some kind of training where they were learning to catch a thrown weapon out of the air and throw it back at the enemy, but the atmosphere around them didn't seem like they were training, so she decided to stand there and observe.

After observing a little, she understood that they were playing. But from just observing, she couldn't understand what could be so fun about it.

「Here it comes, King –」(Orcus)

The Orcus boy holding the disc gave a large swing of his arm and threw it.

Because he possessed the【Superhuman Strength】skill that granted him great physical strength from birth, the disc flew high, very quickly.

「Ah, this is –」(Vandalieu)

It was impossible for Vandalieu to catch it. So Basdia thought, but Vandalieu ran at one of the nearby ruined walls and, without slowing down at all, began climbing it like a four-legged animal!

She thought that he was using magic, but it seemed that he was using his claws.

「Van looks thin but he has a lot of strength, and he's quicker than he himself thinks. As expected of the man I'm expecting to be the father of my second child.」(Basdia)

Giving a satisfied nod and thinking more positively of Vandalieu, Basdia decided that she would talk to him later and left so that she wouldn't be in their way.

And thus Frisbees became popular among the Ghouls, Black Goblins and the Anubises in particular. But its popularity was dubious among the Titans and Orcuses.

***

There was currently a large amount of materials that had been brought into Talosheim.

Over ninety percent of those were the products obtained by the Undead Titans who worked under Borkus to exterminate the influence of the exterior Devil's Nests from Talosheim.

There were large quantities of monster meat, timber, medicinal plants, herbs and goods of Talosheim that the Mirg shield-nation had either abandoned or never found in the first place.

Most of them were still usable... The rate at which more materials were brought in was faster than the rate at which they could be processed, so Vandalieu had simply cast【Preservation】on them and they were lying in a huge pile.

Among the quickly-gathering materials were coins that were used as the Orbaume Kingdom's currency two hundred years ago... copper and silver coins of various sizes, things that had no use now. The Mirg shield-nation had probably taken gold coins and any coins more valuable than those, but the silver coins and coins worth less than them had been abandoned.

If one were to polish these coins and take them to the Orbaume Kingdom, they could likely be used as currency except for the badly damaged ones. The currency might have been revised in the past two hundred years, but they would at least hold the value of the copper and silver that the coins were made of. If lucky, they might be worth a premium the way that old coins on Earth were valued by enthusiastic collectors.

But right now, there was really no way to use them.

「What shall we do with these?」(Vandalieu)

「There is nothing to do with them. For now, let us store them somewhere until you go to the Orbaume Kingdom, Van-sama.」(Tarea)

Tarea was getting her back rubbed by Vandalieu after having come back from changing her Job to her original Job of『Arms Smith』at the Job-changing room in the ruined Adventurers' Guild.

「Currency revisions are quite uncommon, so I believe that there should be no problem, however... I am not knowledgeable about the Orbaume Kingdom. Even if you ask Kachia and the others... Ah, there, harder...」(Tarea)

「You're right; they're enemy nations who have done nothing but wage war against each other, after all.」(Vandalieu)

Neighboring countries would normally have people going back and forth across the border, but unfortunately Viscount Balchesse's region, in which Kachia and the other former adventurers had been active in when they were still human, were not adjacent to the Orbaume Kingdom.

No, even in areas where the Mirg shield-nation and Orbaume Kingdom shared a border, almost nobody did business across them other than black-market dealers.

These two nations had been enemies ever since their foundation, and apparently many of the Orbaume Kingdom's duchies had been taken back as a result of a ghastly conflict that had occurred only a few years ago, so there was hardly an atmosphere to be doing business with each other.

But if one were to question whether the nations still functioned properly, the answer was yes. The Amid Empire covered a third of the continent... Half of the continent if one was to only consider the regions that were inhabitable by humans, and it did commercial business with nearby island nations and other continents.

Thus, the Empire had no economic problems or problems regarding the acquisition of food.

The state of the Orbaume Kingdom wasn't known, but it likely didn't suffer from any problems for the same reasons. The duchies had originally been individual small countries, and they were likely able to trade with nations outside the continent through the Kingdom.

Vandalieu had thought of taking the coins that he had taken from the bandits around Evbejia to the Orbaume Kingdom and exchange them there, but considering these facts, it would probably better if he didn't.

It felt like a waste, but it was probably best to simply melt them down into metal.

「I'll ask Craftsman Datara later.」(Vandalieu)

Datara was an Undead Titan who had been an elderly blacksmith when he was alive. He had continued swinging his hammer for two hundred years... well, swinging his hammer, but not actually making anything.

He had regained a little of his sanity and memories when he met Vandalieu, and now he was struggling to restore his workplace.

His various tools had corroded; he wouldn't be able to work unless he made them all from scratch again.

「That is a good idea. I am still unable to use metal.」(Tarea)

Tarea was a skilled arms smith with high skill levels. However, she was unskilled in the use of metal.

Arms smiths in the world of Lambda mainly use materials taken from monsters to create their weapons and armor. They do not use metal very often, unlike the swordsmiths and weapon smiths that one would imagine on Earth, who would forge metal to create swords and katanas. Even if they do, they would only use Mythril powder or Orichalcum fragments as catalysts, or use iron to make clasps for armor.

The blacksmiths who primarily use metals are craftsmen who create arms using copper, bronze, iron, Adamantite or Orichalcum as the base materials, with materials from monsters used only as catalysts.

The skills and tools used by the two types of craftsmen are different.

In Tarea's case in particular, she had trained her skills after becoming a Ghoul in a Devil's Nest forest, where metal had been scarce. The last time she had used metal in her work was over two hundred years ago.

「If I had the tools, as long as I am not needed to create something, I think that I would be able to at least melt down coins, you know? But if there is a specialist around, it is best to leave it to him.」(Tarea)

「You're right. And Datara would probably be angry if I didn't ask him to do it.」(Vandalieu)

Datara was a moody old man. If he were to discover that Vandalieu had given this task to Tarea, who was unskilled in the handling of metal, he would get very angry indeed. And since he was now an Undead, whose emotions often went out of control, there was a chance that this anger would be permanent.

And moody old men in general seemed like they would be scary if they got angry.

「Still, how shameful of me. To become overenthusiastic and... nnh... cause pain to my back.」(Tarea)

The friendly, two-hundred-and-sixty-four-year-old Tarea who looked like a

friendly person in her teenage years had been rendered helpless by a back injury.

Because the Job-changing room in the Adventurers' Guild was usable, all of the Ghouls, including Tarea, had acquired Jobs.

Jobs were blessings granted to people by the gods even before the appearance of the Demon King. Obviously, monsters couldn't undergo Job changes. That applied even for Sam and Nuaza, who had been people before becoming Undead.

However, Ghouls were one of the races that Vida had given birth to alongside the Vampires. They were half-monster, but as the other part counted as human, they could undergo Job-changes.

This was certainly the case considering that Tarea and Kachia had retained the bonuses to their Attribute Values and skills of the Jobs they had possessed as humans, even after becoming Ghouls.

And so the Ghouls who had lived in a Devil's Nest up until now, unable to use a city's Job-changing room or make one of their own, had used the Job-changing room available to them in Talosheim.

Thus, Tarea was able to change from the Job that she had been forced into when she was sold by her family and had long since reached level 100 in, the『Prostitute』job, to her original Job of『Arms Smith.』

「Now I can become a『Renowned Craftsman』and『Artisan』that I had dreamed of being as a human!」(Tarea)

She had been very happy.『Renowned Craftsman』and『Artisan』would be honorable titles given to skilled craftsmen on earth, but in Lambda, they were the common superior Jobs that all crafting-related Jobs shared, including Arms Smith. These jobs would be displayed as『Artisan: Arms Smith』or『Arms Smith: Artisan.』

And so in order to gain Experience Points and increase her level, Tarea had begun working with unknown materials such as those from Raptors and Flying Sharks, but she had been overenthusiastic.

「I understand how you feel, you know.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu understood the feeling of being unable to acquire a Job. He really did.

As he said this, Vandalieu numbed the pain in Tarea's back with death-attribute magic, used【Spirit Form Transformation】on a part of his body and slipped it into Tarea's and eased the stiffening in her muscles.

『If I was able to do this on Earth, I might have been able to open my own store.』(Vandalieu)

Spirit Form Massages, we definitely understand your muscle pains better than low-frequency massagers! ... Probably not.

As Vandalieu released the tension in her muscles, he also secretly checked on the condition of her body, but there seemed to be no problems. There were no signs of declining organ function.

「Ah.」(Tarea)

Had she noticed?

「I just suddenly thought of something. Can you not manipulate metal with【Golem Transmutation】, Van-sama? I am sure that there are Golems made of copper, iron and Mythril.」(Tarea)

Apparently not. It wasn't as if Vandalieu was doing anything bad, but he felt a little relieved as he answered Tarea's question.

「I can. It uses up more Mana than when I make Golems from rocks, though. I've never had a chance to try it with Mythril, but I think it should work.」(Vandalieu)

Like Tarea, Vandalieu's exclusion from human society meant that his opportunity to work with metal was limited. However, he had tested it with small amounts of iron before, and he had succeeded in creating an Iron Golem that could fit in the palm of his hand.

「But I still can't do much other than make large changes to their shape. I can do things like make pit dwellings, fix houses made of stone and straighten bent pieces of metal, but for example...」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu used【Golem Transmutation】to change the shape of some copper

coins and turned them into a sword.

「I see, this is no good.」(Tarea)

Tarea knew that this sword would be useless with a single glance. It was nothing but a lump of copper in the shape of a sword.

The blade had no edge at all; it wouldn't even be able to cut a branch. It was a thin, blunt weapon rather than a sword.

「This is how it is. I can't make a statue of stone and earth that resembles a person exactly, or apply fine details.」(Vandalieu)

As he spoke, Vandalieu used Golems of earth and stone to make a doll that resembling Tarea, but... while it did have the shape of a woman, the facial features were rough and details like the fingers were very crude.

Using【Golem Transmutation】like this, he couldn't create small details. Even when constructing houses, he could only create pit dwellings; building complicated, tall buildings like houses on Earth would be impossible.

Even when making weapons, at best he would be able to have molten metal pour itself into a mold... The casting process. Even that was impossible unless the mold for the desired shape was already made for him.

In order to become able to create smaller details, he would likely need skills like【Blacksmithing】and【Carpentry】in addition to the【Golem Transmutation】skills. In fact, he had already acquired the【Carpentry】skill by making pit dwellings using【Golem Transmutation.】That meant that he had gained the experience required to learn the techniques of【Carpentry】; in other words, he had actively used the【Carpentry】skill.

「Well, I can remove impurities from metal... like this.」(Vandalieu)

The copper sword began to quiver, and dust-like particles began to fall out of it right before their eyes. And then the sword of copper was shining brilliantly, as if it had completely transformed.

「Th-this is copper?! It shines like a gem... Van-sama, this is amazing! If you are able to purify copper like this and the same can be done with iron, this is a technique that would be desired all over the world!」(Tarea)

In Lambda, raising the purity of a substance to a hundred percent was impossible with technology alone. There were almost no examples of even skilled earth-attribute mages succeeding in doing such a thing. Historically, some mages had produced metal with a hundred percent purity, but only with minute amounts of metal used to begin with. Such techniques could not be used industrially.

And so if Vandalieu was able to create one-hundred-percent pure iron, he would rival those skilled historical mages... no, there was a chance that he would surpass them.

However, Vandalieu showed no signs of pride.

「That might be true, but this is actually really tiring.」(Vandalieu)

「Ah, it consumes a large quantity of Mana, doesn't it?」(Tarea)

「No, it really tires my brain out.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu lay down and rested his forehead against Tarea's back. Feeling how hot it was, Tarea let out her voice in surprise.

「A fever?! Van-sama, your forehead is almost hot enough to burn me!」(Tarea)

「This is known as a magic-fever. If you surpass the limits of your Intelligence to force out a complicated spell, this is apparently what happens.」(Vandalieu)

The Intelligence stat displayed on one's Status governs magic and martial techniques, representing the amount that one's brain can process, and the speed with which it does so. If those limits are surpassed, a fever is developed, like a computer that has been overclocked.

Using【Golem Transmutation】to purify copper as Vandalieu had shown Tarea didn't consume much Mana. Perhaps it would be different for other mages, but for Vandalieu, who possessed a Mana pool of 100,000,000, it was a truly miniscule amount.

What he was actually doing was middle-school-level science. He was simply transmuting the copper with the image of ejecting all of the non-copper material from within it.

Though earth-attribute mages manipulated minerals, they were unable to increase their purity. The reason for this was likely because they didn't understand the molecular structure of metals. Nobody could blame them, as this was a fantasy world with no electron microscopes.

However, Vandalieu understood the concept of molecules. But increasing the purity of a single kilogram of copper to a hundred percent had caused a fever intense enough to make his consciousness hazy, so the technique itself did indeed seem difficult.

『Or maybe my Intelligence is just too low. I have a feeling there's a good way around this, but... Fuh, Tarea's back feels good.』

As Vandalieu set heat-absorbing【Demon Fires】around himself and pressed his forehead against Tarea's back, he suddenly realized something.

「Come to think of it, Tarea's...」(Vandalieu)

「Y-yes, my what?」(Tarea)

「Upper arms are thick and muscular, aren't they?」(Vandalieu)

「That is where you want to touch?! There are plenty of other good places, you know?! If it is you, Van-sama, I would not mind if your hand were to slip a little!」(Tarea)

「Other places... Your back is muscular too, isn't it?」(Vandalieu)

Though arms smiths didn't swing hammers like blacksmiths, they still used a considerable amount of physical strength. That was why Tarea had more muscle on her arms and back than one would suspect... though few had noticed this due to her wearing clothes and ornaments that covered her back and upper arms to conceal it.

「NOOOOO! Why are you choosing only places like that?!」(Tarea)

Tarea was covering her face in shame, but Vandalieu had only meant it as a normal compliment. Muscles were splendid things. They were powerful justice, powerful beauty, powerful muscles.

Even if one didn't have such extreme opinions, would lean muscles not be considered attractive?

「I-I don’t need any more massaging-oguh?!」(Tarea)

But perhaps squirming around with Vandalieu on her back had been a bad idea. Tarea’s hips gave an unpleasant clicking sound.

「... There aren’t any problems with the bones. You have a strained back.」(Vandalieu)

Tarea suddenly stopped moving, and Vandalieu used his magic once more to numb her pain and cool down the affected area.

Strained backs were incredible, to even render a Ghoul possessing the【Pain Resistance】skill to become half-unconscious.

Incidentally, this was the first time the term『strained back[1]』had been used in Lambda, and in the years and months to come, the term would spread from Talosheim all over the continent. But right now, nobody was aware of that.

「There you are, boy... So, who is this lying down like that?」(Zadiris)

「It’s Tarea; she can’t move because she injured her back.」(Vandalieu)

It was in the evening, which came early in Talosheim, when a lively-looking Zadiris came to see Vandalieu.

「She injured her back, you say? As to be expected from an elderly person.」(Zadiris)

「Kyiiiiih, even though you are thirty years older than I am! I hope you get a strained back yourself!」(Tarea)

「S-strained?[2] Well, I do understand that you are cursing me.」(Zadiris)

Though Vandalieu had numbed the pain, the injury hadn’t actually been healed, so Tarea was lying still to recover.

As Zadiris looked closely, she saw that Vandalieu’s arms had fused into Tarea’s back.

「... What are you doing?」(Zadiris)

「Spirit Form assimilation therapy. If I turn my body into Spirit Form and fuse it with Tarea’s, she becomes able to use my【Rapid Healing】skill. I can’t use healing magic, but I tried to see if there was anything I could do and this is what

I came up with.」(Vandalieu)

「Fuh, fufufu, are you jealous? Van-sama and I have become one... No, you cannot shake me! Stop it, you insolent little girl!」(Tarea)

「I am only doing this because you show no respect for your elders. Good grief.」(Zadiris)

Satisfied at making Tarea scream after being teased by her, Zadiris whispered into Vandalieu's ear with a serious expression on her face.

「Is it her lifespan that is in danger?」(Zadiris)

「No, she's just old. I can't see a shadow of death, so I think she'll be fine as long as she doesn't push herself.」(Vandalieu)

「... She will, so that is impossible.」(Zadiris)

「You're right. I'll ask her soon if she wants me to use【Youth Transformation】for her.」(Vandalieu)

Tarea hurting her back twice in a row might have just been something unique to Tarea, but Vandalieu and Zadiris suspected that it might be because she was aging. They might have been overthinking it, but it would be best to reverse her age and have her become healthy again long before the shadow of death became visible.

「Come to think of it, how is your training?」(Vandalieu)

「Hmm, it is going well. I have become level 100, so I am due to change Job again tomorrow.」(Zadiris)

The Ghouls who had undergone Job changes had acquired『Apprentice』Jobs to begin with. All kinds of『Apprentice』Jobs existed, such as『Apprentice Warrior』,『Apprentice Mage』,『Apprentice Arms Smith』and『Apprentice Maid.』

As their names suggested, they were Apprentices, so the bonuses to their Attribute Values and skills were weak. However, the bonuses were spread widely over their skills, so everyone could take their own strengths and weaknesses into consideration as they trained and plan out what skills they wanted to obtain.

Zadiris and the other Ghouls had increased the levels of their Apprentice jobs

to their limit in the space of just a few days, but they were a special case.

Humans with Apprentice Jobs were normally not much different from average people. Beginning from this state, they would train with wooden swords and spears, have practice battles, fight Rank 1 monsters such as Goblins, Big Frogs and Living Bones under the supervision of a mentor and slowly gain Experience Points.

But Ghouls were at least as strong as Rank 3 monsters to begin with and already possessed numerous battle-related skills. Thus, they were able to kill monsters like Needle Wolves that human Apprentice Warriors would simply be slaughtered by, earning large quantities of Experience Points.

Zadiris had joined the other Ghouls in defeating monsters such as Flying Sharks and Raptors and promptly reached level 100 in the『Apprentice Mage』Job.

Incidentally, her level as a monster didn't increase. It seemed that Experience Points were split separately into『Job Experience Points』and『Monster Experience Points.』

「I know that you are eager to try, but you must be relaxing for now. It should be the date we promised, your birthday, by the time Tarea's back is healed.」(Zadiris)

「Well, I don't know how it'll go, though.」(Vandalieu)

With the【Cannot learn existing Jobs】curse, Vandalieu could not acquire a Job that had already been confirmed to exist in Lambda.

He wanted to try, so he was half-full of expectations but also half-full of anxiety at the fact that he might not be able to acquire a Job.

Well, in the case of the latter, he would simply have to concentrate on making the Undead and Ghouls stronger.

「Auuh, Van-sama, is my back in such a bad state...?」(Tarea)

Not knowing about Vandalieu's curse, Tarea assumed that he was talking about her back, so he had to spend some effort in calming her down.

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And then Vandalieu's birthday came. Vandalieu was brought to the royal castle.

『Bocchan! Please just think that you've been tricked and put this bag over your head!』(Saria)

『Don't forget to use the blindfold and earplugs before that, okay?』(Rita)

Vandalieu froze as Saria and Rita approached him with a leather bag and a blindfold made of cloth.

At first, Vandalieu thought this might be a gekokujou[3], but this seemed to be a planned surprise, so he excitedly put on the blindfold on and the leather bag over his head. From the outside, he looked just like a child being kidnapped.

『He's here! I took a lot of effort in bringing these here for you!』(Borkus)

「Me too! I brought in a lot of them as well!」(Vigaro)

「Stop competing with each other already when we haven't even shown him yet!」(Basdia)

After a while, things suddenly became noisy. Thinking that a bigger surprise was waiting for him than he'd originally thought, Vandalieu's heart began throbbing.

『Happy birthday!』

The leather bag and blindfold were removed. Vandalieu saw a great dining hall that had been built after Talosheim began trading with the Orbaume Kingdom in order to hold buffet parties and balls like the higher societies of humans.

Borkus, Vigaro, Zadiris, Nuaza, Basdia, Tarea and many others had gathered in this vast place.

The dining hall had once been magnificent, but now it was ruined, a mere shadow of what it once was. As if to replace the decorations and ornaments that had been lost, a great number of corpses covered in colorful feathers and scales had been lined up around it.

「These are dinosaurs!」(Vandalieu)

Nobody knew their exact names and they were likely very different from the dinosaurs that had once inhabited Earth, but their bone structures were easily identifiable those of dinosaurs at a glance.

Corpses resembling tyrannosaurus rexes, with enormous sharp teeth growing in their mouths.

Corpses resembling pteranodons, clearly different from birds and bats.

Corpses resembling triceratopses, with large horns growing on their heads.

Corpses resembling stegosauruses, with sheets of bone growing on their backs and spikes on their tails.

Some of their horns were chipped and their bellies had been sewn shut; they weren't unharmed. But they all seemed relatively fresh.

「This is our present. We heard from Mother that you wanted scaled monsters that weren't Dragons, Van, so everyone gathered them here.」(Basdia)

「There were quite a few of them coming out of the Dungeons. Though we've taken out their blood and organs, since they would have rotted otherwise.」(Vigaro)

It seemed that the information that Vandalieu liked dinosaurs had been leaked by Zadiris.

Well, perhaps because nobody had known what could be categorized as a dinosaur, enormous crocodile and snake monsters as well as a three-meter-long cat-like carnivorous creature possessing sharp claws and teeth with scales covering its whole body were included in there as well.

But this did nothing to inhibit the emotions that Vandalieu felt.

「Everyone... Thank you...」(Vandalieu)

He was moved to tears. He knew how hard it must have been to bring the monsters' corpses all the way back from the Devil's Nests and Dungeons, even if their blood and organs had been taken out first. The Cursed Carriages he had made for crossing the Boundary Mountain Range had probably helped, but even so, it wouldn't have been easy.

『Vandalieu...』(Darcia)

Darcia's spirit appeared from the bone fragment that Saria brought forward.

『You know, during the time leading up until now, there were a lot of times when I thought that everything was over. Your father was killed, I was captured... But you still turned three years old. Thank you so much. Make sure you become even healthier and stronger from now on, okay?』(Darcia)

Vandalieu had cried so many tears that it would be impossible to count them. Tears of anger, frustration, grief, misery, suffering, hatred, sorrow, resentment, rage, loathing.

But this might have been the first time he was crying tears of happiness.

What a pleasant feeling it was.

「Thank you, Mom. Thank you, everyone. Please keep taking care of me from now on.」(Vandalieu)

That was why he would live on.

And he would resurrect his mother.

The tears of joy that he would cry after resurrecting her would surely be pleasant as well.

There was no way that he would be killed, there was no way that he would die.

As for anyone standing in his way, he would kill them – and make them his allies.

Notes

1. This is notable in Japanese because the term is a rather unusual one, ぎっくり腰/gikkuri-goshi, where "ぎっくり/gikkuri" is an onomatopoeic sound (I think) and "腰/goshi" means hip/back, so it's something like "clicked back"? Anyway, it sounds weird if you don't know what the word means.

2. Zadiris's reaction to the word is like this because of the above mentioned onomatopoeic sound.

3. This is a Japanese term that's similar to rebellion/mutiny/coup d'état/betrayal

where those in lower positions such as vassals overthrow the ones in the higher positions such as lords.

Chapter 34: My first time getting a Job, but I won’t go into a Dungeon yet

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Munching on skewers of tyrannosaurus rex and triceratops meat, everyone other than Vandalieu drank the two-hundred-year-old Talosheim-made sake that had been found several days ago while Vandalieu drank dinosaur blood instead. He raised the dinosaurs that had been given to him as presents as Zombies to turn them into a moving dinosaur exhibition. And so his third birthday was enjoyable for everyone, even without a cake.

Vandalieu asked Darcia and the former adventurer Kachia, but it seemed that the cakes as Vandalieu knew them didn’t exist in Lambda yet. Though milk existed, there was no fresh cream, and though bread existed, there was no fluffy sponge cake.

Cakes in Lambda were apparently pieces of bread made of wheat flour with large quantities of butter, sugar, jam and honey spread over them.

If possible, Vandalieu wanted to make a cake with plenty of whipped cream for his next birthday for everyone to enjoy, but he was lacking the essential ingredients of wheat and milk.

Perhaps treasure chests and storage rooms in Dungeons could contain wheat seeds and milk?

The Titans of Talosheim hadn’t domesticated animals like cattle and horses. They hunted monsters for meat, and as for labor strength, the Titans themselves were stronger than farm horses and cattle.

The only things they domesticated were bird-like monsters called Gigas, which were apparently a replacement for chickens.

They were about as large as Titan children... In other words, just a little smaller than the average human. Apparently they laid an egg every day. Incidentally, they were carnivores that possessed sharp beaks and talons. As

Rank 2 monsters, they were not particularly strong, however.

『When I was alive, I used to put a raw Giga egg in my mug every morning and drink it up!』(Borkus)

Borkus laughed as he said this. Incidentally, the eggs were apparently of similar size to ostrich eggs.

The domesticated Gigas had either perished or run away during the war two hundred years ago, but apparently they still inhabited the Devil's Nests and Dungeons now, so they decided to capture some and start breeding them again.

Fortunately, there were mountains of meat to use to feed them.

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(Huh? What was I thinking about again? ... Oh yeah, cakes. Eggs are necessary to make cakes, and I also need –)

「Holy Son, what is the matter? You have been loitering in front of the door for some time now.」(Nuaza)

Vandalieu had been escaping from reality while standing outside the room used for the Job-changing ritual in the building that had once been the Adventurers' Guild, but Nuaza's voice brought him back to reality.

「Ah, no, I was just thinking a little about the future...」(Vandalieu)

「I see, that is a good thing. However, were you not intending to undergo the Job-changing process today?」(Nuaza)

「... I haven't finished my mental preparations.」(Vandalieu)

There were no requirements for the Job-changing ritual.

If the Adventurers' Guild was functioning correctly, he would normally pay a fee to the Guild to use the room. Afterwards, he would submit the Guild registration document... his Guild Card. But in these ruins, there was no need to pay or submit anything.

He simply needed to enter the room and place his hand on the crystal ball in the center of the magic circle inside.

And then he would choose from the list of jobs displayed inside his head.

And then it would be over.

He didn’t need to register himself on an employment website, apply for a Job, write a resume and attend an interview.

Well, that was to only natural, as this was quite a different kind of Job-change.

「... It was once explained to me that Jobs are engraved onto the soul, but there is no pain involved.」(Nuaza)

Wrongly assuming that the cause of Vandalieu’s nervousness was a misunderstanding of the process, Nuaza smiled as he said this... It was probably a smile. It merely looked like the skin of his dried face was stretching, however.

However, Vandalieu couldn’t comment on the facial expressions of others. And even though he paced back and forth in front of the door, it did nothing but pass the time.

「... You’re right. Well then, here I go.」(Vandalieu)

And so he had Nuaza open the door and then entered the room.

The room had nothing inside other than a magic circle drawn on the floor of the room with a round crystal ball that had been set on a pedestal at its center. The crystal ball had a constant, faint glow, giving off a mysterious feeling.

「... Now then, will any Jobs appear for me?」(Vandalieu)

He gently floated into the air with【Flight】and reached out for the crystal ball. He wouldn’t have been able to reach the crystal ball otherwise, as it had been placed at a height appropriate for Titans.

Come to think of it, the long-armed Vigaro and the taller women like Basdia would have been able to reach this crystal ball, but just how had Zadiris managed it? Perhaps she had used wind-attribute magic to fly.

Vandalieu touched the crystal ball with such meaningless thoughts running through his mind, and words appeared in his mind in the same way as when he opened his Status screen.

『Jobs that can be selected:【Death-Attribute Mage】,【Golem Transmuter】』

「Uwah, they're there!」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu was so surprised that a Job-change would be possible for him that he accidentally undid his magic. He fell onto the floor.

He had thrown his head back reflexively, so the back of his head hit the floor with full force. His【Danger Sense: Death】gave him a warning.

Children's skulls are fragile things.

「Holy Son, I heard something – Holy Son?! Are you alright?!」(Nuaza)

Vandalieu stayed on the floor while waiting to recover with his【Rapid Regeneration】skill and the no-attribute magic spell,【Enhanced Healing Power.】 Nuaza, surprised to hear a noise, entered the room and gave a reaction as if he were the first one to discover the scene of a locked room mystery[1]. As he rushed towards Vandalieu, Vandalieu waved his hand to signal,「I'm fine, just leave me as I am.」

Since Vandalieu had hit his head, he didn't want to be moved until he had recovered.

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After overcoming various difficulties, Vandalieu had sworn yesterday on his third birthday that he would live on. Despite that, he almost met a foolish end by hitting the back of his head on the floor out of surprise. Having managed to avoid that, he touched the crystal ball once more.

『Jobs that can be selected:【Death-Attribute Mage】,【Golem Transmuter】』

His potential jobs were really displayed there.

He had thought his chances of being able to undergo a Job-change to be slim because of his curse, but there were even two different Jobs that he could choose from. He would normally be happy about this, but...

「Is this some kind of trap?」(Vandalieu)

Resisting the inner urge to dance with joy, Vandalieu calmly considered the situation.

Rodcorte, who had cast the【Cannot learn existing Jobs】curse on Vandalieu,

had wanted Vandalieu to fall into despair give up on his vengeance and commit suicide. Wasn't it strange that it was possible for him to obtain a Job so easily?

「Now that I think about it, why am I even able to undergo a Job-change at all? The same thing goes for the curse that prevents me from obtaining Experience Points independently. If he wanted me to fall into despair, he should have just cursed me so that I can't level up or undergo a Job-change.」(Vandalieu)

If Vandalieu had been prevented from leveling up and gaining a Job at all in the first place, there wouldn't have been any loopholes. He would be like a monkey that couldn't grow wings and fly no matter how hard he tried.

Could the fact that Rodcorte hadn't done this be part of some kind of ingenious trap? Would he eventually be cornered if he picked one of these displayed Jobs now?

Perhaps they would offer pitiful bonuses for his Attribute Values and cause him to gain passive skills that only served to hinder him.

Vandalieu didn't know if they existed or not, but【Shortened Lifespan】or【Ill luck】would be bad passive skills to have. Skills couldn't be directly sealed away once learned in this world, so it would be a huge problem to gain such skills.

But then, would Rodcorte set such a roundabout trap?

Everything that this god had done so far was setting up the fundamentals in a sketchy way and then leaving everything else up to the people that he reincarnated. He was certainly not an all-knowing, omnipotent god.

It was normal in this world for people to possess levels and acquire Jobs. Looking it the other way, if something didn't have levels or Jobs, it wasn't a person.

Rodcorte had set things up so that the people he reincarnated, including Vandalieu, would reincarnate in Lambda after dying in Origin. It was likely that he was unable to make Vandalieu, who was already set to be reborn in Lambda, an exception to the rules that people possessed levels and Jobs.

Wasn't this the reason why the curses that had been placed on Vandalieu were【Unable to gain Experience Points independently】and【Cannot learn existing Jobs?】Even a god couldn't ignore a world's rules, which was possibly

why the curses had ended up like that with loopholes in them.

Also, Rodcorte didn't exist in the world of Lambda himself. He did govern the circle of transmigration for reincarnating the dead, but his name didn't appear anywhere in the myths of this world.

So it was possible that he could only look down at Lambda from a distance, and he might not even be particularly knowledgeable about the world.

「In other words, I'm able to make use of these large loopholes because Rodcorte is crude and ignorant, I guess?」(Vandalieu)

He felt suspicious and precautious when he remembered Rodcorte from time to time, but in the end, he arrived at the conclusion that gods weren't all-powerful.

The next thing he thought was unusual was the fact that Jobs that weren't particularly creative that nobody had acquired before had appeared for him even though he hadn't done any training to obtain these Jobs, but after thinking for a while, he realized that it wasn't unusual at all.

「My death-attribute magic is a type of magic that has never existed in Lambda before. Considering that, I guess it's not strange for there to be Jobs that nobody has ever acquired before, either.」(Vandalieu)

The Job system had been created by the gods, but that didn't mean that the gods had created every single Job themselves. It was a system that had existed for well over a hundred thousand years, after all.

For example, the aristocratic system hadn't existed in the age of the gods, so Jobs such as【Knight】and【Holy Knight】also hadn't existed.

In the future, if someone reincarnated from another world invented guns with gunpowder in this world, Jobs like【Musketeer】and【Gunman】would appear.

... Though Vandalieu had been surprised that the【Golem Transmutation】skill had never been used in this world before. How were Golems created in this world, then?

Vandalieu puzzled over this as he wasn't particularly knowledgeable about Golems in Lambda, but deciding to find that out later, he turned his attention to

other things.

「So the problem is, which do I choose, but...」(Vandalieu)

【Death-Attribute Mage】and【Golem Transmuter.】Neither of them had “apprentice” at the start of their names, so they should both be fairly difficult Jobs to level up. The bonuses that Vandalieu would obtain from them would probably be large to compensate for that, but it would likely take him between several months to a year before he could undergo the next Job change.

He could assume that the【Death-Attribute Mage】Job, as its name suggested, would put an emphasis on the use of death-attribute magic. Jobs with names that consisted of “Attribute + Mage” existed for other attributes as well.

The mage jobs of other attributes provide large Attribute Value bonuses to Mana and Intelligence, but the bonuses to other things are small. Most notably, they provide almost no bonus to Strength. As for skill bonuses, they provide a large bonus to the attribute of magic in the Job’s name, a moderate bonus to magic-related skills such as【Mana Control】and a small bonus to magic of the other attributes. On the other hand, they make it more difficult to acquire martial-type skills.

Assuming the【Death-Attribute Mage】followed the same pattern, this Job would be the correct choice as it would increase Vandalieu’s skill with the death-attribute magic that he had been using up until now. However, it would make it take longer to acquire non-magic skills.

The【Golem Transmuter】Job had no analogous Jobs, so nothing was known about it. It would likely provide a bonus to the【Golem Transmutation】skill. Vandalieu didn’t know what bonuses it would provide to his Attribute Values. He did think that it would provide a bonus to his Intelligence, however.

The【Golem Transmutation】skill was a convenient skill that he had used well up until now. He wouldn’t stop using this skill ten years or even a hundred years from now.

「... I’ll choose【Death-Attribute Mage.】」(Vandalieu)

After considering his options, Vandalieu chose【Death-Attribute Mage.】

His goal right now was to defeat the Dragon Golem beneath the royal castle

and obtain the resurrection device. That was why he chose to prioritize improving his death-attribute magic, which would be more directly useful in battle.

He would soon obtain the【Alchemy】skill, and since the【Golem Transmutation】skill was something that originated from death-attribute magic in the first place, it was possible that the【Death-Attribute Mage】would provide a bonus to it anyway.

As he selected his Job, the words【Golem Transmuter】disappeared from inside his head, and the words【Death-Attribute Mage】grew larger.

And then he felt the sensation of something growing hot deep inside his chest.

「This is... more amazing than I thought it would be.」(Vandalieu)

There was so much power filling up his whole body that Vandalieu couldn't help but to let out his voice. In particular, his head had become wonderfully clear, as if his brain cells had undergone a software version upgrade.

【The levels of the Death-Attribute Magic skill, the No-Attribute Magic skill, the Chant Revocation skill, the Mana Control skill and the Spirit Form skill have increased!】

【You have acquired the Alchemy skill and the Automatic Mana Recovery skill!】

And thanks to the announcements in his head, he realized that he many of his skills had leveled up and he had gained some new ones.

In a single moment, the【Death-Attribute Magic】skill that hadn't increased past level three despite being used thoroughly as well the skills that had stayed at level 1 for a long time had increased , and he had even learned the Alchemy skill that he had been training for almost a year now.

「The skill bonuses that a Job provides are amazing.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu experienced the reason why the Ghouls had been in a daze after undergoing their Job-change.

He opened his【Status】to check his Attributes and skills to see…

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 3 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: Death-Attribute Mage
- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 50
  - Mana: 124,906,320
  - Strength: 45
  - Agility: 22
  - Stamina: 49
  - Intelligence: 112
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 2
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 4
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Chant Revocation: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Strengthen Followers: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
  - Bloodsucking: Level 3
  - Surpass Limits: Level 3
  - Golem Transmutation: Level 3
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Mana Control: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Spirit Form: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Carpentry: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)

    - Engineering: Level 1
    - Cooking: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Alchemy: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

「Ooh... my Attribute Values increased by more than I thought they would, and my new skills are there.」(Vandalieu)

He had heard that mage-type Jobs didn't provide much of a bonus to Vitality and Strength, but they had increased by about ten percent. Even if he took into account that some of it might be related to his race and that his body was still developing, it was still a considerable amount.

Notably, his Intelligence had reached three digits. No wonder his head felt clearer.

And though this was bonus had little impact as Vandalieu's Mana pool was over 100,000,000 to begin with, it had increased by another ten million. Job-changes were amazing, providing ten million Mana just by acquiring the Job!

... The bonuses to Attribute Values were probably calculated as a percentage of the original values. In the case of Vandalieu's Mana, it had increased by around ten percent.

His skills had increased as well, and he could even feel it in the【Flight】that he was using now. Up until now, he had always had the option of floating lightly like a jellyfish or forcibly using his Mana to fly at a high speed, but now he felt as if he could fly more efficiently.

The increase to the level of his【Mana Control】skill probably had something to do with this.

He wanted to skip with joy, but he apparently looked insane when he tried to skip and he wanted to avoid being forced to rest some more.

And so Vandalieu quietly lowered himself to the floor and left the room just as quietly.

Now then, the next thing to do was level up!

With that said, because of Vandalieu's【Cannot gain experience independently】curse, his level wouldn't increase no matter how many monsters he defeated.

Therefore, he would have to visit Devil's Nests and Dungeons with his Undead subordinates. He hadn't created any new Undead companions since he started living with Zadiris and the other Ghouls, so he wondered if he would be alright with the same members as before, but there was an unexpected rush of people wanting to accompany him.

『It's your first time visiting the Devil's Nests and Dungeons around here, right? Then it'd be best if a veteran like me guides your way. The A-class adventurer, the【Sword King】Borkus, will teach you the structures of the Dungeons and the most efficient way to earn Experience Points, so just follow me!』(Borkus)

『What are you saying, Master? If you do that, you'll end up killing the ones that the Holy Son's supposed to kill as well. Holy Son, if it's monster-hunting you're after, leave it to me, the Scout Zran!』(Zran)

『No, no, what he truly needs is a Healer. The Holy Son can heal his Undead, but the only magic he has to heal himself is no-attribute magic. Though I am still inexperienced, please leave this to me, Nuaza, as I am able to use life-attribute magic.』(Nuaza)

As if trying to make the best first impressions possible, the Undead Titans appealed to Vandalieu one by one, trying to convince him to let them accompany him. The number of applicants was... all of them.

「Now that I think about it, you've never come on a hunt together with me, Van. How about taking this opportunity? I can teach you unarmed combat techniques, too.」(Basdia)

「No, it should be me doing that, since I'm the one who's teaching Saria and Rita, right?」(Vigaro)

「Hey, aren't you interested in how adventurers fight? If you're happy with me, I can teach you.」(Kachia)

「Ah, then me too.」(Ghoul)

「Well then, me as well.」(Ghoul)

And so the Ghouls came to convince him as well...

「I wanna go too!」(Braga)

「Me too, me too!」(Zemedo)

「I also want to go.」(Memediga)

「Fugofugoh.」(Gorba)

Even Braga, Zemedo, Memediga, Gorba and the other monster children raised their hands. Would the fetus inside the Live-Dead raise its hand as well? Vandalieu was so popular that he almost started fantasizing that this would happen.

It was only June, but their enthusiasm was like the middle of summer[2].

Was this a moteki[3]? Was it really a moteki?

「You children can come later. After you become ad... after you gain more skills.」(Vandalieu)

If Vandalieu were to carelessly say,「After you become adults」, they would definitely reply,「But you're still a child, King!」so he quickly corrected himself. In fact, the Black Goblin Braga was already bigger than Vandalieu.

『Oka~ay.』(Children)

The children were surprisingly obedient. Even though their bodies were larger than Vandalieu's, his Attribute Values were still higher, and they hadn't finished learning their skills.

However, what other criteria would he need to use to choose who would accompany him? Both the Undead Titans and the Ghouls were far more experienced in combat than Vandalieu. They could fight much better than he could, as he just used his Mana to brute-force his way through battles.

This had been fine up until now, but he would need to learn an effective way to fight and coordinate with his allies in order to defeat that Dragon Golem.

And any of the Ghouls and Titans could become his teachers.

Of course, they had plenty of fighting strength. Vandalieu was planning to clear a D-class Dungeon first, so bringing Borkus or Vigaro would be overkill. Vigaro would be of the same or higher Rank as the Dungeon's boss. As for Borkus, any monster in a D-class Dungeon would be small fry for him, including the boss.

「Right, let's decide this with Reversi.」(Vigaro)

『Bring the boards and pieces!』(Borkus)

「No, wait a moment. With this many people, it would take days to make a decision with Reversi.」(Vandalieu)

While Vandalieu was contemplating, it seemed that everyone else wanted to settle things with a Reversi tournament. Now that things had come down to this, perhaps it would be best for him to use【Golem Transmutation】to make a lottery system.

「Boy!」(Zadiris)

As this thought occurred to Vandalieu, Zadiris suddenly ran up to him. Was she hoping to accompany him as well?

「Bilde has gone into labor!」(Zadiris)

So he thought, but it was an urgent report.

「How is she?」(Vandalieu)

Bilde had become pregnant in September last year. Now it was late June. It was a little short of the normal duration of pregnancy, but it wasn't a fatally premature birth.

Vandalieu had been periodically monitoring the condition of the unborn babies using【Spirit Body Transformation】in place of ultrasound scans, so there shouldn't have been any problematic diseases like in medical dramas, so he was calm.

He was calm, but Bilde was finally giving birth after Vandalieu had dealt with the Ghouls' low fertility and used magic to prevent miscarriages. There was no way that he could be uninterested by this.

「There should be no problem. Well, this is her first childbirth, so this could take some time. Well then, let us go.」(Zadiris)

「... I'm sorry?」

However, he hadn't expected that he would be dragged along to the event. Zadiris suddenly picked him up and took him with her. As to be expected of the Ghoul chief possessing the【Superhuman Strength】skill, even though she looked like she was in her mid-teenage years.

『Ah, but we haven't come to a decision yet!』(Borkus)

「Well, I guess it can't be helped with these circumstances.」(Vigaro)

And so everyone watched Vandalieu leave... What was it that couldn't be helped?

『Bocchan, if a man shows weakness at a time like this, you will be dominated*, so I humbly suggest that you take a firm attitude.』(Sam)

「Sam, why would Bilde dominate[4] me?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu and Bilde weren't married, nor was the child in her belly related to him.

『Bocchan, do your best!』(Rita)

「No, the one giving birth is Bilde, not me.」(Vandalieu)

Both Sam and Rita seemed to be seeing Vandalieu off. Saria was waving her hand.

「Umm, what position are you calling me to take?」(Vandalieu)

Since there were no problems with Bilde's health, there shouldn't have been a need for Vandalieu to be there, since he didn't have any specialist knowledge in regards to maternity and gynecology, nor was he a midwife.

「Hmm, if there is a sudden emergency, I want you to help. Also, Bilde said she wants you to hold her hand.」(Zadiris)

... The position of doctor and husband?

「I understand.」(Vandalieu)

Ghouls didn’t have the concept of marriage, so Vandalieu would just think of it as Bilde relying on and trusting in him. And he was the Ghoul King, after all.

Vandalieu was content with that.

Well, this was an adventure in itself as well. Childbirth was life-threatening even on Earth, where medical science was more advanced.

... This wouldn’t earn him any Experience Points, however.

Notes

1. A sub-genre of detective fiction where a crime (usually murder) is committed in seemingly impossible situations.

2. The word for “enthusiasm” is 情熱/jounetsu; the second kanji means “heat/temperature” so this is a kind of joke/pun/humorous sequence of words with that in mind.

3. This is awkward to word as there’s no single word for it in English so I’ll just explain it here. モテ期/moteki means “a period of life where one enjoys more romantic attention/popularity than usual”.

4. This term, 尻に敷く/shiri ni shiku, is usually meant to refer to a wife dominating her husband. Something like “henpeck” in English.

Chapter 35: A new life has been born, so let’s adjust our living environment

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The room that Zadiris had prepared for Bilde’s childbirth was one of the countless rooms in the ruins of Talosheim.

The room had been cleaned and a rug made of the soft fur from a Needle Wolf’s belly had been laid out on the floor, and Bilde was lying on top of it.

「First,【Sterilization.】Bilde, are you alright?」(Vandalieu)

There were three other Ghoul women in the room other than Bilde. They were likely women who had experienced childbirth before, acting as midwives.

「V-Van.」(Bilde)

Probably due to the pains of labor, Bilde’s breathing was rough and there was sweat on her forehead as she realized that Vandalieu was there and reached a hand out towards him. Vandalieu took that small hand... that was still bigger than his own, and she gave his hand a squeeze.

「I-I’m going to do my best and give birth to a healthy baby, okay?」(Bilde)

What was a man supposed to say in response to this? This was a difficult question to answer in Vandalieu’s position. He was aware of his own expressionlessness and flat tone of voice, so he thought he might come off as cold if he just said,「Do your best」, so he hesitated. Trying to sound as reassuring as possible, he said...

「It’s alright, I’m here with you, so just relax.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu didn’t have a doctor’s license, nor had he ever witnessed childbirth before, so he didn’t know what exactly was alright or on what grounds Bilde could relax, but encouraging her was the top priority right now.

In fact, his expressionlessness was convenient in situations like this. His lack of confidence didn’t show on his face.

「Okay!」(Bilde)

It seemed that Vandalieu had succeeded in encouraging her. She definitely seemed to be in pain, but she still smiled.

When Vandalieu thought about the fact that had made her smile, the pain of her claws digging into his right hand seemed to be a trivial matter. Ah, they pierced his skin.

... But he could see a faint shadow of death on her face.

「Control your breathing, short breaths in, long breaths out.」(Midwife)

「Check your Status if you can; has your Vitality dropped?」(Midwife)

「I will make sure to deliver your baby. Rest assured.」(Zadiris)

Looking at everyone else, Vandalieu realized that Bilde wasn't showing any strangeness or visible signs of her condition worsening. She showed no signs of being ill, and there shouldn't have been anything abnormal with the baby, either.

「I'm going to examine you a little, okay?」(Vandalieu)

But Vandalieu could definitely see the shadow of death, so he used【Spirit Form Transformation】to transform his unoccupied left arm into spirit form and placed it inside Bilde's abdomen.

And then he found that the umbilical cord had wrapped itself around the baby's neck. At this rate, the baby would be strangled.

『I'm glad Zadiris called me over here.』(Vandalieu)

Thinking this, he loosened the umbilical cord from around the baby's neck... though it would have been easier to do it with his right hand.

「How is everything, boy?」(Zadiris)

「It's fine, I've resolved it.」(Vandalieu)

The bones of Vandalieu's right hand were creaking and Bilde's claws had dug into it so that her paralyzing venom was entering, but there was now no problem with the mother or the child.

「Alright! The rest is up to your effort, Bilde!」(Zadiris)

After that, just as Zadiris said, the childbirth continued with Bilde's efforts while Vandalieu offered her encouragement while having his right hand squeezed.

It took six hours for the child to be born, and Vandalieu learned just how great the mothers of the world were.

***

A gray-brown baby with a wrinkled face. She was the first new Ghoul born into the Ghoul community in a long time.

「Look, it's a girl. I can't give your whole name to her, Vandalieu, but is it alright if I borrow half of it?」(Bilde)

Bilde was holding her child, looking visibly exhausted but incredibly happy.

Vandalieu was fine with it, but would the child's real father not mind? Bilde looked so happy that Vandalieu was hesitant to ask.

「I don't mind.」(Vandalieu)

And so this was the reply he gave.

Vandalieu would ask about this later to learn that newborn Ghouls were generally named by their mothers, or their names would be decided after consulting with the chief of the tribe. Since Bilde was the mother, nobody would say anything about her decision to give her child half of Vandalieu's name.

「Will you hold her?」(Bilde)

「With pleasure.」(Vandalieu)

Now he took the peacefully-sleeping baby with both arms... The bone fractures of his right hand still hadn't healed and it still didn't move very well after having paralyzing-venom-secreting claws piercing it for hours on end. So he took the baby with his left arm and placed her on top of his knees.

「She's light and very warm.」(Vandalieu)

The baby's body felt very light to Vandalieu. But this baby would grow up and live for three hundred years. As this thought occurred to him, he got a sense of

how mysterious life was.

The birth of a new life was an emotionally moving event. Vandalieu felt this for the first time in his three lifetimes.

When he had lived on Earth, even when watching that kind of documentary that told him,「This is how a new life is born」, his only reaction to that was,「Hmm.」After all, he was just watching a complete stranger on a screen or the birth of an animal, so he hadn't felt emotionally moved at all.

But he had experienced death twice... Including the time after he became an Undead, three times. And now that he was trying to bring Darcia back to life, he could really feel the emotion of this event.

He decided to do everything he could to protect this child. He wasn't the child's father, but he was the Ghoul King, after all.

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「And so I'm postponing my trip to the Dungeons.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus and Vigaro made lonely-looking faces when Vandalieu told them this, but they understood that it couldn't be helped.

The remaining nine women would give birth one by one in the near future. If an unexpected situation arose while Vandalieu was in a Devil's Nest or Dungeon, he wouldn't be able to deal with it.

「It's been so long since I've heard a baby crying!」(Vigaro)

『You can take your time to calm down first, but make sure you show the baby to us as well.』(Borkus)

「For a new life to be born in these ruins that were merely waiting to turn into dust, this is a truly happy event.」(Nuaza)

『How great, now we can have some drinks.』(Titan)

『If there's any alcohol to be had.』(Titan)

「There is, though it's not very tasty!」(Titan)

For Vigaro and the other Ghouls who had been troubled by their problem of low fertility, it was clearly a happy event, but even Borkus and the other

Undead Titans were truly genuinely happy to see the birth of this baby.

Incidentally, one might have questioned whether it would be hygienic to allow the baby near the Undead, but it wasn't a problem. Vandalieu had already cast the【Sterilization】,【Bug Killer】,【Deodorization】and【Preservation】spells on all of the Undead Titans.

Once a drain system was established, Talosheim would become a fortress city as hygienic as any city of the Amid Empire. There were relatively few people living in the city considering its size, so it would never lose the feeling of being a ghost town, however.

「Also, I want to strengthen Talosheim's defenses and use【Alchemy】to make the Magic Item that that will increase the Ghouls' fertility. I'll leave the adventures and training for in between those.」(Vandalieu)

Those dedicated to the path of being a warrior or a mage might have scolded him for his lack of dedication, but nobody here scolded Vandalieu.

「Alright! We'll just decide on the order we'll do things here!」(Vigaro)

『This is perfect. Nobody's gone into the Dungeons for two hundred years, so who knows what they'll be like inside. The number of monsters will probably have increased, so I'll thin them out for you!』(Borkus)

『It could be that they have been abandoned for so long that new, unknown levels have appeared in them.』

「What will we do about the unarmed[1] fighting lessons? For now, I suppose we'll go over the basics.」(Basdia)

『Jyuh! My lord, in that case, I shall increase my Level and work hard to catch up to my companions!』(Bone Man)

「We'll be taking this time to learn our skills as well!」(Child)

In this moment, Vandalieu realized once again just how much kindness he was surrounded by in this third lifetime of his.

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The first thing to do was to create the Magic Items to fix the Ghouls' fertility problem. Strengthening Talosheim's defenses would have to be done after the

forest Devil's Nest was completely removed from the city, otherwise they would be up to their necks in Raptors and Needle Wolves.

「Holy Son, please give us a few more days.」

So he was told. It seemed that the problem was indeed the number of monsters, not their strength. Though the Needle Wolves weren't problematic, the Raptors were intelligent enough to run away if they knew they couldn't win a fight, so exterminating them was likely very difficult.

「I am thinking of making two kinds of Magic Items.」(Vandalieu)

「One to make the sperm and egg cells survive longer, and the other to prevent fetuses from dying before they reach a certain size, if I recall? Creating Magic Items with both functions would be difficult, after all.」(Zadiris)

In the building next to the (temporary) maternity room, Vandalieu was discussing the creation of the Magic Items with Zadiris, Tarea, Basdia and several other Ghoul women.

「Regarding that, I'm thinking of making the Magic Item that makes the sperm and egg cells survive longer something that is easy to put on and take off.」(Vandalieu)

「Indeed, if it were something that stayed on permanently... we would produce children endlessly.」(Tarea)

「You're right, it'll be hard for everyone's habits to suddenly change.」(Basdia)

Up until now, Ghouls had experienced difficulties in getting pregnant, and even if they did, most of their children were not born successfully. Because of this, they had no marriage system and it was natural for their society to do their utmost to try and create children. Even after Bilde and the others became pregnant, they hadn't shown any signs of holding back.

Even if Vandalieu were to create the Magic Items, they wouldn't suddenly say, 「Alright, let's do proper family planning from now on.」

There were no convenient contraceptive devices or pills like on Earth, so that would make this only more difficult.

Well, there wouldn't be problems in having a large number of children for a

while. In fact, it would be a good thing; Talosheim still had plenty of space and there was a near-endless supply of food.

However, reproducing to the point of filling up all of the land would be a problem. Unlike Braga and the other monster children, Ghouls did not age to maturity in the span of a single year.

「There will definitely be problems. Having one child is already a handful, but having two or three children at once...」(Tarea)

「And there are many who are raising a child for the first time, including Bilde.」(Zadiris)

There were no nurseries like on Earth, nor were there books, television programs or the internet to refer to in order to learn how to raise a child. As Tarea and Zadiris had experienced raising children before, they were concerned that there would be mothers who would suffer from maternity-related anxiety.

Well, that didn't necessarily mean that having only one child would prevent maternity-related anxiety, however.

「So then I think it would be best to explain about contraception while I make the Magic Items.」(Vandalieu)

「You're right. Unlike humans, our lifespans are long. It's good for us to have many children, but we should be fine having a child once every five or ten years.」(Basdia)

For humans, especially for those living in farming communities, there would be circumstances where they wouldn't have the luxury of spacing out their children because it was a lot of work to raise them, and they probably didn't understand the concept of family planning anyway.

Because medical technology was not well-developed, there would be a strong notion that they should have as many children as possible while they were still young and healthy. But as Basdia said, Ghouls had long lifespans so it would be easy to convince the Ghouls to adopt this policy.

Humans would have opposed this strongly, however.

「But can the men hold themselves back? I think once every five or ten years is

impossible.」(Basdia)

「That is why it will be an accessory that can be put on and taken off. It can be put on only when wishing to have children.」(Tarea)

It would be a reverse-contraception device.

「So what kind of accessory will you make it?」(Basdia)

「Right now, I'm thinking of making it a pendant or a band that goes around the thigh.」(Vandalieu)

The shape and part of the body that the Magic Item would be worn on was very important. These factors would affect the difficulty of creating the item with【Alchemy】, the materials required and the strength of its effect when completed.

For example, if there were a Magic Item that allowed one to walk on air as if it were the ground, would it not be likely that most people would expect such a Magic Item to be a pair of shoes?

At the very least, nobody would think it would be a pair of glasses.

In contrast, if there were a Magic Item that allowed one to see through objects while it was worn, most people would expect it to be a pair of glasses, not shoes.

In this way, certain shapes and where the Magic Item would be worn would make it easier to create the item and produce a stronger effect, depending on what kind of effect was desired.

Something that granted physical strength would be a ring or armlet. Something that granted some kind of vision would be glasses or, alternatively, a circlet. Something that let one run at high speeds would be shoes or an anklet.

Of course, Magic Items such as socks that allowed one to see in the dark apparently existed, but creating such items would require a high level in the【Alchemy】skill and expensive materials.

At present, there were more Alchemical materials available than food. The reason for this was that anything that they obtained from hunting monsters, they had to use themselves.

There was no Adventurers' Guild to take Magic Stones to, so Braga and the other monster children had been playing with them like marbles.

However, Vandalieu, the only one who could create a death-attribute Magic Item, had a skill level of 1 in【Alchemy.】Creating a band that went around the thigh close to the abdomen or a pendant that would hang similarly close was the limit of his ability.

He also had the option of making it a belt, but the Ghouls didn't have a culture of wearing belts, so it might have made the use of the Magic Item unpopular.

... Vandalieu would find it difficult to create an item that would be worn even closer to the relevant body parts than that.

「So, are there any colors or designs that you like?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had included Basdia and the other women in this discussion to ask them this. Since they would be the ones wearing it, it would be best to ask them for their preferences in color or shape.

... Because of its intended function, it would be constantly worn during intercourse, after all.

「Let's see... Everyone likes white, black, silver and gold.」(Basdia)

「I don't think anyone likes seeing red unless it's in battle.」(Woman)

「I think everyone likes things that look like wings. Also, hearts, maybe.」(Woman)

Basdia and the others offered their opinions on what Ghoul women liked. Vandalieu had no confidence in his sense of fashion, so this was greatly helpful.

Incidentally, in Lambda, the heart was apparently a symbol of the goddess Vida. As to be expected of the goddess of the light-attribute.

However, a black heart would be a bad omen, so perhaps silver would be better?

「For now, we shall try making some.」(Tarea)

「I'm counting on you.」(Vandalieu)

The ones actually making the objects would be Tarea and the other Ghoul craftswomen. Creating a Magic Item required the【Alchemy】skill, but that was simply imbuing an object with magic. The object itself was generally made by another craftsman.

There were some alchemists that did everything on their own, from gathering materials to creating the items themselves, but those were exceptionally unusual.

「So what will you do for the Magic Item that keeps the fetus alive? It would be problematic for this one to be something that can be easily taken off.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris had been whispering,「Gold and silver? Youngsters these days sure like their shiny things...」But now she asked this question, and Vandalieu replied,「This is a little problematic.」

As Zadiris said, it would be better for this Magic Item to be difficult to remove. If it accidentally came off and was lost or the mother forgot to put it on and the baby died, it would be seriously problematic.

But that didn't mean that it could be something put inside the body...

The two of them nodded as they thought about this...

「How about a tattoo?」(Zadiris)

「A piercing, after all?」(Vandalieu)

『Eh?』(Both)

They both looked at each other after coming up with totally different answers.

「Boy, a piercing would be too far from the abdomen. A tattoo will not disappear, and it can be applied anywhere.」(Zadiris)

「The piercing wouldn't be on the ears, nose or lips, but on the belly button. As for tattoos, who would apply the tattoos to begin with?」(Vandalieu)

It seemed that Ghouls hadn't come up with the idea of piercing their belly buttons. And Vandalieu hadn't thought of the idea of making a Magic Item out of a tattoo engraved onto the body.

And then after discussion, they settled on using belly button piercings.

「If we use tattoos, won't they become strangely distorted when the stomach expands? The baby would have grown big enough by the time that happens, but re-applying the tattoo every time you want to become pregnant wouldn't be an option. In that case, I think piercings are better.」(Basdia)

And so Basdia's opinion was accepted.

Incidentally, the idea that piercings were applied on the neck and above was something that not only Ghouls, but the entirety of Lambda possessed. Belly button piercings would spread and become greatly popular, starting in Talosheim, but that would be a story set in the distant future.

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From then on, Vandalieu lived a lifestyle that was more lenient than usual, but still harsh on a three-year-old boy.

He would typically rest one day a week, and if one of the pregnant women went into labor on that day, he would still have to attend. He would take three hours' rest the next day to compensate. With this as the basic rhythm of his lifestyle, he spent his time continuing to repair and maintain the city of Talosheim as well as training in unarmed combat while waiting for Tarea and the other craftswomen to create prototypes for the Magic Items.

The repairing and maintenance were simple.

「Get up, join together, get out.」(Vandalieu)

He just needed to use【Golem Transmutation.】The pieces of rubble on the ground would grow arms and legs to move, join together, change their shape and return to their original form.

Constructing a building from scratch would still be difficult, but fixing one that had crumbled a little was simple. Thanks to the【Carpentry】skill, Vandalieu had a general idea of what he needed to do.

In Lambda, apparently the same skill was used to build both pit-dwellings for Ghouls and stone houses for Titans.

Not only did Vandalieu repair the buildings, he also used the【Engineering】

skill to repair and maintain the roads and sewer system.

Talosheim had no waterworks system, but it did have a sewer system. They used a water-purifying Magic Item to purify used water while gathering the waste in one spot to ferment and use as manure.

Of course, since two hundred years had passed, this system was unusable without some work being done on them.

Vandalieu turned the ground surface into Golems to expose the sewer pipes, turned those pipes into Golems as well to repair the cracks and remove any blockages and applied the【Anti-Degradation】spell that he had learned after his skills leveled up before putting the ground back.

He supplied Mana to the water-purifying Magic Items.

He had Bone Man and the other Undead exterminate the unknown sludge-like monsters that had grown in the vats that were used for fermenting waste.

With all of these completed, the sewer system finally became usable again.

They would have to draw water to use from wells and waterways, but it was very convenient to simply be able to discard any used water.

After being alive in Lambda for three years, Vandalieu realized just how great the sewer systems of Earth were. He was especially appreciative of this because he had been Japanese.

After making everything usable again, he intended to have them maintained automatically by Golems.

Vandalieu was thoroughly taught the basics of unarmed combat by Basdia.

「Your physical strength is almost no different to an adult Ghoul's, Van. Let's practice as if it were a real battle.」(Basdia)

He learned numerous patterns as well as how to defend and dodge... with his body.

Basdia swept his legs, kicked him, threw him around, stomped on him... he was surprisingly overwhelmed one-sidedly. Even though he wasn't using any magic, it made him doubt whether he really had the strength of an adult Ghoul.

「You have an aptitude for this and you're sensitive to bloodthirst, but your attacks are forced and monotonous, Van. You'll become stronger if you move more quickly and use some feints. Also, you have to always predict your opponent's next movement.」(Basdia)

Basdia knew that Vandalieu panicked when scolded harshly and that he disliked being taught in a spiritual way. So while she hadn't gone easy on him in the training, she made sure to speak in a gentle tone while teaching him.

And so Vandalieu was able to take these lessons with composure.

He had been completely reliant on magic for defense up until now, and his attacks had been monotonous in that he simply used his overwhelming amount of Mana to push his way to victory. Some of this couldn't be helped because of how young his body was, and he himself thought that there was no other way. He had never even gotten into a fight as a Japanese person, and after that he had become a laboratory animal in Origin who could do nothing but rampage around like a beast. He had been under the impression that unarmed fighting and martial arts were too distant for him to reach.

But thanks to his father in this world, he apparently had surprisingly strong muscles.

「What's really amazing is how you don't close your eyes. I took three months to learn not to close my eyes even when my face was attacked, but you haven't been closing your eyes right from the beginning, Van. You have incredible talent.」(Basdia)

「Thank you.」(Vandalieu)

His forehead and cheeks had been hit, though lightly, so his face was pinker than usual, but Vandalieu's eyes stayed open.

Knowing that he could close his eyes and use【Spirit Form Transformation】to see using his spirit-form eyes seemed to influence his instincts and reflexes.

The pregnant women would go into labor every few days, and Vandalieu attended every single baby's delivery.

Things like the umbilical cord wrapping around the baby's neck didn't happen every time; they proceeded normally – that is, with the usual struggles, drama

and emotions that humans experienced – and the babies were born safely.

Things seemed to proceed well for the Ghouls after birth as well, including Bilde. This was likely to do with the fact that Ghouls had more robust bodies than humans and the fact that this place was half-Devil's Nest.

The veterans who had experienced childbirth before like Zadiris and Tarea were teaching them various things regarding life after giving birth, so it seemed that things would go well.

It was the middle of July when things became truly busy with the Magic Item creation process.

Imbuing magic in the items that Tarea had created turned out to be quite difficult. Repairing an entire castle wall would have been far easier than this.

「At this rate, making three Magic Items in a day is my limit, huh...」(Vandalieu)

「Your skill is still level 1, is it not, boy? This is a sufficient pace.」(Zadiris)

「If you make them too fast, the pace at which I make the items will not be able to keep up. Making accessories is outside my area of expertise, after all.」(Tarea)

There were roughly six hundred Ghouls needing these Magic Items. At this rate, it would take over three hundred days to make Magic Items for everyone.

However, not all of the Ghouls wanted children right now, so there seemed to be no need to hurry.

「And by your calculations, you would be making Magic Items for Tarea and I as well. Or could it be that this is your roundabout way of making a confession? Hmm?」(Zadiris)

「Oh my, I mustn't; even though I look young, I am over two hundred and sixty years old. However, if Van-sama wished for it...」(Tarea)

「You shouldn't tease a three-year-old boy. If you say such things too often, I'll really take you up on your words in a decade or two.」(Vandalieu)

The creation of the Magic Items continued with enjoyable conversations like these, using the powdered organs and Magic Stones of defeated monsters.

Ah, the Magic Stone that Vandalieu just crushed, was it a Noble Orc's?

And Vandalieu tried various things in his spare time.

「And the fish and...【Fermentation.】」

Since there were no soy beans, he tried making fish sauce from fish. He hadn't gone out of his way to invent fish sauce in Origin, but he succeeded making it after three tries now.

The fish sauce was smelly and a little harsh, but herbs could be added to make it lighter.

Next, he tried using walnuts and acorns to make walnut miso and acorn miso, and found it a little difficult. He succeeded in fermenting it using magic, but he wasn't entirely satisfied with the resulting flavor.

The researchers who squeezed the Mana out of Vandalieu had tried using him to make miso before, so this was one of his strong points, but it was his first time making it from walnuts and acorns.

「It's not as tasty as it was said to be on Earth, I guess? But it contains the walnuts' flavor and acorns' fragrance, so I suppose this is alright as it is?」 (Vandalieu)

Vandalieu didn't know that the walnut miso on Earth didn't use salt and walnuts as a substitute for miso, but simply added walnuts to already-made miso.

However, he had made something with a flavor that he was content with, so he cast【Maturation】on it to deepen its flavor and shared it with everyone.

Also, wasabi and ginger were discovered in the partial-Devil's Nest Talosheim, so they were quickly cultivated. Well, for ginger, it was just a matter of turning the areas where it grew into fields and occasionally applying fertilizer... This alone allowed them to harvest ginger every week. Devil's Nests were truly wonderful places.

The cultivation of wasabi took some intervention. Wasabi released a toxic component that prevented other plants from growing in its vicinity, but the components affected the growth of the wasabi itself and prevented it from

growing larger.

Vandalieu came up with a scheme where he imbued stakes with the【Detoxification】spell that neutralized the wasabi's toxic components in the area where the stakes were planted.

... It was quite a failure, but also something of a success. The Ghouls and Titans would have to go around the Devil's Nests and find new wasabi to use.

Also, Vandalieu tried creating Jenga. All he needed to do was turn some lumber into Wood Golems and split them into pieces of the same size; it was even simpler than making boards and pieces for Reversi.

「This fish sauce, could this be the legendary soy sauce? The sauce spoken of in legends, the one that the hero Zakkart tried and failed to create...」(Nuaza)

『Whatever it is, it's tasty.』(Borkus)

Soy sauce was more difficult to create than miso; even the hero Zakkart had difficulties in recreating it.

He had apparently succeeded in recreating miso, but Bellwood had set the miso warehouses on fire before miso could become widespread. That would explain why almost nobody knew that miso existed... Bellwood didn't allow it.

Ginger and wasabi had apparently been used in food from the beginning. But everyone was happy that it was cultivated and could be harvested reliably.

And Jenga became a trending thing in Talosheim just as Reversi had. No carpenters among the Titans had become Undead, so the Ghouls and Undead Titans approached Vandalieu with monster meat and offered him a trade for Jenga pieces.

「Could it be that I could live a peaceful life just by making flavorings and toys?」(Vandalieu)

The trading was primitive, but it seemed that life would become fulfilling for him.

The first stage of Magic Item creation was completed, and around the time Talosheim had returned to its appearance of being a white fortress city, it was the end of summer in September, when the footsteps of autumn could be

heard.

「Now then, I'll be going into the Dungeons starting today.」(Vandalieu)

And so Vandalieu was finally beginning his adventures to earn Experience Points.

【The levels of the Alchemy, Carpentry, Engineering and Cooking skills have increased!】

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A long dining table had been prepared in a dark, unknown location.

A red fluid was poured into wine glasses and shared among those gathered here.

They were dressed in elegant clothes that would sell for enough money for a normal family to live in luxury for a year and over-decorated with jewelry.

One might think that this would be some banquet for noblemen, but the ones gathered here were not noblemen in the normal sense of the word.

An air of elegance and nobility appeared to be drifting from them.

The men and women here were beautiful, perhaps ephemeral in appearance.

It was possible that everyone here possessed both profound beauty and intelligence.

But in reality, they were cold-hearted, merciless, cruel demons who thirsted for blood.

「Now then, let us begin the meeting. The first topic of discussion is... the aforementioned Dhampir.」(Vampire)

With his crimson eyes sparkling with joy, the Pure-breed vampire who led the discussion moistened his throat with the fresh blood that had been poured into his glass.

Notes

1. "Hand-to-hand" was bothering me too much, so I've changed this to

“unarmed” in this chapter and all previous chapters.

Chapter 36: Spartan training supported with praise

The most peaceful, prosperous age that the world of Lambda ever experienced, the age of the gods. The ones who ended it were the Demon King Guduranis and the countless evil gods that followed him.

The one who cursed the water, earth and even the air, turning them into poison that ruined living creatures, the【Evil God of Cursed Poison.】

The master of massacre who knew of nothing but hunting and competing, the one who taught the people the pleasure of drawing blood, the【Evil God of Mad Slaughter.】

The one who toyed with all forms of life, the one who created numerous evil synthetic beasts, the【Evil God of Distortion.】

The one who corrupted the people with immoralities that had never existed in Lambda before, the【Evil God of Ruinous Greed.】

Their leader was destroyed by the gods and the heroes, but there are still many evil gods lurking in this world.

One of those, the【Evil God of Distortion】, had a subordinate god, Hihiryushukaka, the【Evil God of Joyful Life.】There was a Vampire community obeying this Evil God and receiving his divine protection.

Hihiryushukaka was an evil god who taught his followers that toying with life was the ultimate pleasure, a way of proving oneself to be a superior being.

If someone begs for their life, toy with them, give them hope and force them to obey before finally pushing them off the cliff of despair and taking their life.

If there are insects who desire power, give them a power they do not want that leads them to ruin and make them scream in regret that they do not need power.

If someone is proud of their strength, rob them of that strength. Tear off their limbs, crush their eyes and rip out their tongues. Make them into nothing more than insects that are only capable of crawling on the ground.

Only by doing that can you become superior beings. Only by creating a pile of the weak beneath your feet and trampling over it can you reach a higher place.

The Vampires had lost Vida, their『Goddess of Life and Love.』For Hihiryushukaka, who advocated such teachings, converting them into his followers may have been one of those pleasures for him as well.

A hundred thousand years later, those who followed the【Evil God of Joyful Life】were a prominent force even among the other Vampires who had begun to follow the evil gods.

There were over a hundred Noble-born Vampires, ruled by three Pure-breeds who possessed tremendous power. Below them were countless Subordinate Vampires and human followers who desired eternal life. If one included the Undead, monsters and even the groups of mercenaries and bandits who were not even aware that they were serving as the Vampires' pawns, it would be foolish to try to count their numbers.

Their military strength was equivalent to that of a large country, and their influence was so great that they would be able to manipulate such large countries.

「Now then, the first topic of discussion is the aforementioned Dhampir.」(Birkyne)

The one speaking was Birkyne, one of the three Pure-breed Vampires ruling the community. His outward appearance was that of a man of around twenty years of age with delicate features consisting of thin lines. He seemed like someone who might gather sons and daughters of noble families to host tea parties and balls.

「Dhampir? Ah, the one who was born between one of your Subordinates and one of the guards?」(Female Vampire)

The one who replied was a woman who looked to be over twenty years old. Her attractive figure and beautiful face would be enough to conquer any man if

she smiled, but they were clouded by a somewhat dull-looking gaze.

The dress that revealed much of her chest and left her back exposed was extravagant, but in bad taste. Rather than looking like a noble lady, she looked like a high-class prostitute that noble families might pay for.

「Both the mother and child are working hard in my castle with their backs stuck together, moving around with eight limbs.」(Female Vampire)

「Ternecia, isn't that from a hundred years ago?」(Birkyne)

「Then are you talking about the one that came from the stomach of that Beast-person? Didn't you kill that one? Along with its whole clan.」(Female Vampire)

「That one was from five hundred years ago.」(Birkyne)

Ternecia, the one engaging in this two-person comedy act with Birkyne, was another one of the Pure-breed Vampires.

She was the third most powerful in this community, and recognized as the most powerful female Vampire.

「The Dhampir I am referring to is the one born at Gubamon's place between one of the Subordinates in a very low position and a Dark Elf.」(Birkyne)

「Ah, the one at Gubamon-jiisan's place! Now that you mention it, something like that did happen there, didn't it? So, where is Gubamon-jiisan? I don't see him around.」(Ternecia)

Birkyne and Ternecia spoke a third name, Gubamon. He was the last of the Pure-breed Vampires ruling the community.

But even though Ternecia looked for him, she couldn't see him at all.

「L-Lord Gubamon is absent today because he is busy with other matters…」(Vampire)

The pale-faced Noble-born Vampire who had spoken was likely one of Gubamon's followers. He was trembling violently, unable to endure Ternecia's glare.

「What did you say?! He's absent today as well?! I'm only absent for nine out

of ten meetings, but that jiisan has already missed twenty! Hurry up and bring that shitty old man out here!」(Ternecia)

「Please forgive me. Lord Gubamon is dealing with some matters at hand, and he asked me to apologize to you on his behalf, Ternecia-sama and Birkyne-sama.」(Gubamon's follower)

「Stop making excuses! Do you want to turn into materials for one of my creations?!」(Ternecia)

Ternecia looked as if she would pierce the trembling Noble-born Vampire with her fangs at any moment. Birkyne and the other Noble-born Vampires chuckled at this scene.

Even their own brethren didn't deserve their compassion.

「Let us leave it at that. We have already received a report on the details, you see.」(Birkyne)

Unlike Subordinate Vampires, creating Noble-born Vampires took a considerable amount of effort, and though it was very pleasant to see disputes between Gubamon's faction and Ternecia's faction, it could cause the community to disintegrate.

Birkyne enjoyed the spectacle for a little while before putting a stop to it.

「Is that so?」(Ternecia)

「Yes. As you know, Valen was executed by one of Gubamon's subordinates. The body was disposed of in a way that it will never come back to life. And I have heard that the religious fanatics in Amid were used to burn the Dark Elf mother at the stake.」(Birkyne)

「Wow, considering that shitty old man has nothing in his head except filling up his collection, his subordinates perform pretty well, don't they? So what happened to the Dhampir?」(Ternecia)

「Apparently he managed to slip away.」(Birkyne)

「Huh?!」(Ternecia)

As Ternecia's face twisted in surprise, Birkyne raised a corner of his mouth and continued his explanation with a pleased look on his face.

「He was never found, but as he was still a baby of breast-feeding age, it was thought that he would be unable to survive on his own and was left alone. I do not know how he did this, but as a child not even three years of age, he apparently gathered several hundred Ghouls under his control. And when the humans dispatched a large extermination force after him, he apparently led the Ghouls across the Boundary Mountain Range before the extermination force could reach him. What he did and how he did it is a complete mystery.」(Birkyne)

As Birkyne spoke, not only Ternecia, but all of the other Vampires showed all sorts of reactions.

There were some who were half-laughing, thinking that this was some kind of joke.

Others were silently dumbfounded.

Others still were confused, wondering if they had misheard something.

「You've got to be kidding me!」(Ternecia)

The only one to respond with anger was Ternecia.

「So you're saying that someone let him go thinking that he would die, then helplessly watched as this Dhampir gathered hundreds of followers and crossed the Boundary Mountain Range?! What the hell was he thinking?! No, does he even have brains to think with in the first place?! Kill that guy, right now!」(Ternecia)

Ternecia bared her fangs in anger. She wasn't scared of the Dhampir. She simply understood that the Vampires had ruled world in the shadows for a hundred thousand years because of the evil god's divine protection and because they had prepared their battles in a way that they would win before fighting them.

She wouldn't feel this sense of danger facing a mere Dhampir or human. However, there were Pure-breed Vampires residing beyond the Boundary Mountain Range. Beings that stood equal to themselves.

They had shown almost no movement at all during the last one hundred thousand years, but if they were to begin moving, it was certain that the

Vampire community here would have its existence endangered.

「She is right, Birkyne-sama, please execute the one responsible immediately and leave the Dhampir to us!」(Vampire)

「No, please leave this to me, Carmine!」(Another Vampire)

「I will do my best to live up to your expectations, Birkyne-sama and Ternecia-sama!」(Yet another Vampire)

And then the Vampires, seeing this as an opportunity to add some achievements to their own records, raised their hands one by one even though nobody had asked them to. It was impossible for a Noble-born Vampire to become a Pure-breed Vampire through achievements, but if Hihiryushukaka acknowledged them, they would receive his【divine protection.】

If they received this divine protection, they would rise one or two steps above the other Noble-born Vampires in power and privilege.

「No, no, I am thinking of still making the person who failed to work to deal with the matter.」(Birkyne)

「What?! Are you saying that you're taking pity on someone who has failed twice already? It's certain that he'll just fail a third time!」(Ternecia)

「Well, I think so as well, but I was impressed by his enthusiasm. Ah yes, let me introduce him to everyone.」(Birkyne)

With these words, Birkyne gently raised his thin, white hand.

With a whooshing sound, a man with his whole body covered in blood fell down from somewhere.

「Allow me to introduce you; this is Gubamon's subordinate, Sercrent Ozba-kun.」(Birkyne)

With a smile, Birkyne raised his hand to introduce this man… The Noble-born Vampire who held connections to Earl Thomas Palpapek, currently letting out a small groan.

His appearance could be summed up in one word: Ghastly. All of the fingers on both of his hands had been pierced through by silver skewers; his legs were covered in burn marks as if he had been roasted in a fire and the flesh on his

back was covered in countless protuberances.

One of those protuberances appeared to burst. A mouse with no skin or fur crawled out from within and began to eat into Sercrent's nearby flesh. And then once it had eaten a quantity of flesh equivalent to the size of its own body, it pushed its head into the hole it had created and returned beneath Sercrent's skin.

This was one of Hihiryushukaka's curses.

「For… give… me… This… I will… definitely…」(Sercrent)

As Sercrent mustered his strength and looked up, the Vampires looking at him gasped. He had no face.

His eyes had been gouged out, his nose sliced off, his cheeks dug out and his lips torn to pieces. His head was like a skull that was covered in blood.

The cruelest thing about all this was that none of the things that had been inflicted upon him, including the curse, were fatal. Noble-born Vampires possessed incredible Vitality and regenerative capabilities; they wouldn't die even after having this done to them.

Even the Noble-born Vampires who had transcended the limits of mortality were nothing but playthings for Birkyne. As they were reminded of this fact, the other Vampires fell silent.

The mice that were made of flesh continued consuming Sercrent's tissues as they regenerated. Ternecia rose from her seat, approached him and kicked him in the face with all her strength.

「Geuh!」(Sercrent)

「Birkyne, what are you planning on having this half-dead bastard do? He wouldn't even be able to kill a single caterpillar.」(Ternecia)

Sercrent was in agony after his jaw was crushed by Ternecia's kick. Indeed, he looked more like a pitiful criminal on death row awaiting execution than an assassin.

「With all due respect, I would say that Ternecia-sama is right. I believe it would be impossible for this person to cross the Boundary Mountain Range,

find the target, get through hundreds of Ghouls and dispose of the Dhampir.」(Female Vampire)

This remark was made by a female Vampire who shared Ternecia's opinion. The other Vampires seemed to be in agreement as well.

Though differences existed between individuals, Vampires were a powerful race. If one were to only look at the Pure-breeds, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that they were the strongest among all the races that Vida had created.

They could slaughter Dragons with ease; one Pure-breed Vampire could destroy an entire nation on his own. The only ones capable of opposing them would be a party of adventurers of A-class or higher, equipped with legendary-class Magic Items.

However, Sercrent was a Noble-born Vampire, a being considerably inferior to a Pure-breed. Even so, he would be a great threat to knights or adventurers, but there were plenty of monsters on his level of strength in the Boundary Mountain Range.

Anyone trying to cross the Boundary Mountain Range high in the sky would encounter the monsters inhabiting the Devil's Nests in the skies… The Devil's Skies. They would be considered as challengers to the fight for domination over the air and be torn to pieces.

But crawling across the steep mountain surface like a human would take time, and there were still no guarantees that one would make it through that journey safely.

Monsters were overflowing from the unknown Devil's Nests and unexplored Dungeons; they would attempt to devour any outsiders.

In order to avoid that, hundreds of warriors strong enough to ignore monsters and capable of fighting while climbing the steep cliffs would need to be gathered, and they would have to travel in a large group while intimidating the surrounding monsters to deter them from attacking.

No matter how one thought about it, it was impossible. Unless a god and his followers were to act directly, or some incredible trick was used, this could not be done.

Not only would Sercrent have to cross the mountain range, but he would have to follow the Dhampir's tracks, slip through the sight of the hundreds of Ghouls that had survived the journey and kill the Dhampir. If Sercrent could at least complete that mission, the Vampires here couldn't care less whether he lived or died, but it would be problematic if he were to die before completing it.

「There is no problem. Sercrent-kun said that he would even go as far as to risk his life to complete his mission. Isn't that right, Sercrent-kun?」(Birkyne)

「Y-yaash. Leaf ert... Leaf ert ter meh!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent immediately responded to Birkyne's question with his shredded tongue and crushed jaw. The other Vampires were secretly amazed that he was still capable of hearing despite having no ears.

「I don't give a shit about his willpower or motivation. What I'm trying to say is that I can't trust his ability.」(Ternecia)

「What you are saying is completely reasonable, Ternecia. That is why I am thinking of dispatching one of my lovers for this.」(Birkyne)

「Huh? One of your prostitutes?」(Ternecia)

The Vampires began to murmur. Their faces expressed uncontrollable fear and disgust.

Vampires were generally very proud; they would never make an effort to raise someone of the same rank above themselves.

The reason Subordinate and Noble-born Vampires formed a hierarchy was because the ones at the bottom of the hierarchy would be treated as slaves.

At least, this was true for the Vampires who had come to follow the evil gods.

And Birkyne greatly enjoyed watching this hierarchical process. It was a hobby to him; even things like torture were nothing but casual pastimes compared to this.

The Noble-born and Subordinate Vampires that he had turned into his subordinates, he would make them compete and fight amongst each other. He would make them crush each other and draw each other's blood, granting his favor to the victorious and bestowing severe punishments onto the defeated.

He was saying that he would have one of his lovers… one of his own bodyguards work with Sercrent.

「Eleanora, you will do this for me, won't you?」(Birkyne)

A beautiful woman with red hair that came down to her waist appeared from within Birkyne's shadow. If she were to appear at a ball, noblemen experienced in giving compliments would exhaust their vocabulary to praise her beauty from the depths of their hearts. She was wearing a smile that would instantly make any man fall in love with her.

「Yes, please leave it to me.」(Eleanora)

「Fufu, make sure you get along with Sercrent-kun and the others. Also, the ruins of Talosheim are nearby, so it would be very helpful for you to collect the bones of the Sword King Borkus if they are still around. That would allow me to have Gubamon owe me a second favor.」(Birkyne)

「Certainly, my beloved lord.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora. While she was the youngest among Birkyne's subordinates, having only become a Noble-born Vampire several years ago, she was a talented woman who had established herself as one of the best. It was expected that in a few hundred years' time, she would become one of the most powerful followers of the【Evil God of Joyful Life】other than the Pure-breed Vampires themselves.

Even Ternecia had killed several of her own subordinates out of irritation at the fact that they would never reach her level.

「Hmph, be careful to not let your guard down and go through a painful experience.」(Ternecia)

It would be even better if Eleanora and the Dhampir simply killed each other. As Ternecia spoke these words that concealed her true feelings, the discussion regarding this topic came to an end.

What came afterwards was a regular meeting with the same contents as usual… How the Guilds hiding in the shadows were doing, the recent movements of Amid's Church, how the conflict to become the heir of the Hartner family of earls was intensifying, the exchange of information that would

help the Vampires pass the time during the long nights, reports on the status of various projects. Finally, candidates to become Subordinate Vampires were introduced. Once they were acknowledged, they underwent the process to transform into Vampires and then the meeting was adjourned.

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There were four Dungeons in the Devil's Nests surrounding Talosheim.

They were Garan's Valley, Doran's Aquatic Cavern, Borkus's Evil Dragon Savannah and Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain. All of them were Dungeons that imitated natural environments, but the materials obtained from these Dungeons had supported Talosheim's prosperity.

Vandalieu had decided to clear the one with the lowest-difficulty among them, the D-class Dungeon, Garan's Valley.

It would likely be about as difficult as the Dungeon that he had entered in the Mirg shield-nation (or so Vandalieu thought), but this had been a training ground for Talosheim's inexperienced adventurers and one of the sources of Talosheim's prosperity.

Garan's Valley was a place where rock salt and stone could be obtained. The rock salt in particular had been particularly important; since Talosheim was located in an inland area surrounded by a mountain range, it wouldn't have developed into anything more than a small village without this salt.

Vandalieu was currently on the first floor of Garan's Valley. The members with him were the usual cast with the exception of Basdia having replaced Sam.

「Gyih! Gah!」

He was fighting one-on-one against a Goblin Soldier armed with a short spear.

Though the Goblin's movements were poor in Basdia's eyes, it did have some degree of technique as it thrust its spear towards Vandalieu repeatedly.

「…」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu used martial arts with some degree of technique to repel the thrusts and tried a counterattack with his claws.

「Gyagyah!」

His attack was dodged and the spear was thrust towards him again.

This crude exchanged continued. Though it was suspenseful to watch if one remembered that it was a battle between a three-year-old child and a monster, if one thought of it as a warrior fighting another, it would be yawn-inducing.

There were dozens of Goblin Soldier corpses all around them. The one who had done this was… not Vandalieu, but Bone Man, Basdia and the others.

They had slaughtered an entire group of Goblin Soldiers except one to allow Vandalieu to take it on.

『How is Bocchan's talent for unarmed combat?』(Saria)

As Saria asked Basdia this question while wiping the blood from her halberd, Basdia replied,「I don't know how to put it.」

「I've said this to Van before, that he has an aptitude for this. So much that it makes me excited. But I feel like it would be wrong to call it talent.」(Basdia)

『Umm, so does that mean that he does have talent?』(Saria)

『He has better memory than me, so he will probably surpass me soon, won't he, Nee-san?』(Rita)

Saria thought hard about Basdia's words. As Rita said, it seemed to her that Vandalieu had good memory.

They were now Undead Living High-Leg Armor and a Living Bikini Armor. But while they were alive, they had been maids, and thought they had used a broom for cleaning, they had never wielded halberds or naginatas or shot monsters to death with bows and arrows.

Thus, they were reliant on the increased Attribute Values that they had obtained from becoming monsters to wield their weapons. They had received the instruction of Vigaro who had told them that their movements were those of beginners and they had made use of the fact that Undead had no need for rest or sleep to train all night, every night. Through this, they had finally learned their skills.

To them, Vandalieu seemed to be quick to learn things in comparison. He slept at night and every week on his day off, he only did one hour of practice.

Vandalieu was receiving the Goblin Soldier's counterattacks and suffered injuries, but it couldn't be helped. Unlike Saria and Rita who were suits of armor, Vandalieu had a flesh body.

「Van has no hesitation, no fear and he doesn't seem to be impatient at the moment.」(Basdia)

『Jyuuh? Is that not a good thing?』(Bone Man)

Bone Man was examining a Goblin's corpse with the tip of his sword to see if a Magic Stone might come out. In response to his question, Basdia replied, 「You're right.」

「It's a good thing. Vigaro got angry at me plenty of times back in the day. He would tell me not to close my eyes, not to be scared, not to get impatient.」(Basdia)

Basdia calmly recalled the times when she was still an amateur. She was now a Rank 4 Ghoul Warrior, but, of course, that didn't mean that she had been strong right from the beginning.

Because she had grown up in a dangerous Devil's Nest, she had gone through and overcome harsh training.

The Ghouls had no military exercises or anything of the sort; instead, they had used Spartan-style training that emphasized practical experience, making the inexperienced fight against weak monsters such as Goblins that had been captured alive.

But even so, real battles and training are different things.

When someone is facing an opponent that really intends to kill them, they wonder if this attack will be enough, what could happen if the attack is dodged, and this causes them to hesitate.

Exposed to the bloodthirst-filled gaze and attacks of their enemy, they fear being wounded or killed.

Unable to display their ability in real battle as they do in training, they become impatient.

『Is that how it was?』(Saria)

『Ah, I might get the impatience part.』(Rita)

『Yeah, I don't know about the hesitation or fear, but I do understand the impatience part.』(Saria)

It seemed that the Undead didn't have much sympathy for that, however. Their senses were different from those of living creatures, so that was to be expected.

「But Van doesn't have any of those.」(Basdia)

Vandalieu attacked with no hesitation, received attacks with no fear of pain and counterattacked patiently.

Basdia had asked him whether he was simply covering it up with his expressionlessness, but it seemed that he really felt no hesitation or anything else.

「The worst thing that can happen is me being injured. I won't die from something like that, anyway.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had the【Danger Sense: Death】spell constantly active, so he could sense how likely it was that he would die. The bloodthirst of his enemies was just another danger.

It seemed that he was also able to ignore pain. He wasn't dulling his senses, but rather, delaying them.

「I've experienced far more painful things in my previous life.」(Vandalieu)

It seemed that he had learned a way to divert his attention from pain in his previous life. This was further supported by the high-speed regeneration ability he possessed as a Dhampir and the no-attribute spell,【Enhanced Healing Power.】

And because he knew that he would simply feel a little pain even if he failed, he felt no impatience. Even if his fingers or legs were cut off, he would simply need to pick them up and reattach them. That would be problematic for his eyes, so he would be careful about those.

「That's why he does things like that.」(Basdia)

As Basdia said this, the Goblin Soldier's short spear pierced Vandalieu's arm.

『Aah!』(Saria)

『Wah, Bocchan!』(Rita)

『GRRR?!』(Bone Wolf)

Rita and the others panicked, but Vandalieu remained composed. That was only to be expected; he had used his arm as a shield against an attack that he had decided that he couldn't avoid.

The Goblin Soldier smiled and tried to pull his spear out, but that was the cause of his downfall.

「Fuh!」(Vandalieu)

With strength that seemed impossible for a three-year-old body, Vandalieu moved his arm that still had the spear piercing it and broke the Goblin Soldier's stance.

「Gyagihih?!」

And then as the Goblin Soldier fell forward, he dug out the Goblin Soldier's side with his claws. With blood spurting from its wound and its mouth, the Goblin Soldier became yet another corpse on the ground.

「Fuh… A failure.」(Vandalieu)

With these words, Vandalieu pulled the spear out of his arm, cast【Sterilization】and healed the wound.

『It wasn't a failure! What would we do if you were to die?!』(Saria)

『If I recall, humans die if they lose too much blood, don't they?!』(Rita)

『Geeh?! Geeeeh?!』(Bone Bird)

「Calm down, I'm not going to die. Sorry, sorry.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu apologized, trying to calm Seria and the others down. This was why Basdia was kept on her toes when watching him, and it was difficult to get angry at him as well.

「I'm sorry. I couldn't complete my attacks and I lost my footing because I tripped over one of the corpses on the ground so I couldn't avoid my enemy's attack. I used my arm as a shield to avoid a more serious wound. Next time, I

will use my claws to deflect the spear or defeat my enemy before such a thing can happen.」(Vandalieu)

For Vandalieu, using his arm as a shield was an action he took to avoid the worst-possible outcome, something that couldn't be helped. But even so, he knew that it wasn't pleasant for those close to him to see that… and if he was scolded harshly, he would fall into a panicked state.

「Good, make sure to be more careful next time.」(Basdia)

And so after Basdia said those words, she settled on teaching him what he should have done in that situation.

Vandalieu was aware of his own lack of ability, so once he gained the skills that he was lacking, he would no longer need to do such reckless things. Basdia thought this, as did Vigaro and Zadiris who heard about these things from her.

Nobody allowed their own bodies to be wounded because they enjoyed it. Even Vandalieu felt the sensation of pain. If there was a way to survive and win without being wounded, he would definitely choose a method that allowed him to avoid pain.

In fact, Zadiris and Vigaro who were stronger than him had fought through battles and been forced to do absurd, rash things to somehow survive. Zadiris in particular had pushed herself like that only to be rescued by Vandalieu.

「So, Van. I'm going to have you raise your skill quickly. After a short rest, we're moving onto the next.」(Basdia)

So Vandalieu would have to learn some proper skills while they were still on a floor where he could get away with pushing himself.

「… Isn't the pace a little fast?」(Vandalieu)

「It's not.」(Basdia)

「Then am I allowed to use magic?」(Vandalieu)

「You want to get stronger, don't you? Do your best, Van~♪」(Basdia)

「At the very least, can I do a normal ambush or surprise attack instead of facing them head-on?」(Vandalieu)

「You won't learn the techniques if you do that, right? You have to fight~♪」(Basdia)

It wouldn't make for good training for Vandalieu if he were to use magic, and Vandalieu was not yet skilled enough to combine both magic and martial arts while fighting.

Making use of his high Attribute Values, he would be able to kill a Goblin Soldier in one hit with a surprise attack, but then he wouldn't learn the essential skills he needed.

And above all, men needed to be strong.

「I heard from Kachia that wives raise not only their children, but their husbands as well. Rest assured, Van. I'm going to raise you well~♪」(Basdia)

「… Y-yay…」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu was the one who had asked her to teach him unarmed combat because he wanted to be stronger, and he knew that this almost-real-combat training was an efficient way to do learn.

「It's alright, Van. You can do it!」(Basdia)

「Yes.」(Vandalieu)

And most importantly, Vandalieu was the type of person that was easily affected by praise.

And so on this day, Vandalieu defeated two Goblin Soldiers, one Kobold, two Mini Needle Wolves and a Goblin Knight all on his own.

【You have acquired the Unarmed Fighting skill!】

Chapter 37: Can this be called clearing a Dungeon?

「Gigyaaah!」

「Gihyih?!」

Vandalieu avoided a Goblin Soldier's sword and gouged out the flesh of the side of its body with his claws. While the additional Goblin behind it was panicking, he dashed up its body, grabbed a hold of its head and twisted it, breaking the bones of its neck.

And then he continued to attack the Goblin Archers that were further behind. An arrow grazed his cheek lightly, but he wouldn't die from this. He ignored it as he charged in.

「…!」

The Goblin Archers panicked and drew their short swords to replace their bows, but Vandalieu hit them with the unarmed martial skill,【Fist Strike.】He felt the pleasant sensation of breaking their ribs and crushing their lungs through the furs they were wearing in place of armor.

Another Goblin Archer fired an arrow at him from his blind spot. Feeling it with his【Danger Sense: Death】, he used【Kicking Strike】against the ground to leap out of the way.

「Gyih?!」

And then he used【Kicking Strike】once again, charging towards the Goblin before it could ready a second arrow. It struggled humorously to draw its short sword, but Vandalieu broke the Goblin's leg with a kick and then crushed its neck with his foot as it collapsed.

「… Fuh.」(Vandalieu)

Making sure his enemy was properly finished and checking whether there

were any more enemies around, Vandalieu exhaled.

And as he regained his breath, he really appreciated one fact.

「Skills are amazing things.」(Vandalieu)

He didn't feel it so much with magic-related skills, but every time he gained a new skill like【Unarmed Fighting】,【Carpentry】and【Cooking】, he realized just how amazing skills were.

Vandalieu had never received combat-related training in either of his two previous lives on Earth and in Origin. The closest thing would perhaps be the judo that he did in his physical education classes. Even in real battles, he had never fought without the assistance of magic.

But this was the result of three months of training.

His enemies were Goblin Soldiers and Goblin Archers. Both were Rank 2; they were not particularly strong enemies.

But though they didn't possess skills, they were stronger than the average human and capable of using weapons.

Vandalieu had managed to slaughter them all, sustaining only a scratch on his cheek. Yesterday, he had barely managed to kill a single Goblin, using his own arm as a shield in the process.

This was the effect that skills had.

Obtaining the skill didn't mean that he suddenly gained some mysterious power. The same applied for his【Carpentry】and【Cooking】skills. He wasn't unconsciously, half-heartedly creating things and having them turn out well-made.

Take the【Unarmed Fighting】skill as an example. When he threw a punch, he understood how to make his fist strike hard and fast and moved his body according to that understanding.

When he threw out a kick, he understood how to break the enemy's leg and moved his body according to that understanding.

How to avoid the enemy's attacks, how to evade, how he should posture himself for a counterattack.

He understood them all, and this allowed him to move his body accordingly.

In the case of【Carpentry】, he understood what he needed to do to make a good building, where he should put pillars to bear loads and how many he needed. As for【Cooking】, he instinctively, intuitively knew what he needed to do to make a more delicious meal.

As to be expected of a system created by gods. Gods who did their work properly were truly wonderful.

What was especially wonderful about it was that abilities could be quantified in numeric values. On Earth and in Origin, one would have to look at a person's past achievements and whatnot to determine how useful the person would be, but in Lambda, it could be done with one look at a person's Status… or at least the relevant skills for the field in question.

… Well, there was also the risk that the value of people would be determined solely based on the current skills they possessed.

『Good work, Bocchan.』(Saria)

『Splendidly done, my lord.』(Bone Man)

Saria and Bone Man brought Vandalieu some water.

「I give you eighty points, Van.」(Basdia)

And Basdia gave him a merciless grading.

「Umm, what are the reasons I lost points for?」(Vandalieu)

「The scratch on your cheek is ten points, and relying on your martial skills too often is another ten points. You wouldn't need to worry about running out of Mana, Van, but if you use martial skills too many times consecutively, your brain will become unable to keep up. It's the same as when you use magic too many times in quick succession.」(Basdia)

「I see.」(Vandalieu)

He had experienced multiple sudden fevers. It was easy to imagine that he would be easily killed without being able to put up any resistance if they occurred during battle.

It wasn’t a matter of mental strength; it was something that couldn’t be avoided because people were creatures that required their brains to think.

Vandalieu’s Mana exceeded 100,000,000, but his Intelligence was just over a hundred. Even with the【Surpass Limits】skill, overusing martial skills might be a bad idea.

「Now then, from now on I’ll learn how to fight while combining these skills with my magic.」(Vandalieu)

The reason Vandalieu had chosen【Unarmed Fighting】out of the numerous available combat-related skills was because it suited him and he could make convenient use of his claws.

His body was small and his limbs were short. No matter how much strength he had, it would not change this fact.

Most of the weapons he had pillaged up until now were too large for him. The only weapons he could realistically use were a short sword, a short bow, a short spear and his own claws.

A short sword would be exceptionally easy to carry and would work well as a hidden weapon, and in emergency situations, could even be thrown as a projectile. But it would have poor attacking power and one would need more speed than strength to wield it. Vandalieu’s lowest Attribute Value was Agility.

Using a short bow would clearly be a bad idea. With a short bow’s projectile range and killing power, it could simply be replaced by the use of【Mana Bullets.】

A short spear was more appealing than the other two. Though it was short, the【Spear Technique】skill would govern its use and if Vandalieu learned the skill now, he could replace it with a longer weapon once his body grew larger.

It wasn’t a weapon that could be concealed, but Vandalieu wasn’t really planning on becoming an assassin or anything, so he couldn’t reject the idea based on that reason alone.

But in the end, Vandalieu chose to use his claws.

The claws were his own personal weapons that grew on all four of his limbs,

and he could withdraw and extend them freely like a cat. They had short reach and they couldn't be thrown as projectile weapons, but he would always have access to them as long as his limbs weren't severed.

The other reason was because it was possible that he had inherited a talent for claw-based unarmed combat from his father.

Darcia was happy about it and the decision was well-received by Basdia and the other Ghouls.

『Bocchan is becoming more and more like a Ghoul, isn't he?』(Saria)

『He might come to be known as the【White Ghoul】before long.』(Rita)

『Jyujyujyuh, if he were to apply【Deadly Poison】to his claws, he would become even more Ghoul-like.』(Bone Man)

Vandalieu had a feeling that this might become a new Title. No, this might actually become a Title placed on him by the Adventurers' Guild labeling him as a monster to be exterminated.

It would be problematic to be put on the wanted list of the Mirg shield-nation's Guilds.

「Leaving that aside, the basic training is over. Now let's raise our levels while we clear the Dungeon. It seems that we've hunted down almost all of the monsters on this floor, anyway.」(Basdia)

And so they continued on for a little while, passed through some stairs leading further underground and descended to the second floor.

Vandalieu was in the middle of the formation, with Bone man and Basdia in front. Bone Wolf, Bone Bear and Bone Monkey were positioned at the sides. Saria and Rita were positioned at the back, having switched from their long melee weapons to bows. Bone Bird was keeping a lookout from above.

Garan's Valley was a Dungeon that mimicked the structure of a natural valley, from the first floor all the way to the bottom floor.

Because of this, there were passages that were split into multiple paths by boulders and things, but even so, it was no exaggeration to say that the Dungeon's layout was simple and linear, and there were almost no traps. This

was one of the reasons this place was suitable for the inexperienced to learn.

「Oh, it's the King!」(Black Goblin)

「Yo, King!」(Black Goblin)

Because it was suitable for the inexperienced, the Black Goblin children were undergoing training in real battles here with the Undead Titans acting as their teachers.

「How are you feeling, King?」(Braga)

Half a year had passed since Braga had been born, and he was now a fully-grown adult. Vandalieu looked up at him as he replied.

「I learned the skill and Basdia gave me eighty points.」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu said this proudly, the corners of Braga's mouth rose in a smile as he answered.

「That's amazing considering you're still so small! You're doing well, King!」(Braga)

Vandalieu's head was patted roughly… He was being praised, but for some reason, he found it hard to believe that this was praise.

「I suppose this is the feeling of watching your childhood friends become adults while you're the only one to stay as a child. What an empty, painful, uneasy feeling.」(Vandalieu)

「Don't talk nonsense, King. I'm a Goblin and you're a Dhampir.」(Braga)

Vandalieu was startled as he suddenly became aware of his unusual emotional state. But it was as Braga said; there was a difference in how children of different races developed.

And though Braga was taller than Vandalieu, as a Black Goblin, his height only reached up to an adult human's chest. One day in the future, Vandalieu would be able to look down at Braga once more… right?

「Oh yeah, how is your training, Braga?」(Vandalieu)

「I learned tons of skills. Short Swordsmanship, Short Spear Technique, Silent Steps, Detect Presence… I'm already over level 80!」(Braga)

「Uwah, amazing. I'll be overtaken in no time.」(Vandalieu)

As Braga held his chest out in pride, Vandalieu used【Flight】to pat his head back.

「You're a Black Goblin after all, Braga. Like normal Goblins and Kobolds, you mature quickly. It's like your growth period is condensed together, so now is your time to grow.」(Vandalieu)

For monsters like Black Goblins that reached adulthood in less than a year after birth, their growth occurred during a short, condensed time period. So they seemed to grow stronger the more they trained during that period.

「You have to do your best and increase your Rank. If you don't, it'll be difficult to earn your keep by hunting the monsters around here in the future.」(Vandalieu)

The Black Goblins were Rank 2. The majority of the monsters that appeared around Talosheim were Rank 3 or above. Though they would have friends and weapons to help them, hunting monsters in a stable manner with their current strength would be difficult.

「S-so strict. But it's true, so I'll do my best.」(Braga)

Braga was training hard because he understood this. As they were now, they might be able to scrape by, living as assistants for the Undead Titans or Ghouls. Or perhaps they could try their hand at agriculture, though they might find it difficult. But they were monsters; they felt an instinctual desire to grow stronger.

「See you, King. Once we clear this place, we'll go on an adventure!」(Braga)

「Yeah, an adventure.」(Vandalieu)

Exchanging a firm handshake with Vandalieu, Braga returned to his training.

Incidentally, it seemed that Braga and the other Black Goblins didn't hesitate at all to kill the Goblins appearing in the Dungeon.

「Those are enemies.」

That one sentence summarized it all.

Since the second and third floors of the Dungeon were being used by the Black Goblins for their combat training, Vandalieu's party didn't encounter many enemies here. They didn't mind, however, as only Rank 2 monsters appeared in the earlier floors of the Dungeon, making them unsuitable to gain many Experience Points.

And on the fourth floor, it was not the Black Goblins but the Anubises receiving combat training here.

「GAAAAH!」

「GAAAAH!」

A young Anubis wielding a spear was facing off against a baboon-like Rank 3 monster.

They bared their fangs at each other menacingly. As if deciding that a fight was inevitable, the baboon used all four limbs to climb a nearby cliff, trying to take the high ground.

「Uohn!」(Anubis)

The young Anubis somehow dashed up the cliff after it with just his legs, using the spear in his hand to attack the baboon.

「GYAAAAH!」

With a high-pitched scream, the baboon fell onto the ground on his back. The Anubis leapt down after it, crushing its neck with his foot.

It was a magnificent victory.

「Uohn! What did you think of my hunt, King?」(Anubis)

「You've become strong, haven't you? You'd probably be able to hunt any Rank 3 monster now, Zemedo[1].」(Vandalieu)

The young Anubis was Zemedo, born around the same time as Braga. His appearance was now considerably different from how it had been during his childhood.

His head resembled the impressive, tough-looking head of a German shepherd, and from the neck down, his body was that of a lean-muscled man

with attractive, dark-colored skin. He was tall as well; nobody would look at him and think that he was younger than Vandalieu.

「No, I've still got a long way to go. And being Rank 3 in this place means that I'm still weak. Even if I'm going to be working with others to hunt, I want to become stronger.」(Zemedo)

Multiple weak individuals could combine their strength to hunt strong prey.

However, it was only natural to think that it would be better if strong individuals combined their strength to hunt even stronger prey. It seemed that Zemedo had set his sights on the higher objective.

「More importantly, I have something I want to ask you about. It's about Memediga.」(Zemedo)

「Did something happen to her?」(Vandalieu)

It seemed that there was something about Zemedo's twin sister Memediga, who had grown to adulthood just like him and Braga, that was troubling him. It seemed that she had been behaving strangely lately.

「She wears a necklace made of a monster's bone or fang that someone gave her, and whenever I go to talk to her during our breaks, she disappears somewhere… Recently, she's been spending all of her time with that Berg guy.」(Zemedo)

「… Isn't she just getting to that age?」(Vandalieu)

It seemed that Memediga had started accompanying another Anubis by the name of Berg-kun. Quite impressive for a younger guy, though he was only a month younger than her.

It seemed true that girls were more mature than boys. Vandalieu wanted to congratulate her.

「What?! Is Memediga intending to have Berg's child?!」(Zemedo)

It seemed like quite a leap of logic to go from accompaniment to baby-making… No, perhaps not. They were monsters living in the world of Lambda, after all.

「It's still too early! We're still young!」(Zemedo)

As someone who had grown up as a Japanese person on Earth, he agreed with Zemedo, but –

『That isn't true. It isn't uncommon in human society for people to get married as soon as they come of age.』(Saria)

『And even if you say that it is too early, she isn't a child anymore. If you keep saying things like that, she will miss her chance to get married.』(Rita)

So said the Living Armor sisters.

The view on marriage in this world was that people should get married and have children while they were young. Though this world's underdeveloped medical knowledge was compensated for by the existence of magic, only noblemen, wealthy merchants and high-ranking adventurers could afford to pay fees for the mages' services.

The same had been true in the past in Japan and other countries as well; this was fairly normal.

「That's right. The important question for a woman is whose child she wants to bear. If Memediga wants to have Berg's child, you should be supporting her.」(Basdia)

Basdia showed how the Ghouls thought of the relationships between men and women. Women gave birth to children and raised them in the village. Was this a heavy or light responsibility, considering the standards of modern Japan?

Though the men had no responsibilities as fathers, as long as they were members of the village, they had to hunt enough food for more than themselves. In Ghoul societies, it wasn't acceptable for men to become reliant on the women.

… Life might be harsh for men who couldn't fight.

『Jyuh…』(Bone Man)

『Aooohn.』(Bone Wolf)

As if unconcerned with this, Bone Man and the others were keeping an eye on their surroundings. Well, even if they were consulted, they would likely give answers based on their knowledge as animals, so this was likely for the best.

「I-is that so…」(Zeme)

「Well, perhaps the best thing to do would be to tell them to wait until Berg becomes able to hunt prey?」(Vandalieu)

Things might be difficult for sis-cons in this world as well.

And so the journey through the fourth floor continued peacefully. Incidentally, the baboon's liver and kidneys could be used as Potion ingredients… Unfortunately, there was nobody running an apothecary, so they couldn't be used, however.

And on the fifth floor, a joint-training between the other Anubises and the Ghouls who were still Rank 3 was taking place.

「GAAAH!」

「GRRRR!」

Words in the Ghouls' battle language were shouted and in the blink of an eye, a Rock Python that resembled numerous boulders linked together began to take damage.

The giant snake that possessed a rock-like defense was still just prey when faced with the coordinated efforts between the Anubises and the Ghouls. Viscous mud created with magic was used to trap it and then spears, swords and claws were twisted into the gaps in its skin until it stopped moving.

And despite its rocky exterior, the flesh underneath was tender when cooked and tasted similar to chicken tenderloins.

「King! How do you like my earth-attribute magic!」(Memediga)

Memediga, the female Anubis with a German shepherd's head approached Vandalieu, waving her staff back and forth. The viscous mud that had stopped the Rock Python's movements had been created by her magic.

「Mhmm, it was very good.」(Vandalieu)

It was a simple but reliable and useful spell in battle. Many spells of the earth-attribute were like this. Only a very small portion of mages could do things like causing volcanic eruptions, manipulating lava like their own limbs or creating fissures in the ground to swallow up their enemies; most earth-attribute mages

were proficient at spells that did things like digging pitfalls and causing hard spikes to grow out of the ground.

So considering the special characteristics of earth-attribute magic, Memediga was using it well. Most living creatures couldn't separate themselves from the ground, so her magic was very effective.

But Vandalieu was thinking about something different as he looked up at her.

Her shining eyes, long ears, moist nose, white fangs, magnificent fur, skin that was just as beautiful as her fur, her generously-sized chest, tight hips and the tail that was wagging happily back and forth.

Memediga had been cute as a small child, but now she had become a beautiful woman. Vandalieu had heard that one feels a little proud when their childhood friend becomes a beautiful woman, so he realized that this was the emotion that he was feeling as he looked at her.

It was easy to understand that she would have a boyfriend.

「What's wrong, King?」(Memediga)

「No, it's nothing. Come to think of it, I saw Zemedo on the fourth floor; are you not getting along with him these days?」(Vandalieu)

「That's right. Listen, Nii-san is just annoying, complaining about every little thing.」(Memediga)

After that, Vandalieu heard enough of her complaints to think,「Ah, this is a common thing that happens during puberty.」

「But I do understand that Nii-san is just worried about me. Still, I think it'd be fine if he would trust me more.」(Memediga)

「Ah… Yeah… I wonder if things would be fine if you two just talked to each other sometime. Things might become too intense with just the two of you, so maybe include someone else in the conversation as well.」(Vandalieu)

「You're right, well then, I'll ask Berg –」(Memediga)

「Someone other than Berg.」(Vandalieu)

Bringing Berg would only cause a scene of carnage.

Normal Goblins and Kobolds didn't understand human language, but the reason Memediga, Braga and the other children could speak so fluently was because they had learned the language from Vandalieu and the Ghouls.

This was not a particularly special case; monsters of a certain intelligence tamed by Tamers could learn human language. Only a very small number of non-humanoid monsters were capable of having conversations, however.

After dealing with Memediga's problems, Vandalieu's party descended the stairs after not running into many battles on the fifth floor.

And on the sixth floor was where Garan's Valley really began… industrially.

『Cut it!』

「UOOOH!【Rock Cutter!】」

The Undead Titans were cutting square blocks of bright white rock out of the stone cliffs. They were the stonemasons of Talosheim.

White rock could be mined from the rock walls on the sixth floor of Garan's Valley. It was similar to Earth's marble, but perhaps because it originated from a Dungeon, it was a higher-quality stone that contained Mana.

Apparently through some secret processing technique, it could be turned into products that were harder than marble and more resistant to wear.

When Talosheim had first started trading with the Hartner duchy in the Orbaume Kingdom, the Titans were apparently surprised by the high price that they could sell the stone for.

But that trading had long since come to an end, and Vandalieu had already restored the royal castle, the town and the walls back to normal. So there shouldn't have been much demand for more stone, however.

「Look who it is! Have you come to the Dungeon for training, o Holy Son?」(Nuaza)

Standing there was Nuaza, wearing metal armor and holding a shield and a mace that looked as if could crush someone's skull like an egg. His appearance was rather un-Lich-like.

「Yes. What are you and the others doing here, Nuaza?」(Vandalieu)

「We have come to be in need of some stone.」(Nuaza)

Vandalieu's【Golem Transmutation】could be used to combine broken fragments of stone to reuse it. However, he couldn't make new stone out of nothing.

But why would new stone be needed?

「Could it be because I made too many Reversi sets?」(Vandalieu)

Had he gone overboard by making a hundred Reversi sets because everyone had liked it?

「No, that is not the case, o Holy Son. But I would like to request that you make one hundred more sets when it is convenient for you to do so.」(Nuaza)

The Reversi sets, Jenga sets and Frisbees that Vandalieu had created were currently very popular in Talosheim. The fact that everyone was so deprived of entertainment that they themselves hadn't realized it was one reason, but the fact that all of them had simple rules that could be learned quickly made them very well-received.

Thus, owning a Reversi or Jenga set had become something of a status symbol. Vandalieu was getting worried that their popularity had gone overboard.

It wasn't as if Vandalieu was being paid to make the sets, nor did it take much effort to make them. Giving it some more thought, he decided it wasn't a problem.

「And if possible, I would also like to request more Jenga sets and Frisbees.」(Nuaza)

「… I don't think you need to ask me to make them?」(Vandalieu)

Anyone should be able to make these.

「No, there is some meaning behind them being created by your hands, Holy Son.」(Nuaza)

It seemed that receiving Vandalieu's handmade toys were like receiving an award for the Undead. Even though they weren't such amazing creations.

Had he created a brand name without realizing?

「I understand.」(Vandalieu)

But if they were so happy about it, he would make plenty for them. Now that he thought about it, he wasn't paying the Undead Titans or Ghouls salaries or anything, so it was fine to do at least this much for them.

「So what is this stone going to be used for?」(Vandalieu)

「The plaza in front of the royal castle is empty, is it not? We thought that we would erect a stone statue there.」(Nuaza)

「A stone statue. That would be nice.」(Vandalieu)

The arts make the mind rich. The minds of Undead in particular were often more important than their bodies, so it was important for them to have stable minds.

「Yes, we have planned for the stone statue of the Holy Son to be completed by next spring.」(Nuaza)

「… Are you serious?」(Vandalieu)

「I am serious. You are the Holy Son of two prophecies, after all. For those of us who desire the restoration of the goddess Vida, you are someone to be worshipped, Holy Son.」(Nuaza)

「… I suddenly don't really want to go outside anymore.」(Vandalieu)

Of course, Vandalieu didn't feel negative feelings about being treated favorably, but would it be alright for him to go so far beyond that and become a religious symbol?

Well, it wasn't as if his face had the words「I am the Holy Son」written on it, so it would be fine as long as he kept his mouth shut about it when he went to the Orbaume Kingdom.

『Bocchan, it's something to look forward to, isn't it?』(Rita)

『Noblemen should keep at least one self-portrait or stone statue of themselves, so you shouldn't feel so opposed to it.』(Saria)

「Are there any noblemen who would have a stone statue of themselves

erected in the plaza in front of the royal castle?」(Vandalieu)

Upon being asked this, Rita and Saria averted their gazes, so Vandalieu had a rough idea of how it was. The sisters showed plenty of expressions, even though they didn't have heads.

『Ooh, which means that there are none? In other words, you are the only one, my lord! Jyuuuh, my congratulations to you!』(Bone Man)

Bone Man congratulated Vandalieu sincerely.

Well, it was fine. It wasn't like anyone would be coming to Talosheim. The only ones who would see it would be the Undead Titans, Ghouls and those of the new races that Vandalieu had created.

「Well then, we shall be carrying this stone out, so excuse us.」(Nuaza)

With those words, Nuaza and the other Undead Titans set about carrying the stone out of the Dungeon. They would be protecting the stone that weighed tons and preventing it from being destroyed by attacking monsters on the way to the surface.

The monsters wouldn't deliberately aim to attack the stone, but if an attack happened to hit it, the stone would be cracked.

「Fugofugoh.」(Orcus)

「We'll protect the materials for King's stone statue.」(Orcus)

「So more Reversi sets for us, too.」(Orcus)

Gorba and the other Orcuses were in charge of guarding the stone. Unlike the Anubises and Black Goblins, they had not yet reached adulthood, but they already possessed enough skills and physical strength to somehow deal with Rank 3 monsters. In other words, this was perfect training for them.

「I'll make them after I'm done here. Come to think of it, won't it be hard to carry the stone up the stairs?」(Vandalieu)

『Don't you worry about it! We have something called know-how!』(Titan)

It seemed that there were various things they could use, including a Magic Item that turned stairs into a slope. And between the Undead Titans who didn't

feel fatigue and the Orcuses, though they were still children, there was plenty of physical strength to be used. Worrying about them would be pointless.

Parting with Nuaza and the others, Vandalieu's party continued on, but perhaps the monsters had been cleared pre-emptively so that the stone-mining wouldn't be interrupted. There were almost no monsters appearing on the sixth floor.

「Why did we pass through here again? To observe everyone?」(Vandalieu)

「I know how you feel, but I'm sure there are still plenty of monsters beneath here. Let's keep going, Van.」(Basdia)

Notes

1. I misread the Anubis child's name initially as Zendo, it's actually Zemedo. My apologies. Made the fix in previous chapters as well.

Chapter 38: The Dungeon boss is disappointing

The seventh floor of Garan's Valley.

The reason the Titan population had grown to over five thousand and prospered enough to build a city-nation was in this place.

「The rock salt! Mine the rock salt!」(Titan)

『There aren't any monsters to hinder us, are there?!』(Titan)

「Searching for the enemy, all clear~!」(Titan)

Indeed, high-quality rock salt could be harvested from the cliffs on this floor.

Salt was an important product, a necessity. Talosheim had relied on this Dungeon as its salt supply.

In this land trapped inside a mountain range containing numerous Devil's Nests, there was no trading with outside nations until the tunnel leading to the Orbaume Kingdom was discovered, reaching the sea would have required the Titans to journey through multiple Devil's Nests.

Thus, the seventh floor of Garan's Valley had been the only place that salt could be obtained.

If the Titans had never discovered this Dungeon, Talosheim wouldn't have existed and the Titan population would have remained in the hundreds.

Of course, this was still a part of the Dungeon so monsters would still appear. And since the monsters appearing on this seventh floor were Rank 4, not 3, it was more dangerous than the sixth floor.

Monkeys that possessed rocky carapaces, Rock Monkeys.

Kobold Mages able to cast spells and Kobold Generals capable of using martial skills.

And Stone Golems that were even larger than the Titans.

All of these were monsters that would require at least middle-class adventurers to take them on.

The way the Titans had mined salt from such a dangerous place was to have the laborers become at least as proficient in battle as middle-class adventurers.

『I won't let you interfere with our mining!』(Titan)

The armored, pickaxe-wielding laborers fighting heroically against monsters had been a sight to behold, and later when adventurers from the Orbaume Kingdom came to Talosheim for trading, they were told that the miners didn't need escorts.

That hadn't changed even after the Titans had become Undead.

『UOOOOH! MISO! THE SOURCE OF MISOOOOOO!』(Titan)

『I want fish sauce!』(Titan)

『If any monsters get in our way, we'll fry them in miso and eat them!』(Titan)

No, perhaps they were even more ferocious than they had been in the past.

The idea that Undead do not eat is a misconception.

It is true that lowly Skeletons and Ghosts do not feel hunger or possess a sense of taste. However, Zombies and Undead of a certain Rank and above feel hunger and have a sense of taste.

Of course, as the biological processes of Undead have stopped, they do not need to eat. They have no problems continuing to function even if they do not eat for years at a time.

However, they cannot escape the restrictions of having once been living creatures entirely. They still retain some of their primitive needs.

Out of the three main needs[1], the need for sleep is the one that disappears entirely. Undead do not tire, so they do not need sleep. If they try to sleep they can reach a state similar to being asleep, but this is in carried out in order to recover from mental fatigue rather than physical, and is done more for self-satisfaction.

Interestingly, the need to reproduce remains. As the body has already died, there is no desire to leave offspring behind, but the deed is still physically possible. It is carried out by some to absorb spirit from the living and by those that died with a strong liking for engaging in intercourse.

And the need that remains in its entirety is hunger. This desire that remains in the souls of the Undead drives Zombies to eat the flesh of the living and drink their blood to absorb the Mana contained within and gain experience.

Skeletons and Spirit-type Undead can also increase their Rank to become superior versions of Undead, gain the【Spirit Form】skill to gain a replacement for flesh and consume the flesh and blood of the living or even absorb their Vitality in a more direct way.

The Undead Titans of Talosheim were no exception; they ate as much as they liked. Most of the food they had been eating was the flesh and blood of monsters brought into the city, but from time to time they also ate the surrounding grass, tree branches and rock fragments.

But after Vandalieu and the Ghouls had arrived, they had been eating tasty foods such as spit-roasted meat, food baked in leaves and things covered in walnut-and-basil sauce.

And the things that had recently made an impact among them were the「fish sauce」,「walnut miso」and「acorn miso」that Vandalieu had created.

These were the seasonings that the hero Zakkart had tried and failed to reproduce, things that hadn't existed in Lambda before. They had caused a culture shock on the Titans' tongues and one by one, they had charmed those who tasted it.

『Miso miso miso MIIIIIIISOOOOOOO!』(Titan)

『FISH SAAAAAAUUUUUCE!』(Titan)

『My head hurts! I'm seeing things! Miso, give me misoooooo!』(Titan)

… Perhaps it was just an addiction.

「Van, could it be that those seasonings you made have addictive properties?」(Basdia)

「No… At least, they shouldn't. Right?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu answered Basdia's question with his eyes fixed on the Titans who were mining the salt in a bloodshot-eyed frenzy, but it was clear even with his expressionless face that he had no confidence in that answer.

「I think I made it with the same recipe as on Earth, and I never heard of the fermented foods I created with death-attribute magic in Origin having any addictive properties... No, maybe I just didn't know about it? Or maybe the walnuts and acorns I used contained compounds that I don't know about, and that's what's causing these strange effects…」(Vandalieu)

『Even Father was delighted with its taste. Isn't it possible that it is just very delicious?』(Saria)

Sam had recently increased the level of his【Spirit Form】skill and had become able to taste food. Saria suggested a possibility based on Sam's reaction when he had first tried the miso.

『It's unfair for only Father to be eating it, isn't it?』(Rita)

The dissatisfied Rita and Saria were indeed suits of Living Armor with no mouths. They were still unable to eat or taste food.

「I wonder if that's true. Well, the one called Baridge who was saying that his head hurts apparently has hallucinations regularly so, it might be.」(Vandalieu)

「Van, I can't really feel at ease about that. Is Baridge alright?」(Basdia)

「Who knows? Apparently while he was alive, his hands would start shaking if he ran out of alcohol, so I think there is nothing that can be done about it.」(Vandalieu)

『Even if you consume alcohol, do not allow it to consume you.』(Saria)

「Yeah, I'll make sure not to drink too much alcohol.」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu said this, they passed by the Undead Titans who were spiritedly mining the rock salt and decided to set up camp for the night on the seventh floor.

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What Vandalieu could really call a Dungeon clearing began from the eighth floor.

There was nobody training on this floor, nor were there any Undead Titans mining rocks and salt, so they could encounter monsters with normal frequency.

And in Garan's Valley, where the floors had fundamentally simple layouts, it was impossible to hide from the monsters unless the entire party was made of scouting-type members like Thieves or someone was capable of using illusion magic.

『Bocchan! I thought these were those rock-like monkeys, but they are just Stone Golems!』(Saria)

「They're so hard; can't you do something about them with【Golem Transmutation?】」(Basdia)

「No, I can only manipulate Golems I created myself, so let's have Bone Monkey and the others mow them down.」(Vandalieu)

『Oooooh!』(Bone Monkey)

From this floor onwards, multiple Rank 3 monsters could appear simultaneously. There was a difference between Golems that had only numbers with no coordination and groups of Kobold Knights or Kobold Archers that had excellent coordination, but the battle was definitely more difficult than any encounter on the seventh floor.

『Uooh!』(Bone Monkey)

If an average adventurer were to face the Stone Golems that Bone Monkey had beaten down, they would find it to be a considerably difficult battle. D-class adventurers might think that it would be fine if they just used their weapons, but using weapons consumes Mana.

Many frontline-fighting adventurers do not possess an abundant amount of Mana.

In that regard, Vandalieu and his party possessed more than enough strength to clear Garan's Valley. All of them were Rank 4 and above except for

Vandalieu. And if he really needed to, Vandalieu would simply make use of his vast Mana pool to push his way through.

In fact, it could be said that there was no way that they would have difficulty in this Dungeon.

「Fuh… The feeling of gaining Experience Points for the first time in about two years is quite pleasant.」(Vandalieu)

Well, if he had to risk his life every time he wanted to gain Experience Points, no number of lives would be enough, so this was perfect.

『Jyuh, my lord, how is your level?』(Bone Man)

「Hmm… I still haven't even reached level 10.」(Vandalieu)

However, the amount of crucial Experience Points that he could gain was only this much.

Vandalieu currently possessed the【Death-Attribute Mage】Job, but it seemed that leveling up this Job was difficult. He still hadn't reached level 10 yet.

「How about you, Basdia?」(Vandalieu)

「I underwent a Job-change from【Apprentice Warrior】to【Warrior】, and now I'm level 14.」(Basdia)

「Hmm, let's ask Borkus and the others when we return to Talosheim.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus would likely know whether different Jobs required different amounts of Experience Points to level up. He was an A-class adventurer who had been praised as the【Sword King.】

He had lost his Job after becoming an Undead, but there was no doubt that he had mastered several Jobs beginning from an Apprentice Job.

Since that was something that happened about two hundred years ago, it was possible that he had lost his memories regarding that, however.

「My Attribute Values are increasing, though only little by little, so let's proceed without being too impatient.」(Vandalieu)

『How much have they increased by?』(Saria)

「Each of my Attribute Values have increased by one to ten points. My mana has increased by about two percent.」(Vandalieu)

『I see. There is still a long way to go, isn't there?』(Saria)

「… If we're talking about your Mana, it's increased by two million? It never fails to amaze me.」(Basdia)

Vandalieu continued fighting the monsters that appeared with everyone else, holding back so that he didn't deal the killing blow. The【Unable to gain Experience Points independently】curse was truly inconvenient.

Incidentally, this curse still allowed him to gain around a tenth of the Experience Points earned by his allies and servants, and he had gained a general understanding of the conditions for this.

It seemed that the fundamental requirement was that Vandalieu's allies or servants gained experience within his field of vision. Borrowing Bone Bird's vision to watch Bone Man defeating monsters in a faraway location did not gain Vandalieu Experience Points.

It seemed the condition wasn't met if Vandalieu didn't witness it with his own eyes. Apparently there were no binoculars or telescopes in Lambda; would using those to see further perhaps not count? What if he was wearing vision-correcting glasses?

There were apparently Magic Items that acted as glasses for farsightedness, so Vandalieu had decided to test them out if he ever obtained such an item.

Depending on the results of such a test, Vandalieu's eyes might become an important lifeline for him, so this needed to be verified as soon as possible.

… He didn't know how to create binoculars or a telescope, so he couldn't test those, however.

「Ah, but if I made Golems out of glass, maybe I could at least create lenses? If their magnification is low, then perhaps…」(Vandalieu)

「Van! It's dangerous to contemplate things in the middle of battle!」(Basdia)

「It's alright; I'm finished now.」(Vandalieu)

「Ugageh?!」(Monster)

Even finishing off the occasional enemy himself to increase his【Unarmed Fighting】skill, Vandalieu finally reached the tenth floor. This was the deepest floor in Garan's Valley.

「GUOOOOOH!」

A Rock Gorilla even larger than a Titan let out a roar, baring its fangs. It made loud, crashing sounds by drumming its thick chest with its fists as an intimidation tactic.

It was Rank 4, but it was one of the more powerful Rank 4 monsters. It had no special abilities, but it was as hard and strong as it appeared, and was actually more intelligent than its appearance suggested. It was capable of casting multiple earth-element spells.

However –

「It's weak for the big boss of a D-class Dungeon, isn't it?」(Vandalieu)

「So it seems. It's probably a mid-boss.」(Basdia)

As if aware that Vandalieu and Basdia were insulting it, the Rock Gorilla let out a short roar and ran towards them on all fours at a speed that they hadn't expected considering its appearance.

『UOOOH!』(Bone Monkey)

Bone Monkey stood in its way to prevent it from reaching them. A monkey of bone and a monkey of rock collided with a crash.

『UBOOH!』(Bone Monkey)

Bone Monkey's bones creaked. They were even in physical strength, but the Rock Gorilla who had flesh covered in a carapace had an advantage over Bone Monkey who was made of only bones and a little spirit-form.

「Gufuh.」(Rock Gorilla)

Confident in its victory, the Rock Gorilla let out a strangely human-like sneer.

『BOOOOOOH!』(Bone Monkey)

As it sneered, it took Bone Monkey's poisonous breath directly in the face.

「Vugih?!」(Rock Gorilla)

With its eyes and nose that weren't protected by its carapace struck by the poison, the Rock Gorilla let go of Bone Monkey and clutched its face.

『GAAAAAAAH!』

『GRUOOOOH!』

『Teyaaaah!』

The resulting events were very one-sided. The Rock Gorilla was certainly a powerful monster, even for a Rank 4. However, looking at it another way, its strength could not even match a Rank 5 monster.

But it was facing eight Rank 4 monsters. Basdia didn't step into the fight, but even so, it was more of a lynching than a battle.

If the Rock Gorilla had kept its distance without charging in and used its earth-attribute magic as its primary way of attacking, it could have at least put up a proper fight. However, perhaps because of the Dungeon's influence, it had become more ferocious and aggressive.

After defeating the Rock Gorilla, Vandalieu cast【Disinfect】to remove the poison. Its Magic Stone was collected, its meat that had a strong, peculiar taste but made a good soup when boiled with herbs was collected,【Sterilization】and【Bug Killer】were cast on its organs and these became ingredients for today's lunch.

Also, the carapace could be used as a catalyst to create armor that granted increased resistance to earth-attribute magic, so they took that with them as well.

After casting【Preservation】on these harvested materials, Vandalieu turned them into a Flesh Golem and had them move on their own. With this, Vandalieu's party could maintain their mobility while proceeding through this dangerous Dungeon.

More effort was needed to guard the mass of materials that had been turned into a Flesh Golem and preventing it from eaten by monsters, but since the party had many members, it was not really a problem.

「Now then, shall we go down?」(Vandalieu)

Garan's Valley had originally been a shallow, D-class Dungeon with ten floors. However, perhaps because it had been abandoned for over two hundred years, there were three more floors.

That was why a mid-boss had appeared here.

Dungeons with eleven or more floors spawn mid-bosses. They appear roughly every ten floors, and they are known as mid-bosses because they are stronger than regular monsters but not as powerful as bosses.

For example, a Dungeon with twenty-seven floors would have a mid-boss appearing on the tenth and twentieth floors, and then a boss on the twenty-seventh floor.

It is common for an adventurer party in the midst of clearing a Dungeon that has never been cleared yet defeating a powerful enemy and thinking,「This was definitely the boss of this Dungeon」, only to discover a staircase leading further down instead of a treasure storage chamber, revealing that the powerful enemy they defeated was merely a mid-boss.

「I heard from Borkus and the others that once you defeat a mid-boss, the difficulty of the Dungeon increases. Let's proceed with caution, everyone.」(Basdia)

『Yeah!』

With renewed enthusiasm, Vandalieu's party descended to the eleventh floor.

From the eleventh floor onwards, Rank 4 monsters leading Rank 3 monsters appeared.

They were all groups of monsters that coordinated well with their allies, such as Kobold Knights led by a Kobold Mage and Rock Monkeys under the command of a Rock Gorilla.

And on the thirteenth floor, multiple Rank 4 monsters began to appear simultaneously. Even Vandalieu's party began having some difficulty dealing with these.

When they encountered a group of Hell Hounds that kept their distance and spat flaming breath attacks at them, Vandalieu fired several【Mana Bullets】at

them, turning some of them into lumps of meat, knowing that some of the Experience Points and materials would go to waste.

When multiple Rock Golems appeared at once, everyone had to go all-out with the use of their martial skills and then recovered their Mana through Vandalieu's【Mana Transfer】afterwards.

And there was the occasional trap laid out starting from the eleventh floor. A triggered trap had caused a boulder to fall down on them, but Vandalieu held nothing back as he used his Mana to crush it. The boulder wouldn't have given them Experience Points either way.

However, they were able to gather a considerable harvest from the treasure chests that had begun to appear.

「Even though the Dungeon is close to Talosheim, the weapons inside the treasure chests are human-sized, huh.」(Vandalieu)

Looking at the handle of a steel sword, it was clearly a human-sized broadsword rather than a Titan-sized short sword.

This was a Dungeon in a land inhabited by no people other than Titans for the past hundred thousand years; why did the treasure chests contain weapons for human use? As Vandalieu wondered this, Basdia, who had been into multiple Dungeons, explained why.

「This is the first time I've gone this deep into a Dungeon, but I've heard that this isn't that uncommon.」(Basdia)

Adventurers had discovered that the contents of treasure chests in Dungeons change depending on the person who opened it and that person's allies.

Of course, it isn't as if Dungeons understand what the adventurers want and prepare it for them inside the chests. They simply change the size and specifications of the item.

For example, a party made entirely of Titans would find Titan-sized weapons and armor. Conversely, if a party was made entirely of Dwarves whose height only reaches a human's chest, they would find Dwarf-sized equipment.

A Dwarf party wouldn't find Titan-sized armor inside a treasure chest, or vice-

versa.

There is a theory that evil gods had created the Dungeons and made it like this to tempt adventurers more easily. There is another explanation that the genie Ricklent, who created the Dungeons for people to use as places to train, made it this way to provide more motivation for those who used them.

「… It's true that nobody would be tempted or have any motivation to get treasures that didn't meet their needs. Well, it's convenient, so either explanation is fine for me.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu shared the thoughts of many adventurers in regard to the debates that happened between scholars as he made the Flesh Golem hold the steel sword.

And the monsters that appeared in the boss chamber of the thirteenth floor were an Orc General and four Orc Knights.

「I thought it would definitely be some kind of rocky monster.」(Vandalieu)

『What will we do, Bocchan?』(Saria)

「What will we do, you say… There's no way we will leave without defeating them, right?」(Vandalieu)

None of them could hide their disappointment, as they had killed plenty of Orcs during the winter of this year. Unaware of this, the Orc General became enraged with the pride of a Dungeon boss, but it was an easy victory for Vandalieu and his party.

「Well, it is Rank 5 so I did get a lot of Experience Points, their meat tastes good and I was thinking of getting some lard, so it's perfect, I suppose.」(Vandalieu)

「But even the pack of Hell Hounds was more of a tough battle.」(Basdia)

「You're right.」(Vandalieu)

The party was in strangely low spirits as they harvested the treasure from the treasure storage chamber. The Undead Titans and Ghouls had been forming parties together and clearing this Dungeon over and over recently, so it was nothing outstanding.

Furthermore, the Adventurers' Guild of two hundred years ago had installed items that allowed teleportation in each of Talosheim's Dungeons.

These items allowed them to return from the treasure storage room to the surface in an instant.

Depending on the Dungeon, they apparently allowed one to return to the surface from any floor or teleport from the surface to any previously-visited floor.

What a convenient world this was.

【Basdia has become a Rank 5 Ghoul Amazoness!】

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「How was the Dungeon-clearing, boy?」(Zadiris)

Vandalieu had returned to Talosheim and was taking a bath in the royal castle when Zadiris came in.

「It was alright, Mother. Van is currently able to defeat a Kobold Knight without using his magic.」(Basdia)

Basdia, who was in the bath with him, answered for him.

If one were to ask why this had become a mixed bath, the reason was because Vigaro had revealed that he had discovered Vandalieu with his head completely submerged in the water.

The idea that allowing Vandalieu to bathe on his own would be dangerous was shared by everyone, so it had been decided that someone should be in the bath with him at all times.

It was often Vigaro or Borkus accompanying him, but this time, the two of them were busy clearing a different Dungeon.

Both Basdia and Zadiris were aware that Vandalieu possessed the memories of his previous life and the one before that, having lived for forty years in total, but perhaps the concept of shyness was different in Ghoul culture. They showed no signs of embarrassment at all.

『Well, my appearance is that of a three-year-old and my physical body is

actually that of a three-year-old, so I suppose they don't feel anything.』(Vandalieu)

He was sharing a bath with a tall, outstandingly beautiful woman and a beautiful young girl. The Vandalieu who had lived on Earth would have been staring at them with bloodshot eyes, suffered from a nosebleed from the excitement or perhaps he might have curled into a ball and averted his eyes instead.

After Basdia left the Dungeon, her Rank had suddenly increased and she had become a Ghoul Amazoness. It was a race that had never been reached by anyone in her village, but Vandalieu thought that the word "Amazoness" suited her.

In fact, her increased Attribute Values were apparently suited for a Warrior. Her Rank had likely increased because she had reached level 100 and met the requirements of leveling up multiple martial-type skills.

Though Basdia's appearance hadn't changed much, red tattoo-like patterns that looked as if they might have magical properties had appeared on her body.

As tattoos, they looked cool. Though they made her look more impressive, they also seemed to highlight her abundant curves.

Zadiris looked like a young girl, but she had a charming appearance… probably. With his three-year-old eyes, Vandalieu didn't have the confidence to say for sure.

Even so, he knew that she was lovely and pretty.

But perhaps his mind was affected by the age of his body; he thought nothing other than,「Ah, they're naked.」His heart didn't begin throbbing, nor did he feel any arousal.

He was still at an age where most children would be unaware of things happening around them, and even his first love was still at least two or three years away, so this was how things were for now.

Could it be that ten years from now, he would regret not taking a better look?

「Hooh, that is quite impressive.」(Zadiris)

「Yeah. His skill is still level 1, but that's probably because he receives no bonuses to the skill from his Job. His magic looked as if it had become stronger than before as well.」(Basdia)

「Come to think of it, it seems that your Rank has increased as well. These patterns that look as if they may be related to magic have appeared on your body; have you finally decided to learn magic?」(Zadiris)

「It seems that this is how Ghoul Amazonesses are. Maybe because of these patterns, I've gained resistance to magic. I don't know if they have any other effect, but magic, huh… I'll think about it after I have a child.」(Basdia)

「Ah, that reminds me, how is the Magic Item? It should increase the chance of a successful pregnancy when worn.」(Vandalieu)

The three-year-old boy casually changed the topic of conversation to baby-making. It seemed that the problem of Ghoul fertility would be solved with the distribution of these Magic Items, but it was true that they couldn't become careless yet… If things went too well and too many children were born, they might face problems as there were no nurseries here, unlike on Earth.

Vandalieu asked the question with this in mind, but Basdia turned pale.

「It isn't going well. Both my partner and I have been wearing the Magic Items, but…」(Basdia)

It seemed that they were simply not having an effect.

The Magic Items only made the egg cells and sperm survive about as long as those of humans, giving Ghouls the same chance of becoming pregnant as humans, but that didn't mean that they guaranteed pregnancy.

Considering that, it wasn't strange for her to still not be pregnant yet. Even healthy human couples sometimes took some time to conceive.

「Well then, I'll use【Spirit Form】to have a look just in case, shall I?」(Vandalieu)

However, it was possible that there was some kind of problem. It was probably best to investigate it when there was time.

「Thanks, I'm counting on you.」(Basdia)

「It's fine. I promised that I would spend a week in the city after I came back from the Dungeon, and I've also promised that I'll be making some more Reversi sets later today.」(Vandalieu)

「Hmm, it seems that you have not forgotten about your promises with us. That is good, in more than one way.」(Zadiris)

Rules had been decided to prevent Vandalieu from becoming a black worker again.

- **Name**: Basdia
- **Rank**: 5
- **Race**: Ghoul Amazoness
- **Level**: 0
- **Job**: Warrior
- **Job level**: 24
- **Job history**: Apprentice Warrior
- **Age**: 27 years old
- **Passive skills**:
  - Night Vision
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Pain Resistance: Level 2
  - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 3
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1 (NEW!)
  - Intuition: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
  - Axe Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Shield Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Archery: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Javelin Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Silent Steps: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Coordination: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Status Effects**
  - Infertility → Completely recovered

Monster Explanation:

【Ghoul Amazoness】

When a Ghoul woman with qualities suited for magic learns and diligently studies martial skills instead of magic and continues to do so after becoming a Ghoul Warrior, she can increase her Rank and become this race.

There is no significant change in appearance, but tattoo-like patterns appear on the body. Physical ability increases significantly and the patterns on the body grant the【Magic Resistance】skill and enhances inherent magic-oriented qualities.

As it is a considerably rare race, there are never two Ghoul Amazonesses in a single village. They typically act as leaders of groups and groups with a Ghoul Amazoness tend to have other women in powerful positions.

It is said that there are groups of Ghouls entirely made of women led by a Ghoul Amazoness in the depths of some Devil's Nests, though this has not been confirmed.

It is unknown what Ghoul Amazonesses become if they increase their Rank further; no such case has been confirmed up until now. However, it can be assumed that individuals who master not only martial skills but magic as well may increase their Rank to become an even superior race.

Notes

1. As I mentioned in chapter 17, the three main needs are the need to eat, the need to sleep and the need to reproduce.

Chapter 39: With honor and fame, without land or a successor. That's the kind of nobleman I want to be.

「I want coffee milk.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu whispered this as he got out of the bath and remembered a promise that he had made at a bathhouse on Earth.

Apparently there was coffee in Lambda, but it wasn't a major drink; it seemed to be a drink for only a small portion of the wealthy.

The wealthy. In other words, celebrities; the bourgeoisie[1].

Thinking about that only made him want to drink it more. Wouldn't there be coffee trees growing somewhere?

Basking in the breeze created by an electric-fan-shaped Golem that he had made himself, he remembered that coffee could be replaced by dandelion roots.

「I wonder if I can make it using the dandelions in this world. Well, if I find any, I'll give it a try.」(Vandalieu)

He had been unable to drink coffee at some point on Earth because his uncle had declared that coffee was a luxury, so he had read a book in his middle school's library called『Edible Wildflowers in the City』and tried it out.

If it turned out to be delicious in this world as well, he would recommend it to everyone.

「Now then, I guess it's time to go. Stop spinning.」(Vandalieu)

Ordering the electric-fan-shaped Golem to stop spinning, Vandalieu left the bathhouse to begin the medical examination of Basdia's body.

Incidentally, the dandelion coffee that Vandalieu would create in the future

would turn out to be not very delicious, perhaps because the plant itself differed from the dandelions on Earth. It did not become popular in Talosheim.

However, he made electric-fan-shaped Golems from the surplus wood that could obey certain commands such as rotating their propellers, setting their rotation speed to one of three levels and swaying left and right across a bed. These became popular in Talosheim instead.

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「Now then, I'll start the medical examination.」(Vandalieu)

「Yeah, I'm counting on you.」(Basdia)

Wearing a white fur in place of a white doctor's gown, Vandalieu immediately used【Spirit Form Transformation】on his arms, which then penetrated Basdia's body as she was lying down.

It was his first time examining Basdia with this method, but he had done it plenty of times to other Ghouls so he was very accustomed to doing this.

『Hmm, maybe it's because her Rank increased. Her body is the embodiment of health.』(Vandalieu)

There were no problems with her blood, her blood vessels or the function of her major organs. In fact, everything was very vigorous.

There was also no problem with her uterus. Vandalieu couldn't see any injuries, inflammation or disease. Could it be that pure coincidence or perhaps stress was the reason that she couldn't get pregnant? So he thought, but he checked her ovaries as well just in case.

『… Hmm? This is strange, what is this?』(Vandalieu)

And then he felt a strong, uncomfortable feeling.

「W-what's wrong, Van? It seems that your hands have stopped…?」(Basdia)

Basdia was enduring the sensation of some foreign objects creeping around inside her, but she noticed that Vandalieu's behavior had changed and spoke out to him.

「Hmm… I'm going to examine you a bit more, so tell me if it feels

unpleasant.」(Vandalieu)

As he said this, Vandalieu concentrated on examining her two ovaries.

Normally, the ovaries and testes would contain strong signs of life. Vandalieu perceived that life as heat.

With healthy ovaries and testes, touching them with his spirit-form hands would even feel like plunging them into boiling water, but… Basdia's ovaries didn't feel hot.

『Are her ovaries dead? No, it's not to that extent. But they're not functioning normally.』(Vandalieu)

So what was causing this problem? Vandalieu examined them again, but there was no injury or disease. Vandalieu consulted his knowledge that he had learned on Earth and the information that he had overheard in Origin.

『Now that I think about it, those researchers did say that my death-attribute magic contributed to the fields of obstetrics and gynecology.』(Vandalieu)

They were unpleasant people who would constantly be muttering things in an indistinguishable tone and then shout at Vandalieu when he failed to hear them. Well, Vandalieu didn't care about the researchers right now.

『If I recall, abortion, contraception, prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases… Ah, infertility treatment.』(Vandalieu)

Though not every case had been successful, there had been some occasions in Origin where Vandalieu's death-attribute magic had been used to treat infertility. There were numerous methods such as prolonging the life of the egg cells and sperm as the Magic Items that he had created for the Ghouls did, and using【Youth Transformation】on the egg cells.

But there were also cases that were difficult to treat with death-attribute magic.

『Basdia's case is one of those. If the egg cells aren't mature, they can't be fertilized. It would be simpler to treat this using life-attribute magic.』(Vandalieu)

The ovaries were functioning sub-optimally and the egg cells were not

maturing. With that being the case, it would just be a matter of using life-attribute magic to make the ovaries work more vigorously, but Vandalieu possessed no aptitude for the life attribute.

Fortunately, there were individuals capable of using life-attribute magic in Talosheim, like Nuaza. There was the option of asking him to help. However, there was a problem in that Vandalieu didn't know how knowledgeable Nuaza was about physiology.

Magic is strongly influenced by the caster's knowledge and imagination. If a mage who has spent his whole life in a country that is perpetually in the season of summer and a mage who has spent his whole life in a country with harsh winters were to both create ice using magic, the one from the snowy country would be able to do so more skillfully.

In the same way, Nuaza casting some vague magic without knowing how the organs function wouldn't be very effective.

Vandalieu could teach Nuaza what he knew, but unlike basic arithmetic, it would take time for Nuaza to understand physiological concepts.

「Well then, I'll give it a try first, and if that doesn't work then I'll ask Nuaza to help.」(Vandalieu)

「Hmm? What are you saying about Nuaza… Kuh, ah, ugh.」(Basdia)

This method was very roundabout and many steps would have to be followed. The gist of it was that Vandalieu would suck out the negative components of the ovaries and transfer his own Vitality to them, making them function normally.

Though the overall process would be difficult to control using life-attribute magic, it would be completed in one step, while doing it with death-attribute magic required the process to be divided into dozens of separate steps. Without the【Chant Revocation】skill, it would likely take over an hour.

『I'll activate【Surpass Limits.】I wish I had three… or at least two more brains.』(Vandalieu)

He began complaining internally about the fact that his head was becoming feverish even with the use of【Surpass Limits】, but quickly put those thoughts

aside.

「It feels kind of warm?」(Basdia)

「It's because of my【Rapid Healing】skill and【Enhanced Healing Power.】」(Vandalieu)

Even the process of transferring his Vitality to her needed him to transform his arms with【Spirit Form Transformation】, fuse them with Basdia and trick her body into thinking that they were a part of it, trigger his【Rapid Healing】skill and cast the no-attribute spell【Enhanced Healing Power】at the same time.

Around ten minutes passed and the【Rapid Healing】skill stopped. It seemed that things had healed for now.

Both the left and right ovaries were now overflowing with enough Vitality to burn Vandalieu's spirit form hands.

Vandalieu wasn't sure whether they had completely recovered or whether the effects of this treatment were temporary, but it should be fine for… at least a month.

「I've finished treating you for now. Let's see how things go from here.」(Vandalieu)

「It's over, huh… Th-thanks.」(Basdia)

With sweat on her face, Basdia let out a sigh of relief. As Zadiris had experienced when Vandalieu applied【Youth Transformation】on her, it seemed that the sensation of his spirit form hands crawling around inside the body was not a pleasant one.

「I'll inspect you again in a month from now. If anything happens before then, let me know.」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu said this, he felt a vague feeling that he had become a doctor. As this thought ran through his mind, his stomach growled. It seemed that this work had taken a toll on not only his Mana, but his body as well.

「I'm hungry as well. Alright, I'll make something. We brought plenty of ingredients with us from the Dungeon, after all.」(Basdia)

「I'm counting on you.」(Vandalieu)

It had been several months since Vandalieu had become three years old, but Darcia still didn't allow him to cook using a fire… even though he did possess the【Cooking】skill.

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Vandalieu removed the wooden lid and gently lifted her out.

With a wet cloth he had sterilized with【Disinfect】, he wiped her smooth skin, taking care not to cause any scratches to it. Using【Sterilize】would only kill microorganisms; it wouldn't remove any dust.

『Bocchan, what are you doing?』(Sam)

「As you can see, I'm taking care of Zandia by hand.」(Vandalieu)

Sam had an indescribably confused expression, but Vandalieu answered his question while caring for Zandia, of whom only the left hand and wrist remained.

「Now that I think about it, you've started to make quite a lot of different facial expressions, haven't you, Sam?」(Vandalieu)

The previous Sam… the spirit form of Sam that had sat on the carriage was mist in the shape of a person and the horses pulling the carriage were only mist in the shape of horses. It had been impossible to distinguish any kind of facial expression.

However, now that Sam's【Spirit Form】skill had leveled up, he definitely appeared to be a human at a glance, albeit one with pale skin and red eyes. Each hair of his beard had been reproduced realistically; if he wore a hat to cover his eyes, he would look just like a regular, pale-skinned person.

The horses were the same; if they closed their red eyes, they would look like normal horses… No, they might appear too ominous to be called normal, but in any case, they did appear to be horses.

『Haah, thank you very much. More importantly, why are you performing such a noble deed? I would understand if it were an Undead, but I do believe that it is but a hand.』(Sam)

Vandalieu had cast【Preservation】on the hand to prevent decomposition, but

it wasn't Undead or anything; it was still just a hand. Sam apparently found it strange that Vandalieu was taking care of it.

「If I didn't treat it well, she would get angry at me when we meet, won't she?」(Vandalieu)

If Zandia had become a sentient Undead, she wouldn't be pleased to learn that her hand had been treated poorly. That was why Vandalieu was caring for her hand.

Hearing this, Sam gave a sigh of relief.

『So that is how it is. I had presumed that you might be the kind of person with a strong interest in certain body parts of the opposite sex, Bocchan…』(Sam)

「No, I don't have a fetish for hands.」(Vandalieu)

What an outrageous misunderstanding. Vandalieu didn't have a taste for such things.

『I see. I have heard that there are many noblemen who have peculiar tastes, so I thought that perhaps…』(Sam)

『If anything, Father, Bocchan prefers muscles.』(Saria)

『The problem is that we don't have either muscles or hands. Our hands are pieces of armor, after all.』(Rita)

It seemed that noblemen were sinful people in this world as well.

『Speaking of noblemen, there's something I wanted to confirm.』(Darcia)

Darcia spoke as she smoothly appeared and joined the conversation.

「Mom, I definitely feel hesitant to be discussing things like this with you –」(Vandalieu)

『Not that. I mean regarding the kind of nobleman that you want to be in the future.』(Darcia)

That side of things, huh. Vandalieu breathed a sigh of relief.

『You said that you'll make a child with Basdia when you become an adult; are you serious about that?』(Darcia)

He had breathed that sigh of relief too early.

「I was thinking that things might turn out that way.」(Vandalieu)

In any case, Vandalieu was still in a three-year-old's body, unable to feel lust or feelings of love, so he wasn't sure. But he was thinking that things would end up that way in more than ten years from now.

He thought well of Basdia, she was beautiful and he didn't feel any negative feelings at being desired by such a person.

She was a member of a different race, but Vandalieu himself was a child of mixed blood. It was apparently possible for them to have children, so he couldn't see a reason to refuse.

He had always yearned for a warm family, anyway.

『Don't get me wrong, I think that Basdia is a great person too. She's sturdy, and I can believe that she would protect you, Vandalieu.』(Darcia)

「… Yes.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu felt a strange desire to object, but considering that he was a young child and Basdia was a Ghoul Amazoness, he understood that this was easy to imagine.

『But I think that many people would loudly disapprove of that if you wanted to become a nobleman. The Orbaume Kingdom is much more tolerant than the Amid Empire, but there will be people who hate Dhampirs as well…』(Darcia)

It seemed that Darcia was concerned with the events leading up to and after Vandalieu becoming a nobleman.

Indeed, when Vandalieu thought about it, it might become a problem if Vandalieu were to have a child with Ghouls who were treated as monsters by human society.

There had been people who would start baseless rumors even on Earth, and there would be some who would be displeased with a Dhampir becoming a nobleman.

『There would also be problems regarding succession.』(Saria)

As Saria said, having children would directly lead to having problems with succession. This was only natural, as noble families were families that continued generation after generation.

And whether the Orbaume Kingdom would accept the possibility of a half-Ghoul child being the next generation's successor to Vandalieu's family was largely questionable.

Of course, even after Vandalieu became a nobleman, neither he nor Basdia would think of making their child a nobleman as well, but there would be those who would make a fuss over the mere「possibility」even if Vandalieu himself didn't desire that.

Vandalieu had never given this proper thought or consideration, but he had something of an idea.

「About that, I'll alter my course and aim to be not a nobleman, but an honorary nobleman.」(Vandalieu)

『If I recall, honorary noblemen are noblemen only for one generation who cannot be succeeded, right?』(Darcia)

『Yes, it is a title bestowed to people who were made noblemen because of their achievements and those who cannot succeed their noble families due to being born after the first son.』(Sam)

As Darcia and Sam said, honorary noblemen were noblemen who could not have a successor. They generally did not govern over land and would receive an annuity for the rest of their lives, but they were mostly noblemen only in title.

But this only-in-title nobility would be convenient for Vandalieu.

『Would you be content with that, Bocchan? Well, most people would consider that to be a great success in life.』(Sam)

『I've heard that the annuity that such noblemen would receive is several times the income of a normal person, but…』(Darcia)

This was how honorary noblemen were generally treated. There were plenty of stories of individuals who had strived to become noblemen but only managed to become honorary noblemen.

「Yes, because just receiving an annuity without having land, an official position or a successor is much more convenient.」(Vandalieu)

Naturally, Vandalieu had no need for land. He had no knowledge of how to make a region prosper. He could simply find and employ a reliable vassal to do it for him, but doing that on his own would be difficult. No matter how he thought about it, he could only imagine that it would be more than he could handle.

He did think that he would be able to do various things with【Golem Transmutation】if he owned land with people living in it, however.

An official position would be too much to handle as well. Vandalieu had lived for around forty years in total, but he had no experience in regards to society. He could probably fill the position if someone taught him how, but he couldn't imagine that it would be enjoyable work.

As for having a successor, when he had seen how long Dhampirs' life-spans were at the Adventurers' Guild before, he had thought,「Ah, that would be impossible.」He estimated that he would live for three thousand years as long as he wasn't killed; there was no way that he would become an nobleman that would be succeeded.

That was why he was aiming to be an honorary nobleman. He would have no land, official position or successors. But those around him would still respect him as a nobleman.

It would also be much easier to reach this position than a court rank where he would have land and require a successor.

「The reason I wanted to become a nobleman was so that the guys who will be reincarnating here from Origin will hesitate to kill me, and because I want enough money to live in luxury. I'm alright with being either a nobleman or an honorary nobleman as long as I have the reputation that comes with it.」(Vandalieu)

『What will you do to gain the required sum of money?』(Sam)

「I'm thinking I can just earn it normally as an adventurer. Let's do our best, everyone.」(Vandalieu)

Even just the materials that they had obtained from clearing Garan's Valley today would sell for a considerable amount at an Adventurers' Guild. Vandalieu figured that if he could earn this much as a three-year-old, he would eventually be able to earn more than a lowly nobleman if he continued working hard.

「And I'm sure that giving up my nobility would also be simple if I were an honorary nobleman.」(Vandalieu)

『Eh?! You're going to give it up?!』(Saria)

「Yes. I think I'll consider it once I come to an understanding with the others who will be reincarnated.」(Vandalieu)

For Vandalieu, gaining the status of nobility was nothing more than a means to an end.

It was true that being a nobleman would be convenient. It would certainly feel good to exercise his influence and special rights, and he had no doubt that there would be delicious foods that only noblemen could eat, high-quality goods that only noblemen could obtain and pieces of art that only noblemen could see.

But what if the burdens of being a nobleman became greater than those privileges? What would he do if it hindered his interactions with the Ghouls and Undead, or he were to get involved in some troublesome power struggle?

It was simple. He would simply return the tool that had already served its purpose.

「A nobleman wouldn't be able to give up his position easily if he is in charge of land with people living in it, but an honorary nobleman wouldn't have responsibilities or anything. I would just need to give up my position, stay low for a hundred years or so and then wait for things to calm down.」(Vandalieu)

Sam and his daughters were at a loss for words.

In this world, noblemen were special people; they were treated as completely different creatures even if they were members of the same race. In fact, there were more than a few noblemen that wouldn't hesitate to say that they were superior beings to commoners.

『It's certainly exactly as you say. That's amazing, Vandalieu. To think that you had put so much thought into it; I'm seeing you in a new light now~♪』(Darcia)

Darcia's reaction was like this, but only because she had been raised in a Dark Elf village whose society was nothing like an aristocracy.

For those like Sam and his daughters who had once served noblemen, Vandalieu's view on things was astounding.

But this was something that Vandalieu could say because he possessed the values of modern Japan. He wouldn't go as far as to say that all of humanity were like brothers and sisters, but he would only give a scornful laugh at those who said that noblemen were beings who were superior to commoners.

Sam and his daughters were still completely silent, and Vandalieu became worried that his statement based on his own values had caused them unpleasant feelings.

『I see… As expected of you, Bocchan.』(Sam)

But it seemed that this wasn't the case. As Sam opened his mouth to speak after having been completely still for a while, he seemed to have a deeply moved expression on his face.

『So you are saying that the status of being a nobleman would be nothing but a hindrance to you, Bocchan!』(Sam)

「… Eh?」(Vandalieu)

『It is just as the goddess prophesized. An extraordinary individual must have extraordinary ambitions!』(Saria)

「Wait a –」(Vanadlieu)

『And you even said that you are the Holy Son to Borkus-san! So you really are planning to use Talosheim as a foothold to unite the entire continent?』(Rita)

「You're joking or teasing me, aren't you?」(Vandalieu)

It somehow seemed that there were various independent rumors and exaggerated truths. I don't plan to do anything that outrageous, thought Vandalieu as he scratched his head.

Even if he were to do something like that, at most, it would be the restoration of Talosheim.

『I'm sure it will be fine; Vandalieu is the type who grows when people praise him. Given a thousand years, I'm sure that he'll be able to unite the continent.』(Darcia)

「I think you're a little too patient.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu didn't feel any enthusiasm for the idea of spending a thousand years uniting the continent. The continent wouldn't be unified so easily, anyway.

Things don't always go as planned in life, but Vandalieu thought that becoming an honorary nobleman was a reasonable goal.

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The next day, Borkus's party still hadn't returned so Vandalieu joined Zadiris and her group in training, deciding to ask questions about Jobs later.

「Since you are joining us today, boy, we will be doing special training.」(Zadiris)

They were outside Talosheim's walls. The Ghoul mages led by Zadiris, the Black Goblins and the Anubises including Memediga were gathered here.

「Now then, we will begin training with the aim of acquiring the【Chant Revocation】skill.」(Zadiris)

Everyone gave a cheer. The【Chant Revocation】skill is a skill that allows the user to cast spells without the necessary incantations.

The effects of this skill could be described in one word as tremendous.

It removes the need for the actions normally taken to cast spell, causing spells to require no time to prepare. It allows for consecutive casts of spells that pushes the caster's Mana and Intelligence to their limits and even removes the risk of a spell's incantation of giving away which spell is being cast or being interrupted to make the spell misfire.

It is a remarkably more difficult skill to acquire than the【Chant Reduction】skill that shortens the time needed to make an incantation, but its effect is also

remarkably different.

But the method of learning the skill is exceedingly simple. One simply needs to continue casting spells without incantations.

But casting a spell without an incantation consumes at least several hundred times the amount of Mana and produces an effect that is less than a tenth of the original spell. Even skilled mages cannot perform this task repeatedly.

And so Zadiris and the others were casting spells silently to try and learn this skill.

A light resembling that of a firefly so small that it was almost invisible in the sunlight appeared at Zadiris's fingertip.

Small droplets of water appeared at the fingertips of the Ghouls and Undead Titans to dampen their surroundings, pinky-fingertip-sized flames appeared and vanished and small gusts of wind blew around them.

As this process was repeated, one by one, they ran out of Mana.

「We're counting on you, boy.」(Zadiris)

「Oka~ay.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had been watching up until now, but now he used【Spirit Form Transformation】on his arms and changed their shape so that they became bundles of tubes. And as these pipes reached the mages, his Mana pool of over 100,000,000 was poured into them through【Mana Transfer.】

This was the crucial point of the training. Zadiris and the others lacked Mana, so even if they did training to learn the【Chant Revocation】skill, it would take far too long for them to achieve their goal. And for Vandalieu to do the training of using up his entire Mana pool of over 100,000,000 to increase its size, it would normally take more than an entire day.

And so Vandalieu was providing the mages with Mana. This allowed Vandalieu to quickly and easily use up all of his Mana.

「Alright, we will continue the training!」(Zadiris)

With this method, the mages could perform ten days' worth of training to gain the【Chant Revocation skill】in a single day.

The problem was…

「I’m surprisingly free.」(Vandalieu)

The problem was that he didn’t get the feeling that he was training just by acting as a Mana source, so he seemed quite free. If he crossed his legs and meditated, then perhaps it would seem more like training.

Notes

1. As far as Googling gets me, this is just a fancy word for rich people.

Chapter 40: Human society is in good shape, but more importantly, I want seaweed

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The region ruled by Viscount Balchesse was experiencing an unexpected period of prosperity.

This was because the project to reclaim the Devil's Nest forest three days' journey from the town was proceeding smoothly.

Most of the powerful monsters living there had already been hunted down, and even when monsters did appear, it was usually an Orc or two wielding thick tree branches as clubs. The hired adventurers had no problem dealing with them.

The soldiers cut down the trees and earth-attribute magic was cast by mages to make the ground flat and to crush the rocks into smaller pieces, making them easier to transport.

It hadn't even been half a year since the reclamation began, but not even a quarter of the original Devil's Nest remained.

The reclamation would continue until snow began falling and the rich soil would be cultivated. Water wells, reservoirs and irrigation channels would be dug into the ground and the preparations to set up multiple farming villages would be complete.

With the coming of spring, people would immigrate and gather here; houses would be built and seeds would be planted in the ground. Considerable harvests could be expected on the first year cultivating the land of the Devil's Nest, so the inhabitants cultivating the land would need little assistance.

Once the tax exemption period ended, plenty of taxes would enter the purse of Viscount Balchesse. In ten years' time, not only would he have recouped the

costs of reclaiming the land, he would have made a profit.

It had even been decided that the viscount's third son would take the position of governing the reclaimed land.

Of course, it was not only the viscount and his vassals that were making a profit here. Those immigrating to live in the farming villages that would soon be built, the inhabitants of slums who were unable to find jobs, sons of farming families who couldn't inherit their families' fields because of the order in which they had been born, adventurers who had been forced to retire due to reasons such as injury or age and other people like these would also benefit.

Thanks to this reclamation project, they would be able to own their own houses and fields, get married and have families.

And building farming villages would mean that guards would need to be organized to protect them, so the budget and number of available positions in the army would increase. Churches for Alda, the God of Law and Fate, would also be built so there would be more positions available for those involved with the Church.

The viscount's region had been reliant on trading with other regions to obtain produce up until now, but if they people could harvest their own crops, they would be able to obtain fresh produce for cheaper prices.

And the town closest to the reclaimed land would be supplying the villages with goods and daily necessities, lining the people's pockets even further.

Everyone would be receiving the blessings of this time of prosperity.

Even people living outside Viscount Balchesse's region were benefiting; immigrants were being recruited from slums elsewhere in an effort to reduce poverty.

The ones not benefiting would be the adventurers and Marshal Palpapek. However, even though they were not benefiting largely, that didn't mean that they were being set back by this project, either.

The adventurers had lost the Devil's Nest forest as a place they could earn money, but there had always been a larger Devil's Nest that was even closer to Viscount Balchesse's town. It wasn't a large problem for a small Devil's Nest

with no Dungeons that took three days to reach on foot to disappear.

Marshal Thomas Palpapek had been criticized harshly by the finance minister and resigned from his position of marshal in order to clear away the accusations that he had some kind of illegal backroom deal with the reclamation project.

But though the shield-nation's government couldn't publicly commend Palpapek due to how things had turned out, it was true that the nation had benefited from these events. And though his failure had been an unprecedented event, it didn't produce any casualties.

So it was expected that he would be reappointed to his position after the commotion surrounding the reclamation project died down, or even if it didn't, he would be reappointed within the next ten years.

The Palpapek family of earls didn't have a monopoly over the position of marshal; three families of earls would take turns filling the position in periods ranging from a few years to over a decade. This was because if the position was owned by a single family and that family's head and his heir were to be suddenly assassinated, the army would lose its chief executive.

With other families filling the marshal position generation after generation, marshals supported by knowledgeable vassals could be prepared if such a thing were to happen.

It seemed like a callous approach, but the nation had been at war repeatedly with neighboring nations since its foundation. There was no room for naivety.

The Palpapek family of earls had produced the most exceptional marshals among the three families that filled this role; even now, Thomas was striving to be known as a protective god of the nation.

In fact, several vassals of the Palpapek family of earls were planning to enlist to become guards for the new farming villages that would be built. Even they were benefiting from these events.

That was why nobody was at a loss from this reclamation project; everyone was benefiting.

On the surface, at least.

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「Has a route through the mountain range still not been mapped out yet?」(Eleanora)

In a room of an inn in the town reserved for the upper class, the red-haired Noble-born Vampire Eleanora was sitting in a chair with a seemingly… no, a very clearly scornful gaze directed at Sercrent, who was wearing a sour expression.

The wounds on his face and body from the merciless punishment that Birkyne had inflicted on Sercrent had healed completely, leaving no scars behind. However, it seemed that he found the rage induced by the words spoken by the woman in front of him to be more unbearable than the pain of that torture.

「Do you even understand how difficult the request you are making is?」(Sercrent)

However, Sercrent exercised the all of the patience he possessed to control his rage. Though this was a high-class establishment, it was still just an inn, not a castle or building owned by Vampires. He couldn't raise his voice to be heard in the nearby rooms and corridors.

「Oh, but didn't the humans accomplish that just two hundred years ago?」(Eleanora)

「Two hundred years ago is different from now, and why do we even have to avoid monsters as much as possible in the first place? That is where we are different from the humans!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent and Eleanora were both Noble-born Vampires. Their ability in battle surpassed that of lesser Dragons, and could even be compared to Fire Dragons and Ice Dragons.

They also possessed various special abilities that Dragons did not have, and as their bodies were in the same shape as those of humans, they were able to move around very dexterously.

Of course, they had weaknesses as well. The sun, silver, offensive light-attribute spells and anti-Vampire Magic Items created by the followers of the god Alda. However, when crossing the mountain range, the only thing they would have to be careful about was the sunlight. There were monsters that cast

light-attribute spells, but most of these spells would be flashes of light to blind the enemy, deceiving illusion spells and spells that removed all light from a space in order to create an opportunity for a surprise attack in the dark. These wouldn't be a threat for Vampires.

Even if they didn't bother finding a route that would let them avoid monsters, they would probably lose a few Subordinate Vampires crossing the mountain range, but that would be the extent of their losses.

However, Eleanora gave an exasperated sigh.

「Sercrent… Your foolishness is beyond help.」(Eleanora)

「What did you say?!」(Sercrent)

「How skillful of you to shout while still keeping quiet. But it would be troublesome if you don't use your brain more than just for that.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora treated Sercrent with none of the ladylike behavior that she had displayed in front of Birkyne; this was her true self.

She was showing that there was no need to keep up appearances with Sercrent.

「Did you forget the information that you reported yourself? The target Dhampir is a Spiritualist, isn't he? With that being the case, he'd be able to obtain information about us from the spirits of the monsters we kill, won't he?」(Eleanora)

「Th-that may be possible, but that would normally be quite difficult. Didn't you conclude that Spiritualists aren't capable of anything significant with your own investigations?」(Sercrent)

There weren't many who possessed the Spiritualist Job. It is a Job that is completely unsuitable for battle, and it does not enable the creation of items or products, either. It only enables communication with the dead, fortune-telling and small exorcisms.

Because of this, the number and popularity of Spiritualists was quite low. That was why Eleanora was planning to use her inherent skills to obtain information about Spiritualists from the Adventurers' Guild and a Spiritualist in person while

Sercrent was to find a route across the Boundary Mountain Range.

「And do you think that the spirits of the monsters would seek the Dhampir of their own accord?」(Sercrent)

Spiritualists are capable of seeing and conversing with spirits, using Necromancy to summon the spirits of the dead and reading residual memories.

Though it was impressive that they overturn the rule of “dead men tell no tales”, it is not as if all spirits are friendly towards Spiritualists and they are unable to tame Undead.

Sercrent thought that a Spiritualist wouldn’t be such a large threat if caution was taken against them, but Eleanora had a different opinion.

「And what will we do if he *is* capable of something significant? The information I gathered only applies to normal Spiritualists. This Dhampir has been accomplishing unprecedented things one after another, hasn’t he? Doesn’t that make you think that he might not be a normal Spiritualist?」(Eleanora)

Sercrent had no response to these words other than to nod.

For example, what if he was able to summon only spirits that met certain conditions among a large group of spirits?

If the Dhampir was able to summon spirits holding malice against those who meant to do him harm, the Boundary Mountain range was not only a sturdy wall but a garrison of faithful guards for him.

Eleanora did think that such a thing would be impossible, but this Dhampir had already done plenty of things that were considered impossible, and as a result, the man before her eyes was on the edge of a dangerous cliff.

If she underestimated the Dhampir, she would be joining him on the edge of that cliff.

「So make sure you plan our route properly. To think that you wouldn’t understand these things if I didn’t explain them to you… If you don’t understand things, can you at least have the obedience to listen to what I say despite not understanding?」(Eleanora)

Being reprimanded in a way even worse than simply being told outright that he was incompetent, Sercrent ground his fangs together.

But for the Vampires who followed the teachings of the【Evil God of Joyful Life】, this kind of conversation was extremely commonplace.

Their personal relationships with each other generally only amounted to whether the others were superior or inferior to themselves. They used words like equals, companions, brethren and siblings, but they only judged and thought of others as above or below them.

It was simple when the hierarchical difference was clearly established, like the difference between a Pure-breed and a Noble-born or the difference between a Noble-born and a Subordinate. However, things got very bloody very quickly between Pure-breed Vampires or Noble-born Vampires.

With others in better positions than them, they would take any opportunity they could to bring the others down and raise themselves above.

With others below them, they would emphasize their superiority and make the others obey, trampling them underfoot to make sure they didn't get any funny ideas.

And when those hierarchical differences of who was superior and who was inferior had not yet been decided, they fought in various ways to establish those differences.

And though Eleanora was a genius, only several years had passed since she had become a Vampire while Sercrent had spent a considerably long time as a Vampire. Though Eleanora was a little stronger than him, the difference between them wasn't a large one.

However, Sercrent had been criticized harshly for his failure by Birkyne and almost all of the important figures in the community had seen him in an extremely pitiful state. He had received no protection or support from Gubamon, his「parent」; there were orders that he was to be killed if he failed again. That was why he was in a vastly inferior position to Eleanora.

As long as he was in an inferior position, Eleanora would have to keep kicking him down. If she didn't, then that would mean that she wasn't superior to this

fallen man. In short, she would be viewed as inferior to him.

「… Alright. I'll make the Subordinates work faster.」(Sercrent)

「If it seems that it will take some time, perhaps you should ask Elder Gubamon for any suggestions. He was involved with the events of two hundred years ago, wasn't he? He might know something that would be helpful here.」(Eleanora)

「… I'll take that into consideration.」(Sercrent)

Seeing Sercrent say these words over his shoulder and leave the room, disappearing behind the door, Eleanora whispered.

「Sorry. But I don't want to be dragged down with you.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora no longer felt hunger and had gained the power that would allow her to fight against even a Dragon without dirtying her own body in the process. But the color of fear was visible in her eyes.

Because she understood that if she failed, she would be the next to stand in Sercrent's position.

The final day spent training to acquire the【Chant Revocation】skill was the seventh day of training.

「Ooh! I have finally acquired the【Chant Revocation】skill; this is yet another warm gift of generosity from the Holy Son!」(Nuaza)

Nuaza raised his arms that were supposed to be made of skin and bone but were now thick and muscular up in the air as he let out a happy shout.

「Huh, it seems that I have been beaten to it.」(Zadiris)

「Hahaha, though I am a Lesser Lich, I am still a Lich, after all.」(Nuaza)

「Well, I am a Ghoul Mage. And I even possess the Mage Job.」(Zadiris)

Zadiris seemed envious of the proud Nuaza. She still hadn't managed to learn the trick behind using the skill.

Monsters do gain bonuses and penalties to skills based on their race. They aren't as remarkable as the bonuses a person would get from acquiring a Job; it is simply a matter of being suited or unsuited to certain skills.

Orcs are strong, Kobolds are agile and so on.

So the fact that Nuaza had acquired the【Chant Revocation】skill before Zadiris meant that he possessed more aptitude for the【Chant Revocation】skill than her, or that he possessed more relevant knowledge.

Incidentally, it is a fact that talent in this world allows those who possess it to level up more easily, increase their Ranks quickly and learn and develop skills more quickly than normal. However, that doesn't mean that hard work isn't important.

Both people and monsters level up through training and diligent study, and can increase their Rank by meeting certain conditions. They can even learn skills through hard work.

However, it was a matter of when.

Even if someone with genius talent in wielding a sword were to acquire a level 5 skill in Swordsmanship within a year, a normal person might be able to reach the same level with years or decades of dedicated training.

Even a particularly unintelligent, weak Goblin would be able to become a Goblin King. Though that would require it to put in tireless effort for almost its entire lifespan, it is possible.

When an adventurer with a superhuman talent studies diligently and gains experience with various things, he becomes an A-class adventurer capable of defeating Dragons and fully clearing high-difficulty Dungeons.

An adventurer with meagre talent may only end up as a D-class adventurer even with the same amount of hard work and experience. However, if he puts in ten times or even a hundred times the work of the adventurer with superhuman talent, his hard work and tenacity may be rewarded with the achievement of becoming an A-class adventurer.

In the majority of cases, the hard work is interrupted before it can be rewarded.

There are few who can obstinately strive for the top while sacrificing everything else in their lives to do so; there are plenty who give up and turn their attention towards other endeavors.

In the case of adventurers and monsters, many die or are forced to retire due to serious injury before their hard work produces any results. The law of “survival of the fittest” applies to everyone.

(I did like the type of protagonists who overcome genius with hard work when I was on Earth, though.)

As Vandalieu absentmindedly made acorn powder while supplying everyone with Mana, he realized that to everyone else, he must seem like a genius rather than an ordinary person.

Having a vast amount of Mana was a great talent in and of itself.

He had been an ordinary person on Earth and his talent had never been rewarded in Origin, so he didn’t really get the feeling that this was the case, however.

「Now then, I think that if you use【Chant Revocation】to cast spells the skill will level up, so please return to your normal training.」(Vandalieu)

「Muh, now that it has come to this, I feel a little reluctant…」(Nuaza)

「Fufufu, you can go to the Dungeons and Devil’s Nests anytime now.」(Zadiris)

Nuaza seemed disappointed, while Zadiris gave an ill-mannered laugh. It seemed that Vandalieu’s Mana made those under the influence of his【Death-Attribute Charm】feel a very pleasant sensation.

「Well, since my one-week break is over today, I’m thinking of going into a Dungeon tomorrow.」(Vandalieu)

「What?!」(Zadiris)

Zadiris was surprised, and Nuaza was the one to give an ill-mannered laugh this time. Their positions had been reversed.

「B-boy, do you not think that it would be wise to rest a little longer?!」(Zadiris)

「I want Experience Points, not rest. And there are materials that I want to get my hands on as well.」(Vandalieu)

The next Dungeon Vandalieu planned to clear was Doran’s Aquatic Cavern. It

was a D-class Dungeon like Garan's Valley, but it also had many floors and its monsters were considered stronger than those of Garan's Valley and dangerous traps appeared more frequently.

It was also the Dungeon that had supplied Talosheim with its marine products.

Many of the floors in Doran's Aquatic Caverns were arranged as caves containing underground lakes with islands of various sizes and underground rivers, but the water of the rivers was saltwater and inhabited by creatures that would normally be found in oceans.

Vandalieu hadn't been particularly fond of seafood on Earth, but right now there was an ingredient that he had to get his hands on no matter what.

He wanted kombu, wakame[1] or any kind of seaweed that could substitute for those.

(I tried making miso soup with the acorn miso, but it didn't turn out well for some reason. That reason is because I don't have dashi[2]!)

Vandalieu had made miso soup for himself as a student on Earth, but he didn't use dashi back then either. He had tried to reproduce that miso soup in Lambda, but for some reason it was clearly worse than when he had made it on Earth.

Perhaps there was a problem with the tools he was using to make the soup, or perhaps the miso made from walnuts and acorns weren't suited to be used in soups. Giving it some thought, he had come to a sudden realization.

The miso soup he had on Earth had contained dashi!

The miso he had used back then contained dashi to begin with. But the miso soup he was making now was handmade, dashi-less miso. There was no way that he could create delicious miso soup this way.

He had come to the conclusion that to make delicious miso soup, dashi needed to be used as a base.

And with dashi, he would also need katsuobushi[3], dried sardines and kombu. He had to obtain these from Doran's Aquatic Caverns. The kombu was the most

important one.

It was possible that the culture of eating seaweed didn't exist in the continent of Bahn Gaia. At the very least, it didn't on the Amid Empire side of the continent.

Darcia, Sam and the others had never heard of eating seaweed before, so Vandalieu wanted to at least try spreading the idea.

Even on Earth, only certain regions and people had the culture of eating seaweed including Japan, so there couldn't be many people eating seaweed in this world.

Since it seemed unlikely that he would be able to obtain these ingredients in the Orbaume Kingdom, he needed to obtain them and experiment while he could. Katsuobushi would need preparations in order for the smoking process, so he wanted to obtain the kombu first. Also, wakame and… nori[4]! Nori was a necessity for sushi, ramen, soumen[5] and onigiri.

He also wanted tengusa[6] to make vegetable gelatin.

「Zadiris, I need kombu. I need it to make delicious miso soup.」(Vandalieu)

「No, I think it is plenty delicious as it is.」(Zadiris)

「I think so too, but the Holy Son seems to have a strong ambition to reach new heights.」(Nuaza)

「I would say the boy is quite the glutton rather than that he has strong ambitions.」(Zadiris)

It seemed that Vandalieu's passion for food wasn't shared by the others.

However, everyone's opinions would change once they tasted miso soup containing dashi. In fact, Vandalieu himself had given a strong reaction upon trying miso soup before he tried making it himself.

(Ah, I forgot to think about the tools for making it.)

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The next day, Vandalieu entered Doran's Aquatic Caverns.

The members joining him this time were Sam, Braga, Zran[7], Kachia and Vigaro.

Sam had been brought along because of his ability to carry things and because he wanted to test his new equipment. The Black Goblin Braga had increased his Rank and was joining him to test out his strength. Zran, who had formerly been a rare Scout among the Titans, was acting as Braga's supervisor. Kachia had been brought along as a frontline fighter.

And Vigaro, who was clearly excess firepower to bring into a D-class Dungeon, was here for safety reasons just in case anything happened.

They entered the first floor to find…

「Fish, catch the fish!」(Titan)

『Fish sauce, FISH SAAAAAUCE!』(Titan)

The Undead Titans catching small fish using nets.

「I've seen this scene before...」(Vandalieu)

『We can't help it, Holy Son. It's all for the fish sauce.』(Titan)

「The one making it is me, though.」(Vandalieu)

The hunters of Talosheim had originally ignored the small fish. Fish smaller than fifty centimeters in length were incredibly small to Titans, had few edible parts and didn't sell for much. They had been better off spending their time catching the big ones that were over two meters long.

That was apparently how they had thought back then.

Fish sauce was the thing that had overturned the large-fish-supremacy movement. Undead Titans charmed by its taste had appeared one after another just like they had after being charmed by miso, and there were many who had been farmers while they were alive but had now become fishermen instead.

Incidentally, they were still reliant on the rock salt in Garan's Valley as a source of salt.

The water in Doran's Aquatic Caverns was seawater, so it was possible to make sea salt from it. But unlike the rock salt that could simply be carried off

and used after being mined, sea salt would take time and effort to make.

If they simply let the water dry off they wouldn't be able to remove the impurities from the salt, and it would be impossible to build salt evaporation ponds inside the Dungeon. Sunlight didn't even reach inside the Dungeon in the first place.

With that being the case, the next logical step would be to carry the saltwater outside the Dungeon, but that would be difficult, of course. It would be fine if it were a just a few sacks full of water, but transporting the saltwater en masse would require containers like barrels, and the Titans would be defenseless if monsters were to attack them while they were carrying those barrels. And if the barrels were damaged and the water was spilled, it would all be for naught.

That was why the Titans of Talosheim hadn't used the saltwater here for their salt. Though there was one occasion in the past in which the Second Princess Zandia had used space-attribute magic to transport seawater outside to turn into salt.

「With that being the case, I'll collect some saltwater before we clear the Dungeon.」(Vandalieu)

『Huh…』

Why was he going out of his way to do this when there was rock salt available? As this question passed through the minds of everyone here, Vandalieu nimbly rolled the barrels that were loaded in Sam's carriage.

「Get up, get in.」(Vandalieu)

Turning the pure saltwater running down next to the path into Aqua Golems, he ordered them to enter the barrels. It was difficult to maintain the shape of Golems made of liquid, but it was possible to have them enter these nearby barrels that were lying on their sides.

Now he just needed to carry them, but…

「Get up.」(Vandalieu)

With a loud rumble, the wall of the corridor began to move and became Rock Golems that picked up the barrels.

「Now then, please head to Talosheim.」(Vandalieu)

And then they lumbered off.【Golem Transmutation】was a truly convenient skill.

「Vandalieu, what are you going to do with the saltwater?」(Vigaro)

「Rock salt has a different taste from sea salt.」(Vandalieu)

「Really?」(Vigaro)

Vigaro gave Vandalieu a puzzled look, but Vandalieu assured him that he would notice the difference if he tried both.

He was going through this effort to turn the saltwater of a Dungeon into salt not only because its taste would be different, but also because since salt was such an important seasoning, he thought that it would be better to have multiple ways to acquire it.

At any rate, there were many Undead Titans addicted to miso and fish sauce. It was important to have a steady supply of the salt needed to make them.

However… he did wish that he could get his hands on soya beans or some kind of sweet flavoring.

「I wonder if there's any sugarcane growing somewhere.」(Vandalieu)

Well, he couldn't expect to acquire it from this Dungeon.

- **Name**: Braga
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Black Goblin Scout
- **Level**: 7
- **Passive skills**:
  - Dark Vision
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 2
  - Enhanced Agility: Level 3
  - Intuition: Level 1
  - Detect Presence: Level 2
- **Active skills**:
  - Short Sword Technique: Level 2

- Javelin Technique: Level 1
- Silent Steps: Level 2
- Trap: Level 1
- Dismantling: Level 1
- Unlocking: Level 1

Notes

1. Species of edible seaweed.
2. Japanese soup stock made from fish and kelp.
3. Dried, fermented and smoked skipjack tuna.
4. Yet another kind of edible seaweed, the type that's pressed into flat sheets and used for sushi and stuff.
5. Thin, white Japanese noodles made of wheat flour, often served cold.
6. A kind of algae that is used to make the white jelly stuff used in various Asian foods.
7. In case your memory is as bad as mine, Zran is an Undead Titan Scout that initially volunteered to join Vandalieu in his Dungeon adventures in chapter 34.
8. The author notes in this chapter that the tag "eventual revenge" was added to this novel on the Japanese website the web novel is hosted on. He also states here that Vandalieu will be a young boy at least up until the fifth volume.

Chapter 41: Let's take life one step at a time without rushing things

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Vandalieu was finding it difficult to level up. When he had consulted the former A-class adventurer, the【Sword King】Borkus tapped his fingers against his head as he answered.

『It can't be helped. The【Death Attribute Mage】Job is probably a specialized Job. The Dungeon you went to is Garan's Valley and those guys are the ones you brought with you. With that being the case, I'm sure leveling up would be hard.』(Borkus)

This knowledge wasn't something that had been properly quantified, but anyone who had progressed with their Jobs to a certain extent knew certain rules of thumb.

『You know that each Job requires different amounts of Experience Points to level up, right? Apprentice Jobs are easy to level, generic Jobs are moderately difficult and specialized Jobs are harder.』(Borkus)

As their names suggest, Apprentice Jobs are Jobs with the word「Apprentice」at the beginning of the Job Title. Basdia and Zadiris had reached level 100 for these Jobs in a matter of days; they are very easy to level up.

Generic Jobs are Jobs such as「Warrior」and「Mage」that give bonuses to a wide variety of skills.

And finally, specialized Jobs are Jobs like「Swordsman」, specialized for swordsmanship, or「Fire-Attribute Mage」and「Water-Attribute Mage」that are specialized for specific attributes.

『Since your Job is a newly-discovered one, I don't know the details about it either. But judging from the name, I can tell that it's a Job specialized for death-attribute magic. Still, it does seem that it provides bonuses to more skills than Jobs like【Light-Attribute Mage】and【Fire-Attribute Mage.】』(Borkus)

Apparently Jobs such as these required a lot of Experience Points to level up.

『Adventurers and even normal people only take specialized Jobs when they are aiming to become first-class in that field. With a Job like that, there's no way you can become stronger faster than a complete novice.』(Borkus)

Apparently, this is how it was.

Incidentally, the reason Ghouls have a Rank like monsters while Vandalieu didn't as a Dhampir despite both being races created by the goddess Vida is because of the different origins of the two races.

Races like Ghouls that possess the blood of both a monster and a goddess such as Vampires, Lamias, Scyllas and Centaurs have Ranks like monsters while also being able to gain Jobs like humans.

However, Vandalieu was a Dhampir born between a Vampire and a Dark Elf, so only a quarter of his blood originated from a monster. Because of this, he possessed a stronger constitution than humans while not having a Rank.

Borkus and the other Titans who had become Undead originated from the union between the goddess and the Giant god Zeno, so they hadn't possessed Ranks while alive, either.

***

Having decided not to be worried about his level increasing more slowly than those around him after consulting with Borkus, Vandalieu proceeded through Doran's Aquatic Caverns.

The majority of the monsters appearing here were aquatic species. Past the fifth floor, fish-people who possessed pale limbs protruding from the bodies of fish called Sahuagin, the Flying Sharks that had been present in Talosheim's waterways, Big Cancers[1] that possessed pincers large enough to cut a human in half and enormous octopuses called Killer Octopuses would appear.

Sahuagin were Rank 2 demi-human-type monsters that were called the Goblins of the sea, armed mainly with spears, but they were small-fry.

「This isn't edible, is it?」(Vandalieu)

『I suppose they aren't, though they might taste good if you haven't had any

food or water for three days.』(Zran)

It seemed that even their materials were Goblin-like.

They had fought Flying Sharks at the waterways of Talosheim many times, so nobody had any trouble dealing with them.

「【Quick Slash!】」(Braga)

As Braga dodged the jaws of a Flying Shark, he used a Short Sword Technique martial skill, cutting deeply into the Flying Shark's neck.

Braga had been born with a body built for agility, but it was training that had elevated that agility even higher. Braga had learned the techniques of a Scout with Zran as his instructor and gained the Short Sword Technique skill that relied on his speed more than his strength. His agility already matched that of a wild animal.

As Rank 2 monsters, the Black Goblins were the weakest among the new races created by Vandalieu, so even the weakest of the monsters in Garan's Valley that they used for training were at least the same Rank. By fighting the monsters in there, they were able to gain large amounts of Experience Points.

As a result, his Rank had increased and now he was a Black Goblin Scout, only half a year after his birth.

『I've raised quite the fearsome monster, if I do say so myself.』(Zran)

「I suppose so; the Flying Shark's head has been half-severed.」(Vandalieu)

『No, that's not what I mean.』(Zran)

Zran had a shrewd expression, brown brows furrowed and his mouth turned upwards into a smile.

『He's a monster Scout. He's a monster with stronger physical abilities than a human while possessing human-level skills. There are a lot of magical beasts that have special abilities that allow them to conceal their presence and catch their enemies by surprise. But that doesn't mean they're smart. They're just acting on instinct. But Braga would be able to do things like concealing his presence to tail a group of adventurers and assassinate the healer first, or infiltrating villages and towns to kidnap women and children.』(Zran)

「I see. You mean that Braga has a high potential to become a covert operative in the future.」(Vandalieu)

That was indeed a fearsome prospect. The Noble Orc Bugogan that Vandalieu had fought a difficult battle against had trained his skills to high levels. That was why Vandalieu had been forced to allow his own flesh and bone to be cut in order to win. If Bugogan had nothing but brute strength, Vandalieu wouldn't have even allowed Bugogan to cut the tip of his smallest finger.

Braga had the potential to become a monster as threatening as Bugogan. The possibility of him catching an enemy by surprise and stabbing them in the side instead of attacking from the front was particularly fearsome.

No, what was fearsome wasn't just Braga. It was all of the Black Goblins.

Braga was the fastest to develop among all of them, but according to Zran, all of them would increase their Ranks and become Black Goblin Scouts by the end of the year. In other words, all of the Black Goblins had the talent to be assassins and spies.

They would be a group of monsters capable of slipping past the defenses of humans to infiltrate their villages and towns. Though infiltration for long periods of time would be impossible due to their appearance, but they would at least be able to deal with the guards and open the gates from the inside to allow their comrades in.

「But you knew from the beginning that they would become fearsome when you were teaching them, didn't you? You were the one who taught them the Short Sword Technique, after all, Zran.」(Vandalieu)

『Hahahahaha.』(Zran)

「Wait, you're a monster as well, aren't you? You're an Undead.」(Vandalieu)

『Hahahahahahahaha!』(Zran)

「You really just wanted to act cool and boast about your student, didn't you?」(Vandalieu)

『Hahahaha, very perceptive, Holy Son!』(Zran)

「It's just that I know how you feel because I'm a person who likes boasting

myself.」(Vandalieu)

Though Vandalieu wouldn't call himself a parent, he felt strangely old as he thought about how that tiny Braga had grown up to be so great.

It would be good if Braga became powerful enough to hunt monsters on his own and he would be a reliable ally to have if the Mirg shield-nation ever dispatched another extermination force.

「What are you talking about, King?」(Braga)

Braga was nimbly returning after retrieving some shark fins and placing the meat in a container in Sam's carriage.

「We were saying that you're like a ninja, Braga.」(Vandalieu)

Telling him outright would be too embarrassing, so this was the answer Vandalieu gave. But Braga and even Zran gave him puzzled looks.

『Ninja?』(Zran)

「Eh, you haven't heard of them? Even you, Zran.」(Vandalieu)

Zakkart had tried to spread knowledge and technology from his own world, so Vandalieu had thought that at least Zran would know what a ninja was. After that, the two of them began to pester Vandalieu to tell them stories about ninjas every time they stopped to rest.

Incidentally, Big Cancers and Killer Octopuses were Rank 3 and they were simply large crabs and octopuses, so they didn't have any trouble dealing with these monsters.

***

Apart from the marine products that could be harvested in Doran's Aquatic Caverns, there were also metals that could be mined. Precious metals such as gold, silver and Mythril couldn't be found here, but they could mine tin, copper and iron.

That was why miners would slay monsters with pickaxes while digging at the walls.

Vandalieu imagined that it might be incredibly difficult to carry large

quantities of heavy ores outside the Dungeon, but it seemed that the metal originating in the Dungeon formed in large lumps. Even the purity was high enough that it could simply be used to make metal goods and armor straight away.

Upon learning this, Vandalieu had thought, “Other worlds are so convenient.”

This was why Talosheim had blacksmiths but no smelters to turn ores into masses of metal.

After greeting the miners who were carrying these lumps of metal on their backs and taking a break to eat food with them, Vandalieu’s party continued their journey to clear the Dungeon.

From the sixth floor onwards, Rank 4 monsters began to appear alongside the Rank 3 ones.

Squid monsters that could change the color of its own body to conceal itself to attack its enemies by surprise, Chameleon Squids.

Monsters that appeared to be one-and-a-half-meter-long lobsters that had sharp claws that were like bladed weapons, Blade Shrimp.

Monsters that looked like beautiful flowers on first glance but actually secreted paralyzing venom and possessed countless tentacles, Shark-eating Anemones.

These were just a little problematic.

Braga’s【Intuition】and【Detection】skills as well as Vandalieu’s【Danger Sense: Death】let them immediately know where monsters were hiding.

And though it wasn’t like Garan’s Valley, they had more than enough strength to get through.

『UOOOOOH!【QUICK SLAAAAASH!】』(Zran)

With incredible force and enough speed to cut the air itself, Zran sliced the Blade Shrimp clean in two. He was just like a berserker as he ended its life with his short sword.

「GAAAAAH!【Whip Axe!】」(Vigaro)

Writhing tentacles were severed by the axe swung by Vigaro's arm that was even more flexible than them. And then the Shark-eating Anemone's main body was sliced through as well.

It seemed as if Vigaro's desire for battle had increased since he had become a Ghoul Berserker. Was it just in Vandalieu's imagination?

『Bocchan, might it not be wise to stop those two? If I am not mistaken, they are supposed to be supervising you.』(Sam)

Zran as well as Vigaro in particular had high Ranks; defeating monsters that weren't bosses in a D-class Dungeon wouldn't gain them any reasonable amount of Experience Points.

Even if they wanted to improve their skills, their enemies were so far below them that this was nothing but a warm-up exercise for them. The enemies were simply too weak for this to be real training.

In fact, since the enemies were so much weaker, their skills and instincts would become duller instead.

So the reason the two of them were rampaging around at the front was –

「Well, they've been saying they're bored.」(Vandalieu)

They had grown tired of supervising without participating in the fights.

『Well, it is rather awkward to have the two of them do nothing.』(Sam)

「We can take a break while those two are fighting, too.」(Vandalieu)

「That's fine, but… can we really eat these?」(Kachia)

Kachia looked at the Killer Octopus legs, Blade Shrimp and sashimi made of fish and shellfish with a displeasured look on her face.

「Of course. Do the people of the Mirg shield-nation not eat octopuses and eels?」(Vandalieu)

Even on Earth, there had been countries without the culture of eating octopuses. Though he wasn't sure if this was true, Vandalieu had also heard that there had even been ancient civilizations who absolutely could not eat it or avoided doing so for religious reasons.

With that being the case, it was possible that there was a culture of not eating eels in Lambda.

「No, there's no eels because there's no ocean, and octopuses are just dried meat…」(Kachia)

Apparently Vandalieu was wrong. The fact that octopuses were used as dried meat meant that they could be eaten normally. So why was Kachia hesitating? Did she simply dislike seafood?

「Then do you at least eat fish?」(Vandalieu)

「That's not the problem! It's raw!」(Kachia)

「Ah, that's what it is.」(Vandalieu)

It seemed Kachia's apprehension was due to the fact that they would be eating marine products raw. In western countries on Earth there had been dishes like carpaccio where fish and meat would be eaten raw, so Vandalieu had thought that it wouldn't be a problem.

Did carpaccio not exist in Lambda? Or had Bellwood told everyone that eating fish raw was dangerous so that Zakkart couldn't spread the culture of eating sushi and sashimi?

「It's alright. Look.」(Vandalieu)

While Kachia was still apprehensive, Braga was enjoying the sashimi.

「Delicious! Delicious!」(Braga)

They ate eels, squid, shellfish and fish with fish sauce and wasabi. Normally soy sauce would be better than fish sauce, but soy sauce created from walnut miso and acorn miso had a questionable flavor, so they had only brought fish sauce with them.

Were the walnuts or acorns bad to use, or was there a problem with the fungus used for the fermentation process? Either way, Vandalieu really wanted soya beans.

「It's delicious! Kachia, have some too!」(Braga)

『The combination of this tender texture with the sharp spice of the wasabi is

indeed marvelous.』(Sam)

Braga encouraged Kachia with joy on his face while Sam did the same with a report on the food.

「Y-you might say that, but humans can't eat fish raw!」(Kachia)

「Kachia, you're a Ghoul now.」(Braga)

「Ah, that's right! But even Ghouls can't eat raw fish, can they?!」(Kachia)

Monsters like Goblins and Kobolds generally don't cook their food. They feast on meat and anything else raw. Other demi-humans might roast meat on a fire at most.

But the Ghouls had been using primitive techniques such as using skewers to roast meat and baking it in leaves since before Vandalieu arrived.

Like Titans, they were a race of people created by Vida.

「But it's alright. It's extremely fresh and I've even used【Sterilization】,【Bug Killer】and【Disinfect】, so there's nothing harmful left in it.」(Vandalieu)

Even if fungi and parasites had been present, they were all exterminated now and Vandalieu had even used the death-attribute spell【Disinfect】to remove any poison.

With this much treatment done, even poisonous mushrooms would become edible.

「I-if you've gone that far… Hmm? It's delicious?」(Kachia)

Kachia's eyes opened wide in surprise, and then she began greedily munching on the sashimi like Braga. Seeing how happy she was, Vandalieu also felt happy.

Incidentally, after Zran and Vigaro returned from their monster-hunting, Zran said,『Raw meat tastes delicious after you've become an Undead so I can't help it』, as he gleefully dug into the sashimi. Vigaro on the other hand rejected the idea like Kachia had at first, saying,「Raw?! We'll get stomachaches!」But then he began to eat after being reassured that it was safe to do so.

The mid-boss that appeared on the tenth floor was a Rank 4 Sahuagin Berserker with Rank 3 Sahuagin Pirates as subordinates. Since they didn't yield

any valuable materials, they served as training partners for Vandalieu to improve his【Unarmed Fighting】skill.

***

From the eleventh floor onwards of Doran's Aquatic Caverns, Rank 4 monsters began to appear, leading groups of Rank 3 monsters. The frequency of traps also became higher.

There were pitfalls with poisoned spikes at the bottom, spears hidden amongst the stalactites in the ceilings and axes that came flying at them from the walls.

「King, there's a trap here!」(Braga)

「That's right. Can you disarm it?」(Vandalieu)

「I'll give it a try! … Ah.」(Braga)

Poisonous gas was released with a hissing sound, so Vandalieu neutralized the poison with【Disinfect.】

「Sorry, I failed.」(Braga)

「It's fine. Do your best next time.」(Vandalieu)

『… Why is it that the Holy Son who is at the back is the first to know where the traps are?』(Zran)

Depending on the types of traps, traps could be more dangerous than monsters. However, Vandalieu could detect traps that would kill with his constantly-active【Danger Sense: Death.】This allowed him to detect traps faster than Braga who was actually searching for them.

In addition, many of the traps in Doran's Aquatic Caverns were poisonous, so he could deal with them immediately with【Disinfect.】

『With the Holy Son here, aren't Scouts unnecessary?』(Zran)

「Don't sulk like that. Aren't materials and training the reasons we came here?」(Vandalieu)

That was why Vandalieu didn't say or do anything even after detecting traps, leaving Braga to search for them.

「And I can’t detect traps that aren’t deadly. For example, a trap that spits out oil that’s hard to remove.」(Vandalieu)

『That would be more of a prank than a trap.』(Sam)

He would probably be unable to detect a trap where a blackboard duster would come falling from overhead.

『But wouldn’t it be fine to not detect those? They won’t kill you, after all.』(Zran)

「Well, that’s true.」(Vandalieu)

In a Dungeon, half of the traps were designed to kill their victims. The other half would either immobilize or apply a status effect, making it easier for monsters to kill the intruders, so Vandalieu could detect most of them.

「But you know, it’s not like I’ll be around every time.」(Vandalieu)

『I suppose you’re right.』(Zran)

And so they continued and set up camp. The next day, they finally arrived at the lowest floor.

There were apparently only ten floors two hundred years ago, but like Garan’s Valley, the number of floors had increased after being abandoned. There were now eighteen floors to journey through.

Vandalieu was able to obtain the seaweeds and skipjack tuna that he had come here for on the fifteenth floor, so this was a happy surprise for him.

When he returned to Talosheim, he would make a room for smoking food and make katsuobushi. If that was too difficult, it might still be good to use the fish after drying it like it had been in the Warring States period[2].

「By the way, does this turtle spit fire or anything?」(Vandalieu)

「『It doesn’t!』」(Vigaro and Zran)

As Vandalieu asked this question with no signs of nervousness, Vigaro and Zran almost shouted in response.

The boss of Doran’s Aquatic Caverns that was waiting for them was a Rank 5 Crusher Turtle accompanied by six Rank 4 Bullet Turtles.

Bullet Turtles were turtles with one-meter-long shells at first glance, but they were problematic monsters that could withdraw their limbs into their shells and use wind-attribute magic to spin through the air at high speeds in order to perform ramming attacks.

Their shells were harder than iron; their ramming attacks would be dangerous even for heavy warriors.

The Crusher Turtle was five times larger than a Bullet Turtle, but its ramming attack wouldn't be only five times as powerful. There were apparently numerous incidents in history where stone walls of towns were destroyed by the ramming attacks of giant turtles such as these, and it had a powerful defense as well.

They were monsters that were difficult to defeat among Rank 4 and Rank 5 monsters.

In fact, not only Braga and Kachia, but even Zran and Vigaro were having a hard time dealing with them.

「Nuh! It's fast!」(Vigaro)

『And they're coordinated, too!』(Zran)

With their heads withdrawn into their shells and spinning at high speeds, the turtles had begun to move in a coordinated fashion. As Vigaro made an attempt to reduce their number by one first, others attacked from the side and above him to interfere.

Half-hearted attacks would simply bounce off the spinning shells that were harder than iron.

This is where magic would come in handy, but Vigaro, Vran and Kachia couldn't use magic.

「Leave it to me!」(Kachia)

But Kachia raised her sword and stepped forward.

「Kachia, it's impossible!」(Braga)

「It's not impossible!【Rapid Reaction!】」(Kachia)

Taking no notice of Braga as he tried to stop her, Kachia increased her reaction speed with a martial skill, dodged a Bullet Turtle's attack with the bare minimum required movement and released a deadly thrust into the side of its shell.

「【Pierce!】」(Kachia)

A swordsmanship technique that increased the speed and power of a thrust. Now that Kachia had become a Ghoul, she had more physical strength than she had possessed as an adventurer. Her attack pierced the Bullet Turtle's shell.

There was a sound of breaking metal.

「Eh?!」(Kachia)

Kachia's plan fell apart along with her sword.

As she opened her eyes wide, dumbfounded, another Bullet Turtle closed in on her. She noticed it, thanks to her【Rapid Reaction.】But though the【Pierce】she used was fast and powerful, it also left a large opening. Even though she had seen it, her body couldn't keep up.

「I'm done f –」(Kachia)

「I won't let that happen, don't worry.」(Vandalieu)

Though Kachia thought she was doomed, the Bullet Turtle crashed into the ground.

「Well, if I erase their Mana, they're just huge turtles.」(Vandalieu)

The Bullet Turtles that were using wind-attribute magic to fly through the air like bullets lost their ability to fly as they were engulfed in【Magic Absorption Barriers.】They crashed with full force into the walls and into the ground.

If they had wings, perhaps they might be able to glide through the air, but all they had were flipper-shaped legs.

「The amount of Experience Points gained will decrease if I interfere, but it can't be helped. Ah, everyone, please finish them off.」(Vandalieu)

「Yeah.」(Vigaro)

『Sorry about that, Holy Son.』(Zran)

They dealt with the turtles by thrusting their short swords and claws into the gaps in their shells. The Crusher Turtle resisted a little by attempting to bite them, but it joined its subordinates in death with one swing of Vigaro's axe.

「Let's have a new sword made for you when we get back. If there's anything nice in the treasure room, you can simply take it… What's wrong?」(Vandalieu)

Kachia, who was sitting down with the broken sword still in her hand, had tears in her eyes.

Should Vandalieu have helped her quicker? Had he spent too long waiting to see what would happen?

As he panicked, her tears began to fall from.

「I… I'm shorry…」(Kachia)

Why was she apologizing to him?

Vandalieu wanted to ask her this question, but decided to console her instead for now.

「I felt my limits even before being captured by the Orcs… Uu… And then I became a Ghoul, but even so…」(Kachia)

「I see, so you were impatient.」(Vandalieu)

Kachia was a fast learner. She had grown strong rapidly after becoming an adventurer, catching up to her seniors… and then she had hit a wall.

It wasn't a hard iron wall, but a soft one made of mud. It gradually became harder to level up and no matter what kind of training and battles she went through, her skills were improving at a snail's pace. She couldn't even imagine when her skills might level up.

"I don't need to worry about it; the growth period for my strength has just passed. I just have to become stronger one step at a time from now on."

Even though she told herself this, she could only see the backs of the seniors that she was supposed to have caught up to and those who started training in the same year as her left her behind. Even her juniors were catching up to her.

She suddenly felt that the stories of retired female adventurers that spread

throughout the Adventurers' Guild were real.

If Kachia had earned enough money, she might have retired in the same way. However, she had only just become a D-class adventurer and all of her money was going into her equipment, living costs and paying off the debt that her parents had left her.

Though she didn't live extravagantly, the amount of money she had was only several months' worth of living expenses.

She didn't have the connections to be hired as an exclusive escort. The Mirg shield-nation didn't employ female soldiers to fight on the frontlines, though some were used for office work.

That was why she had no choice but to continue as an adventurer, putting in hard work without knowing when it would produce results.

It wasn't that Kachia had become weak. However, the adventurers around her had become strong and left her behind. She was unable to find decent requests to accept, the monsters in Devil's Nests whose materials would sell for high prices were too much for her to handle and there were many cases where more skilled adventurers were already hunting them.

Perhaps it would simply be better to find a suitable man to run away with and marry.

She had been captured by Orcs while thinking this and fell into despair. She thought that she would be giving birth to a Noble Orc's children until she died. She would have been better off dying during her adventures, even when she still had dreams to accomplish.

However, Kachia was rescued by the Ghouls and decided to become a Ghoul at Vandalieu's suggestion.

After becoming a Ghoul, Kachia thought that she had been reborn.

She gained the【Superhuman Strength】and【Pain Resistance】skills and her Attribute Values increased. She was clearly more powerful than she had been as a human.

She could finally become stronger. She would regain her pride and her

dreams. That was what she thought.

「But because everyone else was becoming stronger faster than you, you grew even more impatient.」(Vandalieu)

That was why she had grown impatient and done something like that, believing in herself.

「Eeuuh…」(Kachia)

These were Kachia's circumstances.

Hearing this, Vigaro and Zran thought that this was where Vandalieu would scold her.

After that, Vigaro and the others went to retrieve the items in the treasure room. And all of them began the journey back to Talosheim.

Kachia and Vandalieu were sitting together on top of a Golem that Vandalieu had created. This was because Sam's carriage was full with the harvested materials. Braga looked jealously up at them.

Vigaro didn't understand the circumstances of humans, but he knew how it felt to be frustrated with one's own lack of progress. However, allowing that to cause reckless behavior was not good. His death would cause the village to lose strength.

That was why Vandalieu had to scold her, even if he understood how she felt. He had to scold her and teach her so that she wouldn't become impatient again. That was his job as a leader of the village.

「I understand how you feel. I really do.」(Vandalieu)

But Vandalieu's words faltered.

「V-Vandalieu?」(Vigaro)

Vigaro called his name out, wondering why he wasn't continuing, but the words that came from Vandalieu's mouth weren't scolding or reprimands.

「I've thoroughly experienced that.」(Vandalieu)

It was sympathy. Vandalieu knew all too well why Kachia had felt impatient.

No matter how hard he had worked on Earth, his grades were just a little

above average. He had always been scolded at his part-time job and he had been unable to make any friends. When he had finally participated in the school trip with the money he had saved, everyone else was having the time of their lives and he had to mask his feelings of being alienated by trying to enjoy the view.

His own worth shouldn't change, but as others rose above him, he had felt that his own worth was decreasing relative to them.

「I still feel impatient. Among my mother's enemies, Gordan is an old man, but judging from the sound of his voice, Heinz was still young. He'll have grown stronger by now, but meanwhile, this is how I am.」(Vandalieu)

Heinz had been B-class back then. It had been three years, so he might have become A-class by now. Even while Vandalieu was doing this, Heinz was undoubtedly becoming even stronger.

And Amemiya Hiroto and the others who would be reincarnated here were likely undergoing high-level training and fighting in Origin right now. They wouldn't have the【Experience gained in previous life not carried over】curse, so they would be able to make use of that training fully once they reincarnated in Lambda.

Vandalieu didn't know whether they were serving as soldiers or agents in Origin so he could only make vague guesses as to what kinds of things they would experience, but there was a high chance that they would possess first-class skills even without their cheat-like abilities.

「So how can you stay so calm?」(Kachia)

「I intend on using any method available to me. And no matter how strong they become, they won't be immortal.」(Vandalieu)

He would kill them, even if he had to use poison, spread diseases or catch them by surprise. He would have no qualms about making thousands of Undead and Golems to crush them to death with the strength of numbers.

He wouldn't care if he was called a coward. In the end, he just needed to be the one to stand victorious.

As for those who would reincarnate here… Well, if they insisted on killing

Vandalieu no matter what, then he had no choice but to deal with them in the same way. They wouldn't be immortal, either.

However, he still wanted to avoid having to fight all one hundred of them. He didn't like them; emotionally speaking, he couldn't forgive them. But if he couldn't defeat them in the end, all of it would be meaningless.

He would talk to them. If they apologized, he would keep his distance and watch them work hard to develop this problematic world while enjoying a comfortable life eating delicious food with everyone else. That would be more than enough as revenge for him.

「So what should I do?」(Kachia)

Kachia seemed to have calm down. Vandalieu took a moment to think before replying.

「How about leaving swordsmanship aside for now and trying some magic training? Ghoul women are supposed to have a high aptitude for magic, after all.」(Vandalieu)

She might just end up as a jack of all trades and master of none, but she was currently not making much progress so it wouldn't be a bad thing to have more options.

「… Yes, I'll give it a try. But what if it doesn't work out?」(Kachia)

「If it doesn't work out? I'll be there to listen to you again if that time comes.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu felt that he was responsible for Kachia. He was the one who had suggested that she and the others become Ghouls. He had known that their previous lives would come to an end and this would be a step down a one-way road that they would never be able turn back on. That was why he thought that taking care of them was the obvious thing to do as a person, if he wanted to be considered a person.

Wanting to help others in need was how a person should act, wasn't it? He got the feeling that everyone said that the character for "person"[3] was one person supporting another.

「I see. You'll be there to listen.」(Kachia)

「If magic doesn't work out either, there are other options like becoming a specialist in making fish sauce and acorn miso.」(Vandalieu)

「Hmm, try again.」(Kachia)

「Then how about becoming a maid with Saria and Rita?」(Vandalieu)

「A maid, huh… Well, let's go with that for now.」(Kachia)

Why did she add,「for now?」Could it be that she wanted to be a maid in the past? Was her childhood dream to become a maid leader?

「Mhmm, I've found my motivation. I don't know how far I can go, but I'll do my best with magic as soon as we get back!」(Kachia)

Leaving that aside, it was a relief to see that she had recovered.

「Basdia has a rival now.」(Vigaro)

『This is good, isn't it? Heroes are supposed to be popular with the women.』(Zran)

「I want to be popular too, like Berg.」(Braga)

… Had Vandalieu raised some kind of flag?

Vandalieu didn't care, since he was looking forward to making miso soup with kombu and dashi.

- **Name**: Kachia
- **Rank**: 3
- **Race**: Ghoul
- **Level**: 24
- **Job**: Warrior
- **Job level**: 77
- **Job history**: Apprentice Warrior
- **Age**: 19 years old
- **Passive skills**:
    - Night Vision
    - Pain Resistance: Level 1

    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1
- **Active skills**:
    - Swordsmanship: Level 3
    - Armor Technique: Level 1
    - Shield Technique: Level 1
    - Dismantling: Level 1

As a human, Kachia possessed moderate strength for a D-class adventurer. But she had the flaw of having no skills other than swordsmanship, and hitting a wall in her growth made her feel even worse about not making progress.

She has gained passive skills after turning into a Ghoul and her Attribute Values have increased under the effect of Vandalieu's【Strengthen Followers】, but the way she fought as a human is unable to make use of them and display her strength.

Notes

1. Cancer, the astrological sign, is represented by a crab. So these Cancers are crabs, not diseases.

2. ~475BC.

3. The kanji for "person" is 人. I don't think this font shows it, but when it's handwritten, the left stroke is longer/taller so it looks like the right stroke is supporting it.

Chapter 42: Shadows of unrest approach unseen

「Hogyah, hogyah!」

The thing that was crying like a baby was no normal baby.

It had blonde hair that looked as if made of pure gold, and skin as white as the rock that this royal castle of Talosheim was built from. It had pink, triangular ears and there was a short tail growing from its bottom.

Incidentally, pig-beast-people apparently didn't exist in Lambda.

「Before we knew it, the Live-Dead had turned to ashes and this child was crying.」(Basdia)

「I see.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu came to check on the Live-Dead after returning from Doran's Aquatic Caverns to be greeted by Basdia holding a baby in her arms.

It seemed that while Vandalieu was in Doran's Aquatic Caverns, the fetus had developed sufficiently and the Live-Dead had run out of Mana.

「Well, I don't really care about the Live-Dead. I was planning to bury it after it served its purpose anyway.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu turned the ashes into a Golem to gather them up. The Live-Dead had simply been a creature with a beating heart but no soul. It had existed only to nurture its reborn self in its uterus.

「So this child was born safely, but… I've been troubled because it won't stop crying.」(Basdia)

「Hogyah! Hogyah!」(Baby)

「Can I see the baby for a bit?」(Vandalieu)

「Of course.」(Basdia)

Vandalieu took her in his arms. She stopped crying and stared at Vandalieu.

Vandalieu observed her as she gazed at him.

「… Mhmm, it does resemble her.」(Vandalieu)

Its face resembled that of the Live-Dead and its spirit, and it had a human's nose. And it was definitely a girl. It was not a Noble Orc whose race only had males.

「I'm going to have a good look at you, so bear with me for a moment.」(Vandalieu)

「Uu.」(Baby)

Using【Spirit Form Transformation】to turn a part of his body into spirit form, Vandalieu examined the inside of her body. Her organ count, the shape of her bones and the like were different from Orcs; they were close to a human's.

It was still impossible to tell whether her body would function the same as a human's. But she was clearly not an Orc or Noble Orc.

But it couldn't be said that she was completely human. She had the same golden hair as the Noble Orcs, and her eyes were blue. And her ears and tail made it very clear that she wasn't entirely human.

She was still just a baby; it was possible that she might develop more inhuman characteristics as she developed.

Was she a half-Noble Orc?

「Can you see your status?」(Vandalieu)

「Amu~」(Baby)

For now, it seemed that she wasn't going to angrily shout,「This isn't what you promised me!」because of her strange appearance.

「Umm, could it be that you're hungry?」(Vandalieu)

「Van, I don't think a baby would be able to understand what you're saying…?」(Basdia)

As Vandalieu turned to face Basdia – or tried to, the baby put him in a headlock.

She was unbelievably strong for a child. With his head being held in place by both her arms, he couldn't move at all.

「I had my memories from quite early after I was born. I thought that she might be able to understand.」(Vandalieu)

「I see. But I don't think she understands. If she did, she would have listened to me and stopped crying. But she showed no signs of listening and kept crying until you arrived, Van.」(Basdia)

「Then it might take some time before she regains her memories.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu's memories had returned relatively soon after being reborn in Lambda. But that was because it had been the work of Rodcorte who was a god, while Vandalieu had used a new technique for the first time to carry out this baby's reincarnation.

It might take several months or even years for her memories to return.

Well, several months had passed after her death before Vandalieu used her spirit for the reincarnation, so it was definitely possible that her memories and consciousness might have parts missing, however.

「Well, I've asked Bilde and the others to provide milk in advance, so let's head over to them. You still can't produce any, right, Basdia?」(Vandalieu)

「Me?」(Basdia)

「Yes, you're pregnant. Please make sure you wear the Magic Item that protects the baby.」(Vandalieu)

「Is that true, Van?!」(Basdia)

「It's true, congratulations. Make sure you come to me regularly so I can check its progress.」(Vandalieu)

「Yeah!」(Basdia)

And so two auspicious events were celebrated at once.

Vandalieu dried kombu in the clear winter air and weak sunlight with the reborn girl.

「Now then, I'll begin the experiment.」(Vandalieu)

「Ai.」(Baby)

He slowly applied【Withering】on the kombu to remove its water content while also slowly applying【Aging.】

If he made a mistake it would dry out too much and fall apart, and if he took too long, it would turn into powder, so he needed to be very careful.

He continued controlling his spells for just a minute while enduring a headache and fever. It turned out perfect, so he stopped his spells and retrieved the dried kombu.

「Now then, time to actually taste it.」(Vandalieu)

「Ai.」(Baby)

He threw the kombu into a pot on a magical stove he had found in the ruins and turned the stove on.

Dashi began to come out steadily.

He removed the kombu when enough dashi had come out before the water started to boil and scooped some out with a ladle that the blacksmith Datara had made for him. He placed it onto a small plate, cooled it and tasted it.

「Mhmm, that's good dashi.」(Vandalieu)

Satisfied, he added ingredients like wakame and vegetables and then dissolved miso in it to make miso soup.

「It's turned out well.」(Vandalieu)

「Uu, uu.」(Baby)

「I think it's a little too early for you to be drinking miso soup, Pauvina.」(Vandalieu)

「Au…」(Pauvina)

Pauvina… the Live-Dead who had been reborn as a half-Noble Orc seemed dejected, so Vandalieu comforted her as he felt satisfied at having successfully made kombu dashi.

Applying the【Aging】spell that was originally intended to age living things to kill them through old age to the kombu and drying it, he was able to apply

twenty-five years' worth of drying in a single minute to produce high-quality dried kombu. It was a groundbreaking discovery.

It was a process that shortened a twenty-five-year-long process to one minute. Incidentally, the reason it was twenty-five years was because Vandalieu remembered that kombu that had been dried and fermented for that long had been treated as a much higher-quality product than normal kombu on Earth. If he recalled, it was because the process changed the umami content in the kombu.

He had no spell that could confirm whether the umami content had really increased and Vandalieu had never tried miso soup made from high-quality kombu dashi, so there was no denying the possibility that Vandalieu was just making an assumption here.

「Au.」(Pauvina)

Though Vandalieu had originally thought that Pauvina hadn't regained her memories yet, she had in fact regained them to some extent immediately after her birth.

But as Vandalieu had feared, they were very broken memories and she hadn't even been able to remember her own name.

She only remembered that her corpse had been turned into a Live-Dead and that Vandalieu had saved her. The latter could be referred to as Vandalieu using her, but she felt thankful towards him and was emotionally attached to him.

「Mmuh…」(Pauvina)

But even after regaining some of her memories, her mental age was still that of a child. Unlike people who had been reincarnated like Vandalieu, she was simply a child who remembered a little about her previous life.

She would develop and become an adult for the second time.

… She would surely grow to be large. At three months of age, her height was almost the same as Vandalieu who was three years old. Even taking into account the fact that Vandalieu had a small build, she was growing incredibly quickly.

Was this because she had some Noble Orc blood in her?

As Pauvina lifted Vandalieu into the air, he wondered,「Am I trying to be some kind of mad scientist who creates new species?」

Nuaza and the other Titans seemed happy about it, however, saying things like,「It is just like how the goddess Vida gave birth to us; it is truly divine work!」He would soon become unable to ever get rid of the title of “Prophesized Holy Son.”

Vandalieu thought that if he wasn’t the Holy Son, it would be nice if the goddess could give another prophecy or something to say so.

「So far, everything is going well.」(Vandalieu)

「Uu?」(Pauvina)

「Mhmm, everything but the katsuobushi, I suppose.」(Vandalieu)

Pauvina was developing well. Vandalieu didn’t know how long it would take for her to become an adult, but it would likely be ten years at most. She didn’t seem to have any problems with her health, and they were getting along well.

Since he had used her and reincarnated her, Vandalieu had to take responsibility for her new life, so he planned to take good care of her.

Basdia’s pregnancy had been discovered at the same time as Pauvina’s birth, and that was also progressing well. She had only been pregnant for three months so Vandalieu had been carefully examining her, but the Magic Item had been exhibiting its effects with no problem.

It was even better that she liked the piercing.

Vandalieu had once again put a halt on his Dungeon-clearing so he could take care of Pauvina and Basdia, but he was still going into the Devil’s Nests that were close enough to make a day trip into with everyone to continue his training. He assisted those training to acquire the【Chant Revocation】skill, played Reversi and Jenga and made fish sauce and miso. Everything was going well.

The only thing he was struggling with was making katsuobushi. It seemed that the concept of smoking food didn’t exist in Lambda.

There was dried meat so Vandalieu had assumed that smoked foods existed, but this wasn't the case. Not even bacon, ham, sausages or wieners existed in this world, let alone roast beef.

He had asked Kachia and the others, but dried meat in this world was meat that had been salted and dried in the sun.

Because of this, Vandalieu had been forced to build a food-smoking facility using only his own knowledge.

Darcia had finally given Vandalieu permission to use fire, but the first real cooking that he was doing himself, using smoking tools based on his limited knowledge to make katsuobushi, was difficult.

「In Origin, I learned things from the spirits of western people who were knowledgeable about Japanese food, but they weren't experts in making katsuobushi.」(Vandalieu)

He dried the fish and charred it to make smoked fish. This process simply produced a burnt product or left the center raw; all of his attempts had failed.

To make fermented food, all Vandalieu had to do was prepare the ingredients and use【Fermentation.】

It seemed that Vandalieu would struggle to make bacon or wieners as well, even though he had ingredients for them in the form of Orc meat. No, he still lacked the spices to make them.

「First of all, put me down now.」(Vandalieu)

「Uu.」(Pauvina)

Pauvina refused. Vandalieu spent the fourth winter of his life being held in the air.

***

The search was extremely difficult.

A relatively safe route across the mountain range had been planned out, but in the end, a third of the Subordinate Vampires had been wiped out.

And the search for the Dhampir after crossing the mountain range was

proving difficult as well.

「I didn't think that it would be this troublesome.」(Eleanora)

The objective of Eleanora and her party was to murder the Dhampir, but they didn't have any convenient Magic Items like a【Dhampir Radar】or spells like【Detect Dhampir.】

That was why they had decided to first find the village of Ghouls that he led. The Ghouls might have lost about half of their numbers while crossing the mountain range, but there would still be at least two hundred left.

A village of two hundred Ghouls would be quite large. And Ghouls weren't particularly adapted to living at high altitudes, nor were they good at navigating steep cliffs. There was no doubt that they would choose flat ground, similar to the Devil's Nest forest that was undergoing reclamation now.

Under those assumptions, they released familiars to search for them but… not a single Ghoul had been found.

「Jeez, just where have they gone? It's not as if they could have disappeared like mist.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora sighed as she poured holy water that they had brought with them over the defeated Subordinate Vampire at her feet. They were truly useless. Their master was useless as well, but just why was every single one of the Subordinates gathered here so useless?

「They might have gone underground. I suppose we should search the caves as well.」(Sercrent)

Sercrent had a look of exhaustion on his face as well. He didn't care about some of his useless subordinates dying. But he was desperate because if he couldn't complete this mission, his life would be forfeit.

「But even then, the Ghouls would need to gather food, so it would be a cavern system with multiple entrances. Or perhaps… the Ghouls already served their purpose in helping him cross the mountain range, so he disposed of them?」(Eleanora)

Leaving aside whether that was really possible, if it was true, that would

explain why the search using the familiars that had even cost a third of the Subordinate Vampires' lives had turned up nothing. That Dhampir had stayed hidden from the search of that renowned religious fanatic Gordan when he was less than a year old.

If he was on his own, he would obviously not need much food and living underground would be simple.

「More importantly, isn't there a possibility that the spirits of these guys who have just died have gone to give the Dhampir information about us?」(Sercrent)

Eleanora and Sercrent were conducting their search with a policy of not killing or dying any more than needed in order to deal with the Dhampir who was apparently a Spiritualist, but even so, the Devil's Nests of the Boundary Mountain Range weren't easy to deal with.

Unlucky encounters with Dragons and such had cost them another third of the Subordinate Vampires. They poured holy water on the dead bodies to prevent their spirits from lingering in this world, but they couldn't actually see spirits.

Only those with the Spiritualist Job can see spirits that haven't become Undead.

That was why they couldn't tell whether the spirits were in the vicinity of their dead bodies. The spirits could have rushed off towards the Dhampir and they would have never known.

「Even if the Dhampir is a Spiritualist, he wouldn't be able to summon the spirits of people whose names and faces he doesn't know. The possibility of him being able to do that is low… I want to believe that.」(Eleanora)

「I see… But what will we do? Where do we search from here?」(Sercrent)

「Let's see, how about we go to where the city of Talosheim once stood?」(Eleanora)

The nation of Titans that the Amid Empire used the Mirg shield-nation's army to destroy. The Pure-breed Vampire Gubamon had used the Amid Empire to do this, and Ternecia had been partially involved as well.

It would certainly be a ruin by now, swarming with Undead Titans.

「Even though they're ruins, there might be some usable buildings left, and it would be easier to establish a village there than to build a new one from nothing.」(Eleanora)

Though it was unlikely that the Dhampir was aware of this, there were Dungeons near Talosheim. If he used those, he would be able to gather food efficiently.

However, Sercrent looked doubtful.

「No, Talosheim should be overflowing with Undead. It would be impossible to build a village there.」(Sercrent)

Looking at Sercrent's face, Eleanora was overcome with an urge to kill him on the spot.

The reason Sercrent didn't want to go to Talosheim was an extremely insignificant one.

He didn't want Eleanora to gain leadership.

For Sercrent to erase his past failures and return to his original position in Vampire society, he of course needed to successfully kill the Dhampir, but it also needed to be his own achievement rather than Eleanora's.

Even if he completed his mission, doing so under Eleanora's command would mean that he had stooped low enough to become her dog, and it could even be interpreted as proof that he was an incompetent fool who couldn't even exterminate a single Dhampir without having instructions spelled out for him.

Those living in the society of the Vampires who obeyed the evil gods constantly tried to gain the favor of those who were on the rise while striking down those who were falling.

If Sercrent simply prioritized the completion of his mission, his social position wouldn't move an inch.

However, even though he understood that, there was a reason Eleanora couldn't allow him to have his way. Because that would mean that she, a member of Birkyne's bodyguards, had considered obeying Sercrent, which her

Pure-breed master wouldn't accept.

She would be subjected to indescribable punishment and unhealable wounds would be inflicted upon her. She didn't want that. That is why Eleanora had decided that she would have the pitiful Sercrent fall as far down as it was possible to fall.

「I see. Then I'll go and scout out the ruins on my own.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora had only been working together with Sercrent up until now because she had needed the numbers. Birkyne hadn't given her permission to create new Subordinate Vampires, so the only pawns that she could use were her familiars.

However, it wouldn't make any difference not having such useless pawns whose numbers had even been decreased by the journey. She didn't mind separating herself from Sercrent to work on her own.

「What?!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent was greatly confused. If Eleanora disposed of the Dhampir while separated from him, that would be the same as him having failed his mission.

On the other hand, this was a chance to take the achievement all for himself, but Eleanora was superior to him in ability and the Subordinate Vampires who had been useless up until now were unlikely to suddenly become stronger.

「… Very well, let us search Talosheim.」(Sercrent)

Taking no notice of the Vampire who had lived many times the number of years she had as he meaninglessly pretended to give his permission for the search of Talosheim, Eleanora flew up into the night sky.

However, upon reaching the site where the ruins of Talosheim should have been according to the two-hundred-year-old records left by the Mirg shield-nation's army, Eleanora opened her eyes wide, dropped her jaw and stood stock-still.

Even before she became a Vampire, she had never imagined that she would be making such a foolish-looking face.

「I-impossible…!」(Eleanora)

「Isn’t this some kind of illusion?」(Sercrent)

However, she had no need to worry about Sercrent and his subordinates seeing her like this. They were standing still with the same dumbfounded expression on their faces.

They were dumbfounded by the enormous walls illuminated by the light of the moon and stars. As Vampires, they could see the majestic walls as if they were in plain daylight.

There was not a single ivy branch growing on the white stone walls and not a single crack in the stone.

「What does this mean? The Mirg shield-nation’s army and Mikhail destroyed the walls, didn’t they?」(Eleanora)

「That’s right, if I recall… Back then, the gate was broken and the wall had collapsed in two different places. Even if what we were told is a mistake, there is nobody repairing or maintaining them, so how are they so…」(Sercrent)

Sercrent continued whispering, still astonished, but he slowly regained his composure.

「I see, it was the Undead. The Undead of Talosheim repaired these walls. The Undead don’t tire, so I’m sure they could do it, given two hundred years.」(Sercrent)

However, Eleanora couldn’t imagine that the conclusion he had arrived at was correct.

「The Undead, repairing and maintaining the walls?」(Eleanora)

Undead were generally unproductive and didn’t form societies. They did organize themselves in ways where the weak simply obeyed the strong or used the hierarchical relationships established while they were still alive, but in the majority of cases, they were simply disorganized groups of Undead individuals.

Even if the Undead had two hundred years, they might be able to sweep, clean and wash dishes, but would they be able to perform such advanced, large-scale work as repairing the city’s walls?

It was difficult to imagine that this was possible. If it was, every haunted

building and ghost ship in this world would be sparkling clean.

Nobody could blame Eleanora for staring at Sercrent as if he had gone mad.

「What other explanation is there?」(Sercrent)

But even Eleanora couldn't answer that question.

These walls were clearly not the work of monsters, and they hadn't received any information that the Orbaume Kingdom had occupied the ruins of Talosheim to build a new city.

Eleanora reminded herself that their objective wasn't to take back or occupy Talosheim. It was to kill the Dhampir.

「… We're going to look inside.」(Eleanora)

Fortunately, it didn't seem like there were any guards posted on the walls. It looked like there were several Undead Titans at the gate, but for the Noble-born Vampires who could fly through the sky, it wasn't a problem. They could simply fly over the walls and the Subordinate Vampires could climb over the walls with their claws.

However, the surprises continued even after Eleanora and Sercrent passed the walls.

The dark, silent Talosheim had a loneliness drifting from it that made it look like a ghost town. However, one glance was all it took to notice something abnormal.

「There aren't any collapsed buildings?」(Sercrent)

The buildings of Talosheim were lined up neatly against each other. Though they were large, stone buildings built from stone, they had been abandoned for two hundred years… after a terrible war, even.

「Are you going to tell me that this is the work of the Undead as well?」(Eleanora)

「Th-then who could have… That's it! I'm sure it's the Dhampir; he made his Ghoul subordinates…!」(Sercrent)

「Are you trying to say that the Ghouls simply repaired all of those houses as

they were originally, in Titan-size?」(Eleanora)

「…」(Sercrent)

Sercrent fell silent at Eleanora's words, but even she had no idea who could have repaired the city.

Two hundred years ago, several hundred Titans had actually escaped from the Mirg shield-nation. The possibility that crossed Eleanora's mind was that those surviving Titans had returned and spent the past two hundred years restoring Talosheim with the Hartner duchy's assistance. But even that was hard to imagine.

If that was the case, then why was the city so quiet?

「Sercrent-sama, it's very faint, but I can see a light.」(Subordinate)

「What?! The direction of the royal castle, huh. Alright, let's go.」(Sercrent)

The Vampires couldn't help but to tremble as they thought about how strange all of this was, but even so, the mission took priority.

They renewed their resolve, but as they approached the plaza in front of the royal castle, they were surprised three times.

『It's not really going well, is it?』(Saria)

『But we can't really have Bocchan build this as well.』(Rita)

『Jyuh, Nuaza-dono and the others said that it will be finished by spring. Let us wait and look forward to when it is complete.』(Bone Man)

Strange-looking Living Armors and a Skeleton were looking at what appeared to be a half-finished stone statue.

『I'll definitely win this time.』(Young Titan)

『No, no, I cannot lose to a youngster.』(Old Titan)

Undead Titans were playing a game on a board the Vampires had never seen before with click-clacking sounds, eating baked sweets.

「Fugoh, it's cooked just right.」(Orcus)

「I want miso with mine.」(Black Goblin)

「Fish sauce for mine.」(Black Goblin)

Black Orcs and black-colored Goblins were cooking skewered meat on frying pans and eating it.

「This shark fillet has no flavor.」(Ghoul woman)

「But I heard it does wonders for your beauty. It tastes good when you use it to make soup, too.」(Ghoul woman)

Ghoul women were walking together with their arms linked.

「Paper, scissors, rock!」(Anubis)

「Face away, there!」(Anubis)

Monsters that appeared to be humans with the heads of dogs were playing some kind of game that the Vampires had never seen before.

「What exactly is the meaning of this? I can understand the Ghouls being here, but… Orcs and Goblins in colors I've never seen, and monsters with dog heads. And they're living in such a carefree way in the same space as the Undead; it's just as if it were a human town.」(Eleanora)

She knew that Sercrent wouldn't give her any response worth listening to, but she simply couldn't remain silent.

That was how much the sight before her defied everything she knew.

Monsters as well as humans built societies that included multiple races, but almost all of them were systems where the strong dominated and the weak obeyed.

For Undead, even those kinds of societies were impossible to form.

Excluding some special cases, Undead were generally either superior individuals who had maintained their personalities from when they were alive or inferior Undead that indiscriminately tried to kill and consume any living thing, whether it was a human or a monster.

Such Undead were living calm, quiet lives.

Were all of them superior Undead? That was impossible! Even if their personalities had been preserved, they should still be ferocious.

「I-I don’t know. What does this mean? Could they have been tamed by someone? Impossible; it should be impossible to tame Undead!」(Sercrent)

Like Sercrent whispered, Undead were impossible to tame. That was true whether the Tamer was a Vampire or a human.

In the past, many individuals with superior Tamer-type Jobs had attempted to tame Undead, but they weren’t even able to tame the most inferior, Rank 1 Living Bones and Living Dead, let alone superior Undead such as Elder Liches.

As a result of these unsuccessful attempts, it became known in this world that like insect-type monsters, Undead were impossible to tame.

But the Vampires knew that there was an exception.

「Could it be that there’s someone who has gained the divine protection of the evil god… No, the goddess?」(Eleanora)

It was possible that those with the divine protection of the goddess Vida who had revived Zakkart as an Undead or evil gods like Hihiryushukaka could create and command Undead.

「A Vampire from another evil god’s… No, it’s Vida. There is someone with the goddess Vida’s divine protection.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora could see the Church of Vida that had been restored. If they possessed the divine protection of an evil god, there was no way that the church of the goddess would be restored.

「Impossible.」(Sercrent)

Sercrent trembled, his eyes open wide. If the one who possessed the goddess Vida’s divine protection was one of the Pure-breed Vampires they feared, the ones who worshipped the goddess Vida, then…

「Sercrent-sama, we should escape while we still can.」(Subordinate)

「Nobody has noticed our presence yet, let us retreat!」(Subordinate)

Still hidden, the Subordinate Vampires began to talk about retreating. It was clear what would happen if they were discovered in a place where a Pure-breed Vampire who worshipped Vida was present.

A one-sided annihilation at the hands of that Vampire’s overwhelming power.

The Noble-born Sercrent and Eleanora being here would make no difference. That was how great the difference between a Pure-breed and a Noble-born was.

If that wasn’t the case, there was no way that Pure-breed Vampires like Birkyne and Ternecia who possessed personalities that would make them enemies very easily could have ruled hundreds of Noble-born Vampires for a hundred thousand years.

Sercrent who had been tortured by Birkyne and Eleanora who had been directly appointed by him understood this better than the Subordinate Vampires.

The two of them wanted to retreat immediately, but at the same time, they discovered the reason they couldn’t do so.

「Wait, there are Ghouls among the Undead and Goblins. The Dhampir is definitely here.」(Eleanora)

They had searched everywhere other than Talosheim and hadn’t found a single Ghoul, but there were numerous Ghouls here. Considering that, there was no doubt that these were the Ghouls the Dhampir had led across the mountain range from the Mirg shield-nation.

In that case, it was only natural that the Dhampir would be here.

「You know what will happen if we run away without dealing with the Dhampir, don’t you?」(Eleanora)

The already-pale faces of the Subordinate Vampires who had been suggesting a retreat turned even whiter.

「We’ll look for the Dhampir. If I recall, his name was Vandalieu. Eleanora, capture one of the Ghouls and make them talk.」(Sercrent)

「I don’t need you to tell me what to do.」(Eleanora)

They would quickly dispose of the Dhampir and escape before they were noticed by the superior being who possessed Vida’s divine protection.

Casting aside her exasperation and disgust towards Sercrent, Eleanora began

to act in order to accomplish that difficult goal.

Chapter 43: Something that cannot be run from, cannot be disobeyed, that doesn't exist

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Tarea was walking back home from the bathhouse, wearing a fur coat to keep out the cold of the winter's night.

「Fuuh… It has become cold as of late, hasn't it.」(Tarea)

Despite being known as the capital of the sun, Talosheim's winter was colder than the Devil's Nest forest that she had lived in previously. It wasn't that Tarea had become weaker against cold temperatures over the past few years.

Nevertheless, as Tarea watched the Ghouls and Undead entertaining themselves and eating food, it occurred to her just how affluent Talosheim had become.

Many would object to Tarea's opinion. In fact, the Ghouls' lives might not seem affluent at a glance.

Very few of the clothes they wore were made of cloth; the majority of them were made from tanned leather and fur that had been stripped from monsters, making them look like a tribe of savages. Because the economic environment consisted of primitive bartering, there were no stores of any kind.

There were no resplendent theaters, bookstores selling tomes containing knowledge, restaurants offering delicious foods or anything of the sort.

But the various things that Vandalieu had created surpassed these.

Though board games were considered as entertainment for the wealthy in human cities, Vandalieu had created the simple yet interesting Reversi and distributed it freely.

He had created numerous seasonings that were even more valuable than the Reversi boards.

The walnut sauce and acorn cookies that he had been making since when he had lived in the Devil's Nest forest weren't anything unusual other than the fact that he was making them in a Devil's Nest.

However, the fish sauce and miso that he had created… no, invented after arriving in Talosheim, were astonishing. In addition, he had turned ginger that had only been used as medicine and an unknown plant called wasabi into additional seasonings.

He had created these and then distributed it in significant amounts. Those who wanted more could trade for them at the remains of the Adventurers' Guild.

Vandalieu himself wasn't aware of how astounding these feats were. Even Tarea wasn't confident that she understood just how incredible it was.

However, in human cities, adding seasoning to food had been a luxury that only the wealthy could afford.

Poor commoners would use salt sparingly at most; they almost never tasted sugar. It seemed that things had improved in recent times, but two hundred years ago, when Tarea had been a human, that was how things were in the city she lived in.

But these seasonings were being offered at exchange rates that anyone could afford.

There was no doubt that miso and fish sauce would sell for soaring prices if sold in human cities. Recently, Vandalieu had even started to make kombu dashi and katsuobushi, though the latter was still incomplete.

Of course, the fact that he had solved the fertility problem that affected the entire Ghoul race couldn't be forgotten.

Personally, Tarea was most happy about the fact that he had repaired every public bathhouse in Talosheim. For commoners, being able to submerge their bodies in hot water up to their shoulders while bathing was as much of a luxury as seasoning their food.

「As long as Van-sama is here, the Ghouls will prosper for a thousand years!」(Tarea)

Vandalieu had performed deeds that made her believe this with confidence.

But that was also why she was feeling anxious.

「How should I close the distance between myself and the great Van-sama?」(Tarea)

Tarea was not a combatant, but an arms smith who created equipment using monster materials. When Vandalieu spent time clearing Dungeons and training himself in unarmed fighting, the amount of time that she could spend with him inevitably decreased.

Vandalieu's body was small so the only armor he could wear was clothes made of leather or fur, and he was using his own claws as weapons, so Tarea didn't even have any opportunities to create equipment for him.

He had said that he would refrain from venturing far from Talosheim until Pauvina had developed to a certain extent and Basdia had safely reached the three-month-mark in her pregnancy, but he would be going into another Dungeon before spring.

「I feel the distance, the distance between myself and Van-sama.」(Tarea)

Even while Tarea remained in the city, Basdia and the others were spending significant periods of time with him, fighting for their lives together. Kachia, a Ghoul who had formerly been an adventurer, had recently shown strange movements as well. And it seemed that Zadiris would be accompanying Vandalieu on his next journey into a Dungeon.

How unfortunate. What an unfortunate turn of events this was.

「If I had daughters, everything would be fine, but I have only had sons up until now… Would it be better for me to start having a daughter now? I am only just over two hundred and sixty years old, so it might be… Ah, it is impossible; I cannot give birth to another man's child in front of Van-sama!」(Tarea)

Vandalieu was currently acting as something like a maternity doctor. Because of that, if Tarea were to attempt to get closer to him by having a daughter, she would surely be found out.

That would be an unbearable shame. She had no idea how Basdia had been

able to do such a thing.

When she had asked Basdia herself, Basdia had replied with a straight face, 「It's not like I'm letting him see me during the act, so it isn't something to be concerned about, is it?」

Perhaps this was one of the differences between a natural-born Ghoul and a Ghoul who had once been a human.

「So should I do it personally after all? But it would be meaningless if it causes Van-sama to withdraw from me… Ah?」(Tarea)

Just as Tarea passed by an alleyway between two buildings, a pebble rolled in front of her feet with a small noise. And as she turned her face towards the alleyway, there was a woman there.

Ghouls could see even in this darkness where the only light was coming from the moon, so she could clearly make out that woman's crimson pupils.

「Could you tell me more about this Van-sama?」(Eleanora)

A woman with crimson eyes, red hair and white skin. This appearance was enough to tell Tarea with a single glance that this person didn't belong in Talosheim, but the emotions that Tarea felt right now were not caution or fear, but affection.

「Of course…」(Tarea)

「Thank you. Let's talk over here, shall we?」(Eleanora)

With a drowsy look on her face, Tarea was led into the alleyway by this woman… by Eleanora.

Among the Ghouls walking along the streets, Eleanora had chosen the Ghoul woman who had been speaking the name「Van-sama.」She hadn't appeared to be particularly strong and the fact that she was adding「sama」to the end of his name indicated that she was referring to the Dhampir. Both of these guesses turned out to be correct.

She had been successfully lured and captured by the effects of Eleanora's charming gaze without showing any signs of resistance.

And Eleanora was able to learn information about the Dhampir from her.

「Van-sama is inside the castle. He is in a room that was originally used by a cabinet minister or general or someone of that sort. He should be sleeping in there.」(Tarea)

Now we've learned the Dhampir's whereabouts. He lives in the royal castle, but he isn't using the king's room. Is this because there is indeed some superior being that commands the Undead?

「I see. So is there someone with the divine protection of the goddess Vida in this city?」(Eleanora)

「Divine protection…?」(Tarea)

Tarea gave a puzzled look in response to Eleanora's question. Under the effects of the charming gaze, she treated Eleanora as if the two of them were close family members, but she was unable to answer what she didn't know.

But this was a question from someone「close」to her. Her mind worked in order to answer the question as much as she could.

「I am sure that would be Van-sama.」(Tarea)

That was why it was only natural for her to give this response. As Tarea had ceased to be a human over two hundred years ago during her teenage years, she was unaware that Undead could not be tamed. For her, it was only natural that Vandalieu was able to tame the Undead. He had Undead among his companions ever since she met him, so she had no reason to inquire further about it.

And when she remembered that Nuaza and the other Undead Titans showed respect towards him by referring to him as the Prophesized Holy Son, it seemed even more obvious to her that Eleanora was asking about him.

「Wha – ?! That Dhampir is…?!」(Eleanora)

This statement made a huge impact among Eleanora and the other Vampires.

The Dhampir that they were trying to dispose of already possessed the divine protection of the goddess Vida. In that case, not only the Ghouls, but every single Undead Titan in Talosheim were the Dhampir's pawns.

「Not good… This is not good. We must dispose of him at all costs…」(Sercrent)

One of the only things that the Vampires who worshipped the evil gods feared, a Dhampir building up an organization, had already come to pass.

With the countless Undead added to the Ghouls, their numbers would easily exceed a thousand.

Such great numbers were located in a sturdy fortress city. Their defense was still full of holes, but a defensive net that even Vampires could not easily sneak through would be complete once the number of undead under the Dhampir's control increased.

If Birkyne learned of this, Sercrent would not be able to avoid harsh punishment even if he completed his mission as he was the one who had given the Dhampir enough time to build such an organization in this location.

This was a huge failure that even Gubamon, who was normally indifferent to the activities of his subordinates, might simply purge Sercrent immediately.

So Eleanora could understand why Sercrent was making noise, but she silenced him with her hand.

「Dispose? What are you disposing of?」(Tarea)

Tarea had heard Sercrent's voice and reacted to it. Eleanora's「Charming Demon Eyes」weren't powerful enough to instantly brainwash their target permanently.

We've learned everything we wanted to, but it would be unfortunate if this woman were to become restless now.

「You don't have to worry; he's just talking to himself. Thank you for telling me all these things; you have been of great help.」(Eleanora)

「Ufufu, I am glad to have been of use to you.」(Tarea)

Fortunately, Eleanora was able to successfully divert Tarea's wandering attention back to herself.

「You're tired now, aren't you? Stay in my room for tonight. Here, lie down.」(Eleanora)

「Now that you mention it… My eyelids have grown rather heavy. Well then, excuse me…」(Tarea)

Tarea gave a yawn as she lay down and quickly fell asleep in this vacant stone house.

And then a Subordinate Vampire drew his sword and swung it down at the defenseless Tarea.

「Gugyah?! E-Eleanora-sama, what are you –?!」(Subordinate)

But before his blade reached Tarea's body, Eleanora broke his arm with her slender hand.

「What is the meaning of this, you bastard?! This Ghoul has already served her purpose; what is wrong with disposing of her?!」(Sercrent)

「Of course it's wrong to do so, Sercrent. What have you been listening to all this time?」(Eleanora)

「If this is about her spirit, we simply need to pour holy water on her after we kill her!」(Sercrent)

As Sercrent expressed his rage, Eleanora put a hand to her forehead and let out a sigh. She could no longer become ill or feel physically weak now that she was a Vampire, but talking to him gave her endless headaches.

「You know, this is different from when your subordinates were the ones dying. The Ghoul adores the Dhampir. If she dies, she will happily rush off to the Dhampir. If we pour holy water on her and purify her spirit before that happens, we can prevent her from telling the Dhampir about us. But that Dhampir can tame the Undead. How can you be so sure that another spirit will not inhabit her body to turn it into an Undead? There are hundreds of Undead here… Possibly even more than a thousand.」(Eleanora)

Even if they poured holy water on the Ghoul's corpse to purify her spirit, there was no guarantee that the corpse wouldn't become an Undead. Unless they held a memorial service or destroyed the body thoroughly, the body could be taken over by other spirits and become an Undead.

It is easy for dead bodies to become Undead when there are other Undead nearby.

「That is true, but there would be no problem even if it were to become an

Undead. It would be a Living Dead at most; what is a puppet that cannot even speak capable of doing?」(Sercrent)

If the spirit inhabiting Tarea's body is not Tarea's, it would not be able to warn anyone about Eleanora and Sercrent's presence. However, Eleanora already knew this.

「What do you think will happen if this Living Dead were to be discovered by the other Ghouls and Undead? As far as I can tell, even the Goblins seem to be able to speak and seem quite intelligent.」(Eleanora)

They had learned through the questions they had asked that Tarea was a Ghoul with a prominent position in this community. It would cause a large commotion if such an individual was seen wandering around as an Undead.

They might be able to use the confusion caused by this to find an opportunity to kill the Dhampir. However, it was questionable as to whether they would be to escape the city alive afterwards.

Of course, there was also the option of burning the body so that it could not become an Undead and then pouring holy water, on it, but there was another reason that this was out of the question.

Neither Sercrent nor Eleanora knew of a technique that could silently burn a body without producing any smoke. Being discovered through the smoke produced by burning the body would defeat the purpose of burning the body in the first place.

As for the holy water, they simply didn't have much left. Either way, by the time this Ghoul woman woke up, they would already have escaped. With that being the case, they needed to save it in case they needed it after killing the Vampire and escaping.

「… Tch, hurry and fix your arm.」(Sercrent)

As if he had finally realized this, Sercrent clicked his tongue and spat these words towards the Vampire who was groaning and clutching his broken arm.

I was considerate enough to break your arm instead of your sword which would have been irreparable, so you could at least thank me. But I'll stay silent for now. I can't expect anything from you anyway.

「We’re leaving.」(Eleanora)

Leaving behind the peacefully-sleeping Tarea, Eleanora and her party headed towards the royal castle in which their target resided. They were certain that by the time Tarea woke up, everything would be over and they would have already made their escape.

Getting into the royal castle was a simple task. There had been nobody acting as guards.

Was the Dhampir that confident in his own ability, or did he simply have no sense of caution?

「How are we going to dispose of him?」(Sercrent)

「If we make any noise, we will be noticed by the Undead outside. And now that we have come this far, we need to confirm whether the【Sword King】Borkus’s remains are here. I will use my Demon Eyes to charm him, and lead him here, and you will decapitate him.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora needed to maintain eye contact with her target while using her Charming Demon Eyes. If eye contact was broken for a moment, their effects would be undone. To guarantee success, it was best to have someone else deal the finishing blow.

And Sercrent’s parent, Gubamon, had a habit of gathering the corpses of those known as heroes, raising them as Undead and adding them to his collection.

Even during the war in which Talosheim was destroyed two hundred years ago, numerous corpses of heroes had been gathered. However, the Vampire assigned with the task of retrieving the【Sword King】Borkus’s corpse had unfortunately encountered the【Divine Spear of Ice】Mikhail, so he had failed.

Eleanora didn’t really have any reason to help Gubamon with his hobby, but he was not someone that she wanted to put in an ill mood. She at least needed to put some thought into the task.

「I think there is a high possibility that he has already turned into an Undead, though.」(Eleanora)

「I agree. But we still must confirm that. Even though he was defeated by Mikhail, he is still an Undead hero. He should still be of a considerably high Rank even after becoming an Undead. With that being the case, he shouldn't be serving as the subordinate of a mere Dhampir, but the Dhampir may know where he is.」(Sercrent)

「I know; I will ask the Dhampir while I'm luring him out.」(Eleanora)

If Sercrent was able to obtain even a fragment of one of Borkus's bones, he may be able to avoid being purged by Gubamon. Perhaps as if holding onto that hope, Sercrent's eyes had the dangerous glint of someone who had been driven into a corner.

If I grow desperate, I might be joining him. It's best to cooperate with him.

Eleanora slipped through the completely unguarded door silently and entered the room.

「?!」(Eleanora)

And in the next moment, her eyes met the Dhampir's.

She opened her eyes wide in surprise, but now that she thought about it, this was convenient. She had activated her「Charming Demon Eyes」before entering the room just in case, so the Dhampir had been put under its effects immediately.

As proof, his own will had faded away from his eyes and become like those of a dead fish.

「You are Vandalieu, aren't you?」(Eleanora)

「Yes, I am Vandalieu.」(Vandalieu)

He answered honestly to her question. He had white hair and odd-colored eyes that were a manifestation of his mixed lineage. And his name, too. There was no mistake that this child was the Dhampir the Vampires had been targeting.

However, Eleanora felt like something was out of place. She wondered whether this Dhampir was really under the effects of her「Charming Demon Eyes.」

Those under the effects of her「Charming Demon Eyes」normally loosened their face muscles as if drunk, and their tone of speech became relaxed.

However, this Dhampir's face was completely expressionless and his tone was normal.

And she could feel some kind of strange power in his eyes that were supposed to be hollow and vacant. Looking into them made her feel a chill, as if she were peeking into the depths of some abyss, and yet she experienced some kind of mysterious feeling.

Could it be that my Demon Eyes have been resisted? That should be impossible without a high level in the Mental Resistance skill. Even with the Dhampir's【Status Effect Resistance】and the【Magic Resistance】skill of a Dark Elf… The【Mental Corruption】skill is a possibility as well, but if he had that, it's strange that he hasn't become some kind of madman who can't even hold a conversation. He doesn't appear to be insane. But I suppose it's best to be sure.

Eleanora had absolute confidence in her own Demon Eyes, but this Dhampir was someone who possessed the goddess Vida's divine protection. He was an opponent that warranted caution.

「Hey, what do you think about me?」(Eleanora)

「Huh… I think that you're a beautiful person.」(Vandalieu)

「I see, that makes me happy. Will you be my friend?」(Eleanora)

「… If you're fine with me being your friend, it would be my pleasure…?」(Vandalieu)

「Well then, would you praise the evil god Hihiryushukaka that we worship? Say that he is a wonderful god.」(Eleanora)

「Sure…」(Vandalieu)

As Eleanora requested, the Dhampir pressed his hands together in prayer and said,「The evil god Hihiryushukaka is a wonderful god.」

And then he looked at Eleanora in silence.

It seems that I was worrying needlessly, thought Eleanora.

If the Dhampir was conscious, he would have immediately realized that I'm a Vampire and been on guard. And there is no way that someone with the divine protection of Vida would praise an evil god in a normal state.

The Dhampir would definitely not have complied with my last request if not for the effect of the Demon Eyes. This Dhampir is still an infant, but according to the information we have, he's supposedly intelligent and is referred to by his subordinates as "King" and "Holy Son". He should be a proud individual.

Eleanora had initially thought that he looked ominous, but now she smiled, thinking that he was rather adorable. Now all she needed to do was question him and then bring him to where Sercrent and the others were waiting.

「You have tamed the Undead, haven't you? How did you do it? When did you receive the goddess's divine protection?」(Eleanora)

「That's right, but even if you ask me how I did it… Well, in any case, I'm able to tame them. As for the divine protection… Are you talking about the prophecy?」(Vandalieu)

What a surprise. Not only has he received the goddess's divine protection, but her prophecy as well. There's no doubt that the goddess had taken notice of him and is watching over him even now.

Wouldn't it be dangerous to dispose of him? This thought occurred to Eleanora, but she couldn't go against Birkyne's orders even if that was true, so she drove it out of her mind.

「I see… Well then, I wonder if you know about the【Sword King】Borkus? Can you tell me where he is* right now?」(Eleanora)

「Borkus should be* in the audience chamber.」(Vandalieu)

「Should be…?[1] Has he turned into an Undead?」(Eleanora)

「Yes.」(Vandalieu)

As expected, it seems that the【Sword King】Borkus has turned into an Undead. But judging from the fact that he's still in the audience chamber where his body should have been, it's likely that this Dhampir hasn't managed to tame him. I suppose an Undead hero is beyond even this Dhampir's abilities to tame after

all.

It would be best on giving up on retrieving his remains. If Sercrent wants to attempt it, I'll just have to let him do what he wants on his own.

「Also… How did you repair the castle and the city? It should have been considerably damaged; did you make the Undead repair them?」(Eleanora)

「No, I made Golems to repair them.」(Vandalieu)

Golems? Is he saying that possesses not only the Spiritualist Job, but the Alchemist Job as well?

It would be best to question him in more detail –

「Oi, how much longer are you planning to take?」(Sercrent)

Sercrent had entered the room without Eleanora noticing. The Subordinate Vampires were behind him.

「You have asked him everything that needs to be asked; there is no more use for him.」(Sercrent)

「… I believe we decided that I would lead him to you.」(Eleanora)

「Silence. We came because you wouldn't come no matter how long we waited.」(Sercrent)

「How impatient of you.」(Eleanora)

In the corner of her vision, Eleanora could see Sercrent grinding his fangs without even trying to conceal his irritation. *Is he trying to threaten me?*

I would appreciate it if you don't do such unpleasant things, considering that I have to maintain eye contact with the Dhampir so that he stays under the effect of my Charming Demon Eyes.

「This child might be beneficial to us. It would be useful to ask him how he tamed the Undead and how he used Golems to repaired the ruins.」(Eleanora)

If this Dhampir is indeed using the goddess's divine protection to tame the Undead, killing him could incur the goddess's wrath and cause movements from the Pure-breed Vampires who worship Vida hiding in the far depths of distant Devil's Nests.

And if I can find out how he used Golems to repair the ruins and this method could be applied elsewhere, it would definitely be useful. Not even one year has passed since this Dhampir came to Talosheim. If this method could repair an entire fortress city in that short period of time, it might be possible to build small towers and castles in the space of a single month.

The strategic value of such a method is immeasurable. Surely even this man would understand that.

「… Eleanora, have you gone insane? The mission we received was to kill that Dhampir. That takes priority, and everything else can come after we have accomplished that. Any secret knowledge or rare skills he might have are irrelevant.」(Sercrent)

However, what Sercrent was advocating was that they uphold the rule of their society, the rule that the commands of the Pure-breeds must be obeyed without question.

And that was also correct. As Sercrent said, what both Birkyne and Gubamon emphasized above all else was that their orders should be carried out. Anything other than that was unnecessary; praise would not be given if their orders were not carried out.

「I wonder what you mean when you ask whether I've gone insane?」(Eleanora)

「Those words mean exactly as they sound. Could it be that you have developed some affection for him? To me, it looks like you are hesitating to kill him and repeating your questions in order to delay the inevitable.」(Sercrent)

「There is… no way that is true. You dare ridicule me?!」(Eleanora)

She raised her voice unintentionally, but that was not because of anger but because she was trembling. And as Sercrent made this accusation that was supposed to be completely off the mark, she was surprised by her own trembling.

Impossible; are you saying that I'm feeling guilty only now, after all this time? I was supposed to have discarded these emotions when I swore loyalty to Birkyne-sama!

She had been abandoned by her family, captured by the lower members of Birkyne's society and raised by them. She had received training while witnessing those with poor results being drained of their blood, many of them being her friends.

She had endured being forced to kill her comrades who were raised together in the same environment, being encouraged to betray them and repeated torture conducted for absurd reasons in order to finally become a Vampire.

『Listen, Eleanora. There are only two kinds of people in this world, the rulers who stand at the top and the weak who are trampled underfoot. If you want to become a ruler, you have to trample someone beneath your feet. After all, a ruler only becomes a ruler when there is someone beneath them. There is no such thing as a king who doesn't even rule a single commoner, is there? So if you don't want to be oppressed and exploited, you have to oppress and exploit someone else.』(Birkyne)

Those words that Birkyne had spoken remained in her ears. Steal if you don't want to be stolen from, persecute others if you don't want to be persecuted, kill if you don't want to be killed. This was the only way that Eleanora had been able to protect herself; this was supposed to be an absolute truth.

So there's no way that I can hesitate to kill the Dhampir before my eyes. I've killed countless people up until now. I've been betrayed by friends and comrades, almost killed by them and then I killed them in return. Considering that, why would I hesitate now of all times?

「If you're willing to say that much, then you and your subordinates can just do it, can't you? Are you just going to stand there like scarecrows while making me do all the work on my own?」(Eleanora)

As Eleanora provoked them, the Subordinates began to tremble, looked at each other and then took a step. A step backwards.

Nobody tried to approach the Dhampir. It was as if they were being overpowered by something.

「Eleanora, you do it. If you don't, I will report to Birkyne-sama that you refused to kill the Dhampir.」(Sercrent)

「! You bastard…」(Eleanora)

It was only through great strength of will that Eleanora resisted looking at Sercrent. What was he playing at, trying to brush aside his numerous failures in the past? She felt an urge to tear his throat out with her claws.

But it's just a matter of killing the Dhampir. That's all I need to do.

「Can you come here?」(Eleanora)

She called out to the Dhampir who had been staring at her the whole time. His eyes were endlessly empty.

She would kill this child. It was simple. Once he came closer, she simply needed to stab him with a sword or swing her claws at him; it wouldn't even matter if she kicked and tore through his soft belly with the claws of her toes. Eleanora was strong enough to kill even a heavily armored knight with brute strength alone.

Killing this child is like crushing an insect.

The Dhampir approached her at a brisk, casual pace. Eleanora couldn't stop her heart from throbbing violently, and her breathing was becoming irregular.

He was within range for her to kick him. She felt a painful sensation in her chest. *That's right, I won't finish him with a kick. My claws, I'll dispose of him with my claws.*

He was within range of her claws. *My hands are trembling; he needs to be a little closer. But if he walks any closer, we'll break eye contact. Sercrent and the others are in the way behind me, so I can't step back.*

Eleanora decided that there was no other choice but to lift the Dhampir up. She would simply need to grab hold of his head, thrust her fangs into his neck and drain his blood until he died.

And then Eleanora was staring into Vandalieu's eyes at point-blank range.

There had been no change; there was still no light in these eyes. They were empty, devoid of anything.

But she sensed something that existed inside that emptiness.

Something that Eleanora couldn't run from no matter how much she tried, something she couldn't disobey no matter what she did, something that didn't exist.

No! I must not disobey this person!

Instinctively, Eleanora became unable to move. She stood completely still, still breathing heavily, unable to pierce the Dhampir with her fangs.

At this moment, Sercrent shouted.

「Do it, you bastards! Dispose of the Dhampir and Eleanora as well! Just like we did to that piece of trash, Valen!」(Sercrent)

「Wha –?!」(Eleanora)

Swords were pointed at Eleanora and the Dhampir. Before they could pierce her back, she flew as if pulled forward by something.

She dived onto the bed that the Dhampir had been sleeping on and rolled forward.

「Tch, she avoided it instinctively. As to be expected of one of Birkyne's bodyguards, even if she is rotten. But with that wound, it's now impossible for her to defeat us.」(Sercrent)

There was a wound in Eleanora's back so deep that it might have grazed her heart. Even though she was a Noble-born Vampire who wouldn't die so easily unless her heart was completely destroyed or her head was cut off, her movements would be slowed from taking damage.

「If I kill you along with the Dhampir and seal your mouth, Birkyne and Gubamon will never know about my failures! Die!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent could feel that the Dhampir was emitting an unusual presence. Though it wasn't as powerful as his or Eleanora's, the reason he had been talking so much might have been to shake himself and his followers free of that presence.

However, those words would lead to Sercrent meeting the most terrible of fates.

「What did you say just now?」(Vandalieu)

Ah, the Demon Eyes weren't having any effect after all.

Even as she stared at the Dhampir, petrified with fear, Eleanora forgot the pain of her wound and felt a strange sense of relief.

Relief at the fact that those eyes were not looking at her.

Notes

1. In Japanese, ある/aru is used for inanimate objects while 居る/iru is used for people when saying something/someone is/be somewhere *etc.* Eleanora uses the former when asking the question, referring to Borkus's remains as an inanimate object, but is surprised when Vandalieu replies with the latter, implying that Borkus is a person.

Chapter 44: I will end you completely; there is no future for you

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A little while earlier.

Vandalieu suddenly woke up.

「… The spirits are making a lot of noise.」(Vandalieu)

Has something happened? It doesn't seem like there's a large influx of monster spirits coming from the Dungeon where Borkus's party is crushing everything in their path.

Now that I think about it, Borkus returned from the Dungeon today so he should be in his usual spot.

So then, what was it? He couldn't get an idea of what it was even when he asked the spirits directly.

Well, it would probably be best to stay awake. I don't feel the presence of death, so it doesn't seem like there's a disaster-level high-Rank monster closing in on Talosheim, at least.

Let's relax and wait for now. It could be that Pauvina has just woken up and will be coming here any moment now.

「Mom is… asleep, huh.」(Vandalieu)

The small box on the bedside table that contained the enshrined fragment of Darcia's bone was silent. As he started to wonder what to do while waiting, Vandalieu felt a presence.

「…【Detect Life.】」(Vandalieu)

Casting a detection spell with quite a wide area of effect, he discovered that numerous life-forms had entered the castle. *Who would visit at this time of night? The fact that there are reactions to this spell means that they aren't Undead, so just who are they?*

Excluding people who visit the bathhouse, there should be nobody coming to the royal castle other than me, Pauvina and Borkus. Zadiris is away in a Dungeon today, and Basdia visited Bilde and the other mothers to ask them about childcare and is staying with them.

I invited Tarea to live in the royal castle as well, but she needs to live in the same building as her workshop as she's busy with work. She seemed very disappointed, so she'll likely come to live here once she's less busy.

Leaving that aside, who are these people?

「I'll use【Detect Life】one more time… They're coming here instead of going to the audience chamber?」(Vandalieu)

Which meant that they perhaps had business with Vandalieu, so he got up.

He waited, wondering something as silly as whether it would seem villain-like to greet them with,「Yo, I've been getting tired of waiting」, or,「About time.」

And then he felt a fairly strong presence of death in front of the door. This meant that someone on the other side of the door had murderous intentions towards Vandalieu.

Who is it? He wondered as he took the fragment of Darcia's bone from the small box on the table and placed it into his breast pocket to keep it safe.

Judging from the presence I can sense, it's not such an urgent situation, but just in case.

But living people who hold murderous intentions towards me… It's far too early to be one of the people reincarnating from Origin. Other people who could have a motive to kill me would be people related to Evbejia or its bandits, or humans from the Mirg-shield-nation, but that's unlikely as well.

It would be difficult for them to cross the Boundary Mountain Range, and even if they wanted to hire an assassin, nobody would accept the job.

The most likely answer was monsters, but there were no species intelligent enough to do something like sneak into the castle living near Talosheim.

Hmm, could it be spies or something from the Mirg shield-nation?

It was possible that there was a squad of highly-skilled assassins. As Vandalieu

considered this possibility, the door opened slightly and a woman slipped inside the room.

A woman? And she's not concealing her face.

A woman who didn't look like an assassin or monster at first glance had entered the room. She was wearing clothes that looked easy to move in, but she didn't have any kind of armor or weapon on her.

She was a beautiful woman with red hair and white skin, only a year or two into her twenties.

And then, without pulling a knife from a pocket or reciting an incantation, the beautiful woman raised her face.

「?!」(Eleanora)

And then she opened her eyes. She seemed surprised. He couldn't blame her for being surprised to encounter the owner of the room that she had just sneaked into, but wasn't she a little *too* surprised?

But the beautiful woman recovered from her surprise quickly. She stared at Vandalieu intently.

What powerful eyes.

Even as this thought ran through his mind, Vandalieu didn't take his eyes off the beautiful woman. She was a trespasser in his room, after all, and strangely enough, he could feel the presence of death coming from her. And he thought that this was some kind of contest where the first person to break eye contact was the loser.

With gazes that seemed like they could pierce holes in a surface, they stared at each other. And then the woman's eyes and mouth suddenly relaxed.

「You are Vandalieu, aren't you?」(Eleanora)

「Yes, I am Vandalieu.」(Vandalieu)

She asked his name, so Vandalieu answered honestly. As he answered, he became more and more unsure of who this woman was.

But the presence of death… the reaction from【Danger Sense: Death】is

growing weaker and weaker…?

「Hey, what do you think about me?」(Eleanora)

For some reason, she asked a question like this.

「Huh… I think that you're a beautiful person.」(Vandalieu)

I'll give a noncommittal response for now. She's actually beautiful, too.

「I see, that makes me happy. Will you be my friend?」(Eleanora)

In addition to being happy, she's asking me to be her friend. If I were on a street corner, I'd think that she was trying to pick me up.

「… If you're fine with me being your friend, it would be my pleasure…?」(Vandalieu)

It's exceptionally questionable as to whether being friends with a beautiful woman who has trespassed into my room is a good idea, but I'll answer with a yes for now. If I refuse and she gets angry, I'd be scared.

「Well then, would you praise the evil god Hihiryushukaka that we worship? Say that he is a wonderful god.」(Eleanora)

… For some reason, she's asking me to praise the evil god that she seems to worship. Since everyone in this world knows about the existence of the gods, maybe it's some kind of etiquette in human society to show respect for the god that the other person believes in before introducing yourself?

Well, I don't really care. Since it isn't Rodcorte or Alda, I don't mind giving some insincere praise to this Hihiryushukaka god.

「The evil god Hihiryushukaka is a wonderful god.」(Vandalieu)

But just who or what is this beautiful woman?

She isn't showing any signs of wanting to cause further harm to Mom, nor is she doing anything to try and kill me… and she probably isn't here to invite me to join her religion.

Is there a possibility that she's a spy or something from the Orbaume Kingdom side of the continent?

When Talosheim was destroyed, the First Princess and around five hundred

citizens escaped to the Hartner duchy of the Orbaume Kingdom. They would naturally wish to restore their homeland one day.

And the Orbaume Kingdom that welcomed them would surely wish for Talosheim's restoration as well. They would have set up a political marriage or something with the First Princess to make the nation's ruler their relative, and turning Talosheim into one of its vassal nations would surely be profitable for them.

There's no longer a route through which the Mirg shield-nation can send their troops. They could maintain the nation as long as they have walls and soldiers to keep the monsters at bay, and adventurers would come swarming in large numbers as there are four Dungeons nearby.

Could this woman have set out to investigate Talosheim's current state? But when she arrived here, the walls, the city and even the castle had been restored and there were Undead and monsters living here. And there was even an unknown『King』present.

So then has she come here to contact the king who currently leads the group who has taken over Talosheim?

She'll negotiate if possible, and if not, she'll have the guys outside the room dispose of me.

I still don't get why she made me praise the evil god, though.

They got me. I didn't expect a spies or humans to sneak in, so the security is full of holes.

Without an ability like Vandalieu's【Golem Transmutation】to create roads among the cliffs, crossing the mountain range with hundreds of people or more would be difficult, and the tunnel leading to the Orbaume Kingdom was still sealed. He had never imagined that humans would come in from the outside.

The monsters couldn't climb the walls, and they wouldn't even approach since they could sense the presence of the Undead Titans.

That was why there had been no guards on the high, sturdy walls and it would have been easy for someone to sneak into the city or castle with a little knowledge. Vandalieu hadn't even thought about the security situation.

He cursed himself for his own carelessness, but felt grateful that he could talk to this person more than the people who were trying to kill him with no arguments such as the adventurers of the Mirg shield-nation or the religious fanatics who worshipped Alda.

For now, I should ask for the woman's name.

「You have tamed the Undead, haven't you? How did you do it? When did you receive the goddess's divine protection?」(Eleanora)

Before he could ask, he was asked a question. And the question asked was something that he'd never even thought about.

How did I tame the Undead, she says… I'm not really doing anything special; is it really something that you'd go out of your way to ask?

I haven't thrown special balls to capture weakened Undead, nor have I defeated them to have them stand up again and want to become my friends.

I made Bone Man and the others myself, and the Ghouls and the Undead Titans of Talosheim are under the effect of the【Death-Attribute Charm.】I had to negotiate with Borkus. I don't really feel the sense that I've tamed them.

I didn't think it would be that strange considering that there are Tamer Jobs in this world. Could it be the sheer number of Undead? From her perspective, it might seem like I've tamed over a thousand Undead, so maybe she wants to hear whatever secret or trick I'm using.

Unaware that it was common knowledge that taming the Undead was impossible, this was how Vandalieu interpreted her question.

And the goddess's divine protection… Ah, is she talking about the prophecy that Nuaza received?

「That's right, but even if you ask me how I did it… Well, in any case, I'm able to tame them. As for the divine protection… Are you talking about the prophecy?」(Vandalieu)

I asked a question in response, and even though she seems surprised, she also seems to understand. Even though gods exist, prophecies are probably rare.

I ended up asking her a question in response, but I'm relieved that she isn't

bothered by it.

… Oh? I can feel her murderous intent returning a little.

「I see… Well then, I wonder if you know about the【Sword King】Borkus? Can you tell me where he is* right now?」(Eleanora)

I was lost in thought and missed my chance to ask her name. She's asking about Borkus this time. I don't know why she's interested in Borkus, but… maybe she wants to know how much military strength is present here?

「Borkus should be[1] in the audience chamber.」(Vandalieu)

「Should be…?[1] Has he turned into an Undead?」(Eleanora)

「Yes.」(Vandalieu)

Neither Borkus's location nor the fact that he had turned into an undead was something that needed to be hidden, so Vandalieu answered both questions. When he did, the woman seemed to ponder something.

The murderous intent coming from the woman has disappeared again, but I can still feel a response from【Danger Sense: Death】on the other side of the door. I should call Borkus and the others here just in case. I have to awaken my Undead insects, ask them to come to the room below and…

「Also… How did you repair the castle and the city? It should have been considerably damaged; did you make the Undead repair them?」(Eleanora)

And then the woman asked about the castle and the city. She might have been surprised after seeing the restored Talosheim that had previously been a ruin.

「No, I made Golems to repair them.」(Vandalieu)

Repairing things by making Golems is definitely extraordinary. Even now, it costs thousands of Mana to make a single Golem; sometimes even more than ten thousand. Even if it's theoretically possible, it's definitely impossible for ordinary alchemists to do in practice.

The【Golem Transmuter】Job was undiscovered, so only someone with over 100,000,000 Mana could possibly use such a method.

As Vandalieu had no proper knowledge regarding Golems, that was how he interpreted the woman's surprised reaction when he mentioned Golems.

And then the door behind the woman opened and several people stepped inside, led by an irritated-looking man.

Hmm, things have changed. For now, I'll turn the floor into a Golem.

The men who have entered aren't hiding their faces and don't have weapons drawn, though they are armed. They're shooting dangerous glares in this direction. Come to think of it, including the beautiful woman, all of them have crimson pupils.

「Oi, how much longer are you planning to take?」(Sercrent)

The man is saying something dangerous, that I should be disposed of since there's no further use for me. He's not even making an attempt to conceal his murderous intent and malice. Despite that, he seems fully concerned about the woman, not me.

Is the battle finally beginning? Vandalieu thought, but the woman began arguing with the man, still maintaining eye contact with Vandalieu.

「This child might be beneficial to us. It would be useful to ask him how he tamed the Undead and how he used Golems to repaired the ruins.」(Eleanora)

I'm happy that you acknowledge my value, but it'd be really helpful if you could try and stop the man. Still, saying things like this while looking into the eyes of the person you're referring to is quite questionable, isn't it?

「… Eleanora, have you gone insane? The mission we received was to kill that Dhampir. That takes priority, and everything else can come after we have accomplished that. Any secret knowledge or rare skills he might have are irrelevant.」(Sercrent)

This was the response the man gave. Vandalieu had finally learned the beautiful woman's name, but he had also heard something that he was far more concerned about.

Killing the Dhampir takes priority? Does that mean that these are believers of Alda? They're not spies from the Orbaume Kingdom? Was everything about the

evil god a lie?

It seems like all of my guesses up until now have been wrong. But why is this man saying these things calmly right in front of me? He's either very confident in his own abilities or simply underestimating me.

Either way, it's unpleasant.

「Eleanora, you do it. If you don't, I will report to Birkyne-sama that you refused to kill the Dhampir.」(Sercrent)

「! You bastard…」(Eleanora)

And at the end of it all, Eleanora is being threatened to kill me. It seems that this Birkyne they mentioned is a really fearsome person.

But this Eleanora person hasn't broken eye contact with me during all this talking. Don't her eyes hurt? Mine sting a little.

While these thoughts ran through his mind, Vandalieu decided how he was going to deal with these people.

For now, I'll capture all of them alive.

I could question them after killing them, but if they were dispatched by the Orbaume Kingdom, I could use them in the future if I capture them alive.

Eleanora's murderous intent rose a third time. Did she intend to kill Vandalieu as she had been ordered to by Birkyne?

「Can you come here?」(Eleanora)

It seemed that she had steeled her resolve. She asked Vandalieu to move closer.

It can't be helped. I'll approach her, and at the timing at which she tries to kill me…

Vandalieu approached her while thinking this. He entered the range of a possible kick but Eleanora didn't move. Her murderous intent faded rapidly.

He approached close enough that he could reach out and touch her, but she still didn't move. He couldn't feel her murderous intent at all anymore.

Even consciously using the【Danger Sense: Death】that was always active,

there was no response.

It seemed that she had either decided not to kill Vandalieu or become unable to. With this, she was no longer an enemy.

However, he could feel a remarkable response from the men behind her. Unlike the response he could feel from Eleanora, the response he felt from them was growing larger.

And it was pointed at not only Vandalieu, but at Eleanora as well.

A conflict within their organization? Well, unlike me, she's not in enough danger to be killed suddenly… Ah, this isn't good.

As Eleanora took Vandalieu's head in both hands and lifted him up, the men moved.

「Do it, you bastards! Dispose of the Dhampir and Eleanora as well! Just like we did to that piece of trash, Valen!」(Sercrent)

The proud-looking man shouted with bloodshot eyes, and his subordinates drew their swords to kill Vandalieu and Eleanora. Their movement was faster than he had expected based on the response he felt from【Danger Sense: Death】, and he reacted a moment too late.

Using【Telekinesis】, Vandalieu flew backwards together with Eleanora. The bed creaked and blood sprayed from her wounded back.

However, it seemed that the wound that almost reached her lungs wasn't enough to kill her. That was to be expected; she and the others were all Vampires, after all.

Having finally realized this, Vandalieu looked at the men, still being held in Eleanora's arms. They were shouting something, but he didn't care about that.

「What did you say just now?」(Vandalieu)

"That piece of trash, Valen." These men had called Vandalieu's father who had been killed before he was born, Darcia's husband, a piece of trash.

「The effect of the Charming Demon Eyes has been cut off! Kill him before he summons the Undead outside!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent drew his own sword as he spat orders at the Subordinate Vampires whose movements were slowed as if they were in awe of the Dhampir. He had no intention of exchanging words with Vandalieu, no matter what he said.

If Eleanora heals herself and becomes able to fight, I will not be able to defeat her. If the Dhampir summons his Undead, we will be overwhelmed by their numbers.

The two of them joining forces would be the worst possible turn of events.

They have to be killed now at all costs!

The Subordinate Vampires bared their fangs and rushed in to tear the two of them apart with their swords and claws.

「Drop.」(Vandalieu)

However, the floor disappeared from beneath their feet. The floor that Vandalieu had preemptively turned into a Golem changed shape with the【Golem Transmutation】skill, turning into a makeshift pitfall.

「A pitfall?!」(Vampire)

「Impossible!」(Vampire)

The Vampires and the bed fell down helplessly. Only the floor below the bedside table remained as it was, but the Vampires who had rushed in towards Vandalieu and Eleanora hadn't noticed that.

「Th-this is…?」(Eleanora)

On top of the bed that defied gravity to float downwards gently, Eleanora was astonished. Too many things had happened in a single instant; her mind wasn't processing all of this new information quickly enough.

As she blinked, seemingly unconcerned about the wound on her back, Vandalieu thought that she looked quite adorable with this expression now that her formidability was gone.

It would have been good to be able to say such cool-sounding words, but there was someone that he was more concerned about than her right now.

「Please wait a moment.」(Vandalieu)

He wasn't really concerned about Eleanora. She wasn't an enemy. She had appeared before him with murderous intent, but that murderous intent had vanished without Vandalieu having done anything to it. Even if she was one of his father's enemies, he would deal with that when it came.

Vandalieu turned his eyes towards Sercrent.

「Kuh, such impudent acts!」(Sercrent)

The Noble-born Vampire Sercrent who possessed the ability to fly had fallen for a moment, but now he had regained his stance and was floating lightly in the air.

There were none among the Subordinate Vampires foolish enough to land on their backs or heads. As to be expected of Vampires.

「Hurry up and kill them!」(Sercrent)

『Yeah, we'll do that.』(Borkus)

「?!」(Sercrent)

As Sercrent turned to look in the direction that this unfamiliar male voice had come from, he heard a slashing sound.

And then in the corner of his vision, he saw his own arm that was still holding his sword and his leg that had been severed above the knee flying away.

「Guh… GAAAAAAH! Y-you bastard!」(Sercrent)

The bald Titan who possessed only half a face with finely-chiseled features responsible for the【Sky Rend】attack laughed and said,『Don't scream so loudly.』

『Oops, my bad. Are we taking them alive?』(Borkus)

「Change of plans, Borkus. Please kill everyone except for this person. But I would be happy if you let me kill that one.」(Vandalieu)

『Yeah, roger that. Just when did you manage to charm such a pretty lady?』(Borkus)

「No, no, I'm the one who has been charmed.」(Vandalieu)

『Are you serious? At this rate, things will start to look bad if we don't find

Zandia-jouchan soon.』(Borkus)

Seeing an Undead with extraordinary bloodthirst emanating from his entire body, Eleanora whispered in wonder.

「Th-the【Sword King】Borkus. It can't be, you tamed him?」(Eleanora)

The Titan hero who was said to have cut off the head of a Dragon in a single attack, defeated in the war two hundred years ago. And even now, he had simultaneously severed the arm and leg of Sercrent, a Noble-born Vampire.

It was impossible that such a powerful Undead could be tamed. The difficulty of taming a monster is proportional to the monster's Rank and intelligence. Borkus possessed strength exceeding that of lesser Dragons, and was intelligent enough to hold conversations. Even with the goddess's divine protection, the difficulty of taming such a being should be beyond comprehension.

However, there were many Vampires who, unlike Eleanora, didn't have the time to notice and be surprised by such facts.

「Sercrent-sama!」(Vampire)

「You bastards, keep the Undead busy! I will kill the Dhampir in the meantime!」(Sercrent)

『As you will!』(Vampires)

The ten or so remaining Subordinate Vampires faced Borkus while Sercrent turned to Vandalieu, who had slipped away from Eleanora's arms, and began reciting an incantation.

Though Subordinate Vampires were lesser beings among Vampires, their power posed a threat to humans. Even though they didn't possess magical abilities like Noble-born Vampires, they possessed immense physical strength, sharp reflexes, claws that could tear through iron and tremendous Vitality and regenerative abilities that prevented them from dying as long as they weren't decapitated or had their hearts destroyed.

And they also possessed the human-like trait of receiving bonuses to their skills from Jobs. Facing ten such Vampires was utter madness.

「GYAAAAAH!」(Vampire)

「A-a Dragon from the wall?! GAHAH!」(Vampire)

「S-Sercrent-sama! Please save – GUHEH!」(Vampire)

But such Vampires were trampled down without being able to resist in the slightest.

『GAAAAAAAAAAAAH.』

『GYAOOOOOOOOOOH!』

The one responsible for this wasn't Borkus, but the Undead dinosaurs that had been created from the dinosaur corpses Vandalieu had received on his third birthday.

There was a large banquet hall on the unoccupied floor beneath the cabinet minister's office. Vandalieu had already turned its walls into Golems.

That was why they had changed shape to form a corridor through which the Undead dinosaurs had charged in from the dining hall.

Apart from those who had been taken by surprise, the Subordinate Vampires attempted to deal with them, but Vandalieu had also turned the floor that they were standing on into a Golem.

As their legs were caught by the arms that had sprouted from the ground and their movements were stopped by holes that had suddenly appeared beneath them, the Undead dinosaurs pierced them with their teeth and horns.

They had the upper halves of their bodies shredded by the teeth of a Zombie Tyrannosaurus Rex, their heads smashed like ripe fruit by a direct hit from the tail of a Zombie Ankylosaurus and thrown around in the jaws of a Zombie in the shape of a mysterious one-eyed cat with scales.

Every time they attempted to counterattack, fists would extend towards them from the walls and floor to hinder them, and then they were overwhelmed by the Undead without being able to move properly.

Meanwhile, only three of the Subordinate Vampires faced Borkus as they had been ordered to.

『Here,【Single Flash.】』(Borkus)

With an unenthusiastic voice, Borkus swung his magic sword towards them and released the most basic of martial skills.

「You fool!【Iron Wall!】【Iron Body!】」(Vampire)

A Subordinate Vampire quickly readied the shield that was on his back and used Shield Technique and Armor Technique martial skills.

Both of them were skills increasing his physical and magical damage resistance that he had finally become able to use after his skills had reached level 5. There was no way that a sword swung with a technique such as【Single Flash】could touch even the Vampire's pinky finger through such a defense.

However, Borkus's magic sword cut through the Subordinate Vampire's shield, arm and entire body like a hot knife through butter.

『Come on, you have to survive at least one hit.』(Borkus)

The martial skill's power was proportional to the user's skill level. The level 5 Shield Technique and Armor Technique skills couldn't possibly stop the【Single Flash】of Borkus, whose skill had reached level 10 and granted him the superior version,【Sword King Technique.】

「Hyih, hyiiiiih!」(Vampire)

「Sercrent-sama, it is impossible for us! Please assist us!」(Vampire)

The last two finally understand the difference in our strength, but are they stupid? Borkus wondered as he swung his magic sword once more.

『Look out,【Triple Slash.】』(Borkus)

Borkus released three sideways slashes at high speed. They cut a Subordinate Vampire's neck, below the chest and the base of his legs. Blood scattered everywhere as his legs and head went rolling across the floor.

「Ah, AAAAAH!」(Vampire)

But the other one was saved by the fact that he's only had both legs cut off just above the knees. Well, I'll kill him soon as well anyway.

「W-wait! I surrender, I'll tell you anything! I'll tell you about Sercrent-sama, Gubamon-sama and even Birkyne-sama! So please spare me!」(Vampire)

『Sorry, but I've been told we don't need any prisoners.』(Borkus)

I've been told to kill everyone but that pretty lady, and I have to do what the boss says. Oh, I've grown up quite a bit, haven't I?

『And it's an old saying that you should kill Goblins no matter how pitiful they look.』(Borkus)

Saying an old proverb spoken amongst adventurers since old times, Borkus swung his sword three times. Scattering blood everywhere, the three small-fries had turned into masses of meat giving off a delicious smell.

『Well, you can blame yourself for becoming that kid's enemy.』(Borkus)

Borkus picked up one of the legs rolling around and began munching on it raw. *Delicious. Subordinate Vampires taste better than they look.*

I suppose I'll try their brains and organs next.

Ah, I should have at least brought some salt with me.

With fresh meat as a snack, Borkus watched the execution.

「Die, you damn Dhampir!」(Sercrent)

Shouting these words, Sercrent unleashed a lightning attack. The lightning that was writhing through the air like a snake was probably very powerful. There was no doubt that being grazed by it would stop Vandalieu's heart and taking a direct hit would turn him into ash.

However, it vanished upon coming into contact with the【Magic Absorption Barrier】surrounding Vandalieu's body.

「Wha –?! … Very well, I will slaughter you personally with my claws!」(Sercrent)

Swinging his claws, Sercrent closed in on Vandalieu with the speed of a wild beast. His movements were unexpectedly sharp for someone missing an arm and a leg.

「I'll have your head!【Iron Tear!】」(Sercrent)

Such wonderful speed. To Vandalieu, it appeared as if Sercrent had vanished in one moment and appeared in front of his eyes in the next.

However, the【Impact-Negating Barrier】and【Magic Absorption Barrier】had both been set up. After what had happened during the battle against Bugogan, Vandalieu had decided to make them extra-thick.

「What?! My Mana, my strength!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent felt as if the air had been replaced by a heavy, viscous substance. The moment he touched Vandalieu's barriers, his arm had stopped moving.

His arm should have been strong enough to destroy a castle's walls, but Sercrent felt an incredible amount of resistance from trying to move it just a single millimeter. It was as if it was submerged in an impossibly viscous liquid.

Sercrent thought that this was some kind of special defensive spell. And he understood how he could pierce through it.

「Fuhahaha! This simply means that I must attack with an attack powerful enough to overcome your spell!」(Sercrent)

Laughing loudly, he once again unleashed his high-level unarmed martial skill, 【Iron Tear.】His arm began moving towards Vandalieu again, one centimeter at a time. He was less than thirty centimeters away now.

The moment my claws reach him, I will crush the Dhampir's fragile skull and scatter its contents across the floor as he dies a terrible death!

「You're right about that. But you can't do it.」(Vandalieu)

Sercrent had thought that the Dhampir's expression was empty due to despair, but the Dhampir said this proudly. *Quite the bluff.* Sercrent was inferior to Eleanora, but his Mana and martial skills were worthy of being called those of a Noble-born Vampire.

It will take some time, but even with one arm, breaking a barrier like this would be… One arm?

「Sercrent's arm and leg haven't regenerated?」(Eleanora)

Eleanora noticed that Sercrent's wounds were simply continuing to spill blood. With the regenerative ability of a Noble-born Vampire, the wounds should have stopped bleeding and begun to regenerate by now like the one in her own back, unless cut by a sword made of silver or a magic sword of the light

attribute.

However, there were no signs of this occurring at all.

「I've used a spell called【Negate Healing】that nullifies self-healing abilities. It only works while I continue casting it, but it's enough to kill you.」(Vandalieu)

It took a moment for Eleanora and Sercrent to understand the flat-toned words that Vandalieu spoke.

「Ah… AAAAAAAGH!」(Sercrent)

The moment he finally understood what Vandalieu meant, Sercrent let out a shout that didn't quite sound like a scream or roar. He tried to break through Vandalieu's barrier at all costs.

Before he died from losing too much blood.

Vampires have incredible regenerative abilities. Noble-born Vampires in particular can lose limbs and regrow new ones, and after some time passes, the limbs return to normal.

That was why Eleanora and Sercrent never bothered learning healing spells. They didn't even carry Potions with them.

「UOOOOOOOH!」(Sercrent)

Sercrent attempted to use lightning and fire spells as a last-ditch effort to cauterize his wounds and stop his bleeding, but they faded away as they had their Mana absorbed by the【Magic Absorption Barrier.】

And the more he struggled, the more blood poured out of his open wounds.

「Uoh… oh…」(Sercrent)

Sercrent's movements grew remarkably weaker and his originally white skin became deathly pale.

「Y-you bastard, I… I am the… subordinate of… the Pure-breed… Vampire… Gubamon… who has received… the divine protection of the…【Evil God of Joyful Life】, Hihiryushukaka… If you kill me… Hundreds of Vampires will… Even the Mirg shield-nation… is our puppet… They'll send their forces here! If you… don't want that to –」(Sercrent)

And then he started begging for his life. But it was partially true; Vandalieu seemed to think that his words had some merit to them.

He looked not at Sercrent, but at Eleanora behind him.

「What this guy is saying, is it true?」(Vandalieu)

On the other side of Vandalieu, Eleanora could see Sercrent's face tensing up.

「No. This man who killed your father is indeed the subordinate of a Pure-breed Vampire, who does have connections to the Mirg shield-nation. But they will not move for the sake of this man.」(Eleanora)

「You bastard, wagging your tail for a Dhampir –」(Sercrent)

「Your breath stinks.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu plunged both of his arms into the angry Sercrent's chest.

「Gagah?!」(Sercrent)

With【Spirit Form Transformation】applied to his arms, he moved them around inside and extracted his spirit while he was still alive.

「I've never met my father, so I can't say that I love him. I don't even know if I respect him. So even if you ridicule my father, even if you're the one who killed him, I can't hate you on his behalf.」(Vandalieu)

And I've learned the hard way on Earth and in Origin that blood relatives aren't always your allies.

And then Vandalieu began to tear the spirit that he had pulled out.

「GYAAAAAAAH! AAAAAAAGH!」(Sercrent)

「But my mother loved my father. And the fact that you have connections to the Mirg shield-nation means that you're not entirely unrelated to her death. I'm sure you were involved with the extermination force that was sent into the Devil's Nest forest, too. That's why I hate you bitterly. I'll never forgive you; I don't want to be liked by you. You make me sick. I'm not going to let you have another life.」(Vandalieu)

His spirit-form arms found a shining sphere, the size of a marble that he could pinch between his fingers.

And then he seized it.

「S-stop! Anything, anything but that!」(Sercrent)

This sphere was a soul. The core of a spirit, covered in spirit form. If compared to a cell, this was the part that would contain genetic information.

Sercrent understood this instinctively and pleaded with Vandalieu, but Vandalieu wasn't listening.

He crushed Sercrent's soul with all of his strength.

「GAAAAAAAAAH! GIHYAAAAAAAH! GYA –」(Sercrent)

With a cracking sound, it crumbled and fell to the floor.

The base fragments that made up Sercrent danced in the air like particles of light.

Sercrent, who had been screaming for his life, stopped moving at that moment. His heart was still beating and he was still breathing, and if there were machines available to perform electroencephalography, they would probably be able to detect brain waves.

However, Sercrent would never move again.

「What a nice sound… I've always wanted to do this.」(Vandalieu)

He had broken a soul. In manga and light novels, Vandalieu had occasionally seen spells or items that could『break』or『destroy』souls, but he had always wondered ever since his time in Origin whether it was really possible to do it.

Because in this world… and even on Earth or in Origin, there was no hell to punish the dead. It was impossible to imagine that Rodcorte, the god of the circle of transmigration, would make the effort to create one.

If the guys who have taken everything from me were to simply die, pass on and be reincarnated… It wouldn't be worth it.

But those who had their souls broken would have only oblivion awaiting them. Their souls would never find their way to Rodcorte. There would be no new start for them.

「But it takes a bit too long. It's not something I can do during a battle. I have

to do it after immobilizing them or killing them first, I suppose.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu put Sercrent on the floor. He turned to see Borkus staring at him with his jaw dropped, half-eaten-Subordinate-Vampire-leg still in hand, and the petrified, wide-eyed Eleanora.

What are they so surprised about?

「Just now, what… did you do to him? You broke something of Sercrent's, what was it?」(Eleanora)

『I'm an Undead, and even I could see it. If my eyes aren't playing tricks on me, that was his soul. The kid went and broke that Vampire's soul. Haha, he really did it.』(Borkus)

「His soul…!」(Eleanora)

Eleanora's expression was one of dumbfounded awe, while Borkus gave a nervous laugh. Vandalieu consciously used the muscles in his cheeks that normally never moved to smile at them.

「Umm, I'll be the one questioning you now. Ah, you don't really have to praise Vida or anything.」(Vandalieu)

For some reason, the two of them remained petrified.

『You have acquired the【Soul Break】skill!』

Notes

1. Same dialogue as last chapter, same TLN. In Japanese, ある/aru is used for inanimate objects while 居る/iru is used for people when saying something/someone is/be somewhere *etc.* Eleanora uses the former when asking the question, referring to Borkus's remains as an inanimate object, but is surprised when Vandalieu replies with the latter, implying that Borkus is a person.

Chapter 45: Apparently I'm her number one and only one

After breaking Sercrent's soul and having his dinosaur Zombies eat the body so that he would gain Experience Points, Vandalieu brought Eleanora to the dining hall.

He did this so that he could gather all of the important people here to listen to what Eleanora had to say.

「I'm terribly sorry!」(Tarea)

The one apologizing while kneeling on the floor was not Eleanora, but Tarea.

「To think that I was charmed so easily, spilled all of Van-sama's secrets and then carelessly went to sleep! How can I apologize for such a thing…?」(Tarea)

「No, please don't worry about it.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu had panicked after Eleanora told him what happened to Tarea, but considering that she had fallen asleep on a stone floor in the middle of winter, she seemed quite healthy. Vandalieu didn't think any more of the incident than that, so he felt that Tarea didn't need to apologize so fervently.

「It could not be helped, Tarea. Even if you had high levels in skills such as【Status Effect Resistance】and【Magic Resistance】, you would likely have been unable to resist the Demon Eyes.」(Zadiris)

「And if you apologize any more than that, you'll only cause trouble for Van.」(Basdia)

「Uu, thank you very much for your words. But… why have things turned out this way?」(Tarea)

Tarea directed this question at Vandalieu, who was sitting right next to her. The two of them were sitting on a single Titan-sized chair. Not only could they hear each other breathing, their bodies were in contact.

「I heard that you were worrying about how there was distance between me and you, so I decided to try shortening that distance to zero.」(Vandalieu)

「W-who did you hear such a thing from?!」(Tarea)

「Eleanora.」(Vandalieu)

「UWAAAAH! What does this woman think she's doing, blabbering such things so freely?!」(Tarea)

「Tarea, Tarea, your tone is becoming unpleasant. And do not squirm so much; your elbow has been hitting the boy.」(Zadiris)

As Tarea had moved around with her head in her hands, realizing that Vandalieu had been told everything she had said before she lost consciousness, her elbow had inflicted considerable damage to him.

「So why is this woman here?!」(Tarea)

After quick recovery, Tarea glared at Eleanora. She seemed to be looking not at Eleanora's face, but at a spot below Eleanora's neck, seemingly wary of the『Charming Demon Eyes.』

Eleanora sat quietly in her chair. Her hands and legs weren't bound, nor had she been gagged or blindfolded. It seemed that she might fly away and escape if they tried to place such restrictions on her.

「I am here to tell Vandalieu-sama everything I know, of course.」(Eleanora)

For some reason, Eleanora was adding -sama to Vandalieu's name and acting as if she were his vassal.

Trying to stop her after those events was difficult.

Eleanora had praised the goddess Vida despite Vandalieu having told her it wasn't necessary, and after that, she had kissed his hand and sworn loyalty to him. If he hadn't stopped her, she would have likely gone on to kiss his feet.

On top of that, Eleanora addressed him with an incredibly formal tone, and he had to put a lot of effort into asking her to return to her original, informal way of speaking. She had said,「I would never dare to」, and Vandalieu had only managed to convince her by telling her that this was an order, gesturing with his hand by forming a fist.

For some reason, she had made an expression that made it impossible tell whether she was scared or happy.

『Umm, can we have a discussion of what comes next after we listen to what Eleanora-san has to say? I woke up to find that lots of things have happened, so I still don't know what's going on.』(Darcia)

『These are Darcia-sama's words, so perhaps we should accept her suggestion?』(Sam)

Sam, who had recklessly brought his carriage inside the royal castle's dining hall, relayed Darcia's words. And then Eleanora began to speak about the reason she and the other Vampires had come here, and what the Vampires who worshipped the【Evil God of Joyful Life】, Hihiryushukaka, had done to Darcia and Vandalieu.

Incidentally, Eleanora, Sercrent and their subordinates hadn't been haunted by the spirits of those they had killed up until now because they had preemptively poured holy water over their entire bodies numerous times. As an anti-【Spiritualist】method, they had endured full-body burns in order to prevent any spirits from informing Vandalieu of their whereabouts.

It was a very effective method against Vandalieu, but quite a radical approach.

「Things are on a much larger scale than I thought.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu sighed as he listened. The Vampires who had killed his father Valen had never become directly involved with him after he regained his memories up until now, and he could never learn anything more about them so he hadn't really had strong feelings towards them.

They had been hiding their existence behind High Priest Gordan and Heinz, after all.

The Mirg shield-nation was a nation of the Amid Empire that worshipped his enemy, the God of Law and Fate Alda. He had never even dreamed that its strings were being pulled by a greater power.

If they were going to advocate that Vampires were evil, they should have at least prevented Vampires from gaining control over them.

「Well, the Mirg shield-nation and Amid Empire were always my enemies to begin with.」(Vandalieu)

『The truth appears to be stranger than fiction.』(Sam)

It was a truth that shocked even Sam, who had once been a citizen of the Mirg shield-nation.

The Pure-breed Vampires, Birkyne, Ternecia and Gubamon. The Noble-born and Subordinate Vampires who served them. And Marshal Thomas Palpapek.

Even though Vandalieu had destroyed one enemy, it was as if his enemies had explosively increased in number.

『And they were even involved in the war two hundred years ago?! You guys instigated that?!』(Borkus)

On top of that, the Vampires who worshipped the【Evil God of Joyful Life】were considerably malicious. They had apparently been behind the war in which the Mirg shield-nation destroyed Talosheim.

Nobody could blame Borkus for exuding rage from his entire body.

「I-I hadn't been born at that time, so I don't know the details! But I've heard that Gubamon used the war to have his subordinates collect the dead bodies of Talosheim's heroes.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora spoke hastily, perhaps scared of Borkus.

The rough outline of the teachings of Hihiryushukaka, the【Evil God of Joyful Life】, was that in this world, there were those who had their lives toyed around with and those who toyed with others' lives. By toying with others' lives, one could become a superior being.

With the divine protection of such a god, it was apparently possible to tame Undead who would normally be impossible to tame… or at least create Undead and turn them into servants.

And one of the three people who had attained that evil god's divine protection, the Pure-breed Vampire Gubamon, apparently had an interest in turning the dead bodies of those praised as heroes into Undead and adding them to his collection.

That was why he sent his subordinates into wars and large-scale monster hunts in which heroes lost their lives in order to retrieve the heroes' bodies.

He had dispatched his subordinates in the war two hundred years ago, too.

『I see, so that's why Jeena and Zandia-jouchan's bodies aren't here anymore. But why didn't they take my body?』(Borkus)

「Perhaps because your body was terribly damaged? With your dominant arm severed and your magic sword broken, it would not be strange to think that they would have thought you would not be a powerful asset even after becoming an Undead.」(Nuaza)

『Nuaza, are you trying to say that I'm not a powerful asset?』(Borkus)

「It is not me who thinks this! I am simply saying that the Vampires might have thought this way!」(Nuaza)

「This is just something I overheard, but… Apparently the other bodies were carried out first because yours was terribly damaged, and then Mikhail returned before your body could be taken.」(Eleanora)

And then Mikhail and the Vampires who had encountered each other had apparently done battle. It was likely that the Vampires had thought that Gubamon would reward them if they simply killed Mikhail, who had wounds all over his body and had lost his precious spear, and then retrieved Borkus's body afterwards.

However, as an adventurer who was said to be destined to become S-class, Mikhail was powerful even without the spear that was the origin of his Title. He succeeded in repelling the Vampires. However, as a result of the Stamina he expended in doing so, his wounds deteriorated and were treated too late, causing him to perish.

『To think that something like that happened right next to me while I was dead. So I guess he set up that ice so that the Vampires wouldn't be able to get inside.』(Borkus)

What had finished Mikhail off wasn't the Dragon Golem that had been carefully crafted by the goddess, but the Vampires who had come to retrieve Borkus's body. It was quite the questionable story.

「But it seems like we won't find their bodies even if we defeat the Dragon Golem.」(Vandalieu)

『Alright, kid. We'll pillage them, take back the ladies from that Gubamon Vampire! A man becomes an adult for the first time when he steals a woman from another!』(Borkus)

「Ah, but what about Eleanora-san? Doesn't this mean I've stolen her from the Vampire called Birkyne?」(Vandalieu)

『This one doesn't count!』(Borkus)

「Eh… Well, he is someone I want to destroy in the future, but please wait a decade or two.」(Vandalieu)

I don't like situations where love is stolen. Whether I would be on the stealing side or having love stolen from me. No, it's questionable as to whether this falls under the category of stolen love in the first place.

Still, no matter what Vandalieu said, he would still end up doing deadly battle with the Vampires worshipping the【Evil God of Joyful Life.】They were a group that was even more necessary to exterminate than the High Priest Gordan and Heinz in order for him to survive and live a happy life.

Since they were Vampires, they were immortal. If he left them alive, they would continue coming up with plans forever until Vandalieu died.

Because of this, he felt no opposition to retrieving Jeena and Zandia's corpses and turning them into Undead, and if they were already Undead, stealing them away was the obvious choice, but…

「Also, can you stop trying to put me on a throne?」(Vandalieu)

For some reason, Borkus was trying to marry Vandalieu to Zandia, who had been second in line to the throne while alive, and place him on Talosheim's throne.

『What, you're already a King, right? What's the problem?』(Borkus)

「The boy doesn't know when to give up.」(Zadiris)

『Well, perhaps it can be considered practice for becoming a nobleman?』(Sam)

『Bocchan, there's no need to worry. You don't need knowledge about laws and taxes; you're not taxing anyone now, are you?』(Saria)

『Talosheim isn't really a proper nation right now, so it'll be more like pretending to be a king.』(Rita)

「You might be able to gain a new Title and make Borkus and the others even stronger, you know?」(Basdia)

The thing that was most troubling was that everyone other than Vandalieu seemed to agree on the idea.

『Um, everyone, it isn't that Vandalieu is against it. He is just holding himself back because of the First Princess and her descendants in the Orbaume Kingdom.』(Darcia)

Darcia relayed her son's thoughts in his place.

It was possible that the First Princess who had escaped to the Orbaume Kingdom and her descendants would make a claim to the throne and try to restore their royal lineage. Vandalieu had mistakenly thought last night that Eleanora was a spy who had come from the Orbaume Kingdom for this very purpose.

The war had taken place two hundred years ago. With the Titans' lifespans of three hundred years, the same as the Ghouls, it was cutting it close, but there was still a chance that she was alive.

If that were the case, if Vandalieu sat on Talosheim's throne for even a moment, it would become very troublesome.

「Wouldn't Princess Levia and her descendants praise the Holy Son who restored Talosheim and gladly give up the throne? After all, the Holy Son has restored Talosheim's castle, walls and cityscape to its past splendor.」(Nuaza)

As Nuaza said, these things could all be called Vandalieu's achievements. Even though the removal of the trees and extermination of the monsters had been carried out by the Undead Titans and Ghouls, it was his【Golem Transmutation】skill that had restored the city's structures.

Even if the First Princess and her descendants had returned to Talosheim,

without Vandalieu, it would have taken decades of time, an unimaginable amount of labor and an equivalent amount of funds to return the city to normal. Vandalieu had rebuilt the city, so this wouldn't be necessary.

「But I don't think they'll hand over the throne. And no matter how good a person the princess is, the people of the Orbaume Kingdom will have their own expectations of her.」(Vandalieu)

It was even possible that assassins would be sent to kill Vandalieu. In the worst-case scenario, an extermination force with high-class adventurers might be dispatched.

Other than the Dhampir Vandalieu, none of those currently living in Talosheim were of races that the Orbaume Kingdom recognized as people. There would be no legal repercussions if the Orbaume Kingdom forcibly removed them and occupied the city.

「So because of that, I can't do anything careless while we still don't know how the Orbaume Kingdom will act. Well, maybe I should have thought about this earlier. From now on, we'll have to think about defenses against not only monsters, but people as well.」(Vandalieu)

Only while they didn't know how the Orbaume Kingdom would act. Vandalieu had no intention of relinquishing Talosheim. It was a place that he had made great effort to obtain and arrange, a place for everyone to live. He wouldn't simply give that away.

There was a piece of magical equipment that was capable of resurrecting Darcia underground as well. Even the Orbaume Kingdom would become his enemies if they were to try and steal it from him.

「Now then, I think we should get to discussing plans to deal with various things.」(Vandalieu)

「Van-sama, before that, you must decide what we are going to do with this woman!」(Tarea)

Tarea interrupted Vandalieu as she pointed a finger at Eleanora. It seemed that she felt great humiliation because of the fact that she had been misled by Eleanora's『Charming Demon Eyes.』

But Eleanora turned her gaze towards Tarea without moving a single eyebrow, and Tarea lowered her head.

「I am very sorry about what happened last night.」(Eleanora)

「Eh?! You are apologizing willingly?!」(Tarea)

「Of course. I am the one at fault, after all. I simply do not want to become Vandalieu-sama's enemy. That would be more terrifying than anything. Terrifying enough that if I have to cast away my pride as a Noble-born Vampire to avoid it, then so be it.」(Eleanora)

As Tarea expressed surprise at Eleanora's apology, Eleanora smoothly explained the reasons behind her apology.

After destroying Sercrent's soul, Vandalieu had briefly spoken to Eleanora and the spirits of the Subordinate Vampires.

And then Vandalieu had broken and destroyed all of the Subordinate Vampires' souls.

It was not because they had tried to take Vandalieu's life. He did that because they had directly ended the life of his father Valen, and because they had tried to kill Tarea.

The reason Eleanora was sitting here unrestrained and unharmed was because Vandalieu had decided that she was not an enemy.

She wasn't involved with Valen's death. Though she had initially come to kill Vandalieu, she had lost the will to do so before she could attempt it, and she had stopped the Subordinate Vampire who tried to kill Tarea. With those three points in mind, Vandalieu acknowledged that she wasn't his enemy.

「Umm, why are you saying all these things about me? The goddess's divine protection and all that was just a misunderstanding.」(Vandalieu)

「No, in a way, you possess a power even more fearsome than that of the gods.」(Eleanora)

This was Eleanora's response to Vandalieu's question.

「Destroying a soul is something that only the legendary Demon King was capable of. Even the【Evil God of Joyful Life】could not do such a thing, let alone

my previous master.」(Eleanora)

『I heard about things like that when I was a kid as well, but… Well, that's why I was surprised when you destroyed that guy's soul. My body froze unconsciously. I suppose that's what you call... rigor mortis.』(Borkus)

Leaving Borkus's joke aside…

There are none in Lambda capable of destroying souls. The reason for this is that the circle of transmigration for people is the domain of Rodcorte, not one of the gods who exist in Lambda.

Rodcorte is the god who governs the circle of transmigration system that applies in multiple worlds, including Earth, Origin and Lambda.

That is why no god or evil god, no matter how powerful, can destroy a soul. No matter what kind of gruesome torture someone is subjected to, no matter what kind of disgusting manner in which they may die, no matter how many hundreds or even thousands of years their souls are bound for, they will find their way back to Rodcorte eventually. And then they will be reborn as a new life-form.

Including Eleanora, the people of Lambda are unaware of Rodcorte's existence. But everyone believes in the circle of transmigration.

Because the circle of transmigration is a guaranteed thing, the people have hope after death. One day they will be reborn and walk a new life.

As long as the soul is safe, there is a chance that one will be chosen to be a god's follower after death. Many heroes and great individuals have been chosen in this way to become subordinate gods and followers, and their deeds are praised even after their deaths.

And as long as the soul is intact, there is hope that the god they follow will revive them.

The thing that denies all of that hope is the destruction of the soul.

The only one who has been able to do that up until now was the Demon King, and it was this power to destroy souls that made the gods fear him and evil gods obey him.

「So now that the Demon King is gone, you are the one with the most fearsome power in this world. Neither Birkyne nor Hihiryushukaka can even compare to you. That's why I don't want to be your enemy.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora was and always had been a slave of fear.

Her parents who had ruled her through fear sold her as a slave, and the slave merchant who purchased her saw no value in her body that was thin and dark-colored back then. He treated her roughly without caring if he caused her injuries, and the mine owner who bought her after that treated her like an expiring product that should be exploited to its fullest.

And then she was purchased by Birkyne who had spotted her quality by coincidence, and then she was ruled by even greater fear. But unlike her treatment up until that point, Birkyne treated her well as long as she produced favorable results.

When she produced results superior to those of the other children, she would be given praise instead of a hard fist.

When she obeyed his commands, she would receive soft, pretty clothes instead of cold chains and collars.

If she carried out filthy, gruesome tasks, she would be able to eat extravagant food instead of soup containing half-rotten vegetable scraps.

If she flattered her master and wagged her tail, her body would be decorated with beautiful pieces of jewelry instead of scars.

And so Eleanora developed into a beautiful woman, was accepted as a Noble-born Vampire, acquired the『Charming Demon Eyes』and received Birkyne's favor.

However, at the same time, she feared losing that favor above all else. Birkyne did acknowledge Eleanora's excellence, but she understood that he didn't consider her to be a unique existence.

To Birkyne, Eleanora was a recent favorite, but given a thousand years, anywhere between one and a dozen Vampires of her quality would come by.

Yes, just a thousand years. For Birkyne, who had lived for a hundred thousand

years, this wasn't a long time.

That was why Eleanora continued wagging her tail for Birkyne. However, she met someone even more fearsome than him. That person was Vandalieu.

If Birkyne discovered that his pet dog had gone over to the Dhampir's side, he would likely tremble in humiliation and rage. If Eleanora was ever caught by him, she would have to be prepared to be subjected to horrendous torture. But her soul would not be destroyed.

「Are you really sure?」(Vandalieu)

It was not only Tarea, but Vandalieu who also gave Eleanora a puzzled look.

「I'm sure you will get paid better on Birkyne's side. They have more resources, too. In fact, his side is stronger than ours, overwhelmingly so.」(Vandalieu)

「That's not true. You tortured Sercrent and killed him in a one-sided manner, didn't you? Even in perfect condition, it would be impossible for me to defeat him in such a ruthless, cruel way.」(Eleanora)

「… I'm starting to question whether you're complimenting me.」(Vandalieu)

Even Eleanora seemed to think that Birkyne's side had more resources. She didn't seem to think that this was particularly important, however.

「The one from yesterday, Sercrent, was it? I was only able to kill him so one-sidedly because he was so careless.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu himself didn't think that Sercrent had been a weak enemy. He was simply careless, or rather, very unlucky in various ways.

As he hadn't possessed accurate information regarding Vandalieu, he had been separated from his subordinates when Vandalieu removed the floor.

In addition, one arm and leg had been cut off by Borkus who Vandalieu had discreetly summoned, and then Borkus and the Zombie dinosaurs had slaughtered all of his subordinates.

The finishing touch was that he had chosen to engage in close-quarters combat with his claws before sealing his wounds, thinking that magic wouldn't work against Vandalieu. Because of this, he had his arm caught in the【Impact-

Negating Barrier】, become unable to move and panicked at the prospect of dying of blood loss due to having his regenerative abilities nullified by the【Negate Healing】spell.

It would have been better to use a weapon like Bugogan had; with his arm directly caught inside the【Impact-Negating Barrier】, kinetic energy had been directly drained from his muscles and he had become immobilized. And Vandalieu had learned from his past mistakes and poured a huge amount of Mana into the barrier this time.

Because his skill's level had increased, the performance of the barrier itself had increased as well.

With so many disadvantageous circumstances working against Sercrent, it could only be said that he had been unlucky.

「From what I heard from you before, Eleanora, it seems that he was being driven into a corner in various ways even before you arrived here, so maybe he was panicking because of that? But if he had kept his distance and engaged in long-range combat, he might have at least been able to escape.」(Vandalieu)

The reason Vandalieu wasn't saying that he could have put up a decent fight was probably because Borkus had been present while Vandalieu remained inside his barriers.

A superior foe behind him and an untouchable target in front. Under those circumstances, there had been no hope for Sercrent to win that battle.

「Even if he ran away, only execution would be waiting for him.」(Eleanora)

「Vampire society is rough, isn't it. Well, leaving that aside, I'm still not powerful. I'm just specialized in defense.」(Vandalieu)

I don't have offensive power like Borkus's ability to slaughter enemies with a single swing of a sword. No, I do, but I can't aim【Mana Bullets】too accurately and they're slower and have shorter range than arrows.

「But one day you'll kill Birkyne and his Vampires… You will destroy them, won't you?」(Eleanora)

「Of course.」(Vandalieu)

Even if he is a Vampire who had lived for a hundred thousand years, it would probably be easier to defeat him than the people who will resurrect here from Origin with cheat-like abilities. Even if he does possess an evil god's divine protection, he isn't an evil god himself, after all.

「But if this Birkyne person steps into the fight directly before I become strong, what will you do?」(Vandalieu)

「That won't happen. They would never cross the Boundary Mountain range personally.」(Eleanora)

Eleanora declared this with confidence. There was a basis for that confidence. Birkyne and the other Pure-breed Vampires were indeed powerful, but it could never be said that the Pure-breed Vampires were on good terms with each other.

If Birkyne were to act personally, the other two Pure-breed Vampires, Ternecia and Gubamon, would promise to help, saying,「I see, do your best. We'll lend you our subordinates.」However, they would then seize the Vampire organization in his absence.

「The king of the hill can only be a king because there is a hill to be a king of. If he stepped down from the hill, making it back up would be next to impossible.」(Eleanora)

As to be expected of a community that worshipped an evil god. The idea of kicking each other down instead of cooperating was deeply ingrained in its roots.

「So you're saying that's why it's fine for you to be on my side?」(Vandalieu)

「That's right; there is nobody more fearsome in this world than you.」(Eleanora)

「So you'll put in as much effort as you can to get along with Tarea and everyone else?」(Vandalieu)

「Of course. Their enemies are your enemies, are they not? I will beg for their forgiveness even if I have to lick their feet.」(Eleanora)

In fact, if Tarea had been killed, Vandalieu would have likely killed Eleanora,

so this was the correct response.

I get the feeling that she's being too brave about it, though.

「Well then, if Tarea forgives you, then that will be fine. Let's get along from now on.」(Vandalieu)

And so Vandalieu quickly moved on.

『V-Vandalieu? Are you sure it's alright to believe her so easily?!』(Darcia)

「Boy, what this person is saying is equivalent to saying that if there is ever someone she fears more than you, she will betray you!」(Zadiris)

Darcia and Zadiris expressed their objections. Vandalieu waved both of his hands to calm down the flustered ladies.

「As to whether I should believe her, it's alright because at her request, I'm going to apply a method of insurance. And what you say is true, Zadiris, but that's how the world is.」(Vandalieu)

People gather beneath those who can provide them with the most benefits.

On Earth, Vandalieu had seen news reports of trouble caused for factories and businesses because their employees were readily leaving to work for other businesses that paid better.

What Eleanora was doing was equivalent to that.

「The criteria that Eleanora is using is『fear』, so as long as nothing like the Demon King's resurrection happens and I'm the only one who can destroy souls, I'm sure she'll never betray me.」(Vandalieu)

There's also a chance that someone with that ability might be among those reincarnating from Origin, but I probably don't need to worry about it. It's difficult to imagine that Rodcorte would give someone a power that infringes on his domain.

「Muh~, well, the method of ruling through fear is something that has existed in the past, but…」(Zadiris)

「Other reasons for accepting Eleanora as one of our companions… She wasn't involved in the incident with my father, so she's not an enemy. I can gain

information about the Vampires who worship the evil god from her. She can fight for us. Also –」(Vandalieu)

『She's a pretty lady, I suppose. She has a nice body, too.』(Borkus)

「Yeah, that's right.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus interjected, and Vandalieu nodded in agreement with his words. A few seconds later, for some reason, there was a strange atmosphere in the room. Really, why was that?

「Van-sama… Didn't we agree that you should hastily deny this fact?!」(Tarea)

「I don't believe in telling unnecessary lies.」(Vandalieu)

「How can this be! Then does that mean you prefer this woman over me?!」(Tarea)

「No, no, you have a nicer body, Tarea.」(Vandalieu)

After all, Tarea has more muscle, particularly in the upper arms. And her abdominal muscles are quite splendid to touch as well.

「Oh my~♪ If that is the case…」(Tarea)

Tarea held her face in her hands as if blushing.

「No, I am sure he is referring to her muscles.」(Zadiris)

「There's no other explanation.」(Basdia)

Zadiris and Basdia whispered to each other, and they were entirely correct.

『So, Bocchan, what did you mean by method of insurance?』(Sam)

Sam returned the derailed conversation to its original topic.

「I will make a Golem in the shape of a piercing and apply it to her. With that, I will know where she is at all times, and if anything happens, I will make the Golem attack her body from the inside.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu thought that this was a harsh method of insurance for Eleanora, but this was something that she herself wanted.

It was Vandalieu who had deliberately suggested a harsher method in order to make it easier for everyone to accept Eleanora as a companion, however.

Incidentally, Vandalieu planned to put mercury on the inside of the piercing and apply【Preservation】to prevent corrosion.

「If you're going that far, I don't have any complaints about it, but where are you going to have her put that piercing? Her belly button?」(Vigaro)

『Bocchan likes belly buttons, after all. Fuuh… Muscles, wrists, all parts that we don't have.』(Rita)

「Vigaro, Rita, I'm sure you know this, but other than muscles, everything else is a misunderstanding. And anyway, what parts *do* you have, Rita?」(Vandalieu)

『Loveliness~☆』(Rita)

「I'll have her put it on her tongue.」(Vandalieu)

As Rita made a joke, this was Vandalieu's serious reply to Vigaro's question.

「Her tongue…」(Vigaro)

『Vandalieu, that's a little…』(Darcia)

For some reason, everyone drew away from him.

「Whether it is one or two piercings or as many as you wish, I will accept them!」(Eleanora)

Eleanora poked out her red tongue as if asking Vandalieu to pierce holes in it.

「Umm, I want to discuss Talosheim's defenses, so can we leave this topic here?」(Vandalieu)

What was important was what they would do next.

Incidentally, Vandalieu had decided to leave the inspection of his newly-acquired【Soul Break】skill until later.

- **Name**: Eleanora
- **Rank**: 8
- **Race**: Noble-born Vampire Baroness
- **Level**: 47
- **Job**: Demon Eye User
- **Job level**: 70

- **Job history**: Slave, Servant, Apprentice Mage, Apprentice Warrior, Mage
- **Age**: 6 years old (20 years old at time of Vampire transformation)
- **Passive skills**:
  - Self-Enhancement: Subordination: Level 3
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 5
  - Rapid Regeneration: Level 2
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 5
  - Intuition: Level 3
  - Mental Corruption: Level 3
  - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 3
  - Detect Presence: Level 3
- **Active skills**:
  - Mining: Level 1
  - Time-Attribute Magic: Level 5
  - Life-Attribute Magic: Level 5
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 2
  - Mana Control: Level 3
  - Swordsmanship: Level 1
  - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 1
  - Silent Steps: Level 3
  - Steal: Level 1
  - Housework: Level 2
- **Unique skills:**
  - Charming Demon Eyes: Level 7

Chapter 46: Preparing defenses while desperate and out of my mind

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「Now then, I want to set up Talosheim's defenses.」(Vandalieu)

Using the contents of the discussion that had taken place on the day Eleanora had been accepted among his companions, Vandalieu and the others set to work.

From Eleanora they had learned that the Vampires worshipping the evil god had subordinates in positions of power within the Mirg shield-nation including the (currently ex-)Marshal, and they even had subordinates in the Orbaume Kingdom.

It was uncertain how much strength the Pure-breed Vampires would invest into the task of killing Vandalieu, but in the worst-case scenario, the Vampires among the Mirg shield-nation's army could send troops to Talosheim.

The only thing sturdy about Talosheim right now was its appearance; it wouldn't hold out against an army of thousands, and with the Vampires among the army making hidden movements, escape might be impossible as well.

If Vandalieu was on his own, he would have the option of escaping while he could, but if the enemy's reach extended even as far as the Orbaume Kingdom, there was no place that he was completely safe on this continent.

Of course, because Vandalieu needed to ensure the safety of the Undead Titans and Ghouls who lived in Talosheim, the option of separating himself from them was nonexistent.

『There aren't any cowards here who would drive you out for their own safety!』(Borkus)

「That is correct, Holy Son. We will continue fighting, even if we quite literally have our flesh and entrails severed and our bones broken!」(Nuaza)

「I’m a bit late in having a say in this, but I agree. Vandalieu, we’d be in trouble without you.」(Vigaro)

「Indeed; if the Magic Items we are using now were to break, we would once again face problems with fertility. Even if we leave that matter aside, what is the use in driving out our own King in order to achieve temporary safety?」(Zadiris)

Borkus, Nuaza, Vigaro and Zadiris made it clear that this was not an option.

It wasn’t as if Vandalieu didn’t want to protect Talosheim, the place where he belonged. He planned to go to the Orbaume Kingdom eventually, but he planned to at least return for a visit once a year or once every few years.

Even if he moved away to chase his dreams, he wanted there to be a home for him to return to. That was how he felt.

「Thank you. Well then, we will set up a system that will hold just fine even if we’re attacked by an army of ten thousand, including Vampires. We’ll achieve this by spring or early summer, or mid-summer at latest.」(Vandalieu)

「『「「Are you insane?!」」』」(Everyone)

「No, I’m desperate and out of my mind.」(Vandalieu)

Birkyne and the other Vampires who had sent Eleanora’s party here would be suspicious at the sudden lack of contact, realize that they had failed and take the next step.

Well, it was unlikely that they would suddenly manipulate the Mirg shield-nation into sending its troops here because of that, but they would at least try to gather more detailed information about Talosheim.

And once they learned about Talosheim’s situation, it was highly likely that they would realize that dispatching a few Vampires would be ineffective and begin to make a greater effort to crush the city.

「Thith… This【Golem Transmutation】, nobody can use it except for Vandalieu-sama. Leaving aside the Mana problems, it’s impossible for alchemists to create them in an instant and have them change their shape freely. The same goes for taming the Undead.」(Eleanora)

This was what Eleanora had said.

If the Pure-breed Vampires discovered that Vandalieu possessed these abilities, they would try to kill him at all costs.

「That's a bit of an overreaction. The three Pure-breed Vampires can tame Undead as well, can't they?」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu asked this question, Eleanora, who was having trouble pronouncing words because of the new piercing in her tongue, shook her head.

「Birkyne's group can't tame them. Ternecia and Gubamon are the ones who mainly use Undead, and they can turn corpses into Undead and control them, but they can't control creatures who have already turned Undead.」(Eleanora)

It seemed that the Undead controlled by the Pure-breed Vampires were those created themselves; they would not be able to tame even a Rank 1 Living Dead if it had already become an Undead without their intervention.

「So if they discovered that Vandalieu-sama can tame Undead, they would be outraged. Especially Gubamon.」(Eleanora)

「I see.」(Vandalieu)

The【Sword King】Borkus was one of the heroes that Gubamon had wanted, but now he was already an Undead. Vandalieu had even gathered the scattered bone fragments of his right arm and used【Corpse Healing】to restore it, so claiming even a single bone fragment of Borkus would be impossible.

Vandalieu didn't know what kind of personality Gubamon had, but it did seem likely that he would be outraged to learn that a mere Dhampir had stolen one of the heroes that he had wanted in his collection.

Vandalieu found it satisfying to know this, but felt that it would be unreasonable for Gubamon to get so serious over it.

He wanted to go on the offensive so that he wouldn't lose to such an unreasonable person, but that was difficult. Like the Vampires, Vandalieu and his companions would find it difficult to cross the Boundary Mountain Range now. In addition, the Vampires who worshipped the evil god possessed numerous bases and Eleanora didn't know the locations of all of them.

After coming to the conclusion that going on the offensive wasn't a realistic plan, Vandalieu set out about addressing the problem of not having enough numbers.

Talosheim had originally been a fortress city-nation of five thousand Titans. Of course, this meant that the city was plenty large enough for a population of five thousand to live inside the city's walls.

However, there were only a thousand Undead Titans. Even including the Ghouls and monsters of the new races Vandalieu had created, there were less than two thousand of them.

Creating a flawless defense with these numbers would be impossible. As Undead didn't feel fatigue or need to sleep, it was possible to have them keep permanently keep watch, but Vandalieu didn't want to ask them to do this. The Undead needed riches and pleasure in their day to day lives as well.

So the first thing he did was increase the number of Golems he had at his disposal.

「Get up, go.」(Vandalieu)

He went to Garan's Valley and mined the stone. The method he used was to directly turn the stone walls into Golems and have them walk themselves back to Talosheim. Other than requiring a lot of Mana, this method was very easy.

「Amazing, Holy Son.」(Titan)

『Doesn't that mean we're losing our jobs?』(Titan)

「Because there's no time. In any case, I'm going to be mining here today until this place becomes known as Garan's Pit instead of Garan's Valley.」(Vandalieu)

「… We're actually going to lose our jobs.」(Titan)

「No, we're actually going to have more work.」(Titan)

『Really?』(Titan)

As the Undead Titan stonemason said, their workload had sharply increased.

Because they would be turning these new Golems into ornaments.

「I'm going to attach these Golems to the outer walls and the walls of the

stone buildings. I want you to work on them so that they look like decorations at a glance.」(Vandalieu)

『That's quite fancy. We don't mind, but is there a reason you're doing that? Will it make the Golems stronger or something?』(Titan)

「No, it won't. They'll just look like decorations.」(Vandalieu)

The stonemasons looked puzzled, but once the decorated Golems were actually set in place, the effect would be clear.

Simply stationing Golems near the walls and buildings would be sufficient as a defense against intruders. But Golems decorating the walls and buildings would look like simple ornaments, and Golems embedded into the walls which had also been thickened would look like mere sculptures.

If an enemy army tried to close in on the defenseless walls, they could be taken by surprise by the enemies springing forth from the walls.

「And I can do things like have the sculptures keep up their act, wait for the enemy to set up ladders to climb the walls and then make them destroy the ladders.」(Vandalieu)

『Th-that's dirty…』(Titan)

「Holy Son, will the fortress and buildings not become more fragile once the Golems start moving?」(Titan)

「I'll add more stone to the walls to compensate when setting up the Golems, so it will be fine. Also, the Golems on the houses and buildings will be just for scouting, so they'll be things like faces and eyes.」(Vandalieu)

「With that, it will be unlikely that the enemy will destroy them.」(Titan)

Vandalieu had thought of the idea from security setups used on Earth where security guards and cameras would be positioned in inconspicuous places.

And I don't have to pay any attention to the Golems acting as security guards and cameras, so it's not mentally taxing on me.

It would improve Talosheim's scenery as well, so there were only benefits to this method.

Furthermore, Vandalieu discovered that taking too much of the stone cliffs in Garan's Valley would cause them to become unable to mine any more stone for a while. It was as if there was a transparent barrier that created a dead end, preventing him from going any further. It looked like he could continue forward, but the background scenery might as well have been painted on a solid wall.

But the Dungeon would return to normal in a few days' time, so there was no need to worry about the stone running out.

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The others weren't taking it easy while Vandalieu and the stonemasons worked busily.

「I'm going to request something a little dangerous. I want everyone to place the Golems and Undead that I made to keep watch in the places that I tell you.」(Vandalieu)

They were strengthening their defenses, but the fact that they didn't know when enemies would come would be a source of insecurity and inconvenience. That was why Vandalieu requested that Golems be stationed to keep watch.

There were three possible routes that enemies could take.

「Leave it to me, Vandalieu-sama.」(Eleanora)

The first was the route that Eleanora had used to cross the mountain range. This route was relatively safe, but many of Sercrent's Subordinate Vampires had been defeated along the way.

Only Noble-born Vampires and beings stronger than them would be able to use this route safely. Eleanora declared that this route would be absolutely impossible for normal humans to use.

Considering that, Eleanora realized just how abnormal Vandalieu was to have crossed the mountain range with six hundred Ghouls and not sustained a single casualty.

『Is there a need to watch this area as well?』(Zran)

「Zran, there are Vampires worshipping the evil god in the Orbaume Kingdom as well.」(Vandalieu)

The second was the tunnel that led to the Hartner duchy in the Orbaume Kingdom. It was collapsed for now, but it could be reconstructed from Hartner duchy and Vampire underlings might be sent through it.

If the First Princess was still alive on the other side, there was no guarantee that the Vampires wouldn't utilize her feelings for her home country.

And the third route was the most difficult.

『So you want us to look for a tunnel that connects to the Mirg shield-nation. Does such a thing even exist?』(Zran)

「I can't rule out that possibility.」(Vandalieu)

There were no legends that said there were tunnels in the mountain range leading to the Mirg shield-nation. But since there was one that led to the Orbaume Kingdom, there was a high chance that there was one that had not yet been discovered.

It would be a tunnel over a hundred thousand years old, after all. Back then, the Amid Empire and Orbaume Kingdom hadn't existed, and it might have been constructed even before the goddess Vida created the Vampires.

If that were the case, it made sense to think that tunnels would have been built to the west as well as the east. Who could have built such tunnels was still a mystery, however.

They would have to traverse lands full of Devil's Nests with uncontrolled monster populations to search for ruins that could be anywhere. Borkus would lead Vigaro and Zadiris in performing this task, and even Bone Wolf and the other Undead would be dispatched so that they would be fully prepared.

『I don't mind, but make sure you have miso, fish sauce and especially katsuobushi waiting for me. If you're going to make adventurers work, you have to reward them.』(Borkus)

「Do you like katsuobushi?」(Vandalieu)

『Yeah, it makes the soup taste nice if you boil it, and it makes a good ingredient. Don't need to put any effort in.』(Borkus)

The katsuobushi was an unfinished product that was simply dried without

being smoked, but as Borkus said, it made a good addition to soups.

「I want to perfect katsuobushi by the end of the year, too.」(Vandalieu)

『It's imperfect?! I'm looking forward to the finished product.』(Borkus)

「Leaving that aside, I'll be having you place Goblin Skeleton skulls, Rock Golems disguised as rocks and Wood Golems disguised as dead branches.」(Vandalieu)

All of them were objects that could be held in one hand. They were also things that would not be strange to find lying around anywhere.

If the【Appraisal】spell was cast they would be discovered, but surely nobody would go around casting this spell on every rock, branch and Goblin skull lying on the ground.

The mountain range was a place where monsters struggled violently to survive. Nobody would have the time to do that.

Well, there was a chance that a Golem or Undead would be unfortunate enough to be destroyed by a stray monster, but that was why they would be placed in sets of three. If one of them were to break, they simply needed to be replaced.

Incidentally, Vandalieu had decided to abandon the route used by the Mirg shield-nation's army two hundred years ago. According to Eleanora, a pair of Hurricane Dragons inhabited the area surrounding that route.

In order to simultaneously battle against two Dragons above Rank 10 and win in an environment where the only footholds were precipitous, fragile cliffs, a party of S-class adventurers would need to be formed. This would be difficult for the current Amid Empire, even if they expended all of their resources to do so.

It would be difficult for the Vampires as well. Eleanora had said that it would be possible for a Pure-breed Vampire like Birkyne to defeat them, but the signs of such a battle would likely be visible from Talosheim. Bright flashes of light, explosions and the sound of parts of the mountain range crumbling would be very noticeable.

It was also possible for enemies to make a detour into the southern regions of the Bahn Gaia continent and then pass through the Boundary Mountain Range from there, but apparently it would be suicidal for even a Pure-breed Vampire to journey into those regions.

「Those regions contain Dragons and Giants of even higher Ranks than those found in the mountain range, and there is even apparently a Palace of Demons.」(Eleanora)

There were also countless unexplored Devil's Nests and large organizations of monsters such as Noble Orc Empires.

They weren't exactly Vandalieu's allies, but they served as a very effective protective wall.

Well, because of them, it was impossible for Vandalieu to go and look for the Vampires who worshipped Vida.

「Well then, please get to work.」(Vandalieu)

It took less than a month for all of these tasks to be completed other than the discovery of a tunnel leading to the Mirg shield-nation. Vandalieu would have Eleanora and Zran's party join up with Borkus's and continue searching for this one-hundred-thousand-year-old tunnel.

「While they're doing that, we're going to build a second and third outer wall. Also, we will be developing weapons.」(Vandalieu)

『Bocchan, are you planning to work yourself to death?』(Saria)

「It's alright, I'll rest properly on my days off.」(Vandalieu)

The only ones who had visited Talosheim in the last two hundred years were Vandalieu and the Ghouls, and the Vampires led by Eleanora. And apart from Eleanora, all of the Vampires were now dead.

It wouldn't be easy to immediately tell that the number of Talosheim's walls had increased from the city's slightly different appearance.

The second wall would be built sturdy like the first, Golems would be set up on it and slots through which arrows could be fired would be included.

The third wall would be tall enough to conceal the first and second walls, but

constructed in a way that would make it look fragile and easily collapsible.

「I was thinking that if I put mud all over them and have Undead vines crawl over their surface, it would have the appearance I want.」(Vandalieu)

If the Mirg shield-nation came, they wouldn't see the holes in the wall that should be there according to their records of past events, but they might let their guard down because the wall looked so fragile.

Of course, Vandalieu would build the whole wall out of Golems so that the wall would maintain itself without actually crumbling.

『So the wall itself will turn into soldiers when the time comes.』(Sam)

『But Vampires that are Noble-born or greater can fly through the sky, can't they? Like Eleanora-san.』(Saria)

「That's why I'll be making anti-air weapons. Creating Undead that can fly would take time, after all.」(Vandalieu)

It would be a different story if he only needed a few, but to make dozens, hundreds of Undead like Bone Bird from bone remains and raise them until they were able to fly, he would need a lot of time. There was the option of turning fresh corpses of monsters such as Wyverns into flying Undead, but getting those numbers would still take time and if they were completely destroyed, it would take time to replace them.

He did consider making hundreds of Undead from small creatures like small birds and insects, but… In this world, becoming an Undead didn't necessarily make the creature stronger. Even if he turned winged insects and beetles into Undead, there was a high chance that they wouldn't even be able to bite through the enemy's skin.

And since Noble-born Vampires were proficient with magic, they could easily be wiped out in an instant by a single wide-area attack.

And turning that many insects and small birds into Undead would actually be likely to cause Vandalieu to work himself to death.

「I could probably use the corpses of insect-type monsters, but… Well, I suppose once I've set everything else up, I can take my time gathering them.」

(Vandalieu)

「More importantly, Van-sama, what about the new weapons that we will be assisting you with?」(Tarea)

『If it's working with metal, leave it to this old man.』(Datara)

「I'm planning to have you build some crossbows.」(Vandalieu)

Tarea and the Undead Titan blacksmith Datara gave Vandalieu odd looks.

「Crossbows? … Ah, you mean those.」(Tarea)

『What are you going to do with something like that?』(Datara)

Crossbows already existed in the world of Lambda. However, they weren't very popular or in demand.

Crossbows are accurate weapons with a slow rate of fire, but with their strings wound back, even frail women and the elderly can use them.

However, skills and martial abilities exist in this world.

A high level in the【Archery】skill increases accuracy and power with a bow, and with increased Attribute Values from gaining levels, even a woman with slender arms can draw the bowstring of a large bow.

And with martial skills, it is possible to achieve superhuman feats such as rapid consecutive fire and firing with enough precision to thread a needle.

Crossbows receive a bonus to accuracy from the【Archery】skill, but【martial skills】cannot be used due to their structure. One does not physically use one's hands pull the string back, so increased Attribute Values make no difference to their power.

Because of this, even soldiers do not use them, let alone adventurers.

As they are easy to use, ordinary people sometimes purchase them to have just in case, but even then, it is more common to buy regular bows and arrows as this is the cheaper option.

Thus, crossbows are known as weapons only used by the eccentric in the world of Lambda, and apparently it is common for weapon stores in even larger cities to not have them in stock.

『It would be better to hand out good bows and arrows rather than crossbows.』(Datara)

「No, no, I'm not going to hand out the crossbows to everyone. I'm going to turn the crossbows themselves into Undead.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu would make spirits haunt the completed crossbows, creating Cursed Weapons. Cursed Weapons are weak, Rank 2 monsters consisting of weapons possessed by spirits that move on their own. Normally, they would be unreliable even against normal soldiers, let alone Vampires.

However, crossbows fire projectiles capable of piercing through plate armor with the pull of a trigger. They are also highly accurate. Because Cursed Weapons don't use martial skills to begin with, there are no drawbacks.

The problem would be making sure they were loaded, but if Vandalieu installed each of them with a Golem arm responsible for reloading and placed them on the walls, the city's rooftops and the royal castle, that problem would be solved.

Once this was complete, he would have tireless archers that would shoot enemies to death until running out of projectiles to fire, undetectable through【Detect Presence】and capable of seeing in the dark.

Vandalieu planned to have projectiles with silver-plated tips for the anti-Vampire crossbows installed on the upper walls and rooftops.

Normally, technology would be required for this plating process, but Vandalieu could perform it easily by manipulating the shape of the silver with【Golem Transmutation.】

「Let's make ballistae and catapults as well.」(Vandalieu)

「… You really are planning to fight a war. I cannot wait to get to work!」(Tarea)

『I can make ballistae, but I can't make things like catapults.』(Datara)

「Yes, I'll be in charge of making the catapults.」(Vandalieu)

Of course, Vandalieu had no prior experience in catapult-building either. However, he had once seen a documentary on Earth that described how

catapults were built.

If he recalled, it had been a documentary in which weaponry of ancient civilizations were recreated through modern technology and then inspected in detail.

It was the kind of program that would have caused Uncle to have a fit from his luxury allergy, so I remember it well.

That program hadn't described every part of the building process of a catapult in detail, but it had showed the overall shape and structure of a catapult. All Vandalieu needed to do was recreate it with【Golem Transmutation.】

And on his days off, he played with Pauvina and the other children, checked Basdia's condition and busied himself with the aging reversal of Tarea, which he had been procrastinating doing.

Before he knew it, it was summer already.

【The levels of the Rapid Healing, Status Effect Resistance, Death-Attribute Magic, Chant Revocation, Automatic Mana Recovery, Surpass Limits, Golem Transmutation, No-Attribute Magic, Mana Control, Carpentry, Engineering and Alchemy Skills have increased!】

【You have acquired the Multi-Cast skill!】

【The Ranks of Zadiris, Nuaza, Bone Man, Bone Wolf, Bone Monkey, Bone Bear, Bone Bird, Braga, Zendo, Memediga, Rita and Saria have increased!】

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 4 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: Death-Attribute Mage
- **Level**: 39
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
    - Vitality: 69
    - Mana: 144,596,652

    - Strength: 52
    - Agility: 31
    - Stamina: 56
    - Intelligence: 157
- **Passive skills**:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
    - Rapid Healing: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Magic Resistance: Level 1
    - Dark Vision
    - Mental Corruption: Level 10
    - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 4
    - Chant Revocation: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Strengthen Followers: Level 5
    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Control: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 2
    - Carpentry: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Engineering: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Cooking: Level 1
    - Alchemy: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Soul Break: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Multi-Cast: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

Monster explanation:

【Vampires】

This is the race born between the goddess Vida and the Undead hero Zakkart. While not technically monsters, many nations and societies treat them as monsters, and thus they are explained as monsters here.

There are currently three kinds of Vampires,【Pure-breed】,【Noble-born】 and【Subordinate.】Their communities are built and managed as strict vertically-structured societies.

The majority of Vampires encountered and reported to the Adventurers' Guild are Subordinate Vampires; encounters with Noble-born Vampires are very rarely reported.

Although Vampires are monsters, they are capable of possessing Jobs as they are also blood-related to the goddess. Due to this, the skills they possess vary significantly compared to other monsters. Subordinate Vampires alone are powerful adversaries, and Noble-born Vampires are a threat equivalent to or even greater than Dragons.

Because of this, the Adventurers' Guild recommends that adventurers report any sightings of Vampires to the Guild rather than try to defeat them on their own.

There are large differences between individual Vampires, but according to the Adventurers' Guild, Subordinate Vampires are a minimum of Rank 3. Noble-born Vampires are defined as Vampires of Rank 7 and above.

Subordinate Vampires only possess physical Vampiric powers, but when their Rank increases, they gain skills such as【Beast Transformation】and【Clone】, making them extremely dangerous beings.

It has been confirmed that they have race titles such as Vampire Slaves, Vampire Lycans and Vampire Rebels after their Rank increases.

Noble-born Vampires possess magical powers, and depending on the individual, may even possess some kind of Demon Eyes. They tend to place importance on studying magic diligently, but that does not make them physically inferior to Subordinate Vampires. Because of this, superior individuals

master both magic and martial skills and possess high base Attribute Values, making them nightmarish creatures.

Incidentally, there is a misconception that all Noble-born Vampires have Demon Eyes of Charming, Paralysis or Mind-reading, but Demon Eyes are in fact a unique skill that only a handful of individuals possess.

This misconception is likely caused by those witnessing Noble-born Vampires casting spells that have similar effects to such Demon Eyes.

Most Noble-born Vampire race titles follow the aristocratic system used in human societies.

Inexperienced Rank 6 Vampires are just Vampires, but they are Vampire Leaders at Rank 7, Vampire Barons at Rank 8, and so on.

All of these Vampires have a common weakness to sunlight, silver and attacks of light-attribute magic, which is governed by the God of Law and Fate, Alda. Depending on their family and the evil god they worship, they may possess additional weaknesses such as not being able to enter buildings they are not invited into and weaknesses to garlic and running water.

There is almost no information available about Pure-breed Vampires. The only thing that is known is that even the highest-Rank Noble-born Vampire with the race title of Vampire Emperor would bow and swear loyalty to a Pure-breed.

Furthermore, Sercrent was a Rank 7 Vampire Leader. His talent was clearly inferior to that of Eleanora, who became a Rank 8 Vampire Baroness in the space of a few years.

Chapter 47: Let's launch things with a high amount of bloodthirst

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The bathhouse was currently the only functional facility in the royal castle of Talosheim. As there was no functioning national government, this was the only facility of any use.

「That was a good bath~」(Ghoul woman)

「The massage-Golems that the King made for us were good too, weren't they?」(Ghoul woman)

「Really? I found the『Jacuzzi』thing that made bubbles come out to be better.」(Ghoul woman)

The Ghouls who had only ever bathed in cold water before coming to Talosheim were totally engrossed in submerging themselves in hot water. There were some Golem products that Vandalieu had come up with, but the hot baths seemed to be the most pleasurable thing after all.

「Oh yes, have you heard? The rumors that Chief Tarea has been summoned into the King's bedroom every day recently.」(Ghoul woman)

「I've heard about it, but doesn't he just want her company? The King is only four years old, after all. I've heard that he gets lonely easily, too. And she's not the chief anymore, she's the foreman, right?」(Ghoul woman)

「That's right, but I'm more used to calling her Chief –」(Ghoul woman)

As the two Ghoul women walked along during their conversation, Tarea, the subject of their discussion, ran across in front of them.

「Huh? Foreman –」(Ghoul woman)

Immediately afterwards, Vandalieu passed across them as well. For some reason, he was crawling across the ceiling silently using all four limbs.

「...」(Ghoul woman)

As the two of the were rendered speechless at the sight of the Ghoul King, Tarea came back. She had been captured by Vandalieu.

「Noooooooooo! Please let me go for toniiiiiight!」(Tarea)

「No, no, we have to test the catapults' firing tomorrow, so let's do ten more today.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu walked away, holding the teary-eyed Tarea in the air with【Telekinesis.】Watching him leave, the two Ghoul women swallowed before speaking again.

「It's not because he's lonely?」(Ghoul woman)

***

Vandalieu was next to Tarea, who was lying in an unladylike, spread-eagle position while breathing wildly.

「The【Youth Transformation】will be complete in a few more days. Let's do our best.」(Vandalieu)

「Hauu…」(Tarea)

Seemingly exhausted and unable to get up, Tarea let out a strange sound.

Tarea had experienced many things in the past, but the【Youth Transformation】caused sensations she had never felt before to run through her entire body. The unpleasant feeling of something foreign crawling around inside her body, and the pleasure of having her entire body massaged, causing her muscle tension to vanish.

She was in an incomprehensible state where her body was full of energy, but at the same time, it felt as if she had just run a marathon.

The fact that she had learned a secret that was only between Vandalieu and Zadiris up until now made her feel younger as well. These were only good things for Tarea, but…

「Uu, it's true that I don't get tired easily, run out of breath or get blurry eyes anymore, and my back no longer hurts, but…」(Tarea)

Tarea's aging had progressed further than Vandalieu had initially thought. As

to be expected of someone over two hundred and sixty years old.

「Should we reverse another ten years of age?」(Vandalieu)

「Hyih?! Let me go for tonight!」(Tarea)

***

The Pure-breed Vampires who only gathered together once every few millennia had assembled in one of the numerous meeting places for the Vampires who worshipped Hihiryushukaka, the【Evil God of Joyful Life.】 Something that hadn't happened for tens of thousands of years was taking place.

A crooked seven-pointed star had been drawn on the floor using special, freshly-drained blood. The three Pure-breed Vampires raised their arms towards the center of this star, curling their hands into fists.

「I, Ternecia, pour my sacred blood.」(Ternecia)

A drop of blood fell from in between Ternecia's fingers. Her eyes were shining like those of a child about to open a box containing a present.

「I, Gubamon, pour my sacred blood.」(Gubamon)

Gubamon, an old man who looked like a withered tree, rolled his large eyes. A drop of blood fell from in between his fingers as well.

His unknown desires were showing unpleasantly in his eyes.

「I, Birkyne, pour my sacred blood.」(Birkyne)

And then red blood also fell from Birkyne's white hand. His eyes were ominously empty. His lips that normally gave a gentlemanly smile were pressed together tightly, as if he were enduring something unpleasant.

These three Pure-breed Vampires gathering in one place and cooperating to carry out a task was something that had not happened in tens of thousands of years.

A single Pure-breed Vampire possessed enough power to defeat a party of adventurers made up of superhuman A-class adventurers alone.

As well as acting as the rulers of this Vampire community, they had received

the divine protection of Hihiryushukaka, the【Evil God of Joyful Life】, and were equivalent to being his subordinate gods.

Just what kind of ritual were they carrying out?

「… Hmm, it seems that the ritual has failed. That damn Sercrent, has he betrayed us?」(Gubamon)

Gubamon looked at the seven-pointed star that showed no response whatsoever and raised the ends of his lips in a smile, exposing his pointed fangs.

「Well then, next is Eleanora. Get on with it.」(Ternecia)

「… Yes.」(Birkyne)

As Ternecia pressed Birkyne to perform the next step, he took an unconscious child from a Noble-born Vampire who had been waiting nearby and cut off its head, using the side of his hand as a blade.

Blood gushed onto the floor, glowing mysteriously and crawling around as if alive to form another seven-pointed star.

The three of them each gave a drop of their blood as they had done earlier.

However, the result was the same. Nothing happened.

「It seems that Eleanora has betrayed us as well.」(Ternecia)

「Kukuku, if they were dead, they would have been revived here as Undead, after all.」(Gubamon)

This ritual was one that summoned the souls of dead Noble-born Vampires and resurrected them as Undead.

It required the decapitation of a child born to a woman who had only ever known one man, and all three of the Pure-breed Vampires needed to contribute a drop of their own blood to the seven-pointed triangle drawn with that child's blood. Even though this ritual would revive a Noble-born Vampire as an Undead, the resulting Undead would be vastly weaker than the live Vampire, so it was hardly worth the trouble.

The reason this ritual was being carried out was because a major incident had occurred a month ago.

【Slay the Dhampir born between the Subordinate Vampire Valen and the Dark Elf Darcia.】

That was the divine message that had recently been given to the Pure-breed Vampires by Hihiryushukaka, the【Evil God of Joyful Life.】

They had given the task of slaying the Dhampir in question to Sercrent and Eleanora around a year ago. As Vampires' sense of time was different from that of humans, they had thought that perhaps Sercrent and Eleanora were having some difficulty with the task, so it hadn't really occurred to them that they should investigate the situation.

As the problematic Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped Vida had showed no signs of movement, there hadn't been anything to get impatient about, either.

However, things changed when the evil god sent the divine message directly. Even though the evil god had given the Pure-breed Vampires his divine protection, it was unusual for him to send them a divine message.

The evil god had given them a direct order to slay the Dhampir. It was a significant enough event that even Gubamon, who normally refrained from attending these meetings, had stopped admiring his collection to come out here.

They had then tried to contact Eleanora and the others who had been sent to slay the Dhampir, but it was already too late.

That was why this ritual had been carried out. If they had killed the Dhampir but lost their lives in the process, they would be revived as Undead and be able to report the fact.

It they could not be revived, it would be clear that they had betrayed the Vampires.

「It seems that we've been underestimating this Dhampir. Perhaps he has captured his would-be assassins alive and is now tormenting them, but either way, they have failed.」(Ternecia)

「Sercrent was not a particularly excellent individual, but he was still a moderately useful man. If the Dhampir has made him betray us, he must

possess a considerable amount of power.」(Gubamon)

Gubamon nodded in response to Ternecia's words, excited about the fact that his subordinate might have betrayed him. Either the Dhampir had prepared something that forced Sercrent to obey him even if it made his own parent and every Noble-born and Subordinate Vampire his enemy, or he was powerful enough to convince Sercrent that doing so was the better choice.

「Fuhaha! The corpse of such a Dhampir is something that I would like to acquire! I cannot help but be excited by thoughts of what kind of Undead I will turn him into! Kyiihihihihihihi!」(Gubamon)

For Gubamon, who had made it his life's hobby to collect the corpses of heroes and use them to create Undead, it appeared that the【Evil God of Joyful Life】had given him an indication as to which corpse should be added to his collection next.

A Dhampir so dangerous that the evil god personally wished for his demise. Wouldn't that be an even more valuable addition than some A-class adventurer? It was unclear as to what made him so dangerous, or perhaps he had simply incurred the evil god's wrath, but he had caught Hihiryushukaka's attention.

「Do your best then. I'm not really interested – no, I am a little. That Dhampir was leading hundreds of Ghouls, wasn't he? Making Undead from Ghouls sounds interesting.」(Ternecia)

Ternecia was also interested in creating Undead, but she did so to create works of art. Unlike Gubamon, she wasn't particularly concerned with the strength and fame of the materials used to create the Undead.

The theme of her creations in the past few centuries had been「Families」, so she had no interest in a Dhampir whose father had already been disposed of and whose mother had been burned at the stake. But it was possible that the gray-brown skin of the Ghouls would look attractive once they were turned into Undead.

That was what her twisted inspiration was whispering to her.

And as for Birkyne…

「Shit…」(Birkyne)

He quietly whispered a single word.

Hearing a word that Birkyne wouldn't utter with his usual demeanor, the Noble-born Vampires who had been standing by with empty cages in their hands opened their eyes wide in surprise.

「Birkyne-sama…? Higyih?!」(Vampire)

Birkyne unconsciously seized the head of the Noble-born Vampire who had spoken his name and raised this「thing」into the air.

「Birkyne-sama, whatever are you doing?! Gugeh?!」(Vampire)

Birkyne swung the panicking「thing」around wildly.

「DAMN IIIIIIIT! MY ELEANORA! MY TOY THAT I CHOSE FROM AMONG DOZENS OF HUMANS! HE STOLE HER FROM MEEEEEEE! THAT ACCURSED DHAMPIIIIR!」(Birkyne)

Being shaken in every direction, the「thing」in his hand struck the floor and walls numerous times, causing various pieces to break off and scatter everywhere.

「I WAS GOING TO TOY WITH HER FOR CENTURIES TO COOOOME! I WAS GOING TO CONVINCE HER THAT SHE WAS SPECIAL, MAKE HER CONCEITED AND THEN BREAK HER BY SCRAPING OFF HER FLESH PIECE BY PIIIIEEECE! HOW UNFAIR OF HIM TO TAKE HER FROM ME BEFORE I COULD GET TO THE GOOD PART! THAT DAMNED, ACCURSED, UNFORGIVABLE DHAMPIIIIIIR!」(Birkyne)

「W-what?! Hyih! Birkyne-sama?!」(Vampire)

「Please stop, Birkyne-sama! What is the – Gehoh!」(Vampire)

「HYIIIIIH! Birkyne-sama has gone mad! Run away, run awaaaay!」(Vampire)

「NOOOOOOO!」(Vampire)

Birkyne went into a frenzy with disheveled hair, bloodshot eyes and a foaming mouth.

His appearance was no longer that of a young nobleman or even that of an angry beast, but that of a broken madman.

He swung his fist wildly, destroying a pillar that had barely avoided destruction up until now, and then stopped, breathing heavily with his shoulders heaving.

「Haah… haah… fuuh.」(Birkyne)

He looked up into the sky to see the beautiful, blue-white glow of the moon and the sparkling stars that accompanied it.

As Birkyne threw away the「thing」… the head of the Noble-born Vampire, which was already in a poor enough state to make it impossible to tell whether it was even a man or a woman, he calmly spoke to Ternecia and Gubamon as if nothing had happened.

「So that brings up the question of what we will do next, Ternecia. Do you have any ideas?」(Birkyne)

He took a silk handkerchief from his breast pocket, cleaned his mouth and hands with it and quickly adjusted his hair with his fingers.

「Ah, you're back. It didn't last very long this time, did it?」(Ternecia)

「The last time, you were in that state for days. I was considering whether Ternecia and I needed to stop you.」(Gubamon)

「Fufu, my apologies.」(Birkyne)

Birkyne had completely reverted to his usual self, but his surroundings were in a pitiful state.

The meeting chamber that previously looked as if it were from inside the large mansion of a nobleman had now turned into a mountain of rubble, other than two circular areas roughly a meter wide around Gubamon and Ternecia.

Blood and severed limbs sprawled over the rubble. Heads and fragments of heads littered the ground.

Half of the Noble-born Vampires and the majority of the Subordinate Vampires had been turned into silent corpses.

「Well, it's fine. I thought that this would happen, so I didn't bring my servants to today's meeting other than some Subordinate Vampires to fill the numbers.」(Ternecia)

「Kakaka, well done! But all of my Noble-born Vampires were present today!」(Gubamon)

「I have done a terrible thing. How many of them did I crush?」(Birkyne)

「Don't worry, don't worry! I was thinking of cutting down those that were below average so that I do not end up with another individual like Sercrent. You have merely made the selection for me by cutting down those who could not survive your temper!」(Gubamon)

「I see. How terrible of you to use me like that.」(Birkyne)

「By the way, why are you asking me? I did say that I'm interested, but I'd be happy as long as I can skin the Ghouls when the Dhampir is dead.」(Ternecia)

「It's simple. First was Gubamon's subordinate Sercrent, then my Eleanora, so you're next aren't you?」(Birkyne)

「You're right. I suppose I won't look very good if I don't make any moves.」(Ternecia)

Ternecia took a moment to think.

「Well then, I suppose we can mobilize the army. There's a guy in the Amid Empire's army that wants eternal life. A convenient guy who will do anything we tell him as long as we turn him into a Vampire.」(Ternecia)

We'll exert our influence on him, and a few other noble families and high officials… If we do that, we should be able to set the army after the Dhampir in about two years.

An average Noble-born Vampire, another Noble-born who was quite exceptional for her age and a few dozen Subordinate Vampires, was it? The Dhampir disposed of that many of our forces.

I don't know what methods he used to fight them, but it was enough for the evil god himself to send a divine message. I'm sure he used a very abnormal method.

So let's try attacking with numbers. Things will surely go well if we use thousands of soldiers, knights, adventurers and the High Priest that burned his mother at the stake.

If we hide our subordinates among such an army, there will be no chance for him at all. A hundred Noble-born Vampires would be too many, but a few dozen should be enough.

「Can you give me *that* information? I'm sure those who worship Vida can't make use of it if I break it with my own hands once I'm finished with it.」(Ternecia)

「I do not mind」, said Birkyne in response to Ternecia's request.「It was information that the guys worshipping Vida are fairly likely to know anyway.」(Birkyne)

「Yes, if Ternecia destroys it, we can be certain. But it is a serious matter to mobilize the army; you were quite poor at utilizing humans, were you not?」(Gubamon)

「What, you don't consider yourself good at it either, do you?」(Ternecia)

「Hihihi! That is right, I am also poor at using them!」(Gubamon)

「In any case, it seems that you have an idea. I want you to let me know when your plan begins to progress. Now that our god has given us a divine message, there is a need for us to cooperate.」(Birkyne)

「That is right; Hihiryushukaka-sama's punishment would take a toll on our bodies, after all.」(Gubamon)

The three of them laughed in agreement as the other Vampires who had somehow managed to survive staggered to their feet. And then they began the journey to the next meeting location.

They were all thinking the same thing about Hihiryushukaka's divine message.

Why would the evil god, the only existence who certainly possessed greater power than them, make the effort to send a divine message instructing them to kill the Dhampir?

For him to have done that meant that Hihiryushukaka's attention had been drawn to the Dhampir. A Dhampir that was not one of his followers.

In other words, couldn't this be a sign that the Dhampir possessed something that would be a threat to Hihiryushukaka…? Some kind of power or

information?

In that case, if we could somehow get our hands on it, wouldn't it be possible to rule and conquer the evil god himself?

Hihiryushukaka knew that the Pure-breed Vampires would think this. It was only natural; they were only applying the teachings that he himself had given them.

That was why Hihiryushukaka had given them no information regarding Vandalieu in his divine message.

***

A human-sized boulder flew from the catapult with a whoosh.

The boulder fell accurately on top of a wooden target set up in the firing area, destroying it.

Basdia, who was sitting in a chair with a monster-leather parasol protecting her from the sun much like a human lady, let out a sigh of amazement as she rubbed her expanding abdomen.

「These catapults are amazing. They look very promising.」(Basdia)

「This is still just the test-firing phase.」(Vandalieu)

This was the response of Vandalieu, who was being thrown into the air by Pauvina next to her, but he seemed not entirely unsatisfied.

He was generally expressionless, had the eyes of a dead fish and a flat-toned voice, but once one got accustomed to it, it was possible to tell his emotions from his manner of speech. The slightly more carefree tone of speech he was using now was proof that he was in a good mood.

「The results of firing with normal projectiles are excellent. Next, I'll begin test-firing with Golem projectiles.」(Vandalieu)

「Yes, ready!」(Pauvina)

As Pauvina gave this vague order, the catapult moved on its own and prepared to fire. This catapult was essentially a catapult-shaped Golem that Vandalieu had created through【Golem Transmutation.】

It was no ordinary catapult; it possessed arms and wheels made of stone.

It was possible to make it load projectiles, take aim and fire all on its own.

And as Ent wood had been used in the construction of its body, it had the sturdiness of metal and excellent resistance to fire.

「Fire!」(Pauvina)

The loyal catapult Golem fired the next boulder.

It flew through the sky in a trajectory similar to the previous one, but towards a different target, which had wooden dummies lined up around it for some reason… and landed on top of it.

『UOOOOOHHN!』

And then the projectile let out a groan and stood up!

「Did the catapult launch a Golem?」(Basdia)

The sight of the projectile-turned-Golem destroying the wooden dummies around it took Basdia by surprise.

The Golem seemed to have taken some damage from the impact of landing, but it caused no problems in combat as Golems didn’t feel pain or anything.

This would likely be incredibly effective in a real battle. The main weakness of Golems was their slow movement. This method would provide the Golems with a way to attack the enemy while removing that weakness.

A Golem fired at the enemy this way would easily break down the front lines and then run rampant among their ranks; this would not be an easy attack to deal with.

「Yes. And since we might be fighting Subordinate Vampires, I’ve put silver plating on its fists and toes.」(Vandalieu)

「You’ve got attention for detail. It’s exciting to see.」(Basdia)

「Thank you, but it seems that the Golem projectiles still have room for improvement.」(Vandalieu)

「Do they really?」(Basdia)

It's destroyed all of the wooden dummies set up as enemies, so as far as I can see, it's perfect. As Basdia thought this, Vandalieu, who was sharing the vision of the Undead insects he had set up nearby, shook his head.

「There's one wooden dummy that has only had its legs crushed, its torso is completely unharmed. Even though I ordered the Golem to kill… to inflict damage in ways that would be fatal to humans.」(Vandalieu)

It would be impossible for a human to enter a battle with two broken legs unless they were treated first. However, it would be possible for Vampires to continue fighting even with both legs broken.

Vandalieu wanted the Golem to crush their heads just in case.

「You've got a high amount of bloodthirst, don't you, Van?」(Basdia)

「Hiiigh~」(Pauvina)

Pauvina threw Vandalieu directly overhead. It seemed that she had reacted to the word「high」in Basdia's sentence.

She had once done this inside a room, causing a stain of Vandalieu's nose-blood to appear on the ceiling, so she had been forbidden to throw Vandalieu into the air indoors. She seemed to be intent on enjoying herself as much as she could today.

Pauvina caught Vandalieu as he fell onto her with a smacking sound.

「… There's a big impact when I land, so do it more gently.」(Vandalieu)

「Okay!」(Pauvina)

「I'm begging you, I really am. Leaving that aside, I'll be starting the test-firing of the special projectiles now.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu spoke somewhat lifelessly, and then the catapult loaded a large barrel this time.

And then it was launched. It drew an arc in the air… and then split into two.

「What?! Did it fail?」(Basdia)

A transparent fluid spilled from within and splashed onto the ground in front of the target.

「No, it was quite successful. That was a barrel-shaped Golem I made for spreading poison and pathogens among the enemy. After it's launched, it splits at a certain timing and spreads its contents in front of the enemy.」(Vandalieu)

「P-poison?」(Basdia)

「Yes, poison. It only had water in it just now, though.」(Vandalieu)

Poison and pathogens could be created as long as Vandalieu had the Mana for it. He could carry out biological terrorism anywhere, anytime.

He did have to be careful not to be affected by his own poison and pathogens, however. If he was afflicted by the deadly poison and disease that was powerful enough to overcome his【Status Effect Resistance】skill, he would collapse immediately without even being able to cast any spells.

「Poison and disease… Is that alright?」(Basdia)

「It's more of a problem of what I spread than how I spread it. The Undead and Golems will be fine, but poison and diseases will affect you and the other Ghouls, after all.」(Vandalieu)

It was a truly difficult problem to solve.

If he was planning to spread disease, it would be best to use pathogens with high infectious capacity, but it would be pointless if Basdia and the others, especially the children with weak immune systems, were to be affected by them. It would be fine if he could use【Sterilization】and【Disinfect】right away, but it was impossible to know what could happen during battle.

So then would poison be better after all? But if Vigaro and the other warriors were in the battle, it couldn't be used.

「Maybe it will be fine if I use the same components that are in the Ghouls' paralyzing venom? Hmm, I wonder if there are any deadly airborne diseases that are difficult to treat, highly infectious and only affect humans.」(Vandalieu)

「Wait a minute, that's not what I was trying to ask. I'm trying to ask if it's really alright to do that. Our enemies might be humans, right?」(Basdia)

「Yes, and…?」Vandalieu replied as Pauvina threw him up and down slightly more gently than earlier. It seemed that he was still unsure as to why Basdia

seemed concerned.

「No, I'm not going to say that I have a problem with killing people, either. But won't it cause problems to kill too many?」(Basdia)

「Ah, it would be problematic to kill more than necessary, wouldn't it?」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu nodded a few times in agreement… probably. It was difficult to tell due to him being thrown up and down.

「It's fine. I'll be careful not to kill more than necessary, and it's not like these weapons *have* to be used. Mom wouldn't be happy about it, either.」(Vandalieu)

Darcia wasn't a peace advocate in particular. However, she wouldn't approve of a massacre, either. She would definitely hate unnecessary murder and try to stop Vandalieu from performing such murder. If he actually did it, she would likely be heartbroken about it afterwards.

Basdia was a Ghoul who had been raised in a village where she had been taught not to fight with adventurers. It was possible that she felt very reluctant to kill humans because of this.

And Vandalieu had no recollection of becoming a murderous fiend; he considered himself to be a normal person.

People are creatures with societies, and as long as that is the case, the happiness of humans lies in those societies.

Vandalieu's objective was to become happy and stay happy. Unnecessary murder would simply be an action that would lead him further from this goal.

「That's why I'll try not to kill any more than necessary.」(Vandalieu)

「Yeah, we won't kill, you know?」(Pauvina)

Vandalieu and Pauvina made this declaration together. But Vandalieu continued speaking.

「But if I need to slaughter every single enemy to protect everyone, I'm going to do it. So don't get angry at me if it comes to that, alright?」(Vandalieu)

「You got it?」(Pauvina)

He wouldn’t kill people he didn’t have to. However, there was a god and a religion that taught that killing every member of their races was justice, and this religion was the official religion of an entire Empire. In order to survive in this world, there would be times where he would be forced to kill all of his enemies in order to survive.

As Vandalieu told Basdia this, she seemed to get a little haughty.

「That’s a given. If it were necessary to slaughter all of the enemies in order to protect this child and you and all the others, Van, I wouldn’t hesitate. I’d gladly swing my axe at them.」(Basdia)

「What a reliable mother you are.」(Vandalieu)

「I am, aren’t I? If you ever want to give me my child, let me know anytime.」(Basdia)

「That will be at least another ten years from now~」(Vandalieu)

As Vandalieu gave Basdia this response, Pauvina gave Vandalieu a particularly large throw towards the sky.

Falling from this height would cause quite the impact, so he used【Flight】to float gently in the air.

And then he reflected upon the events of the past few months.

Chapter 48: It seems I've become a place for insects

Vandalieu and his companions had built their walls, solidified their defenses and prepared their weapons. Undead and Golems had been successfully placed for surveillance purposes at locations where Vampires and humans were likely to cross the Boundary Mountain Range.

Vandalieu had personally tried stepping into the entrances of the route that had been used by Eleanora's party and the tunnel that led to the Hartner duchy after the surveillance Golems had been placed at these locations.

There had been no particular problems on the route that Eleanora's party had used. But things had been strange at the tunnel.

From the outside, the tunnel looked as if it had simply caved in, but Vandalieu had used【Golem Transmutation】to turn the rubble into Golems and【Spirit Form Transformation】to go inside and investigate. He had found that the inside of the tunnel had been destroyed too thoroughly.

According to what he had heard from Nuaza and the other Undead Titans, two hundred years ago, the First Princess Levia and the other Undead Titans used this tunnel to escape and then used some hidden mechanisms to seal the tunnel. But the inside of the tunnel was had been like an impossible puzzle.

There hadn't been a single large rock among the rubble, only large amounts of soft dirt and sand. When he had tried to remove the rubble to rebuild the tunnel, more and more dirt and sand kept falling from above. That was the state the tunnel had been in.

Vandalieu hadn't investigated through the entire tunnel to the end but the first few hundred meters were all in this state, even though the tunnel was covered by mountains high enough to reach the clouds.

It was as if someone had used sophisticated earth-attribute magic to turn the

boulders and hard bedrock above the tunnel into tiny grains of sand in order to make it impossible to rebuild the tunnel.

With this being the case, the tunnel would remain sealed forever if Vandalieu's【Golem Transmutation】skill didn't exist; it would have been completely impossible for the Mirg shield-nation army of two hundred years ago to reconstruct the tunnel.

Nobody knew how Princess Levia had collapsed the tunnel. It was possible that the mechanism or magic used to collapse it, which only Talosheim's royal family knew about, was just that incredible. However… Vandalieu found this suspicious.

He wondered whether the Vampires had something to do with this.

If he thought about it, the commercial trade between Talosheim and the Hartner duchy would have been nothing but an eyesore for the Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped the evil god and feared the Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped Vida that lived in the southern regions of the Bahn Gaia continent beyond the Boundary Mountain Range.

If trading had become very prosperous in Talosheim's geographical location, the people there would have eventually started exploring the southern regions of the continent. This could have caused the Vampires worshipping Vida to possibly make a move.

That might have been why they had chosen to mobilize the Amid Empire and the Mirg shield-nation without making any movements themselves. They had probably wanted to reduce the strength of the Empire and the Mirg shield-nation around then anyway, and with the Vampires' influence extending into the Empire, starting a war would have been a simple matter.

Eleanora knew nothing about this. She seemed to have been considered an individual with great promise, but she hadn't been in an important position in the community as a whole, and not even a decade had passed since she had even become a Vampire.

Since the Vampires in the same faction that worshipped the evil god didn't seem to be on good terms with each other, it was only natural that she didn't know.

Vandalieu stopped his speculations here. No matter how much he investigated, the truth wouldn't be clear unless he were to talk to some person or spirit who knew about the events of two hundred years ago. For now, he just needed to increase his intent to kill the Vampires who worshipped the evil god.

And the remaining tunnel in the mountain range leading to the Mirg shield-nation was found.

It had been covered by a large boulder, however. As Vandalieu had suspected, a tunnel had been built a hundred thousand years ago on this side of the mountain range as well.

Borkus's party had slaughtered Earth Dragons, Rock Dragons and scattered a Goblin King's large pack to find it.

The Dragon materials that they had brought back as souvenirs were currently in Tarea's hands, being processed to create equipment.

With this, Vandalieu's surveillance network was complete.

And though they didn't possess enough fighting strength to stand against the Pure-breed Vampires, everyone was improving both individually and as a whole.

His powerful companions like Borkus, Eleanora and Vigaro had leveled up in the past few months, but their Ranks hadn't increased.

However, prior to this, Vigaro had undergone a Job-change from Warrior to【Axeman】, a Job specialized in using axe techniques. He had apparently even acquired the【Deforestation】skill as well. He had acquired it during the search for the tunnel by cutting down trees that were in the way with his axe.

Nuaza had become a Rank 5 Lich.

「I have finally lost the "Lesser" from my race title. I will no longer allow Borkus-dono to call me a weak youngster!」he said, smiling with his face that was only made of skin and bones.

Braga had become a Rank 4 Black Goblin Assassin, while the other Black Goblins had become Black Goblin Scouts. They were quite the team of scouts.

It seemed that Braga was walking along the path of a ninja that he had heard

about from Vandalieu.

Zemedo and Memediga had increased their Ranks as well, becoming an Anubis Rider and an Anubis Monk respectively. Zemedo had successfully tamed a monster he had captured in a Dungeon and become able to fight while using it as a mount. Memediga had apparently increased in Rank while studying magic and martial skills simultaneously, shortly after she began going on dates with Berg in the Church of Vida.

Was this the goddess's blessing?

The Orcus Gorba hadn't increased his Rank yet, but his body had grown enough for him to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the three-meter-tall Borkus and he had grown even stronger and sturdier.

Most importantly, he had found a Giga in a forest and captured it alive. Because of this, Talosheim now had a supply of fresh eggs.

Everyone was becoming stronger by increasing their Ranks, leveling up and improving their skills.

With this, unlike when they had been forced to escape the Devil's Nest forest, they were capable of fighting.

Vandalieu wanted more anti-Vampire weapons prepared if possible, but he lacked time and, more importantly, skills and technology for those.

However, fortunately, it seemed that Pure-breed Vampires and Noble-born Vampires who had lived a long time had an unusually slow perception of time, so when they made a move, they would use a plan that would take years, or several months at least to carry out.

Vampires had long lifespans and surrounded themselves with the company of other Vampires, so their sense of time was very different from that of humans.

They often referred to events over ten years ago as,「a little while ago.」

It was still unlikely that Vandalieu would be left alone for ten years, but Eleanora estimated that they would take two to five years to make their next move as long as there were no special reasons to act faster.

And so Vandalieu decided that he should start taking action to achieve his

own goals.

He would acquire Vida's legacy, the resurrection device beneath Talosheim's royal castle, and resurrect Darcia.

「I have to become stronger for that as well.」(Vandalieu)

In order to do that, the half-destroyed Dragon Golem that still protected it needed to be defeated. But if that was all, Vandalieu wouldn't need to become stronger.

He would simply need to stand at the back and support Borkus, Eleanora, Vigaro, Zadiris and the others. Darcia's resurrection was at stake, but there was no need for him to be positioned at the front.

However, only Vandalieu was capable of melting the ice that sealed the chamber guarded by the Dragon Golem, and when he had gone to melt it, he had felt a powerful response from his constantly-active【Danger Sense: Death.】

That was proof that the Dragon Golem had noticed Vandalieu and was preparing to attack him the moment he tried to enter the chamber. In other words, even if he was planning to leave all of the fighting to Borkus and the others, there was a high chance that he would receive some kind of attack as soon as he opened the chamber and be killed immediately.

Of course, Vandalieu had become much stronger than he was the first time he had seen the Dragon Golem through the wall of ice. He had gone through a Job-change and leveled up. His Attribute Values and his skills had increased.

The【Soul Break】that he had acquired after destroying Sercrent's soul was a particularly powerful skill.

Upon careful inspection, it had turned out to be a skill that dealt damage to Mana equal to the amount of damage to Vitality that Vandalieu inflicted.

If he dealt damage to Vampires with this, their Mana would stay damaged even if their Vitality recovered immediately, so this skill would be effective to use in battles against Vampires. He would even be able to drain the Dragon Golem of the Mana it used as its power source… if he could damage it.

But even so, he still felt a powerful reaction from【Danger Sense: Death.】That

was why he needed to become stronger.

That was why he decided to resume his Dungeon-clearing that he had put on hold.

『The Dungeon we're going into is a C-class Dungeon. It'll be on another level from the D-class Dungeons you've already been in, kid. Don't let your guard down.』(Borkus)

Borkus was doing his best to make a strict face, but the remaining half of his lips were raised in a smirk. Vandalieu didn't comment on this.

「Yes. I'm relying on you to guide me through.」(Vandalieu)

The Dungeon they would be clearing was Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah. It was a Dungeon discovered by Borkus's ancestors, countless generations ago.

Unlike the D-class Garan's Valley and Doran's Aquatic Cavern, nobody usually entered this Dungeon other than adventurers. No matter how strong Titans were, this Dungeon was too dangerous for anyone other than a genuine adventurer to venture into.

「That's right, this place is really harsh. There are a lot of floors and the monsters are strong. There aren't many monsters that use attacks that inflict status effects or problematic traps, but the monsters are strong.」(Vigaro)

「You have said the same thing twice. Are you drunk?」(Zadiris)

『But the monsters really are strong. Even though our Ranks increased, it's tough for us from the third floor onwards if Vigaro-san isn't with us.』(Saria)

『Jyuuh. From the eleventh floor onwards, it was difficult battle after difficult battle.』(Bone Man)

The members of this exploration party were the Rank 6 members Vigaro and Zadiris, as well as Rita, Saria, Bone Man and Bone Bird who had become Rank 5. Other than the inclusion of Borkus, their guide, they had a suitable amount of fighting strength for clearing this Dungeon.

As its name suggested, Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah was a Dungeon with many savannahs in its terrain.

Some floors had forests, rivers and lakes, but they were mostly savannahs.

The scenery was –

「Just like in a movie.」(Vandalieu)

Vandalieu whispered these words as he released a【Mana Bullet.】

Dinosaurs roamed across the ground that was covered in thick, verdant grass that looked like a green carpet. It was as if Vandalieu had traveled back in time to the Cretaceous Period.

It was a truly moving sight.

Even as he noticed the groups of dinosaurs coming to attack, Vandalieu's sense of wonder didn't disappear.

『O~oi, if you don't hurry and crush that Raptor… Oh, you've already done it.』(Borkus)

As Borkus relaxed at the back and watched, one of the Raptors that had slipped through the frontline tried to attack Vandalieu, only to be turned into mincemeat by a【Mana Bullet.】

Normal【Mana Bullets】weren't this powerful; they were slower than arrows and attacks of other attributes of magic, difficult to fire in a controlled trajectory and easy to predict.

It was a spell full of flaws, but Vandalieu had poured ten thousand Mana into a single bullet to release a projectile larger than himself that should have been called【Super Mana Cannon.】Its size made it hard to avoid and lately he had been twisting the shape of the Mana to alter the projectile's trajectory.

Because of this, it was even able to bring down a fast-moving Raptor.

『I suppose the others won't have any problems on the first floor since they've been in here before.』(Borkus)

Though Vigaro, Zadiris, Bone Man and the others were still inexperienced in his eyes, they were slaughtering the Raptors with ease.

The boss of this group of Raptors was a Rank 4 Huge Raptor that was larger and more intelligent than the rest, but they were fighting it safely.

If there had been a few less Raptors, Vandalieu would likely not have had to

do anything.

『Well, this is where it starts.』(Borkus)

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The monsters appearing in the earlier floors of Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah were mostly similar to the dinosaurs that Vandalieu knew or large reptile-type monsters such as crocodiles and turtles.

It seemed that these monsters that had scales like Dragons and yet weren't Dragons had been named「Sub-Dragons」by the people of Talosheim. Incidentally, Wyverns and similar monsters were apparently also categorized as Sub-Dragons.

Indeed, it wouldn't be strange to think of them as being related to pterosaurs[1].

As they descended from the first floor to the second and then from the second to the third, the battles with the monsters naturally became harsher.

From the fifth floor onwards, there were no Rank 3 monsters appearing at all and there were Rank 5 monsters among the monsters that did appear.

「GYAOOOHN!」

「Oh, a tyrannosaurus rex.」(Vandalieu)

An enormous, triangular silhouette, fangs sharp and long enough to be used as tips of spears, powerful rear legs and short front legs.

Probably the most well-known carnivorous dinosaur on Earth, the tyrannosaurus rex… This was an Armored Tyrannosaurus, a monster with a higher Rank. It was a dinosaur covered in hard scales and a carapace like an ankylosaur, but it was apparently a Rank 5 monster in Lambda.

Vandalieu found it strange to think that this enormous carnivore was weaker than Bugogan and only as powerful as a Wyvern, but it turned out that this wasn't so strange after all.

『Jyuuh! You will become provisions for my lord!【Flowing Water!】【Slicing Moon!】』(Bone Man)

Bone Man avoided the Armored Tyrannosaurus's biting attack with flowing movements and half-severed its neck with a slash that drew a circular path in the air.

After successfully increasing his Rank when Vandalieu had added more spirits to his body, he had trained even further and become a Rank 5 Skeleton Baron. His【Swordsmanship】skill was level 5, while his other skills such as【Archery】and【Shield Technique】had reached level 4.

The Armored Tyrannosaurus was supposed to be of the same Rank as him, but it was only capable of simple movements, perhaps due to its overly-active instinct to attack. Bone Man performed complicated, mysterious movements that seemed to ignore the normal rules of motion as if they came naturally to him. This was the difference between them.

『My lord, what shall we do with this corpse?』(Bone Man)

「I already have a Tyrannosaurus Zombie, so I suppose we'll use it for materials and food. Which parts of the tyrannosaurus monsters were tasty, again?」(Vandalieu)

『I believe it was the area around their legs.』(Bone Man)

They took the Armored Tyrannosaurus's Magic Stone, stripped it of its scales and carapace and then took a break as they ate the meat of its legs.

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The mid-boss on the tenth floor was a herbivorous dinosaur.

But it wasn't the enormous, long-necked brontosaurus that Vandalieu had been hoping to see. It was a ferocious triceratops that even a wild boar would flee from.

「BOOOOH!」

Flashes of lightning appeared around the horn on the tip of the triceratops's nose and the pair of horns on its forehead as it let out a roar that sounded somewhat similar to that of a cow and prepared to charge.

「… Hmm, as to be expected from a creature of another world.」(Vandalieu)

This triceratops had undergone a fantasy-like evolution.

『It is a Tri-Horn that has increased its Rank and contains wind-attribute Mana in its horns! Leave this to us!』(Saria)

『We have defeated it before!』(Rita)

Saria and Rita, the Living Armor sisters, stepped forward. They looked significantly different from how they had looked before.

They had increased their Ranks to become a Rank 5 Magic High-Leg Armor and Magic Bikini Armor, and finally acquired the【Spirit Form】skill.

As a result, they had visible bodies instead of just being suits of armor… Bodies that were like clouds of white mist with no outline that were just barely human-shaped.

Their【Spirit Form】was vague and seemed as if it would be blown away by a strong wind, but their other skills had increased as well. Though they were Rank 5, the two sisters could hold their own against Rank 6 enemies.

The promising-looking pair charged directly at the Tri-Horn from the front –

『KYAAAAAAH!』(Saria/Rita)

As they leapt up, their gauntlets that were still clutching their weapons, their greaves and their iron boots separated and flew into the air.

「Huh?」(Vandalieu)

「Th-they died?! Have they died?!」(Vigaro)

『Geh?! GEEEEEH!?』(Bone Bird)

『Hey, hey, isn't this looking bad?』(Borkus)

Vandalieu was surprised. The two men and Bone Bird began to panic. However, Zadiris didn't panic or make any noise, instead letting out an exasperated sigh.

「Another of their ill-humored jokes again.」(Zadiris)

As she whispered this, Rita and Saria's gauntlets and iron boots and turned in the air and they gripped their weapons, the halberd and the glaive, once more.

「BOOOOOH?!」

As the Tri-Horn who believed it had defeated them let out a roar of victory, they thrust their weapons into its neck, back and belly and cut it to pieces.

And then the Tri-Horn stopped breathing and the pieces of armor that had separated reunited once more, restoring Saria and Rita to normal.

『We're done here. This method is effective against the Tri-Horn.』(Saria)

『I suppose it thinks that it has defeated us once we separate our parts. Its movements stop and it's full of openings, so it's a piece of cake~ ☆』(Rita)

『Ah, I suppose you're getting thirsty now. Here. It's freshly-squeezed, Bocchan.』(Saria)

Vandalieu took the wooden cup full of fresh Tri-Horn blood from the two sisters who showed no signs of shame.

「I understand why you did it, but wasn't the screaming unnecessary?」(Vandalieu)

『Ah, that's… The electricity of the horns shocked me more than I expected, so I couldn't help it.』(Saria)

『Nee-san, you're weak to electric shocks, aren't you?』(Rita)

「Rita, I believe I heard you screaming as well.」(Zadiris)

『Th-that was… I was just feeling a little playful.』(Rita)

「That kind of playfulness is unnecessary! And more importantly, tighten your spirit form! You look like a log.」(Zadiris)

『You're mistaken! This isn't because I had a child's body or that I had excess flesh when I was still alive, but because I'm still experienced –』(Rita)

「Don't play around in battle when you're still inexperienced! You scared the hell out of me!」(Vigaro)

『Yeah, you've got some bad hobbies, Jou-chan.』(Borkus)

Vandalieu was watching Rita being scolded by the senior members; it seemed that he had decided not to say anything to her himself.

「But Saria, you should be careful as well, okay? Even if you're going to do something like that, do it better next time. If you don't, I'll let my enemies cut

my flesh and organs in battle again.」(Vandalieu)

It's unfair that I get scolded for being reckless while others can get away with it. It should be fine to say at least this much.

『P-please don't! Really, please don't! I'll think of a better way to do it!』(Saria)

With her face turning pale… or not, Saria hastily made this promise. Things would probably be fine from now on.

「Though this is another topic, how did you do that thing where you separated into pieces while attacking?」(Vandalieu)

Though Saria and Rita's pieces of armor were separate at first glance, they had generally moved together as if worn by an invisible person up until now.

However, they had acquired the【Spirit Form】skill, though it was still level 1, which had granted them misty bodies. Yet they had separated the pieces of their armor in battle. Shouldn't it have been the other way around?

『That's because we have acquired the【Long-distance Control】skill.』(Saria)

「Long-distance control?」(Vandalieu)

『Yes. It is a skill that lets us move parts of our bodies such as our gauntlets and boots separately from our main bodies.』(Saria)

Apparently, Saria and Rita had wondered whether something like that would be possible and acquired the skill by practicing together.

『That seems like quite a useful skill. I would certainly like to acquire this skill myself, jyuuh.』(Bone Man)

『Geeeh.』(Bone Bird)

Bone Man and Bone Bird spoke up after hearing this story.

Since Bone Man had flesh and cartilage made of spirit form and Bone Bird was made entirely of bones other than its wings, it was likely possible for them to acquire the【Long-range Control】skill with practice. If they controlled their spirit form, they would simply be separating their bones without any risk.

It was likely that the【Long-range Control】skill was a special skill possessed by Undead such as Living Armors, Skeletons and Zombies to begin with.

Vandalieu hadn’t seen it in this world yet, but scenes where a Zombie or Skeleton’s severed limbs would move and attack on their own had been almost obligatory to include in horror works on Earth.

There were things like severed lizard tails that regrew, but they didn’t move on their own so that was probably different.

「I’d like to acquire that skill, too.」(Vandalieu)

『『Eh?』』

Though the skill was a specialized skill for Undead, Vandalieu didn’t see this as a reason that he couldn’t acquire it himself. But as he said this, the atmosphere around everyone froze.

『U-umm, I don’t know about Bocchan separating himself into pieces…』(Saria)

『If you do not put yourself back together afterwards, would you not be forced to become an Undead yourself, my lord?』(Bone Man)

「No, I’m not planning to cut my own arms and legs off to practice.」(Vandalieu)

It would indeed be problematic if he didn’t put himself back together afterwards. He thought that it might be possible if he used【Spirit Form Transformation】beforehand, but if not, he might cause irreversible damage to himself.

He had put himself back together after allowing Bugogan to cut his torso, but that was because he had repaired the damage immediately after being cut. There was no telling what could happen if he delayed the repairing process to practice for acquiring the skill.

「For now, let’s try doing it with my hair.」(Vandalieu)

Zadiris and Basdia had called Vandalieu’s long hair「truly manly hair.」It seemed that he had wanted it to be like the lion’s manes of the Ghoul men.

Darcia had thought of it as being cute, so Vandalieu was growing it out, thinking that it was fine as it was. It would likely reach waist-length soon. He did plan to cut it before it reached his ankles, however.

『Well, if it’s your hair, then…』(Saria)

『My lord, if it does not work well with your hair please do not attempt to make changes to your fingers or anything of the sort.』(Bone Man)

It seemed that Vandalieu had made them worry, but he had no intentions of giving up on the acquisition of the【Long-range Control】skill that seemed as if it would have a variety of applications.

Even if he did acquire it, he had no plans to cut of his arms and send them flying to perform rocket-punches or anything like that, however.

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Things got even harsher from the eleventh floor onwards.

The monsters appearing were all Rank 5, and from time to time a Rank 6 monster would appear on its own.

『But it's from the eleventh floor onwards that this Dungeon becomes a good hunting ground. There are a lot of usable materials other than those that come from monsters.』(Borkus)

The fresh leaves of an enormous fern the size or a large tree could be crushed to make medicine, and if dried and boiled, they made a bitter but healthy tea.

Apparently, adventurers in the past had ventured into this Dungeon with the aim of reaching the floors containing plateaus in which amber could be found, and cliffs whose rocks would produce whetstones that made it more difficult for weapons to rust.

And there were many Experience Points to be gained here.

「The dinosaurs here are on the verge of death, so please finish them off.」(Vandalieu)

『As you will!』(Bone Man)

『Nee-san, an octopus-like one went that way!』(Rita)

『Bocchan! What is this flying monster that seems to be related to snails and octopuses?!』(Saria)

「I think it's an ammonite, though the ones I know didn't fly in the air.」(Vandalieu)

『A knight of the ammo race! In that case, I shall be its opponent!』(Bone Man)

「No, it's not really a knight…」(Vandalieu)

Bone Man stepped forward to challenge the flying ammonite with a shell as large as a bear to an honorable one-on-one duel.

Including this ammonite, all of the monsters appearing here were individually of the same or higher Rank as Bone Man. Of course, by defeating them, he could gain large amounts of Experience Points.

「UOOOOOH!【Iron Slash!】」(Vigaro)

Facing a hard-headed herbivorous dinosaur's headbutt attack, Vigaro used his newly-learned Axe Technique martial skill.

With a loud smashing sound, it split the dinosaur's oval-shaped, bony head in two, continuing down to its chest.

Now that Vigaro had become a Ghoul Berserker in the battle in the Devil's Nest forest and acquired a Job in Talosheim, his strength was equivalent to that of a B-class adventurer.

As he had acquired the【Axeman】Job that provided bonuses to the【Axe Technique】and【Deforestation】skills, he would likely continue to grow even stronger.

「Uoh! I've even split the Magic Stone in half!」(Vigaro)

「What are you doing?」(Zadiris)

Vigaro felt the sensation of cutting through the Magic Stone among the flesh and blood and raised his voice. Zadiris sighed as she fired a spell at another dinosaur.

Zadiris had reached level 100 long ago but had lacked the skills to increase her Rank. Due to the training that she had done after coming to Talosheim, she was now a Rank 6 Ghoul High Mage.

Her appearance hadn't changed significantly, but a red jewel had appeared on her forehead like a third eye. It was apparently some kind of organ that assisted her in the use of magic.

Zadiris's light-attribute attack spells were fearsome, cutting the ankylosaur-like dinosaurs like hot knives through butter.

「Hmm, the【Chant Revocation】skill is working well… Boy, can you give me a little of your Mana?」(Zadiris)

「Yes, yes.」(Vandalieu)

Her Mana pool had increased as well, but it was certainly still nowhere near Vandalieu's. It was only natural for her to run out of Mana if she used it carelessly.

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The most valuable materials that could be harvested in Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah, other than the materials obtained from the Dungeon's Boss, were the honey and beeswax of the Cemetery Bees.

They were Rank 5 bee-shaped monsters, around thirty centimeters in length. Each of them weren't individually threatening, but they were fearsome in that the whole swarm attacked together like a single unit.

Their large jaws were capable of shredding plate armor like paper, and their sharp stingers couldn't be blocked by the average Shield-bearer. And the most vicious weapon they had was their deadly venom.

The potent neurotoxin couldn't be resisted by average resistance skills and was capable of causing death by shock in minutes.

It was said that countless corpses of adventurers desiring the exquisite honey and the beeswax that could be turned into the most extravagant candles and soap could be seen surrounding the nests of these monsters.

So their nests were just like cemeteries.

「That's what I heard, but could it be that they're surprisingly friendly to people?」(Vandalieu)

『There's no way… Kid, could it be that those bees are Undead?』(Borkus)

「I think they're healthy and very much alive.」(Vandalieu)

Borkus was astonished by the sight of Vandalieu being swarmed by so many

bees that he appeared to be made of them.

『You wanted sweet things, so when you asked me to find some for you, this is what I thought of. The Cemetery Bees are the rarest monsters in this Dungeon.』(Borkus)

「… Considering that, there are a lot of them, aren't there?」(Vandalieu)

The Cemetery bees buzzed around Vandalieu, licking him with their tongues rather than biting him with their jaws or stabbing him with their stingers.

Vandalieu didn't get the sense that they were surrounding him to increase his body temperature and overheat him to death, so it seemed that they were simply attached to him.

『Amazing, Bocchan, even the bees are madly in love with you.』(Saria)

『Jyuuh, is this really alright, my lord?』(Bone Man)

「… Probably?」(Vandalieu)

If Vandalieu had been someone who hated insects, he would probably have fainted, but he didn't dislike them that much. As a child, he had admired rhinoceros beetles and stag beetles.

As he reminisced about this, a conspicuously large Cemetery Bee, leading countless other bees, flew towards him.

It made a creaking sound with its jaws as it landed on Vandalieu's head.

「Boy, is that not what is known as a queen bee?」(Zadiris)

「It looks like it.」(Vandalieu)

「And what is it doing?」(Zadiris)

「Probably being tamed?」(Vandalieu)

「… Boy, is it possible that you can charm not only Undead, but monsters with things like death and cemetery in their names?」(Zadiris)

『That's pretty amazing; I've heard that insectoid monsters have powerful instincts that makes it impossible for anyone to tame them.』(Borkus)

「Yeah, that's amazing, Vandalieu. This could be the first time anyone in the

world has done this.」(Vigaro)

「I'm guessing you're praising me, but I can't hear you over the sound of their wings.」(Vandalieu)

It seemed that【Death-Attribute Charm】also worked on a certain kind of insects. Or perhaps he had used Undead insects so much that even living insects had started to become attached to him?

Notes

1. The Japanese word for dinosaur is 恐竜/kyouryuu, which literally means "fearsome dragon". "Sub-Dragon" is 亜竜/aryuu, so it's actually fairly similar to the actual word for dinosaur.

Chapter 49: The victory against the mid-boss was unfulfilling, but the Dragon Golem is next

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Insectoid monsters have no ability to think and move solely on instinct.

Upon hearing this, one might think that this would make it easier for Tamers such as those with the Animal Trainer skill to control them. However, the reality is that their instincts are too powerful for humans to manipulate.

There have been those who came up with ways to use special herbs, incense and certain sounds to control them to a certain extent, but the final result was too unstable to be called taming. It was a dangerous method where one mistake would end with the would-be tamers being eaten.

And thus, the fact that insectoid monsters and Undead cannot be tamed became widely-known.

“Is that how it’s supposed to be?” Vandalieu asked after listening to Borkus’s explanation.

Buzzing.

“It is,” replied Borkus.

More buzzing.

“I find that hard to believe.” Vandalieu had been captured by the countless Cemetery Bees and was now being carried around by them.

They’re so friendly, though.

It apparently happened to be the time of year where the Cemetery Bees would change the location of their nest when Vandalieu had found them. And then they had been caught by his Death-Attribute Charm.

There had been a previous incident where the Undead in a Dungeon were

friendly towards Vandalieu, but he hadn't managed to tame them and bring them outside the Dungeon back then. However, these bees had followed Vandalieu's party even down to the next floor.

It was likely because the level of Vandalieu's Death-Attribute Charm skill had increased since back then.

Or perhaps it was simply that Cemetery Bees were more compatible with Vandalieu.

"Ghouls, Vampires and Cemetery Bees. This Death-Attribute Charm works on a lot more things than I thought," said Borkus.

Cemetery Bees were originally one of the types of monsters created by the Demon King to fight against humans and take over this world. It is possible that they were actually created by an evil god who rules over death.

Either way, if Death-Attribute Charm levels up any further, it might be a good idea to start avoiding Dungeons and Devil's Nests where there are lots of Undead.

It would be pandemonium if I was followed by hordes of Undead each time I entered and exited such places. It might be an effective way to gather forces quickly, though.

"So what are you going to do about that guy?" asked Vigaro, pointing at the mid-boss on the twentieth floor of Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah.

"GYAOOOOHN!"

The Rank 6 Venom Wyvern spread the wings that were attached to its front limbs as it let out a roar.

It was a Wyvern that had grown older and increased its Rank, becoming larger and evolving to gain the ability to secrete deadly venom from its claws and the enormous spike at the end of its tail.

Its intelligence was still just at the level of being relatively intelligent for a beast, and it was still incapable of spitting some form of deadly breath. However, the speed and mobility of normal Wyverns couldn't compare to those of the Venom Wyvern.

It was said that it would be impossible even for C-class adventurers to defeat this monster in close-range combat without being able to fly themselves.

“I’ll try fighting it alone, just as we planned at the start.” Vandalieu had been planning to use the mid-boss that appeared before the boss of Borkus’s Sub-Dragon Savannah as a test for himself.

Even if he leveled up and his Attribute Values increased, it would be meaningless if he couldn’t put them to use in real battles. He wouldn’t be able to confidently say that he had become strong enough to not be killed instantly by the Dragon Golem.

For that purpose, he was to fight the Venom Wyvern one-on-one and see if he could defeat it. Of course, without using a Mana Absorption Barrier to remove the Mana from its wings and bring it to the ground.

Of course, even if he was able to defeat the Venom Wyvern, there was no guarantee that he would be able to avoid an instant death at the hands of the half-destroyed Dragon Golem.

That Dragon Golem was overwhelmingly superior to the weak Dragon that was currently flapping its wings threateningly in front of Vandalieu.

Well, this is just to get an idea of how strong I am. I know I’m not going to gain any special abilities or anything from beating this mid-boss. If I win, I’ll try going down to the Dragon Golem again and if it’s still not going to work out, I’ll just have to come back and do more training.

“Make sure you don’t die,” Borkus warned him.

“Do your best, boy. Do not forget that we are all watching over you,” said Zadiris.

Receiving this encouragement, Vandalieu stepped forward to challenge the Venom Wyvern on his own.

***

“I failed this time, too,” said Vandalieu.

“Well, it can’t be helped. I heard that C-class adventurers need to have a lot of talent or put in an incredible amount of hard work.”

“Vandalieu works hard for his age, but it’s one-on-one… you’re a Tamer, so you don’t need to worry about it, right?”

After failing for the fifth time, Vandalieu had returned to Talosheim and was resting while developing more weapons, making katsuobushi and doing other various things.

He was currently attending a meeting between Bilde and the other mothers who were busy raising their children, where ideas regarding childcare were being exchanged. He was also practicing death-attribute magic at the same time.

The food menu was mostly Japanese, consisting of miso soup containing katsuobushi and wild vegetables, acorn powder udon and agar soaked in honey for dessert.

He had first tried making katsuobushi around this time last year, mass-producing failed products that had been made using a process based on his knowledge from Earth of over twenty years ago, but he had finally become able to make it successfully and reliably recently.

I should have learned more about katsuobushi and smoking food. Well, I’d never imagined that I would be making katsuobushi in another world.

He had tried to connect the pieces of his vague knowledge of the process from television and whatnot and executed it as best as he could, producing large quantities of failures as a result. He got the feeling that the fillets were supposed to be smoked near a charcoal fire, but it was likely that he remembered it incorrectly or the method he remembered was some kind of unorthodox one.

As for the udon, it had been made using acorn flour that was smoother than wheat flour with the eggs of the Giga bird that Gorba had captured to bind the flour together. He had originally wanted to make ramen, but he had been unable to make lye water[1].

Sodium carbonate and potassium carbonate are the main ingredients of lye water; in other words, it is a special kind of alkaline solution. Vandalieu was currently trying to think of ways he might be able to make it. Even the spirits of

the researchers in Origin that Vandalieu had listened to hadn't made their own lye water.

He was trying to devise a method, so he would likely be able to make it in a few years' time.

Vandalieu had been surprised to learn that noodles didn't exist in Lambda. There was no udon, soba, ramen, not even pasta. So when he had first made udon, everyone's impressions had been something along the lines of, "This bread is quite long and thin. It's interesting that you've used boiling water to make it."

Well, that was why spreading the Japanese custom of slurping when eating udon and soba seemed like it would be fun.

He had thought that there would be at least udon or pasta, but… Considering that there was no smoked food either, perhaps there were only simple foods and recipes in this world. Perhaps the reason was that the people hadn't had the freedom to invent them, or the fact that delicious monster meat and produce could be obtained from Devil's Nests, eliminating the need to invent such food.

And the agar used for the dessert was something that Vandalieu had made from tengusa, while the honey was, of course, from the Cemetery Bees. Vandalieu had tamed… or rather, been forced to tame the Cemetery Bees, who were now building an enormous nest in Talosheim's royal castle.

Even though it was winter, worker bees were being sent into the Devil's Nests to produce honey. Incidentally, the Cemetery Bees mainly ate meat. There was no problem with giving them the meat of monsters that wasn't suitable for eating, such as that of Goblins.

The honey of the Cemetery Bees had a powerful scent and rich taste. The combination of agar with this honey had become very popular. With things like tengusa and kombu being major food ingredients, the inhabitants of Talosheim were forced to reconsider their opinions on the value of seaweed.

They required effort to make, however, as they couldn't be created through the cast of a spell like miso and fish sauce.

“Come to think of it, Van, isn’t it a bad idea to give honey to the children?” asked Basdia.

“This is honey that has had everything harmful to the body removed, so there’s no problem,” said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu had used Sterilization and Disinfect to remove any components that could cause harm to the body from the honey while preserving its quality. It would be impossible for anyone to collapse from eating this honey… though he couldn’t change the fact that one would gain weight if they ate too much of it.

“So I suppose it’s fine for them to eat.”

“Uu~.” The baby in her arms made a strange noise.

“But it’s still too early for you to eat baby food, Jadal.” Basdia readjusted the way she was holding the baby, who was reaching a hand out towards a plate full of honey-covered fruit, so that the baby was further away from it.

Jadal was Basdia’s daughter who had been born towards the end of summer. Perhaps in return for Basdia having gone through so much trouble getting pregnant, the birth and delivery had been surprisingly straightforward. Now Jadal was growing quickly.

Her gray-brown, puffy cheeks were very adorable.

“Jadal-chan has grown big, hasn’t she?” said one of the other mothers. “Ah, are you trimming her claws properly?”

“No, it seems like she hasn’t grown any yet,” replied Basdia. “When did Varbie start growing them?”

“For Varbie, I suppose it was just before she turned a year old. But sometimes they can grow them as early as three months after they’re born, so make sure you trim them properly.”

“Children can hurt themselves with their own claws, after all,” said another mother. “Did that happen for you, King?”

“Vandalieu started growing his claws after only three months, but he was already very smart by then,” said Darcia.

“Really?! Smart at the age of three months, that’s amazing.”

“He was only a year old when he came to our village, so I think it’s a bit late to be surprised.”

Darcia was smiling as she joined in on the conversation between the Ghoul mothers. She had only been visible to Vandalieu and the Undead up until now, but now she was able to be seen by Basdia, Bilde and the others as well as converse with them thanks to the Visualization spell that Vandalieu had invented, though it did make her appear rather transparent.

He had thought that Darcia would be less stressed if she could communicate with others more smoothly, so he had created the spell with that in mind.

Well, since it also made the whip-marks and burns on her spirit visible, it would be difficult to use in human societies, unlike in Talosheim where everyone knew about her circumstances.

Vandalieu wanted to resurrect her and make this spell useless before entering human societies.

Meanwhile, Vandalieu was playing with the Ghoul children nearby.

“Nao~.” Another of the Ghoul babies made a noise.

As Ghoul boys had the heads of lions as soon as they were born, they looked just like kittens at this age. They didn’t have paws, but they were very cute.

Bone Man didn’t seem to be able to deal with them, however. Vandalieu was really glad that he had instructed him not to harm any cats without thinking.

“Papa.”

“I’m not your papa,” said Vandalieu.

I know you’re really attached to me, but I’m not your papa. Let’s make this very clear.

“Nii-nii.”

“That’s right, Nii-nii is correct.”

If by “Nii-nii” you mean “Onii-chan”, you’re absolutely right. I’m three years older than you.

“Nee…”

“Not Nee-nee, Nii-nii.”

I’m not your onee-chan.

“The King is kind of girlish, I guess,” one of the Ghoul mothers commented. “Like the shape of his head.”

“You’re right; if he had the same skin color as us, you’d never think he’s a boy,” said another.

As Ghoul men had the heads of lions, from Bilde and the other mothers’ perspective, Vandalieu had feminine features and a girl’s head. However, it seemed that this didn’t apply for the Undead Titans like Borkus or Zran who had large, robust bodies with beautiful muscles.

“Muh… Once my voice changes and I hit my second growth period, I’m sure I’ll be like them, too.”

And by the time I’m an adult, I’ll have a cleft chin, arms like logs, a broad chest, abdominal muscles like the caterpillar tracks of a tank and thighs thicker than a woman’s waist. I’ll definitely be as macho as a Hollywood star.

I have the Superhuman Strength skill that increases my muscle strength, so I’m sure of it.

… Probably, I hope.

Pauvina, with the other children riding on her back as if she were a horse, passed happily by Vandalieu as he was feeling strangely insecure about his future self.

She was almost one year old, but she was already big enough to look five or six. She was currently obsessed with letting the other children ride on her back.

She was definitely not showing off her future promise of becoming a muscular individual right in front of Vandalieu.

“Come to think of it, what happened with clearing the mid-boss?” asked Basdia.

“Once I’m finished with this break, I’ll be going to challenge it for the sixth

time," replied Vandalieu.

Vandalieu had repeatedly lost to the mid-boss on the twentieth floor of Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah.

Of course, it wasn't as if his life was put at risk during these fights. In a fight to the death, he would win. But simply based on the rules he had set, he was losing.

He fought the mid-boss one-on-one. This included the restriction of the use of Golems created through Golem Transmutation.

On top of that, he wasn't allowed to use Mana Absorption Barrier to rob the mid-boss of its mobility.

The time limit he had set was determined by an hourglass, which took roughly five minutes for all of its sand to fall.

Vandalieu had fought the Venom Wyvern under these rules five times.

He couldn't land his attacks on the Venom Wyvern, and even if he did, they were ineffective, and five minutes would quickly pass. He had repeated this process several times.

Using Disinfect removed the venom inside the Venom Wyvern's body, which meant that he didn't need to worry about being poisoned until it produced the venom again. His Impact-Negating Barrier was more than enough to stop the Venom Wyvern's direct attacks.

But Vandalieu's attacks hadn't been able to deal a decisive blow, either.

At first, he had tried using the no-attribute spell, Flight, to match his opponent, but he had been completely unable to keep up. If it were just a matter of speed, he would have been able to move faster by simply spending a great amount of Mana, but the Venom Wyvern was far superior when it came to performing tight turns.

To begin with, the no-attribute spell, Flight, was simply a spell that used Telekinesis to move the caster's body. It wasn't a match for the skillful, complicated flying techniques of the Venom Wyvern that employed the use of wind-attribute Mana in its wings.

And then he had tried defeating it from a distance. He had tried aiming at it with Mana Bullets, but this had failed due to their problematic range and projectile speed.

At any rate, Mana that wasn't affected by any attribute dispersed easily. The Mana Bullet spell was a spell that gathered such Mana to prevent its dispersion as much as possible.

However, there were limits to how much he could prevent it from dispersing. Their range was only several dozen meters normally, and even when Vandalieu poured ten thousand Mana into a single projectile, it didn't even last a hundred meters. Even using Multi-Cast to release multiple Mana Bullets at the same time had the same result.

Their speed was inferior even to arrows, never mind bullets fired from the guns on Earth, and their trajectory was linear, making them very easy to avoid. Dodging them was child's play for the Venom Wyvern that could fly in any direction at high speeds.

Vandalieu had tried methods like twisting the shape of the Mana Bullets to alter their trajectory, but still none of them had managed to hit. If they did, they had enough destructive power to burst the Venom Wyvern's flesh and organs, however.

In any case, as Vandalieu was unable to engage it in close-quarters combat and Mana Bullets were ineffective. This meant that he was left with the indirect methods of poisoning it, infecting it with disease, using Soul Break to somehow take its Mana away and distracting it with a Lemure to create an opening.

But even when he had managed to get poison created using his Deadly Poison spell into the Venom Wyvern's eyes and mouth, it wasn't effective as it seemed to possess the Poison Resistance skill.

Things had gone well when he had done the same thing with disease, but five minutes passed before the disease began to work.

Soul Break was a skill that had no effect if Vandalieu couldn't land any physical or magical attacks on the enemy, and since the Mana drained by the skill was equal to the amount of damage dealt to the body, he couldn't drain any of the Venom Wyvern's Mana.

Though Lemures had worked on lesser Wyverns, the Venom Wyvern hadn't shown any large openings despite being surprised by the bloodthirst that the Lemure suddenly produced.

And then Vandalieu had remembered his battle against Sercrent and amplified his Impact-Negating Barrier at the moment of the Venom Wyvern's attack, managing to trap its claws and tail in the barrier and creating an opening for the first time.

But before he had managed to move into an attack, it twisted its long neck to bite off the tip of its tail and its trapped paw to escape.

It was even more resolute than Sercrent had been. This wasn't something that even a wild animal would be able to do immediately. It was only its fighting instincts as the mid-boss of a Dungeon and the knowledge that it would die instantly if one of Vandalieu's Mana Bullets struck its torso that allowed it to do this.

And after that, the five-minute time limit passed again.

After their battles, Borkus and the others had quickly dealt with the Venom Wyvern, continued on to defeat the Dungeon boss on the thirtieth floor and taken the loot in the treasure chamber.

This had given him experience and caused him to level up.

"I can definitely win next time," said Vandalieu.

"Vandalieu, you don't have to be in such a hurry, you know?" said Darcia. "If I'm resurrected five years, ten years or even a hundred years from now, I don't mind."

"It's alright," said Vandalieu. "I say this every time, but it'll be alright this time."

Darcia seemed uncertain, but Vandalieu knew he had a chance to win this time.

He had gotten an idea for altering the Mana Bullet spell to create a new death-attribute spell.

Vandalieu had thought that death-attribute magic had limited ways to deal

damage directly to enemies, but if there were limited ways, he just had to invent some.

He had postponed the invention of such a spell because he didn't gain any experience from defeating enemies himself, but he could devote his efforts to it if necessary.

As a result, he had successfully finished developing a new spell yesterday. This spell was a projectile affected by the death-attribute with long range, high speed and a difficult-to-read trajectory.

"I'll definitely win next time. There won't be a seventh time," Vandalieu declared confidently.

***

Unlike the regular monsters, mid-bosses and bosses that appear in Dungeons are produced by the Dungeon's core.

That is why no matter how many times a boss is defeated, once a certain amount of time passes, a monster of equal strength appears in its place.

"Shaaah…"

"Shuaaa."

Seven enormous snake heads large enough to swallow a cow whole were coiling around each other. However, there was only one tail.

It is one of the Dragon races, a serpent with multiple heads. When this creature hatches from its egg it has two heads and is the size of a Japanese rat snake, but the number of heads increases as it develops, as does the size of its body, the hardness of its scales, its regenerative abilities and the potency of its venom.

And once it matures to adulthood, it becomes an enormous seven-headed serpent known as a Hydra.

It is Rank 6, superior to Wyverns among the Dragon races.

Its intelligence is not much different from a normal snake and it is far less mobile than Wyverns.

However, its powerful body can mow down a human with ease, and it is difficult to wound it through its scales with normal methods. And the substance secreted from its fangs is a potent venom that cannot be removed without a special antidote.

And what makes this creature difficult to kill is its resilience that keeps it alive unless all of its heads are cut off and its heart is destroyed. If only one of these two steps are taken, its regenerative ability will allow it to make a full recovery in a matter of days.

Incidentally, Hydras can develop even further to grow an eighth head, becoming known as an Orochi. Its name was no doubt given to it by one of the heroes from another world.

“I want a rematch,” said Vandalieu, seeing the Hydra that had appeared for his sixth attempt at fighting a mid-boss of Borkus’s Sub-Dragon Savannah.

“No, that’s probably impossible,” said Borkus, denying him immediately.

“But I just invented a new spell to deal with the Venom Wyvern’s mobility…”

The Hydra was less intelligent and less mobile than a normal Wyvern. Of course, it couldn’t even compare to the higher-Rank version, the Venom Wyvern.

“There’s nothing to be done about it,” Borkus told him. “It was actually really unusual that the same monster spawned five times in a row as the mid-boss in the first place.”

Normally, the race of mid-bosses and bosses that appear in Dungeons are not fixed. They tend to be of around the same general strength, but they are generated randomly by the Dungeon.

This Dungeon would generate Rank 6 Dragon or dinosaur-type mid-bosses.

The Venom Wyvern was probably one of the stronger monsters that could have been generated. The reason it had appeared five times in a row was due to Vandalieu’s bad luck.

“It’s not like that Hydra’s going to back down now,” said Borkus. “Try it out. That new spell of yours.”

“Sure… Death Bullet.”

As Vandalieu lifted a hand towards the Hydra that was raising its curved necks, a black object resembling shimmering hot air appeared at his palm.

He fired the Death Bullet at the Hydra that had sensed some extraordinary presence and was trying to escape.

The Death Bullet consisted of death-attribute Mana capable of draining an enemy’s life-force, condensed using the same principle as the Mana Bullet.

He couldn’t fire them consecutively because he still wasn’t used to casting the spell, but their range and speed were on another level. They also had a homing ability that allowed them to chase targets to a certain extent.

“SHIGYAAAAAH!”

However, the Death Bullet’s projectile speed and homing ability proved unnecessary as it hit the Hydra with ease. A scream rose from the Hydra as its Vitality was drained, and its heads began lowering towards the ground one by one.

Vandalieu fired multiple more Death Bullets, and once all of its heads were lying on the ground, he fired one last Death Bullet at its heart to deal the final blow.

What remained was the corpse of a Hydra that was dead despite being completely unwounded.

“Oh, that’s pretty amazing,” said Borkus.

“Considering that the amount of Mana I spent was equivalent to the entire Mana pools of a hundred first-rate Mages, not really,” said Vandalieu.

“That might be true, but… that’s less than one percent for you, isn’t it? Anyway, you should be happy. You beat a mid-boss in less than a minute, never mind the five-minute time limit.”

“I did, but…”

“You don’t need to be so focused on the Venom Wyvern. The main thing is, you just need to become strong enough that the Dragon Golem won’t kill you straight away,” Borkus reminded him. “Isn’t that right?”

You're right, but I still can't feel satisfied.

Still, as Borkus says, clearing this Dungeon repeatedly until the Venom Wyvern appears is wandering too far away from my goal. So I guess this will do.

The Dragon Golem is next.

【The levels of the Death-Attribute Charm, Strengthen Followers, No-Attribute Magic, Mana Control, Cooking and Unarmed Fighting Technique skills have increased!】

【You have acquired the Long-distance Control skill!】

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 4 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: Death-Attribute Mage
- **Level**: 100
- **Job history**: None
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 90
  - Mana: 204,506,933
  - Strength: 67
  - Agility: 46
  - Stamina: 71
  - Intelligence: 233
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 3
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 5
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 5
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Chant Revocation: Level 3

    - Strengthen Followers: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 3
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 4
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 4
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Control: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 2
    - Carpentry: Level 4
    - Engineering: Level 3
    - Cooking: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Alchemy: Level 3
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Soul Break: Level 1
    - Multi-Cast: Level 1
    - Long-distance Control: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

Notes

1. Apparently this is something that is necessary for acidity regulation in the ramen-making process.

Chapter 50: The battle against the Dragon Golem that was seventy percent destroyed by the hero

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Since Vandalieu's【Death-Attribute Mage】Job had reached level 100 after his sixth clearing of Borkus's Sub-Dragon Savannah, he headed for the Job-changing room in the Adventurers' Guild for the first time in over a year.

"Give me some fish sauce for this. Miso as well."

"Katsuobushi and kombu for me."

"Is there any honey? I want some wasabi, too."

"Give me some acorn powder!"

"The Giga eggs are sold out, huh. Then at least give me some eel. Ammonite is fine as well!"

The Adventurers' Guild had been turned into a place where the food that Vandalieu had invented, including the flavorings and kombu, was being distributed and traded.

People would come here to receive a rationed amount, and if they wanted any more than that, they would have to barter using materials that they had gathered from the Devil's Nests.

Requests for goods had been posted on a board so that the goods in short supply would be replenished, so it appeared as if the Adventurers' Guild had begun operating again.

"If real Adventurers' Guilds were full of Ghouls and Undead like this, going in and out would be easy," Vandalieu said to himself.

Leaving that wishful thinking aside, the Ghouls and Undead Titans would be able to make acorn powder themselves without having to trade for it, though

the flavorings would be impossible for them.

When asked why they came to trade for it instead, these were the responses they gave.

“Hey, hey, we get miso, fish sauce, kombu and agar distributed for free and if we want more, all we have to do is pick up monster materials, Magic Stones and ingredients like acorns and bring them in to trade. Why should we have to spend time making it on our own?”

“You have to break acorns, soak them in water for three days and then dry them before turning them into powder, right? Killing monsters is easier.”

It seemed that the Undead Titans and Ghouls’ sense of manual labor was very different to that of the humans on Earth.

“Well, it’s much easier to go into a Devil’s Nest and hunt an Orc than raise a pig from birth for its meat, so I understand how they feel.” Vandalieu seemed to have been raised into quite the hunter himself.

Incidentally, the amount of products Vandalieu was producing had increased, so he had built a special manufacturing facility for things like acorn powder and walnut sauce.

He had used his Alchemy skill to make Magic Items imbued with spells like Withering for drying and Decomposition to decompose the flesh of the walnuts. Golems were set up in lanes to perform tasks like smashing, cooking and powdering the ingredients, so there was a lane of Golems for making acorn powder and one for making walnut sauce.

Seeing the Golems shaped like mortars and other equipment at work reminded Vandalieu of factories on earth.

The only fuel required was Mana, so it was very economically and environmentally friendly. And in an emergency, the Golems would change shape to participate in battle.

It was a wonderful, environmentally-friendly factory that didn’t require any maintenance.

“I wonder if I can industrialize the nori and agar as well. If I made more labor

necessary, it would create more jobs in the future… But the Ghouls and Titans are hunters, so maybe I don't need to worry? But in a few decades from now, there will be Black Goblins and Anubises who have aged and can't fight anymore." Vandalieu contemplated these truly complicated factors.

Well, let's leave thinking about the societal system for later on.

"So, the Job-change. I suppose I'll be a Golem Transmuter now."

Vandalieu could only acquire undiscovered Jobs due to the "Cannot learn existing Jobs" curse. During his previous Job-change, "Golem Transmuter" was the available Job that had appeared alongside "Death-Attribute Mage".

So he would definitely be able to undergo a Job-change now.

He calmed himself down and coolly reached out to touch the crystal ball in the Job-changing room.

『Jobs that can be selected:【Golem Transmuter】【Undead Tamer】【Soul Breaker】【Venom Fist User】【Insect User】』

"There's a lot more…" Vandalieu whispered in astonishment at the five Jobs displayed in his head. It seemed that among the three curses Rodcorte had placed on him, this one was the most pointless.

Well, it will probably cause trouble for me in the future.

The reason "Undead Tamer" hadn't appeared previously is probably because I wasn't aware that Undead can't normally be tamed until I heard about it from Eleanora.

It's strange to think that whether the Job is displayed or not is dependent on whether I'm aware of this fact, but it's probably something like that.

It seems self-explanatory that this Job will provide bonuses to Undead-related skills, but many Tamer-type Jobs apparently don't provide a lot of bonuses to Attribute Values.

"Soul Breaker" is clearly a Job that has appeared because I acquired the Soul Breaker skill after destroying Sercrent's soul.

Soul Break is a skill that applies its effects to all of my attacks. Wouldn't this Job probably give me bonuses to a wide range of both magic-related and

martial-type skills?

As for its Attribute Value bonuses, I have no idea. It seems like it would increase Strength and Intelligence, though.

And "Venom Fist User"… What is it? Could it be a Job that appears for someone who uses death-attribute magic after reaching a certain level with the Unarmed Fighting Technique skill and killing a certain number of enemies with poison?

It seems like it would probably give bonuses to Unarmed Fighting Technique, Strength, Agility and Stamina, but… it seems like the kind of Job that would make people refuse to shake hands with me.

It would break my heart if people refused a handshake or wiped their hands with a handkerchief after shaking my hand.

There's no doubt that "Insect User" has appeared because I tamed the Cemetery Bees. Its bonuses to skills and Attribute Values are probably the same as Undead Tamer except applying to insects instead of Undead.

It would be a good Job if it increases the amount of honey the bees produce. It might even be interesting to tame rhinoceros beetles and stag beetles so I can call myself the King of Insects that I couldn't become on Earth.

"But I'm going with Golem Transmuter this time."

Because the opponent I'm fighting next is a Dragon Golem.

There were no stories telling what kind of inorganic mineral the Golem was made of and【Appraisal】couldn't be used through the ice. There was a chance that the Golem Transmutation skill would be useful against the Golem that was made of an unknown substance.

Controlling it directly would be impossible, but the place where Vandalieu would be fighting it was a large yet finite space. There was a floor, walls and, most importantly, a ceiling. In addition, the Golem's wings had been broken. There was no chance that it would be able to fly freely.

If I turn the floor and walls into Golems and manipulate them, I should be able to rob the Dragon Golem of its freedom or at least slow its movements down.

Golem Transmutation was useful when I killed Sercrent and his subordinates. I've used it to develop Golems that manufacture acorn powder and walnut sauce as well as repair Talosheim's walls and royal castle. This skill should become important in helping me survive longer and making my life richer.

【You have selected Golem Transmuter.】

【The levels of the Strengthen Followers and Golem Transmutation skills have increased!】

- **Name**: Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 4 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】
- **Job**: Golem Transmuter
- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: Death-Attribute Mage
- **Attributes**:
  - Vitality: 90
  - Mana: 204,506,933
  - Strength: 67
  - Agility: 46
  - Stamina: 71
  - Intelligence: 238
- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
  - Rapid Healing: Level 3
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 5
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 5
  - Magic Resistance: Level 1
  - Dark Vision
  - Mental Corruption: Level 10
  - Death-Attribute Charm: Level 5
  - Chant Revocation: Level 3
  - Strengthen Followers: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 3
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodsucking: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 4
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 4
    - Mana Control: Level 4
    - Spirit Form: Level 2
    - Carpentry: Level 4
    - Engineering: Level 3
    - Cooking: Level 2
    - Alchemy: Level 3
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 2
    - Soul Break: Level 1
    - Multi-Cast: Level 1
    - Long-range Control: Level 1
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

When Vandalieu checked his Status, he found that his Attribute Values hadn't increased as much as they had when he acquired the Death-Attribute Mage Job.

Well, that's probably just how the difference between a first Job change and a second one is.

"Now then, time to go below the royal castle…" Vandalieu paused and reconsidered. "Before that, I need to test out my Golem Transmutation skill now that it's leveled up, and I should ask everyone how they're feeling now that my Strengthen Followers skill has leveled up as well."

Vandalieu inspected the Golem Transmutation skill to find that it cost him less Mana than before to create Golems. If he were to cross the Boundary Mountain Range again, he would be able to create the paths to do so at twice the speed

that he had managed the first time.

In the future, I might be moving the mountains out of the way rather than creating paths or digging a tunnel… Though I won't do it that carelessly, because it would be troublesome if I happened to come across some magma. I don't know anything about this world's geographical structure, anyway.

Also, his Golems had become stronger. It seemed that his Golems had started being affected by【Strengthen Followers.】They wouldn't be able to put up a fight against the Dragon Golem, but they would probably be useful in the future.

"You really mustn't push yourself too hard," said Darcia. "If you think it's too dangerous, you have to run away immediately, okay?"

"That's what I intend to do, Mom," Vandalieu assured her.

"Bocchan, may fortune be with you," said Sam. "But it is also courage to escape when the situation calls for it."

"If the situation calls for it, I'll open a hole in the wall and come running back."

Vandalieu and his carefully-selected companions headed below the royal castle as Darcia and the others saw them off.

The enemy they would be facing was the Dragon Golem. The hero who had been said to be destined to become S-class, a hero so powerful that he had killed Borkus with a single attack, had not been able to defeat this enemy.

Its head, right arm, wings and tail had been destroyed, cracks were running all across its body and the magic spear was even still embedded in its chest. But even so, this was a powerful enemy for Vandalieu and his party to face.

That was why Vandalieu had only chosen those who were Rank 6 or above, those who could be revived by being placed in a new body if their current one was damaged and those that Vandalieu was using to soak up damage.

The Rank 9 Borkus and the Rank 8 Eleanora were obvious choices. Next were Zadiris and Vigaro, who were Rank 6.

And then there was Bone Man, Bone Wolf, Bone Monkey, Bone Bear, Bone

Bird, Saria and Rita. They were still only Rank 5, but their bodies were made of bones and suits of armor. Even if they were smashed into tiny pieces, they could be revived once Vandalieu prepared new bones and suits of armor.

And as for meat shields, or rather, stone shields, Vandalieu was bringing ten Stone Golems with him. This was a precaution that he was taking just in case the available materials in the Dragon Golem's chamber were brittle or they had been magically altered in a way that would make them difficult to turn into Golems. They would sacrifice their bodies to slow the Golem's movements and act as shields.

They were made of the spirits of the Orcs and Goblins from Bugogan's village, so Vandalieu intended to exploit them fully.

"Depending on what the Dragon Golem is made of, I'm afraid that it might be able to attack spirits, so please be very careful," Vandalieu warned his party.

The wall of cursed ice is still in place, so I still don't know what the Dragon Golem is made of. I'm sure it's not going to be made of simple iron.

"If it's made of Mythril which has strong anti-magic properties, it will be hard for me and Zadiris to make an impact with our spells," said Vandalieu. "Mythril can damage spirits as well. If that's the case, we'll be completely reliant on the physical attacks of Borkus and the others."

"It would be a relief if it were made of Adamantite, since we wouldn't have to worry about it damaging spirits. But if it's made of Adamantite, my sword won't be able to cut it. The situation would be reversed; we'd be reliant on your magical attacks, kid," said Borkus, tapping his fingers against the handle of Bugogan's magic sword that he had received from Vandalieu.

His sword was simply a magic sword with enhanced sharpness and strength, but its attacks were quite powerful. With this sword in hand, Borkus would be able to slice through the scales of an Earth Dragon with ease.

"Is it really that hard?" asked Vigaro, swallowing nervously upon hearing that even Borkus's sword wouldn't be able to cut through it.

"You bet," said Borkus. "It's a magical metal so hard that even the scales and bones of inferior Dragons are nothing like it. If you tried comparing iron to it,

the iron might as well be slime.”

“But if that is the case, Vandalieu-sama’s spells will be effective,” said Eleanora. “There is also the option of pulling that spear out and using it.”

“Also, we have no choice but to aim for the cracks in its body,” Zadiris added. “Well, if its movements are slow, the boy simply needs to bury it in the floor.”

“There are other options. Like using the broken pieces of the Dragon Golem that are lying around. Since they’ll be made of the same material as the Golem itself, they should at least serve as shields,” said Vandalieu as he and his companions walked through the underground passage.

There were still broken fragments of ice littered across the ground. Despite this being the one place in Talosheim that not even a single Undead entered for two hundred years, it was the most ominous place in the city.

However, Vandalieu had melted all of the walls of ice that served as barriers to enter. There was now nothing in their way.

Then they arrived in front of the Dragon Golem’s chamber. They could see a dragon made of a black metal through the ice.

“The danger of death is less than it was before, but… it’s still there,” said Vandalieu.

“What will we do? Shall we postpone this venture?” asked Saria.

“No, we’ll press on,” replied Vandalieu. “It’s a Golem that defeated someone who almost possessed the power of an S-class adventurer; there’s no way that we’ll defeat it without facing any danger.”

In order to defeat the Golem that was carefully made by the goddess herself without facing any danger, Vandalieu would either need to become more powerful than an S-class adventurer or make Borkus and the others all as strong as S-class adventurers.

Vandalieu had gone from being a powerless baby with nothing but a large Mana pool to becoming this powerful in a little over four and a half years, but there was no telling how many years, how many decades it would take him to achieve that power.

Darcia had told him not to push himself, but Vandalieu had no intention of waiting that long.

I want to celebrate my birthday this year with a mother who has a physical body, Vandalieu thought as he cast enchantments on his party members. Zadiris and Eleanora cast their own spells as well.

Everyone had their physical and magical damage resistance increased by Vandalieu's Energy Absorption.

Their weapons had their attack power increased by Zadiris's Blade of Wind Enchantment and their Agility enhanced by her Blessing of Wind. Just in case, she cast Arrow Evasion which made it easier to dodge projectile attacks and offensive spells. It was a little regrettable that many of the party members were Undead, so she couldn't use light-attribute enchantments on them.

Eleanora's time-attribute spell, Acceleration, allowed them to move even faster.

Finally, Vandalieu transferred Mana to Zadiris and Eleanora until they were full and then their preparations were complete.

Other than Borkus's magic sword and Vigaro's axe, everyone's equipment had been enhanced by monster materials and items obtained in the treasure chambers of cleared Dungeons.

Many pieces of their equipment were enhanced by Earth Dragon or Rock Dragon materials, or made of Black Steel, a lower-value magical metal.

Bone Wolf let out a growl. He and the other Undead were the ones making the most extravagant use out of those materials, all of the major bones in their bodies had been replaced by those of Dragons whose shape had been changed to match their skeletons.

Even an Ogre would be incapable of breaking their bones now.

"Well then, let's go," said Vandalieu.

He raised a hand and began sucking the Mana out of the wall of ice. It was thicker than the other walls of ice he had removed, but the difference wasn't great and the ice began melting steadily.

The Dragon Golem sensed this and made a loud, slow movement. Sideways.

One second, two seconds, three seconds passed. It wasn't retreating or approaching; it simply continued sideways and stopped in front of its own severed head that was on the ground.

Could it be, it's going to pick it up and put it back on – this is bad!

"Everyone, split left and right and retreat!" Vandalieu ordered.

Vandalieu obeyed the warnings his instincts gave him and stopped his spell. Everyone followed his command and split into two groups.

The shining black head of a Dragon came flying through.

The Dragon Golem had kicked its own head to launch it as a projectile weapon!

"It's quite the smart Golem!" Borkus spat as he avoided the Dragon's head that had smashed the ice like brittle glass and destroyed all of the Stone Golems that were supposed to be their meat shields.

"And that's the metal of the gods, Orichalcum! The fact that it destroyed the cursed ice that only Vandalieu-sama should have been able to remove is proof of that!" Eleanora said in a slightly trembling voice, making it clear what the Dragon Golem was made of.

Orichalcum, Mythril, Adamantite, Damascus Steel, Black Steel – all of these magical metals are high-quality materials, the most precious metals in this world. It is said that only the gods can handle them.

One of these precious metals made up the entirety of the Dragon Golem's thirty-meter-long body.

"Using it for weapons and equipment is one thing, but what an amazing goddess, using it for a Golem larger than a dinosaur!" said Eleanora.

"Uwah, if we brought all of that back, we'd be able to buy a country," said Rita.

"Well then, please bring it back," said Vandalieu.

"Eh?"

“Rita, Saria, Bone Man, everyone, please gather the pieces of that Golem,” Vandalieu ordered as he dashed into the chamber behind Borkus and Eleanora.

Letting out a noise that was difficult to tell whether it was a roar or the sound of creaking metal, the Dragon Golem thrashed around with dull but powerful movements.

“UOOOOH! Dragon Slayer!” Borkus struck the Dragon Golem with his prided, most powerful martial skill, but though it made a loud impact against its cracked arm, he didn’t manage to cause any new damage.

“Shit! GAAH!” Borkus swore as he was repelled by the Dragon Golem’s arm and sent flying like a ball in a sports match. The enchantments that had been placed on him broke like fragile glass.

“There’s no way you can get through Orichalcum that’s even harder than Adamantite, is there?” Eleanora said in exasperation as she flew through the air, trying to find an opening. Her objective was, of course, the spear embedded in the Golem’s chest.

I’ll pull it out and use it as a weapon. Even if I can’t do that, if I thrust it deeper into the Golem, it should deal some damage.

Vital spots exist for Golems other than those created by Vandalieu. Their heads or bodies contain cores that are the source of the Mana that powers them; a Golem hand-made by a goddess should be no exception.

Since the Golem already has no head, the core should be somewhere in that body. If it’s broken, the Golem will stop moving. If I’m going to aim for anything, it has to be that.

The current situation… Borkus was being stopped by Vandalieu’s Impact-Negating Barrier before he hit the wall. Vigaro had decided to give up on attacking after seeing Borkus’s sword have no effect, and it seemed that he was now devoting himself to acting as bait.

Zadiris was attacking with wind and light-attribute spells, but they were having no effect against the mass of Orichalcum that had even greater anti-magic properties than Mythril.

The ones who were playing the biggest role were probably Bone Wolf and the

other Undead.

“UOOOOOHN!” roared Bone Bear.

They had been unable to increase their Ranks to surpass being Rotten Beasts, but Vandalieu had flooded them with his Mana to cause them to become Rank 5 Hell Beasts and, in Bone Bird’s case, a Hell Bird. All of the bones of their bodies were now the crimson color of fresh blood.

Their crimson bodies were picking up broken pieces of the Dragon Golem in their jaws, scooping them up in their arms and dragging them along with their claws to gather them up. This was to make sure that the Dragon Golem wouldn’t use them as projectile weapons like it had done with its own head, and also so that they could be used.

“Bocchan, do you think that you could make a Golem with this?!” Rita asked incredulously.

“… It’s repelling my Mana; turning it into a Golem is impossible,” replied Vandalieu. It seemed that it would be difficult to use directly.

“Vandalieu-sama, stop the Golem’s movements!” shouted Eleanora, as if to say that this would be her time to shine. Vandalieu answered her request by using Golem Transmutation to turn the floor into a Golem.

“UOOOOOHN!”

Countless arms extended from the floor and grasped the Dragon Golem’s legs.

However, the Dragon Golem moved with a creak and they broke like twigs. Its movements were slow, but its power was extraordinary.

However, it began focusing on trying to destroy the floor-turned-Golem at its feet; its decision-making ability seemed to be flawed from having lost its head, or perhaps it found the floor Golem extremely irritating.

“This is it!” Eleanora used Super-Acceleration to accelerate the flow of time around herself and flew towards the Dragon Golem’s chest.

She forcefully took hold of the spear’s handle, and pushed –

“Gah?!” Eleanora let out a gasp as an icicle made of cursed ice appeared from

the magic spear she had grasped and pierced her chest.

She had been aware that Artifacts often rejected anyone other than their owners when touched.

“Impossible, even after two hundred years…”

However, she hadn’t expected that this weapon would still respond over two hundred years after its owner had perished.

The icicle had pierced Eleanora’s heart magnificently. There was no saving her. But Vandalieu would likely raise her as an Undead after her death and make use of her. *In that case, I should push this magic spear even a little deeper into the Golem while I’m still alive, for the sake of my master who is the most fearsome being in this world.*

For this purpose, Eleanora produced Mana Bullets behind her and released them at both herself and the magic spear. *Even if the magic spear itself is made of Orichalcum, even if it’s covered in cursed ice that won’t let anyone near it, I should be able to push it at least a little deeper with this.*

But the Mana Bullets she had created with the last of her strength vanished.

“NUORYAAAAA! DRAGON SLAYEEEER!”

“Iron Tear! Circular Axe Whip!”

Borkus and Vigaro, wielding misshapen lumps of metal that couldn’t be called swords or axes, struck the Dragon Golem with them.

The Dragon Golem’s body creaked and the cracks in its surface began to spread.

Even as Eleanora felt surprise at this sight, her consciousness became distant… And then the icicle was broken and tossed away. The next thing she knew, Vandalieu was looking down at her.

“I’m sorry. I could sense the danger, but I couldn’t stop you in time,” he said. “But please don’t try to accomplish things at the cost of your own life.”

“Kah… I… apolo…” Eleanora tried to apologize while coughing blood.

“It would be best if you don’t talk,” Vandalieu told her.

And then his claws grew longer right before her eyes.

“Because my body is small, this is all that I can give you.”

Vandalieu’s blood dripped onto Eleanora’s face. She reacted instinctively to the smell of its rich Mana, opened her mouth and accepted it.

Her heart began to regenerate rapidly. It should have been impossible for her heart to recover after being destroyed to this extent.

“I kept your death away,” Vandalieu explained. “As long as I have my Mana, no wound is fatal. I’m sure it hurts, but please do your best to heal.”

“It’s… already healed,” said Eleanora. “Thanks to your blood,” she added.

To think that I made a complete recovery after having my heart pierced through. Eleanora could feel power flowing throughout her entire body just from licking the remainders of Vandalieu’s blood on her lips.

If Vandalieu hadn’t ordered Eleanora to use her normal tone of speech, she would have been praising him as her lord and expressing her gratitude and loyalty by kissing his feet.

However, this was a time where she should express her loyalty through her work.

“Give me a sword as well,” she said.

“Umm, please wait a moment.” Vandalieu was unable to create a sword for her right away.

He was currently casting three spells simultaneously.

He had attach handles to broken Orichalcum fragments that Bone Bear and the other Undead had gathered and barely managed to alter the shapes of the lumps of metal so that at least the Swordsmanship and Axe Technique skills could be used with them, forming crudely-made Orichalcum weapons. They were trying to return to their original shape like a memory alloy, so the two instances of Golem Transmutation that he was using for the two weapons to prevent that were two spells.

Transforming the floor into a Golem to impair the Dragon Golem’s movements was another spell.

Making Eleanora's weapon would be the fourth.

Maintaining the shape of the Orichalcum fragments was using up a particularly large amount of his Mana.

"Boy, you are so hot that my hands are almost burning," Zadiris warned him. She was helping alleviate his symptoms by casting healing magic on his head.

"Please bear with it for a little while longer," said Vandalieu.

"No, won't you worry about yourself a little more?" Zadiris sighed.

"It's alright; Surpass Limits is still taking effect."

"Boy… Surely you are not under the impression that you can surpass your limits endlessly?" Zadiris showed her anger while wearing a smile.

"I don't need a sword anymore! I'll sit here quietly and watch!" said Eleanora, taking back her request.

Vandalieu decided to obey their wishes and stay put as well.

And it seems that things will be fine even if we just watch from now on.

With each swing of Borkus and Vigaro's crude weapons, the cracks in the Dragon Golem's body grew larger and deeper.

The Stone Golems that Vandalieu had rebuilt were acting as decoys for the Dragon Golem's counterattacks, and each time more pieces of Orichalcum broke off its body, Bone Monkey and the other Undead gathered and discarded them so that the Golem couldn't use them as projectile weapons.

The Dragon Golem that had limited options for attacking and dulled movements after being more than half-destroyed by Mikhail wasn't even an enemy now that a method of inflicting damage to it had been found.

The only thing to be careful of now was the self-protecting mechanism of the magic spear that had pierced Eleanora's heart. Borkus and Vigaro simply needed to make sure they didn't accidentally touch it, so it wasn't a substantial threat.

With a loud sound, the Dragon Golem's right leg collapsed. Half of its one remaining arm dropped onto the ground.

And then its torso followed, crumbling as the Dragon Golem fell.

They had won.

Everyone believed it. The only casualties were the Stone Golems. Borkus, Vigaro and the Undead let out a shout of victory.

Vandalieu didn't doubt their victory either. He looked towards the door on the wall far behind where the Dragon Golem had stood. The resurrection device that he had been unable to search for up until now was likely behind that door.

With this, he would be able to resurrect Darcia.

But then that confident belief turned into fear.

"Run –"

Countless icicles exploded outwards from the Dragon Golem, drowning out Vandalieu's shouted warning.

Chapter 51: You're an enemy

Icicles extended with explosive force from the cracks in the Dragon Golem's torso.

Vandalieu and Eleanora were far away, but Vigaro and the others had been caught up in it with no chance to react.

Bone Wolf and Bone Bird let out screams as the icicles pierced them while bones and pieces of armor flew and rolled across the ground all the way over to Vandalieu.

Vandalieu's eyes met with those of a skull that had landed nearby.

"Bone Man… What about your other parts?" he asked.

"Jyuuh! My lower half is on the other side and my left arm has been swallowed by the ice. The rest is all around this area!" replied Bone Man, his lower jaw and teeth clattering energetically. It seemed that he had split himself into pieces to escape the icicles.

"A-as expected of an Undead," said Zadiris.

"I've started to lose confidence in my own immortality," said Eleanora.

The two of them smiled bitterly with relief and looked up to see Rita and Saria, who were combining their armor pieces to make up a single suit of armor now that they lacked the parts to make two. Vigaro was unharmed and Borkus was getting onto his feet, despite having now properly lost half of his head rather than just his face. It seemed that there was surprisingly little damage done.

"Those icicles… That cursed ice moved with the Dragon Golem's fragments that cover it like armor," said Vandalieu. "The surface of the ice has Orichalcum fragments in it, so it nullified my Energy Absorption and Zadiris's Arrow Evasion."

On top of that, the cursed ice was a special substance that only Orichalcum

and Vandalieu's death-attribute magic could break down.

Bone Man and some of the other Undead had managed to avoid the icicles by splitting themselves into pieces, but Bone Monkey and Bone Bear had instinctively tried to stop the ice to no avail.

Bone Bird, who was missing a leg, gave a sorrowful cry.

Vandalieu saw the crimson color of Bone Monkey's femur fade away, returning to its original white color.

"My lord…!" Bone Man began.

"I know." Vandalieu used Spirit Form Transformation on his right hand, connected it to the spirits of Bone Monkey, Bone Bear and Bone Wolf and poured his Mana into them to preserve their damaged spirits. Their spirits had been gravely wounded by the Orichalcum, and though it was possible to heal them, it would be difficult to have them return to fighting shape right away.

"Is everyone alright?!" shouted Vigaro.

"Tch! My good looks have been ruined!" Borkus lamented.

They were both still holding their weapons, which were crude and barely weapon-shaped at all. But they were still weapons made of Orichalcum.

They had managed to block the Orichalcum-covered icicles with these to protect themselves.

"Here you are, Rita-jouchan," said Borkus.

"Thank you," replied Rita.

While Vigaro was unharmed, the skull-like right half of Borkus's face had been broken… because he had immediately grabbed the bra portion of Rita's bikini armor.

"I was thinking about how embarrassing it would be to fight in front of everyone with my chest exposed," she continued.

"Chest, you say… there's nothing there," said Borkus, seemingly disappointed at the fact that Rita was still just a spirit other than her armor, but it seemed that she had no intention of being upset by his remark.

“Once my Spirit Form skill levels up like Father’s, you will be able to see it,” she told him. “Bocchan, what will we do now?”

“Let’s see… Is there anyone who can explain this situation?” Vandalieu asked.

“I can speculate,” said Eleanora, pointing a finger towards the combined mass of the ice and the remains of the Golem. It had begun writhing and creaking after icicles had exploded outwards.

She was pointing at the magic spear that was still embedded in the Dragon Golem’s chest.

“That magic spear, Ice Age, has probably gone wild. The Dragon Golem has been stopping its functions up until now, but I’m sure it took Mana from the Dragon Golem’s core to release that explosion of ice. I couldn’t have imagined that it would be capable of doing something like this, nor that its self-protection mechanism would still be functioning.”

In other words, it seemed that it was all Mikhail’s fault.

“Then do you know what’s going to happen to it now?” asked Vandalieu.

“I don’t know what has caused the magic spear to go wild or how exactly it is receiving power from the Golem’s core, but if it’s just on a rampage with no purpose it will keep thrashing around indiscriminately until it runs out of Mana.”

“Indiscriminately,” Vandalieu repeated. “I see.”

Into the walls or the floor, or perhaps towards the resurrection device beyond the door.

The headless Dragon Golem whose legs had sprouted Orichalcum-tipped icicles like the legs of an octopus or a squid… Or rather, the magic spear, Ice Age, was doing something far more terrible than Eleanora’s prediction.

It was moving directly behind it, towards the resurrection device.

“We must stop that rotten spear,” said Vandalieu.

There was now no other choice. There would be no point in reorganizing another party to come back; the resurrection device would already be destroyed by then.

“Yeah! Leave it to me!” shouted Borkus.

He and Vigaro began running, crude Orichalcum weapons in hand. Since the ice was cursed ice, only they and Vandalieu could deal a decisive blow to Ice Age.

Their attacks landed in an interesting way. The legs made of ice made no attempt to avoid the attacks; they were broken and pieces of ice scattered across the floor.

However, no matter how much they broke, the amount of ice wasn’t decreasing.

“Nuuuuh! There’s no end to this!” said Vigaro.

“It’s the Mana! As long as that Golem’s core still contains Mana, that spear will keep making more ice!” said Borkus.

As Ice Age’s ice was not a part of its body like a Golem, no matter how much of it broke, there was no damage to Ice Age itself. Since it was using the ice as limbs, breaking it would slow down its movement, but that would be nothing more than stalling for time.

Vandalieu was trying to stop it as well by turning the floor into a Golem, but the ice crushed it easily and continued onwards, slowly but surely.

“Then I’ll smash the spear itself! Instant Response!” Borkus moved with a speed that was difficult to imagine possible for his enormous body, running up the ice and closing the distance to Ice Age itself.

However, before he could get close enough for his weapon to reach it, countless icicles appeared and were launched towards him.

“Shit! The ice near the spear is damn fast!”

Faced with this machine-gun fire of icicles, even Borkus had no choice but to stop and fall back.

But as the icicles were being fired straight after being created, there were no Orichalcum fragments included in the attack. Even if they hit Borkus, they wouldn’t really cause any serious damage as he was a Zombie.

However, it seemed that the icicles stayed under Ice Age’s control after being

fired; he could see that they writhed unpleasantly after being repelled by his sword.

If they hit him and pinned him down, he would be immobilized until Vandalieu melted them for him.

“Damn it! I couldn’t defeat the weapon’s owner and now I can’t even win against the weapon itself?!” Borkus bellowed. He wasn’t giving up; he began looking for another opportunity.

“Vandalieu, we need more help!” Vigaro was still breaking the legs made of ice away from the spear to buy more time.

Both of them were probably aiming to make it run out of Mana.

However, the ice being generated by Ice Age showed no signs of weakening.

“I can’t bear to watch this any longer,” said Eleanora, picking up an Orichalcum fragment and flying into battle.

“Rita, we’re going too!” said Saria. The two of them picked up one of the Orichalcum fragments that were shaped more appropriately and followed Eleanora’s lead.

And then they began attacking Ice Age’s legs with that Orichalcum fragment. Its shape wasn't very good for using as as a weapon, but fortunately the two of them possessed considerable physical strength. Smashing the Orichalcum into the ice with all of their strength was enough to break it.

Eleanora used her large Orichalcum fragment as a shield as she moved to join Borkus. She blocked the icicle projectiles as she looked for the smallest chance.

Even the one-legged Bone Bird was screeching as it fired its spirit form feathers. It knew that it couldn’t break the ice, but it wanted to buy as much time as possible.

Everyone was fighting with everything they had so that Vandalieu could acquire the resurrection device. But it seemed that Vandalieu could do nothing more.

He was already managing six spells simultaneously.

He had stopped turning the floor near Ice Age’s legs into Golems as it was

completely ineffective, but he was maintaining the shape of two Orichalcum weapons, and the spirit form transformation on his right hand to protect each of the fallen Undead's spirits made four more – six in total.

Even with the Multi-Cast spell, he was past his limits. His Surpass Limits skill was already active, as was his Rapid Healing skill. Zadiris was murmuring the incantations for light-attribute healing spells, but even so, it felt like his brain was boiling.

No matter how big a lake is, there is only so much water that a bucket can draw from it at a time. In same way, no matter how large Vandalieu's Mana pool was, there was a limit to how many spells he could cast at a time.

What should I do?

What was happening now wasn't a fight to the death. If Vandalieu left it like this, nobody would die. Only the resurrection device will be destroyed.

That spear was clearly moving with some kind of intent. It would have been unnatural for it to head in a straight path towards the place where the resurrection device was likely to be if it was simply on a rampage.

It was the spear once wielded by Mikhail, the Divine Spear of Ice, the spear forged for heroes by the god of ice who served Peria, the goddess of water and knowledge. It was unmistakably a legendary-class, or maybe even mythical-class Artifact.

In that case, it wasn't strange to think that it had a mind of its own. And that mind considered Mikhail… the justice of the hero Bellwood and the justice of the God of Law and Fate, Alda, as true justice.

The hero who didn't accept things from other worlds, denying and destroying existing prosperity for the sake of this world's own culture and civilization despite not knowing how long those would take to develop.

The god who doesn't acknowledge the lives of those who don't obey his laws, who still passes on discriminatory teachings against the races created by Vida even after a hundred thousand years have passed.

The hero who dealt the fatal blow to the nation of Titans in their name.

The crazed magic spear of that hero was trying to destroy the resurrection device that Vandalieu desired.

There was some truth to their beliefs. It couldn't be said that they were completely wrong.

So then, was Vandalieu the one who was wrong? Was his desire to resurrect his dead mother an absolute evil?

That wasn't right, was it? Treating the wounded, curing the sick – extending the lives of creatures who will eventually die one day is always a good thing, so why should only the resurrection of someone who is dead be considered evil?

I won't acknowledge their beliefs. So I have no choice but to win. How can I do that? I have Mana. I have Mana, but I can't win like this. I don't have enough brains, I have too few brain cells. What should I do?

"Boy, you are at your limit!" Zadiris's voice was full of sorrow. Vandalieu was at his limit; he couldn't do any more. Could he only watch as the battle was lost, as the hope he had gained was taken away from him?

There was one way. If he gave up on the spirits of Bone Monkey and the other wounded Undead, there would be less burden on his brain.

But he couldn't do that. The resurrection device was his hope to gain something; what use would it be if he lost something to get his hands on it? At first, Bone Monkey and the others had been nothing but tools to him. But now they were his important servants that he had raised up to this point. He could replace their bones no matter how many times they were broken, but he couldn't replace their spirits.

That's right, their spirits are – ah, right. I do have another brain, don't I?

Realizing this, Vandalieu began to split into two.

"Boy –?!"

At least, this is how it appeared to Zadiris. However, she quickly realized that this wasn't the case.

"Spirit Form?!"

Vandalieu was now separate from his physical body… He was having an out-

of-body experience.

Normally, a body with no soul would collapse and stop moving, like a dead tree. However, Vandalieu was still using his body through magic.

The spirit-form Vandalieu was controlling the physical Vandalieu through the Long-distance Control skill that he had acquired.

“With this, I have two brains,” said Vandalieu. “Zadiris, please take care of my physical body.”

“Y-yes, leave it to me.” Zadiris was startled by the fact that Vandalieu was speaking through both his spirit form and his physical body, but she quickly focused on her healing spells.

With this, he could split the six spells he had barely been managing to maintain, with each brain managing three. But it was still not enough. In order to stop that miserable, god-made stick, he needed more.

But what more could he do?

My brain is… Hmm? I’m in spirit form right now. Then do I even need to worry about my shape?

Vandalieu looked at his physical body to see his right arm under Spirit Form Transformation, split into three to preserve the spirits of the wounded Undead by providing them with Mana.

When he used Spirit Form Transformation on his physical body, he was able to freely change its shape like he was doing with his right arm. With that being the case, he would certainly be able to change his shape now that he was completely in spirit form.

Vandalieu’s vision expanded.

Manipulating his spirit form with his Spirit Form skill, his head split into two at the neck. Now he had three brains.

It still wasn’t enough. He quickly added more. Now he had five brains.

Using his new brains, he made Golems. He made more, more and more. He embedded Orichalcum fragments in the Golems he made.

In short, he was now doing the same thing as that stick. He mixed Orichalcum instead of ice into his Golems that he made from the floor and walls so that it could be used as a weapon.

Stone men with black metal protruding from their bodies roared as they rammed themselves into the octopus of ice, one after another.

“Bocchan?!” exclaimed Rita. “Why is your appearance like that?! There are two of you and you have so many heads!”

“I didn’t see nothing!” shouted Vigaro.

“Ah! How terrifyingly beautiful!” remarked Eleanora.

As Golem reinforcements appeared one after another as if Vandalieu was trying to use up all of the walls and open a giant hole in the floor, everyone had turned around in surprise to see two Vandalieus, and one of them had a rather grotesque appearance. They were surprised… but for some reason, Eleanora’s eyes showed signs of awe and excitement.

“Everyone, pay no attention to my lord’s appearance! You must fight!” Bone Man shouted from the ground near Vandalieu’s feet.

“Move your hands, not your mouths!” Borkus said, reprimanding them.

Bone Man and Borkus’s voices returned them to their senses, and they returned to work once more to destroy the ice.

Indeed, this was simply work now.

The magic spear was indeed a legendary-class Artifact. However, it would normally never have the power to fight battles on its own. It was merely using some method to utilize the huge amount of Mana contained in the Dragon Golem’s core in order to produce and manipulate ice in order to make its struggling movements.

That was why the movements of the cursed ice were slow and stiff. If it were made of normal ice, Borkus and the others would have broken all of it long ago even without Orichalcum weapons.

That cursed ice was being swarmed with countless Golems with Orichalcum fragments attached, broken by Vigaro and the armor sisters and even directly

melted by Vandalieu's death-attribute magic. It couldn't even maintain the shape of its ice even though it had stopped firing projectiles, let alone repel Borkus and the others.

"This damn spear is so annoying!" Borkus struck the spear as it struggled in vain, sending it flying out of the thick chest of the Golem that it had been embedded in and spinning onto the floor.

The ice stopped moving at that instant.

Is it over? Vandalieu wondered as he returned to his physical body. He felt dizzy for a moment as his extra fields of vision disappeared, but Zadiris stopped him from falling to his knees.

"Whoa… Thank you, but why are you holding onto my head so tightly?" he asked her.

"I was just thinking that it would be terrible if this head were to split into multiple as well." Zadiris had both arms wrapped around Vandalieu's head. It seemed that she had been very shocked by the division of his spirit form head.

Vandalieu had frequently branched his arms out into tentacle-like shapes with Spirit Form Transformation, however. Did dividing his head make more of an impact than his arms?

"More importantly, the first thing I need to do is prepare bodies for Bone Bear and the others."

Vandalieu really wanted to rush to the resurrection device. But that could come last.

Reviving the Undead came first. He could heal their wounded spirits after putting them in bodies. It wouldn't take much time or effort.

But as Vandalieu attempted to return them to normal, their spirits growled in protest.

They had become burdens to Vandalieu; they were weak. They didn't want to be returned to normal because they wanted to become stronger.

Bone Bird let out a cry. It seemed to be in agreement, intending to join them.

"… I think it's possible, but are you sure?" Vandalieu asked. "If I do this, I don't

know if I can undo it.”

Bone Bird nodded, as did Bone Wolf and his companions. Their spirits had already lost the appearance of when they were alive; they were now skeleton-shaped.

They had originally been the wandering spirits of animals and insects. They had no memories of how they had appeared when they were alive, and they already had almost no memories of before they were turned into Undead. Their loyalty to Vandalieu was the most important thing to them. It was because of him that they were now immortal creatures with no limited lifespan, no need to eat or reproduce, without the chains of animal instinct binding them.

“I understand.”

Bone Bird’s spirit came out of its body. The spirits of the others lost their shapes, and all of the spirits mixed together.

The bones of Bone Bear and the others that had been scattered around rolled across the floor to gather in one spot.

And then the spirits that had combined with each other and lost their shapes entered that spot.

A monster made of bones let out a roar as it was born. It was built like the pieces of different puzzle sets had been forcibly joined; the bones of a bear, a monkey, a wolf and a bird were combined together.

It was a Chimera with a body consisting of bones. A Japanese person might think it was a Nue[1] made only of bones.

“This is a Bone Chimera. A creature born of a single malicious entity trapped in the bones of multiple animals, humans and monsters… This is the first time I am seeing one,” said Zadiris. “Bone Bird, Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf, Bone Bear, Bone Man. This is a splendid display of loyalty.”

“Umm… I am still here,” said Bone Man.

“Ah, that is right.”

Bone Man’s skull was still lying on the ground. The magic spear’s rampage was over, so his bones were steadily gathering together, however.

“Bone Man, please let me know if there are any bones you are missing,” said Vandalieu.

“As you will.”

Vandalieu headed towards the magic spear lying on the floor, bringing Bone Chimera with him.

“Vandalieu-sama, it’s dangerous to approach that spear!” Eleanora said, trying to stop him, but he waved her down with his hand.

As to be expected of an Artifact; there wasn’t a single scratch on the magic spear. Vandalieu enveloped it in dark, death-attribute Mana and then touched it.

“Do not touch me!” shouted a voice echoing inside his head.

It seemed that this magic spear had a clearer personality than Vandalieu had expected. A weapon with conscious intelligence; should this be called an Intelligent Weapon?

“Filthy Dhampir! I do not know what your intentions may be, but they will certainly be crushed by Mikhail’s successor, my future owner! Enjoy your brief victory while it lasts!”

“Ah, I’m not interested in that stuff, so can I ask you to tell me some things regarding the current situation? You were a spear originally created to serve Peria, not Alda, weren’t you?” asked Vandalieu.

Judging from the angry, distressed tone of Ice Age, he could guess that Yupeon, the god of ice, had similar views to Alda and the hero Bellwood unlike Tristan, the god of the seas who had mated with Vida to become one of the ancestors of the Mer-people.

Ice Age, an Artifact created by Yupeon, shared his views. And the hero it had acknowledged as its owner over two hundred years ago was Mikhail, the Divine Spear of Ice. He had been a devout believer of Alda, a hero who believed in the justice of the Amid Empire and Mirg shield-nation from the bottom of his heart.

However, he had been narrowly defeated by the goddess-made Dragon Golem and Ice Age was left embedded in the Golem’s chest, separated from its

owner.

In this world, those who lost their lives can never come back. In Mikhail's absence, Ice Age had decided to use his cursed ice to seal away the resurrection device that overturned this law of his own accord so that nobody would ever touch it.

Normally, he wouldn't have been capable of doing this without his owner despite being an Artifact. But by coincidence, he had been able to use the Dragon Golem's core that was lightly touching its tip and receive the necessary supply of Mana from there. He had built multiple walls that only Mikhail could pass through.

The wall that contained Zandia's hand was not Mikhail's doing, but Ice Age's.

"But it was not Mikhail or the one who bears his will, but you who came to this place. An insolent creature such as you who toys with life, accompanied by two filthy undying creatures! How regrettable it is that I was only one step away from completely crushing your ambitions!" screamed Ice Age.

"That's – what?" Vandalieu was about to say, 'That's a shame', but then he had noticed something strange about Ice Age's words.

Two… He said, 'two'. Even if you exclude Rita and Saria, there's Borkus, Bone Man, Bone Bear… Six in total. I'm sure this guy wouldn't use a different counter between Undead people and animals[2].

So why two? The first time I came here, it was me, Borkus and Nuaza, the three of us. Is that what he means?

Vandalieu didn't know how good this magic spear's five senses were, but it seemed that it had been working even while embedded in the Dragon Golem's chest.

It was obvious once he thought about it. In this state, Ice Age had created walls of ice at the entrance to this chamber, the distant corridor and the entrance leading to this underground area, after all.

It wasn't strange to think that he had noticed Vandalieu and his companions when they had visited this place around two years ago.

So what has this guy been doing up until now? When a Dhampir who was able to melt his cursed ice appeared in the company of two Undead instead of Mikhail's successor, what did he do in this period of over a year?!

"Vandalieu, what's wrong with you all of a sudden? Are you talking with that spear? Hello?"

"Bocchan, what's the matter?!"

Taking no notice of Vigaro and Saria's voices, Vandalieu began to run towards the door that the Dragon Golem had been protecting.

The door, which was made of the same material as the wall and difficult to spot, opened on its own as Vandalieu approached. It had probably been set to open once its guardian, the Golem, was defeated.

On the other side of the door was a large pipe made of some unidentified glass-like substance, a magic circle, a monolith with indecipherable characters engraved on it and something that resembled a flat-screen television from Earth.

All of them had been pierced by icicles, damaged and broken.

"Fu… FUHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! It seems that it has worked well! I could obtain Mana from the Golem's core, but I had become unable to move in exchange for that. I was unsure whether I had managed to destroy the device with the ice that I created in that distant space, but it is a relief to see that I succeeded! Your evil plans have fallen apart, Dhampir!"

Ice Age's harsh, loud laughter sounded repulsive to Vandalieu's ears. Behind him, Bone Chimera let out a sorrowful cry while Vigaro and the others stood there, frozen in place.

And then Vandalieu turned his wide-open eyes towards Ice Age.

If it's broken, I just have to fix it, and if that's impossible, I just have to find another way. I'll never give up on resurrecting Mom.

But before that, I have to dispose of this thing.

"You would destroy me, Dhampir? It is indeed likely possible for an insolent creature such as you who is even capable of manipulating Orichalcum,

something that only the gods should be allowed to do. However, doing so would be meaningless. I am an Artifact created by Yupeon, the god of ice; I am essentially a clone of him. Even if this spear is destroyed, my consciousness will return to Yupeon and one day I shall stand before you once more in the hands of another hero like Mikhail. And then I shall sever the thread of your evil life, along with your filthy undying creatures!”

Vandalieu felt nauseous as he listened to the repulsively confident voice that had absolute belief in its own righteousness.

“I’ll ask you just to make sure. Are you serious?” Despite his nausea, Vandalieu asked the spear this question, just to be absolutely certain about his upcoming decision.

“Of course! If you should regret anything, regret your own cursed birth –”

“Then I will destroy you.”

Vandalieu stabbed his spirit-form fingers into the magic spear. He felt the Orichalcum resist, tearing off his skin. He felt pain, as if his exposed flesh and bone were being scraped away by a file.

Ice Age’s voice turned into a screaming noise. It sounded so pleasant to Vandalieu’s ears that he forgot his own pain.

“It seems that you’re a clone of a great god, but you’re one of our genuine enemies,” he said. “Since you’ve said that you will curse us and deny us with all of your might, with not a single shred of mercy, with no exception, then I have no choice but to do this.”

It was possible that Ice Age didn’t know why Vandalieu had wanted to obtain the resurrection device. But it didn’t matter.

In that case, that would simply mean that Ice Age had said, ‘evil intentions,’ while not knowing anything. If that was the case, Dhampirs were an absolute evil to him, worse than insects that caused only great harm while having no benefits to existing whose intentions were not even worth listening to.

That was to be expected. This spear believed Mikhail’s actions had been those of justice.

The actions of the hero who had believed his home nation was good for obeying the orders of the Empire to invade the Titan nation that was doing nothing more than prospering in the area surrounded by the mountain range. The hero who had put an end to that nation.

And he even called those who had turned into Undead after being killed by that hero ‘filthy’.

As long as this magic spear existed, he would continue cursing Vandalieu and his companions for being evil and watch vigilantly for an opportunity to tear out their entrails with his tip. That was the kind of existence he was.

“If I left someone like you alone, I wouldn’t be able to calmly look for a way to resurrect my mother, and I would definitely be unable to become happy in the future,” said Vandalieu. “Ah, there it is. I thought it would be here since you said you’re a clone of a god; I’m glad I found it. Even I can’t destroy something that doesn’t exist.”

Ice Age continued screaming unintelligibly. “You... bastard... You would turn a god into your enemy –”

“No, we’re enemies of your god no matter what we do, aren’t we? So it doesn’t matter what I do, does it?”

What was Ice Age trying to say after he had already destroyed any opportunity for negotiations, reconciliation, harmony or a truce, all on his own?

Had he said and done all of these things with so little resolve that he expected to remain unharmed afterwards? If so, Vandalieu couldn’t help but admire his nerve. He would find it impossible to be so bold.

“I think it’s impossible for you to do this, but if you can, please tell him something for me,” said Vandalieu. “Tell him that he’s my enemy.”

“Gih, gah, M-Mikha –”

Ice Age’s wonderful song stopped and the clear sound of a cloned god’s soul being destroyed rang out.

【The levels of the Golem Transmutation, Spirit Form, Multi-Cast, Soul Break and Long-distance Control skills have increased!】

【You have acquired the unique skill, God Slayer!】

Notes

1. A Nue is a Japanese chimera with a monkey's head, tanuki's body, tiger's limbs and a snake tail.

2. Ice Age used the counter for animals rather than people, *i.e.* "Two Undead animals". Using this counter while referring to Undead like Borkus would be a way to show disrespect towards them.

Side Chapter 1: In a Divine Realm

In the space between worlds, Rodcorte, the god who ruled over the circles of transmigration[1] for multiple worlds including Earth, Origin and Lambda, had created a place that could be called a ‘Divine Realm’ and was currently sitting in there.

This was also the place that the souls of the one hundred people who had died on Earth had once gathered.

Rodcorte was currently observing Origin’s present state. As a god, he was capable of seeing many things happening there from outside the world. He was far from omniscient, but he could gain a general picture of things.

“The lapsing of Origin into chaos is inevitable. I suppose the cause lies in the existence of Amamiya Hiroto and his death,” he said, speaking to himself.

The world where magic and science coexisted, where Vandalieu had lived during his second lifetime, where *Amemiya Hiroto* and the others who were reincarnated there were still living. Rodcorte considered this world to be as far-developed as Earth, but it was falling deep into chaos.

The cause of this was Vandalieu… Amamiya Hiroto’s death attribute. The military nation that had used him as an experimental animal extorted death-attribute Mana out of him and produced a large number of Magic Items that exceeded common sense.

Cookware capable of fermenting food to make it reach the optimum level of maturity in an instant.

Storage cabinets that kept food preserved almost permanently.

Medical equipment that removed any poison and illness from the body without causing any harmful effects.

Pills that restored the organs with impaired function due to aging, illness or injury.

Hair regrowth medicine that restored lost hair.

Things that had been impossible through other attributes of magic and previous science… Things that had been theoretically possible but almost impossible to actually create in practice. Such things had been created at unbelievably low costs.

That death-attribute Mana had created dream-like produce and domestic livestock, led to the announcement of cures for previously incurable viruses, pathogens and hereditary diseases and even made cryogenic sleep possible.

Research had almost reached the secret behind immortality.

If one were to ask whether such things were possible with death-attribute Mana alone, the answer is that it really was.

At a glance, the death attribute may seem like a simple counterpart to the life attribute. Indeed, the things both attributes were capable of were similar, and if the life attribute transcends its highest limits, it can achieve exceedingly close results.

However, they are not completely the same. The reason is because life is energy. No matter how much energy one adds, no matter how much one tries to limit its consumption, it will run out eventually. In other words, death occurs.

The death attribute is the one that governs over death. It is able to remove the phenomenon of death from living things. It is free to accelerate or stop decomposition; in the same way, it is simple to produce things that can eliminate poison and illnesses. It is not even difficult to return failing organs and cells to a healthy state.

However, the military nation that discovered the death attribute had caused Amamiya Hiroto to die in their reckless experiments. And the others who had reincarnated in this world had thoroughly destroyed him. Not even a single fragment of his Mana had been left behind.

Nobody could create death-attribute Magic Items anymore. The research could not continue. The produce and livestock that had been created still remained, but those alone weren’t enough to satisfy mankind.

The military nation was internationally condemned for the existence of the

research laboratory that had conducted illegal experiments that completely ignored human rights. Its president and the high officials that had been involved with the laboratory resigned, but that was only the beginning.

The dream-like Magic Items that the military nation had been producing and selling were now completely impossible to create.

The largest nation in the international committee that had condemned the military nation for its actions immediately began research on the death attribute. Amamiya Hiroto had killed most of the researchers in the original laboratory and consumed much of their spirits. Their souls were just barely intact, but their memories and personalities were not in a state for them to be useful, so even methods such as Necromancy were useless.

The few survivors, the remaining research materials and the death attribute Magic Items possessed by each nation were all gathered for analysis in a desperate attempt to reproduce the death attribute.

The people in power had been lured by the industrial and medical advances offered by the death attribute, or rather, the word ‘immortality’ which had almost been achieved.

The military nation had become much weaker, but as long as the powerful men of the world continued to desire immortality, the secret feuds between the federal states, commonwealths, republics and new nations would surface in a large way.

War could break out and cause the loss of millions, tens of millions of lives.

“I don’t really care about that, but…” Rodcorte had no interest in calculating those numbers. In fact, people being killed in war would be a wonderful thing; he would welcome them with open arms. He was the god who ruled over the circles of transmigration, after all.

It would be problematic if people didn’t die and come to be reborn.

Even if tens of millions of people were to die all at once, Rodcorte’s transmigration system wouldn’t have any difficulties in dealing with them. It could process up to a trillion people at a time. There would be no problem at all.

Origin had a population of ten billion people. Only a small number, not even one percent of them, would die in war and their numbers would soon increase again afterwards. Things would be back to normal in less than a hundred years.

In fact, people's life expectancies in Origin had surpassed those on Earth by too much due to the existence of magic in Origin in addition to science, so this was just perfect.

Rodcorte did indeed desire the world's development, but a society capable of sustaining a population of billions of people without falling to ruin could already be considered nothing but a good result.

Even if a population of seven billion were to shrink to five billion, he would consider it as only a minor decrease. Rather, if humanity underwent some kind of spiritual evolution or reached some 'next stage', then they would really be beyond his control.

He wouldn't mind if they advanced into outer space, however.

With that said, Rodcorte had no intentions of directly intervening with the world and his ability to do so was limited so he couldn't do anything about the situation anyway.

If he wanted to stop the conflict and war in Origin, it was possible for him to send a 'Divine Message' to those who had been reincarnated from Earth in order to guide them and give them information. However, he had no intention of doing that, either.

The reason he had sent them to Origin rather than Lambda in the first place was so that they could gain experience. He had helped them by giving them cheat-like abilities, fortunes and destinies, so he would have them do as they liked, whether they chose to stop the conflict, participate in it or simply stay uninvolved.

If war began, some of them, maybe even dozens of them, could die. That would be an experience for them in itself. There were a hundred of them after all; there would be no problem if some of them failed.

For Rodcorte, a god who was not directly believed in by humans, humans were nothing but bits in a computer. Just information flowing in a system. Good

and evil, tragedy, happiness, none of that mattered. Everything would be fine as long as the system continued working with no problems.

“The problem is immortality, I suppose.”

The thing that would cause Rodcorte trouble was immortality. As he was a god ruling over the circles of transmigration, creatures that don’t die would be nothing but beings who denied his authority and hinder his system.

It would be even more problematic than Undead who continued moving after death and the resurrection of the dead.

Undead are a result of souls lingering in the world without being reincarnated, but they would still return to the system eventually. The resurrection of the dead was problematic, but if the soul was already transmigrated, only the body would be resurrected and the soul would never return. Only a small error would be caused.

However, immortal beings would never return.

If Undead were small errors that wouldn’t cause any problems even if left alone for a while and the resurrection of the dead was a bug that was slightly more difficult to fix, immortal beings would be a critical bug that would require the system to be brought down for maintenance in order to eliminate.

“Even considering that, it’s good that Amamiya Hiroto died.”

If Amamiya Hiroto had continued to live, the research had gone on and immortality had become a reality, Rodcorte would have been racking his brains over how to deal with it. Even if he were to send those reincarnated from Earth a Divine Message, he possessed no way of forcing them to obey his commands.

He couldn’t even send Divine Messages to humans other than them.

This was also because Rodcorte’s existence wasn’t known and he wasn’t worshipped by the people of any world. This was to ensure that if something serious were to happen in one world, it wouldn’t affect the circles of transmigration of other worlds, but… he was now regretting not preparing another being like a subordinate god or collaborative god.

Gods are not omniscient or omnipotent; their direct influence extends only as

far as their authority allows and to those who believe in them.

No, for now, Origin would be fine. Rodcorte would let it be. Mankind would not self-destruct or decrease in numbers too drastically.

Coming to this conclusion, Rodcorte shifted his gaze away from Origin. And then he suddenly realized something.

“It has been five years since Amamiya Hiroto reincarnated in Lambda. His memories may have returned by now.”

Memories of previous lives returning while still in the body of a breastfeeding infant would have placed a huge mental burden on reincarnated individuals. In order to protect their minds, Rodcorte had set things up so that their memories would start returning from the age of five onwards.

As long as nothing hugely troublesome and unexpected occurred, memories would not return to a breastfeeding infant.

“The fact that Amamiya Hiroto’s soul has not returned here means that he was unfortunate enough to not die within the first five years of his life. It may be some time before his memories return, but I should check to make sure.”

If Amamiya Hiroto’s memories had indeed returned, Rodcorte had to drive him to suicide so that he would die before it was discovered that he could potentially make immortality a reality.

He had three curses placed on him, but even Rodcorte had been unable to erase the death attribute that had soaked into his soul and become a part of him. If he struggled and refused to give up, he would learn to cast death-attribute magic in Lambda as well.

For this purpose, Rodcorte used his system to investigate Amamiya Hiroto’s life following his reincarnation. Through this system, it was possible to look at a reincarnated soul’s past and present situation.

However, there was no information about Amamiya Hiroto.

“… What is this?”

He searched again, but there was no information. There were records of his reincarnation from Earth to Origin, but the records stopped suddenly following

his death in Origin.

“Could it be that he wasn’t reincarnated? That isn’t possible. Amamiya Hiroto was definitely reincarnated. But the fact that there are no records in the system means – Oh no. He fell out of my system and entered a circle outside of my control!”

For Rodcorte, there were three irregularities in Lambda. The first was the Undead that even appeared from time to time in Origin.

The other two were the monsters that the Demon King and his subordinates had created in ancient times and the new races created by the goddess Vida.

Those two weren’t managed by Rodcorte’s circle of transmigration system.

When the Demon King created the monsters, if their transmigration fell under the categories of Rodcorte’s system, the Demon King would have been unable to reincarnate monsters’ souls and have them be reborn. For this reason, he had somehow managed to imitate Rodcorte’s circle of transmigration system and created his own transmigration system.

That was why monsters were still rampant in Lambda to this day. This was also the reason bosses and mid-bosses were unnaturally generated inside Dungeons.

Humans and other races who worshipped the evil gods were now falling outside of Rodcorte’s system and being incorporated into the now-fallen Demon King’s system instead. This was another thing causing slightly problematic errors in Rodcorte’s system.

And the problems caused by the races created by Vida were due to the hostility between Vida… or rather, all of the gods of Lambda, and Rodcorte.

When the Demon King first appeared, the gods of Lambda known as Vida and Alda had asked Rodcorte for help. Rodcorte had refused all of their requests and simply observed carefully.

If he were to get involved and the Demon King destroyed his soul, this would have effects on all of the circles of transmigration of the other worlds that he managed, not just Lambda. This was a decision he made to prevent that from happening.

To Rodcorte, Lambda was but one of many worlds. If it were destroyed, Rodcorte would feel pain equivalent to several bones being broken, but it wouldn't be a fatal wound. He wasn't willing to risk a swift death in order to avoid his bones being broken.

After that, Rodcorte had protested against the decision of the gods of Lambda to summon heroes from other worlds in order to turn the tides of the battle. Because the heroes had only been summoned from worlds whose circles of transmigration Rodcorte ruled over, this had caused errors in his system.

He requested that they quickly send the heroes back or simply exploit them until they died.

Back then, Rodcorte had thought that Lambda's destruction was inevitable, so he hadn't wanted more trouble to be caused by a meaningless struggle.

As a result, a deep gulf formed between Rodcorte and the gods of Lambda. Rodcorte himself didn't think much of it, but Vida in particular held a profound distrust in him.

With this as one of the reasons, Vida made an imitation of the system created by the Demon King with her own original functions included, creating her own circle of transmigration system, and then gave birth to new races including the Vampires. As she ruled over the life attribute, her divinity was quite close to Rodcorte's. It would have been impossible for her to rule over the circles of transmigration of multiple worlds, but she probably thought that she would be able to manage one world's once she built a system for it.

It was likely that she intended for not only the races she created, but all of the future races of people that would exist in Lambda to be managed by her own circle of transmigration system.

However, despite being hostile towards Rodcorte as Vida was, Alda, who prioritized the strict preservation of law and order above all else, defeated Vida and her followers.

As a result, only the new races created by Vida were being reincarnated through Vida's system.

There was a high chance that Amamiya Hiroto's soul had been swallowed up

by either the Demon King's system or the goddess's system and he had become reborn as either a monster or a member of one of the races created by Vida.

"Muh… He isn't here after all."

Using his system, Rodcorte looked up all of the people who had been born around the time of Amamiya Hiroto's second reincarnation but no information on Hiroto was to be found.

"But just why has something like this happened? The probability of this happening is less than one in ten quadrillion. Unless I am just terribly unlucky… Oh no. It's because of that."

Rodcorte remembered that the things Amamiya Hiroto hadn't been given included not only cheat-like abilities, but a fortune and a destiny as well. As he had no fortune and no destiny, there was always a constant danger that he would go along a path that even Rodcorte himself wouldn't be able to predict.

On top of that, three curses had been placed on him just before he was reincarnated. Rodcorte had done this in order to encourage him to end his own life, but the possibility that this had caused flaws in Rodcorte's system couldn't be ruled out.

"I have no choice. It will take some time, but I will investigate if there are any people who have encountered Amamiya Hiroto's reincarnated soul. I should at least be able to learn of his current situation… This is a Dhampir."

There was a Dhampir appearing in the memories of a certain merchant. It seemed that Amamiya Hiroto had indeed reincarnated as a member of a race created by Vida.

But this wasn't the problem.

"Impossible, why have his memories returned? On top of that, he is already using death-attribute magic and controlling the Undead?!"

Rodcorte couldn't even tell whether the Dhampir in this memory was even a year old or not, and yet he was already using death-attribute magic and speaking with a childish voice. His memories had clearly returned.

"I suppose this is because I did not give him a fortune. In that case, I have to

improve my method the next time I have a chance.”

Rodcorte regretted the mistakes that he had made during the process of reincarnating Amamiya Hiroto and the others from Earth.

Back then, Rodcorte had prepared enough cheat-like abilities, fortunes and destinies for a little over a hundred people. He had prepared plenty, so that he wouldn’t be lacking any even if there were many people to distribute them to.

And just as he finished preparing the ferry had sunk with good timing and around a hundred people, not including the evil people responsible, had died. Among them, all but one chose to be reborn in another world.

Thinking that it would be a waste to not use everything he had prepared, he had distributed it all without leaving a single item remaining, only to find that he had overlooked one person.

To think that this one remaining person would become so troublesome as a result.

“Now then, the question is what to do with Amamiya Hiroto… Vandalieu. Should I warn Alda? I suppose it would be better to set the evil gods on him.”

Alda was the only attribute god who was still currently properly active in Lambda, the god who possessed the most power.

However, his relationship with Rodcorte was as terrible as it could be. Alda had no choice but to overlook Rodcorte’s actions so that the order of the circles of transmigration would be preserved, but that did not mean that he forgave them.

Rodcorte’s decision to reincarnate these people had been made without Alda’s knowledge. Because of this, if Alda were to find out about Vandalieu and the others, he would be infuriated with Rodcorte.

From Alda’s point of view, Rodcorte had abandoned him in a time of need without offering any assistance, and now he was doing these things on his own… and a hundred more people would be reincarnating in Lambda with Jinxes, cheat-like abilities that defied common sense that Rodcorte had given them on a whim.

It was more than likely that Alda would order his subordinate gods and followers to murder those one hundred reincarnated individuals.

With that said, leaking information to the evil gods to have them kill Vandalieu would also be a poor move. The evil gods had sense of values so twisted that Rodcorte couldn't understand them. It was possible that they would make Vandalieu their ally instead of killing him.

As a result of much contemplation, Rodcorte decided to watch and wait for a while.

"A few of those reincarnated in Origin should die in the next few years. I'll ask them to kill Vandalieu."

Undead had always appeared in Lambda, so the number of Undead increasing by a few wouldn't have any effect on the system now.

And for Vandalieu, whose curses would prevent him from turning his experiences into skills, reaching immortality without the assistance of the science of Origin would be an enormous task. It would be impossible to do so in decades, centuries or possibly even millennia.

In a few years' time, once the second of the reincarnated individuals died in Origin, he would ask that person to kill Vandalieu and then there would be no problem. That person would have cheat-like abilities created by Rodcorte himself, while Vandalieu had only death-attribute magic and the 100,000,000 Mana contained within his Empty Frame. When Rodcorte analyzed the records from the merchant, it seemed that Vandalieu had succeeded in leveling up, but the other two curses should still be functioning with no problems. He would probably not become any stronger than that.

There was no problem.

Coming to this conclusion, Rodcorte turned his gaze away from Lambda.

If he had searched the memories of the adventurer Luciliano who had encountered Vandalieu through his Live-Dead, he might have felt a greater sense of danger.

If he had made contact with the evil gods, he would likely have learned that the soul of the Vampire Sercrent had been destroyed by Vandalieu and made a

move before the souls involved in his own system were destroyed.

But instead, Rodcorte remained oblivious to the greatest mistake that he had ever made.

End of Volume 2

Notes

1. In Japanese, singular and plural nouns are often impossible to distinguished unless specified. It becomes clear in this chapter that this is plural; each world has its own circle of transmigration.

V1+2 Character Summary Page

Note from the author:

This is an introduction of the major characters that appeared in volumes 1 and 2 and will be making an appearance in the next volume.

It has no relation to the story, so you can enjoy the third volume even without reading this, and it is quite lengthy. However, please take a look if you wish.

Vandaleu

A Dhampir, nearly five years old. His name on Earth was Amamiya Hiroto, and in Origin his serial number was D-01.

He has learned to use magic of the death attribute, an attribute related to death that was undiscovered in Origin when he was reincarnated there.

He is a Dhampir born between a Subordinate Vampire who was born as a human, and a Dark Elf.

His appearance is that of a boy with white hair, crimson and purple heterochromatic eyes and skin as white as candle wax. Also, his ears are pointed, though this is difficult to notice as they are covered by his hair.

His expression doesn’t change and the tone of his voice stays flat unless he makes conscious effort to change these. His eyes are constantly lifeless, like those of a dead fish, making it difficult to tell where he is looking. As a result, it is also difficult to tell what he is thinking unless one is very familiar with him.

He possesses a cheat-like amount of Mana; he was born with 100,000,000 Mana and it now exceeds 200,000,000. But as the only magic he can use is no-attribute magic and death-attribute magic, he is under the strange assumption that he cannot make the best use of that Mana.

Because he suffered terrible treatment at the hands of his luxury-allergic uncle, he possesses a complex when it comes to luxuries. When he is told that something is owned by rich people, he desires it even if he does not need it. In addition, he has developed a mother-complex since coming to Lambda. As a result of the trauma caused by Darcia's death, he feels an intense desire to kill those who attack women.

He yearns to have muscles, doesn't care for monster girls or Undead girls and has a sinful personality that causes him to hold unforgettable grudges against people he resents until he resolves the grudge in a way that satisfies him. He tends to prioritize his emotions and makes decisions without paying any regard to the benefits or losses to himself.

He also has a soft personality.

Though he is not aware of it himself, he has gone insane; he doesn't feel a shred of guilt or doubt when taking the lives of others. However, he does not particularly enjoy murder, either.

As he was not blessed when it came to friends and family on Earth or in Origin, he has deep feelings for those he has in this world and treasures their lives.

He learned various pieces of information including information regarding Japanese food from the spirits in Origin, but since that information is only things he heard from them, he has struggled to reproduce Japanese food.

His dream for the future is to become a muscular man that resembles a mass of male hormones. He wants to have a warm family, rich relationships with others and live an easy, luxurious life.

However, Darcia's resurrection and his own vengeance must come first.

Amemiya Hiroto

The young man who was mistaken for the main character, appearing only in the prologue.

In Origin, he uses cheat-like abilities such as All-Attributes Affinity (excluding the time and death attributes) and Simultaneous Multi-cast Chant Revocation (Grants the abilities of both Chant Revocation and Multi-cast) and works internationally as the leader of those who reincarnated from Earth.

He only knows of Amamiya Hiroto as, “the student who was on that boat that has a similar name to me;” he is unaware that Rodcorte mistakenly gave him Amamiya Hiroto’s portions of cheat-like abilities and the other blessings, and that the Undead that he and his companions destroyed was Amamiya Hiroto.

Naruse Narumi mistook him for Amamiya Hiroto and thanked him. A misunderstanding was established and various things happened, leading to the two of them being in an intimate relationship.

Incidentally, *Amemiya Hiroto* is very handsome.

Rodcorte

The god who rules over the circles of transmigration for Earth, Origin, Lambda and multiple other worlds. He is not worshipped in any world, but thoroughly maintains the transmigration systems for these worlds.

From his point of view, the people in his worlds are data flowing through his system, computer bits that need to be processed, while he sees the gods of each world as people who work for the same company but in branches of other districts.

Because of this, he generally views each world with indifference disguised as impartiality, but this story began when he tried to interfere with the worlds for the first time.

However, the gods of each world would summarize Rodcorte's actions as 'unnecessary'. For Alda, the god of law and fate in particular, the situation is as if he were the only remaining manager of the company trying his best to restructure it, only to have the nation certify personnel with unknown personal histories as being excellent and sending them over to him without contacting him for consultation or notification.

The only one welcoming the new individuals is the goddess of life and love, Vida.

Darcia

Vandalieu's mother. She was a female Dark Elf adventurer. She met Valen by coincidence while she was completing a request and fell in love at first sight. Valen was also charmed by her, and the two of them wed. In other words, she has a soft personality.

She possessed D-class ability as an adventurer, using spiritual magic and archery as her weapons.

After she became a spirit, perhaps because she had been burned at the stake or perhaps simply as a policy for raising her child, she stopped Vandalieu from using fire for a while. However, other than that, Vandalieu is mostly free to do as he likes.

Darcia is under the influence of his Death-Attribute Charm, but as Vandalieu doesn't disobey her, her personality is mostly as it was in life. In other words, she is also soft on her son.

At first, she tried to move onto the next world for her son's sake, but now she has no desire of doing so and hints at Vandalieu from time to time to make her an Undead.

The Blue-flamed Sword, Heinz

In chapter 1, he was seventeen years old; he is now twenty-one years old as of chapter 51.

An adventurer of commoner background, he reached B-class status in his teenage years, holding a Title and serving as leader of the Five-colored Blades.

He has a strong sense of justice, believing that any wall can be overcome as long as he has strength and bonds with companions that he can trust.

However, at the end of chapter 2, he didn't stoop so low as to participate in the torture of Darcia who was trying to protect her own child. As he watched Darcia being burned at the stake without letting out a single scream, he began to doubt Alda, the god of law and fate that he had believed to be an embodiment of justice up until then, and questioned what he should do.

He has now reached A-class status. He turned down Earl Palpapek's offers and is now working in the Orbaume Kingdom.

Bormack Gordan

A High Priest of the Church of Alda, the god of law and fate, and a fanatic believer. A Vampire hunter who wields his war-club at the forefront of battle despite having aged considerably.

He has exterminated numerous Vampires, and possesses prowess in combat exceeding that of inferior B-class adventurers. Because of these achievements, the Cathedral of Alda in the Amid Empire has nominated him to become the Cardinal many times, but it is his principle to act where he is needed.

He believes that the extermination of not only Vampires but all of the new races created by the evil Vida will bring about a world full of Alda's order, leading to salvation for all.

He learned of the main character's survival when he was included in the extermination force sent into the Devil's Nest forest. As the main character's

escape beyond the Boundary Mountain Range marks the second time he has failed to exterminate him, he considers this the greatest regret of his lifetime. He is praying to Alda for a third opportunity.

Bone Man

An Undead created when the spirits of rats that had died in the forest near Evbejia, where Vandalieu was born, were placed into a skeleton that was lying on the ground for some unknown reason. As he was just one of many pawns that Vandalieu used back then, he was simply named 'Bone Man'.

He possesses a loyal personality, and though he is made of rats, he has such talent that he is able to wield a sword and shield and use a bow. Considerable talent for rats, anyway.

Vandalieu transplanted additional spirits into him in Talosheim, giving him the ability to have conversations like a normal person.

He considers himself to be Vandalieu's First Knight, possessing a chivalrous sense that causes him to feel a fiery rivalry with Ammonites.

He is not good with cats, but Vandalieu has ordered him not to kill or harm them without reason, so he does not lay a hand on them.

As of the end of chapter 51, he is a Rank 5 Skeleton Baron. The bones making up his body are Earth Dragon bones reshaped to be like human bones, so he is harder than he appears.

Bone Chimera (Knochen)

A Rank 7 monster created when Bone Monkey, Bone Wolf, Bone Bear and Bone Bird – the other Undead made at the same time as Bone Man – were combined. His name, 'Knochen' – which means 'bone' in German – was given to him afterwards.

It is loyal to Vandalieu, and its favorite game is to have Vandalieu throw a frisbee for it to catch and then throw it back for him to go and fetch.

Sam

While alive, he served as a caretaker for horses and a coachman for a certain noble family. He has a very difficult past. He was dismissed from his position in the noble family and attacked by bandits during his journey to a new land. His daughters were violated before his very eyes and then all three of them were killed.

Vandalieu killed those responsible, and Sam swore loyalty to him as his new master.

He presently occupies a carriage, and is now an Undead known as a Blood Carriage. Perhaps because he was once an excellent coachman, he offers pleasant, comfortable rides that other Blood Carriages cannot compare to.

His main body is the carriage, but due to his high-level Spirit Form skill, he is able to produce a clone of himself that resembles his body when he was alive other than having pallid skin and crimson eyes. He is even capable of eating.

His hobbies include running over living creatures to kill them beneath his carriage wheels, but he is weak when it comes to Reversi. His record of consecutive losses against his daughters is growing longer and longer.

Saria

Sam’s daughter. A young woman who was burned alive after being violated by bandits alongside her sister.

She currently resides in a high-leg-leotard-shaped suit of armor that is a Magic Item; she is a Living Magic High-Leg Armor.

Until recently she was nothing but a suit of armor, but as she has acquired

the Spirit Form skill, it is now possible to see her directly.

However, she has the appearance of mist shaped like a stick figure with no outline or features. She resembles the silhouettes depicting the criminal in mystery manga, where it is difficult to determine the criminal's age or gender. Of course, she has no sex appeal or anything of the sort.

Unlike her younger sister, she has a firm personality. However, she chose a halberd as her weapon and seems to possess heroic qualities as well.

She has recently taken a liking to her Long-range Control skill, and works hard to train it.

She believes her sister is joking when she tries to tempt Vandalieu from time to time, including the perverse behavior she shows when she is refused.

Saria's future dream is to become a slaughter-maid who can clean up both dirt in the mansion and the enemies of her master.

Rita

Saria's younger sister. Like her sister, she is a maid girl who met a difficult end.

She presently resides in a bikini-shaped suit of armor that is a Magic Item; she is a Living Magic Bikini Armor.

Her Spirit Form appearance is like her sister's.

She has a bright, playful personality, but she actually also has a dark side. She chose a glaive as her weapon for a simple reason; it looked strong.

She is half-serious when she tries to tempt her master, Vandalieu. The bandits that assaulted her were little more than 'male' beasts; she has taken a liking to Vandalieu because he is the exact opposite of them.

That is why she is aiming to increase her Spirit Form skill, but as she has forgotten what she looked like while she was alive, she secretly tells herself constantly, 'I am beautiful, I am sexy,' in an attempt to hypnotize herself to

believe it.

Zadiris

The most senior of the Ghouls, currently two-hundred-and-ninety-three years old. However, due to Vandalieu having used Youth Transformation on her, her physical age is almost the same as her physical appearance. She has the appearance of a beautiful girl with a small build. She uses ‘washi’[2] to refer to herself and adds ‘no ja’[2] at the ends of her sentences, but perhaps due to the influence of her physical appearance, her mental age isn’t as high as her real age.

She is a hardworking person, having become a Ghoul Mage through considerable effort despite not being able to undergo a Job-change and receive bonuses to her skills.

She met Vandalieu, who reversed her aging and solved the fertility problems that Ghouls faced as a race. Though she was forced to escape from her homeland, as a result she and the other Ghouls moved to a more comfortable place to live where they could have more substantial diets and baths. She was even able to undergo a Job-change and increase her Rank to become a Ghoul High Mage, so only good things came of it.

She is very pleased that she managed to see the face of her first grandchild.

She feels a great deal of gratitude to Vandalieu. She is training mages so that one can take her place in the next generation, in the hope of being able to follow Vandalieu to the Orbaume Kingdom as a tamed familiar once he becomes an adventurer to build up his achievements there.

She has recently taken a liking to the massage Golems that have been installed in the changing rooms of the bathhouses.

Vigaro

He was once supposed to become the young chief of the Ghouls; he is currently serving as the chief of the Ghoul warriors in Talosheim.

He is an established individual, very popular among groups of Ghoul women and respected by the young men. However, the Undead Titan women have also tried seducing him, and he has caused trouble for Vandalieu by asking for advice about various things.

He has a muscle-brained personality, but he has the flexibility to ask for advice from his more intelligent companions on things he doesn't understand.

He considers himself to be Vandalieu's older brother, and he has a rivalry with Borkus, who also considers himself to be Vandalieu's older brother.

Incidentally, he had sexual relations with Zadiris in the past, and Basdia was born as a result. However, as he only knows Ghoul culture in which there is no marriage system, he believes, 'the past is the past, now is now.'

He cares for Basdia more than he would for other women, but not enough for him to tell her that he is her father.

His favorite food in the past was human flesh, but now it is acorn cookies with plenty of honey poured on top.

Basdia

Zadiris's daughter. She is currently a Rank 5 Ghoul Amazoness.

Her physical appearance is that of a beautiful woman in her late twenties. She has a muscular, 190 cm-tall body while having abundant, feminine curves. There are red patterns running across her entire body like tattoos that Vandalieu thinks of as 'cool'.

Due to the special characteristic of the Ghouls that causes their physical appearance to become fixed when they first become pregnant, she had been troubled by her infertility, but thanks to Vandalieu, she successfully became

pregnant and gave birth.

Incidentally, the father of her child is unknown.

She has liked Vandalieu ever since she met him, and she has promised that he will be the father of her second child once he becomes an adult.

She likes men who are the strong type, and her personality leads to her pursuing strength herself.

The reason she brings up the topic of child-making with Vandalieu from time to time is actually because she feels a risk that if she doesn't do that, he will start viewing her as an older-sister replacement rather than as a woman.

Bilde

A Ghoul woman. Her physical appearance is that of a beautiful woman with short hair in her late teenage years or early twenties.

She was the reason Vandalieu became aware of the Ghouls' fertility problems. She is the first among the Ghoul women to successfully give birth after receiving his death-attribute-magic treatment.

Her personality is like that of a bright onee-san, and as far as abilities go, she is an average Ghoul. But as other Ghouls have been improving their abilities, she is on the relatively low end in that regard. However, she is currently not paying any attention to that and devoting herself to raising her child.

She has recently been cooperating with the other mothers, taking care of her daughter Varde and training herself in magic for several hours every day.

Tarea

Originally a human, she is an elderly arms smith who creates equipment using monster materials. She has walked a difficult path in life. She was sold

by her family and became a slave. Feeling despair and being unable to see any future for herself as she worked as a prostitute, she killed one of her customers and ran away. She entered a Devil's Nest to escape her pursuers, only to be captured by Ghouls and turned into one of them.

However, she is an indomitable, brave woman. After becoming a Ghoul, she used her smithing skills to produce equipment, used techniques she had learned as a prostitute to entice the men, taught her smithing skills to the women and rose to the top of her village to rule over it.

Though she holds a folding fan, has her hair in ringlet curls and speaks in an elegant tone in an attempt to appear elegant, she actually comes from a commoner background and and her actions only serve to make that apparent. She has a luxury complex second only to Vandalieu's.

She has a strong ambition to improve her position in society; she sees herself as a king's vassal for Vandalieu for some reason and devotes herself to trying to gain his favor. For this reason, she views Zadiris and Basdia as her rivals.

Hearing that Vandalieu destroyed the Subordinate Vampire who tried to kill her, she has become even more enthralled by him.

She has recently completed treatment with Youth Transformation, which reversed her physical age to her appearance of being less than twenty years old. She enjoys bathing in the bathhouses.

Incidentally, among all of the characters who have appeared up until chapter 51, she possesses a bust that competes for number 1 in size. Her competition is Basdia, and if Darcia is included as well, it becomes a three-way competition.

Ranked fourth are Eleanora and Memediga; fifth and below belong to Bilde, Kachia and others whose sizes are not outstanding, and Zadiris comes after them. Last are Rita and Saria (who have none).

Kachia

A former D-class adventurer with a difficult past. She was captured alive by Bugogan and personally raped by him to bear his children.

After that, Vandalieu rescued her and she fell under the effects of his Death-Attribute Charm because she had lost the hope to live and desired death. In the end, she chose to become a Ghoul.

She became impatient when she realized she was not progressing as quickly as the other adventurers that were her companions and that impatience continued even after she became a Ghoul. However, this has been solved after Vandalieu gave her some advice. She has now become accustomed to her increased physical strength as a Ghoul, and is presently training in magic.

Braga

A Black Goblin born between a Goblin and one of the Ghouls who were held captive as breeders in the Orc village led by Bugogan. He was originally supposed to become a slave after birth, but Vandalieu interfered in various ways while he was in the womb and exposed him to death-attribute Mana. He and his companions were born with superior intelligence and a better personality than normal Goblins, so they were welcomed into the community.

It has been around two years since he was born, but he has already become an adult and started living on his own. He has a good relationship with his mother, visiting her from time to time with meat that he has hunted.

He has been taught the basics of being a Scout[1] by the Undead Titan Zran. After hearing stories about ninjas from Vandalieu, he is currently training with the goal of becoming Lambda's first ninja.

He is particularly good friends with the Anubises Zemedo and Memediga, and the Orcus Gorba.

Thomas Palpapek

An earl who served as the Mirg shield-nation's marshal. He has connections to the faction of Vampires led by the Pure-breed Vampire Gubamon, who worships Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life.

He is an abundantly talented individual in his mid-thirties. He believes that any methods should be used as long as they produce favorable results. His connection with the Vampires is but one of those methods.

He is resented by Vandalieu as he was indirectly involved in Darcia's death, but the only information he has on Vandalieu is that he leads several hundred Ghouls and that he can see spirits. For this reason, Palpapek doesn't see Vandalieu as a particularly great threat.

He is served by a former member of the Five-colored Blades, the Green Wind Spear Riley, who is also Vandalieu's enemy.

Nuaza

A young man who was an apprentice priest warrior in the Church of Vida in Talosheim. After dying, he became a Lesser Lich with a mummy-like appearance, being made of only skin and bones. Because of this, he appears to be an elderly person at first glance.

However, back then, he was stronger physically than with magic, and not very much like a Lich.

Though he was not particularly religious in life, he became fanatically so after becoming an Undead upon receiving a prophecy. Through the power of religion, he became one of the key individuals among the Undead Titans.

He believes Vandalieu to be the Prophesized Holy Son and the second coming of the Vampires' ancestor while making no attempt to certify these facts.

He has become a Rank 5 Lich as a result of Vandalieu's training, and is

continuing to become more and more of a fanatic.

Borkus

An A-class adventurer bearing the Title of ‘Sword King’ in life, weakened upon becoming an Undead and currently a Rank 9 Zombie Hero.

He is a little over three meters tall, and has a characteristic appearance of being bald with one side of his face being only a skull.

He has a rough but helpful personality and eats and drinks a lot. He is the embodiment of a Titan man, and was idolized when he was alive. However, he had a daughter who apparently saw him as a simple doting parent.

Because he can now gain Experience Points simply by devouring the meat of creatures that he kills, he thinks, ‘Being a Zombie isn’t so bad.’

He competes with Vigaro for the position of being Vandalieu’s older brother. He feels no shame in frequently creating easy-to-understand schemes to try and make Vandalieu sit on Talosheim’s throne and marry the Second Princess Zandia of whom only a severed hand is left without the permission of Zandia herself.

Pauvina

The spirit of a fresh female corpse that Viscount Balchesse prepared in order for the life-attribute mage adventurer Luciliano to turn into a Live-Dead and scout the Orc village.

Her name and personal history are unknown. She herself has forgotten most of her previous life.

Thanks to Vandalieu, she was reborn as a half-Noble Orc. Though she has a face resembling the one she had in her previous life, she was born with golden hair and the ears and tail of a pig.

As of chapter 51, she is a year and a half old. But as Noble Orc blood runs in her veins, she is developing quickly and has reached the size of a three or four-year-old.

However, the size of her body has already surpassed that of Vandalieu who is almost five years old; if she continues at this pace, it can be expected that she will become over two meters tall.

But like Dhampirs, she is more like a person in nature, so there is no Rank on her Status.

She is emotionally attached to Vandalieu and has taken a liking to throwing him in the air.

Eleanora

A Noble-born Rank 8 Vampire Baroness, a beautiful woman around twenty years of age. She has a height of around 170cm, long red hair, a beautiful face that looks strict at first glance and a well-defined figure.

She had a difficult past. As a human, she was sold by her family around the time she became old enough to know what was going on in the world around her, and then was sold to the mines as nobody wanted to buy her due to the black skin she had at the time. There, she was taken in by Birkyne after he saw that she had an affinity for the time attribute, and as a result of surviving the cruel environment she was placed in with other children with similar backgrounds, she became a Noble-born Vampire.

Not even ten years have passed since she became a Vampire, but even so, she is a talented individual who has acquired the unique skill Charming Demon Eyes, with ability surpassing Sercrent, who had been a Vampire for more than a century.

She has a calm, pragmatic personality, but she is essentially a coward.

She is under the influence of Death-Attribute Charm, and even acknowledges Vandalieu as the most fearsome existence in the world due to

his ability to break souls. Believing that she could feel at ease being in his service, she changed sides.

Though she is not really aware of it herself, she is clingy and, contrary to what her appearance may suggest, has some masochistic tendencies. When Vandalieu tried to remove the piercing in her tongue that is a sign of her loyalty, she cried in protest.

Because of her skillset, she is more adept in covert movements than in direct combat.

Because she is a Noble-born Vampire that her Vampire parent Birkyne created hastily, she has not acquired some skills that she should possess already.

Birkyne

A Pure-breed Vampire who has lived for over a hundred thousand years. He turned his back on the goddess Vida and the Vampire ancestor who were defeated by Alda, the god of law and fate. He worships the Evil God of Joyful Life Hihiryushukaka, creates evil schemes and indulges in repulsive pleasures.

His appearance is that of an eloquent, pleasant young man and his behavior is elegant; he could pass for a young nobleman if he does not show his fangs. In fact, his normal behavior is much more decent than that of the other Pure-breed Vampires. He always shows his face at the meetings that occur once a year and often decides where they are held.

However, his true personality is one that desires to monopolize and rule over things, and he is so hot-tempered that if he becomes mad with rage, he can rampage haphazardly and be out of control for up to ten days straight.

His main hobby is torture, but the thing he enjoys the most is to discover and raise superior individuals and then gradually destroy them with his own hands. Several slave traders and orphanages are under his control without being aware of this.

He was outraged when Vandalieu stole his new favorite, Eleanora, but he has cleared his head after going on a rampage and now no longer holds any grudge towards him. He is now more concerned and curious about why the evil god would go as far as to personally send a Divine Message instructing the Vampires to kill the Dhampir.

Ternecia

One of the Pure-breed Vampires. Her appearance is that of a woman in her mid-twenties with a well-featured, beautiful face and an excessive amount of sex appeal, but her vulgar, violent behavior often gives off the impression that she is a prostitute from some run-down district.

Her personality is just as short-tempered and violent as her behavior would suggest. She is not incapable of being calm, but she does not hold back her emotions as long as she sees no need to do so. As a result, she disposes of her own subordinates most frequently among the three Pure-breed Vampires.

Due to the divine protection of the Evil God of Joyful Life, she is able to turn corpses into Undead and control them. She feels a sense of superiority from doing so, and it has already surpassed being a hobby, being more in the realms of being an addiction.

Her recent themes have been parent-and-child and families, so she is indulging in the wicked pastime of sewing the corpses of twins, brothers and sisters together to create a single Zombie.

She has recently been hit with a twisted inspiration and now desires to use the gray-brown skin of the Ghouls in her work.

Gubamon

One of the Pure-breed Vampires. His appearance is that of an old man who

looks like a withered tree, featuring large, staring eyes and an abundant beard.

His personality is as eccentric as his appearance; he shows little interest in things outside of his own hobbies. Because of this, the management of his subordinates is sloppy and this is one of the reasons the Dhampir Vandalieu was able to survive.

He is the one who turned Vandalieu's father, Valen, into a Subordinate Vampire, and used him as a convenient spy who could move around during the day. However, again due to the poor management of his subordinates, not only did he not notice the relationship between Valen and Darcia until they eloped, but he told the other subordinates who tried to warn him 'not to interfere with his hobby' and killed them with his bare hands without listening to them.

However, since he is completely indifferent towards his subordinates as long as they do not interfere with his hobby, those in his faction had the highest survival rate… until recently.

The hobby of his lifetime is to turn the corpses of heroes into Undead and collect them; he has stolen the corpses of some of Talosheim's heroes, the 'Saint' Jeena and the 'Tiny Genius' Zandia, and turned them into Undead.

He is also thinking of turning Vandalieu into an Undead once he is killed.

Note from the author:

The 'Green Wind Spear' Riley appears frequently in the third volume, so please stay tuned for his appearance.

Notes

1. I've mentioned this before, but 'washi' is a pronoun is typically used by elderly males. Similarly, the 'no ja' that Zadiris ends her sentences in is also typically used by elderly males.

2. There is furigana over this that says “a thief, so to speak”, but the dictionary meaning I get is “scout, patrol, spy” and I’m pretty sure I translated something else to “thief” before so I’m leaving this as is.

Credits

Author	—	Densuke
Publisher	—	Syosetsu
Translation	—	Light Novel Bastion
Book designer	—	Armaell's library