The Death Mage Who Doesn't Want a Fourth Time

– Yondome wa Iyana Shi Zokusei Majutsushi –

- Volume 5 -
The Monstrosity's Expedition

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Chapter 97
The Cream Expedition's conclusion!

The one with the Title of "Scaled King," the one who ruled the vast marshlands, was being served today, just like he was every day, by the servants who worshipped him.

Over a hundred years ago, he had been nothing more than an Earth Dragon.

He was a member of a race of Dragons feared for their earth attribute, but such Dragons were indeed a lower-class race of Dragons.

He was a monster born in a Dungeon that had appeared in the marshlands. He was not a boss or a mid-boss, but an ordinary monster inhabiting the Dungeon's floors.

He suffered because those inhabiting the area around him were monsters of the same Rank as him, but one day, a great monster rampage occurred and he was released from the Dungeon.

When he went outside with the other monsters, he found that there were countless monsters that were weaker than him.

He ate them. He attacked, consumed, fought, was attacked in return, fought and was engrossed in consuming more.

Before he knew it, his Rank had increased.

And after some time, he heard the voice of Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God.

"You have quality. If you worship me, I shall give you my divine protection."

He obeyed Luvesfol's words and gained a divine protection. He continued to violently consume, and he, who had once been Rank 7, became a Great Mad Dragon.

His limbs became fin-shaped and his head and torso became like those of a crocodile, but he did not care. As a monster, an increase in Rank was something to be happy about, and if that resulted in a change in form, it was nothing to regret.

The Lizardmen that he had previously obeyed now obeyed him, and now that he had devoured his most powerful enemies, he now spent his pleasant days ruling as the Scaled King.

The Lizardmen would bring him food, and if it wasn't enough, he could simply eat the Lizardmen.

He stared at the treasures that he had collected and dozed off to sleep while having the Lizardmen polish the scales on his back that he couldn't reach himself. There was nothing better than this.

He no longer needed to do any fighting himself, but by having the Lizardmen worship Luvesfol as well, he was not reprimanded, but had his divine protection strengthened instead.

He had thought that time would simply continue passing like this forever, but his Lizardman servants had been making noise lately. It seemed that some of the conquered Lizardman groups were no longer obeying.

It was bothersome, so the Scaled King did nothing and simply went to sleep.

The next time he opened his eyes, he was delivered a message that they were under attack.

What insolent fools dare they defy the Scaled King? I will devour them!

After eating the Lizardman who had delivered the report as breakfast, the Great Mad Dragon with the Title of Scaled King left his den for the first time in a long time.

In the vast marshlands, a large number of Lizardmen were fighting an allied force made of other Lizardmen, Ghouls and Undead.

It was the allied force that was pushing forward.

"My army is overwhelming, is it not?" said Chezare, performing general-like work for the first time in a while.

It was so overwhelming that there was no need to tell Chezare that his words were

triggering a flag.

“I did make sure that it would become overwhelming,” said Vandalieu, whose skin was as white as wax even in the sunlight of this hot, humid summer.

They had started by searching for the groups of Lizardmen that had made non-aggression pacts with Talosheim two hundred years ago, holding flags of the same color that had been used when negotiating with the Lizardmen back then. But when they found these Lizardmen, who had ruled the marshlands two hundred years ago, they found that there was only a small group of only thirty individuals now.

There hadn’t been any Lizardmen smart enough to understand human words or write characters, so Vandalieu made a Zombie out the Lizardmen he had defeated during the search and had them translate.

Vandalieu learned that the marshlands had now been ruled for a long time by a powerful Dragon and the group of Lizardmen who worshipped Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, who had given this Dragon his divine protection.

No matter how much Vandalieu talked to the Lizardmen or listened to the spirits, he couldn’t get any idea of where this Dragon had come from or what kind of Dragon it was, but he did learn that it had adapted to the marshlands and ruled over numerous Earth Dragons and Rock Dragons.

And the number of Lizardmen under the Scaled King’s rule was apparently over three thousand.

The enemy group had used the Dragon’s power to bring many other groups under its command, maintaining their numbers by hunting other monsters and fish and training their warriors in one of the two Dungeons that had appeared in the marshlands.

Lizardmen were Rank 3 to begin with, but they were the most intelligent among demi-human monsters excluding superior races such as Noble Orcs. Lizardman warriors had more endurance, more composure and better decision-making than unskilled bandits.

The fact that they had formed a non-aggression pact with Talosheim two hundred years ago was proof of their intelligence.

It seemed that there were many high-Rank Lizardmen in the Scaled King's group, so considering that the battlefield would be a marshland with poor footing, conquering them through sheer strength would be a poor plan.

If rock or wood Golems were to be used as disposable soldiers, they would quickly sink into the marshes.

So how had Vandalieu cut through the Scaled King's intelligent Lizardmen who weren't affected by Death-Attribute Charm and added them to his own army?

He had shown them his overwhelming power.

"Lizards! Choose whether you want to obey us or die here!"

"OOOOOHN!"

"Choose quickly! We have short tempers!"

The Rank 10 Zombie Hero Borkus, the Rank 8 Union of Bones Knochen and the Rank 7 Ghoul Tyrant Vigaro had intimidated the Lizardmen with their bloodthirst and anger, with the translating Lizardman Zombies next to them persuading the Lizardmen to surrender.

"Fufufu, it does look quite painful to have one's limbs severed. Do you wish for us to kill you? Oh no, what we desire is not your lives, but your absolute obedience. Please consider this offer. If you submit to us, I shall sew your limbs back on, just as they were before." The Rank 10 Bellmond persuaded the Lizardmen along with a Lizardman Zombie's translation, maintaining her usual businesslike smile.

"Obey us!" Braga shouted.

"You foolish people!" said Eleanora. "I am telling you to surrender to Vandalieu-sama!"

"Aren't you going to use your Charming Demon Eyes?" Basdia asked.

"There's no point in doing that because its effects are canceled the moment eye contact is broken!" Eleanora told her.

The three of them had beaten all of the Lizardmen half to death in order to make them understand the difference in strength.

Monsters generally only obeyed those stronger than them, so the only way to bring these Lizardmen over was to use violence and the language of physical actions.

"– ♪"

Vandalieu had peacefully sung an endless song among some of the Lizardmen groups as well while scattering paralyzing venom into the air. Of course, with the Scream and Mental Encroachment skill included.

By the time the paralyzing venom had worn off, these villages of Lizardmen believed without a doubt that they had been under the rule of Vandalieu all along, not the Scaled King.

The above methods had been used two months ago on the small groups outside the marshlands, and a thousand Lizardmen had become allies… and, for some reason, the group that had joined Vandalieu and his companions from the beginning, the one that had been friendly to Talosheim in the past, had become much more loyal in the process.

"With things being so one-sided, I have the feeling that it would have been easier to simply conquer them by force," said Chezare, half-joking.

"Chezare, you are getting ahead of yourself. And Shashuja is making a sad face, so don't say that," said Vandalieu, glancing at the Lizardman Geronimo Shashuja, who was acting as a mediator for the other Lizardmen.

He was a descendant of the ones who had made a non-aggression pact with Talosheim, and he was currently looking at Vandalieu with the expression of an abandoned puppy. It was incredible that he could make such an expression with his cold, reptilian eyes.

The truth was that Lizardmen were not a race created by Vida; they were just monsters. Vandalieu and his companions had no reason to give them any consideration.

But Vandalieu had yielded to Shashuja's sorrowful tears, deciding that the Lizardmen would merge with Talosheim after the Scaled King had been defeated.

Incidentally, the name Shashuja was a conversion of his original name in the Lizardman language so that other races could pronounce it.

"…Your Majesty, even if you are weak to women and children, why were you persuaded by the tears of a Lizardman?" Chezare asked.

"I've always liked animals," Vandalieu explained. "But when I was on Earth, I couldn't have any pets, and in Origin, I was a guinea pig."

And in the end, it had simply taken a bit of time, and the Lizardmen hadn't posed any particular danger to anyone, so he was sure that nobody would mind.

Also, it was true that it would be convenient to use the Lizardmen, who were adapted to this terrain, to manage these vast marshlands.

"More importantly, the enemy has revealed its trump card," said Vandalieu.

"Oh, those are Lizardman Royal Guards!" Chezare exclaimed. "That is a monster that normally does not appear in the absence of a Lizard King, Your Majesty."

Powerful-looking Lizardmen with better physiques and equipment than the others crawled out of their den. According to Chezare, they were members of quite a rare race.

They joined the frontlines, but they weren't enough to turn the tides of the one-sided battle.

There were still two thousand Lizardmen on the Scaled King's side, but on the side of the Eclipse King Vandalieu, in addition to the one thousand Lizardmen, there was a thousand-strong mixed army of Ghouls, Undead and monsters.

And the Lizardmen were not affected by Vandalieu's Strengthen Followers skill, but the Strengthen Subordinates skill was taking effect on them.

There was no way that a few dozen elite individuals joining the frontlines could make a difference.

Perhaps flustered because of this situation, the Dragons that were likely the Scaled King's most powerful servants emerged. Earth Dragons and Rock Dragons, six in total. They were scattering their own Lizardmen as they charged onto the frontlines, so they were making the battlefield even more chaotic.

But the Scaled King's Lizardmen gave hissing cheers and raised their own morale.

The Eclipse King's army cheered and raised their morale as well.

"Delicious-looking meat!"

"Kill them! Kill them!"

There were no Dragons around Talosheim these days, so everyone was fired up. Although Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain, a B-class Dungeon, produced many Wyverns, the spawn rate of Earth Dragons and Dragons more powerful than them was low, so this was a chance to have some Dragon meat for the first time in a long time.

In fact, these Rank 7 and Rank 8 enemies stood no chance against the elite members of the Eclipse King's army.

"Great Splitting Axe!" Vigaro cut through the neck of an Earth Dragon with an axe made of the Demon King's horns, and next to him, Knochen, who couldn't be described as anything but a mountain of bones, gave a roar as it swallowed another Earth Dragon whole while gouging out its bones.

"This is the time to show the bravery of the reborn Black Bull Knights' Order!"

"Run, my beloved steed!"

The Zombie knights of the Black Bull Knights' Order, who were formerly from the Mirg shield-nation, attacked a Rock Dragon together, mounted on their sturdy, somewhat sinister horses.

The Rock Dragon was Rank 8 Dragon that was as large, powerful and sturdier than anything else, as if it was actually a boulder that had begun moving. However, the knights were making sport of it, splitting its shell with their black halberds and claymores made of Death Iron.

Incidentally, the horses that they were riding were the horses taken from Karcan and the Red Wolf Knights' Order in the Hartner Duchy, and they had now become monsters.

They were now Rank 3 Demon Horses, feared monsters that war horses who had basked in the endless blood and screams of the dying on the battlefield could transform into.

They had frightening appearances, but they would not be scared even when Zombies approached. They were omnivorous and would eat the weak monsters that they trampled under their hooves, so they were convenient mounts.

Another Dragon was petrified by Bellmond's transplanted Demon Eye and sliced into pieces by her metal threads. Another was slaughtered by Basdia and Eleanora. One particularly pitiful Dragon had its throat destroyed by Braga and his companions so that it couldn't release its Breath attack and then used as a living sandbag by the less experienced Black Goblins and Anubises.

Both allied and enemy Lizardmen were dumbfounded at the sight of the Dragons, whom they had always considered to be absolutely superior beings, being defeated one after another. Shashuja, who was in the troop headquarters with Vandalieu, was dumbfounded as well.

"Rank 7 and 8 monsters appear in the Dungeons at home," Vandalieu explained. "We won't struggle with enemies like this."

Dragons themselves didn't appear in the Dungeons, but monsters just as powerful did, so defeating these monsters was to be expected.

"Your Majesty, it is time," said Chezare.

"Yes. Well then, I'll leave the rest to you."

A few seconds after Vandalieu spread his Spirit Form wings and took into the sky, a particularly enormous Dragon emerged from its den with a thunderous roar.

Not only the Lizardmen, but those in the Eclipse King's army were quite disturbed at the bizarre appearance of the Scaled King, who resembled an enormous crocodile with fins for limbs.

A Rank 10 monster was one that was powerful enough to destroy an entire nation. It would not be strange for regular monsters and ordinary adventurers to flee in panic from such a foe.

That was likely why Borkus gleefully jumping in with his enormous sword raised was an unexpected development for the Scaled King.

"Finally, someone worth fighting!" Borkus roared.

The Scaled King showed nothing resembling a movement until his snout had been torn to pieces by the tip of the magic sword. As his blood sprayed into the air, he finally roared in anger.

“Spacing out, huh!” Borkus shouted. “Don’t doze off! Open your eyes!”

Vandalieu thought it would have been fine for the Scaled King to keep dozing off, but it seemed that Borkus, who found even the bosses of B-class Dungeons to be not enough of a challenge now that he had become Rank 10, wanted to fight the Scale King in earnest.

As if granting Borkus’s wish, the Scaled King’s fighting instinct awakened. He let out a howl in place of an incantation, released earth-attribute and wind-attribute spells, swung his tail like a whip and thrashed his fins.

His mayhem could only be called a natural disaster; any creature caught up in it would be thrown about and pulverized.

“Gahahaha! Just like that!” Borkus laughed, undaunted.

He was Rank 10 as well, and most Dragons would be more powerful than Undead, but Borkus was a Zombie who had regained all of the strength that he had possessed as an A-class adventurer while he was alive. On top of that, he was equipped just as well as an A-class adventurer, or even better.

And his Attribute Values were enhanced by the Strengthen Followers and Strengthen Subordinates skills.

But at Rank 10, even a level 10 Strengthen Followers skill would make it difficult for Borkus to overcome an opponent a Rank higher.

A Rank 1 Goblin’s physical lifting strength increasing by five hundred kilograms would be a dramatic increase, but for a Dragon who could lift boulders with ease to begin with, a five hundred kilogram increase in strength would still be amazing, but not as dramatic. The same principle applied here.

But Borkus was the same Rank as the Scaled King. Only one of them was under a strengthening effect, so the difference was great.

“Hahaah! The sword that the kid made for me really has a different sharpness to iiiit!”

The enormous, three-meter-long sword that Borkus was currently wielding had been created by polishing the Demon King's horns with the Demon King's blood, then combining it with Death Iron.

The Scaled King's scales were so solid that even a first-rate swordsman would be helpless against them, but they were being torn through by a super-first-rate Zombie swordsman wielding a sword created with a material that could even shred Adamantite.

"I suppose it's about time," Vandalieu murmured.

Looking down at the cornered Scaled King from the sky, Vandalieu decided that this was a good time and cut his own wrist with his claws, activating the Demon King's blood.

Red-black blood gushed out of the wound, rapidly clotting in a cylindrical shape. And then he activated the Demon King's horns, forming a small, aerodynamically-shaped horn the size of his fingertip.

The Scaled King let out a particularly long, loud roar. A pillar of thick purple light descended upon him from the sky.

This was the Familiar Spirit Descent skill that High Priest Gordan had once used, the skill that allowed a god's Familiar Spirit to descend upon the user's body and strengthen their Attribute Values.

The Scaled King was a monster, but he was a follower of Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, so he was able to have a Familiar Spirit descend upon him.

This Dragon was powerful to begin with; strengthened further by Familiar Spirit Descent, it was possibly a dangerous enemy even for Borkus.

"Fire."

Vandalieu pierced that evil pillar of light created by Familiar Spirit Descent with a bullet from his Telekinesis cannon, loaded with the effect of Soul Break.

Some kind of indescribable scream echoed out as the pillar of light crumbled and vanished.

Vandalieu's wings were beating as he hovered over the Scaled King, who had frozen in place in a dumbfounded state. Vandalieu sighed, thinking his work was done, and then felt confused.

"It seems that I succeeded in interfering with the Familiar Spirit Descent using the Demon King's horn bullet that I fired with a gun barrel made with the Demon King's blood, but what was that scream?" he wondered. "Could it be that it hit the Familiar Spirit itself?"

Eleanora and Bellmond had concluded at an early stage that the Scaled King might be able to use Luvesfol's Familiar Spirit Descent.

The evil gods possessed their own Familiar Spirits, and they could bestow the Familiar Spirit Descent skill to their followers. Even if they were monsters.

Therefore, a plan to deal with it needed to be discussed.

But Vandalieu's apprentice, the former adventurer and current Undead researcher Luciliano, had said, "You can simply shoot through it with your gun thing, Master."

Vandalieu had been doubtful that the descent of a god's Familiar Spirit could be interrupted by a gun, but everyone had immediately agreed with Luciliano.

"It's okay, I'm sure you can do it, Vandalieu! You can easily beat a Familiar Spirit of an evil god," said Darcia.

"Indeed, you should have confidence in yourself, boy," said Zadiris.

"Vandalieu-sama, you have already destroyed Ternecia, who was a subordinate god of Hihiryushukaka," said Eleanora. "A Familiar Spirit is just small fry."

Encouraged, Vandalieu had decided to give it a try.

The Demon King's blood, once coagulated, wasn't as hard as Orichalcum, but harder than Adamantite. Vandalieu had created a gun barrel using this, loaded Demon King's small horn into the barrel and fired it as a bullet.

As a result, he had actually managed to prevent the Familiar Spirit Descent. It was possible that the Soul Break in the bullet had damaged the Familiar Spirit itself.

“Well then, I’ll leave the rest to you,” said Vandalieu.

“You got it!” Borkus said. And then he raised his sword once more. “Now then… let’s continue.”

For the first time, the color of fear appeared in the Scaled King’s vertical pupils.

『The levels of the No-Attribute Magic, Mana Control, Artillery Technique, God Slayer, Commanding and Strengthen Subordinates skills have increased!』

Nothing particularly miraculous happened. Borkus fought a reasonably fierce battle while saying it was a little lacking and then pierced the Scaled King’s forehead.

He was happy that he had finally gained a sizeable amount of Experience Points from defeating an opponent as equally powerful as him.

And Vandalieu, who received approximately ten percent of everyone else’s Experience Points, had leveled up as well.

“With this, my Tree Caster level has increased to 100,” he said happily.

“I’m looking forward to hearing what kind of new Jobs will be available, Bocchan,” said Rita.

“Will your next Job be Madoushi after all?” asked Saria.

“That’s my plan,” said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu had avoided the Madoushi* Job as it sounded like a suspiciously ordinary Job, but according to the information that he had squeezed out of Ternecia, whose soul he had destroyed in spring, acquiring the Guider Job was a requirement of becoming a champion.

The Guider Job was apparently a Job that made not only the Job holder, but his companions stronger as well. Ternecia hadn’t known the exact details, but perhaps it was possible that it allowed the acquisition of a skill like Strengthen Followers that

affected people.

But considering that the effect of Vandalieu's 'Eclipse King' Title allowed all of Talosheim's citizens to be affected by Strengthen Followers regardless of their race, it might seem that there was no advantage to Vandalieu acquiring this Job.

However, it was still a Job that was a requirement for becoming a hero, even if this fact wasn't commonly known. There was no doubt that simply acquiring the Job would be enough to gain the trust of the upper echelons of society, such as Guild Masters of the Adventurers' Guild.

It was a little sinister that "魔/ma" had been added to it, but it seemed that there were multiple varieties of the Guider Job. The champion Bellwood had simply been a 'Guider,' but Zakkart had been a United Guider*.

TLN: 共導士/Kyoudoushi, where 共/kyou is something like "together."*

Considering that, Vandalieu decided that it wasn't that unusual for his Job to have "魔/ma" attached to it.

Jobs like Mage, Magic Warrior, Magic Sword User and Monster User also had 魔/ma attached to them*, but they were all normal Jobs. The 魔/ma in Madoushi probably just represented the fact that he had many monster friends.

TLN: As you can guess, all of these Job titles start with 魔/ma.*

"If you become a Guider, please make it so that Father can fly!" said Rita.

Her father, the Undead Sam who was possessing a carriage, still had his sights set on flying through the sky. He had been performing full-speed jumps from high places to increase the level of his Impact Resistance skill.

It seemed that his long experience being a carriage driver while he was alive had given him fixed preconceptions that were hindering his evolution into an Undead carriage that could fly.

Vandalieu had been unable to help him, as there was no telling what effects using the Mental Encroachment skill to remove those preconceptions from Sam's mind could have.

“Hmm, I’ll do my best,” said Vandalieu. “Now then, I suppose I should help out with the post-battle cleanup as well.”

After the Scaled King’s defeat, the surviving enemy Lizardmen had already surrendered and submitted to Shashuja and the others, dropped their weapons and raised their hands into the air, exposing their bellies.

…This was not an act of arrogance, but surrendering by exposing their soft bellies. It was the same as a beast showing its belly to an enemy.

The ones that were not getting on the ground were staying standing because they were standing in water and would not be able to breathe if they lay down, as their home was a marshland.

Vandalieu had thought that about half of them would try to resist or flee, but that hadn’t happened.

“They switched sides quite quickly. Maybe this Scaled King wasn’t very popular?” Vandalieu wondered.

“That’s not it; I’m sure they just know that they would die if they disobey,” said Rita.

Vandalieu nodded, deciding that this was a reasonable explanation. “This is thanks to Borkus’s hard work.”

Borkus had stayed in an advantageous position the entire battle as he defeated the Scaled King who had ruled at the top all this time, while Bellmond, Eleanora, Vigaro and the others had defeated the Dragons that had been his most powerful servants as if they were small fry.

Nobody could blame the Lizardmen for surrendering.

“No, it was you more than me, kid,” said Borkus, whose entire body was red with the Scaled King’s blood.

“Eh?” said Vandalieu.

Borkus looked exasperated. “You’re really confused, huh?”

“But all I did was hit a large target with the Telekinesis cannon I made by combining

the Demon King's blood and the Demon King's horns," said Vandalieu. "I think it's true that preventing the Familiar Spirit Descent was significant, but I didn't use any Mana and didn't put myself in any danger at all, so it was an easy job."

This wasn't a small achievement, but nothing that deserved to be taken notice of more than Borkus, who had defeated the enemy general. That was how Vandalieu saw his own actions.

However, the reality was apparently a little different.

"Listen," said Borkus. "That Scaled King guy was a priest for that Luvesfol guy, the Raging Evil Dragon God, the one that the Lizardmen were worshipping, you know? It was only natural for that priest to be trembling after you shot and killed the Familiar Spirit that he summoned."

"No, I don't think I necessarily killed it," said Vandalieu.

"That may be true, Master, but even I have not heard of any incidents where someone attacked and interfered with the Familiar Spirit itself rather than its host… I was certain that you would be able to, however," said Bellmond with a bitter smile. Her eye, which had been blinded by burns, had been replaced by transplanting Ternecia's Petrifying Demon Eye.

"In other words, you shattered the enemies' hearts, Vandalieu-sama," said Eleanora.

"Indeed, since you defeated the one that the Lizardmen worshipped," Zadiris added. "And unlike Goblins and Orcs, they are limited to living near water. Now that we have taken this place from them, they have no choice but to submit to the victors."

Life seemed difficult for the Lizardmen.

"Well, the more that submit, the better it is… For now, please gather the important individuals among the surviving Lizardmen, and please call Shashuja here."

And so Vandalieu acquired the great marshlands that had been ruled by the Scaled King.

Incidentally, the total land area of the great marshlands was far more than the Hartner Duchy's.

Vandalieu was eight years old. In human society, he was still an ordinary person, but he already ruled over a country larger than a duke's territory, with an army that a medium-sized country couldn't hope to match.

Monster explanation:

【Lizardmen】

They are a race of demi-human monsters, and they are considered to be the most intelligent of demi-human races. In truth, their intelligence is not so different from that of Gillmen, but Lizardmen are considered smarter because they have mental structures that are easier for people to understand.

Their base Rank is 3. Their appearance is that of bipedal lizards; they do not have horns or any features like that. Even the largest Lizardmen do not exceed two meters in height, so they are inferior to Orcs in raw strength. However, they possess speed that Orcs do not, as well as the intelligence to think about tactics and the composure to not fall for provocation and baits.

They become even more powerful in groups, giving the illusion of fighting like a trained army.

They use their advanced intelligence to create their own arms; even their lowest-ranked individuals equip themselves with spears, armor and small shields made from the scales of their dead brethren.

They are clearly more powerful monsters than Orcs despite both races being Rank 3, but as they are limited to inhabiting environments with water, there are almost no incidents of them leaving these environments to cause harm to villages and cities of people.

Also, unlike Orcs, they do not desire human women for reproduction; their reproductive power itself is quite low, so they pose less of a threat than Orcs.

However, large groups of Lizardmen normally worship evil gods, so depending on the personalities of the gods that they worship, they sometimes form non-aggression pacts with people. However, as Lizardmen cannot speak the human language, negotiations are limited to body language.

Their scales can become materials for arms and decorations, and their meat is suitable for consumption. Their meat has little fat and resembles chicken in flavor.

Also, calling Drakonids Lizardmen or lizards is an insult, so that should be avoided.

Chapter 98

The one who guides and the ones who go on

"Now then, we will begin the project to turn the marshlands into a Capricorn farm," Vandalieu declared enthusiastically, but there was actually not a lot to do. There were still only a few dozen Capricorns that had transformed from goats, so the only thing they could do was make preparations for a large-scale farm in the future.

First, he informed the two thousand Lizardmen with Shashuja as the mediator. But since he was only a Rank 5 Lizardman Geronimo, it seemed that leading two thousand members of his own race was harsh on him.

That was why Vandalieu had left the Zombie of the former Scaled King, who had now been renamed Leo, as well as the Dragons that had been his subordinates, under Shashuja's command. A Zombie of the former ruler would be serving him. It didn't have any practical abilities, but this would likely discourage the Lizardmen from disobeying.

"Come to think of it, it was my first time creating a Zombie out of a Dragon," said Vandalieu.

Knochen, the combination of countless bones, groaned unhappily.

"Knochen, please restrain yourself this time."

It seemed that Knochen had wanted Leo's bones, but Vandalieu had given it Earth Dragon bones to keep him restrained.

Vandalieu still felt unsure about the Lizardmen, so he had decided to call Bone Man, who had remained in Talosheim during the battle of the expedition, to come out and be stationed here for a while along with the Black Bull Knights' Order who were mounted on Demon Horses.

"Jyuuh, please leave it to me, my lord," said Bone Man.

Demon Horses had the Rough Road Travel skill, so they could run across the muddy marshlands the same as any flat ground. And unlike the horses that they had once

been, they could eat anything, so they were easy to maintain.

Of course, Bone Man was planning to replace his Demon Horse mount to Leo once things had settled down in the marshlands. Leo had some difficulties with mobility compared to Demon Horses, but he was Bone Man's desired Dragon Zombie.

"I'm counting on you," said Vandalieu. "Well, while you're here, I'm planning to be going back and forth from Talosheim."

"After all, you are talented, my lord," said Bone Man.

There were many things that only Vandalieu could do, and many other things that others could do but Vandalieu could do much quicker and in a much simpler way.

"Well, this work isn't that impressive though," said Vandalieu, using Golem Transmutation to build barns with the trees produced with Plant Binding Technique as lumber.

And then he taught the Lizardmen how dairy farming worked with ten of the Capricorns that he had brought from Talosheim.

Of course, the Lizardmen, who had been living a lifestyle of hunting and gathering, were inexperienced with dairy farming. However, there was a race known as Lizardman Riders who tamed and mounted monsters resembling crocodiles, so they immediately understood Vandalieu's orders to raise the Capricorns.

At first, they had been confused that they would be doing so for milk rather than for combat, however. As their appearances indicated, Lizardmen were oviparous, so they were unfamiliar with milk.

But that didn't mean that they couldn't drink it. They were carnivorous, but milk provided animal protein, so Vandalieu had told them to try a cup. While they had been bewildered at first, after a mouthful of milk, they understood that this task was for the purpose of securing a stable food source.

Capricorns were a little more intelligent than normal goats and they were also sturdy and resistant to disease. They ate any algae and aquatic plants growing in the marshlands without specific preferences, so they were popular with the Lizardmen as well for their use in dealing with weeds.

They then reorganized the Lizardmen groups that had become smaller as a part of the battle and made maps. It was possible that small groups of less than twenty Lizardmen wouldn't even be able to live stable lives, let alone manage territories, and it would be extremely inconvenient for Vandalieu to not know how large each village of Lizardmen were.

The organization of the Lizardmen groups went very smoothly because of their fear of Vandalieu. If they had been humans, various problems could have occurred, but it seemed that the Lizardmen had no attachment for their territory.

As for the map, Sam had postponed his flying training and taken Chezare and the others around the marshlands to quickly create a map that gave a rough idea of the area's layout.

As a result of this work that took multiple days, Vandalieu gained an idea of how vast the marshlands were.

"This place is larger than the Hartner Duchy, isn't it?" said Vandalieu.

There wasn't any technology for precise measurements, but the map could be used to estimate how long it would take someone to walk somewhere.

When Vandalieu had been getting the small and medium-sized groups to join him, he had gained a rough idea of the size of the area ruled by the Scaled King. From there, they had determined the size of the marshlands, but… it turned out that the marshlands were even larger than that.

However, it seemed that there weren't any influential monsters other than the Lizardmen. The Noble Orc Empire was apparently further south of the marshlands, but the marshlands were not attractive lands for the heavy Orcs, so they hadn't come to the marshlands before.

Vandalieu wondered how the Noble Orc Bugogan had managed to cross the marshlands, but… the truth was that he never did.

Bugogan had not gone north from the empire he was exiled from; he immediately challenged the mountain range to the west. After struggling and finding a path that even he could cross, he had ended up coming out near the Devil's Nest near Balcheburg.

Everyone was currently busy organizing everything in the marshlands, so Vandalieu decided to leave the Orc meat buffet in the Noble Orc empire for later. The empire wouldn't escape anywhere.

Leaving that aside.

"That means that His Majesty is already a being that surpasses the dukes of the Orbaume Kingdom," said Chezare.

"No, Chezare-dono, I believe that is going a little too far. Our population is too small. Even if we take the Lizardmen into account, there is too much land," said Sam.

The population of even a remote city of the Hartner Duchy like Niarki had a population of around ten thousand. Even if the Lizardmen were included, Talosheim's population was only six thousand.

Vandalieu agreed with Sam; it couldn't be said that he had surpassed the dukes.

But the marshlands were a treasury of resources. Plants that looked exactly like lotus roots grew natively and the marshes had fishes resembling catfish, loaches and eels living in them.

Also, the Lizardmen had told Vandalieu about a place where hot mud came out of the ground. It was possible that this would be Vandalieu's first encounter with a hot spring in Lambda.

And there were two Dungeons, so it was possible that he could acquire new materials and food ingredients.

"Lizardmen apparently take five years to reach adulthood, so let's take it slow to make the marshlands thrive," said Vandalieu. "For now, I suppose we should go back to Talosheim."

Doing all of the tasks ahead would have to wait until after a Job-change.

Ten days had passed since the Scaled King's defeat. Vandalieu had been worried that Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, would make a move after his servant who had received his divine protection had been defeated and his Familiar Spirit wounded, but there were no signs of that happening, so there would probably be no problem with leaving the marshlands.

Coming to this decision, Vandalieu climbed aboard Sam's carriage and returned to Talosheim for now, having completed the preliminary preparations for the farm and the creation of a map.

Incidentally, Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God that Vandalieu was wary of in case he was plotting revenge, was writhing in agony as he desperately fled the southern region of the continent.

"I can't stay and gather servants in a place where a monster like that exists! I'm going back to the Dark Continent!"

The Lizardmen who had been his subordinates hadn't known this, but the Scaled King who had the divine protection of the Raging Evil Dragon God had actually acquired a superior version of Familiar Spirit Descent, the Spirit Clone Descent skill, allowing him to temporarily have a Spirit Clone of the god he worshipped descend upon him.

Familiar Spirit Descent couldn't even compare to Spirit Clone Descent's effects, but… during the descent, the Spirit Clone had been shot and killed by an absurd attack, inflicting quite a deep wound in Luvesfol.

It wasn't fatal, but enough to make Luvesfol feel a great fear rather than a desire for revenge. He fled to his original base that was the Dark Continent, where all of the land and surrounding seas had become Devil's Nests, feeling no regret for the loss of several thousand of his believers.

Vandalieu, who had returned to Talosheim, was in the Job-changing room on the second floor of the trading post where explorers gathered to exchange goods.

With this, he would join the ranks of the champions… but he didn't know how to feel about this. Even so, he touched the crystal ball with excitement.

『Jobs that can be selected:【Archenemy】【Zombie Maker】【Corpse Demon Commander】【Disease Demon】【Spirit Warrior】【Whip Tongue Calamity】【Vengeful Berserker】【Dead Spirit Mage】【Dark Healer】【Labyrinth Creator】【Demon King User】【Demon Guider】【Magic Cannoneer】【Golem Creator】』

“Oh, there are two new ones.”

There was a new Job that seemed specialized for using cannons and another that was probably a superior version of the Golem Transmuter Job. There were no Jobs specialized for using Thread-reeling, but those were probably already existing Jobs like the Thread User Job that Bellmond had.

He was interested in the Golem Creator Job, which would likely improve the Golem Transmutation skill that had brought Talosheim so much prosperity, but the Job he should choose was probably still Demon Guider.

With that, he should be able to acquire skills that would improve his appearance to society. Skills with shiny-sounding names and powerful effects, even if he didn’t know what they were.

“Select Demon Guider.”

Vandalieu made his choice with his heart full of anticipation.

『You have changed Jobs to Demon Guider!』

『You have acquired the Mana Enlargement skill!』

『The levels of the Death-Attribute Charm, Death-Attribute Magic and Chant Revocation skills have increased!』

『The Death-Attribute Charm skill has transformed into the Demon Path Enticement skill and the Strengthen Followers skill has been transformed into the Guidance: Demon Path skill!』

『You have acquired the unique skill, Abyss!』

“…I’m sorry?” Vandalieu asked the voice in his head that was announcing these skill names that were far from shiny-sounding or good for society, but there was no reply.

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 8 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】,【Eclipse King】,【Second Coming of the Demon King】,【Guardian of the Cultivation Villages】,【Holy Son of Vida】,【Monstrosity】
- **Job**: Demon Guider
- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster
- **Attributes**:
    - Vitality: 856
    - Mana: 485,761,053 (+48,576,105)
    - Strength: 295
    - Agility: 329
    - Stamina: 480
    - Intelligence: 990
- **Passive skills**:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 5
    - Rapid Healing: Level 7
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 7
    - Magic Resistance: Level 4
    - Dark Vision
    - Demon Path Enticement: Level 1 (Transformed from Death-Attribute Charm!)
    - Chant Revocation: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Guidance: Demon Path: Level 1 (Transformed from Strengthen Followers!)
    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 6
    - Strengthen Subordinates: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 4
    - Enhanced Agility: Level 2
    - Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 4
    - Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed: Small
    - Enhanced Physical Ability (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 3
    - Thread Refining: Level 2
    - Mana Enlargement: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodwork: Level 3

    - Surpass Limits: Level 6
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 7
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Control: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 7
    - Carpentry: Level 6
    - Engineering: Level 4
    - Cooking: Level 5
    - Alchemy: Level 4
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 5
    - Soul Break: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Multi-Cast: Level 5
    - Long-distance Control: Level 7
    - Surgery: Level 3
    - Parallel Thought Processing: Level 5
    - Materialization: Level 4
    - Coordination: Level 4
    - High-speed Thought Processing: Level 3
    - Commanding: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Plant Binding Technique: Level 3
    - Thread-reeling: Level 4
    - Throwing: Level 4
    - Scream: Level 3
    - Dead Spirit Magic: Level 3
    - Insect Binding Technique: Level 3
    - Blacksmithing: Level 1
    - Artillery Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Unique skills:**
    - God Slayer: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Grotesque Mind: Level 6
    - Mental Encroachment: Level 5
    - Labyrinth Construction: Level 5
    - Demon King Fusion: Level 2
    - Abyss: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Demon King fragments:**
    - Blood
    - Horns
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over

- Cannot learn existing jobs
- Unable to gain experience independently

"…So I didn't mishear it." Vandalieu looked at his status multiple times before putting his hand on his forehead.

Vandalieu didn't really care about Mana Enlargement. As its name suggested, it was probably a skill that simply increased Mana. The problem was with the other skills.

Demon Path Enticement, Guidance: Demon Path and Abyss. All of these names sounded bad from society's point of view. Rather than being shiny-sounding, they were skills that were wrapped in darkness deeper than the darkness of night.

"But I have an idea of what the effects of the first two are. Demon Path Enticement is probably an upgrade to the original Death-Attribute Charm skill and Guidance: Demon Path is probably an upgrade to the Strengthen Followers skill."

From Vandalieu's experience, the effects of skills didn't change significantly when they transformed into others. It sounded dangerous and suspicious to say that he would entice or guide people on a demon path, but there wouldn't be any changes on the scale of the sun turning into a lump of ice.

But Vandalieu had no idea about the Abyss skill.

"…Abyss, activate," Vandalieu said to try and test it, but nothing remarkable happened.

It seemed that it wasn't the kind of active skill that could be used as if flipping a switch, but a passive skill that was always exhibiting its effect, but…

"What did Abyss mean again?" Vandalieu pondered for a bit, having a vague recollection that the word wasn't used in any particularly positive way, but he couldn't remember the exact meaning.

He thought that he would investigate it later, but because it was a unique skill, he wasn't sure if there would be any information on it. There was no ruling out the possibility that Vandalieu was the first in history to acquire this skill, just like his Jobs.

"There's no use in worrying about this and that. I can't undo the fact that I've acquired it, and if it seems harmless, I should just see how it progresses."

Vandalieu had acquired a Job that was a requirement of being a champion, so things would be alright. He left the room after telling himself this.

“Holy Son, congratulations on this auspicious event!” said Nuaza.

“Getting a Job of the same type as a champion is amazing!” said Darcia. “You’re still small, but you were even smaller before, now you’ve become so fantastic… I’m really happy.”

“We should celebrate today!” said Basdia. “So, no making clones of yourself and working today, Van.”

“That’s right, Van-sama,” Tarea agreed. “You are the center of attention today.”

Vandalieu had been caught by everyone who had been waiting outside and taken to the meeting hall where a party had been secretly prepared.

After Bellwood’s death, there had been few who had acquired a Guider Job even among a hundred thousand years of history, and Bellmond had told Vandalieu that all of them had left their names in history, so this was apparently something to be celebrated.

In fact, in other nations, massive events were held if it became known that there was someone with a Guider Job. Not only would such people become heroes, but they were likely to even join the lower ranks of the gods, so the appearance of these people was to be celebrated.

If that person was the nation’s leader, everyone would be wildly excited.

The people of Talosheim celebrated Vandalieu’s Job-change to Demon Guider in a much more modest way.

The person being celebrated didn’t notice that, however.

“Alright, now for the sweets –” Vandalieu began.

“They would be delicious, but you don’t have to make them, Your Majesty.”

“Well then, soup –”

“We told you, King, you’re not allowed to multiply!”

“Well then, just a quick, simple dish – obuh.”

Rapiéçage groaned as she grabbed Vandalieu’s spirit form that had escaped with Out-of-body Experience and forced it back into his physical body.

“You’re not allowed to move,” said Pauvina as she pinned him down.

Vandalieu completely gave up on resisting.

The dreamers’ senses and limbs were in a hazy state, but they were aware that there was clearly something near them.

That thing was like a person, like a beast, enormous yet small, unsightly yet beautiful. The dreamers didn’t know what that thing was.

However, they could never reach that thing on their own. When they tried, it walked away at a pace that seemed as if it could be caught, but they could not.

They could stay there and watch it go, or distance themselves from it. But before they knew it, that thing had come close to them again.

People having this dream began appearing among Talosheim’s people.

One let that ‘thing’ ride them and flew through the night sky.

One became a wall to protect that ‘thing.’

One wished for a form that could be of aid to that ‘thing.’

Some wished for that ‘thing’ to give them something that it could grant them, and were delighted with the change that occurred.

Some simply felt at ease by being next to the ‘thing.’ And when they woke, they shed tears with the unfilled emptiness and despair that they felt.

But Vandalieu never had this dream.

In his Divine Realm, Rodcorte was monitoring Vandalieu by looking at the records from the humans and Dwarves that had migrated to Talosheim, but – with signs of something being cut, the images stopped.

This didn't stop at only one person; he became unable to see the records from more and more people.

"What does this mean? Were they turned into Undead? No… could this be?!"

An unpleasant thought ran through Rodcorte's mind. As if to inform him that this thought was correct, an alarm sounded from his circle of transmigration system.

"The ones living in Talosheim who belong to my system are leaving it and moving to another, most likely Vida's system!"

The next day, Vandalieu needed to procure Undead to examine his Demon Path Enticement and Guidance: Demon Path, so he was thinking of finding some in the wild or making his own. Suddenly, he heard a familiar laugh and the turning of wheels, so he stuck his head outside the window.

"BOCCHAAAAAAAN! PLEASE OBSEEEERVE!"

Sam's carriage was running through the air.

His pitch-black horses were running and his wheels were turning, as if there was an invisible floor beneath him.

"I, Sam, have succeeded in running through the sky at last! This is the gift of your power, Bocchan!" Sam exclaimed.

"Congratulations, Sam," said Vandalieu. "You finally did it. But is it really a result of my power?"

Vandalieu knew that Sam had put in a lot of effort into achieving a goal that could even be called reckless. He was happy and proud that this effort had paid off. There wasn't any problem with the fact that he was 'running' instead of 'flying.'

But wasn't that Sam's own ability?

"What are you saying, Bocchan! My Rank increased after you acquired the Guider Job; this is most certainly a result of that!"

Indeed, given the timing, this could be the case.

"And there are others who have gained power as well!" said Sam.

"Eh? Who?" Vandalieu asked.

"I will explain, so please get in," said Sam.

"Okay."

Vandalieu used Flight and flew into Sam's carriage. His spirit-form horse that had become even more sinister, with a pitch-black mane and eyes as crimson as pools of blood, took Vandalieu outside Talosheim.

However, Vandalieu noticed something unusual before they arrived at their destination.

"…There's a new fort outside," he said.

At first, he thought that it was probably Knochen. Knochen, who had absorbed and fused with multiple bones, was now as big as a large fort.

However, as they drew closer, Vandalieu realized that there were numerous Skeletons that he had never seen before striding around it.

It would have been strange if he could recognize Skeletons that were made of only bones, but Vandalieu would have definitely remembered creating large Skeletons with the features of Dragons, dinosaurs and Manticores.

And then all of the Skeletons roared in unison as Vandalieu and Sam approached.

Vandalieu nodded, recognizing this voice. "Yes, it's Knochen, isn't it?"

It seemed that fort made of bones and the Skeletons were all part of Knochen.

“Yes,” said Sam. “It seems that Skeletons emerged separate from Knochen’s own body after its Rank increased, and it is able to control them. It is happy that it has the same ability as you, Bocchan.”

As if agreeing to Sam’s words, the fort of bones itself roared this time. It seemed that the fort was Knochen’s main body while the Skeletons were extra parts of it.

It did indeed resemble the way that Vandalieu could use Out-of-body Experience to make spirit-form clones of himself.

“Both of you have had a Rank-up at the same time, so it seems that it isn’t a coincidence,” Vandalieu noted.

One case might have been a coincidence, but two was a pattern. Thinking this, Vandalieu concluded that while Sam and Knochen’s qualities, determination and hard work were the largest factors, Guidance: Demon Path had given them the extra push.

It was the same as how companions of champions acquired hidden techniques or awakened to new special abilities.

This was an effect that would be better described as a transformation or evolution rather than development, but that was only because Vandalieu’s companions were not only people, but Undead as well.

It was unlikely that the Guider Job’s effects were limited to people, after all.

Vandalieu was satisfied with this explanation.

“So what kind of races have you become?” Vandalieu asked.

“I appear to be a Rank 6 Nightmare Carriage,” said Sam. “Knochen is apparently a Rank 9 Bone Fort.”

It seemed that they had become a carriage of nightmares and a fort of bones. Sam was a rare type of Undead to begin with, so it couldn’t be said whether there would be any details recorded of his race, but it was possible that there would be something written about Knochen. It had already been a monster that would be labeled as a calamity when it was still a Union of Bones, after all.

Vandalieu decided to investigate this later.

“We have to celebrate, don’t we?”

Celebrations came first.

But as Vandalieu joined in the circle of Knochen’s Skeletons in a bonodori dance, Cemetery Bees flew in and took him away.

- **Name:** Knochen
- **Rank:** 9
- **Race:** Bone Fort
- **Level:** 0
- **Passive skills:**
    - Dark Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Bone Form Manipulation: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Physical Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Absorption Healing (Bone): Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Fortress Form: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Fission: Level 1 (NEW!)
- **Active skills:**
    - Silent Steps: Level 2
    - Breath (Poison): Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - High-speed Flight: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Long-distance Control: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Projectile Fire: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Name**: Sam
- **Rank**: 6
- **Race**: Nightmare Carriage
- **Level**: 0
- **Passive skills**:
    - Spirit Form: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Rough Road Travel: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Impact Resistance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Precise Driving: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Comfort Maintenance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Murder Healing: Level 1
    - Space Expansion: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Air-running: Level 2 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Silent Steps: Level 1

- High-Speed Travel: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
- Charge: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
- Size Alteration: Level 3 (NEW!)
- Spear Technique: Level 2 (NEW!)
- Fear Aura: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Bone Fort】

A monster whose appearances in history can be counted on one's fingers, a race that is designated to be a calamity.

Its enormous, fort-sized body is completely made of the bones that it has absorbed, and those bones can form Skeletons that can act independently.

The Skeletons are not particularly powerful; they are slightly stronger than Rank 2 Skeletons. However, their numbers are a threat.

According to records, there has been a Bone Fort that manipulated ten thousand Skeletons simultaneously.

The fearsome thing about this monster is that the fort, its main body, can move.

It is a moving fortress with countless soldiers that need no food or rest. It is truly a nightmarish being for humanity.

Knochen is even more terrifying than normal Bone Forts.

As it possesses the High-speed Flight skill, it can fly faster than a bird. Of course, its Skeletons can also fly through the air, and each of them have poisonous breaths. In addition, they are all under the effects of Guidance: Demon Path and Strengthen Subordinates.

Those who think that these are mere Skeletons will likely be overwhelmed by the Skeletons' poisonous breaths, and once they are immobilized, they will meet the cruel fates of having the bones torn from their bodies while they are still alive.

Monster explanation:

【Nightmare Carriage】

A monster that Sam of Talosheim has become, the first in Lambda.

He runs freely through the air and his entire body emanates an aura that strikes fear into all nearby living creatures.

Skill explanation:

【Mana Enlargement】

A skill that increases the total Mana pool by 10% for each level in the skill. It is a simple skill, yet its effect is enormous.

Many desire the skill, but it is said that the only ones who can acquire it are the companions of champions and the champions themselves.

Chapter 99
The changing omens and citizens

The Cemetery Bees flew in and grabbed Vandalieu, who had joined a circle of Knochen's Skeletons in a bonodori dance to celebrate Sam and Knochen's increase in Rank.

"I kind of want to eat breakfast soon," Vandalieu told them.

Buzz-buzz-buzz.

It seemed that there was a pressing matter; the Cemetery Bees did not stop for Vandalieu's hunger.

Vandalieu could understand the intentions of the insects that he had tamed to some extent, but he couldn't understand them completely. He possibly could if he used his spirit-form to fuse with them, but –

"The queen is calling."

"Calling, the queen is."

Vandalieu only knew that the queen bee was calling him.

These were bee monsters; the thoughts of each individual worker bee were too simple to have a conversation.

Incidentally, Sam and Knochen had simply waved their hands goodbye as Vandalieu left.

Since he was hungry, Vandalieu started eating vegetables that were growing from his arm with the Plant Binding Technique skill. And then they arrived at the Cemetery Bee nest that seemed to have grown even larger.

Buzz-buzz-buzz.

A Cemetery Bee Soldier, three times larger than a worker bee, flew towards Vandalieu.

Cemetery Bees lived in a similar way to normal bees and ants, but Experience Points were not shared among all of the bees in the group. Even if they hunted enemies, only the individual bee that had done the hunting would receive Experience Points.

The Cemetery Bees going from being worker bees to soldier bees from their Rank increasing would take the opportunity to separate themselves from Vandalieu and begin guarding the nest. This was an instinctual desire, so there was nothing to be done about it.

Vandalieu understood that the protection of the nest and queen was the most important thing for bees, so he only equipped worker bees in his body with the Insect Binding Technique skill.

The problem was –

"I've told you, not raw," Vandalieu protested.

The soldier bees were holding caterpillar dangos in their forelegs.

Vandalieu wasn't reluctant to eat bugs, but it seemed that he disliked eating them raw.

Feeling hesitant to use fire inside the nest, in the end, Vandalieu decided to simply accept the caterpillar dangos without eating them.

"What if I had my hair in dreadlocks?" Vandalieu said, voicing a thought that had suddenly occurred to him.

Darcia blinked. "Vandalieu, we don't know what 'dreadlocks' are, so I don't know what kind of expression I should be wearing."

"It's a hairstyle like this."

Vandalieu used Thread-reeling to change the shape of his own hair into dreadlocks to show his mother Darcia, who had been tortured and burned to death at the stake and now currently resided in a small bone fragment as a spirit. He had a lot of hair to work with, suitable for having in dreadlocks.

Having his hair bundled together felt pleasant against the back of his neck and his

pointed ears, too. Vandalieu thought that perhaps he should have this hairstyle until autumn came.

“Wow, it really looks like there are white caterpillars attached to your head,” Darcia remarked. “Is ‘dreadlock’ a word for ‘caterpillar’ on Earth?”

“…I don’t think so,” said Vandalieu.

Foreseeing a misunderstanding that couldn’t be considered a joke if it spread, he quickly returned his hair to normal.

Meanwhile, the queen bee, who was even larger than the soldier bees, approached, accompanied by numerous other bees.

She didn’t appear to be in such a desperate state that she needed to call Vandalieu here so desperately.

Buzz-buzz-buzz.

Click-click-click.

With her wings beating and her jaw and exoskeleton making noises, the queen bee turned as if dancing.

“I see. And then?” Vandalieu nodded and prompted her to continue.

Seeing this exchange repeat itself several times, Darcia shuddered as she whispered to herself. “I-I don’t understand. Umm, what is a mother supposed to do at a time like this?!”

She didn’t know what her son and his friend were talking about. What was she to do?

This wasn’t a rare concern for a parent raising a child, but what was the correct answer when that friend was an enormous insect?

She requested an answer, a translation, from her son.

“She is saying that she wants to be reborn in an egg that she is about to lay in order to evolve further,” Vandalieu explained.

“I see,” said Darcia. “But is increasing her Rank not enough? She still has time to live, doesn’t she?”

Every monster in Lambda could gain Experience Points, reach level 100 and then increase in Rank once they met certain conditions.

Thus, an increase in Rank was certainly possible for the Cemetery Bee Queen as well. What reason was there for the queen bee to abandon her current life and ask Vandalieu for a pseudo-reincarnation?

“I’ve asked that as well; she’s apparently received ‘guidance,’” said Vandalieu.

“You mean from the Guider Job?” Darcia asked, surprised.

Vandalieu nodded. “I don’t remember giving her anything like that, though.”

Sam and Knochen had received its effects immediately, so it wasn’t strange to think that the Cemetery Bees were under its effects as well.

However, it was strange that Vandalieu, the one who had supposedly guided them, had no memory of doing so.

In legends and heroic tales, the champions with the Guider Jobs had given people instructions, taught them the correct path to follow, strengthened their friendships and bonds with their followers and overcame the point of life and death together. The effects of the ‘Guidance’ skills on the followers were said to be a result of having experienced such events.

In Vandalieu’s case, he had simply had a feast with everyone on the first day that he acquired the Job.

“If everyone’s Ranks increase because of that, it would be fine to have a feast every day for a while,” said Vandalieu.

Buzz-buzz-buzz.

“Eh, a dream? Come to think of it, I did have one, which is rare,” said Vandalieu.

“Oh my, you always say that you don’t have dreams. What kind of dream did you have?” Darcia asked.

“It was a dream where I was walking in a dark place on my own, and just as I was feeling lonely and wondering if anyone would come, everyone gathered around me and we played together,” Vandalieu replied.

He had been taken for a ride through a starless night sky, guided to a sturdy fortress, among other things.

Now that he remembered it, it was possible that those were Sam and Knochen.

“Fufu, it’s good that you had a nice dream, isn’t it?” said Darcia, smiling at her son.

This had resulted in the birth of a Nightmare Carriage and a Bone Fort. From the perspective of the Church of Alda, which was hostile to Undead, and the Adventurers’ Guild that would send out requests to exterminate them, it was a nightmare rather than something to smile about.

“In any case, if I guided them, I can’t stop those who answered me,” said Vandalieu. “I’ll do as they ask of me.”

The queen bee gave a happy click of her jaw as she gave birth to a single egg into Vandalieu’s outstretched hands.

“Well then, let us meet again,” Vandalieu said.

He extracted the queen bee’s soul. He had thought that it would be difficult to extract a soul from a living body, but because the queen bee herself had agreed to it, or perhaps this was another effect of Guidance: Demon Path, he was able to extract it smoothly.

The semi-transparent, white egg shaped like a grain of rice that was already the size of a human baby, now contained the soul of the queen bee. The body that she had been living in up until now fell to the ground.

“By the way, Vandalieu, who’s going to take care of that egg?” Darcia asked.

“The Cemetery Bees… huh?” Vandalieu looked around to see that the other Cemetery Bees had returned to their daily work.

After using Preservation to prevent the queen bee's body from decomposing, Vandalieu ended up holding and raising the egg.

"To think that I would be raising a second child so quickly."

Incidentally, Pauvina was the first.

But Pauvina, Jadal, Varbie and Rapiéçage seemed unhappy with this.

"I was never treated like that," Pauvina protested.

"Me neither."

"I wanted to be treated like that."

Rapiéçage groaned in agreement.

Pauvina, who would turn five years old this year, was already as tall as an adult human. Even if her size was disregarded, she looked like an eight-year-old child. Girls developed quickly… or rather, this was likely the influence of her blood originating from Noble Orcs, a race that grew to heights of three meters and developed much faster than humans.

Bilde's daughter Varbie and Basdia's daughter Jadal were as adorable as four and five-year-old children should be, while Rapiéçage… hadn't changed. That was to be expected, as she was a Patchwork Zombie.

The 'treatment' that they were referring to was… Vandalieu extending his tongue and licking the queen bee's egg.

"…I'm only doing this to prevent mold from growing on the egg," he said. He was simply mimicking how insects took care of their eggs, so he was bewildered by the protests of Pauvina and the other girls.

"Well then, lick me as well so that mold doesn't grow on me!"

"I mean, you take baths, don't you? Mold won't grow even if I don't lick you."

“Eh, lick me!”

“It’s interesting how you lick it.”

It seemed that the sight of Vandalieu’s tongue extending to around four meters in length with the Body Extension skill was interesting to the girls. Perhaps it was the same as a cat taking a liking to cat toys.

It was a cute, childish behavior, but also problematic.

“Augh?” Rapiéçage groaned.

“No, you *really* don’t need it,” said Vandalieu, looking up at her and thinking about the misunderstandings that could happen if he did lick her.

Rapiéçage had the wings of a pterosaur, a tail extending from her hips with a Cemetery Bee’s stinger on the end, the arms and legs of Ogres past the elbows and knees, a sensual woman’s body and the face of a beautiful young woman.

It was only natural for Vandalieu to feel hesitant to lick her.

In Talosheim, the fact that she was Undead or that there were stitches all over her body weren’t going to be accepted as excuses.

“I am sorry to interrupt your conversation, but may I have a word, Danna-sama?”

Bellmond, who had been instructed to come to Vandalieu’s personal workshop beneath the castle, seemed disturbed as she called out to her master who was, for some reason, surrounded by children while taking care of an insect’s egg.

It seemed that these circumstances were within acceptable limits for Bellmond. No, there was something else nearby that she was more curious about.

“Ah, Bellmond, thank you for your hard work,” said Vandalieu. “I was thinking of having you look over your surgery plan.”

“It’s Bellmond!” Pauvina exclaimed.

“Hi!” said Jadal.

“Hello, Ojou-samas,” said Bellmond, greeting the children. “So, Danna-sama, that surgery plan… could you be referring to that thing?”

‘That thing’ that Bellmond glanced at pointedly was an object that had been placed next to her former master Ternecia, who was now a Live-Dead inside a capsule, submerged in a mysterious fluid.

It resembled a female mannequin made of white stone. It had been elaborately made; it had no face, but it looked as if its arms and legs could move at any moment.

It was the same height as Bellmond with arms and lengths the same length as hers, while the bulge in its chest and around its hips were about the same as the Live-Dead Ternecia.

“Yes,” Vandalieu said.

Seeing that he showed no signs of guilt whatsoever, Bellmond clutched her chest.

“…Danna-sama, what are you planning to do with me after giving me a body with such excessively attractive features?” she asked.

“Well, it will be difficult to make small changes in the shape of your chest, so I was thinking of simply transplanting the chest straight onto yours,” Vandalieu explained.

“I am your servant, Danna-sama,” said Bellmond. “If you wish to tamper with my body and do as you please with it for your own amusement then I am prepared to accept my fate, but –”

“That’s a horrible thing to say about me,” said Vandalieu. “I’m quite confident in how I treat people.”

“I understand. Do as you will, Danna-sama.”

Bellmond agreed to it in the end, but Vandalieu thought that she would make all kinds of complaints once it came to attaching her tail.

Of course, she didn’t seem to be showing any real signs of resistance. In fact, she seemed happy.

“Van, are there only people like Eleanora among Vampires?” Basdia asked with quite

serious-looking eyes.

"…No comment," said Vandalieu, declining to answer. He didn't think that there were, but it was possible that…

Thinking like this, Vandalieu couldn't completely deny the possibility.

"Vandalieu, you're hurting a girl's body before she becomes a bride, so you have to take responsibility," said Darcia.

"Umm, Darcia-sama, with that logic, wouldn't that make His Majesty unable to perform surgery on any women?" Princess Levia pointed out.

"No, to go as far as to take responsibility…" Bellmond remonstrated them now that they had taken things too far. In fact, she was looking forward to receiving surgery from Vandalieu.

She did have her misgivings, but her happiness at receiving everything from Vandalieu overcame them.

Just like in that dream.

"But I would be happy if you could avoid making me too indecent," she added.

Bellmond's former master, Ternecia, was beautiful even to her eyes. However, that beauty was not an elegant one.

Though her words and the way she normally dressed were likely the main causes, she looked like a prostitute… though this impression never lasted long, as she never gave a second glance at others, let alone flirted with them.

"I'll do my best, but I think it will be fine," said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu had only been face-to-face with Ternecia for a few minutes; he hadn't particularly felt the prostitute-like impression, but he thought that even if he replaced every part of Bellmond's body below the neck with Ternecia's, she wouldn't look indecent.

"Bellmond, are you going to become muchi-muchi*?" asked Pauvina.

TLN: This is a childish, onomatopoeic word that means "plump/chubby" or "voluptuous" (the most fitting translation in this case), but the word "voluptuous" doesn't really fit the vocabulary of the character here.*

"What about the muscles that King likes?" asked Varbie.

"I do think that she will become muchi-muchi, but I have no plans on transplanting the muscles," said Vandalieu. "She has plenty already, anyway."

"My body becoming heavy is… as long as all of my fingers, toes and tongue can move freely, there will be no problem," said Bellmond.

"Com… panion?" Rapiéçage groaned.

"Well, I do believe that I will become your patchwork companion, but…" Bellmond gave a bitter smile to the children who were innocently comparing her to the post-surgery mannequin and Rapiéçage who was wondering if she would gain a companion.

Suddenly, Bellmond became aware of a person who had been silent the whole time, watching something squirm with bloodshot eyes.

"By the way, what is he doing?" she asked.

"Luciliano? He is researching Lump-of-flesh-chan," said Vandalieu.

The convulsing lumps of flesh with no bones or organs, produced as a result of trying to resurrect Darcia using the incomplete, but functioning, resurrection device.

When lumps of flesh produced by the device were put together, they had fused to form a larger lump of flesh, but no matter how much time passed or what Vandalieu did, it was still a lump of flesh.

Vandalieu had tried adding the Demon King's blood, but nothing in particular had changed.

However, this morning, its movements had become more prominent; it seemed that changes had begun.

"He was saying that this might be the birth of a new life," Vandalieu said.

“A new life,” Bellmond repeated. “I see.”

The two of them were looking at lump of flesh that was convulsing violently in an apparatus resembling an enormous pot in front of Luciliano.

It had formed a thick, flesh-colored soup that was bubbling and frothing as if it were boiling, and there were meat-like projections resembling people’s hands and snake heads that emerged and extended a short distance from its surface before collapsing back into the lump of meat, over and over.

“It looks to me like tormented souls being boiled in the cauldron of hell,” said Bellmond.

“What a coincidence,” said Vandalieu. “I think so too.”

“Something that looks like a human’s head comes out from time to time, but… I have the feeling that it resembles me a little,” said Darcia. “What will I do if I grow lots of heads?”

It seemed that there were no disagreements that this was not the ‘birth of a new life,’ but the sight of dead souls trying to crawl out of hell.

Vandalieu couldn’t see its Status yet, and the Appraisal spell only gave him, “A mysterious, convulsing lump of flesh,” so it was still unclear as to whether it was a living creature or not.

“How is it even staying alive, Your Majesty?” Princess Levia asked. “It doesn’t even have a single organ, let alone bones.”

“We gave it some food from time to time,” said Pauvina.

“It’s eats really happily when we give it meat!” Jadal added.

It seemed that the two of them had been feeding it.

“It really eats,” said Pauvina.

Despite not having a mouth or stomach, being made of nothing but meat until Vandalieu gave it blood, Lump-of-meat-chan apparently ate food. It was likely through the same mechanism by which unicellular organisms absorbed food.

It indiscriminately absorbed everything it came into contact with, so it was extremely dangerous. It was probably best that Vandalieu created an enclosure around it so that the children wouldn't fall in.

"But it doesn't eat vegetables," said Jadal.

"Even if we feed it a live frog, it just spits it back out," said Pauvina. "Even if we scold it and tell it that it will never become big if it's too picky, it won't listen."

"I see, so it seems that it doesn't eat living things," said Vandalieu.

It didn't have ears or a head to listen to scolding, but it was possible that it was relatively safe. It was possible that it simply disliked frogs, so Vandalieu decided that he would try seeing whether it would eat live mice, fish or Undead.

"It looks like I'm being fed by the children," said Darcia. "And I'm being given frogs…"

It seemed that she was a little shocked by the fact that Lump-of-flesh-chan, who was a failed attempt to recreate her, was being fed.

"Well, Mom, frogs are delicious," Vandalieu told her.

But despite the expectations of Luciliano, who was engrossed in his research, Lump-of-meat-chan still wouldn't become a living creature.

"Whether it is a monster or a person, it seems that there is something missing for it to become a living creature," Luciliano concluded as he reverted his research on Lump-of-meat-chan to plain observation.

Around the end of September, when temperatures were starting to drop, the road between Talosheim and the large marshlands to the south was completed. Since this was necessary for transporting dairy products, fish, lotus roots and other things in the future, waves of attacks had been conducted to clear the forest of enormous ferns that was in the way and Vandalieu had flattened the ground and used Golem Transmutation to lay stone tiles to create a road.

In times of emergency, the stone tiles would get up and fight the threats, and even if they were damaged in such situations, they would reabsorb the broken pieces and repair themselves; it was a truly maintenance-free highway.

There was no need to worry about bandits, but it was a highway crossing a Devil's Nest where monsters more dangerous than bandits would appear, so these functions were necessary.

Of course, the monster numbers in the southern forest had already been reduced drastically, so it was possible for the highway to become a normal highway in a little over a decade from now.

Now that Vandalieu had dealt with the aftermath of the Cream Expedition and performed the necessary work for future development, Vandalieu was now busy with something else. That thing was…

"Now then, we'll begin the universal conscription campaign," Vandalieu announced.

The training of Talosheim's non-combatants.

"As I explained previously, this campaign's purpose is to make everyone strong enough to at least kill a normal soldier," said Vandalieu.

"That's different from the universal conscription that I know of," whispered Lina, the former irregular employee of the Adventurers' guild, current receptionist at the trading post and Fester's lover.

Taking no notice of her, Vandalieu continued. "As you know, Talosheim is surrounded by Devil's Nests, and we could be attacked by the Mirg shield-nation and the Amid Empire. I want everyone to do a little training to prepare for such times."

"We've heard that, but… Even if we level up, we won't become much stronger," said Ivan, who was working hard as a stonemason once more after his family had gained an additional member.

As he said, ordinary people with creation-oriented Jobs would not see large gains in Attribute Values even after leveling up. Creation-oriented Jobs mostly provided bonuses to creation-oriented skills.

And those with creation-oriented Jobs would gain less Experience Points from

exterminating monsters than those with combat-oriented Jobs such as Warrior or Mage. Just as it would be strange for a warrior to level up by performing work as a stonemason, stonemasons wouldn't level up much from defeating monsters.

"Yes, I know that," said Vandalieu. "That's why I'm going to have everyone acquire skills."

He was focused on skills rather than Attribute Values. Lambda had a convenient skill system, unlike Earth.

And once skills were acquired, they generally weren't lost. If they weren't used for a long time, senses could dull and the body could grow weaker, but if this kind of training was held regularly, they could stay in a reasonably useable state.

"I see. So, you're telling us to get level 1 skills to begin with," said Kyne, who had once flown through the sky on Vandalieu's back. As a hunter, he possessed the Archery skill at level 3, so he would be one of the instructors rather than one of the people being instructed.

Vandalieu's policy of having the civilians use crude spears, bows and arrows to at least have level 1 skills was one used by many other policymakers.

Civilians with level 1 combat-oriented skills would be able to fend off bandits on their own to some extent. And if they joined forces, they could defeat a single Rank 3 monster that might enter their village.

And they would be capable of making a living by venturing to hills and fields that weren't Devil's Nests to harvest the blessings of nature, hunt beasts for food and tan their hides for leather.

The policymakers would gain many benefits from this, such as being able to reduce the number of permanently-employed soldiers.

Of course, it would be problematic if there was a rebellion or the villagers turned to banditry due to poverty, but the policymakers would simply not enforce this training if they were not confident that they could prevent these things from happening.

Vandalieu's objective was simply to increase the citizens' ability to defend themselves, however.

“No, level 1 skills are not dependable, so at least level 2,” he said. “Of course, it would be helpful if you became able to use martial skills.”

“Aren’t you expecting a lot from us?!”

Incidentally, Fester’s Swordsmanship skill had been at level 2 when Vandalieu first met him.

Even though he had been an apprentice, he was a young man who had decided to make a living in that line of work, studied at an adventurer’s school for a year and spent his days gaining experience by facing monsters such as Goblins day after day. That level 2 combat-oriented skill had been a result of all of that.

“But if you don’t have skills at level 2 and can’t use martial skills, you won’t even be able to buy any time against the monsters living in the Devil’s Nests around here,” said Vandalieu.

What he said was reasonable. Kyne couldn’t imagine that any monsters could get through the excessive outer walls of Talosheim to get inside, but he couldn’t deny the possibility that something unexpected could happen.

“But won’t we have to go through hellish Spartan training to get level 2 skills?” asked Lina. She and the others had stiff expressions, thinking that it was impossible to gain level 2 skills in the space of just a few days.

“It’s alright,” said Vandalieu. “I’ve prepared capable instructors.”

He had his instructors stand up to show themselves.

The instructors that appeared with clattering sounds were suits of armor that Lina and Ivan both recognized.

Indeed, just suits of armor.

“They are Living Armors that I made out of the former Red Wolf Knights’ Order,” Vandalieu explained. “I will have everyone wear these Living Armors and learn combat skills through experience.”

The people would train by wearing these Undead suits of armor with spirits living inside them.

Lina and the others froze as Vandalieu declared this unprecedented training method.

“Now then, let us hurry and begin our training! I must quickly acquire a level 2 skill and return to my work of making something out of Van-sama’s horns,” said Tarea as she glanced back at everyone else before beginning to choose the instructor that she would wear.

Skill explanation:

【Guidance: Demon Path】

There is a path that one does not walk because they wish to, a path that is not a path. This is the skill of one who walks such a path for guiding those who walk on it with him.

Those who receive the blessings of this skill undergo drastic changes, increases in Rank and development in exchange for growing further and further away from the path of righteousness.

They are not evil; they are simply 'different' beings rather than being good or evil.

Ordinary people would think of the possessor of this skill and those who follow its guidance to be fearsome beings, be repulsed by them and the sight of them would appear to be total chaos.

It is a skill that transforms from Strengthen Followers after acquiring the Demon Guider Job, so the effects of the Strengthen Followers skill is included in full.

Skill explanation:

【Demon Path Enticement】

A skill that captivates those who already walk the demon path and those who have set foot upon it. A skill that beckons those who walk the path of righteousness to the demon path.

It is, so to speak, a devilish skill, and those charmed by it indulge themselves in the skill's possessor as if they have fallen into addiction.

It is a skill that transforms from Death-Attribute Charm after acquiring the Demon Guider Job; the skill's area of effect is increased and once under its effects, it is difficult to resist.

Skill explanation:

【Abyss】

A unique skill that represents that the skill owner is not one who peers into an abyss, but the abyss to be peered into.

The one who possesses this skill has no need to worry about becoming a monstrosity when fighting other monstrosities. That is something that the one fighting the skill's possessor should fear.

Chapter 100
Dungeon-clearing is effective against back pain

With rattling sounds, the people were doing training runs, swinging spears in practice and firing practice shots with bows and arrows while wearing plate armor made of metal.

This wouldn't be an unusual sight if knights were training, but it was actually ordinary people who were receiving training, and the trainees were not only young people, but middle-aged men and women who were over thirty years old as well as white-haired elderly people.

Perhaps because they normally made their livings through physical labor such as working in the fields, stonemasonry or carpentry, they didn't appear to be weak. Still, performing vigorous exercise while wearing metal armor that was dozens of kilograms in weight should have been tough on them.

"Phew, my body is so light! It's like I've grown wings!"

"It's like I've grown younger!"

"Training is pretty fun, isn't it?"

However, these ordinary people were experiencing the pleasant sensation of sweating it out, as if they were enjoying some casual sports. Inexperienced knights would certainly lose their confidence if they saw these people.

Such inexperienced knights would likely regain their confidence once they heard the voices of the suits of armor that the people were wearing, however.

"You have excess tension in your body. Relax more."

"We'll work on your form from the beginning one more time. Ready stance, thrust, come back into ready stance, sweep."

The people were training while wearing Living Armors, Undead consisting of suits of armor haunted by spirits.

“This training method is more effective than I’d expected,” remarked Vandalieu, the proposer of this idea. He gave a satisfied nod as he watched everyone enjoying themselves.

The Living Armors that now housed the spirits of the former knights of the Red Wolf Knights’ Order from the Hartner Duchy who had worn them while they were alive had mostly regained their Spear Technique and Archery skills. They were level 4 on average, better than most but not first-rate, but this was enough for them to be instructors for the ordinary people from the former cultivation villages.

Also, the Living Armors were essentially powered exoskeletons for the people wearing them, so they could train for long periods of time while retaining their stamina.

This also allowed the Living Armors that were teaching them to be sensitive to what kinds of tensions and muscles needed instructions, allowing them to demonstrate their leadership abilities.

And, of course, they were suits of armor, so they also protected people’s bodies.

“Living Armor training drills… let’s keep doing this from now on,” said Vandalieu.

“Can’t you make an exception for me?!” Lina begged with red cheeks. She was wearing a Living Armor as well, so it wasn’t that she was particularly tired.

“I don’t think that you need to be so embarrassed,” said Saria, the Magic High-leg Armor that Lina was wearing.

There hadn’t been enough Living Armors of the Red Wolf Knights’ Order, and there hadn’t been any that matched Lina’s size.

“It isn’t as if you’re wearing me over your bare skin,” Saria pointed out.

“That’s true, but it’s somehow still embarrassing,” said Lina.

Lina was wearing Saria over simple clothes that were easy to move in, but Saria’s design left Lina’s cleavage, navel and back exposed, which appeared to be the cause of her embarrassment.

“At least let me wear a cloak over the top,” Lina insisted.

“But that will make it hard to move, you know?” said Saria. “Unlike me, you aren’t used to this, Lina-san, so it would be dangerous if your arms and legs were to get caught in it.”

Saria couldn’t understand why Lina was so embarrassed. The problem was the shape of Saria’s own body. She had stopped being a human around seven years ago; the things she considered embarrassing had changed drastically from when she was alive.

But Saria’s words weren’t wrong. Wearing a cloak that covered the body could cause problems for an inexperienced beginner like Lina. Saria would do her best to try and prevent injury, but she wasn’t perfect, either.

“Aren’t you the one who chose Nee-san over me, saying that she’s better?” asked Rita.

“Indeed,” said Tarea, who was wearing Rita because of a lack of Living Armors of suitable size, just like Lina. “There is nothing to be so embarrassed about.”

And Tarea wasn’t even wearing Rita over her clothes like Lina; she was wearing Rita over the undergarments that Vandalieu had created in experiment.

It was the kind of undergarments that clung tightly to the body like a second skin, allowing for unobstructed movement, and while it didn’t expose anything, the shape of her chest and waist were clearly visible.

“Just like me, you are not exposing your skin,” said Tarea. She showed no signs of embarrassment despite wearing clothes that, in some ways, were more arousing to members of the opposite sex than having her skin completely exposed.

Despite being formerly human, she had completely absorbed the Ghouls’ preference for wearing highly-revealing clothes.

“Ah… Mhmm, I’ve started to feel that it’s not really something to be embarrassed about,” Lina said.

It seemed that she had changed her mind after seeing Tarea showing no signs of embarrassment despite her deep cleavage drawing the eyes of men other than Vandalieu.

Perhaps it was similar to feeling more calm after seeing others in a more panicked state.

Of course, Tarea had tied a ribbon from the top of her undergarments so that her thick, muscular arms didn't stand out. It seemed that she was embarrassed not by her chest or waist, but by her upper arms.

Feeling slightly disappointed about this, Vandalieu began producing strings from his mouth.

"Should I add some decorations to make it harder to see your body?" he suggested.

Since Tarea wouldn't always be by Lina's side, he quickly knitted something with Thread-reeling.

He also felt apologetic towards Fester for making his girlfriend so embarrassed.

Incidentally, Rita, whom Tarea was wearing, was in a bad mood. This had begun when Tarea had said, "It is a little tight around my chest, can you not adjust it a little?"

"Kuh, as to be expected of you, Tarea-san. It seems that I cannot defeat you in size just yet," Rita said.

"Rita, Tarea-san's abdomen is just as large to make up for it –"

"But Nee-san, those are abdominal muscles, not fat!"

"…You two, I can hear you clearly," said Tarea.

Lina and the others became accustomed to moving while wearing the Living Armors after around an hour of warm-up exercises. Now they were going into the E-class Dungeon that Vandalieu had created to test his Labyrinth Construction skill, named the 'Ghoul King's Experimental Grounds.'

Of course, they weren't being told to polish their skills in real battles right away.

"Now then, begin," Vandalieu ordered.

“A-alright!” said Ivan, thrust his spear towards a Kobold despite feeling a little scared. The tip of his spear pierced the chest of the Kobold that was standing as still as a wooden dummy, emerging from its back.

The others were also thrusting their spears and firing their crossbows at unmoving monsters. The monsters made no attempts to avoid the attacks and simply fell to the ground.

“W-we defeated them…”

“My arrow hit?”

“I’ve exterminated Goblins before, but now I’ve beaten an agile Kobold…”

“Ugh, it feels more unpleasant than I’d expected.”

There were those who felt exhilarated by the sensation of gaining Experience Points and the sense of accomplishment, and others who grimaced at the feeling of killing living creatures made of flesh and blood… humanoid creatures, even if they were monsters.

“It seems that having them get accustomed to combat by attacking dummies first was the correct choice,” said the Living Armor of the former squad leader of the Red Wolf Knights’ Order.

Vandalieu nodded.

The monsters that Ivan and the others had just defeated were soulless dummy monsters created by Vandalieu’s Dungeon.

They were normally set to attack detected intruders, just like normal Dungeons. However, Vandalieu had set restrictions such as that they would not finish enemies that were unable to fight and would not chase fleeing enemies.

But now they were complete dummies for the purpose of training… just like real wooden training dummies, they wouldn’t move no matter what was done to them.

For those with a certain level of combat abilities, defeating monsters in this state would be like harvesting plants; their skill levels wouldn’t increase much.

But for amateurs with no skills, this was physical training to polish their skills.

The most efficient way of acquiring combat-oriented skills was in real battle. This was because defeating enemies while using weapons would grant large amounts of Experience Points.

The Labyrinth Construction skill was convenient because it allowed this to be done without any risk.

And the people could become used to not letting their guard down due to the exhilarating post-battle feeling or the feeling of disgust that beginners experienced, and get rid of their hesitation, risk-free.

Ivan and his companions had experienced killing Goblins once or twice in order to create Gobu-gobu. They had killed rats, hares, fish and birds for food countless times.

However, this wasn't enough to be able to ignore the Experience Points gained from defeating monsters of Rank 2 and above or ignore the unpleasant sensation of killing humanoid monsters in order to deal with the next threat without letting their guards down.

"Well, against Rank 2 monsters, even if you let your guards down, the Living Armors can just punch the monsters to death," said Saria. "Ah, Lina-san. There is too much tension in your back. Please relax."

"L-like this?"

"Yes. Now please pull the trigger."

Lina, who was wearing Saria whose armor Vandalieu had attached frills and laces to, made of his strings that wouldn't obstruct movement so that she could feel less embarrassed, pulled the trigger of a small crossbow. The arrow flew straight ahead of her into the chest of a Kobold.

"I-it hit…" she murmured.

"Please load the next arrow," said Saria.

"O-okay."

Incidentally, Tarea was next to them, wearing Rita who was also now covered in frills and laces, firing a crossbow at a Huge Bone Rabbit in the same way.

“Incidentally, is it alright to only train in using spears and crossbows?” Tarea asked. “If we are preparing for emergency situations, would it not be better to train with short swords and throwing weapons?”

“It’s true that nobody is going to be walking around with spears on their backs or crossbows in their hands,” Rita agreed.

Neither the spears as long as people’s heights that Ivan and the others were swinging nor the crossbow that Tarea was currently using could be called exceptionally portable weapons. They were too large and heavy for ordinary people to carry around.

Making them collapsible would increase their portability, but as the weapons were supposed to be used in emergency situations, it would defeat the purpose.

But according to the former squad leader of the Red Wolf Knights’ Order, it wasn’t really a problem.

“No, once you have acquired skills, that problem will be solved,” he said. “The gods are generous. After you have acquired the Spear Technique skill, you can switch from a long spear to a short one and still use them as long as you remember your form. The crossbows can also be replaced by easy-to-carry short bows once you have acquired the Archery skill.』

Lambda’s skill system was quite broad in terms of martial skills.

For example, both a spear as long as a person’s height and a short spear of less than a meter in length could be used for the Spear Technique skill. There was no such thing as Long Spear Technique or Short Spear Technique.

There was no Crossbow Technique; crossbows used the Archery skill.

Both clubs and hammers used Club Technique. Bladed weapons were separated into Swordsmanship and Short Sword Technique depending on the length of the blade, but both a one-handed, thin rapier and a two-handed claymore used Swordsmanship.

Of course, the martial skills that could be used were different between weapons even if they used the same skill; in fact, even the ways they were used were different

depending on the most appropriate time to use them and the weight and shape of the weapons.

For instance, a warrior who was skilled in the use of Triple Slash to unleash consecutive attacks with a claymore couldn't suddenly become a master of the rapier, which wasn't suited to making slashing attacks.

That was why it was considered best for those who were soldiers and knights by occupation to learn to start off using the same weapons as the ones they would be using in the future.

However, the ones being trained were ordinary people. Though this was a little inconvenient, they were not professionals that lived in battle.

"Thus, we will first have you learn skills and then have you learn how to use weapons suited for carrying around. This will allow you to receive the benefits of the skills and learn to use them in a short period of time," the former squad leader explained.

It seemed that this was the standard way to prepare ordinary people for battle in a limited period of time.

Lambda was a world considered inferior by the gods, but because monsters and nations had fought each other throughout its history, training exercises had been thought about considerably.

"I see," said Tarea. "But I believe a light short spear will be easier to use than a long, heavy one, am I wrong?"

"That is true, but in this case, we are providing everyone with physical strength and stamina, so even the long spears do not cause any problems. And though they are not moving, we are training everyone with live monsters rather than dummies, so… we thought that it would be best for you to be far away from them."

"Ah, indeed, that is true."

Short spears were easier to use, but that would mean having to kill monsters from a closer distance. That would mean being sprayed by the monster's blood and witnessing its dying moment up-close.

That would likely weaken the willpower of Ivan and the others, who were

inexperienced in battle.

“Is that true?” asked Saria. It seemed that this had never occurred to her and Rita, who had been Undead for a long time, because they only felt hunger in response to the smell of blood.

“Apparently so,” said Vandalieu.

Incidentally, the reason they weren’t training in Throwing Technique was simply because few of the Living Armor instructors possessed the Throwing Technique skill.

“Killing enemies with throwing weapons needs knives, short spears and axes, but we didn’t have the budget for providing enough of these to be discarded with each use,” the former squad leader explained. “And bows and arrows are easier to carry many of.”

“Oh my, could we not simply throw stones if we have no arrows? If we gather appropriately-sized stones beforehand, we will have no inconveniences regarding ammunition. Isn’t that right, Van-sama?” said Tarea.

“You’re right,” Vandalieu agreed.

“My apologies, Your Majesty,” said the former squad leader. “We did not possess the Superhuman Strength skill when we were alive, so throwing stones was impossible for us in various ways.”

Stone-throwing was an effective method of fighting for ordinary people on Earth, but it apparently wasn’t very effective in Lambda without the Superhuman Strength skill.

This could be compensated for by high Attribute Values, but… those with such high Attribute Values would be able to defeat enemies without having to resort to stone-throwing.

And so, in just one day, Ivan, Lina and the others acquired the Spear Technique and Archery skills.

On the next day, they switched to short spears and short bows for fundamental training. After that, they trained in real battles against Rank 1 monsters in the Ghoul King’s Experimental Grounds. Once they became accustomed to this, they engaged in real battles against Rank 2 monsters.

Within ten days, everyone had acquired level 2 skills.

“I feel kind of refreshed around my stomach!”

“My level increased as well. I will be able to undergo a Job-change soon.”

“At this rate, I could aim to become an explorer and… Ouch!”

“Don’t get ahead of yourself! You’ll just end up getting injured and causing trouble for everyone!”

Ivan and the others went back home, taking the short spears, bows and arrows that they had used for training with them as well as ten days’ worth of average pay.

“To think that ordinary people who are not even young would be able to gain level 2 skills in just ten days, without any bonuses to skills from Jobs…” Because he was an empty suit of armor, it was difficult to tell that the former squad leader was surprised, but he probably was.

“Is it something that’s never happened before?” asked Vandalieu.

The former squad leader’s helmet clattered as it moved up and down in a nod. “Something that has never happened before, or rather… if it had, regular soldiers would not be able to afford to feed themselves.”

There would be no reason to pay high wages to those with skills that could be attained by amateurs in the space of ten days.

It was generally expected that the average soldier would have combat-oriented skills at level 2. It wasn’t that this was a standard that had been decided upon for regular soldiers. It was simply that level 2 was where their skills settled at as a result of various circumstances.

Those circumstances were the quality and amount of their daily training and experience in real battles. Even soldiers didn’t spend every day fighting. Their jobs included policing, escorting, patrolling and deskwork as well. Soldier quality was important for those who hired them as well, but they couldn’t spend money and time endlessly to improve the quality of those soldiers.

As a result, the skill level of the average soldier was level 2.

Thus, if it was common for ordinary people to acquire these skills in just ten days, statesmen would be forced to pay large amounts of money to have soldiers train their skills to level 3.

“Well, they trained using a method that has never been used before, so I suppose that’s how it is,” said Vandalieu.

The Living Armor instructors, monster targets that allowed Experience Points to be gained safely and real battle experience with the instructors’ support.

Vandalieu was likely the first in history to go this far to train ordinary people in combat.

“I think you being a Guider has something to do with it as well, Bocchan,” said Saria.

“That might be the case, but… I don’t get a feeling that I’m using the Guidance: Demon Path skill other than the constantly-applied bonus to everyone’s Attribute Values,” said Vandalieu.

He wasn’t aware of the effects of the Guidance skill… In fact, he wasn’t even aware that he was walking on a demon path. It was a skill that Vandalieu couldn’t sense.

As Vandalieu watched Ivan and the others leave, Fester, who had come to pick Lina up, called out to him.

“Hey, Vandalieu, I wanted to ask you… could you make clothes for Lina in the same shape as Saria? With the laces and frills.”

“…If it’s clothes rather than armor, I can, but has Lina agreed to this?” Vandalieu asked.

“No, I mean, it’s hard to talk to her about it –”

Smack.

“Stop asking for stupid things and hurry up! You’re the one who came to pick me up, right?!”

Lina dragged Fester back home. It seemed that the training had placed her even more firmly in her position above Fester in their relationship.

“Muh, why Nee-san?” Rita wondered. “I’m sexy, too.”

“Bocchan, when you do make such clothes, please make it possible to tell them apart from me, like making them a different color!” said Saria.

“You really are young, aren’t you?” Tarea remarked.

Incidentally, in the days to come, Lina would send a request for Vandalieu to estimate some costs through Zadiris, who visited the trading post regularly as an explorer.

It was possible that the time for her wedding ceremony was close.

In the Bahn Gaia continent, there were apparently no rules against premarital sexual relations as long as both individuals were adults.

The working Ghoul women had also raised their skill levels to 2 within ten days. They hadn’t particularly tried to learn these skills up until now, but they had possessed the qualities to do so, so it wasn’t particularly surprising.

“Umm, Van-sama, my Archery skill has also become level 2,” said Tarea. “I would love to always be by your side, but I must return to my work –”

She possessed incredible skill as a craftsman but had been level 0 as a Ghoul, but she had acquired Experience Points for the first time during this ten-day training, increasing her level dramatically.

It wasn’t enough for her Rank to increase, but her Attribute Points had increased considerably. It didn’t have any direct effect on her Arms Smith skill, but her increased physical strength would be useful for her work.

Most importantly, it was good for her back.

“You should continue with this to get rid of your back pain,” said Vandalieu. “I was just planning to clear the two Dungeons in the marshlands, too.”

“Wha–?! I will die if I enter a high-difficulty Dungeon where Earth Dragons begin appearing from the first floor!” Tarea exclaimed.

“That’s true for the one called the ‘Scaled King’s Nest.’ I’m not talking about that one, I’m talking about the ‘Lizardmen’s Nest.’”

“A D-class Dungeon is only one class above the Ghoul King’s Experiment Grounds, so it will be fine for you as you are now, Tarea-san,” said Saria.

“We’ll support you as well,” said Rita.

The two of them had decided that Tarea would be able to follow Vandalieu in his conquest of a D-class Dungeon as long as she was just staying behind and firing arrows.

In fact, the boss fight would be difficult with a skill level of two, but it would be enough to deal with the monsters they would encounter in the upper floors. And Tarea’s Attribute Values alone were equivalent to a D-class adventurer’s.

“But that Dungeon is not one that you created, is it, Van-sama?! The monsters will attack us normally!” Tarea protested.

It seemed that a different level of determination was needed to go from practicing real battles to actually fighting them.

“It will be fine,” Vandalieu reassured her. “We’ll protect you. Do your best so that your Rank can increase.”

Tarea seemed dissatisfied, but finally agreed. “Very well. Very well… so please say it one more time. Say ‘I’ instead of ‘we.’”

“It will be fine because I’ll protect you,” Vandalieu said.

“Yes, Van-sama～♪”

The reality, however, was that Vandalieu could solo-clear a D-class Dungeon with ease.

“Ghouls act like maidens despite their age, don’t they?” Rita remarked.

“But Rita, wouldn’t you like him to say it to you as well?” said Saria.

“Hmm, it’s not like I’m not interested, but we’re suits of armor, aren’t we? I feel like suits of armor being protected is quite a contradiction.”

“That is true… The conflict between a suit of armor’s heart and a maiden’s heart. A difficult problem.”

“Is it really difficult?” Vandalieu asked, confused. He was willing to say it as many times as they wanted if it would make them happy.

As the weather became colder, Vandalieu visited the marshlands once more in order to clear the Dungeons. The first thing he did was have Bone Man and Shashuja take him around so that he could inspect each area of the marshlands.

He wanted to see whether the training of the Lizardmen to work on the Capricorn farm was going well and whether the Lizardmen had any requests or problems with their lives here.

Of course, the Lizardmen were genuine monsters rather than members of Vida’s races. Many of them were astounded that the one who had conquered them was even taking the effort of coming and asking such things.

“Monsters are quite easy to rule over, aren’t they?” Vandalieu muttered.

Monsters’ ways of thinking were quite different to those of people. They thoroughly believed that the strong were always right.

For instance, if their friends, parents, siblings and children were killed or eaten for stupid reasons, people would hate rulers and plot betrayal no matter how strong the rulers were.

But monsters wouldn’t consider it unless they were pressed or forced to betray rulers by someone who seemed even stronger. They would only think of betraying rulers if the rulers showed signs of weakness.

For them, their friends being killed by rulers for pointless reasons and their friends being killed by other monsters or people were completely different things.

“Shuu?” Shashuja, who seemed uncertain as to whether Vandalieu was dissatisfied with something, licked his own eyes with his tongue.

“My lord, as monsters, we are the more peculiar ones,” said Bone Man.

As he said, the Undead who possessed their personalities from their previous lives as well as the members of the new races created through the influence of the death

attribute, who could understand the values of people, were more peculiar as far as monsters went.

In fact, the Demon King Guduranis, the ancestor of monsters, had created them to use as an army. There would be no value in an army that would betray him and his servants, who were more powerful than the monsters.

It was better than hearing complaints from the Lizardmen for years over how their companions had been killed, so Vandalieu didn't particularly mind. He didn't intend to do anything unreasonable to them just because he ruled over them now, but it was nice and simple that they would obey him just because he was strong.

Though it was unusual, the Lizardmen did report one thing that was troubling them. Vandalieu went to look at it and found himself looking confusedly at the sight of Lizardmen children who had emerged from their eggs only a few days ago.

"They look healthy to me?" he said.

Gyuu, kugyuu, kugyuu.

Lizardmen children were adorable. But the children that were crying energetically seemed perfectly healthy to Vandalieu. They were eating plenty, eating frogs and fish by biting their heads to begin with.

But Shashuja pointed at the children's heads.

"Now that I look carefully… their heads are shaped differently?"

Shashuja nodded. The children's heads weren't same shape as ordinary Lizardmen.

To put it simply, they were crocodile-shaped.

There was no mistake that their parents were Lizardmen, but all of the children hatched after the Scaled King's defeat had apparently been born shaped like crocodiles rather than like lizards.

"That is how it is, my lord… Do you have any memories of secretly immersing them in death-attribute Mana?" asked Bone Man.

"None at all, but… Considering the timing, this should be the effect of Guidance:

Demon Path," said Vandalieu.

It seemed that a new race had been born yet again.

"Let's name them Armans for now," said Vandalieu.

『The level of the Guidance: Demon Path skill has increased!』

Job explanation:

【Tree Caster】

A Job that can be acquired by having a certain amount of knowledge regarding plants and taming many (over a hundred) plant-type monsters.

This Job makes it easy to increase the Vitality Attribute Value.

Also, this Job allows the acquisition of the Plant Binding skill, which grants the ability to equip plant-type monsters inside the body.

This Job has an effect of allowing plants to be cultivated inside the body. This includes fungi, molds and phytoplankton.

Those who acquire this Job are likely to be able to produce exceptional results in farming, the making of bread and certain pastries, fermented food, forestry and fishing involving the use of seaweed, aquatic plants and phytoplankton.

However, it would normally be considered impossible to tame over a hundred plant-type monsters, and even those praised as wise men in Lambda do not possess the required amount of knowledge (There is not enough known about fungi, molds and fermentation), so it would be difficult for anyone other than Vandalieu to acquire this Job unless he were to directly teach them the required knowledge.

Chapter 101
The meeting between those who crawl on the ceiling

Traps set in Dungeons generally targeted those who walked on the ground and those standing near walls. There were very few that targeted those flying through the air.

The reason for this was that for the Demon King Guduranis, the creator of the Dungeons, they were breeding grounds for the monsters that formed his army and traps for treasure-seeking humans.

It was said that Ricklent, the genie of time and magic, changed this so that Dungeons were a place to train and acquire resources and treasures.

But Ricklent had fallen into slumber before the end of the war, and, of course, the Demon King had been sealed.

Neither the Demon King nor Ricklent had imagined that people would be able to fly.

There were currently races created by Vida that could fly, such as pterosaur-type Drakonids and bat-type Beast-people, but before those races existed, no people could fly except for those with precious Magic Items, those with the ability to use advanced magic and those who had tamed flying monsters.

For the Demon King and Ricklent, it could be safely assumed that there were many more flying monsters than people with any method of proceeding through a Dungeon other than walking across its floors.

Even so, some B-class and A-class Dungeons contained traps targeting those who could fly, but such traps didn't appear in C-class Dungeons and below.

However, there were some monsters in Dungeons resembling caverns and ruins that clung to the ceilings and looked to take adventurers by surprise.

A mucus-like monster called a Slime was clinging to the ceiling in this particular Dungeon.

This Slime, whose instincts as a monster generated by the Dungeon made it prioritize the repulsion of intruders over its own life, patiently waited for its prey to pass by beneath it.

But the Slime heard the rustling of something crawling along the ceiling. It ignored this sound, thinking that it was just some other monsters.

But the source of the sound drew closer to the Slime.

Monsters born in the same Dungeon didn't share any feelings of companionship. Though they prioritized other monsters less than the repulsion of intruders, they were still just prey.

The Slime obeyed its instincts and decided that this approaching monster was prey.

But what approached it was not a monster. It was an intruder with spider legs protruding from its back and bee legs extending from its sides, crawling along the ceiling.

The Slime did not see things as people did, but the presence it sensed was so bizarre that even its instincts stopped functioning.

"Hmm? The reaction suddenly disappeared?"

Vandalieu, who had gone on ahead to use Danger Sense: Death in order to see whether there was any danger such as traps on the ceiling, was confused by the sudden disappearance of the reaction that he had sensed and his gaze began to wander around.

He had been certain that there had been a trap or a monster waiting for an ambush from the ceiling, but… there was no way that a trap would disappear on its own, and even if the monster fled, it was unnatural for it to do so without making a single noise.

He tried using Detect Life and found a response, but it wasn't a very strong one. He hadn't sensed a large danger to begin with, so it was likely a venomous insect or something.

Coming to this conclusion, Vandalieu decided to continue, but then he froze as he felt a wet sensation on his hand.

Vandalieu and his party had challenged the D-class Dungeon, the Lizardmen's Nest, in order to power-level Tarea and to have the Lizardmen become absolutely loyal to him, and they had gained immediate results.

"I have tamed a Slime," Vandalieu announced happily, having brought back a Slime with a washbasin's worth of fluid volume and an internal core the size of a child's fist.

"Oh, that's definitely a Slime."

"It really is! It's my first time seeing one."

"How rare."

"This is also my first time seeing a Slime."

"It's certainly a Slime."

Kasim, Zeno, Fester, Tarea and Rita were all surrounding the Slime, impressed.

"It is true that it is rare, but why does Bocchan seem so happy?" Saria asked, and everyone looked at Vandalieu, suddenly wondering the same thing.

For him, Slimes were indeed rare. This enormous, amoeba-like Rank 2 monster was an enemy that would be dangerous for beginner adventurers if they were caught by surprise. Attacks with farming tools and improvised weapons were ineffective, as Slimes possessed great resistance to impacts.

But in the end, they were only Rank 2. They could be defeated by brute force using martial skills, and a thrusting weapon could be used to pierce the core to defeat them easily.

They could be exterminated even more easily using offensive magic spells.

Superior Slime races such as Metal Slimes and Poison Slimes were enemies that one would need to stay vigilant against, but ordinary Slimes were nothing but small fry as long as they weren't handled carelessly.

In fact, even in Devil's Nests, they often concealed themselves in hidden places and

scavenged corpses rather than actively hunting other monsters.

That was why they were simply rare monsters that were seldom encountered.

It was difficult to imagine that anyone would be happy about taming them. Especially Vandalieu, who had already tamed numerous high-Rank monsters.

“It’s because it’s a Slime,” said Vandalieu.

For him, Slimes were a great example of monsters that appeared in fantasy works, just like Goblins.

Unlike the Slimes that appeared in an extremely popular international game on Earth, the jiggling, quivering Slime in Vandalieu’s arms wasn’t comical or cute in appearance. In fact, it was dark-colored, viscous and odd.

But it was still a Slime.

“It’s weak now, but I’m sure it will become strong,” said Vandalieu. “Just like Bone Man, the other Undead, Pete and Pain.”

Bone Man, who now rode Demon Horses and Leo (formerly the Scaled King), and the calamity-designated Bone Fort Knochen, had originally been Rank 1 Living Bones. Though the Slime was currently Rank 2, there was more than enough of a chance it could become a calamity-designated race surpassing Dragons in the future.

Click-click.

Pete and Pain, a former Pain Worm, emerged from Vandalieu to agree.

Pete had become a Rank 5 Lightning Centipede that emitted electricity from the horns on his head, while Pain had become a Rank 4 Fur Worm with a lot of fluffy hair covering his body.

“That’s true…” everyone said simultaneously. Given Vandalieu’s track record, they had no choice but to agree.

“Then we’ll have to be careful to make sure that the Slime doesn’t catch up to us,” said Kasim.

“If I recall, Bone-Man-san took eight years to… Won’t it be difficult?” asked Zeno.

“I do not mind in the slightest if he catches up to me,” said Tarea.

“Bocchan, please raise us properly too!” said Rita.

Kasim and the others hadn’t been opposed to the idea. They were satisfied by Vandalieu’s explanation and seemed certain now that this Slime would one day become a big figure.

Normally, those of Rank 5 or 6 would already be considered big figures.

“Incidentally, your Majesty, what will you name it?” asked Princess Levia, who was floating a short distance away as the Slime seemed to be frightened of her.

Vandalieu thought for a moment before answering. “Let’s name him Kühl.”

It was the name of a military nation in Origin, sounding like a German word that meant “cold.” It seemed that Slimes were genderless, so this name was probably fine.

“I see. Nice to meet you, Kühl,” said Kasim. “By the way, are we going to walk on and have it follow us? Or are you going to have someone carry it?”

“Ah, it’s alright,” said Vandalieu. “I can equip him with Insect Binding Technique.” The moment he finished saying these words, the Slime Kühl was absorbed into his arms.

“…Were Slimes always insects?” asked Zeno.

“That’s the biggest surprise of the day,” said Rita.

“The Insect Binding Technique probably includes all creatures that move around by crawling, not just insects,” said Vandalieu.

If Slimes counted as insects in this regard, it was possible that Vandalieu would be able to equip snakes and lizards as well. Dragons would likely be impossible, however.

There were no historical records of the D-class Dungeon called the Lizardmen's Nest, but it was likely to be quite old.

According to the information passed by mouth to the wise Lizardmen like Shashuja, the Lizardmen produced by this Dungeon were their ancestors.

In Talosheim, directly north of the marshlands, it had been recorded on stone tablets that Lizardmen had existed nearby for tens of thousands of years, so this Dungeon had likely appeared before then.

The Lizardmen, who had emerged from the Lizardmen's Nests in a monster rampage, had won the battle for survival in the marshlands and settled there. And then they had conquered the Lizardmen's Nest in order to gain a reliable source of food and experience in battle.

It was quite ironic that a Dungeon would be conquered by monsters that had emerged from it in a monster rampage.

And the Lizardman who had cleared this Dungeon on his own was a being acknowledged by the god who had created him (whose name was not known), so there was apparently a custom among the Lizardmen of these marshlands where they paid their respects to this exemplary member of their race.

This Lizardman had been the chief of the group who had formed the non-aggression pact with Talosheim in the past.

"Then isn't it likely that you won't be recognized as an exemplary individual if you clear the Dungeon with us?" asked Kasim.

"That's not a problem," said Vandalieu. "I'll be soloing when I clear the B-class Dungeon that Leo (the Scaled King) came from, anyway."

The above-mentioned honorary custom had fallen out of use when the B-class Dungeon that had given birth to Leo appeared.

"Though you say you will solo, we will be with you," Princess Levia reminded him.

Click-click.

And so they cleared the Dungeon up to the twelfth floor with ease. Befitting of the birthplace of the Lizardmen, most of the monsters in this Dungeon were Lizardmen, so Kasim and the others would have found it difficult on their own, but the Rank 5 Levia, the Rank 6 Living Armor sisters and Vandalieu himself were with them.

There was no chance that a D-class Dungeon would give them problems. And the Labyrinth Construction skill informed Vandalieu of each floor's layout as he stepped into them, so they never even lost their way.

If they wanted to, they could have even done a complete run through the Dungeon in just a few hours.

Their objectives were the leveling of Tarea, Kühl, Kasim and his friends and to check the value of the resources in the Dungeon. Tarea's Night Vision skill had transformed to the Dark Vision skill under the effect of the Eclipse King Title along the way, and Kasim and his friends had acquired the Night Vision skill thanks to the Title's effect as well, so they spent two days in the Dungeon for them to get used to their new vision as well.

As a result, their levels increased significantly. Most importantly, Kasim had become able to actually use Shield Bash rather than just screaming the skill's name in pretense.

"Did you see my Shield Bash?! I shattered the Lizardman General boss's greatsword!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I saw it!" Tarea shouted. "I saw you take the Lizardman General's attack directly from the front and your shield shatter along with its sword! How can you have your defensive equipment broken as a shield-bearer, even if your opponent is the Dungeon boss?!"

"Eh, I mean, I couldn't help it?"

"You could! If you wish to boast proudly, make sure you become able to repel the boss and his martial technique without breaking your shield!"

"Y-yes, Ma'am!"

Though Kasim had made great efforts, those efforts had resulted in his shield breaking, so Tarea scolded him.

Vandalieu had wanted to warn Kasim as well, but he hesitated, seeing that he was too late. Seeing Kasim feeling depressed after Tarea's nagging, he thought that lecturing him further would be a bad idea, so he ended up comforting him instead. "… Well, that shield was full of scratches, anyway. It has been holding out against similarly powerful opponents since you came to Talosheim, so I'm sure it was nearing the end of its lifespan."

"Van-sama, how can you be so soft on him?" Tarea asked. "I am saying these things to him for his sake –"

"I'm sure Kasim already understands," said Vandalieu. "Isn't that right, Kasim?"

"Y-yeah. I'll be careful from now on, Tarea-san," said Kasim.

Seeing Tarea and Vandalieu's conversation reminded him of the times he was scolded by his parents. Back then, his mother had been angry as well, while his father calmed her down.

Tarea looked to be only a few years older than Kasim in appearance, and Vandalieu was less than half his age, so it felt significantly out of place, however.

Of course, Tarea's real age was over two hundred and seventy and the number of years that Vandalieu had lived in total was over forty years.

"Well, let's replace our equipment when we get back to Talosheim. My sword has started to fall apart, too," said Fester as he looked at the chipped blade of his longsword. He and Zeno had been talking to each other about how they should clear the Dungeon without Vandalieu's supervision next time.

"Will you be upgrading to Death Iron equipment?" Vandalieu asked.

"Hmm… It's tempting, but I still think it would be a waste for us to use it," said Fester.

If they were to indulge in exceptional equipment, they would become negligent in the training of their techniques. It seemed that they planned to do their best with iron and steel equipment for a while longer.

"So, was there anything that seemed useful in this Dungeon?" Zeno asked.

"There weren't any minerals, but there were fish like catfish, swamp prawns and

swamp crabs that can also be found in the marshlands, and mud," said Vandalieu.

"Mud?" Princess Levia repeated.

"Yes. The grey mud that can be found in a part of this Dungeon has fine dirt, so I think it will be good for beauty products."

The mud-packs that had been available on Earth. Of course, Vandalieu had no experience with mud packs or beauty salons that had used mud products, but wouldn't he be able to do the same thing with this mud?

"Oh my, is that true?!" Tarea exclaimed.

"That's good for you, isn't it, Tarea-san?" said Princess Levia.

"I see," said Saria.

"More importantly, Bocchan, you said that catfish are delicious when cooked with the kaba* method, but how are you supposed to cook them with the kaba method?" asked Rita.

"Come to think of it, I heard from Hannah-san that there are Lava Hippopotamuses that live in boiling lava, but… I wonder if you use those to cook them?" Princess Levia wondered.

TLN: From Wikipedia: Kabayaki is a preparation of fish, especially unagi eel, where the fish is split down the back (or belly), gutted and boned, butterflied, cut into square fillets, skewered, and dipped in a sweet soy sauce-based sauce before being broiled on a grill. カバ/kaba also means "hippopotamus."*

The only one interested in skin beauty among the women present now was Tarea.

After all, the other four didn't have skin. What appeared to be skin was actually spirit form.

"Kabayaki takes time, so I'll try it when we return. It will be my first time doing it myself, too," said Vandalieu. "Incidentally, I won't be using hippopotamuses."

Meanwhile, Tarea and Kühl had both increased in Rank.

Tarea had become a Rank 4 Ghoul Artisan first, and now a Rank 5 Ghoul High Artisan. There hadn't been any large changes to her appearance, but tattoo-like patterns had appeared on her skin, centered around her arms.

And as expected of the Artisan in her race name, it seemed that there were bonuses to her crafting skills.

Kühl had become a Rank 4 Venom Slime. The volume of its body had increased and its color had become a poisonous-looking purple, but Vandalieu was expecting it to develop even further.

"Fufufufu, once we get back, we must have the working Ghouls level up in turn and have their Ranks increase," said Tarea, spellbound by her arms that moved more nimbly and powerfully than before. It seemed that her memory of how opposed she had been to leveling around half a month ago had vanished into the distance.

"Please be careful when leveling them," said Vandalieu. "Have them wear the armor of the Red Wolf Knights' Order, and don't forget to post requests at the trading post to recruit people to support them."

"Of course," said Tarea. "You should do your best in clearing the B-class Dungeon as well, Van-sama."

"Once we get back, we need to get new equipment and find new party members," said Kasim.

"Things went well this time because Vandalieu and everyone else were with us, but things will be tough with just the three of us," said Zeno.

"Yeah, do your best," said Fester. "I'm sure you two can find nice girls like my Lina as well."

"That's not what we meant!" Kasim and Zeno shouted together.

The Dungeon that had given birth to Leo, named the Scaled King's Nest, was in the depths of the cavern that Leo had been using as his burrow.

"Well then, here I go," said Vandalieu as he entered without any particular signs of

enthusiasm, being watched by a large number of Lizardmen.

The Lizardmen who had served the Scaled King seemed skeptical that he would really be alright on his own as they watched him go. They were intelligent and had an advanced society for monsters, but they were still monsters.

They would not recognize those who were not strong as superior beings, as rulers. With that absolute instinct in mind, Vandalieu hadn't fought the Scaled King directly, so some of the Lizardmen had their doubts whether he had the qualities of a ruler.

He had fired the projectile that had killed the Familiar Spirit (actually the Spirit Clone) of the evil god that had given the Scaled King his divine protection by smashing its heart, but it wasn't as if the Familiar Spirit's (Spirit Clone's) corpse could be found lying around, so naturally, some had begun to doubt Vandalieu's abilities after some time passed.

This was especially true for those that had served the Scaled King.

Vandalieu could always have Bone Man and the Black Bull Knights' Order use physical force to convince them if they caused problems, but it would be troublesome to have to repeat this over and over, so Vandalieu had decided to solo the Dungeon, leveling himself and his monsters in the process.

Though he had told them that he would be soloing, the Lizardmen would not be able to see him once he entered the Dungeon, so he would be letting everyone out once inside.

"As expected of a Dungeon where Dragons appear; it is quite large, isn't it?" Princess Levia remarked as she appeared.

Pete gave a hiss as he emerged from Vandalieu's body.

"It's quite different from Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain, even though they're both B-class Dungeons," said Rita. "Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain's internal structure was all mountains."

"Well, it is a mountain," said Saria.

The two sisters had simply been stored in Vandalieu's luggage. The suits of armor that were their actual bodies actually had very little volume, so once they erased their

spirit forms, the armors folded up and were easily carried.

Bone Man had insisted that his bones could be taken apart and absorbed by a large worm, but there was a chance that they would be digested, so he had been stationed in the marshlands.

“Is everyone alright?” Vandalieu asked.

“Ugh… We are alright, but… This is something that I cannot get used to,” said Zadiris.

“It’s quite harsh on us,” said Vigaro.

The two of them had emerged from Vandalieu’s body after Pete, and Basdia was with them as well.

“Being infested by the parasite is alright, but… being equipped inside you with your Insect Binding Technique, Van, is a little…” Basdia muttered.

“Now that you mention it, what is it like inside me?” Vandalieu asked.

“…It’s dark and we can’t see anything. While we’re equipped, we can’t move, but the other creatures can, so we can feel them crawling around on top of our bodies… we can hear the sounds of the insects’ wings in our ears, too.”

“Wow.”

It wasn’t just that they found insects unpleasant; it seemed that the inside of his body was an extremely unpleasant place for people to be.

“Well, it is called the Insect Binding Technique,” said Zadiris. “The insects are the main part. Also, we could not hear the sounds made by the Ents and Monster Plants, so the ones equipped by the Plant Binding Technique are likely in a different place.”

“It’s amazing that Eleanora and Luciliano were always willing to be equipped,” said Vigaro.

“That’s true,” Vandalieu agreed. “Well, Luciliano’s unlikely to care about a little discomfort once his ambition for research is fired up.”

“Hmm, was it really that unpleasant to have insects crawl around on you?” Rita

wondered.

“I wonder? I do recall that it is unpleasant, though,” said Saria.

“The normal sense of touch… I lost my body two hundred years ago, so I cannot remember,” said Princess Levia.

“It was certainly unpleasant,” said Darcia.

As the four of them didn’t have skin to speak of, they only felt confusion during this discussion.

As if the monsters had heard the noise, the ground suddenly rumbled.

“It seems that the first monster has appeared, so let’s leave the talk for later… and let’s begin our leveling,” said Vandalieu.

And so the power-leveling on the stage of the B-class Dungeon that nobody had cleared in over a hundred years began.

- **Name**: Tarea
- **Rank**: 5
- **Race**: Ghoul High Artisan
- **Level**: 17
- **Job**: Arms Smith: Skilled Artisan
- **Job Level**: 90
- **Job history**: Apprentice Arms Smith, Arms Smith → Slave (Forced job change at level 47), Apprentice Prostitute, Prostitute, Arms Smith (Level 48)
- **Age**: 271 years old (18 years old physically and in appearance)
- **Passive skills**:
    - Night Vision → Dark Vision (Transformed!)
    - Pain Resistance: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 1
    - Allure: Level 4
- **Active skills**:
    - Estimation: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Armor Smithing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Weapon Smithing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Bedroom Skill: Level 5
    - Dancing: Level 2
    - Love-making: Level 2
    - Archery: Level 3 (NEW!)

Title explanation:

【Monstrosity】

A name acquired by those feared by numerous influential beings.

But those with this Title are not simply feared; the Title cannot be obtained unless a strange, ominous aura surrounds them.

Those who acquire this Title are often monsters whose true identities are not known to the higher-ranking individuals and bosses in societal organizations, including the Adventurers' Guild, so those with this Title are treated with caution once they are

known to possess it. However, they might simply draw attention in the underworld. When monsters possess this Title, it becomes easier for them to acquire subordinates.

Those who have acquired this Title attract the attention of those who fear them more easily, and more individuals in the underworld take notice of them and draw closer.

In the past, there have been numerous cases where statesmen deliberately gave the Monstrosity Title to bosses of criminal organizations that had become so tremendous that gaining more subordinates made no difference to them in order to watch out for their movements.

Chapter 102
A chance meeting with a god

As the Scaled King's Nest was an unconquered Dungeon, monster encounters in it were more frequent than in Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain, which was being cleared every month.

The powerful monsters that appeared one after another were not simply strong; many of them had special abilities such as scattering poisonous spores and firing lasers from their bloodshot eyes or used dangerous spells such as firing projectiles of fire or ice and creating illusions to make their enemies let their guards down.

The traps that had been set in the Dungeon were all highly lethal and the floors' environments were harsh as well. The upper floors were simply large caverns and valleys, but from the middle floors onwards, there were scorching-hot deserts, forests of giant mushrooms that scattered poisonous spores, rocky areas with lava erupting in various places followed by intensely-cold ice fields and there was even a floor that was a swamp of deadly poison.

This Dungeon could only be cleared by someone with more Vitality than a Dragon or –

"That's the thirty-eighth floor clear."

A party with a death-attribute mage who possessed a Mana pool that transcended common knowledge.

The poison and disease among the monsters' special abilities were neutralized beforehand, their offensive spells were rendered useless by the Magic Absorption Barrier and the Grotesque Mind skill prevented illusions from even being seen in the first place. The Labyrinth Construction skill revealed the locations of the larger traps the moment the floors were set foot into, and even the smaller ones were detected by Danger Sense: Death before they were triggered.

The forests of enormous mushrooms were neutralized by Disinfect and Detoxification. The sunlight of the scorching-hot deserts had been blocked by Sand Golems while a cool temperature was maintained by the Demon Fire spell that absorbed heat from its

surroundings as it burned. The lava-filled areas were nothing more than slightly hot rocky areas once Demon Fires were used unsparingly to absorb most of the heat.

In the intensely-cold ice fields, Princess Levia and the other Ghosts did their best to burn in order to maintain warm temperatures as they proceeded.

The marshlands that produced endless amounts of deadly poison couldn't be detoxified, but they weren't a problem when Immortal Ents were summoned with the Plant Binding Technique to go over them.

The monsters that were simply powerful and monsters that released heat rays or breaths were dealt with by Vigaro, Rita and the others, however.

"It's unexpectedly easy," Vandalieu remarked.

"We regularly fight enemies of this level in Barigen's Fall Life-Mountain," said Vigaro. "The fights aren't easy, but they're not tough enough for us to need to ask you for help, Vandalieu."

"Well, having everything other than the battles themselves taken care of for us makes it hard to be boastful," said Zadiris.

"Well, we're all in the same party, aren't we?" said Rita.

Creeeaaaak.

"Eisen-san agrees, so I don't think you should worry about it," said Rita, interpreting the words (creaking?) of Eisen… The Immortal Ent that produced iron-hard, apple-like fruits, to her liking.

Incidentally they had discovered during the exploration of this Dungeon that the iron-apple fruits became softer when boiled. Now even Princess Levia, who had lost her Augmented Muscular Strength skill upon becoming a Ghost, could eat them.

"Anyway, I wonder how many floors are left," said Vigaro. "Since it's a B-class Dungeon, it should be less than forty."

"The next time we see a monster that's stronger than the others, it might be the Dungeon boss," said Vandalieu.

When they descended to the thirty-ninth floor, they found the boss of the Scaled King's Nest, a Rank 10 Genocide Rock Dragon that was considerably larger than a normal Rock Dragon, with countless drill-like spikes protruding from its carapace.

The enormous Dragon gave a deafening roar that would cause most ordinary people to lose consciousness.

"Even though this is the Scaled King's nest, the Dungeon boss doesn't have scales," Vandalieu murmured.

The body surface of the Genocide Rock Dragon was covered in a thick, boulder-like carapace.

Leaving that aside, even this boss didn't give them a fight that could have been called difficult.

After all, even though the Genocide Rock Dragon was a Rank 10 monster, it was just a Dungeon boss. It wasn't like Leo, who had received a divine protection from a certain god.

They were even able to weaken it without killing it to turn it into a target dummy and then have everyone deal the final blow together.

As the Potions were gulped down, they healed the wounds of those who drank them.

"Kah, there's nothing like a drink right after work."

"It's surprising that these special Potions that Bocchan made even work on us Undead."

The crimson Potions in porcelain containers… the limited-volume Potions were highly effective, had a sweet, fruity taste and even worked on Undead; they were the perfect Potions.

"Fifty percent of the raw materials are taken from me," said Vandalieu.

The raw material for this special Potion was Vandalieu's blood that had been collected with the Demon King's blood active, all sorts of medicinal herbs and fruit juice, as well

as powdered Demon King's horns. It had been named 'Blood Potion.' It was not half-made of kindness, but of Vandalieu*.

TLN: This is a joke on a Japanese phrase where something is "half-made of kindness."*

Its effects weren't limited to injuries; it was a cure-all item that was effective against fatigue, lack of Mana and even poisons and diseases as long as they weren't special varieties.

And as he had discovered from giving these Potions to Zadiris and the others, there were no side effects of products using the Demon King's fragments. Vandalieu had experimented for around a month using the soulless monsters from the Eclipse King's Orchard, Goblins captured alive near Talosheim and bandits captured from outside, but no negative effects on the body or mind had appeared.

Just like the products created from the Demon King's horns, it seemed that the Demon King's fragments that were separated from Vandalieu did not gain their own individual wills.

It was likely that the parts that Vandalieu produced were nothing more than derivatives; it was likely that the core-like parts didn't leave Vandalieu's body.

If that wasn't the case, the large number of Demon King's horns that Vandalieu had produced up until now would have infested a lot of living creatures by now.

Basdia licked her lips once she was sure that not another drop would come out of her bottle. "It's no wonder Eleanora and Bellmond are obsessed with Vandalieu's blood," she said. "After using these Potions once, you can't go back to using ordinary Potions."

"Indeed," Zadiris agreed. "It heals wounds about as well as a third… no, second-grade Potion, but it even restores Mana. And most importantly, it tastes very pleasant."

Normal blue-colored Potions tasted worse the more effective they were. Even fifth-grade Potions would cause an "uegh" of disgust upon touching the lips, while third-grade Potions would numb the sense of taste for a while. The taste of second-grade Potions often caused trauma more than the emotions of fear felt upon sustaining the serious wounds that required their use.

In that regard, Blood Potions were far easier to drink, so it was likely that they would be highly sought-after. Even if they were diluted and only as effective as fourth-grade

Potions in order to be able to produce more of it, there would still be plenty of people wanting to buy them.

“Not that I have plans to sell it to the outside world,” said Vandalieu. “This is a Talosheim-only product.”

If he sold the Blood Potions carelessly, there would be a flood of alchemists wanting Vandalieu’s blood. It would be far too ironic for a half-Vampire to have his blood taken from him.

They would likely be less popular if it became known that the Demon King’s fragments were used as raw materials for it, however. No, perhaps that would cause it to become even more popular in the underworld.

Though Darcia hadn’t thought that far, it seemed that she was in agreement with making it a limited product. “It’s true that you can’t sell these Potions irresponsibly.”

She was looking at the quivering Kühl, who was now so large that it looked as if it could swallow a bear whole. Its body had been purple when they entered the Scaled King’s Nest, but now it was the dark-red color of venous blood.

It seemed that Kühl had become a Rank 5 Blood Slime after licking the few drops of Blood Potion that had been left in a bottle.

Blood Slimes were fearsome Slimes that particularly enjoyed blood, being more sensitive to the smell of blood than sharks and squeezing blood from their prey more avariciously than Vampires.

『……』

But it seemed that what Kühl desired avariciously was not blood, but Blood Potion. It extended a tentacle to hold out an empty bottle towards Vandalieu. It was like a drunkard hiccupping as he asked for another drink.

“That’s all for today,” said Vandalieu. “Please make do with the Dragon blood for now.”

As if giving up, Kühl went off to slurp up the puddle of the Genocide Rock Dragon’s blood that was on the ground.

“Does the Potion that I made from my blood taste better than the blood of a Rank 10

Dragon?" Vandalieu wondered.

"I'm sure it has a sweet tooth," said Princess Levia. "Maybe it's a girl."

Pete hissed in agreement.

Both of them had increased in Rank as well.

Princess Levia was a Rank 6 Blood Flame Ghost. Like Kühl, her Rank had increased immediately after drinking the Potion.

Pete was a Rank 6 Great Black Lightning Centipede. His appearance was becoming more and more fiendish.

"Potions that cause an increase in Rank when they're consumed are too dangerous to sell," said Darcia.

"But they did not cause an increase in Rank when tested on Goblins and such," said Zadiris.

Perhaps some kind of affinity was involved, or perhaps it was the effect of Guidance: Demon Path.

Even if it was the latter, it wasn't a skill that Vandalieu could consciously choose the targets for, so it would probably be best not to sell the Potions.

Everyone else's Ranks had increased as well.

Vigaro had become a Rank 8 Ghoul Great Tyrant and Zadiris had become a Rank 8 Ghoul Wizard. Neither of them had changed much in appearance, but their Attribute Values had increased significantly.

Both of them had hit a wall with their levels as monsters despite their Job levels increasing, so they were happy that their Ranks had finally increased.

Basdia had become a Rank 7 Ghoul Amazoness Leader. Her appearance hadn't changed other than the patterns on her skin becoming darker in color, but her Mana and Intelligence seemed to have increased drastically. There was a dignified air about her now, fitting of someone with 'leader' in their race title.

“Leader, huh… I would have liked a race title like ‘Amazoness Queen’ or something,” said Basdia. “I’m right next to the Ghoul King Van, after all.”

Her dignified presence quickly faded away when she laughed as she lifted Vandalieu into the air, however.

“By the way, Van, Jadal has been wanting a younger brother or sister,” she said.

“Then when we get back, I’ll ask her to wait another eight… no, around ten more years,” said Vandalieu.

“Muh, how cold of you, Van.”

“How can I not be?”

It’s still impossible for my body, so I wish you wouldn’t demand such careless things, Vandalieu thought.

“If there is a queen next to the king –”

“There must be maids to serve them, right, Bocchan?”

Saria and Rita had become Rank 7 Living Maid Armors. Vandalieu had made decorations, laces and frills out of Dark Copper and the threads that he produced from his mouth, and Saria and Rita had gained this race title after fighting with these attached to their armors.

“My Housework skill has increased as well! Now nobody will call me a fake maid!” Rita exclaimed.

“Fake maid… but I get the feeling that you’ve been more often called a murderous maid?” said Saria.

The additional lace and frill-shaped pieces of armor had fused with their bodies, and at a glance, less of their bodies were exposed and they looked more adorable.

But this was simply an illusion; their abundant cleavages and the shapes of their hips were still clearly visible.

They might even appear as if they were wearing a remodeled maid uniform created

by a nobleman with peculiar tastes.

“Hmm, then it is best for a knowledgeable mage to be by their side as well,” said Zadiris, casually drawing closer to Vandalieu.

“Ah, umm, where am I supposed to be?” wondered a flustered Princess Levia as she shifted around in confusion. “Since I am the princess, that would make me their daughter.”

There’s no path for me other than becoming a lustful king in the future, Vandalieu thought as he looked into the distance, remembering that Eleanora, Tarea, Kachia and Bilde would join in once he returned to Talosheim. Incidentally, Bellmond would likely be watching from behind a pillar without saying anything or approaching.

“Well, this has started to make me a little happy recently,” said Vandalieu.

He was eight years old, an age where it wouldn’t be strange for him to experience his first love. It wasn’t as if he was completely uninterested in these things.

“Everyone, we are still inside a Dungeon, so please leave it at that,” said Darcia. “Vigaro-san, don’t just stand there watching while eating Eisen-san’s fruit. And Vandalieu, keep it up.”

“Okay.”

Kasim and his friends would have asked her, “Eh, aren’t you going to stop him?” but Darcia was a passionate person who had an illicit love affair with the Subordinate Vampire Valen.

She wouldn’t say anything that would make things difficult as long as both parties felt the same way. And everyone was saying that they would wait until Vandalieu became an adult, so there was nothing to stop.

The insectoid monsters like Pete and Pain, as well as the plant-type monsters, had increased in Rank as well. The Cemetery Bees were now all Cemetery Bee Soldiers, but it seemed that they didn’t intend to return to the nest in Talosheim.

They would follow Vandalieu, who kept the egg that the queen bee had been reborn in inside his body, and help care for the larva once it hatched.

“Now then, let’s finish dismantling the corpse and take a rest before looking at the treasure chamber and heading back,” said Vandalieu.

『The levels of the Rapid Healing, Death-Attribute Magic, Magic Resistance, Chant Revocation, Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue), Enhanced Agility, Body Extension (Tongue), Enhanced Physical Ability (Hair, Claws, Fangs, Tongue), Thread Refining, Surpass Limits, Golem Transmutation, Alchemy, Unarmed Fighting Technique, High-speed Thought Processing, Plant Binding Technique, Thread-reeling, Throwing, Scream, Dead Spirit Magic, Insect Binding Technique, Artillery Technique, Labyrinth Creation and Mana Enlargement skills have increased!』

The treasure chamber that Vandalieu and his party went to was full of treasures and Magic Items worthy of the Dungeon’s first clearance.

But perhaps because the main race that had inhabited the surrounding areas had been Lizardmen for a long time, there were quite a lot of things that were suited for the Lizardmen’s physiques and tastes.

Defensive equipment that was supposed to be attached on flexible, sturdy tails were of no use to humans or even Beast-people.

“Rapiéçage and Yamata will be happy, won’t they?” said Vandalieu.

He did have people to give these to. Tarea and Datara would likely find it difficult to make armor specialized to be worn on tails, so it was fortunate that he had found it.

There were no gold or silver coins, but there were plenty of gold and silver nuggets lying around instead, as well many gemstones so large that if they were attached to a ring, they would tire the finger wearing it.

These non-Magic Item treasures alone were valuable enough to buy a court rank on their own.

In fact, clearing a B-class Dungeon that had never been cleared before was a great enough achievement to become an honorary nobleman. If the achievement was recognized, that is.

Fortunately, Vandalieu didn't realize this.

"That large crystal, no, is it an orb? What are you going to do with it?" asked Vigaro, drawing Vandalieu's attention to a large orb by pointing at it.

"For now, we'll carry it out… no, stop. That's a dangerous item," said Vandalieu.

There was a reaction from Danger Sense: Death. In other words, this orb was a dangerous item that could cause death for Vandalieu and his allies.

Cracks began to loudly appear on the orb.

"What?!"

"Get away from it, Vigaro!"

"Everyone, get near Bocchan!"

Everyone gathered near Vandalieu and braced themselves as he put up a barrier.

And then the orb crumbled to pieces.

With a deafening roar, an enormous, grotesque-looking Dragon appeared from the orb.

It looked as if it were a giant person's hand that was covered in enormous scales, its fingers replaced by the heads of one-eyed snakes. As it roared, Vigaro, Zadiris and the others, whose Ranks had increased, felt their minds tremble as their bodies froze despite being inside Vandalieu's barrier.

Their eyes widened as they looked upon the Dragon's grotesque form.

Darcia, who was a weak spirit, quivered feebly.

Vandalieu decided to kill it.

"GAAAOOH – Wait wait wait wait waaaait!"

"Calm down!"

“If we just talk, you’ll understand if we talk!”

“I didn’t mean any harm! It’s true, please believe me!”

Seeing Vandalieu produce numerous gun barrels made of coagulated Demon King’s blood from both arms, the grotesque Dragon stopped roaring and began pleading for its life.

Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, like Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, had changed which side he was on. The difference between them was that they had been on different sides to begin with.

Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, had originally been a subordinate of Marduke, the Dragon Emperor God, one of the original eleven gods. But when Marduke was destroyed by the Demon King Guduranis, Luvesfol had sworn loyalty to the Demon King out of a desire to live.

Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, had originally been one of the evil gods serving the Demon King. But he hadn’t sworn loyalty to anyone. He had simply been serving the Demon King because there had been no other way for him to survive.

And so, for the purpose of surviving, he had obeyed the Demon King’s command and invaded the world of Lambda, to make it a place that would replace his own world that had been destroyed.

But the champion Zakkart had offered them a new choice.

“Gods from foreign worlds, if you will separate yourselves from the Demon King and become our allies, we will welcome you into this world as new gods.”

This proposal that contained no signs of lies was astonishing and made Fidirg’s heart dance with joy.

The Demon King was a tyrant who had no mercy for those who defied him or failed to meet his expectations. He had broken the souls of useless subordinates to make an example of them on numerous occasions. The only reason there hadn’t been any rebellions despite this was the Demon King’s overwhelming strength.

But it was a different story if the gods of this world were willing to accept them.

This offer was not a joke made by a mere human. These were the words of a champion who could fight against gods on even terms. There were none that thought lightly of this fact.

And so, Fidirg accepted this offer.

But although victory was achieved against the Demon King afterwards, Zakkart and three other champions had their souls broken by the Demon King. Now that his benefactor had perished, it was only natural for Fidirg to cooperate with Vida.

However, in the following battle against Alda, four of Fidirg's five heads were crushed and he lost a substantial amount of his power.

He barely managed to escape being sealed away and fled for his life to the Bahn Gaia continent with Vida. He was then forced to slumber for tens of thousands of years.

When he finally recovered enough to make a move, he squeezed as much Mana out of himself as he could to create the Dungeon that had given birth to the Lizardmen, the Lizardmen's Nest. He needed a large number of followers in order to make a full recovery; he had decided that he would use Lizardmen for that purpose rather than people.

Fortunately, there were no followers of Vida or the other gods nearby. Though the Lizardmen grew in number, they would be able to avoid killing each other by mistake.

Things went as Fidirg had expected and two of his crushed heads recovered. It was still uncertain as to whether he would be able to descend upon the world again, but it was possible that he would be able to fully recover in another ten thousand years.

However, that was when Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, appeared. Luvesfol created this B-class Dungeon called the Scaled King's Nest, sealed Fidirg inside an orb, selected a Dragon to grant it his divine protection so that it could act as his priest and stole the Lizardman believers from Fidirg.

And then over a hundred years passed –

"You got fired up by the feeling of release from the seal being removed and roared in happiness?"

“Precisely.”

“I meant no harm. It is just that my tension had reached a maximum.”

“Please forgive me, I really meant no harm.”

The three recovered heads among Fidirg’s five were all rubbing against the ground as he knelt down before Vandalieu.

He was the one known as the Dragon God of Five Sins, but he still hadn’t recovered enough to possess a physical form other than in certain places, such as the inside of this Dungeon. Even so, he normally wouldn’t have gone so far to keep himself hidden from ordinary people or monsters.

The one Fidirg was facing was the one who had released him, and though it hadn’t been intentional, it was certainly true that he had caused this person and his companions harm. But Fidirg was a god. No matter how apologetic he felt from the depths of his heart, he would not bow down.

But the one before his eyes was not a person.

If I don’t behave properly, I-I’ll be killed!

That was the kind of being that was in front of him.

Vandalieu gazed at Fidirg with empty eyes, as if thinking about something, or perhaps thinking about nothing.

The Demon King’s blood gun barrels near both of his arms, loaded with bullets made of the Demon King’s horns, were still pointed at Fidirg, ready to fire at a moment’s notice.

Looking into their muzzles, Fidirg realized that these might be the ‘guns’ that Zakkart had once tried to create.

During the war, Zakkart had actually completed several prototype products, but in the end, they proved too weak to be used against powerful monsters, and production had never increased to the point that they could be distributed to his allied soldiers to be used against weaker monsters.

Although they had been effective against weaker monsters, they had no effect against the monsters of Rank 13 and above that the champions had faced back then, despite the bullets being made of Mythril, Adamantite or even Orichalcum.

The cause of this was likely the gunpowder. Although the bullets had been specially made, the gunpowder used to fire them had lacked explosive power.

If the guns that Vandalieu possessed were the same as Zakkart's, there was nothing for Fidirg to fear. However, as a former subordinate of the Demon King, Fidirg knew that they were made from the Demon King's fragments.

These were the fragments of the fallen Demon King who had destroyed many gods, including Marduke and Shizarion. As simple materials, they wouldn't be as incredible as Orichalcum, but they would have similar abilities.

And, of course, they would be enough to take Fidirg's life.

But what he feared was not just Vandalieu's fragments. It was the enormous amount of Mana that Vandalieu possessed.

It is more than double the Mana I have in my complete form; is this guy really a person?!

Fidirg doubted his own senses as he estimated the total amount of Mana that Vandalieu was exuding in his anger.

But no matter how many times he redid the calculations with all three of his heads, the total amount he came to was more than what he himself possessed as a god.

What would happen if Vandalieu were to use that tremendous amount of Mana and the Demon King's fragments that he was somehow able to manipulate like his own limbs? There was no need to calculate the answer to this.

"Please, please have mercy!" begged all three of Fidirg's heads, left with no choice but to discard the last of his pride as a god and plead for his life.

"How about calming yourself for now, boy?" said Zadiris.

"Don't be so angry, Van," said Basdia. "Your horns are getting bigger."

"That's right," Darcia agreed. "I was a little surprised, but look, I'm feeling just fine

now."

Fortunately for Fidirg, the damage that Darcia had suffered had been light, and she had recovered quickly after Vandalieu supplied her some Mana.

And it seemed that she and the others felt sympathy for Fidirg; they were trying to calm Vandalieu down. The fact that he was the original god worshipped by the Lizardmen that were now their allies likely had something to do with this, too.

"Your Majesty, he was an ally of the goddess, so please settle down," said Princess Levia.

"…You're right," Vandalieu said finally, and the gun barrels made of the Demon King's blood silently crumbled and collapsed.

"I'm saved," Fidirg gasped as he collapsed onto the ground, exhausted.

"Now that I think back, I remember making a similar mistake," said Vandalieu, remembering the great rampage that he had gone on after becoming an Undead in Origin.

Now that he looked back on it, that had been a mistake. There had been something wrong with him back then.

He had become high and intoxicated on the sensation that ran through his entire body, as if he were an all-powerful god, after acquiring freedom for the first time in his second life. He had then worked hard to gain his revenge, but… as a result, the reincarnated individuals who were supposed to be his companions had ended up disposing of him.

Now that Vandalieu thought back to it, he realized that he couldn't blame them, as he would have appeared to be a monster without the ability to reason.

If only he had maintained his composure after becoming an Undead, if only he hadn't killed any of the researchers that he hated or the guards that had been in his way, if only he had simply escaped the facility while causing as little damage to it as possible and then concealed himself. He should have gathered information about the outside world and then made contact with the other reincarnated individuals himself. It would have been best to show that he possessed the ability to reason and a sense of self that would have allowed him to perform relief work for humanity, such as rescuing other

victims who had been in the same circumstances as him.

…This was only something that could occur to him now, and this was not even taking into account whether all of this would have been possible or not. And he could calmly reflect upon this himself, but if he were to point this out to others… especially the other reincarnated individuals, they would only have a desire to kill him.

But in any case, Vandalieu was able to accept Fidirg, who was lying before his eyes.

“I’m forgiving you because of my mother’s words, but don’t do that again,” said Vandalieu. “And though this is a separate matter, can I expect some thanks for sparing you?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Since I have not fully recovered yet, I can only maintain my physical form in this Dungeon, but…”

“For now, I’ll give you my divine protection and a Title. Let’s see, first of all, I’ll give you the Title of being the next Scaled King.”

“…I don’t have any scales. Is it really alright?” Vandalieu asked.

『You have acquired the ‘Scaled King’ Title!』

Title explanation:

【Scaled King】

A Title bestowed by a god to the leader of the Lizardmen who rule over the great marshlands in the southern reaches of the Bahn Gaia continent that is separated from the rest of the continent by the Boundary Mountain Range.

As the Title suggests, it represents a king who possess scales, granting a charisma that is effective against Lizardmen and other scaled monsters such as reptilian monsters and Dragons. (This does not include fish-type monsters.)

It also normally has the effect of making the scales of the Title's possessor more beautiful, but this effect is adapted when the Title is possessed by someone without scales.

- **Name:** Kühl
- **Rank:** 5
- **Race:** Blood Slime
- **Level:** 92
- **Passive skills:**
    - Blunt Damage Resistance: Level 6
    - Hunger Resistance: Level 2
    - Predator's Restoration: Level 5
    - Body Form Manipulation: Level 3
    - Venom Secretion: Level 5
- **Active skills:**
    - Silent Steps: Level 4
    - Bloodwork: Level 1
    - Surpass Limits: Level 2
    - Grow: Level 1

- **Name:** Pete
- **Rank:** 6
- **Race:** Great Black Lightning Centipede
- **Level:** 14
- **Passive skills:**
    - Hunger Resistance: Level 2
    - Self-Enhancement: Following: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Venom Secretion (Neurotoxin): Jaws: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Wind Attribute Resistance: Level 2 (NEW!)
    - Enhanced Body: Exoskeleton, Horns: Level 4 (NEW!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 2 (NEW!)
- **Active skills:**
    - Silent Steps: Level 1
    - Charge: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Surpass Limits: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Armor Technique: Level 1 (NEW!)
    - Lightning: Level 6 (NEW!)
- **Unique skills**:
    - Dragon Devourer: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Great Black Lightning Centipede】

Enormous centipede monsters that are large enough to wrap themselves around an average-sized house. Their black exoskeletons are impervious to superficial attacks, while their charging attacks using their horns as weapons are so powerful that even shield-bearers must be careful.

Also, even if they are fought from a distance, it is capable of releasing long-ranged lightning attacks, so caution must be taken when exterminating these monsters.

They are far more intelligent than their appearance would suggest, and while they cannot speak human language or cast spells, they are capable of using skills such as Armor Technique.

For some reason, Pete has even acquired a unique skill, granting him increased attack power and defensive power against Dragons and allowing him to increase his own Attribute Values by devouring them.

Side Chapter 10
Rodcorte and the two's decision

It seemed that Vandalieu had undergone a Job-change to Guider.

The Job that was a requirement of being a champion, the Job that Bellwood and Zakkart had acquired.

It was difficult to believe, but it was true.

But the situation that he had caused as a result of acquiring the Job was even more difficult to believe.

"To think that he would guide people to Vida's circle of transmigration system exactly as they are!"

Rodcorte could not suppress his shuddering as he struggled to deal with the errors that were occurring in unison.

Vida's races such as Vampires and Ghouls had been converting people to members of their own races using rituals. These rituals involved giving their own blood to these new members or submerging them for days in mud mixed with their own blood; they differed depending on the race. But these methods all took a great deal of time and effort.

And the charm of changing race usually did not overcome the people's fear of such a change. Alda and the other gods had taught them to fear it.

Vampires could acquire near-infinite lifespans, but they would become unable to walk beneath the sun ever again. And most would be opposed to having to slurp the blood of others in order to survive.

And other races such as Ghouls, Scylla, Lamias and Arachne had remarkably different appearances from ordinary people, so it was natural for people to fear and avoid such changes.

Alda had focused on making sure that the anecdotes of saints, epic poems about

heroes and myths about himself would spread and make the people hesitant about becoming members of Vida's races.

These were more exaggerated than similar stories on Earth; Vampires would be rejected by maidens that they desired as their brides and fall to ruin, crying words of grief such as, "So you would choose the sun over me as well?"

The fact that some still chose to become members of Vida's races of their own will was a headache-inducing problem, but that was a mild pain compared to what was happening right now.

Vandalieu had undergone a Job-change to the Demon Guider Job and started to unconsciously guide the people. To Vida's circle of transmigration system!

The human and Dwarf citizens of Talosheim had already been transferred to Vida's transmigration system without their races ever changing.

The reason that Vandalieu was guiding his citizens to Vida's circle of transmigration system was likely because he had been taken into Vida's system himself.

This was a dreadful situation for Rodcorte, just like the pseudo-reincarnations that Vandalieu had been conducting.

"As their races have not changed, the people have no clue whatsoever as to what has happened to them. Only us gods know the secrets of the circles of transmigration, and, of course, we cannot reveal those secrets."

The citizens of Talosheim had no way of knowing that the circle of transmigration system that they belonged to had changed. Even Vandalieu, who had guided them to the new system, was unaware.

For people, no visible ritual had been conducted, and no changes to their bodies or minds occurred despite being moved to another system, so they didn't know what had happened. And even if this became known to Alda and the gods who served him, it was unlikely that they would know what needed to be prohibited.

He would be left with no choice but extreme options such as declaring Vandalieu as an enemy of the gods and ordering the people to exterminate him.

This would make no difference to the current situation.

“As I thought, there is no choice but to erase Vandalieu.”

Since he had become a Guider, Vandalieu would continue to guide others unconsciously. Not every person would respond to his guidance, but the high standards of living in Talosheim would be incredibly attractive to them.

In the end, as always, the only option that Rodcorte had was to erase Vandalieu.

“No, aren’t there other options like trying to reconcile with him?” asked a voice.

“More importantly, there’s something I don’t understand. Why did we die?” asked another.

Two reincarnated individuals were looking at Rodcorte through half-closed eyes.

An earnest-looking woman, Shimada Izumi. A man with a somewhat vacant-looking face, Machida Aran. The two of them had suddenly died and found themselves here; Aran had not even been aware that he had died.

They had been watching Rodcorte for a while as he groaned to himself for reasons that they didn’t really understand.

The two of them didn’t know the specific details of the circle of transmigration systems, but they could understand that the god before them had come to a conclusion through some very extreme thought processes.

“Shimada-san, do you know what happened?” asked Aran.

“Hey you, what did you do with your Calculation, your only redeeming feature? Or should I call it Laplace’s Demon?” said Izumi.

Aran’s cheat-like ability was Calculation, which had also been known by its codename, Laplace’s Demon, in Origin. This ability gave him computational power on the level of a supercomputer, or perhaps even greater. As long as he had enough information, he could even predict the future to a certain extent.

“Don’t be so unreasonable,” Aran protested. “What are you trying to ask me to calculate when I’ve got no information to work with?”

If he didn’t have enough information, super-advanced calculations such as predicting

the future was impossible. Also, these calculations were only calculations, nothing more. They were vulnerable to errors due to unexpected and unknown situations.

“I suppose that the only thing I know is that I wasn’t killed by you, Shimada-san?” he said tentatively.

“You’re right about that,” said Izumi. “You were killed in an explosion. A string of hand grenades came flying from the wall, and that was it. I was further away so I didn’t die instantly, but it seems that I lost consciousness before I could cast any spells and died soon afterwards.”

“Ah, what’s known as ‘near-instantaneous death*?’”

“Yes, near-instantaneous death.”

TLN: This appears to be an obscure Japanese phrase.*

“Then the ones who did it are… Murakami’s group? If grenades came through the wall, I’d have thought it was Kanata, but he’s already dead,” said Aran.

“What about the intelligence agencies of each nation?” Izumi suggested. “My ability is convenient, but it was hated by many, so I think it’s possible. Now that I think about it, Hiroto’s ideals are a problem as well.”

“They’re working as an NGO that doesn’t belong to any specific organization or government,” said Aran. “We acted like superheroes, so it’s true that a lot of people liked us, but a lot of people hated us as well. Especially my Laplace’s Demon and your Inspection, Shimada-san.

Shimada Izumi’s cheat-like ability was Inspection, which allowed her to see through all kinds of falsehoods. It wasn’t merely seeing through lies; she could see through every kind of disguise, forgery, CG footage and illusion.

She had often complained that this ability had made the magic shows that she had enjoyed on Earth very dull, however.

It had been Aran’s Laplace’s Demon and Izumi’s Inspection that had allowed the capture of the Metamorph, Shihouin Mari.

But although the two of them possessed powerful abilities, they had little in the way

of strength in combat. They both had considerable talent in magic, and they did receive training to some extent. However, they hadn't fought as combatants on the frontlines like Kanata and Mari.

That was why the two of them were never sent to dangerous places, being left to process information behind the scenes for the Bravers, but… it seemed that they had been targeted for this.

"But considering the method and timing… there isn't anyone among Murakami's group who has a similar ability to Kanata, is there?" said Aran.

"Probably not," said Izumi. "But maybe it's possible to achieve something similar by combining multiple abilities."

"Well, now that we've died, there's nothing that can be done even if we figure it out. Ah, if things were going to turn out like this, I should have eaten more fried chicken, pizza and Terra burgers."

"You're right, I would have liked to get married at least once… impossible. I can see through the lies of men, even if I don't want to."

The two of them were calm despite having just died, but this was the second time that they had died, and they had lived for forty-six years in total between their lives on Earth and in Origin. And since it had happened so suddenly, they hadn't had time to feel anger or regret.

And they were in the company of not the ones who had killed them, but each other, friends who had died together, so they weren't too upset.

Ah, it has restarted, Rodcorte thought as he looked up at Izumi and Aran. "So, about your next lives –"

He explained to them that they would reincarnate in Lambda, and that he wanted them to kill Vandalieu, just like he had done with Kanata.

Unlike Kanata, the two of them listened calmly. Even as they learned that the Undead that the Bravers had faced in Origin was Amamiya Hiroto and now Vandalieu, they didn't lose their composure.

"Absolutely not," Aran said flatly.

“In fact, I’d rather die than doing something that reckless,” said Izumi.

“As I thought,” said Rodcorte. Unlike the time with Kanata, he had been expecting them to refuse. Unlike Kanata, as well as Tanaka and the others who had died after him, these two were not suited for fighting at all.

It wasn’t as if they didn’t have any qualities for fighting whatsoever, but they had chosen a path in Origin other than training those powers and skills.

But feeling guilty of the sin of essentially having abandoned Vandalieu in Origin and considering the fact that he was originally a student attending the same school, Aran and Izumi were hesitant to simply refuse this request.

They could see that if they remained quiet, the other reincarnated individuals and Vandalieu would kill each other.

“Looking at what this person is doing, it’s hard to even say what *Amemiya*-san would do,” said Izumi. “Even considering that we couldn’t save him, if you apply the common sense and ethics of Earth and Origin, what this person is doing is…”

“Crime and terrorism,” said Aran. “Of course, that’s only if you apply the common sense and ethics of Earth and Origin. Especially the creation of Undead; it’s an act that tramples on the sanctity of the dead before it’s a crime of property damage.”

Even from the viewpoints of Izumi and Aran, this was what Vandalieu was doing in Lambda. But never mind it being a different nation, this was an entirely different world. Considering that this was likely just how things had turned out when he had used death-attribute magic, and considering that he had no affinity for any other attribute, they couldn’t condemn him unconditionally.

In fact, considering the way that Vandalieu had been treated in Origin, they even felt respect for his strength of will. At the very least, they themselves would have found it impossible to put the philosophy of, “The good you do to others is good that you do to yourself,” into practice.

In fact, while Vandalieu had killed over a hundred people in the Hartner Duchy, he had saved over a thousand.

However, they couldn't be certain that the other reincarnated individuals would think the way that Izumi and Aran did. *Amemiya* and his followers likely wouldn’t try to

erase him right away, but…

“Now that we understand the situation, I’ll ask one more time. Can’t you reconcile and persuade him peacefully? He was originally a Japanese person, and given the information that you’ve given us, I think negotiating will be possible,” said Izumi.

At the very least, it seemed that Vandalieu would listen to what had to be said. Though it also seemed likely that he would simply listen and walk away without saying anything afterwards.

Izumi and Aran hadn’t been present when Vandalieu’s second life came to an end, but from his point of view, that was likely incredibly close to being a similar offense.

“Shimada-san, how would you persuade him peacefully?” Aran asked.

“Well, convince him… though it doesn’t seem like he would listen. How about things like offering him favorable conditions?” Izumi suggested.

“Can you think of any conditions that we and this god could offer him that would be favorable for him?”

“…I can’t think of anything.”

This was something that they had never thought about during the time that they had lived in Origin.

Forgiving small crimes, plea bargaining with the appropriate judicial branch, guaranteeing safety, reduction of prison sentences, release on parole. These were the primary methods that the Bravers had used to bargain with criminals, but… none of these had any meaning to Vandalieu, who had been reincarnated in Origin.

By offering a reconciliation, it might be possible to prevent a battle to the death between Vandalieu and the other reincarnated individuals. But it was unlikely that he would be able to stop creating Undead. The scales would be too unbalanced away from his favor.

Also, neither Izumi nor Aran had any connections or organizations now. Once they reincarnated in Lambda, they would just be individuals with special abilities.

Even if they were born into the royal family of a great nation or the family of a

merchant with an enormous fortune, it would still take nearly two decades for them to rise to positions where they would have any political influence to speak of.

It was difficult to imagine that anything they could offer would be of any significance to Vandalieu.

“The only thing that I can think of is information about the other reincarnated individuals, but… giving that to him would be protecting ourselves rather than reconciling,” said Aran.

“You’re right. Then, what else…”

“Normally it would be money, a social position, honor or women. Is there anything else?”

Though its population was small, Vandalieu was already the ruler of his own nation. His citizens gave him their absolute support, and he was served by countless members of the opposite sex. Was there anything that could be offered that would convince him peacefully and allow a reconciliation between him and Rodcorte?

“It’s impossible,” Izumi concluded.

“You’re right,” Aran agreed. “Even if we told him that we would serve him with our powers, it seems like he would just tell us, ‘It’s troublesome so I don’t need you.’”

“Yes… considering that’s how he is.”

The biggest problem for a peaceful persuasion and reconciliation was Vandalieu’s emotions towards the reincarnated individuals.

If they were compulsive emotions like hatred and a desire to kill, the two of them would still have some hope. According to Rodcorte’s information, Vandalieu was rational, or he was at least trying to be. That was why Izumi and Aran, who hadn’t directly caused Vandalieu any harm, might have been able to negotiate with Vandalieu, depending on how they approached him.

But the emotions that Vandalieu felt towards the reincarnated individuals were unhappiness and disgust.

They were simply troublesome and it was tedious for Vandalieu to even become

involved with them. They were bothersome and an eyesore, so he didn't want to see them or have anything to do with them. Considering how he had treated Kanata, this was how he felt.

Simply having anything to do with Izumi and Aran would be unpleasant for Vandalieu.

"What other… oh yeah, can't you resurrect his mother who gave birth to him in Lambda?" Aran suggested. "You're a god, aren't you?"

"That is impossible," said Rodcorte.

"No, I mean, the rules aren't meant to be bent, but can't you make an exception in this case?"

"It is not a problem with the rules; it is simply impossible."

It seemed that Aran had assumed that the reason Rodcorte refused to resurrect a dead person was because there were rules that gods were not supposed to interfere directly with the world, but Rodcorte was simply unable to resurrect Darcia, Vandalieu's mother.

Darcia was a Dark Elf, a being who would be reincarnated by Vida's circle of transmigration system. Rodcorte could not directly intervene.

Rodcorte could not mention these circumstances to humans, even if they were reincarnated individuals, so Izumi and Aran were not convinced. But they saw that Rodcorte had no intention of saying any more, so they started considering other ideas.

But no bright ideas occurred to them. In the end, they settled on a very simple plan to convince Vandalieu.

They would appeal to his emotions. It was like bringing the relatives of hostage-holding criminals in order to appeal to them.

"What do you think, Shimada-san?" asked Aran. "He was your classmate, wasn't he?"

"…I don't think he had any friends; even I wasn't his friend," said Izumi. "It was over twenty years ago, so I'm not certain, but I don't remember ever seeing him talking to anyone."

As her image would suggest, Shimada Izumi had been a class representative on Earth, but she had almost no memories of Vandalieu, who had been known as Amamiya Hiroto back then.

He hadn't caused any problems, but he hadn't been particularly exceptional, either. He had never become involved with any other students. He had been a boy who was always a part of the background.

Though Izumi searched her memories, the only thing that she could remember was that she didn't remember anything about him.

If there was anything that could work, it would be Naruse Narumi, whom Vandalieu had risked his life to try and save before he died on Earth, but… Izumi hesitated to suggest that they bring her up. She had been among those who dealt the final blow to him in Origin, and there was no telling whether he had any interest in her now.

"So, someone in Origin who could persuade Vandalieu… there aren't any, are there?" said Izumi.

"Have you been listening to me?" Rodcorte asked her.

"Sorry, it was just a wild idea. Forget it," said Izumi.

"I will answer you just in case," said Rodcorte. "He did not have a single family member, friend or lover."

"As I thought."

It was obvious that the father and mother who had sold Vandalieu in Origin would not be suitable for persuading him.

There were those involved in the research laboratory, but Vandalieu had killed as many of them as possible after being killed and becoming an Undead himself.

"The only ones left are the members of the Eighth Guidance, but… they're hostile towards us," said Aran.

"They wouldn't cooperate with us, would they," Izumi said in agreement.

The leader of the Eighth Guidance, the girl who had been rescued by the Undead

Amamiya Hiroto, was a self-proclaimed priestess of death who called herself Pluto. She had made it clear through her criminal acts that she held a fierce hatred for the Bravers and agencies that conducted research into the death attribute.

The reason she had accepted Murakami and several other former Bravers as allies despite this was unknown, but it was unlikely that she had been uninvolved in Izumi and Aran's deaths.

She and the other central members of her organization formed what was more of a cult-like group of fanatics than a terrorist organization. Even if she was killed and brought here, it was unlikely that she would cooperate with the reincarnated individuals.

"It is possible that she could be used as a hostage against Vandalieu, so I am planning to summon her here when she dies, however," said Rodcorte.

Izumi and Aran looked at each other.

Isn't this guy way too cowardly for a god?

Maybe he's cowardly because *he's a god.*

Being a god, Rodcorte overheard this silent exchange between the two, but just like Kanata, he paid no heed to them.

"Then isn't there anyone on Earth who could persuade him? Ah, on second thought, you don't have to answer. Show us our records and we'll use that to decide," said Izumi.

"Also, can you make it so that we can use our abilities?" asked Aran. "I think it will help somewhat."

"Very well," Rodcorte replied.

Izumi and Aran looked at the video and audio information from Earth that was given to them by Rodcorte to see if there was anyone who could possibly persuade Vandalieu.

Among the other high school students who had survived the school field trip, there was… nobody. There were none among the upperclassmen and underclassmen who hadn't been on the field trip, either. Because he had been working a part-time job,

Amamiya Hiroto hadn't taken part in any club or committee activities, so he hadn't been acquainted with anyone other than his classmates.

As for the place that he worked at… he had only performed work such as organizing endless piles of letters, early-morning paper deliveries and handing out leaflets – work that didn't really provide any proper human interactions. It seemed that he hadn't had any dependable senpais, close co-workers or kouhais, either.

Deciding to go further back in time, Izumi and Aran searched further to see if there was anyone from his middle school days… and found themselves feeling dizzy, as if they would be overwhelmed by the total lack of human relationships.

When they checked the records of his elementary school days, they really were overwhelmed by the total lack of human relationships and began to feel headaches.

"…He had quite a miserable childhood," said Izumi.

"Continuing on and on with a 'dark school life that can be found anywhere' that isn't grand or dramatically horrible is amazing in its own way, isn't it?" said Aran. "But seeing how he was in high school, you'd have never imagined how he behaved and talked as an elementary school kid."

Normally, people would have at least a single new person in their lives, but Amamiya Hiroto didn't have a single one in his entire lifetime. Of course, it wasn't as if everyone had bullied him, but just because they didn't bully him didn't mean that they were on good terms with him. He had been someone who was part of the background. Just like he had been in high school.

Now that they had come this far, they had a bad feeling about this and felt that there was no other option but to look at the records from Amamiya Hiroto's family.

"Seeing his suspicious behavior as a child, I can guess what we're going to see, but…" Aran murmured. As he looked at the record, he saw that his suspicions were on the mark.

But without giving up, he saw that the uncle and his wife who had adopted Amamiya Hiroto, and his younger cousin, were still alive. Thinking that perhaps they had changed their ways and they could perhaps apologize to Vandalieu in order to help convince him, Aran looked through their records as well.

What he saw was pitiful.

After Amamiya Hiroto had died in the incident, his uncle's family took the money from his life insurance, the entirety of the fortune left behind by Hiroto's parents and the condolence money that people had given them to live even more luxurious lives than before.

However, starting with this money, their business failed. The project that they started to try and recoup these losses also failed. This process repeated itself several times and, in the end, they gradually lost their fortune.

Once their financial situation worsened, the uncle and his wife began to abuse their own son. They were unable to maintain their sanity now that Amamiya Hiroto, their punching bag, was gone.

They had still managed while they were still wealthy, but now that they were at the end of their rope, they needed a target to take out their stress on. As Amamiya Hiroto was dead, their son had been chosen as their new punching bag.

Of course, their son did not quietly accept his fate as a punching bag. Unlike Amamiya Hiroto, who had been treated as such since childhood, he was already a university student by the time this had happened. He left the house and distanced himself from his parents.

And so the family separated. Now that his outlet for stress was gone, the uncle began harassing his subordinates horribly at his company, and him being sued for this was the final straw. Now that they had lost their entire fortune, he and his wife divorced.

After that, the uncle became homeless. His ex-wife managed to live on welfare for a while, but was then arrested for theft. After that, she went in and out of prison for theft and other petty crimes.

Ironically, their son got the live-in job that Amamiya Hiroto would likely have taken after graduating high school, barely managing to earn enough to sustain himself. But he never worked seriously, so he was still doing subordinate work.

It was likely that a few years after the uncle turned cold on some unknown roadside, it would be his son's turn to live on the streets.

The only thing that they had in common was that they both whispered to themselves,

“I want to go back in time.” They wanted to go back to after Amamiya Hiroto had died and they were able to spend their large sums of money as they pleased.

Seeing these records, Izumi and Aran were at their wits’ end.

“Even if we had them meet Vandalieu after they died, it doesn’t seem likely that they would sincerely apologize to him,” said Izumi.

“They might apologize insincerely, since he’s a powerful person now,” said Aran.

In any case, it didn’t seem like they would be useful to persuade Vandalieu.

“But considering how miserable he was, I admire him for not being in despair and hanging himself before dying on the ferry,” said Aran. “He was surprisingly positive and forward-thinking.”

“So it seems,” said Izumi. “But it’s strange that he became so popular as soon as his third life began. It’s not as if he suddenly learned communication skills. If he could do that, he would have made at least one friend on Earth.”

The truth was that the circumstances seen in the records of Vandalieu’s past on Earth and the circumstances in Lambda were completely different. Vandalieu had been surrounded by people who were his enemies and people who were not his enemies. In Lambda, he had many enemies, but he also had many allies.

It was hard to imagine that they were simply after Vandalieu’s power, either.

Aran responded to Izumi’s doubts.

“It’s probably the effect of that Death-Attribute Charm skill,” he said. “From what we’ve seen in the records, the way he treats people hasn’t changed much from when he was on Earth. It seems that he’s still not good at getting closer to others on his own, either. But I think he had a similar ability in Origin as well. That would explain why the Eighth Guidance are so fanatical.”

“I see… it’s no wonder he’s loved by the Undead,” said Izumi.

They had come to a conclusion as to why Vandalieu had such rich human (?) relations in Lambda, but the situation that they were in had not changed at all.

“I’ll ask just in case. Isn’t there any way we can have his real parents from Earth persuade him?” Izumi asked.

She was asking whether it was possible for Rodcorte to summon the only people who had ever shown love for Amamiya Hiroto on Earth, the ones who had died in an accident before they knew what was going on. But as expected, the answer was not a good one.

“Amamiya Hiroto’s parents on Earth have already been reincarnated,” said Rodcorte. “They have lost memories of their previous lives and are now living their new lives in separate places. If you still think it is wise, I can summon them here when they die.”

“Ah, that would be meaningless,” Izumi said.

In Rodcorte’s circle of transmigration system, there was no heaven or hell. It was normal for people to be reincarnated straight away once they died.

Thus, Vandalieu’s original parents, the only people that he might possibly feel a desire to meet, had long since lost their memories and been reborn as completely different people.

“Just to be sure, where are his parents and what are they doing?” asked Aran.

“His father has been reborn as a single mother who is managing a restaurant in France while raising her two children,” said Rodcorte. “His mother is being raised.”

“R-raised?” Aran repeated.

“In a certain household, as a pet tortoise.”

As to be expected with reincarnation. People could be reborn with not only a different race and gender, but even as a member of a different species.

“Th-this is hopeless,” said Aran. “Shimada-san, let’s give up on this.”

“Wait, Aran,” said Izumi. “Isn’t your favorite saying, ‘No matter what, there is always a way?!’ What about your Calculation?!”

“I’ve been using it for a while, but there’s almost no chance of persuading him,” said Aran. “If the two of us beg for mercy or make a promise not to harm him, our chance

of success is almost a hundred percent, but…"

Rodcorte looked at the two of them and thought that it would be best to not have them reincarnate in Lambda. He had known that they were unlikely to become assassins for him, but not only would they not get involved with Vandalieu, they were likely to become hindrances for the other reincarnated individuals.

But it was impossible to have them reincarnate anywhere but Lambda now. He didn't even consider cursing them like he had done with Vandalieu. If he did, it would only give them more reason to become Vandalieu's allies.

It was possible to completely erase their memories and personalities before reincarnating them, but Rodcorte had a far better idea.

"Then how about you do not reincarnate and become my Familiar Spirits instead?" he suggested.

This idea was to make these two his Familiar Spirits. Hearing this, Izumi and Aran looked up at Rodcorte with suspicious expressions.

Normally, one would feel honored to be spoken to personally by a god. But it seemed that Rodcorte's image in the minds of these two had already collapsed.

"Familiar Spirits? Are you telling us to become nuns?" asked Izumi.

"No, Familiar Spirits are not clergymen or followers," said Rodcorte. "Perhaps it will be easier for you to understand if I described them as angels."

"Describe them with more simple terms," said Aran.

"…Assistants, support staff, system engineers."

These were the descriptions that Rodcorte gave when he complied with Aran's request. There was no mystery or divinity to these descriptions, but this was the truth, so there was no helping it.

Aran looked dejected upon hearing this answer, but Izumi's expression stiffened and she asked another question.

"What would change by us becoming Familiar Spirits? Can you influence our wills and

actions as you please?"

"You will ascend to become living beings with no physical bodies… you can interpret this as a transformation," said Rodcorte. "I have no intention of restricting the freedom of your thoughts and actions, but I will punish you if you act disloyally."

"I see… In other words, it's like being employed at a company," said Izumi. "Other than the fact that we probably can't return to being humans again. So, what do you want to make us do?"

"Assist in the transportation of souls in Lambda, Earth and Origin through the circles of transmigration," said Rodcorte.

Rodcorte was trying to turn Shimada Izumi and Machida Aran into his Familiar Spirits and have them support his circle of transmigration system. With this, they would never become involved with anyone whose soul didn't return to the circle of transmigration, let alone Vandalieu.

Even if they were on Vandalieu's side in their minds, they wouldn't be able to do anything for him.

In fact, they would not be performing any hostile acts that would cause Vandalieu harm, so Rodcorte thought that it would be easier for them to agree to this.

And it was also true that Rodcorte had been wanting support personnel to help him deal with the errors that Vandalieu had been causing.

Izumi and Aran looked at each other and discussed this, but it seemed that they had come to a conclusion very quickly.

"Alright," said Izumi.

"It's out-of-character for me to be an angel, but I want to see Murakami and the others' faces when they come here, too," said Aran.

The two of them agreed to become Rodcorte's Familiar Spirits.

As long as immortality did not exist, their fellow Bravers would come to this place once they died in Origin. Other than being able to warn them not to do anything reckless, they believed that this was for both Earth and Origin's sakes.

It seemed that Rodcorte felt no sense of danger, but if he continued to aim for Vandalieu's life, it was certain that one of them would eventually die or end up in a state very close to death.

But Rodcorte governed the circles of transmigration in not only Lambda, but Izumi and Aran's homeworld of Earth, and Origin as well. These could not be allowed to stop.

They had to make sure that the circles of transmigration in Earth and Origin would continue functioning even if something happened to Rodcorte.

That was what the two of them had decided to do.

Of course, Rodcorte understood these intentions, but as he didn't feel any risk that his own life would be in danger, he decided that these two would actually be more useful if they became capable of doing these things, so he turned them into his Familiar Spirits.

"Now then, I, Rodcorte, the god of reincarnation, shall make you two my Familiar Spirits," Rodcorte declared. "Be sure to work hard from now on."

As particles of light fell from his raised hands and poured onto Izumi and Aran, they ascended to greater beings. And then the two of them had this thought:

At least we're divine in appearance. Even though we're just support staff.

Chapter 103
The disappointed half-Vampire and the mad Pure-Breed Vampire

TLN: Fidirg's heads speak separately with separate dialogue lines and they speak differently, too. One is super-polite (usually speaks first), one is polite with some hints of casualness (usually speaks second) and one is quite casual (usually speaks last).*

Despite having no scales, Vandalieu had acquired the Title of Scaled King.

The Scaled King Title was normally something that Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, bestowed upon the those who had solo-cleared the D-class Dungeon known as the Lizardmen's Nest as proof that they were the new ruler of the marshlands, so apparently having scales or not made no difference.

Next, though it was unclear how effective this would be, Vandalieu tried to acquire Fidirg's divine protection (or rather, make him grant his divine protection), but Fidirg had replied that it was impossible and hung his head.

"Huh… What do you mean?" asked Vandalieu.

"That is, my current state is insufficient…"

"Divine protections are normally things that a superior being bestows upon an inferior being, so…"

"For example, it'd be effective for a fox to borrow a tiger's power. But there wouldn't be any point in a tiger borrowing a fox's power. It's kind of like that…"

It was an easy-to-understand explanation of divine protections that would likely cause people to lose their faith in gods.

And it seemed that Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, was the fox and Vandalieu was the tiger.

"I see," said Vandalieu. "So, you're saying that it's impossible because you haven't fully

recovered yet?"

The truth was that Vandalieu, who was capable of manipulating the Demon King's fragments perfectly and possessed a greater total Mana pool than Fidirg, would not be so different in status from Fidirg even if Fidirg had fully recovered. In fact, it would not be strange to think of Vandalieu as the superior being, as he had more freedom with a physical body and possessed weapons that were capable of slaying gods.

But this was how Vandalieu had interpreted things.

Although the being before Vandalieu was prostrating himself and begging for his life, no matter how little dignity he had, he was still a god. Gods were beings that were capable of creation, incredible miracles and cursing people with terrible wrath.

Vandalieu simply assumed without thinking that this god would be far greater than him once the god fully recovered.

"N-no, even if I were to make a full recovery, I am not such a great being," Fidirg replied honestly.

He's making himself seem small for now. He's not someone I can underestimate, Vandalieu thought, thinking more highly of him now.

Fidirg could only see the gaze of dead eyes looking at him, so he was completely oblivious to this misunderstanding as well, however.

"Still, when I tried to grant you my divine protection, I touched your soul, and, how do I put it? Its shape is…"

"Perhaps I could describe it as beyond unworldly…"

"Could it be that you've eaten one of us evil gods or one of our followers?"

Fidirg did not have the state of mind to see the misunderstanding. He was too busy with having learned that Vandalieu's soul was not that of a person.

The shape and color of a soul was unique like a fingerprint; there were no two that were alike. But the shape of Vandalieu's soul was simply too strange. Even if the Demon King's fragments were taken into account.

“No, not that I remember,” said Vandalieu.

“Has there ever been an incident where you touched a cursed item or something similar, and your Attribute Values and skills changed right afterwards?” Fidirg asked.

“I did read a cursed book once,” said Vandalieu. “My Mana increased by fifty million, and I became able to extend my tongue.”

“THAT’S IT!” all of Fidirg’s heads shouted together.

The forbidden tome that Vandalieu had read after trespassing into the Mages’ Guild of the city of Niarki in the Hartner Duchy. Fidirg suspected that this tome had contained an evil god or a follower of similar status, and Vandalieu had absorbed him.

“Boy, spit it out, you must quickly spit it out!” shouted Zadiris.

“Bocchan, you mustn’t eat strange things!” exclaimed Rita. “You’ll get a stomachache!”

“No, I think it’d be amazing if all he got was a stomachache… and it’s not like he ate it, right?” said Vigaro.

“And that was over a year ago; is it not too late to spit it out now?” said Princess Levia.

Ah, I’m getting déjà vu, Vandalieu thought in a carefree manner as Zadiris and Rita held him upside-down and shook him up and down.

“Was he your friend? If so, then I’m sorry,” said Darcia, apologizing. “I’m sure Vandalieu didn’t mean any harm.”

“No, I do not believe that there were any who turned away from the Demon King who would hide in a book.”

“And judging from what we have heard about that book, it seems that there was a trap that takes over the minds of any people that read it.”

“Quite frankly, he got what deserved, being absorbed like that.”

Fidirg seemed satisfied now that he had solved the mystery.

The truth was that Buburdura, the evil god of the magic tome, had been an evil god

who was part of the remnants of the Demon King's army, so he was not a companion or friend of Fidirg; he was an enemy. And, of course, Fidirg felt no sense of racial unity with the other evil gods, so even if an evil god from the same foreign world as him were to be annihilated, as long as they weren't allies, he would simply feel happy that he had one less enemy.

"However, I believe that this is one of the reasons I cannot grant you my divine protection," he said.

In fact, Fidirg was grateful that there was now a proper reason that proved that he wasn't simply refusing to grant a divine protection because he didn't want to regret it later.

"I-I see. Well, it's impossible, so it can't be helped," said Vigaro.

"Th-that's right, it can't be helped," said Rita.

"Indeed. How about you raise your heads now?" Zadiris suggested.

Everyone other than Vandalieu was a little intimidated by Fidirg. They couldn't tell the difference between the two by the size of their Mana pools, so they feared Fidirg, who was the Dragon God of Five Sins, more.

One might wonder why they feared someone who was prostrating themselves, but considering that this pitiful being was a monster that was larger than a castle, it was understandable.

No matter how pitiful and miserable it looked, for Vigaro and the others, a god was still a god.

"Then please grant your divine protections to the Lizardmen and suitable individuals from Talosheim instead," said Vandalieu. "In exchange, I'll place a statue of you in the Church."

The statues of Alda and his gods had all been removed, so there was plenty of space in the Church of Vida.

"This is something that I could not have even wished for!" Fidirg's three heads exclaimed.

An increase in the number of people praying to him would mean that the recovery of his power would accelerate. It made no difference to him that he would not be the only god worshipped by those people.

“Also, I have a few questions, so please answer them,” said Vandalieu.

“I understand.”

And so, Vandalieu and his companions came to know the truths of what had happened a hundred thousand years ago that almost no people of the current age were aware of.

They had acquired a certain amount of information about the past from Ternecia, whose soul Vandalieu had already broken, but she hadn’t been in a particularly prominent position during the battle between Vida and Alda. In contrast, while Fidirg had not been particularly influential, he had been the commander of a battalion.

Most importantly, Ternecia had lost more than half of her sanity, so the fragmentation and distortion of the memories of the distant past was severe. But the memories of Fidirg, whose mental structure was different from those of mortals, were almost completely accurate.

Vandalieu and his companions learned of the achievements of Zakkart and the other creation-minded champions, and the circumstances surrounding their destruction at the hands of the Demon King. They learned of the state that Zakkart had been in when he became a parent of the True Ancestor of the Vampires.

And they learned that Zantark and the other subordinate gods had fought on Vida’s side, and now they were scattered all over the world.

Vandalieu had thought that Vida and her allies had been more alone while fighting against Bellwood and the other champions, so he was happy to learn the truth that she had many allies on her side. And the fact that some of her allies were those who were considered to be evil gods was a greatly beneficial piece of information.

The fact that they could be negotiated with was valuable as well, even if they weren’t Vandalieu’s allies now.

“Well, I won’t be negotiating with Hihiryushukaka, though,” said Vandalieu.

This was only natural, as Hihiryushukaka was responsible for his father’s death.

According to Ternecia, he had sent a Divine Message with an order to kill Vandalieu, and it didn't seem that he would be interested in talking things out, either.

Incidentally, as one would expect, Fidirg was unaware that Vandalieu's soul was a combination of Zakkart, Ark and the other creation-minded champions.

Despite being a god, he did not possess the eyes to know the hundred-thousand-year-old history of a soul by simply looking at it.

"So that is what happened," said Zadiris. "They never did anything good, did they, those people of Alda's."

"Wouldn't this cause chaos among Alda's believers if it was known to the people on the outside? What do you think, Van?" asked Basdia.

"…It's probably impossible for us to convince anyone of anything," said Vandalieu.

"That's true," said Darcia. "Vandalieu is a Dhampir, Basdia-san and the others are Ghouls, I am a spirit and Levia-san and the others are Undead. And the one who told us this information is an evil god."

Everyone here was someone who would be persecuted at best, slaughtered at worst, by the believers of Alda. The peaceful faction would likely listen to Vandalieu's words, but it was difficult to imagine that they would believe a truth that was inconvenient to the gods and heroes they worshipped, a truth that was different to the truth that they had believed as soon as they had become conscious.

And the source of this information was a grotesque evil god; there wasn't a single piece of hard, immovable evidence.

Even if he were to wear a Magic Item that made it impossible to lie, which Vandalieu wasn't sure existed, people would simply think, "The poor thing, being fooled by an evil god and being made to believe such lies."

"Now then, I'll ask another question for a change of mood," said Vandalieu. "You seem to be on Vida's side now, but why is it that you didn't have the Lizardmen worship Vida?"

Fidirg's own revival was important, but Vida's revival should have been much more important to him. Despite that, there were no signs of the Lizardmen having

worshipped Vida. Their generations passed more quickly than those of humans, but there still should have been remains of shrines.

Tens of thousands of years have passed since Fidirg created a Dungeon to produce Lizardmen to be his followers. If he'd made even a tenth of them believe in Vida as well during that time, wouldn't Vida's revival have progressed more as well? Vandalieu thought.

But Fidirg had a unique, proper reason for this.

"That is true, but that would have been harsh on me."

"Vida did indeed seem to have had her divinity taken from her by Alda, but even so, she was one of the most well-known goddesses in this world. Even now, there is a steady number of worshippers who pray to her."

"But I'm a nameless evil god. If I don't make my own believers, nobody would pray to me."

In other words, it seemed to be a problem of how well the gods were known. Even now, there was a steady number of believers in Vida who were not members of the races that she had created. Despite the beliefs regarding the races originating from Alda's followers, Vida was still considered a goddess of equal rank to Alda and significantly respected.

But Fidirg's name was nowhere to be seen in historical records. Because he was a nameless evil god, there was absolutely zero chance of people coming to believe in him through normal methods. In fact, when he had awakened, he had found that he had no followers at all.

That was why he had made the Lizardmen worship only him. Having believers of other gods praying to him would have provided him with some power, but he would gain more power if those believers worshipped only him.

And even if Fidirg had made the Lizardmen pray to Vida, it would have made a great deal of difference to him, but for Vida, it would only have been a drop in the bucket.

To give an extreme example, it would have been like pouring half of the water in a cup into a lake.

“I see, I understand now,” said Vandalieu. “Now then, about the other fragments of the Demon King…”

Vandalieu and his companions asked question after question about the Demon King’s Fragments, the other evil gods that had joined Vida, the gods such as the Sun Giant Talos, the current status of Vida’s new races, the situation of the continent’s southern region and Vida’s current state, but what Fidirg knew was limited to what had happened up to the point that he escaped the battle with Vida a hundred thousand years ago.

“In any case, I slumbered for tens of thousands of years after that, so I do not have the slightest idea as to what the others are doing.”

“I did search the area that I can see, but… that’s limited to half of these marshlands. Just a hundred years ago, I did get the feeling that I heard something. But by then, I’d already been sealed by Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, so it might have just been my imagination.”

“However, I do believe that Mububujenge, the Evil God of Degenerate Corpulence, is within the Noble Orc Empire.”

“The evil god of octopuses*?”

TLN: The kanji reading for “degenerate corpulence” is ダコ/dako, which can be a variation of タコ/tako, which means “octopus.”*

“No, degenerate corpulence. It means, to become degenerate and fat.”

For a moment, Vandalieu had thought that this was a god of fishermen and marine products, but it seemed that he was actually a god who ruled over corpulence.

The boar beast-king had betrayed the beast-god Ganpaplio and used the power given to him by the Demon King Guduranis to give birth to the Orcs and Noble Orcs. The Orcs had apparently been created first, and then the Noble Orcs created after them in order to act as the Orcs’ commanders.

But the boar beast-king had been defeated and sealed away by the champion Farmaun. After that, the Demon King had failed to find a successor to the boar beast-king and apparently assigned numerous subordinates, including Mububujenge, the Evil God of Degenerate Corpulence, to command the Orcs and grow their numbers.

And so when Mububujenge had accepted Zakkart's invitation, the Noble Orcs and Orcs that had been serving him then had changed sides as well.

"…Eh, are they allies?" asked Vandalieu.

"Muh, then they could have executed him instead of exiling him," Zadiris grumbled.

The Ghouls, who had suffered greatly at the hands of Bugogan, and the Ghoul King Vandalieu, were not pleased by this.

They likely didn't have any ill thoughts against the Noble Orc Empire, where Bugogan had been defeated in a power struggle and essentially exiled, but they didn't know to react if the Noble Orcs were to suddenly tell them, "We're actually your allies, buhibuhi!"

"And we were going to have a Noble Orc buffet once things settled down in the marshlands," said Vandalieu.

"Everyone was looking forward to it, too," said Vigaro.

"…" Fidirg shuddered.

Noble Orcs were Rank 6 at minimum, and a hundred thousand years ago, there had been no small number of Noble Orc individuals who had surpassed Rank 10. Even now, their empire likely possessed more military might than medium sized human nations. But Fidirg could clearly imagine Vandalieu and his companions turning that empire into a pork buffet.

"Err, well, they were allies in the past, but it is uncertain as to whether they are allies to us now…"

"After that battle, there might be some who went off to do as they pleased, though I cannot say for certain…"

"But I think it'd be best to check."

This was quite a strange viewpoint, but Fidirg couldn't provide any guarantees on Mububujenge's personality, either. The relationships between evil gods who had formerly been in the Demon King's army was such that they would steal each other's achievements and betray each other when given the opportunity, so there were no

bonds of trust between them. They had communicated with each other to some extent after accepting Zakkart's offer and changing sides, but apparently, they had simply been "acquaintances from the same place."

There had been some exceptions where evil gods had good relationships with each other, but most of those relationships were described as "abnormal."

It seemed that because they were evil gods, even if they were all gods, their mental structures were all different.

And although Fidirg didn't know this, there were those like the Pure-breed Vampires who obeyed evil gods, such as Ternecia and her two former partners. They changed sides once, but now that Zakkart and the other creation-minded champions had been destroyed and Vida had become unable to act, there was no being certain that they would be allies.

"Well, I understand," said Vandalieu. "Let's try making contact when the time comes."

"Hmm? Not right after you return?" Fidirg asked.

"There's a place that I personally want to visit before that. I don't think it will take that long, though."

"I see."

"More importantly, this is the last question. Would your power be useful for creating a Homunculus?"

Vandalieu's question contained an enormous amount of silent pressure, as if to say, "If it would, then hand it over, right now."

Fidirg cowered instinctively as he answered.

"H-Homunculus? I am not well-versed in Alchemy, so…"

"Even when I created monsters, I could only create Lizardmen… After that, I left it to the Dungeon."

"I-I think I could manage making one with scales."

"…Scales," Vandalieu repeated.

"I didn't have any scales, did I?" said Darcia.

The two of them could only shake their heads in response to this very disappointing answer.

Vandalieu returned from the Scaled King's Nest, having acquired resplendent treasures and the 'Scaled King' Title. The Lizardmen swore absolute loyalty and obedience to him.

Perhaps due to the effect of the 'Scaled King' Title, some of the Lizardmen had started to become affected by Demon Path Enticement. At this rate, the Lizardmen would be able to remain loyal citizens of Talosheim for a thousand or two thousand years, as long as Vandalieu still lived.

And now that his leveling had finished, he set about with Eleanora and Bellmond's surgeries.

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 8 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】,【Eclipse King】,【Second Coming of the Demon King】,【Guardian of the Cultivation Villages】,【Holy Son of Vida】,【Monstrosity】,【Scaled King】(NEW!)
- **Job**: Demon Guider
- **Level**: 68
- **Job history**: Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster
- **Attributes**:
    - Vitality: 1438
    - Mana: 815,878,554 (+163,175,710)
    - Strength: 601
    - Agility: 552
    - Stamina: 806
    - Intelligence: 1,663

- **Passive skills**:
  - Superhuman Strength: Level 5
  - Rapid Healing: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Status Effect Resistance: Level 7
  - Magic Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Dark Vision
  - Demon Path Enticement: Level 1
  - Chant Revocation: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Guidance: Demon Path: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 6
  - Strengthen Subordinates: Level 6
  - Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Enhanced Agility: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed: Small
  - Enhanced Physical Ability (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Thread Refining: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Mana Enlargement: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
  - Bloodwork: Level 3
  - Surpass Limits: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Golem Transmutation: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
  - No-Attribute Magic: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Mana Control: Level 6
  - Spirit Form: Level 7
  - Carpentry: Level 6
  - Engineering: Level 4
  - Cooking: Level 5
  - Alchemy: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Soul Break: Level 8
  - Multi-Cast: Level 5
  - Long-distance Control: Level 7
  - Surgery: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
  - Parallel Thought Processing: Level 5
  - Materialization: Level 4
  - Coordination: Level 4

    - High-speed Thought Processing: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Commanding: Level 4
    - Plant Binding Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Thread-reeling: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Throwing: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Scream: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Dead Spirit Magic: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Insect Binding Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Blacksmithing: Level 1
    - Artillery Technique: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Unique skills:**
    - God Slayer: Level 6
    - Grotesque Mind: Level 6
    - Mental Encroachment: Level 5
    - Labyrinth Construction: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Demon King Fusion: Level 2
    - Abyss: Level 1
- **Demon King fragments:**
    - Blood
    - Horns
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

There was a noise resembling the sound of a ripe fruit being smashed, and blood, flesh and bone fragments scattered across the ground.

“HYIIIH! Gubamon-sama, Gubamon-sama has gone mad!”

“Please calm yourself, Gubamon-sama!”

The one that the blood, flesh and bone fragments had belonged to was a Vampire, as were the others who were watching, completely petrified. They were all Noble-born Vampires, who had all lived for at least several hundred years.

These were Vampires worthy of being the villains in epic heroic songs and the tales of

saints that the protagonists would fight difficult battles against and only barely manage to defeat. They were the powerful noblemen who haunted the darkness of the utmost depths of the underworld.

But right now, they were pitiful creatures that were screaming and trying to escape a single old man.

“What is this… do you have complaints about my actions… You bastards, you are traitors, aren’t you!” Gubamon glared at the Vampires with bloodshot eyes.

A beautiful, lady-like Vampire woman gave a bloodcurdling scream. In the next moment, her entire body twisted limply and fell apart, as if it had been ruptured.

“Run! We’re going to be killed!”

“UWAAAAAH!”

“NOOOOO, HELP MEEEEEE!”

Letting out tears, nasal mucus and screams that would normally be let out by their victims, the Noble-born Vampires fled.

Gubamon showed no signs of giving chase.

“Every single one of you, you traitors! Even though I, Gubamon, have given you eternal life through my blood! Birkyne’s dogs!” he spat, his shoulders heaving up and down.

He was cursing these Vampires as if he intended to put a hex on them, but there was no proof that any of them were traitors.

In fact, Gubamon was an ally of the Pure-breed Vampire Birkyne. There was no evidence or information that suggested that Birkyne had any intention of harming him.

But Gubamon had convinced himself that Birkyne was trying to turn him into a puppet, just as he had tried to do to Ternecia, and that some of his subordinates had betrayed him and joined Birkyne’s side.

These were nothing more than delusions created by Gubamon’s paranoia, but none could make him open his clouded eyes.

The bonds of trust between the Pure-breed Vampires that worshipped Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, had barely held together up until now, but now they had collapsed entirely. For Gubamon, even the Vampires that he had given his own blood to could not be trusted.

Gubamon had spent a large amount of time indulging in his own hobbies. Unlike Ternecia, who had exceptional, highly loyal retainers known as the Five Dogs, he had no subordinates that he could trust.

In fact, he had become unable to even remember the names and faces of the Vampires that he had killed just moments earlier.

“At this rate, that Birkyne will… What… what am I to do? Oh, that’s it! There is no need for me to surround myself with those that I cannot trust! So then, I simply need to turn all of my subordinates into Undead, do I not!”

Gubamon’s warped, twisted mind gave birth to the most terrible of ideas.

But he himself had no doubts whatsoever that it was a good idea, and he quickly began gathering the pieces of flesh before him with space-attribute magic.

“These would not be fit to add to my collection of Undead heroes, but no matter. I am magnanimous, after all, hihihi. My subordinates can now become a part of my beloved collection; I am sure that they would happily offer me their lives. After all, I am the one who granted them eternal life!”

- **Name:** Zadiris
- **Rank:** 8
- **Race:** Ghoul Wizard
- **Level:** 70
- **Job:** Philosopher
- **Job level:** 51
- **Job history:** Apprentice Mage, Mage, Light-Attribute Mage, Wind-Attribute Mage
- **Age:** 297 years old (Has undergone age reversal)
- **Passive skills:**
    - Night Vision
    - Pain Resistance: Level 3
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 1
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 2
    - Increased Mana Recovery Rate: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Enlargement: Level 2 (NEW!)
- **Active skills:**
    - Light-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Wind-Attribute Magic: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Control: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Alchemy: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Chant Revocation: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Multi-Cast: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Surpass Limits: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Housework: Level 1 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Ghoul Wizard】

A race title that can only be achieved by Ghouls who have exceptional skill in multiple attributes of magic and have performed much diligent study. Almost none have appeared since the Ghoul race was born, and there are almost no documents recording their existence, even in the archives of the Mages' Guild.

However, their existence was recorded in the notes of an ancient philosopher, and according to his description, they are wielders of fearsome magic while also being wise leaders.

However, many researchers believe that he confused these Ghoul Wizards with Ghoul Elder Mages, and are skeptical of their existence.

Chapter 104
There's nothing that can be done, but I want rice

There were several men on a mountain in the region that was formerly the Sauron Duchy, now occupied by the Amid Empire.

Tentacles were twisting and crawling around in front of them, hitting the water surface and sending muddy water into the air.

"This thing, it's still alive?!"

"F-fire, fire!"

The panicked archers hastily nocked arrows with their tips covered in a green fluid in their short bows and pulled back their bowstrings.

"Don't panic, it's already dead!" shouted a young man with characteristic bangs and a well-featured face, but several arrows fired by the archers buried themselves in the ominously-quivering creature with thudding noises.

But the tentacles wouldn't stop writhing. The young man clicked his tongue and reprimanded the archers.

"I explained this beforehand; the lower bodies of these things don't stop moving for a while even after they've died. Even if you cut their heads off or split their upper bodies in half, they keep squirming around for a bit. Octopuses…"

The young man was about to explain that octopuses were the same, but stopped himself. He had grown up in a coastal town, but he had just remembered that many of the archers were from inland regions, so even if they knew that creatures called octopuses existed, they would have only seen them as dried food products or pickled in vinegar.

"They're like lizard's tails," the young man said. "They flail around for a while, don't they?"

This was actually for a completely different reason, but what the young man needed to give the archers right now was not proper education, but composure.

“I-I see.”

“Indeed… As expected of Vice-captain Rick, you’re so knowledgeable.”

This goal was accomplished; the archers regained their composure and lowered their bows. The arrows that they used and the poison coating the arrowheads were special, so they couldn’t be fired wastefully.

“Don’t relax too much; we’ll have to put it on display once it stops moving,” said Rick.

“What will we do about the Magic Stone and materials?” asked one of his subordinates.

“Don’t touch them, of course,” said Rick. “We’re short on money, but it would be bad if by some small chance someone found out that we were the ones who have been killing these things.”

“That’s true, too.”

Seeing his subordinate return his disassembling knife to its sheath, Rick waded into the marsh towards the creature that had lost its balance and toppled over… the Scylla woman.

Her eyes were still wide open in disbelief as Rick grabbed her loosely-hanging, mud-covered hand.

“Sorry, but I’ll take this back,” Rick murmured. “I’ll be using it for the next one as well, you see.”

And then he took the ring, which he had given to her just moments before, from her thin finger.

“Dispose of her.”

The archers obeyed Rick’s order and switched from their short bows to hand axes, and set about turning the Scylla into a repulsive mess.

They severed all of her tentacles and hacked into the upper body below her neck, with

their blows particularly focused around her breasts.

“Vice-captain Rick, this occurs to me every time, but why do we cut their chests up so much? And wouldn’t it be faster to use Axe Technique to cut them from the waist below in one go rather than cutting their tentacles off one by one?” another subordinate asked.

“This is more humiliating for them,” Rick replied. “I don’t understand it, but the tentacles on the lower bodies of Scylla are apparently equivalent to a woman’s hair, a part of their bodies that they are supposed to be proud of. And the chest symbolizes maternity for women who worship Vida-sama; it’s the place that contains the heart, which is Vida’s holy symbol. The same applies for these things. If we want to desecrate these bodies, this is the best way, even if it is troublesome.”

And the reason that the men didn’t damage the faces was to ensure that the other Scylla who discovered the corpses would be able to identify them easily.

“I see…” the subordinate murmured.

In other words, it wasn’t wasted effort. They were aiming for the body parts of cultural and symbolic importance.

Even if they aren’t people, how can he destroy bodies in such a rational way? the man wondered, his face turning pale.

“Don’t make that face,” said Rick, giving the subordinate a small, bitter smile. “Do I look like I’m doing this because I enjoy it?”

“Eh? But don’t you hate Scylla, Vice-captain?”

“It’s true that I hold Scylla in contempt. But even so, I respect myself. I don’t have any bizarre interests like poisoning women and toying with their corpses.” Rick’s bitter smile grew wider, and then his face straightened into a serious expression as he continued. “This plan is indeed something that we can never tell others about in pride, something disgraceful. It can’t be called justice; it’s something that only scum would carry out. But I want you to remember. We are in a vastly weaker position. We can’t achieve victory by being picky with our methods, and if we can’t achieve victory, we can’t save this nation. Our companions, and even the Scylla that we’ve killed, will have died for nothing. We mustn’t disappoint them. I want you to believe in me and my older brother, and follow my lead.”

“Yes, Vice-captain Rick Paris! We will follow you wherever you may go!” the men declared in unison, overcome with emotion from Rick’s speech.

Perhaps they saw their commander who showed no hesitation to dirty his own hands, as well as themselves, as solitary heroes. Perhaps they were intoxicated on the feeling of superiority from the knowledge that they were fighting for a noble cause.

And then Rick and his men tied the Scylla’s corpse to the trunk of a tree growing on the marsh’s edge and left after applying the finishing touches.

A gruesome corpse covered in blood and mud was abandoned there, along with the tentacles and pieces of flesh floating in the mud of the marsh.

A beautiful, red-haired woman was tied to the operating table by sturdy chains that had been wrapped around her limbs over and over again.

“…”

She was wearing only a single strange, thin cloth, leaving the pure-white skin of the area where her thighs joined into her back exposed. There were curved, stiff scars visible there.

As a beautiful, yet mysterious song echoed out, hands so white that they looked as if they had been covered in candle wax closed in on her silently.

“Scalpel… or rather, claws.”

“Incision.”

“Administer Potion.”

“Part number three.”

The hands were skillfully carrying something out.

They showed no hesitation as they used claws instead of scalpels to make incisions on the woman’s skin. Their movements were accurate and there was a surprisingly small amount of bleeding.

However, the surgery was being conducted without any anesthetics, so each time an incision was made, the woman's spine and shoulders trembled, and heavy breathing that sounded like small moans escaped her lips.

"Last of all, apply the Potion and the surgery is complete. Thank you for your hard work."

"Mmm, this was excellent work, Master."

"～♪"

"Eh?! It's already over?!" Eleanora, who had been lying on her stomach, raised her head.

"It's finished," Vandalieu replied. He sheathed his claws and removed the chains that were binding Eleanora before starting the post-cosmetic-surgery tidy-up with his surgery assistant, Yamata. "I explained beforehand that your surgery wouldn't take very long, didn't I, Eleanora?"

The cosmetic surgery carried out by transplanting the body parts of the Live-Dead Ternecia would have been considered a large-scale surgery on Earth, despite Eleanora having scars in only a few places.

It involved not only transplanting the skin, but the flesh and blood vessels beneath it.

However, with Vandalieu as the surgeon and Eleanora as the patient, it was a simple procedure.

Vandalieu used Spirit Form Transformation on a part of his body, fused them with Eleanora's body, suppressed her blood vessels and used the skillful judgment of his claws and the drugs secreted from them to stimulate their regrowth.

Eleanora was also a Noble-born Vampire who could grow back any body parts that she was missing. Due to her Status Effect Resistance skill, anesthesia was almost completely ineffective on her, but she was resistant to pain to begin with, so she could endure this much without any problems.

…Despite that, Eleanora herself had wanted her limbs to be bound, saying that it would be a big problem if by some small chance her body started to move.

“But… a little longer…” Eleanora mumbled.

“With medical science in its current state, it can’t be helped,” said Vandalieu.

Medical science was powerless when faced with a healthy body.

Seeking an ally, Eleanora glanced toward Yamata, but three of its heads were busy singing while the other six looked back at her with dull, lifeless eyes.

Yamata was one of Ternecia’s finest works; it was a Zombie with the body of a high-rank Dragon-race Hydra specimen as the base and the upper bodies of beautiful women of nine different races attached to the Hydra’s necks. Vandalieu had taken a liking to it as well, saying that it was incredibly convenient, so it had performed all kinds of work with the Surgery skill, but its intelligence was still on the level of an ordinary Zombie.

It did little other than obey orders, and its thinking capabilities were about the same as a small child’s.

But the one who became Eleanora’s ally instead was Luciliano.

“I do not mind being shown more,” he said.

He was standing in this place with a cool expression, but Eleanora hadn’t acknowledged him as a member of the opposite sex. His words of, “Ah, I have no interest in anything but Undead,” that he had spoken before the surgery had been too convincing.

“The process of the combination of Ternecia’s parts with your body is extremely fascinating,” Luciliano continued. “At first, they rejected each other, but the moment that the Blood Potion that Master created with his own blood was applied, they combined before my very eyes and there was not even any need to perform stitching. This is a true transformation.”

As Luciliano said, Eleanora’s body had no visible scars or stitches from the surgery. As body parts had indeed been transplanted, there was nothing to be done about the skin being of a slightly different color in places, but even these looked like they were going to assimilate properly soon.

“So that is how it is, Master. Will you not perform a little more transplanting surgery?”

Luciliano requested.

“Like I said, she’s already healthy,” said Vandalieu. “Eleanora, please drink another bottle of Blood Potion afterwards, and then go and rest.”

“It cannot be helped… ah…!” As Eleanora gave up and drank the Blood Potion with small noises coming from her white throat, her eyes began to sparkle in a bewitching way.

Perhaps because blood was included in its ingredient list, Blood Potions appeared to have different effects on Vampires.

“Is this alright, Master?” asked Luciliano.

“Hmm, it doesn’t seem to be harmful, so it’s probably fine,” said Vandalieu.

“Danna-sama, I am a little anxious.” Bellmond, who had been observing the surgery from the edge of the room, had broken out in a cold sweat at the sight of the mysterious-looking Eleanora.

I will make such a face? How unthinkable. Being as unsightly as I am, if I were to make such an expression, Danna-sama will shun me and… I do not have the confidence that I will be able to suppress my desire to end my own life in self-hatred before that happens.

Bellmond was frightened, but preparations for the surgery were already complete, and the mood didn’t really allow for her to say that she wanted to back out now.

“C-can you not at least make me completely unconscious before performing the surgery…?” she asked.

“If you’re unconscious, the function of your Rapid Regeneration skill decreases, and it will be problematic to have you drink the Potion afterwards, so it would be very helpful if you could stay awake,” said Vandalieu. “It will be fine. Yamata will be singing, and although the pain will continue throughout the whole thing rather than just at the beginning, we will hold you down.”

But it wouldn’t be over so quickly that it would be finished before Bellmond could count the stains on the ceiling. Unlike Eleanora, Bellmond required many different parts to be transplanted.

“Then how about forcing me into an Out-of-body Experience with your magic, Danna-sama?” Bellmond suggested.

“It’s not like I can’t do it, but that would use up an extra process for my Parallel Thought Processing,” said Vandalieu. “In the unlikely event that something happens, I want to have room to work with.”

Since his patient was Bellmond, a Noble-born Vampire with strong Vitality, it was unlikely that a serious medical error would occur, but even so, it was probably best to prepare for the worst.

“Kuh, as to be expected of you, Danna-sama. You have no weaknesses,” Bellmond said, praising Vandalieu with a groan.

“That’s not true,” said Luciliano, slurping his fern tea that he had made himself. “His own personal feelings and interests are not involved.”

“Fufufu, rest assured. Everything will turn into pleasure soon,” said Eleanora.

“Eleanora, please hurry and leave the room, put on your clothes and rest,” said Vandalieu. “You’re making Bellmond feel anxious,” said Vandalieu.

Vandalieu’s spirit form clones carried Eleanora out along with her whole operating table, as if they were going on a little trip.

“This way～.”

“Let’s go and rest, shall we～?”

“Ah, there are so many Vandalieu-samas～ ♪”

Vandalieu had known things would come to this and readied an extra operating table, so everything was still fully prepared.

“Still, this Blood Potion, does it really have those kinds of effects?” Vandalieu wondered.

When he drank it himself, other than its healing effects as a Potion, it just seemed sweet and easy to drink.

“Well, that is how it is,” said Luciliano. “It is made of your own blood, after all.”

It seemed that even Vampires didn’t have an appetite for their own blood.

Suddenly, they heard the slurping sound of saliva.

Yamata, who always wore an empty expression, showed the light of a primitive hunger in its eyes when it looked at Blood Potion. It seemed that Blood Potions were extremely delicious to Vampires and Zombies, just not for Vandalieu.

Even with Vandalieu’s skill, Bellmond’s surgery took over ten hours.

Eleanora had only needed her skin and the underlying flesh to be replaced, but Bellmond needed bones in certain parts and several organs transplanted as well, so perhaps Vandalieu should have been proud for having completed it in only ten hours.

“When I examined you with Spirit Form Transformation, several of your organs were damaged, so let’s take this opportunity to renew them as well,” Vandalieu had said.

Bellmond had become a Vampire, so this didn’t even affect her ability in battle, let alone her everyday life. However, Vandalieu had taken this opportunity to go as far as to perform organ transplantation.

If Vandalieu wanted to repair these in the future but the Live-Dead Ternecia somehow became unusable, it would be a pain, after all.

It is difficult to tell whether Danna-sama is an optimistic person or a pessimistic one, Bellmond thought as she sighed.

She got up from the bed she was lying on and headed towards the full-length mirror that had been prepared under the assumption that the patients would want to see the results of the surgery.

This was a mirror that had been created by Princess Levia heating up some sand and Vandalieu using Golem Transmutation to remove impurities and turn it into a glass with the appropriate shape.

“He truly is incredible,” Bellmond murmured to herself. “Even royals and nobles would

be astonished by this mirror."

Does Danna-sama not know how much a smooth mirror made of glass would be worth? She wondered as she looked at the reflection of herself in the crystal-clear mirror.

And then she hardened her resolve and dropped the robe that she was wearing.

"…!"

The mirror reflected an image of someone that was Bellmond, but at the same time, wasn't her. She was so different that she gasped and almost activated her Demon Eye on herself in surprise.

Her previously scar-covered skin had changed color where new skin had been transplanted, looking as if it was covered in strangely-shaped bruises, but it was very smooth.

Her chest that was almost non-existent, where her skin had been clinging to her ribs in places, was now large and soft. She had been surprised by its weight right after the surgery, but seeing it like this was even more astonishing. It quivered a little every time she moved, and it was heavy.

As for her abdomen, it had become a little thicker, as not only the skin, but flesh and organs had been transplanted as well.

But this didn't make her appear fat. Bellmond had been too thin to begin with. Now she had more feminine curves, and it was likely that many would be attracted to them.

But these weren't the parts of Bellmond's surgery that Vandalieu had spent the longest on. The part that had taken the longest was the bewitching curve of her bottom – or rather, the long tail that had been transplanted just above it.

This was the tail of a monkey… -like monster that had been defeated in the Scaled King's Nest, a tail around the length of Bellmond's entire body, covered in glossy fur.

It was apparently a mutated variant of a Chimera, but nobody had known what it was called. Vandalieu had thought that it resembled a Japanese chimera, but Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, had fled, so nobody knew its exact name.

But this long tail with its shiny, silver-colored fur was beautiful, so Bellmond had no

complaints.

Simply attaching the tail would have been simple, but Vandalieu had even gone as far as to tamper with the inside of Bellmond's brain in order to connect the muscles and nerves so that she would be able to move the tail as she wanted.

As Bellmond had once been a forest-monkey-type Beast-person, there had been a dedicated part of her brain for controlling the movement of her tail, but it had apparently disappeared because so much time had passed after she lost her tail.

Vandalieu had used death-attribute magic to regenerate that part of her brain.

"…It is fortunate that I asked Luciliano-shi to vacate the room," she said.

Bellmond couldn't keep up with discussions of medical knowledge that didn't exist in this world. The only thing that she understood was how unsightly a condition she had been in during the surgery… particularly when the changes had been made to her brain.

But enduring it had paid off; Bellmond was able to move her tail exactly as she wanted to. Her memory of the past wasn't very clear, but she even got the feeling that it moved more dexterously than the tail that she had been born with.

The same applied for the rest of her body as well. Less than a day had passed since transplantation, and yet there was no numbness. When she pinched herself, she could feel the pain. If she brushed her fingertips against her skin to tickle herself, she could feel it.

It was difficult to think that this skin and flesh had belonged to someone else.

Of course, she felt a little discomfort from her figure changing considerably. She could move her fingers and toes the same as before the surgery, but she would have to take care as she went about her everyday life.

At the very least, she would have to replace all of her clothes with new ones. Her previous clothes wouldn't be able to contain her chest, hips and buttocks. The only clothes she wouldn't need to replace were her shoes.

"You have put a great amount of effort into this, Danna-sama. You must take responsibility for giving me such a body… What is this?" Bellmond checked her Status,

just in case.

Vandalieu, who had been sleeping in the bed next to Bellmond, called out to her. Naturally, ten hours of surgery had been very tiring work for him.

Of course, it was also a time of day where children were supposed to be asleep.

“What’s wrong?” he asked. “Ah, before that, is it really alright for me to open my eyes?”

“So you were awake. How skillful of you to wake up without opening your eyes,” Bellmond remarked.

“On Earth, if you wake up and see something, all kinds of tragic, comical things can happen,” Vandalieu explained.

There was a phenomenon commonly known as the ‘lucky sukebe.*’ Incidentally, Vandalieu had never encountered this kind of phenomenon.

TLN: Situations that unexpectedly turn lewd due to chance.*

“I am sure you already saw enough to grow tired of it in the surgery room,” said Bellmond. “And I was someone who was picked up through your compassion, Danna-sama… Leaving that aside, there are a few abnormalities with my Status.”

“Abnormalities? Did you gain a Status Effect? Then we must go back into surgery.”

With his eyes still closed, Vandalieu got up from his bed. He had conducted surgery on muscle, fat, organs, bone, nerves and even the brain, so he had expected that there might be some kind of side-effect.

The chance of such a side effect appearing was much higher for Bellmond than Eleanora. That was why he had chosen to sleep close by.

“No, it is likely a different kind of abnormality from the kind that you are fearing, Danna-sama,” said Bellmond.

“Bellmond, I understand that there is no danger to your life right now. But if we don’t do anything about the side-effects, the risk of it becoming worse is –”

“The race title in my Status has changed from Noble-born Vampire to Abyssal

Vampire.”

“Wow, that was unexpected.”

Vandalieu hadn’t imagined that the side-effect would be a race change.

According to Bellmond, her Rank and Attribute Values hadn’t changed, nor had she gained any new skills, but… there was no way that there would be no changes to her after her race had changed.

It was best to think that the changes hadn’t shown themselves yet.

After that, it was confirmed that Eleanora’s race had also changed to Abyssal Vampire.

“Could it be because you drank too much Blood Potion?”

It seemed that it wasn’t a bad thing, so for now, Vandalieu would just need to conduct follow-up examinations.

『The levels of the Surgery, Alchemy and Guidance: Demon Path skills have increased!』

The clattering sound of a wagon’s wheels turning came from the night sky.

“Hahahaha! This is a truly exhilarating experience!”

With his piercing crimson eyes shining, the Nightmare Carriage Sam was running around in the moonlit night.

“What are your thoughts, Bocchan?!” he shouted.

“If I come out onto the coachman’s seat, I feel like my face will become distorted from the wind pressure, so I’ll pass,” replied Vandalieu, who was relaxing inside the carriage.

Sam was currently running through the sky even higher than the clouds with his Air-

running skill. The atmospheric pressure was different from that of the ground surface, and the cold air was harsher than the middle of winter.

The Undead Sam and the horses that were a part of him had no problems with this, but Vandalieu would be attacked mercilessly by these conditions if he were to leave the carriage. They were rather harsh conditions to endure in exchange for a sense of exhilaration.

“But you really are convenient after all, Sam,” Vandalieu remarked.

“Jyuuh, this is so pleasant that I would never imagine that we are flying… or rather, running through the air, my lord,” said Bone Man.

“So… high…” Rapiéçage groaned.

“Hey, Van, I want to look outside!” said Pauvina.

The inside of the carriage had the same atmospheric pressure as the ground’s surface. The airtightness of Sam’s carriage should have been nonexistent, but his Comfort Maintenance skill suppressed the effects of not only the atmospheric temperature, but the atmospheric pressure and wind pressure as well.

“Pauvina, let’s look outside before we reach the ground,” said Vandalieu.

“Eh~!” Pauvina made a noise of complaint.

“Eeegh,” Rapiéçage groaned.

“Eh~♪”

“Yamata, you don’t have to sing,” said Vandalieu.

“Antenshon pleeease, would anyone like a drink~?” asked Rita.

“Rita, that’s ‘attention,’ not ‘antenshon,’” Vandalieu told her.

Tonight, Vandalieu and his companions were headed towards the former Sauron Duchy, which was now under the occupation of the Amid Empire.

Their objective was, of course, to acquire the seeds for Sauron rice, which was

apparently similar to Japonica rice. The other objective was to meet the Scylla, another of the races created by Vida, and to gather information.

According to Kasim and his friends, who had originally come from the Sauron Duchy, there had been a self-governing dominion of Scylla that originated in the distant past in the Sauron Duchy, though they had never actually seen it. Only certain merchants and noblemen visited it, so they didn't know any details about it, either.

It wasn't clear whether Death-Attribute Charm… Demon Path Enticement would have any effect on the Scylla, but Vandalieu was Vida's Holy Son. There was a reasonable chance that they would treat him well… if they believed him, that is.

And if they were troubled in any way, he would offer a trade, set up a Dungeon so that he could go back and forth from the dominion, establish trade and sign a military treaty for times of emergency.

Our territory and fighting strength has expanded, but Talosheim is in a closed-off, remote area of land. Unless we assertively make moves on the outside rather than just staying holed up in the city, we'll be checkmated eventually.

Of course, conducting just diplomacy on the outside wasn't enough, but –

And if I become known as the Demon King and the world treats me as an enemy in the future, I want those who can become powerful allies.

Vandalieu had already acquired two fragments of the Demon King and more dangerous-sounding skills and Titles than he cared to count. If he were to fail in becoming an honorary nobleman in the future, it was possible that he would become a target of extermination to the whole world instead.

Thus, Vandalieu wanted the Scylla of the Sauron Duchy to be his allies to begin with. The Amid Empire, which was an enemy to Vandalieu and his companions no matter how he looked at it, was currently ruling the Sauron Duchy. It was unlikely that any disputes with the Orbaume Kingdom would arise from damaging the surrounding areas to some extent.

Also, he wanted to gain information on Heinz and the remaining two Pure-breed Vampires if possible. Vandalieu had discovered several of Gubamon and Birkyne's hideouts from information that he had extracted from Ternecia, but they had already been vacated.

It seemed that they had already taken countermeasures to deal with Vandalieu.

He had to gather information from scratch once more. It would be simple if he could use Heinz to kill their close aides, but…

“Bocchan, we are crossing the mountain range soon!” Sam announced.

Incidentally, the reason Vandalieu was traveling through the skies rather than using the Labyrinth Creation skill to teleport was because he could only teleport the plants, ghosts, insects and those infested by the insects with him, but Sam could carry a large number of people at once.

However, the upper skies around the mountain range had become magical skies, known as Devil’s Skies, inhabited by high-Rank monsters capable of flight, including Rank 10 Hurricane Dragons.

“However, we have a guest!” said Sam.

There was a Hurricane Dragon, releasing lightning and letting out a roar at this strange intruder that was entering its territory. It was a powerful monster that even Sam, who was under the effects of Guidance: Demon Path, would be no match for.

“Sensei, you’re up,” said Vandalieu.

“Sensei?” Bellmond repeated. “Well, I shall be going.”

“Bellmond-san, at times like these, you have to say, ‘doore*!’” said Darcia.

TLN: Doore when answering, "Sensei, you are up," is a neta used in anime/ manga/ novels. It means, "Let's see."*

“Doore, doore!” Pauvina squealed.

The two of them were in high spirits for some reason.

“I-I see. Doore?” After complying with their request, Bellmond leapt out onto the coachman’s seat and then into the sky.

“Now then, please back her up,” said Vandalieu.

There was a roar from the torrent of Knochen's bones, which had been flying behind Sam, as it assaulted the Hurricane Dragon along with a poisonous breath attack. As its movements slowed down, metal threads wrapped around its wings.

Despite being Rank 10, a single Hurricane Dragon could not defeat the coordinated attacks of the Rank 10 Bellmond and the Rank 9 Knochen.

- **Name**: Basdia
- **Rank**: 7
- **Race**: Ghoul Amazoness Leader
- **Level**: 55
- **Job**: Magical Warrior
- **Job level**: 79
- **Job history**: Apprentice Warrior, Warrior, Apprentice Mage, Mage
- **Age**: 31 years old (27 years old in appearance)
- **Passive skills**:
    - Night Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Pain Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Paralyzing Venom Secretion (Claws): Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Magic Resistance: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Intuition: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Axe Technique: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Shield Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Archery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Throwing: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Silent Steps: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Coordination: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 3 (NEW!)
    - Wind-Attribute Magic: Level 5 (NEW!)
    - Water-Attribute Magic: Level 5 (NEW!)
    - Mana Control: Level 3 (NEW!)
    - Cooking: Level 2 (NEW!)
    - Surpass Limits – Magic Axe: Level 5 (NEW!)

Chapter 105
A person who won't be escorted

Four carriages were moving along a highway in the former Sauron Duchy. The carriages at the front and back were packed with mercenaries, and the coachmen of these carriages were mercenaries as well. There were also more mercenaries on horseback surrounding the carriages, further strengthening their defense.

And the two carriages in the middle were loaded with 'goods.'

"Really, the world has become a nice place." The leader of this group, Padej Boctarin, had a cheerful smile on his face, paying no attention to the strict atmosphere. "Rumor has it that this region's name will be formally changed soon. Oh my, what a happy event. With this, the Amid Empire's rule will become firm."

The leader of the mercenaries called out to Padej.

"Is it really alright to say that, Danna? Aren't you a pure-blooded citizen of the kingdom?" he asked.

Was it alright for Padej to be so happy when his own nation, his birthplace, had been occupied and was now being ruled by an enemy nation? But Padej's smile did not falter despite this question.

"Of course," he said. "Which nation I was born in does not matter. I am a merchant; I love anything that grants opportunities for profit. And the Amid Empire will bring more profits to my business than the Orbaume Kingdom. Please look at the commodities behind us." Padej pointed at the second and third carriages. Each of them were carrying over a dozen people. "This quantity and quality would have been unimaginable in the Kingdom."

They were slaves.

Expensive slave collars hadn't been put around their necks, but there were sturdy shackles around their wrists and ankles instead.

Padej Boctarin was a slave trader. But slaves were allowed even in the Orbaume

Kingdom. So why was he making more profits under the Amid Empire's occupation?

The reason for this was the races of the slaves. The slaves in the carriages were Beast-people, Titans, Dark Elves, half-Elves and there was even a Drakonid among them. All of them were members of Vida's races or those who shared their blood.

In the Amid Empire, the treatment of slaves of races considered to be people – humans, Elves and Dwarves – was strictly regulated. However, members of Vida's races and those who shared their blood were discriminated against. Their treatment was essentially unrestricted.

Padej had noticed this; he was gathering members of Vida's races in the Sauron Duchy and selling them as slaves.

"It is true that they are attractive women and sturdy slaves that look as if they could work anywhere," the leader of the mercenaries agreed.

The carriage contained beautiful women that would even make the mercenary leader himself start drooling, sturdy men who looked as if they would be able to handle all kinds of harsh labor and young boys who were just at the perfect age to begin teaching them work.

The mercenaries were outsiders in this business other than the fighting, but they understood that there were large profits to be made if these slaves were all sold.

"But didn't the magistrate-sama announce that the Emperor would keep the laws regarding slaves in this region as they were now for another fifty years?" said another mercenary.

As he pointed out, Emperor Marshukzarl had not imposed the Empire's discriminatory system in the Sauron Duchy.

This was a postponement for the citizens of the Sauron Duchy, and at the same time, it was a trap.

If the humans, Dwarves and Elves of the Sauron Duchy were to suddenly be told that their neighbors, coworkers, lovers, spouses and their own children were to become those who should be discriminated against, they would naturally rebel against the Empire. This could potentially cause a large-scale rebellion and a countless number of people would try to escape into the Orbaume Kingdom.

But if they were to hear that things would stay the same for fifty more years, some of them would feel relief rather than a desire to rebel. For the humans in particular, who were present in the Duchy in large numbers, fifty years from now was a distant future, where their children and grandchildren's generation would have already begun.

Even Dwarves and Elves, who had long lifespans, might think that the system would change or the Orbaume Kingdom might retake the Sauron Duchy within fifty years.

So then, wasn't it best to see how things went for now rather than doing something as dangerous as defying the Emperor?

These fifty years were a long enough postponement to make the Dwarves and Elves think this.

Doing this was effectively a measure to prevent the people of the Sauron Duchy from unifying.

But despite this being intended to be a trap, the law was the law. Breaking it would, of course, lead to severe punishment.

"That is why I have chosen this road with no people, hired you gentlemen as guards and am smuggling these slaves into the boundaries of the Amid Empire, is it not? There are no military police who would begin an investigation for the sake of these poor slaves of Vida's races," said Padej.

The mercenary leader laughed. "You're right about that. We'll deliver these goods where they need to be, Danna. So…"

"I know," said Padej. "I will provide ample remunerations for your work."

"No, no, not that –"

As if pouring water on the black conversation between the slave trader and the mercenary, armed men and women with cloths covering their mouths appeared from the forest on both sides of the carriages, blocking the path ahead and behind.

And then a female knight, who had a mask covering her mouth like the others, glared at Padej with a sharp glint in her eye and made a declaration.

"We are the Sauron Liberation Front! Padej, you traitor who would even utilize the

invaders to sell the people of our nation as slaves! Consider yourself a dead man!"

Looking closely, some youth could be seen in the knight's face; it was that of a girl who was in her later teenage years. But the strength of her voice contained no signs of inexperience.

"I-it's the Sauron Liberation Front!" cried one of the mercenaries.

"M-mercenaries, it seems it is already time for you to work. I am counting on you!" Padej shouted at the leader. His face turned pale, but he didn't lose his composure.

The mercenary leader's face twisted in a smile as he raised his special halberd. "Yes, leave the execution to me."

Padej wanted to ask, "Huh? What are you saying?" But what came from his mouth instead was his own blood. He gasped, coughed and then collapsed with his eyes rolled back.

As the mercenary leader removed his special weapon from Padej's corpse, he bowed towards the female knight. "I'm finished, Ojou," he said.

The other mercenaries tied up the workers that Padej had hired and then followed their leader's example, lowering their heads.

"Alright. Release the slaves from their shackles," the knight ordered.

"Yes, leave it to me."

The mercenaries that Padej had hired were working with the female knight who led the resistance.

They removed the shackles from the slaves, who were still confused by the sudden events, and the members of the resistance began wrapping cloaks around the women and children.

The female knight called out to the mercenary leader, who seemed somewhat relieved.

"Are you alright with this, Debis?" she asked. "Though he was indeed scum, mercenaries won't be able to survive if they betray their employers."

Debis, the mercenary leader, gave a bitter smile. “Heheh, I don’t mind,” he said. “Mercenaries are just those of us who have no choice but to do this work because we failed to die on the battlefield. Discontinuing this business might be just what we need.” And then he gave the salute that he had learned when he was a part of the Sauron Duchy’s army before continuing. “We were already losers to begin with. If it means we can return to being soldiers of Sauron before we die, under Ojou’s flag, no less, we’ll cover ourselves in as much mud as we need to.”

“The flag we wave is not my flag, but the flag of the Sauron family,” said the female knight. “I haven’t been knighted; I’m merely the eldest daughter in a family of knights.”

Though she was happy that the former subordinates of her late father were placing their hopes on her, Iris Bearheart didn’t fail to remind them of this.

There were several other organizations in the resistance apart from the Sauron Liberation Front that she led, and there was also the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, led by Duke Sauron’s illegitimate child and his younger brother. Though everyone present was an ally, it was best to avoid words and actions that could cause internal discord.

“Also, the social status of my family is the lowest among those who are a part of the Liberation Front,” said Iris. “I am but a small shrine being lifted up by the others.”

Iris’s family was a family of knights, one of the lowest noble families that could name an heir in the Orbaume Kingdom’s aristocratic system. And all of the members in the Sauron Liberation Front were from families with higher court ranks than hers.

“Iris-ojou is saying something again. Is she being sarcastic towards me, the fifth son of a baronet’s family?”

“Who knows. Maybe she’s being considerate to me, the illegitimate child of an earl’s family.”

“No, no, I am sure that she is holding back for me, a former orphan who became the adopted daughter of a marquis’s family to be used for a political marriage.”

Though all of these members came from such families, they were actually those who would normally never be able to succeed their families or gain significant positions, those who would have eventually become commoners unless they were adopted by another noble family or married to gain another noble surname.

In the previous war, many heads of noble families as well as the eldest and second sons who could have succeeded them had fallen in battle or escaped to other duchies. The noblemen remaining in the Sauron region now were those who had either allied themselves with the Empire or dummy replacements left behind bearing their names to reassure the people.

And those who were not so important to the Kingdom that they desperately needed to escape, and yet were individuals that the Empire could not ignore because they did indeed possess the blood of noble families, had gathered under Iris's command.

"Heh, you'll just be having me, someone who's been a soldier for three generations, joining you, so there won't be any problems," said Debis.

"That's reassuring," said Iris. "Alright, it's about time we depart!"

The resistance, whose numbers had doubled now, as well as the slaves who had now become free citizens again, cheered as they began to move with the stolen carriages. The only thing left behind was the pool of the slave trader's blood.

The voice of a boy leading a somewhat sinister-looking group of individuals echoed out in the refreshing air of this clear morning.

"We'll make this our camping ground," Vandalieu declared.

If survivalists on Earth were to hear this, they might be exasperated, wondering what kind of camping ground this was supposed to be.

"Get up."

The ground surface was steadily transformed into Golems and the slope of the mountain changed into a flat, open space with a reasonable surface area. He didn't forget to transform the bedrock and boulders into Stone Golems as well, to form pillars that would support the flat ground.

And then bones began to join together with clattering noises in this newly-formed open ground.

Knochen groaned as it transformed into ramparts and inhabitable buildings made of

bones. The roofs were made not with tiles, but things such as the bone plates of Stegosauruses and tortoise shells.

The insides of the buildings were not empty; they contained tables, chairs and beds made of bone. Rita and Saria quickly carried in the sheets and mattresses that Sam had been carrying aboard and began making the beds.

Vandalieu used his Golem Transmutation skill to quickly dig a well and his Labyrinth Construction skill to create a small Dungeon for quick travel in emergency situations.

Last of all, Eisen and the other Immortal Ents lumbered around Knochen's surroundings, concealing the bone mansion so that it couldn't be seen from outside.

"Well done, Danna-sama," said Bellmond.

Everything was complete after less than an hour. Everyone began to rest, drinking the tea that Bellmond had prepared.

With just that much time and effort, a base that was very comfortable to live in with the defenses of a sturdy fort had been created. It even had food and water available from the well and the Immortal Ents, and there was an emergency escape option as well.

"I'm sure it would be designated as a disaster," Vandalieu remarked quietly, looking at Knochen (or rather, one of its Skeletons), who was the core of this base.

Knochen gave a curious groan.

A fortress filled with countless Undead had suddenly appeared in an unnoticed location. Any previously-prepared precautions and defenses were useless in such a situation.

And because Knochen possessed the High-speed Flight skill, its mobility was incomparably superior to those of other Bone Forts.

If it wanted to, it could go over castle walls at night and form a fortress before morning while attacking the city.

It was an absolute nightmare from a defender's point of view.

“Now that it comes to this, I’ll have to consider that the Empire, Kingdom and the Pure-breed Vampires might use similar tactics and rework Talosheim’s defensive tactics,” said Vandalieu.

“Van, don’t be scared~! Calm down~!” said Pauvina.

“Relax, Vandalieu. There’s no need to be scared,” said Darcia.

The two of them were trying to calm him down now that he was feeling an irrational sense of danger and imagining things that were impossible.

“Please look over here, my lord. I am managing to do this with more than usual,” said Bone Man, who had removed his own skull and ribs and started juggling them, perhaps in an attempt to draw Vandalieu’s attention away from such thoughts.

“Bocchan, the chances of the Empire or the Kingdom throwing a monster like a Bone Fort onto the frontlines are… well, nil,” said Saria.

There wasn’t even a one percent chance. As long as Vandalieu was the only one capable of taming Undead, there was nobody who could manipulate monsters of the same type as a Bone Fort.

If they were to use large plant-type monsters or special Golems, it might theoretically be possible to achieve something similar, but… these would just be empty theories.

Even if such empty theories somehow became reality, such large plant-type monsters would likely move slower than shellfish on land, and the manufacturing cost of a moving fortress-type Golem with current alchemical knowledge would cause nations to go bankrupt ten times over.

“Then what about the Pure-breed Vampires?” Princess Levia asked.

“I do not know how much fighting strength Birkyne-sa… Birkyne and Gubamon possess, but I do not believe that they possess a Bone Fort,” said Bellmond.

“Eh, is that true?” Princess Levia seemed surprised. “But I do think that Knochen-san is very convenient.”

Bone Forts were rare Undead monsters and only a handful of them had been historically confirmed to exist, but Birkyne and Gubamon had been alive since the age

of the gods. As they were capable of taming Undead, it wouldn't have been strange for them to set their sights on Bone Forts.

That was what Princess Levia had thought, but Bellmond shook her head.

"Princess, you mustn't use Danna-sama as a standard," she said. "They are capable of taming Undead, but they are only capable of controlling Undead that they have created themselves using corpses as materials. They are unable to tame Undead that already move and exist. Thus, if they wished to possess a Bone Fort, they would need to create one, but gathering such a number of bones would be truly difficult*, in every sense of the word."

TLN: This is a slight pun, because 骨/kotsu, the Japanese word for "bone," can also mean "difficult" and this is the word used here.*

And after they gathered the materials, they would need to perform a ritual to turn them into an Undead, so this would take a considerable amount of time.

"Can they not steadily develop from Rank 1 Living Bones?" Vandalieu asked.

"I do not believe that they did this," said Bellmond. "If they wanted more fighting forces, increasing the numbers of Subordinate Vampires would suffice… and Danna-sama, the majority of Undead are not as intelligent as Knochen-dono and Bone-Man-dono."

In other words, even after taking the effort to raise them, they would be left with Undead who would only be able to obey simple commands like, "Fight," and, "Stay here."

"And they are not managing a nation or a large-scale mercenary band to begin with," Bellmond continued. "They are a type of criminal organization. They do not even have any need to directly fight an enemy army."

The Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped evil gods had survived up until now by spreading their roots beneath society. Thus, it was apparently unnecessary for them to conduct large-scale battles such as wars on their own.

To begin with, Pure-breed Vampires and high-ranking Noble-born Vampires each possessed enough fighting strength to scatter the army of a single nation. As they had no civilians that they needed to protect, just one or perhaps a few of them would need

to go on a rampage or simply escape.

“Then what about the evil gods?” Vandalieu asked.

“The evil gods, you ask…? My knowledge does not extend that far,” Bellmond said, unable to answer his question.

However, Vandalieu and his companions would one day do battle with the evil gods, including Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, the one who had given Gubamon and the other two Pure-breed Vampires his divine protection.

As long as this fact remained true, they needed countermeasures against these enemies.

“Well, even if I want to come up with countermeasures, I can’t come up with anything other than defeating them through sheer force, so let’s prepare while trying to think of new ideas,” said Vandalieu.

“My apologies. I have failed to convince him,” said Bellmond.

“That’s not true, Bellmond-san,” said Darcia. “You did well!”

“Jyuuh, there is nothing to apologize for,” said Bone Man. “My lord has returned to normal, after all.”

Knochen groaned in agreement.

As Vandalieu watched everyone thank Bellmond for her efforts, he wondered whether he was overthinking things, but he reconsidered and decided that it would be best to make preparations while not doing anything unreasonable.

It was thanks to Vandalieu’s persecutory delusions that Talosheim’s defenses had been increased to this extent.

“Now then, we’ll be going now. Everyone, if bandits or Empire soldiers come and you can stop them from passing, please dispose of them. The same goes for the Vampires who work for the evil gods. But you mustn’t lay a hand on the people of the resistance. If they look like they will die, please help them.”

With these words, Vandalieu left his camp along with his companions.

The first objective was to make contact with the Scylla, but first he had to gather nearby spirits to gain information. That was why they were going for a little walk around the area first.

“Well, I don’t have high hopes for this,” Vandalieu said.

In these nature-filled mountains and hills, there were countless forms of life and the air was restless with countless spirits appearing and disappearing. These spirits were very convenient for making Golems. However, it was difficult to say that they were useful as a source of information.

The spirits of plants were insensitive to their surroundings, and Vandalieu didn’t expect much from the spirits of insects, either. Animals would know a few things about the areas that their territories encompassed. Birds were the most promising, as they had good eyes and lived over wide areas.

But the spirits of such wild animals lost memories from when they were alive very quickly, and the vast majority of them lasted less than a year before returning to the circle of transmigration.

Thus, the only reliable ones were the spirits of intelligent creatures such as people or monsters. But this was simply a nature-filled mountain in the middle of nowhere. There weren’t even any signs of battle having taken place here, so it was unlikely that there would be spirits of people here.

Therefore, the spirits of monsters should have been the ones to look for, but…

“I wonder if there are any Goblins or something,” said Vandalieu.

“Despite the fact that we are trying to find them, there aren’t any, are there?” said Princess Levia.

“There really aren’t any,” said Pauvina.

The three of them were going along a mountain path, searching for monsters that could be used as sources of information, but this seemed to be a more peaceful mountain than they had thought. There wasn’t a single trace of a Goblin, despite the fact that Goblins were monsters that could be found anywhere.

…Though it was entirely possible that they had simply fled in fear of the Titan Ghost who was over two meters tall and the enormous little girl.

“This would be a relative success if we were just watching the autumn leaves fall, though,” said Vandalieu.

The trees here were separated by generous amounts of space, and the sunlight filtering through the leaves was very beautiful. There were no red leaves and few autumn colors, but it was not a bad view at all.

“What are we hunting? Are Momijis monsters?” Pauvina asked.

TLN: “Watching autumn leaves fall” is literally “hunting autumn colors,” and “autumn colors” = 紅葉/Momiji.*

Pauvina had made a common misunderstanding for children first hearing about watching autumn leaves fall, so Vandalieu went to correct her, but Princess Levia responded first.

“They are deer-type monsters,” she said. “It was written on stone tablets that deer meat is called ‘momiji.’ This is correct, isn’t it?”

TLN: 紅葉/Momiji also means “venison.”

“Yes, they’re deer,” said Vandalieu.

It was another world, so there wouldn’t really be any problems if watching autumn leaves falling had a different meaning.

Suddenly, Pauvina began sniffing the air. “Ah, I can smell water this way,” she said.

Displaying the sharp sense of smell of a half-Noble Orc, Pauvina did more work than the swarms of spirits gathering around.

“Going to the water should give some clues, shouldn’t it?” said Princess Levia.

Like Lizardmen, Scylla were a race that needed to be near water. Of course, that didn’t mean that all bodies of water would have Scylla living there, but they would at least get some clues.

“I shall remain hidden nearby, then,” said Princess Levia.

“Please do,” said Vandalieu. “Pauvina, where is the smell coming from?”

“Hmm, it’s over there.”

Just in case, Levia erased her presence. Vandalieu followed Pauvina, who was following the smell of water.

After a short while, they arrived at a small pond.

“There aren’t any Scylla-sans, are there?” said Pauvina, sounding disappointed.

As she said, there were no signs of Scylla at this small marsh that was about ten meters across.

“But there is someone who used to be a Scylla,” said Vandalieu.

He could see the spirit of a Scylla.

“It’s not here… It’s not here… It’s not here…” the Scylla whispered.

Her expression was terribly depressed, and she appeared to be searching for something with both of her hands and the tentacles of her lower body. She was apparently searching so frantically that she hadn’t taken notice of Vandalieu’s Demon Path Enticement skill. She was what is known as a Jibakurei*.

TLN: A spirit that is bound to a certain location, such as the place where it died.*

It was the most ghost-like spirit that Vandalieu had ever encountered.

“What are you looking for?” he asked.

As Vandalieu spoke to her, the Scylla’s spirit raised her face and was taken aback. And then her expression loosened as she gazed at him. The shadow of sadness that had been present in her expression had dramatically receded.

“An important… ring. I was only just given it, and… I went and lost it…”

Deciding it was fine to show her to Pauvina, Vandalieu cast Visualization on the Scylla’s

spirit as it began talking. She told him that she was a Scylla by the name of Orbia, from a clan that ran a village near this pond.

Scylla were an entirely female race, and Orbia had a secret relationship with a certain man. This man was a person who held a significant position in society, and their relationship could not be made known.

“But he told me that he wanted to give me a symbol of our engagement and asked me to come out here alone, so I snuck out of the village. And then, right here, I received the ring from that person… I was so happy that I began to feel faint… and before I knew it…”

“You had died,” said Vandalieu, finishing her sentence.

“That’s right! Before I knew it, I’d turned into a ghost, that person was nowhere to be found and the ring was gone… and I didn’t know what was going on…”

“You poor thing, you forgot what happened when you died, didn’t you?” said Pauvina.

“It was painful when you realized that you’d died before realizing it, wasn’t it?” said Princess Levia.

The three of them had experienced death before; they nodded in sympathy as they listened to Orbia’s story.

“Well then, I’ll help you look for the ring,” said Vandalieu.

“Are you sure?! I’ve searched for days and haven’t found it, you know?” said Orbie.

“Yes. I have to divide first.”

“Divide? Uwah, you’re dividing?!”

Vandalieu used Out-of-body Experience to multiply himself and searched everywhere, even inside the mud of the marsh.

While he was doing this, Princess Levia and Pauvina were asking Orbia how she had died.

“Do you have any idea as to when you died?” Princess Levia.

There was the option of using Mental Encroachment, but there was a possibility of Orbia going mad and her mind crumbling if her memories were dug up forcefully, so it was best to ask her and have her remember.

“No, I don’t remember anything…”

The appearance of ghosts were often influenced by how they appeared when they died. The spirit of a person who had been stabbed in the chest would have a knife protruding from their chest, so it would be easily to tell the cause of death in such a case, but Orbia had no external injuries.

It was possible that the cause of death hadn’t appeared on her spirit body because she didn’t remember how she had died.

“I’m sure it happened in an instant,” said Pauvina. “You don’t remember what happened before you died? Maybe something strange happened.”

“Now that you mention it… Recently, in a number of villages, there have been incidents where Scylla have been getting attacked in places where they were alone and killed in horrible ways… Could it be that I was killed by the person responsible for that?! This is terrible! What if that man was also put in danger?!” Orbia exclaimed.

“I-it’s alright,” said Pauvina, reassuring her. “If that person’s spirit was nearby, Van would have noticed.”

“That’s right,” said Princess Levia. “I am sure that your precious person is safe.”

“You’re right,” said Orbia, regaining her composure. “That wouldn’t necessarily have happened to that person.”

Just as she finished speaking, all of Vandalieu’s clones returned to his physical body.

“Unfortunately, I couldn’t find your ring,” said Vandalieu. “It was either stolen by the one who killed you or it’s with your dead body. Or perhaps ‘that person’ has it?”

“I see… thanks for searching for it,” said Orbia. “With this, I can give up.”

Suddenly, Orbia grew fainter. Now that she knew that her ring wasn’t here, her lingering attachment had faded and she was trying to return to the circle of transmigration.

“Orbia-oneesan…” Pauvina whispered.

“Please find happiness after you are reborn, alright?” said Princess Levia.

The two of them watched her with sad expressions.

“Yes, thank you,” Orbia said to them with a smile as she disappeared –

“Ah, excuse me, but it would be really helpful if you could lead me to the Scylla village.”

“Come to think of it, I didn’t tell you where it is, did I?”

Orbia came back before disappearing.

“Also, do you have no intention of becoming an Undead?” asked Vandalieu. “You’ll be able to take revenge on the criminal with your own hands.”

“Hmm, an Undead, not really,” Orbia said. “I suppose I don’t really care about revenge, and as long as that person is safe… ah, but while I’m at it, I might want to confirm his safety for myself.”

And so she easily agreed to stay with Vandalieu. It seemed that she wanted to at least stay with him until she could make sure that her lover was safe.

“I’m happy, but conflicted,” said Pauvina. “I kind of knew that things would come to this, though.”

“It is conflicting indeed,” Princess Levia agreed. “Though I did think that things would come to this.”

The two of them, who had both been stopped from returning to the circle of transmigration by Vandalieu, glared at him with reproachful eyes.

Having Undead insects deliver a message to everyone else who was waiting, Vandalieu and his companions headed for the village that Orbia used to live in, following her lead. The village was apparently in the marshes in the mountains.

“Eh, this child is Vida’s Holy Son?! Amazing! Us Scylla have been worshipping Vida all

this time, but none of us have this Title!" Orbia exclaimed.

"Fufun, that's right," said Pauvina. "Van is amazing. And what about that person that you love, Orbia-oneechan?"

"I can't tell you his name," said Orbia. "But he's really cool~♪ especially when he flicks his bangs to the side, like this."

Her lover was apparently a handsome person with characteristic bangs.

"At this rate, it seems that we'll be able to identify her lover straight away," Vandalieu whispered.

But as they were drawing closer to a river that lay between them at the village, they heard a piercing scream.

"It could be that someone is being attacked," Vandalieu said.

"Uwah, so fast?! But why are you using your hands to run as well?!"

"Because it's faster. Pauvina and Princess Levia, please follow me."

Without waiting for a response, Vandalieu immediately began running on all fours towards the direction that the scream had come from.

"Umm, that's probably not right, but it might be… ah, your tongue extended?!"

Orbia seemed bewildered, but Vandalieu used the Unarmed Fighting Technique martial skill, Tongue Blade, to cut through the branches that were in the way. He kept running, deciding that he'd think about things after finding the one who had let out the scream.

If they were being attacked by Orbie's murderer, he would have to make heavy use of magic, so he wasn't using Flight.

In fact, since he was traveling just to the nearby river, flying wouldn't have been much faster than running on all fours.

- **Name:** Saria
- **Rank**: 7
- **Race**: Living Maid Armor
- **Level**: 49
- **Passive skills**:
    - Special Five Senses
    - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Water Element Resistance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Self-Enhancement: Subordinate: Level 4 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Housework: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Halberd Technique: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Coordination: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Archery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Long-distance Control: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Armor Technique: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)

- **Name**: Rita
- **Rank**: 7
- **Race**: Living Maid Armor
- **Level**: 51
- **Passive skills**:
    - Special Five Senses
    - Strengthened Physical Ability: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Fire Element Resistance: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Physical Attack Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Self-Enhancement: Subordinate: Level 4 (NEW!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Housework: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Naginata Technique: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Coordination: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Archery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Throwing: Level 7 (NEW!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)

- Long-distance Control: Level 7 (NEW!)
- Armor Technique: Level 7 (NEW!)

Monster explanation:

【Living Maid Armor】

Saria and Rita have become these monsters after Vandalieu added Dark Copper armor to them in the shape of frills and laces.

It can be assumed that the likely conditions for becoming Living Maid Armors are things such as possessing the Housework skill, being someone's maid and being suits of armor that appear maid-like.

As there are no Rank 6 Living Armor-type Undead with the Housework skill that are aware that they are maids other than Saria and Rita, they are the first monsters of their kind to appear in Lambda.

Thus, there is a high chance that adventurers seeing them would mistake them for strangely-shaped Living Armors or Living Magic Armors.

It is not only combat abilities that receive bonuses; the Housework skill receives bonuses as well, so they have the potential to develop into exceptional maids.

Chapter 106
Regarding the difficulty of communication between races

Leaving Pauvina and Princess Levia behind, Vandalieu rushed towards the person who had produced the scream that had reached his ears. What he found was a beautiful woman with hair of a bright green-blonde color that wouldn't be seen on Earth, seemingly drowning in the river.

"Kyah, kyah, kyaaah~♪"

Still screaming (?), she was flailing at the water's surface with both her arms. There was no dangerous monster or suspicious silhouette that could be a murderer anywhere nearby.

She was just drowning… perhaps?

"Hmm?"

Vandalieu stared at this beautiful woman with his face sticking out of the thicket on the riverbank, even forgetting to put his stretched-out tongue away.

The reason for this was that the sight before him was a very strange one.

Normally, someone with pride in their swimming abilities might leap into the river right away to save the drowning woman.

However, no matter how Vandalieu looked at the situation, the beautiful woman was not drowning.

First of all, the woman was unmistakably a Scylla.

The lower half of the woman's body couldn't be seen as it was hidden by the water. But it was almost winter, and despite that, this woman was in a river near a Scylla village, inside Scylla territory, half-naked with nothing but a cloth wrapped around her chest. Given the circumstantial evidence, this conclusion could be drawn.

They were a race of people with octopus tentacles for the lower halves of their bodies, and though they weren't as well-adapted to being underwater as Mer-people, they were fine with being underwater for about half a day.

Of course, it was possible that there were some Scylla who were not good at swimming. It was likely even possible that they could drown if water levels increased or they were in bad shape.

But this river's water was flowing gently. Even now, there were leaves floating slowly past the woman.

"And most importantly, there's not the slightest reaction from my Danger Sense: Death," Vandalieu murmured.

This meant that the woman was harmless to Vandalieu, and she herself was at absolutely no risk of dying.

"And now that I listen to her screaming carefully, it's not screaming."

For some reason, it had the intonations of a song.

But then this raised the question of why she was pretending to drown in a place like this.

In fantasy works on Earth, Scylla were depicted as monsters who pretended to drown and then attacked the ones who came to help them. Was this the case here?

But if this was the case, there was a conspicuous lack of killing intent.

"So, so, are you going to go to her?" asked Orbia. "Or are you going to ignore her?"

Vandalieu had wanted to ask Orbia about the woman, who was likely acquainted with Orbia, but for some reason, Orbia was looking at Vandalieu with an excited sparkling in her eyes, seemingly intending to watch what he would do next.

"Hmm, I suppose I'll try calling out to her," said Vandalieu.

It didn't seem that the woman needed to be saved, but it was still possible that a dangerous murderer was in these areas. It was probably best to at least speak to her.

Vandalieu thought that it would be a pain if he were to use Flight to approach her just because he didn't want to get wet, only to have her detect the use of magic and mistake him for an enemy. So he decided to manipulate threads extended from his fingers with Thread-reeling to move towards her as a bridge.

It would look strange to see him using invisible threads as a bridge, but from the front, it would likely appear as if he was if he was walking on the water's surface.

"Kyah~♪ Kyaaaah~♪"

"Hello, excuse me," said Vandalieu, calling out to her. "Could I speak to you for a moment?"

"Kyah… Huh?" The beautiful woman froze and stared at him blankly. It did indeed seem that she hadn't been drowning. "W-why is there a child in a place like this, walking on the river? M-more importantly, you just came closer to me?!"

The woman's expression and the color of her face changed hectically. She became flustered as the former went from surprise to bewilderment, while the latter became gradually more red.

She seemed greatly disturbed; her octopus-like tentacles were squirming about around her as well.

Her expression changes so easily; I'm jealous. So, she was a Scylla after all. And it seems that there are bokukkos in other worlds, too.* With these thoughts running through his mind, Vandalieu watched the woman for a while.

TLN: A ボクっ娘/bokukko is a girl who uses the pronoun 僕/boku to refer to herself, when it is a pronoun that is usually used by males. This Scylla did indeed refer to herself with this pronoun in her previous dialogue line.*

"Are you alright?" Vandalieu called out to her after realizing that she wasn't showing any signs of regaining her composure. "Please calm down, I don't have any intention of harming you."

The woman bent backwards, holding her head in her hands. "You're even calling out to me?!"

Tentacles wrapped around Vandalieu's torso before he could ask, "What did you want

me to do?”

“Come here for a second!” the woman said.

And then Vandalieu was taken to the side of the river.

“Uwaaaah… What should I do, seriously, what should I do~? I was only practicing the courting rituaaal.”

According to the beautiful Scylla woman who was now clutching her head in her hands in worry, what she had been performing in the river was practice for the traditional courting ritual that was handed down among the Scylla race from generation to generation.

A Scylla who wished to get married would swim, sing and dance to make the request of, “Someone, please marry me.”

If a man wanted to marry that Scylla, they would enter the water, approach the Scylla and call out to her or embrace her.

Once the above procedure was followed, the proposal was established.

“Wow…” Vandalieu was surprised to learn that what was considered a way of trapping prey on Earth was actually a courting ritual.

Maybe Vida and others told the founder of the Scylla the stories that they heard from Zakkart and the other champions, and the stories changed over time?

The goddess Vida had given birth to many new races, including the Scylla, but she hadn’t designed their exterior appearance and inner features beforehand.

She had simply tried to give birth to strong races in order to restore the world that had been ruined by the war with the Demon King. She likely had some idea about what she was creating, but it was unlikely that she had simply decided to create black-skinned Elves and women with octopus tentacles for the lower halves of their bodies.

Thus, Vida had likely named the founders of the newly-born races based on creatures that appeared in the myths, legends and fantasy works that she had likely once heard

from the champions.

Thus, the Scylla race had been named as such, and the stories told to their founders had changed into this strange courting ritual.

“We don’t really do it that often now, though, this ritual,” said Orbia, adding more details to the beautiful woman’s explanation. “In the distant past, there were numerous men who mistakenly thought that the Scylla were really drowning, and apparently there were arguments afterwards. Now, it’s only really done by couples who have already become close, and people like this girl who do it as part of a festival’s ceremony. I didn’t perform this ritual with that man.”

In Japanese terms, this ceremony was apparently equivalent to giving each other poems before getting to know each other.

“I wish you’d told me beforehand,” Vandalieu muttered. If he’d known, he would have called out to the woman from afar without approaching.

“I thought that Vida’s Holy Son would know without being told!” said Orbia.

“I didn’t notice you!” the beautiful woman protested, being unable to see Orbia’s spirit and thinking that Vandalieu’s words had been directed at her. But then she dropped her shoulders and let out a heavy sigh. “But I suppose what’s already been done can’t be helped. It’s my fault for practicing on my own because I was embarrassed, anyway. I’m Privel, a Scylla from the nearby village,” she said, finally introducing herself. “And you?”

“My name is Vandalieu.”

“Privel is the chief’s twelfth daughter,” said Orbia. “You did it! Connections get!”

Vandalieu suppressed the urge to ask her where her tragic mood from before went.

“Vandalieu, huh,” said Privel. “Well then, Van-kun, where are your mom and dad? I need to explain the courting ritual to them…”

“Eh? Isn’t it invalidated by the fact that it was an accident?” Vandalieu asked.

“It’s not; I’m a shrine maiden,” said Privel. “Well, we don’t have to go as far as to get married, but I want you to help with the festival.”

Vandalieu thought it would have been fine to pretend as if it had never happened, since there hadn't been any witnesses, but Privel's position apparently made that impossible.

"The shrine maiden has the role of offering the courting ritual to the gods during the winter birth festival," Privel explained. "The shrine maiden is supposed to choose just one person to perform the courting ritual to, but… it's a rule that she mustn't choose more people." She sighed. She hadn't expected a child to be passing by in a place like that. "I…. it was decided that I would become a shrine maiden on short notice because of certain circumstances, and I might be able to do something about it, but… You're a boy, aren't you? You have quite the rugged-sounding name, too."

"I am a boy," said Vandalieu.

"Then we can't," said Privel. "I want to explain things to your parents and have you cooperate with the festival. If I can't, I'll have to explain the situation to my mother, apologize to the goddess and the other gods, and then have someone else take my position as shrine maiden."

It was apparently a religious problem. Vida's religion apparently had few ceremonial procedures to begin with, but perhaps this one had been created to increase the sense of unity with the village.

"Wait. Was there really a white-haired child like you in one of the other villages? Where did you come from?" Privel asked as she examined Vandalieu closely, having suddenly realized that she had never seen him before.

"Privel became the shrine maiden in my place," said Orbia. "She was a candidate, just like me, after all."

The reason Privel had become the shrine maiden on such short notice was because Orbia, who had been named as the shrine maiden, had been killed.

"I understand," said Vandalieu. "I'll help you."

Vandalieu had never been involved in religious things on Earth, but in this world, he was Vida's Holy Son. He was a religious figure, through and through.

Since this was the case, it was probably best to cooperate with Privel and the Scylla, who also worshipped Vida. It seemed that this would make Orbia happy as well.

And he also wanted to do his best to spread the seeds of goodwill among the Scylla race.

“Eh, are you sure? Thank you! But I have to explain things to your parents first,” said Privel.

“It’s fine,” said Vandalieu. “I have an understanding mother.”

He had left the bone fragment that Darcia inhabited back at the camp, just in case. Rita and the others were protecting it now. Darcia wasn’t here right now, but it was probably fine.

Suddenly, Vandalieu heard Pauvina’s voice.

“Van~.”

“Hmm?” Privel looked in the direction that this young voice had come from, and then froze. “She’s… a friend, isn’t she?”

A little girl with blonde hair that looked as if it was made of pure gold, eight years old in appearance. However, she was nearly two and a half meters tall. And as a precaution, she was holding a steel mace that looked as if it could kill a bear.

“You found a Scylla-san? That’s amazing, Van!” Pauvina waded across the river with an innocent smile on her face.

It seemed that Princess Levia had hidden herself.

“This is Pauvina, who is something like my little sister,” said Vandalieu.

“I-I see, quite the large little sister, isn’t she? Is she a half-Beast-person Titan?” Privel guessed, noticing the triangular ears protruding from Pauvina’s blonde hair.

But she didn’t realize that Pauvina was a half-Noble Orc… though this was to be expected, as Pauvina was probably the only member of her race to exist in history.

“Hey, I’m Privel,” Privel continued, introducing herself. “Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you,” said Pauvina. “Van, did you tell her about Orbia-oneesan?”

“Orbia-oneesan?” Privel repeated. “How do you know that name? Ten days ago, Orbia-san…”

Pauvina had let Orbia’s name slip.

But Orbia herself said, “I’ll take it from here, so cast your spell on me.”

It might indeed be better for her to explain things than me, since I’m not good at talking. And since they knew each other while she was alive, it’s probably fine, Vandalieu thought as he cast Visualization.

“Privel, I’m sorry that my death caused a lot of trouble for you,” said Orbia.

As she appeared out of thin air, Privel’s eyes opened wide. With tears welling up in her eyes –

“O-Orbia-saaan!”

Overcome with emotion, she tried to throw herself into Orbia’s chest.

“Hey?!”

Orbia was merely in a state of being visible to normal people, thanks to the Visualization spell.

She didn’t have any physical form.

As a result, Privel went straight through Orbia and tackled Vandalieu into the river.

…*Lucky sukebes* aren’t very lucky after all,* Vandalieu thought earnestly as he fell into the river with Privel crushing him.

TLN: As explained in chapter 104, a lucky sukebe is a situation that unexpectedly turns lewd due to chance.*

Privel was certainly not large; if anything, she had a small build. But this only applied for the upper half of her body.

There were eight thick tentacles on the lower half of her body, each of them over three meters long from their roots to their tips… her body weight was over a hundred

kilograms.

Men and women of the resistance were running, gasping and wheezing pathetically.

“Damn it, I can’t do this resistance thing any longer!”

“You suggested it, didn’t you, Haj-Aniki! You said that we’d be able to eat meals if we called ourselves the resistance!”

“Shut up! You guys didn’t oppose it either!”

To be more precise, the men and women who had pretended to be a part of the resistance were running.

They were not young people with the noble intention of fighting the invaders for the sake of their homeland, but young people who had simply never found proper work and never eaten well.

Even if they wanted to be adventurers, they didn’t have the confidence or the courage, nor did they have the perseverance to patiently train themselves to reach D-class, the class of adventurers that were capable of feeding themselves.

But that didn’t mean that they were so desperate that they would stain their hands with outrageous criminal activities.

And then they had heard that villages and towns would assist them with food if they called themselves members of the resistance.

They jumped at this opportunity. They wouldn’t actually do anything reckless like fighting the armies of the Amid Empire and Mirg shield-nation that were occupying the lands. They would simply quietly go around to a number of villages and towns, tell resistance supporters that they were members of the resistance and have them provide a little assistance.

They weren’t actually participating in any resistance movements so the enemy’s army wouldn’t take notice of them, and they were not stealing from the villagers by force, so the Adventurers’ Guild wouldn’t send out an extermination request for them.

Their earnings were small, but it was an easy occupation, with the only danger they had to be careful to avoid being encountering the real members of the resistance.

That was what they had thought until just an hour earlier.

They had been too naïve in their way of thinking. They had been found by a force dispatched to exterminate the resistance, led by some nobleman of the army occupying the area.

This extermination force hadn't done any investigation beforehand into things such as what the resistance had done and how much damage had actually been caused to the army.

They would simply need to hunt down those who called themselves members of the resistance, and investigate these things afterwards.

It would be different for the well-known groups such as the Reborn Sauron Duchy army, led by the illegitimate child of the late Duke Sauron and his younger brother, or the Sauron Liberation Front, led by the 'Liberating Princess Knight.' But it seemed that they had no intention of spending much time on the numerous nameless resistance organizations.

"Damn it, they got Ben and Bicks! Tarmie as well… it's all your fault!"

"My fault?! Meecher, you were happy as well with the fact that you wouldn't have to become a prostitute selling her body for dirt cheap!"

"Shut up, we have to run now! As far as we can!"

The extermination force had ambushed the fake resistance and taken down about a third of them with archers. They had fled without being able to fight back or help their companions, leading to the current situation.

There were no signs of the extermination force chasing behind them, but their fears that their pursuers would suddenly appear at any moment would not stop, so they couldn't stop running.

However, they soon reached their limits. Their hearts felt as if they would snap, their breathing was wild and their legs were hot with pain. As soon as one of them stopped, unable to bear it any longer, it became a cue for the others to all stop as well and sat

down on the ground.

For a while, the mountain was filled only with the sound of their breathing. Despite winter being close, the sun was warm, but they were not in a state to be calmed by its rays.

“W-where are we supposed to run?”

The man known as Haj-Aniki, who had been completely focused on running, wore a gloomy expression in response to this question from one of his companions.

“Damn it! If only we didn’t pretend to be the resistance, this would never have –”

“Resistance?” said an unfamiliar voice.

Startled, Haj raised his face to see a beautiful, half-naked woman with the upper half of her body protruding from the thicket, looking down at everyone.

Is that a Scylla?!

Seeing that the beautiful woman’s hair and eyes were green, Haj realized that she was a Scylla.

He knew that many Scylla had green hair and eyes. And the only women who would walk around a forest half-naked at this time of year where winter was close were Scylla.

Come to think of it, we were close to Scylla territory. I suppose we entered it without realizing. Which means…

“Yeah, that’s right! We’re part of the resistance! We’re being chased, please help us!” he shouted.

“That’s right, help us!”

“Please, just for a little while, even just one night!”

Haj and his companions pretended to be members in the resistance once more in an attempt to grab hold of this hopeful spider’s thread* that had appeared before them. They were planning to flee to the Scylla’s village in order to hide from the

extermination force that could be chasing them.

TLN: This is a reference to a Japanese short story called "The Spider's Thread." There's a Wikipedia article on the story, so you can look it up if you're curious. A similar reference was made in chapter 22, actually. If you can't be bothered to look it up, "spider's thread" is roughly equivalent to "lifeline" in this context.*

The Scylla women stared at Haj and his companions with a vacant expression for a while before answering with a lethargic tone.

"Resis… tance… will help."

The faces of Haj and his companions shone with hope at this response.

"Ah, thank you," said Haj. "We owe you our lives, Goddess-sa… ma…?"

Right before his eyes, the branches of the thicket began to snap and break. The top half of the beautiful Scylla woman's body drew closer.

But the lower half of its body was not made of the tentacles of an octopus, but the body of a serpent, thicker than a log.

"A-a Lamia? No, it's not a Lamia or a Scylla?!"

For a moment, Haj had thought that she was a member of one of Vida's races that possessed the lower bodies of serpents, but immediately realized that he had made an unthinkable misunderstanding.

The beautiful woman's lower half was connected to the body of an even thicker snake. And this woman's lower half wasn't the only one attached to the root of this snake.

A Dark Elf with pointed ears, a Mer-person with gills in her sides, a Harpy with wings for arms, an Arachne with compound eyes on her forehead, a small Dwarf, a Drakonid with wings growing from her back, a purple-skinned Majin and a Centaur with a long mane – the upper half of these women, who were so beautiful that they would be praised if they were judged on their appearance alone, were attached to the necks of snakes.

"A-a-a mutant Hydraaaa?!"

To be more precise, it was a Hydra Zombie created by replacing all of its severed heads with the upper halves of nine beautiful women of different races, but this was of little importance to Haj and his companions.

“Resistance~♪”

The important thing for them was that the creature before them was unmistakably a monster.

“R-run!”

Three of the beautiful women were singing while the other six closed in on Haj and his companions. They screamed and tried to flee as fast as their legs would allow, but they had pushed their stamina to their utmost limits just moments earlier. Most of them were struggling to walk, let alone run.

And then there was an ear-splitting scream, the sound of someone dying.

Haj and his companions stopped in surprise and looked up… to see a sensual-looking woman with abnormally large arms and legs, membranous wings extending from her back and a snake-like tail with a stinger attached to the end stretching from her waist, flying above them.

There was an unfamiliar man wearing dark green clothes, white smoke rising from his body with a hissing sound as he dangled from one of the woman’s hands.

Letting out a terrified noise, Haj sank to the ground with tears running down his face. “M-Mommy…”

Some of the other fake members of the resistance fell to their knees as well, while the others had fallen onto their backs with their limbs still flailing in an attempt to scramble away.

“Resis… da…?”

“Resistance~♪”

“Will… help?”

“Shelter, chased, being chased, shelter.”

Yamata and Rapiéçage conversed in faltering words that were impossible for Haj and his companions to make any sense of as they began capturing them.

“HYAAAAAAH!”

“HELP MEEEE!”

“I don’t want to die, I don’t wait to die. Please, don’t kill me…”

“Will help.”

“Shelter, shelt? Shell. Ter… ter…”

The two of them, who had come out to guard the surrounding area, captured Haj and his companions who were crying, screaming and begging for their lives. And then they returned to the camp.

- **Name**: Yamata
- **Rank**: 6
- **Race**: Patchwork Hydra Zombie
- **Level**: 0
- **Passive skills**:
    - Dark Vision
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 3
    - Deadly Venom Secretion (Fangs): Level 6
    - Magic Resistance: Level 1
    - Underwater Adaptation
    - Dragon Scales: Level 1
    - Rapid Regeneration: Level 7
    - Body Extension (Neck): Level 3
- **Active skills**:
    - Singing: Level 3
    - Dancing: Level 3
    - Parallel Thought Processing: Level 4
    - Scream: Level 3

Monster explanation:

【Patchwork Hydra Zombie】

A work of art (Zombie) created by Ternecia by severing the heads of the corpse of a nine-headed mutant Hydra and attaching the upper halves of the bodies of beautiful women of different races.

Its modeling is spectacular; it is an embodiment of grotesque beauty.

However, its ability in combat is drastically inferior to a regular Hydra. The venomous fangs that are supposed to be its weapons are absent, and most of the upper bodies that have replaced the heads are lacking in defense.

It is Rank 6, but it only possesses the strength of a Rank 4 monster.

However, this is unlikely to have caused any problems, as Ternecia originally created

it as a moving form of interior decoration.

Naturally, as it is an artificially-created creature, it is a type of Undead that has not been discovered in Lambda. As long as there are no others with the same terrible tastes as Ternecia, there will be no two identical specimens.

As a result of the numerous remodeling procedures that Vandalieu carried out after retrieving it from Ternecia's hideout, it has become able to use its numerous mouths to produce words, use its canine teeth as venomous fangs and hold objects with its arms.

In other words, it was not able to do these things before undergoing surgery.

Chapter 107
Lucky sukebes are suckers

Yamata was an Undead that had been created from a top-class specimen as far as nine-headed Hydras went.

As this fact may suggest, her main body was that of a Hydra, while the upper halves of beautiful women's bodies that were attached to her necks were nothing more than decorations.

Each of those bodies could speak words, had their own senses and possessed individual thinking capabilities. They could even sing and twist their bodies to dance. But the main body that their necks were attached to was a Hydra.

Hydras were those kinds of monsters to begin with. Each of a Hydra's numerous heads contained brains, but they were merely sub-brains for controlling each head and neck. There was only one main brain at the root of the necks, controlling its thoughts and the movement of the main body.

That fact didn't change even if a Hydra were to become an Undead.

But because each of Yamata's heads could perform separate tasks with Parallel Thought Processing, Yamata had been chosen as Vandalieu's secretary. Since he used Out-of-body Experience and Spirit Form Transformation to multiply and perform more deskwork, this was probably more efficient than to use nine separate secretaries.

However, contrary to the appearances of each of the bodies attached to Yamata's necks, she wasn't that intelligent. She was a Hydra, after all.

Hydras were the second-most inferior race of Dragons after Wyverns; even after fully developing, they were not particularly intelligent. They hadn't been examined in detail, but it was thought that their intelligence was around that of wolves.

But as a result of Vandalieu's 'surgery,' the leveling she had done in her spare time and her daily training (animal training?), she had become able to understand words about as well as a young child.

“Please help the resistance.”

Having been given this order by Vandalieu, Yamata had wondered what the resistance was as she patrolled the area around the camp.

Was it the name of a monster? A flower? A bird? Since she had been told to help it, she didn’t think that it meant a stone or dirt.

Yamata understood that she needed to help the resistance if she found them, but she didn’t understand what the resistance was.

Vandalieu had been careless. Because Yamata had the upper bodies of people, he had assumed that she had the intelligence of a person.

And then Yamata found over a dozen people that she had never seen before. And these people called themselves the resistance. They said, “Help us,” and, “Shelter us.”

And so she brought them back in order to “help” and “shelter” them.

And Rapiéçage had been patrolling near Yamata, found a suspicious person who seemed to be chasing after the resistance and killed him with her Electrocution skill. After that, she brought the people of the resistance back along with Yamata. They let the spirit of the suspicious person deliver this news to Vandalieu.

“Resistance.”

“Shel… ter.”

“I see. I have a good idea of what happened now,” said Bellmond.

Each of Yamata’s upper bodies had brought one or two people, holding their arms behind their backs, while Rapiéçage had returned with the corpse of a mysterious man who had been electrocuted to death. With difficulty, they had given Bellmond an explanation that gave her a rough understanding of the situation.

There were over a dozen members of the ‘resistance’ that Yamata and Rapiéçage had brought… captured and dragged here. Their faces were sticky with tears and mucus, and there were even several with wet stains around their crotches. And it seemed that none of them had been able to contain their fear; they had all had lost consciousness with their eyes rolled back in their heads.

“I’m sure they were all terribly frightened,” Saria said earnestly; she actually felt sympathy for these fake resistance members.

What they had truly been scared of was Yamata and Rapiéçage, but Yamata and Rapiéçage weren’t aware of this.

It was likely that they had interpreted, “Don’t kill me,” and, “I don’t want to die,” as desperately wanting to be helped.

That was likely why they had obeyed Vandalieu’s orders and brought them here to help them.

“Jyuuh, they lost consciousness the moment they arrived here,” said Bone Man, pitying the resistance members. “I suppose their tension reached a limit.”

“Though this is but speculation, I suspect that seeing you was the final nail in the coffin, Bone Man,” said Sam. His words were completely true.

They had been captured by monsters and brought to a mysterious structure. And then they had been welcomed by a Skeleton.

Haj and his companions couldn’t be blamed for losing consciousness.

“We should have been the ones to greet them, saying, ‘Welcome～♪’” said Rita.

“Well, it might have given them a little peace of mind,” said Saria.

At the very least, they might have been able to greet Haj and his companions without causing them to faint, so they could hear what they had to say.

“So, what are we doing with these people?” Rita asked, suddenly completely serious.

Everyone contemplated for a while before answering.

“They do seem to be members of the resistance… let us disarm them, treat their injuries and set aside a few rooms for them to rest in. Once they wake up, we should give them some food and I will listen to what they have to say,” said Bellmond.

Perhaps changing them out of their soiled clothes should come first. This will be a considerable amount of work, Bellmond thought as she swung her tail slightly from

side to side.

It was possible that if Haj and his companions had been conscious, their words and actions would have given away the fact that they were fake members of the resistance. But since they had all fainted, despite them being quite suspicious, there was no choice but to assume that they were indeed members of the resistance for now and shelter them.

There wasn't any such thing as a document certifying one's status as a member of the resistance, after all.

They seemed to lack courage for people who had supposedly devoted themselves to save their homeland from invaders, but it was likely that fighting against unidentifiable monsters took more mental preparation than fighting against other people.

And conducting guerilla warfare with the enemy army wasn't the only thing the resistance was for. It was possible that these people were members of the resistance who were specialized in information warfare, which would explain their lack of fighting strength.

They could be discarded at any moment after it became clear that they weren't a part of the resistance, but if they were already discarded and later it became clear that they were actually resistance members, it would be too late.

And the location of this base had become known.

"Either way, now that we have brought them here, we can't throw them back out, can we?" said Saria.

"Indeed," said Sam. "Saria, Rita, please leave the care of the men to me."

"Alright," said Rita.

"This kind of reminds me of when I had trouble changing Vandalieu's diapers," Darcia remarked.

"Darcia-sama, I do believe that such things are best forgotten," said Sam.

Knochen groaned. Bones began rattling as the base's open gate transformed into a

solid wall of bone.

And then Eisen and the other Immortal Ents creaked as they moved to place themselves in front of it.

And so, just as Haj and his companions had desired, they were saved and sheltered in an impregnable fortress.

Vandalieu received news of Yamata and Rapiéçage's capturing of Haj and his companions just as he was drying his soaked clothes with Princess Levia's flames after having been tackled into the river by Privel.

The marks left by the suckers of Privel's tentacles stung a little.

Having heard an explanation of the circumstances from Orbia's spirit, Privel had assumed that Vandalieu had acquired a special Spiritualist Job that allowed him to tame Undead.

Princess Levia had shown herself to Privel and given her the explanation that had caused this misunderstanding.

And while Privel and Orbia were talking, Vandalieu had the spirit of the man electrocuted to death by Rapiéçage give an explanation of things as well.

This scout had been a part of the Amid Empire's resistance extermination force that was stationed in a fort on the border of Scylla territory. They had deliberately let the resistance (Haj and his companions) escape and then given chase to try and discover the location of their base.

"B-behind me, there should have been one more man with me. B-by now, he would have returned to the fort with the rest of the unit and reported my d-d-d-death. The extermination force is fifty… sixty? Fifty?" The expression and eyes of the scout's spirit looked as if they were melting, and it seemed that his memories had begun melting away as well.

But since Vandalieu still wanted to ask more questions, he poured Mana into the spirit in order to preserve its spirit form, and the spirit let out a strange-sounding shout of joy.

Maybe the quality of my Mana changed after I acquired the Demon Guider Job? I get the feeling that the reaction is more extreme than before… Well, as long as it hasn't become less effective, it's fine.

Stepping back a little from the spirit's shout, Vandalieu continued his questioning and learned of the extermination's chain of command, numbers and the size of the garrison at the fort.

As a result, he became certain that this extermination force was incapable of piercing through Knochen's defenses. In fact, with Bellmond, Rita, Saria and Bone Man there, they would be repelled with ease.

As for the fort that they were stationed at, Vandalieu would likely be able to reduce it to a mountain of rubble in a few minutes with a little barrage with Dead Spirit Magic and his Telekinesis cannon.

"But if we did that and a larger extermination force was dispatched after we returned to Talosheim, it would be really bad for the people of the Resistance and Privel-san's people, wouldn't it?" said Princess Levia.

"You're right," said Vandalieu.

If it was a pack of wild monsters, exterminating them would be the end of it, but this was not true when facing an entire nation of people.

It was unlikely that a large army would be dispatched right away, but it was almost certain that an investigation team of elite individuals would be sent out. That team might contain A-class adventurers and others just as powerful as them.

By then, Vandalieu and his companions would likely no longer be here, but it would pain him to cause trouble for the resistance that was fighting to free the Sauron Duchy.

It would simply be too irresponsible.

"But it is difficult for us to stay here and continue fighting, too," said Princess Levia.

"You're right," said Vandalieu. "Making a move here might cause trouble for the resistance in its own way."

Despite how irresponsible it was to leave things as they were, it was also hard to

choose to ally themselves with the resistance and continue fighting with them. The fact was, most of Vandalieu's allies were Undead. Believers of Vida were tolerant towards Undead, but that tolerance was merely dealing with self-conscious Undead by encouraging them to pass on to their next lives rather than exterminating them with no questions asked.

It wasn't the kind of tolerance that treated Undead as creatures to be befriended unconditionally. In fact, the Undead that appeared in the wild were just as dangerous to people as other monsters.

The resistance would be fighting alongside these dangerous Undead. If the Amid Empire discovered this, wouldn't they spread an extraordinarily persuasive propaganda that the resistance had sold their souls to an evil god?

And if Vandalieu were to draw too much attention and caused too much noise as the 'second coming of the Demon King' or whatever else, it was possible that S-class adventurers such as the Thunderclap Schneider or the Blue-flamed Sword Heinz would join forces, overcoming the boundaries of nations for the sake of saving the world.

If Heinz was on his own, Vandalieu might have a chance for vengeance, but if his party members were included and even another S-class adventurer were to enter the picture, Vandalieu would be in trouble.

…Vandalieu was still unaware that Schneider was actually a believer of Vida and a potential ally.

With that said, there were too many moral problems with throwing out or concealing the existence of the resistance members that Yamata and Rapiéçage had saved. So then, the most realistic option was…

"Once the extermination force comes, we'll take a few of them alive and use my brainwashing to alter their memories and have them believe that they were attacked by Undead. I'll use the ones that we kill to create the Undead. If we send a few dozen of Knochen's skeletons towards the fort after releasing the brainwashed survivors, I suppose the enemy army will think that it was the doing of wild Undead?"

There was also the option of capturing *all* of them alive and using the Mental Encroachment skill to brainwash them, and Vandalieu needed to go to the Scylla village.

This would be the appropriate method to use if the extermination force were to reach the camp while he was doing that.

“Well, it will be alright, won’t it?” said Princess Levia. “Normally, nobody would try to analyze the actions of Skeletons and Zombies anyway.”

Hearing her reassure him, Vandalieu wrote on a piece of paper that he had received the message, and wrote his own reply on it as well before surreptitiously giving it to an Undead insect to carry.

“Now then, let’s get going,” said Privel, having finished talking to Orbia. Now, she would lead Vandalieu to the Scylla village and have him meet her mother, who was the chief. “Huh? A rhinoceros beetle at this time of year?” She blinked as she saw the Undead insect flying away.

“Haven’t you mistaken it for another kind of insect?” Vandalieu suggested.

It was probably best to not forget the seasons when choosing Undead insects to deliver messages from now on.

The Scylla village was a gathering of huts built at a marsh at the foot of the mountain.

There were sturdy huts built along the marsh’s bank, designed for the Scylla whose lower bodies and tentacles weigh more than one would expect from their appearance, and there were also boathouse-like buildings floating on the marsh where the humans and Beast-people of the village apparently lived.

To the distrustful eye, it might have seemed that the Scylla were keeping the men in captivity, but the truth was that they were protecting the men.

“There aren’t any Devil’s Nests here, so the deep parts of the marshes are safe,” said Privel. “When they want to leave, they can row boats, have us carry them or even swim themselves.”

That was how it was, apparently.

Incidentally, Vandalieu had wondered whether there were any crocodiles and such since it was a swamp, but the reply was, “There are, and they’re delicious.” They were

apparently the main prey for Scylla hunters.

The Scylla also fished and used large, capybara-like rodents about the size of calves and ducks as livestock to get by, worshipping their main goddess Vida as well as Merrebeveil, the heroic goddess of the Scylla.

“I want ducks,” said Vandalieu.

“Those big rat-like things look tasty as well, Van,” said Pauvina.

“I’d like a share of those as well.”

“But I’m sure they’d become monsters if we raised them in Talosheim, wouldn’t they?”

“I wonder if the quality of their meat would change.”

While the two of them admired the way the enormous capybaras and ducks were being cultivated, Privel was standing nearby, being scolded by Scylla guards who were equipped with spears and armor made of shells.

“Sneaking out without permission! I understand that you want to practice, but it’s dangerous right now!”

“At least ask us to escort you!”

“I-I’m sorry. But listen, we might be able to find out who killed Orbia-san and the others!” said Privel.

The guard onee-sans had noticed Pauvina and Vandalieu, whom Privel had brought back with her. Princess Levia was keeping herself hidden so as not to cause panic, but they seemed to have thought that the enormous, two-meter-tall girl was an important person.

They gave a hesitant glance towards Pauvina, but Privel corrected them.

“No, the smaller one,” she said.

“The smaller one? Eh, it’s alive?!”

“I was sure that it was a doll…”

How horrible. It's true that Pauvina is holding me up with both hands, but I'm actually talking, Vandalieu thought.

"Hello, my name is Vandalieu," he said, introducing himself.

"I'm Pauvina, his little sister!" said Pauvina.

"L-little sister, huh?"

The guards seemed surprised, but fortunately, they didn't seem to be repulsed.

In Scylla villages, children of all kinds of mixed blood were born. Though there weren't any in this village right now, in the past, there had apparently been Scylla with the small upper bodies of Dwarves, the large ones of Titans and even some with beast ears on their heads.

The non-Scylla people in the village were those such as half-Elves who had been unable to fit into society as well, so such Scylla were not subject to discrimination.

Also, for some reason, it seemed that Scylla were affected by Vandalieu's Demon Path Enticement. It was possible that the fact that they used tentacles to crawl placed them under the 'Insect User' category… perhaps they could be equipped?

But in any case, Pauvina stood out, so she couldn't exactly be ignored.

And so Privel introduced Vandalieu as a special Spiritualist who would help resolve the incident with Orbia and took him to the chief.

At first, the chief seemed skeptical of Vandalieu despite her daughter's introduction, but once Vandalieu showed her Orbia's spirit with Visualization, that changed completely.

"O-Orbia, you… you… uwa~ah!"

"Uwah! Even you're doing this, chief?!"

Overcome with emotion, the chief tried to embrace Orbia's spirit. Having had a good idea that this was going to happen, Vandalieu had escaped immediately.

The chief crashed through the wall of the hut and dived into the swamp.

“M-Mother!” Privel shouted.

“What happened?!” the Scylla guards asked as they rushed over.

“It seems that Scylla people like embracing each other?” said Pauvina.

“It might be that they are easily overcome with emotion,” said Vandalieu.

“Come to think of it, I do like hugs,” said Orbia. “I hug all my family and friends to greet them.”

Immediately after this conversation, the Scylla guards were overcome with emotion at the sight of Orbia and tried to embrace her as well. They passed straight through her and followed after the chief, taking Vandalieu with them.

“Van, you can’t let your guard down,” said Pauvina.

Vandalieu was full of openings against attacks with no killing intent that posed no danger to his life.

For the second time today, he experienced being smothered by beautiful women’s lower bodies (tentacles).

“Ahem. I have embarrassed myself,” said the Scylla chief.

“We’re very sorry,” said the two Scylla guards in apology.

“Oh no, please don’t worry about it,” said Vandalieu, whose forehead and cheeks were covered in sucker marks.

After this apology had taken place, the two Scylla guards went to stand guard and make sure that nobody else entered the chief’s house.

“If you get any more wet, you’ll catch a cold, Van,” said Pauvina.

“There is a limit to me drying him, too,” said Princess Levia.

“And the conversation wouldn’t go anywhere, either,” Pauvina added.

And so, a gag order had been placed on the existence of Orbia's spirit.

"Still, to think that a Spiritualist would allow us to meet Orbia again. I was still half-in-doubt when Privel told me this," said Periveil, Privel's mother.

Periveil was a woman who looked to be in her mid-twenties. If one took Privel and turned her into an adult, expanded her chest threefold, increased the size of her tentacles and made her body's surface glossier, she might resemble Periveil.

Scylla apparently stopped aging in appearance completely past a certain point, so Periveil and Privel might have appeared to be sisters at first glance, but it seemed that having twelve children had granted Periveil a calm air about her.

Considering her actions just moments earlier, this calm air wasn't entirely perfect, however.

"When I heard that Privel had brought a half-Beast-person Titan girl and a white child with her, the day after we heard a Hurricane Dragon's roar, I did suspect something," said Periveil.

"What do you mean?" Vandalieu asked.

"I kept it quiet from everyone, but I received a Divine Message from Merrebeveil, you see."

While being this village's chief, Periveil was also a priestess who had received the divine blessing of Merrebeveil, the heroic goddess of the Scylla.

She had previously received a Divine Message from Merrebeveil: "Welcome the white half-Vampire."

"So you expected that this was me?" Vandalieu asked.

"That's right," said Periveil. "This is my first time seeing a Dhampir, but you're completely white, aren't you?"

This was apparently one of the reasons that Periveil had welcomed Vandalieu and Pauvina into the village.

It seemed that she had some idea as to where Vandalieu had come from. Since he had

appeared on the day after the Scylla had heard a Hurricane Dragon's roar, she suspected that he had come from across the mountain range.

After all, the heroic goddess had gone out of her way to deliver a Divine Message about him, so it was unlikely that he was an ordinary person.

"So, Orbia, what were you doing alone in a place like that? You don't remember anything?" asked Periveil.

"Umm, I can't tell you why I was there," Orbia replied. "And I don't remember anything about how I was killed."

"You can't tell me? Ah, a clandestine meeting," said Periveil, seemingly having guessed Orbia's circumstances. It was possible that such circumstances were not rare for Scylla. "But you can't remember, huh? Well, it's unfortunate that there are no clues, but maybe it's better that way."

"…I was killed in quite a horrible way, wasn't I," said Orbia. "More importantly, chief, was there anyone who was killed with me? And wasn't there a ring on my finger?"

"No, there weren't any others where we found your remains," said Periveil. "And you weren't wearing a ring, either."

"I see…"

It seemed that the corpse of Orbia's lover hadn't been discovered, but nothing had been confirmed, so she couldn't feel relieved. He might have been taken somewhere before being killed.

"Judging from what you're saying, it seems that your good person isn't someone who is known in the village, is he? Do you know anything about this, boy?" Periveil asked Vandalieu.

"At the very least, there weren't any spirits other than Orbia's at the marsh we found her," Vandalieu replied.

This much was certain, because if there had been any spirits nearby, they would have been drawn to Vandalieu by his Demon Path Enticement skill.

That was why Vandalieu thought that there was a high chance that Orbia's lover was

alive, but it was also possible that he had already returned to the circle of transmigration, so he couldn't say anything careless.

"I see, then it seems that he will likely be fine for now. That person was brave enough to have a clandestine meeting with you in a marsh with nobody around; you do have some kind of idea as to how strong he is, don't you?" said Periveil.

"Of course!" Orbia said indignantly. "That person's skill with a sword –"

"Orbia-san, are you sure about this?" asked Privel. "If you say too much, we'll be able to tell who it is."

"Oops, that was close!"

The sorrow disappeared from Orbia's expression, as if she were feeling relieved. In a similar way Periveil and Privel's expressions grew brighter as well. It seemed that they were relieved at the fact that Orbia appeared exactly as she had been when she was alive, despite having been killed in a cruel way.

They were disappointed that there were no new clues about the murders, but it was only natural for people to not want to see their friends' faces drowning in sorrow or twisting in hatred.

"Could I hear about the murder incidents?" asked Vandalieu.

"Yes, though it's a bit of a long story," said Periveil.

According to her story, incidents where Scylla from each of the villages were attacked and killed in places where they were alone had been occurring in this Scylla territory for the past half-year. They would go out to hunt and gather, end up chasing their prey too far, get separated from their companions and then vanish, only to turn up the next day in a completely different state.

All of the corpses had been left in mostly the same state, so all the tribes believed that it was the work of the same criminal.

There had already been five victims, including Orbia. With her death, one member of each tribe had been killed.

"We do have an idea of who it is," said Periveil. "We are thinking that it's the work of

Alda extremists who can't accept our peace plan with the Amid Empire."

"Peace plan?" Vandalieu repeated.

"To be more accurate, it's something like a non-aggression pact. They told us that they will guarantee our right to govern ourselves in exchange for paying slightly higher taxes than we did when this place was still known as the Sauron Duchy," Periveil explained. "Of course, our worshipping of Vida-sama and Merrebeveil will stay the same as well."

Surprisingly, the Amid Empire was apparently not trying to suppress the Scylla with military might and make them suffer under tyrannical rule. According to Periveil, though she hadn't seen this with her own eyes, the same likely applied for the entirety of what used to be the Sauron Duchy.

The people had been promised that they could keep planting rice for harvestable crops rather than being forced to switch to wheat, their taxes remained the same as what they had been paying to Duke Sauron and some regions with taxes that were too high had even had them lowered.

The people were being encouraged to convert from Vida's religion, but Periveil hadn't heard of anything suggesting that people were being held and tortured in refugee camps.

"I was sure that the Empire would declare that they wouldn't consider those who don't swear loyalty to them as inhuman and conduct a massacre" said Pauvina.

"I would have imagined that the Churches of Vida would be destroyed along with the believers who tried to protect them and those who resisted would be whipped and forced into labor to erect Churches of Alda," said Princess Levia.

"…I can see that you people hate the Amid Empire more than we do," said Periveil.

She and Privel shuddered a little.

Incidentally, Periveil had already been convinced in regards to Princess Levia. "How surprising, a Spiritualist who can tame Undead," she had said.

The reality was different but with the Divine Message and the fact that there was a special Spiritualist boy right in front of her who had brought an Undead that was

capable of such ordinary conversation, she seemed satisfied with this explanation.

And though Demon Path Enticement's effects were much milder on Scylla compared to Undead, it was still effective. They thought favorably of Vandalieu, so they believed him without question.

"Well, that's how it is," said Vandalieu.

He was satisfied with Periveil's explanation. He had imagined that it was possible that the Empire would conduct a massacre, but he had thought it was more likely that they would maintain their occupation of the land under moderate conditions and then try to turn it into a part of their own territory.

Since the people of the Empire and its vassal nations couldn't be made to move to the Sauron region in large numbers, there was no choice but to hold it under moderate conditions.

And in this world, where the existence of gods was clearly known, the heavens would restrain them if they did anything too unreasonable. Things might have been different if the inhabitants of the Sauron Duchy were all members of Vida's races just like Talosheim. But although many of the inhabitants worshipped Vida, there were humans, Dwarves and Elves as well. And though they were few in number, some worshipped Alda as well.

"But I cannot understand why they are treating everyone so reasonably," said Vandalieu.

"About that, I think there are all kinds of circumstances, but… well, maybe it just wouldn't be worth it for them to attack us," said Periveil.

"Our territory has a lot of mountains and not a lot of flat ground. There are a lot of ponds and marshes, too. It would be difficult to attack with people alone, and it would be inconvenient for them to live here," said Privel.

This Scylla territory, which was adjacent to the Boundary Mountain Range, was mostly made up of mountains and stretches of wetlands.

And Scylla were as proficient as they appeared at fighting in wetlands, in water and on water surfaces. And they moved more comfortably on dry land than their appearances would suggest. In fact, since they had eight legs, they were much more

stable on slopes than two-legged people.

And they were generally strong.

They possessed the Superhuman Strength skill from birth, so the long, flailing tentacles of the lower halves of their bodies were more than enough of a threat to ordinary soldiers.

Their bodies were large and it was as if they were constantly riding mounts; five infantrymen would be needed to hold back a Scylla with a spear.

And all Scylla had combat-related skills such as Unarmed Fighting Technique that they regularly used against the crocodiles that they hunted, so there were no non-combatants other than very young children.

To top things off, they had no real weak points. At a glance, one might think that their upper bodies, which were no different from those of people, to be a weakness, but… their thin arms were certainly affected by their Superhuman Strength and Unarmed Fighting Technique skills.

And since they had hands of the same shape as people, they could make masterful use of weapons such as bows, spears and swords.

And the frightening thing was that the tentacles of the lower halves of their bodies were capable of moving on their own to some extent. Thus, it was possible for Scylla to aim at a distant enemy with a bow and arrow using the arms of her upper body while strangling a nearby enemy to death with her tentacles.

“Wow, they wriggle in the same way, but they’re even more amazing than your tongue, Van!” said Pauvina.

“No, I think that’s amazing in its own way,” said Orbia.

Periveil blinked. “Eh, tongue?”

“Leaving that aside, please continue your explanation,” said Vandalieu.

There were a total of five thousand Scylla living in the five villages in this territory. Doing a simple calculation, twenty-five thousand infantrymen would be needed to assault this area.

Even if such large amounts of military funds and men were sacrificed, the land they would obtain would yield little in the way of agriculture as it contained many mountains and marshes, and an unimaginable amount of cultivation would need to be done in order to live in it unless the people would be content to rely on hunting and gathering alone.

There were the Scylla's terraced rice fields, but these couldn't be maintained without the appropriate knowledge.

And there weren't any Devil's Nests that could be accessed without climbing into the treacherous Boundary Mountain Range other than one in the middle of a wide marshland. There was also a single Dungeon, but the inside was entirely made of wetlands, rivers and large lakes, making it difficult to clear for those other than Scylla. Therefore, it would be difficult to make a living by harvesting the products of monsters and Dungeons.

Thus, the Empire stood to gain little from attacking this territory other than the satisfaction of the people of the Church of Alda, who were taught that it was justice to exterminate the members of Vida's races that originated from monsters.

That was why they had settled things with negotiations.

And so, Periveil seemed to think that radical believers of Alda, who could not accept this peace plan, were conducting this series of murders in order to provoke the Scylla into rejecting the peace plan of their own accord.

Several people with the skills of D-class adventurers would be enough to dispose of a Scylla who was on her own.

"But won't they try doing various things in the future, such as demanding that you pay more taxes?" asked Vandalieu.

"Well, they probably will," said Periveil. "I think they're planning all kinds of things, like breaking the bonds between the villages. Everyone knows that, but if we oppose them directly, the Empire would end up wiping us out whenever they want to. We're accepting the peace plan for now to buy time while we look for a new place to live; we're trying all kinds of things. Maybe the Orbaume Kingdom will take the Sauron Duchy back."

The Scylla had not cast aside their wariness of the Amid Empire. They acknowledged

the difference in power and were searching for a way to survive.

But Vandalieu could feel that they weren't expecting much from the Orbaume Kingdom that they had once belonged to.

Wasn't the Orbaume Kingdom the motherland of the Scylla race?

"So, you said that you'll investigate the incidents if we give you seeds and pairs of ducks and Huge Capybaras in return, but what will you do today?" Periveil asked. "The sun is setting soon, and the places where the remains of the other victims were found are quite far away."

"Well then, could you please show me Orbia-san's remains? If they are still around, that is," said Vandalieu.

"Yes, that's fine. We bury our dead in the marshes, so they should still be there. Orbia was found five days ago. But…" Periveil hesitated. "Are you going to look at them?" she asked, warning him that Orbia was in a terrible state. This normally wouldn't be something to show to a child.

"It will be fine. His Maj… Vandalieu-kun is accustomed to these things," said Princess Levia.

"Ah, come to think of it, he's a Spiritualist, isn't he? Then it's alright… I suppose?" Periveil seemed a little unsure, but she gave instructions to one of the Scylla guards to tell her that they should lead him to the body.

"Well then, I will be going," said Vandalieu.

"We'll be back!" said Pauvina.

"…Pauvina, you stay here with Orbia-san and Princess Levia."

"Eh~?!"

The investigation into the Scylla serial killing incident began with an autopsy.

- **Name:** Rapiéçage
- **Rank**: 6
- **Race**: Neo Patchwork Zombie
- **Level**: 0
- **Passive skills**:
    - Dark Vision
    - Rapid Regeneration: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Deadly Poison Secretion (Tail): Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Physical Resistance: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Magic Resistance: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:
    - Electrify: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - High-speed Flight: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Whip Technique: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Surpass Limits: Level 5 (NEW!)
    - Coordination: Level 1 (NEW!)

Chapter 108
The history of the Scylla race

The Scylla guards, who could see in the dark, guided Vandalieu to the marsh that they used as a graveyard, where he dug up Orbia's corpse.

"O wandering spirits," Vandalieu said, reciting a fake incantation.

But it was actually Mud Golems created from the mud of the marsh with his Golem Transmutation skill that was digging up the corpse.

"It's as if the mud of the marsh is alive!"

"So, Spiritualists can do these kinds of things as well."

The Scylla guards held their breaths as the mud crawled and a mud-stained corpse surfaced. When they had been asked, they had explained that Spiritualists were rare here as well; there had been a few in the past, but there hadn't been a Scylla Spiritualist in the last thousand years or so. That was why they never pointed out that this wasn't the work of a Spiritualist. And fortunately, this allowed Vandalieu to use unknown skills while fooling them.

Vandalieu began the autopsy on Orbia's corpse. But several days had passed since the Scylla funeral of burying her in the marsh had been conducted; the lingering memories had faded and Vandalieu wasn't able to learn much… even if DNA and fingerprints were present, the technology to detect and compare them wasn't there, so he hadn't been expecting evidence like this to begin with.

However, Orbia's corpse itself was in good condition. Decomposition had been suppressed; the state that it had been in when it was buried seemed to have been preserved. Vandalieu had the feeling that there had been cases on Earth where corpses buried in mud were discovered as mummies; it was possible that a similar thing was happening here.

But as Vandalieu removed the cloth wrapped around the corpse, he saw that it was in a state that could only be described as dreadful.

“This is quite terrible,” he said.

There were deep cuts all over the body, and the damage to the chest and lower body was particularly severe. Both breasts were in pieces, bearing no semblance to their original shape, and all of the tentacles of the lower half of the body had been severed.

And the holy symbol of Alda had been branded onto the body.

“Apparently, she was found tied to the trunk of a tree growing near the marsh and put on display in this state,” said one of the guards. “Most of the parts that were cut off were likely taken away by beasts; we couldn’t find them. Fortunately, other than that, they seemed to have only nibbled at her a little, but…”

Apparently, the breasts were a symbol of life for women who believed in Vida, and the tentacles on the lower half of the body were a symbol of Merrebeveil, the Scylla who became a goddess in the age of the gods.

In other words, the criminals were deliberately destroying the bodies of the Scylla in a way that would strip them of their dignity.

The symbol of Alda that had been branded into the body and the arrows that were still protruding from the corpse were apparently those used by the Amid Empire’s extermination forces.

If I was a detective on Earth, I would think it suspicious because there’s too much evidence gathered here, but…

This was clearly a murder that had been carried out to set an example and to provoke the Scylla. If the criminals had no intention of concealing their identities, there was no need to worry about there being too much evidence.

“So, do you think you can figure something out?” one of the guards asked.

“Well, I’ll try,” said Vandalieu.

He touched the corpse and extended his spirit form to scan the inside of the body.

No fatal wounds on the skull. The arrows didn’t hit the important organs… is it one of the cuts that caused her death?

To Vandalieu's surprise, he found that the cause of death wasn't clear. If there had been any vital reactions… if only he could figure out whether the wounds had been inflicted before death or afterwards.

"Have you managed to figure something out?"

"When you let us see Orbia again, honestly, we were quite relieved to see her looking like that. We'd thought that she might have gone through this horrible treatment while she was still alive. But it was good to see Orbia looking as lively as she was when she was alive…"

Vandalieu remained silent as the Scylla guards talked to him. They were distracting him a little, but thanks to them, he suddenly realized something.

"Now that you mention it, Orbia doesn't remember anything about the moment she died…"

At first, Vandalieu had simply thought that Orbia's memories had faded from the shock, but she remembered too little for this to be the case. Even when spirits lost their memories from psychological shock, their spirit forms would be distorted or they would display unnatural behaviors, such as being afraid of something. But Orbia hadn't shown anything like this.

Vandalieu only had a few years' worth of experience of observing living humans, but including the time from his second life, he had around thirty years of experience of observing the dead. There was no doubt about it.

So then, this meant that Orbia hadn't forgotten due to psychological shock, but really did not remember anything about the moment of her death.

With that being the case, the first scenario that came to mind was that she had received a blow to her head that had knocked her unconscious instantly, but Vandalieu already knew that there were no deep wounds to the skull or brain.

Her head, undamaged. Cervical vertebrae, undamaged. The other organs are quite wounded, but they're organs that wouldn't cause instantaneous death. The lower half of the body contains nerves and muscles, but there aren't any organs other than what appears to be sub-brains at the roots of the tentacles. Hmm, it is possible that I can't find it because I don't know much about Scylla biology?

“Excuse me,” Vandalieu said to the Scylla guards. “Please touch my head and stay still for a while.”

The two Scylla guards seemed confused, but they placed their hands on Vandalieu’s head as they were told.

“Your head? Like this?”

“We just need to stay still in this position?”

“Yes, just like that,” said Vandalieu. “This might feel unpleasant, but please bear with me.”

“Eh? Hah, guuuh?”

“S-something’s coming inside?!”

Vandalieu had his spirit form invade the Scylla guards’ bodies from the place they were touching him.

Since Scylla biology was even more different from the humans of Earth or Origin than Ghouls and Beast-people, he was having these two cooperate in helping him understand it.

Their upper bodies are fundamentally similar to Homo sapiens, *just as I thought, along with their organ function… I suppose everything is the same other than the composition of their lungs? Umm, the stomach of the onee-san on the right is in rough shape. I’ll fix that.*

Vandalieu gained a rough understanding of Scylla biology while performing a little service for the suffering Scylla guards in return, but he still hadn’t discovered any clues on the cause of Orbia’s death.

He investigated Orbia’s corpse one more time and found that there was one unnatural wound.

“Her finger?”

There was a small wound on Orbia’s left ring finger, as if it had been pricked by a needle.

It was a small, shallow wound, but… before Orbia's death, she had received a ring from her secret lover.

"Just in case…"

Vandalieu read the memories that lingered on the corpse. Orbia must have been incredibly happy; her body hadn't been preserved by cursed ice or magic, but a vivid image had still remained.

It was the vivid image of Orbia's own left hand with a ring on her ring finger.

The secret lover was blurred and Vandalieu couldn't see him properly, but he did manage to see the characteristic bangs.

"I can't say for sure without seeing the ring as evidence, but… I have a feeling that a sickening truth is waiting for us," said Vandalieu.

The lover who had given Orbia the ring was suspicious. It was highly possible that he had placed poison in the ring and poisoned Orbia.

However, perhaps because too much time had passed, Vandalieu couldn't find the poison in Orbia's corpse. Vandalieu couldn't tell if the ring in question did indeed contain such a trick from the image of the lingering memory alone.

It was possible that Orbia's lover was innocent and the wound on her finger was there by coincidence from a thorn pricking her or something that day. It was also entirely possible that the murderers, who had concealed Orbia's cause of death, had simply fired arrows coated in extremely fast-acting poison.

Vandalieu didn't know whether he should tell Orbia about this at this point in time. "What should I do?" he sighed.

"Ugh, what did… you do? I have a warm feeling in my stomach…"

"A-are you finished already? You're finished… right?"

Vandalieu finally took notice of the two Scylla guards, who had lost their balance and collapsed onto the ground because of him.

Kurt Legston, a man from the Mirg shield-nation who was the commandant of this fort at the boundary of the Scylla territory, had been listening to Captain Mardock Zet's report for a while with a gloomy look on his face. He was the third son of Earl Legston (though Earl Legston's eldest son was the current head of the family, so as his younger brother, he was serving as a member of the branch family).

"So, you are currently continuing the plan of deliberately allowing the resistance to escape and then finding their base?" he asked.

"That is correct." Mardock's words were courteous, but he was looking at Kurt with a disagreeable expression.

He was a shrewd man. In fact, it was likely that he would complete his work flawlessly.

"The resistance members that we are targeting are unskilled; once we locate their base, we will likely exterminate them within a few days," Mardock continued.

He was the commanding officer of the anti-resistance extermination squad, appointed by the headquarters of the army occupying the region. He was staying in this fort in order to exterminate the resistance organizations of the Sauron region that the army couldn't handle.

The social position of Kurt's family and his military rank were higher, but Mardock looked down on him for a certain reason. And though Kurt found this unpleasant, he had accepted it, knowing that it couldn't be helped.

Mardock was someone whom the upper brass of the army expected results from; he was the captain of an exceptional unit that had already exterminated a number of resistance organizations.

On the other hand, though Kurt was the third son of the Legston family that once served as marshal of the Mirg shield-nation, he was a commander who had been demoted.

The expedition into the Boundary Mountain Range had ended in complete failure. The fact that his older brother Chezare had died was – considering that over half of the expedition army had returned as Undead – was the only happy thing about it, but Kurt himself hadn't been involved in the expedition.

So officially, he had received no punishment. But for the reasons of having him take joint responsibility and tightening the discipline of the other men, Kurt had been sent away from his homeland and stationed at this unimportant fort.

This fort was one that had been constructed before the founding of the Orbaume Kingdom, when this region was known as the Sauron Kingdom. The statesmen at the time had acknowledged that the Scylla had the right to govern themselves, but they had decided to build a barrier and this fort just in case.

But as long as the Scylla race didn't decide to start some reckless rebellion, the military value of this fort was essentially nil.

The Amid Empire's noblemen that were in charge of foreign affairs were conducting negotiations, so such a rebellion was unlikely to happen.

In other words, Kurt was essentially a commanding officer for guards who had only been stationed here just in case.

He had received a letter from Marshal Palpapek back at home that read, "I want you to think of this as a vacation and endure this until things blow over." So he believed that he would one day return to his original position and continued serving day after day without feeling dispirited, but…

Marshal-dono, I do not need any vacation that I must spend in the company of such an unpleasant man.

Kurt wanted a change of occupations right this instant, even if it meant being a low-ranking soldier on the frontlines, but he couldn't let this show in his behavior so he endured it firmly. However, he finally let some unnecessary words slip from his mouth.

"But no matter how many of such people you capture, is it not rather meaningless if you do not capture those of the Reborn Sauron army and the Sauron Liberation Front?" he said.

But Mardock's disagreeable smile grew deeper rather than stiffening.

"Indeed, the leader of the Reborn Sauron Army, Duke Sauron's illegitimate son, Paris. His younger brother who is the vice-captain, Rick. The 'Princess Knight' of the Sauron Liberation Front. Capturing these people would be a most spectacular victory," he said. "However, the important thing is for us to make our achievements of capturing

members of the resistance known to the people of the Sauron region."

This would cause the people's hopes in the resistance to fade and decrease their desire to start rebellions.

The people needed to be taught that remaining quiet and submissive was more beneficial to them than taking part in short-lived rebellions.

"And there has been information that resistance organizations have been gathering in this area," Mardock continued. "It is likely that they do not want the Scylla to accept the terms we offered in the negotiations. It is only a matter of time before my unit captures the duke's illegitimate child and the Princess Knight and is given the honor of executing them," he declared, the narcissism audible in his tone.

Kurt thought about how much he wanted Mardock to be beaten into silence as he spoke again. "That is quite fine. But this is an important time period, where our negotiations will either be accepted or refused. Even if it is to exterminate the resistance, I request that you be very mindful of the Scylla territory."

Naturally, as a nobleman of the Mirg shield-nation, which was a vassal nation of the Amid Empire, Kurt was a believer of Alda. However, he was a military man before he was an Alda worshipper. The orders of his superiors were absolute.

Since those superiors had decided that the Scylla would be negotiated with rather than fought, he had no objections to obeying those orders. Interfering with them was out of the question.

That was why he feared that Mardock's unit might make conspicuous moves too close to the Scylla territory and this would be interpreted by the Scylla as a threat, causing disagreements during the negotiations.

Of course, Mardock was a military man himself, belonging to the same army. There was no way that he was unaware of the negotiations with the Scylla, but Kurt was reminding him just in case.

"Oh? Could it be that the powerful military man of the Mirg shield-nation is timid when dealing with these octopus-women?" This was Mardock's response. 'Octopus-women' was extremely insulting to the Scylla race.

These were not words that a military man should be speaking during these times of

negotiation, much less on duty.

“Mardock-dono, I request that you show some earnest caution,” said Kurt.

He didn’t know what kind of personal values Mardock held or what he thought of the Scylla, but if he were to do something, it would be Kurt who would receive punishment for his subordinate’s actions. He tried to ask Mardock one more time, but the, “There is no need to worry,” he got in response completely failed to reassure him.

After Mardock left the room, Kurt, who was supposed to be younger than Mardock, had a bitter expression on his face and suddenly looked very old.

“If negotiations break down and the Scylla leave their territory to attack us, our army would win. But what are you planning to do if you anger them carelessly and they confine us in this fort? Can the higher-ups in the army not put a leash on these mad dogs that think of nothing but raising their own achievements?” he cursed.

The Scylla race had been living in the marshes in these mountains long before the foundation of the Sauron Kingdom that preceded the Sauron Duchy. They had turned the inconvenient, steep slopes into terraced rice fields and made their living through farming and gathering. They had made no attempts to expand their territory into the pleasant, flat land on the outside.

That was because this was the strategy that the Scylla had adopted in order to survive.

Nations had started holy wars led by the Church of Alda, invaded because they wanted more land and even started wars to try and capture the beautiful Scylla women as slaves.

Each time, the Scylla had fought in the marshes where human armies were at a disadvantage, and when they could not hold out even by fighting like this, the families had separated and fled into the mountains.

And then they would wait years or decades, and as the enemy failed to make use of the Scylla’s land, they would attack and take them back.

The first King Sauron had acknowledged the right for Scylla to rule themselves for the first time, welcomed the Scylla chief’s daughter at the time as his concubine and sent

them his youngest son for marriage.

“The great-grandchild of the king’s youngest son is –”

“Periveil-san?!”

“No. My newest husband, and Orbia over there.”

“Her?!”

While Vandalieu was conducting the autopsy on Orbia’s corpse, Pauvina and the others were listening to the story of the Scylla race’s history, told by Periveil, the village’s chief.

“In other words, I’m the great-great-grandchild of the princess, and Orbia-san is my aunt,” said Privel.

“Wait a minute, your father isn’t my brother! We’re cousins! I’m not your aunt!” said Orbia.

Scylla were a race with long lifespans of four hundred years, so stories from a few hundred years ago were stories of their ancestors of a not-so-distant past for them.

And since they were a unisexual race of women, they married men of other races, but apparently half of their children were born as members of the father’s race. Girls were born as Scylla while boys were born as members of the father’s race; it was easy to understand. There were exceptions, but these were miraculously rare, occurring only once every few thousand years.

“Then Orbia-san and Privel-san, if these were normal times, you might be princesses,” said Princess Levia.

Periveil gave a cynical smile. “Well, if this land had continued being ruled by people like the first king,” she said.

The Scylla had been guaranteed their right to govern themselves and become blood relatives of royalty, but a few years after his death, the Scylla chief’s daughter who had been his concubine and the daughters she had given birth to were sent back to the Scylla territory by the new king’s order. Of course, they were forced to abandon their right to succeed the throne.

The Scylla race was still allowed to govern themselves after that, even after the Sauron Kingdom became the Sauron Duchy, but they were also forbidden from coming out of their territory.

Their existence was acknowledged, but nothing else was. That was the position the nation had taken.

“Thanks to that, the only people who come into our territory from the outside are merchant caravans with permits, adventurers who have received requests and civil officials who come to perform inspections,” said Periveil. “Some of them choose to stay, but this ends up quite inconvenient for them.”

“That can’t be!” Princess Levia exclaimed, looking shocked. “Wasn’t Vida’s religion flourishing in the Sauron Duchy?!”

“Were the important people influenced by Alda’s religion again?” asked Pauvina, who seemed puzzled.

“Well, even for Vida’s religion, there are a lot of things to it,” Periveil replied. “Though they’re not as bad as Alda, some sects discriminate against races such as Scylla and Lamias because we possess monster blood. Well, I get the feeling that the one who was chief when I was a child told me that it was for political reasons that they suddenly changed their attitude, not religious ones.”

During the rule of the second king, his influential supporters had hated the fact that the previous king’s Scylla princesses, who had long lifespans, would remain influential in the royal palace for a long time. Periveil vaguely recalled being told something like that.

The second king had insisted that it was not his intention to treat his sisters who had been born to different mothers and their entire race with callousness, and as proof, he had provided all kinds of assistance with the Scylla territory, but the third king and the kings after that had simply kept their distance from the Scylla.

There might have been movements that would have seen the Scylla who possessed royal blood restored to the throne, or assassinated instead out of fear, if a coup d’état or revolution had occurred. But the Sauron Kingdom’s rule had remained stable. An enormous enemy nation, the Amid Empire, had been founded, and the Sauron Kingdom became a duchy of the Orbaume Kingdom, but the changing of statesmen itself had been carried out smoothly.

The nation was occupied by the enemy now, but nobody saw the value in the king's bloodline from hundreds of years ago, so the treatment of the Scylla hadn't changed.

"And other than having to find husbands, this isn't bad treatment for us," said Privel.

"You're trapped in here, but it's not bad treatment?" Pauvina asked.

Privel nodded. "Yeah, there are some inconveniences from being trapped inside, but it's been peaceful for hundreds of years."

Members of the Scylla race were strictly forbidden from leaving their territory, but in exchange, they were not conscripted into the army. Even while the Sauron army had been fighting against the Amid Empire's invading force, the Scylla had been living carefree lives here, cultivating rice and hunting crocodiles and fish.

The taxes became a little higher during times of war, but looking at it another way, that was the only burden the Scylla faced. Their workers were not being taken away from them, so all they needed to do was hunt and fish a little more than usual.

From the Scylla race's point of view, this was perfect as they wouldn't have to become involved in the restless society of humans, and as long as they paid their taxes, they could avoid being invaded as they had been in the past.

"Umm, do you not ever think that you would like to go out into the society outside?" Princess Levia asked.

"No, not really," said Privel. "I've heard stories, but wouldn't human-sized cities be inconvenient?"

"I am interested, but not enough to make the effort to actually go out there, I suppose," said Periveil.

"That person said that he wanted to spend the rest of his life here, too… wait, that was supposed to be a secret!" said Orbia.

The Scylla didn't have much interest in the outside world. They seemed to be a race that enjoyed the slow life.

The Sauron Duchy and the Scylla race's territory had maintained a dry relation, like one between a landlord and a tenant, so even when the Amid Empire had occupied

the duchy, they hadn't felt any desire to fight for their neighbors.

Their attitude of treating it as someone else's business, the attitude that Vandalieu had questioned, was the reason behind this. The Scylla didn't care who ruled the Sauron region as long as no trouble was caused for them.

Incidentally, Kasim and the others who used to live in the cultivation villages had been completely oblivious to the above circumstances despite having been born in the Sauron Duchy. They had been people living in small villages and although they knew that there was a Scylla territory within the duchy, they didn't know the details of the history between the Sauron Duchy and the Scylla race.

Things might have been different if they had done research in history books that could be found in the libraries of cities, but the only time that Kasim and his companions had visited a city was temporary, after they had already become refugees and fled to the Hartner Duchy.

"Recently, people of the resistance have been coming here often, though," said Periveil. "They ask us to fight with them and give them food and other goods."

But the Scylla apparently still had discussions with the resistance as well, because they would prefer the statesmen of the Sauron family who had acknowledged their right to rule themselves for a long time over those of the Amid Empire.

"It's fine for us to secretly give them food and goods, let them move about in our territory and let them build hideouts here, but the other chiefs and I do not want to participate in the war," said Periveil. "It isn't as if we have no obligation at all, and these are the requests of fellow worshippers of Vida, but there seems to be little for us to gain even if we *did* risk the members of our tribes and win. Well, there are some chiefs who are saying that they can't trust the Empire because of the incident that Vandalieu-kun is investigating for us right now, so I'm at a loss as to what to do as well."

"Umm, Mother? Is it alright to say so much?" Privel asked. "This is the first I've heard of this –"

"Pauvina-chan and I are present as well; is this not information that you should not be revealing to outsiders?" Princess Levia agreed.

The two of them had been listening with keen interest, but now that she was revealing so much important information, they couldn't help but point this out.

But then, with a completely cool expression, Periveil said something outrageous. “Isn’t it alright? Vandalieu-kun is going to become Privel’s husband, so we’ll all be family once that happens.”

“W-why are things coming to that?!” Privel demanded.

“His Majesty is Privel-san’s husband?!” Princess Levia exclaimed in shock.

“I mean, you did the courting ritual, didn’t you?” said Periveil.

“That’s true, but he’s still a child!” said Privel.

“Have you forgotten the shrine maiden’s vow? You swore to Merrebeveil that the courting ritual would be fulfilled, didn’t you?”

“Ah, that’s right!”

It seemed that for religious reasons, Privel had to take the partner chosen by the courting ritual as her husband.

“Van won’t live here,” said Pauvina. “He can visit from time to time, though. Also, there are a lot of people who love Van, you know?”

“There won’t be any problems if he can visit from time to time,” said Periveil. “Unlike humans and Beast-people, marriage between us Scylla stop about ten years after children are born. Also, we don’t have limits on the number of wives and husbands one can have, so there are no problems there, either.”

Scylla were a race made up entirely of women, so their husbands were always members of different races. This meant that their lifespans differed as well. Thus, the Scylla race cut off their marriages once their children were born and they grew up to a certain extent.

And it wasn’t as if the number of husband candidates was always equal to the Scylla population, so there were no limits to the number of wives and husbands one could have. That was left for individuals to decide.

But generally, the husbands never outnumbered the wives, so it was essentially a system where a single husband could have many wives.

And though they did cut their marriages short, couples did have feelings for each other, so as a result, many couples remained married until one of them died. There had also been cases where a traveler would wander into the territory, have relations with a Scylla for a few days and then leave again.

Periveil finished explaining the Scylla race's view on marriage. "That's how it is, so can't we make something work?"

Pauvina and Levia both had their hands together in a prayer-like pose as they responded.

"That's fine," said Pauvina.

"There is no problem with that," said Princess Levia.

The two of them agreed to it easily, and now Periveil was the one who was surprised. "Eh? Is that alright? Seriously?"

"You know, it's not like I have to take that boy as my husband no matter what," said Privel. "If it won't work out, I can just pray to Merrebeveil for a few days… probably over a month, and have her forgive me…"

"Is it really alright to agree so easily?" asked Orbia. "That child seems like he would be as popular as my important person. He seems like he has a strange aura about him."

Pauvina and Princess Levia once again assured the three of them that there were no problems.

At this point in time, Vandalieu essentially already had multiple wives, and not much would change from Privel being added to the list. Like the Ghouls, the Scylla had quite loose views on marriage, so it was unlikely that there would be any disagreements.

It was possible that Eleanora and Bellmond would have their own opinions on this, but they would probably not put up any real objections. The Undead Rita and Saria were unlikely to object as well. They were always able to see the countless spirits that were constantly nestling close to Vandalieu, anyway.

And Periveil-san, the chief of the village, will become a blood relative, which should be a positive thing for his Majesty!

Princess Levia had made this self-interested calculation as well. Though she was ignorant when it came to politics, she did think of things like this from time to time.

“Then there aren’t any problems, are there!” said Periveil.

“EEEH?! F-first of all, we should confirm things with the person in question!” said Privel.

“What’s the matter? Are you not satisfied with that boy, Privel?” Orbia asked. “I’m sure that he’ll become just as good a man as that person in the future.”

“Orbia-san, that’s not reassuring at all unless you tell me more about ‘that person,’” Privel pointed out. “Well, in a few more years…”

Privel and the other living Scylla were under the effect of Demon Path Enticement, though not as much as Orbia who was a spirit. Thus, Privel wasn’t as dissatisfied as she seemed. She had been planning to take someone as a husband either way.

“But His Majesty is a Dhampir. Is that alright?” Princess Levia asked. “You are in the middle of negotiating with the Amid Empire, aren’t you? And it is possible that he will still appear younger than Privel-san even a few years from now.”

In the Empire, whose army the Scylla was currently negotiating with, Dhampirs were treated as a type of Undead, beings that needed to be exterminated.

“A Dhampir, huh. If it was found out, the Amid Empire would probably make some noise about it, but… it will be fine as long as they don’t find out, so I suppose we just need to keep it a secret,” said Periveil. “And this will be several years from now, not right now.”

Apparently, the Scylla didn’t really mind.

“And as for his lifespan, it’s actually better that he lives several times longer than a human,” Periveil added. “Us Scylla live for four hundred years, after all.”

“Oh no, His Majesty is half-Dark Elf,” said Princess Levia.

“Ah, no problem, no problem, a Dark Elf… Dark Elf?!”

Periveil and the others were startled by this revelation.

“One of Van-kun’s parents is a Dark Elf?!” Privel exclaimed. “I thought that he was a Dhampir with a parent who was a human with some Beast-person or Titan blood, since his body is so small and he has no beast ears or tail.”

“I didn’t think that one of his parents was a Dark Elf,” said Orbia. “It’s my first time seeing a Dhampir like that.”

It seemed that none of them had expected that Vandalieu was a Dhampir born to a Dark Elf.

Considering that his skin was white to the point that he looked ill, it would have been unreasonable to expect them to have realized this, however.

Dhampirs born to a human parent had lifespans between three hundred and five hundred years, similar to Scylla. However, Dhampirs born to Dark Elves, who had lifespans of a thousand years, lived between three thousand to five thousand years. The difference was overwhelming.

“A Dark Elf, huh~. Well, that’s fine, isn’t it?” said Privel.

“You’re right,” said Periveil.

In the end, it seemed that nobody cared too much.

“He’s a boy who agreed to find Orbia’s killer in exchange for some seeds, ducks and Huge Capybaras. If we hated a boy like that for such small reasons, Vida and Merrebeveil would punish us,” said Periveil. “Please take care of Privel and Orbia.”

“Yeah, leave it to us!” said Pauvina.

“W-wait a moment!” said Orbia. “Chief, Pauvina-chan, I’m going back to the circle of reincarnation once I make sure that person is safe!”

“Orbia-san, haven’t you been tamed by that boy, just like Levia-san? So let’s stay together,” said Privel.

“Normally, I would recommend returning to the circle of transmigration as well, but I’m sure it’s fine if you become an Undead like Levia-san,” said Pauvina. “Stay, stay!”

“Don’t say it like it’s such a small deal~ I’m telling you, I have a person I’ve chosen in

my heart!" said Orbia.

"Umm, Orbia-san, it isn't as if those who are tamed by His Majesty must become his lovers," Princess Levia pointed out.

As this girls' talk began to get more exciting, a voice came from outside.

"Chief, can I have a word?"

"I have guests, so say what you need to say from there," said Periveil, who had returned to her chief-like demeanor in an instant.

The person outside hesitated for a few moments before speaking again. "Apparently, there will be a guest coming tomorrow."

"A visitor?" Pauvina repeated."If it is someone from the Empire's army, we can leave–"

"No, when they just say, 'guests,' they're talking about the resistance," said Periveil.

Vandalieu returned soon after this, carrying the two collapsed Scylla guards with Telekinesis.

Monster explanation:

【Scylla】

A race of beautiful women with the lower halves of octopuses, born between Vida, the goddess of life and love, and a monster (the details of this monster have been lost from the records).

The other distinct outer characteristic that they have is that many Scylla possess green hair and eyes.

As their appearances suggest, they are a race of people suited to living in water, and they like living at watersides, ponds, lakes, marshes and riversides, though not as much as Mer-people. But this is merely a preference; they are more resistant to dry conditions than they appear.

Due to the way they live, they fight Lizardmen for territory more often than they fight humans.

Their base Rank is 3, and groups that live together in villages almost always have a chief who is Rank 5 or above.

Their main weapons are the tentacles of the lower halves of their bodies, and many have acquired the Unarmed Fighting Technique and Whip Technique skills. Also, they possess the Superhuman Strength skill from birth, so the thin arms of their upper bodies have much more physical strength than their appearance would suggest.

The tips of their tentacles and the fingertips of their upper bodies are capable of releasing ink like octopuses, allowing them to blind their enemies.

Also, perhaps due to their origins, many of them learn to use life, water and earth-attribute magic.

When fighting Scylla, the battlefield is often close to water, so they are often formidable enemies that are stronger than their Ranks suggest.

In the ancient past, they were feared as monsters who would pretend to be drowning and then attacked men who would dive into the water to save them, but it is now

known among researchers that this is the Scylla courting ritual and they are simply singing and dancing to attract men who would become their husbands.

Their main habitat is their territory on the southern tip of the Sauron Duchy (that is currently under occupation by the Amid Empire) in the Bahn Gaia continent, but there are some small villages scattered around the land.

Incidentally, according to written copies of the records from the age of the gods, the founder of the Scylla and her daughters had the heads of wolves, dragons, serpents and other creatures on the ends of their tentacles. But the great majority of researchers now agree that this depiction was falsely created by the Church of Alda to create an evil image of Scylla, who are a race created by Vida.

The distinctly-shaped tailbones of Scylla are used as proof of having exterminated them. Their livers and the bones of their upper bodies can be used in Alchemy, while the tentacles of their lower bodies can be used as food. Also, the ink in their ink sacs can be used to create inks and dyes.

However, the fact that the majority of Scylla are cheerful and possess the ability to reason and interact with people is already well-known, so requests to exterminate them are not sent out except in places like the Amid Empire, where the factions of the Church of Alda other than the peaceful faction are greatly influential.

Chapter 109
The approaching evil

Resistance messengers would come to this village tomorrow.

“I want to talk to those people as well. Is that alright?” asked Vandalieu upon hearing this news, wanting to be present at the meeting.

Though he wasn’t very perceptive, even he had managed to conclude that Orbia’s lover, a person who had come into the Scylla territory from the outside, was likely one of the negotiators for the Empire’s army or a member of the resistance.

Even if Orbia’s lover was not among the messengers who would come here tomorrow, there was a chance that the resistance would have some information regarding the Scylla serial-killing.

And the one who was coming to negotiate, the leader of the Reborn Sauron Army, was apparently a believer of Vida, so it seemed likely that he would listen to what Vandalieu had to say.

“We don’t mind, but the other party might not like it, so I can’t give you a definite promise,” said Periveil. “I don’t think there will be a problem, though.”

Seeing that Orbia seemed restless after hearing Periveil’s reply, Vandalieu’s heart grew even heavier now that it seemed even more likely that her lover was a member of the resistance.

“Well then, you should stay the night here,” said Privel. “It’s already the middle of the night so I was planning to suggest that from the beginning, though.”

“That’s right,” said Periveil. “Ah, but as per the custom, Privel will be sleeping in a different hut. Shrine maidens must keep their bodies pure until the festival, you see.”

“There aren’t any customs that force the husband Van to sleep alone, so he’ll be fine!” said Pauvina.

“Pauvina, what do you mean by ‘husband?’” Vandalieu asked.

“Well, he is ‘His Majesty,’ isn’t he? He’ll need two more,” said Periveil.

“Periveil-san, are you being a little too serious about the fact that His Majesty is His Majesty?” asked Princess Levia.

“It is troublesome if you take it seriously,” said Vandalieu.

It wasn’t as if they had revealed the entire truth yet.

Vandalieu and Pauvina were led to a hut used by visiting merchants. It was a little small for Pauvina, but the Scylla had apparently thought it best to give them a vacant hut that nobody was using right now.

“Mother said that you wouldn’t be able to rest properly if there were other people around,” said Privel. “Levia-san would cause a big fuss just by being seen, after all.”

As a result of this considerate treatment, Vandalieu and his companions had gained time to discuss things freely.

“Guh～.” Pauvina grunted.

Since it was a time of night where good children were asleep, Pauvina was sleeping soundly, clutching Vandalieu firmly against her large body. Vandalieu escaped with Out-of-body Experience and asked Hannah, one of the Ghosts that were accompanying him, to deliver a message to everyone waiting back at the camp.

“Yes! Leave it to me!” she said in a lively tone before vanishing silently.

She had become a Blaze Ghost recently; as her race title suggested, she would light up the dark night like a lamp, but as she was a Ghost, she was able to conceal her presence as she moved.

She wasn’t releasing killing intent into her surroundings or anything like that, so it would be impossible for anyone who wasn’t a Spiritualist to find her.

“I’ll ask the Ghosts to deliver messages rather than Undead insects from now on.”

Ghosts wouldn’t be spotted, nor would they accidentally get caught in spiderwebs.

Incidentally, the contents of the message were a report of the current plans and a

request to get information out of the resistance members that were being protected at the camp.

“So, I have something to talk to you about,” Vandalieu said.

“What? A message for me?” Orbia turned around as Vandalieu spoke to her. She had been silent but looking restless up until now.

Vandalieu had already undone the Visualization spell on her, so her voice wouldn’t reach Pauvina.

“Before you received the ring from your lover, did you have any injury on your finger?” Vandalieu asked. “Like being pricked by a thorn, for instance.”

Having realized the meaning of this question, Princess Levia gasped. “Your Majesty, that is –”

“No, I don’t think I had any injuries on my fingers. When he put the ring on me, I kind of felt something pricking me. I suppose I wasn’t just imagining it. Was there something left on the finger of my body?” Orbia answered without hesitation, despite Princess Levia’s attempt to interrupt Vandalieu’s questioning.

Princess Levia blinked in surprise. Orbia looked at her, sighed and dropped her shoulders as she continued.

“I’m not very smart, but maybe because of Van-kun’s Mana, my head feels refreshed and I can think more clearly than I did back when I was alive. I don’t need anyone to tell me to know that person is suspicious. His body was nowhere to be found, the ring is gone and we haven’t heard anything from him despite the fact that his lover died days ago. No matter how you look at it, it’s suspicious, isn’t it?” Orbia gave a self-deprecating smile. “But it’s not like it’s certain that I was killed by that person, is it?”

“There is no definite evidence,” said Vandalieu.

Everything about the incident was suspicious, but there wasn’t any proof or eyewitness testimony. There was no denying that Orbia’s lover was a suspect, but there was also no denying that there wasn’t any evidence supporting these suspicions.

“Then I want to believe in that person. He’s someone that I really came to love… that’s why I still don’t want to tell you who he is. I’m sorry,” Orbia said, casting her eyes down

apologetically.

Vandalieu nodded in understanding. “It doesn’t bother me,” he said. “So, about tomorrow –”

“W-wait, you’re alright with this?! You’re alright with me staying quiet?! Aren’t I being quite selfish about this?!”

“Hmm? Were you just pretending? Would it have been better if I’d read the mood and made you talk?”

“What do you mean, ‘read the mood’?!”

Orbia seemed agitated, but Vandalieu simply looked at her blankly and blinked a few times.

“Orbia-san, spirits are fundamentally self-indulgent and self-centered, prioritizing their own emotions while disregarding reason. That’s how they are,” said Vandalieu. “Rational spirits like Princess Levia and the others are very rare.”

Spirits were the dead who lingered in this world rather than returning to the circle of transmigration after leaving their bodies. There was no way that such beings could be rational.

Many of them let their emotions get out of control; their thoughts were devoid of logic in certain places and many of them unconsciously altered their own memories of the past. And since their frontal lobes and hippocampi were missing, they were unable to restrain themselves and their ability to store and retain memories couldn’t be relied on.

They didn’t even possess lungs to take deep breaths and calm down. They didn’t lose consciousness when they got too worked up, nor would they get tired from being angry, as they didn’t possess stamina that would run out.

There was no end to how mad spirits released from their physical bodies by death could become.

“In fact, weren’t you in that kind of state before you met us, Orbia-san?” Vandalieu pointed out.

“A-ah…” Orbia groaned as she remembered how she had spent days on end searching endlessly for the ring that might have fallen into the bottom of the marsh, despite the fact that she was unable to dig the mud up after having become a spirit.

The only reason she could conduct herself in the same way that she had when she was alive was due to Vandalieu’s influence and the Mana that he had supplied her.

But Vandalieu wasn’t judging her negatively because she was a spirit.

“I’m not trying to speak ill of spirits,” he said. “It’s not a matter of being good or bad; that’s simply how spirits are. I’m trying to say that I don’t think badly of you for choosing to believe in your lover, Orbia-san.”

“But…”

“It’s fine,” Vandalieu reassured her. “I’m taking all kinds of measures.”

He had accepted that Orbia would remain silent about her lover, but that didn’t mean that he was cutting corners when it came to investigating the incident. He had already sent his Lemure familiars to the other Scylla villages in the Scylla territory, whose locations he had heard from Orbia herself, Privel and Periveil, as well as the fort that had been built on its boundary.

The fragile Lemures quickly broke down if they entered water. In this water-filled region, they could only form something like a coarse draining net, but the Scylla had been murdered by their lovers, after all. Unlike the Scylla themselves, they wouldn’t go into the waters during winter.

“And since it is likely that there are multiple criminals, it is likely that they will be easy to spot from above when they move,” said Vandalieu.

“Eh? How do you know this, Your Majesty?” Princess Levia asked.

“After they killed Orbia-san, they put her body on display,” said Vandalieu. “That would have been difficult to do alone.”

In this world, there were martial skills that would allow an iron sword to split a boulder in two, as well as convenient magic spells. There were also all kinds of skills that provided help with certain actions.

But Vandalieu imagined that even if all of these things had been used freely, the things that had been done to Orbia's corpse would have been difficult to carry out alone.

After Orbia had been killed, her tentacles had been severed, her chest cut into shreds, several arrows fired into her, the holy symbol of Alda branded into her body and then she had been tied to a nearby tree with rope.

This was clearly too much work for a single person. Including the branding iron, too many tools were necessary for all of this.

Martial skills were too powerful to use on a corpse. If they were used to try to cut Orbia's chest into pieces, it was more likely that her chest would be cut or pierced through completely. The tentacles had all been cut at different angles, too. It was difficult to imagine that a martial skill had been used eight times… if the corpse had been placed on the ground or already hung up on the tree when this was done, then there would have been blade marks visible on the ground or on the tree. Even if they had tried to forcibly cover up the tracks, the Scylla would have noticed.

Of course, this would have been difficult with magic as well.

Even if the murderer was an adventurer or a knight with high Attribute Values and skill levels, there was a limit to what he could have done alone.

"That's why I think we'll be able to have a good idea of what's happening if we look out for things," said Vandalieu.

"I see~ That's amazing, Your Majesty!" said Princess Levia.

"I thought you spaced out a lot, but you do a lot more thinking than I'd imagined," said Orbia. "That's pretty good!"

"Not at all; this is second-hand knowledge," said Vandalieu.

Princess Levia and Orbia seemed impressed, but this was second-hand knowledge that Vandalieu had acquired from a mystery manga and the police dramas that he had seen on Earth.

Come to think of it, is that manga still being serialized on Earth?

"And even if you were to tell us your lover's name, what he looks like and where he

belongs, it's not like I'd be able to do anything right away," Vandalieu added.

In Japan, when a suspect's face and full name were revealed, their address and workplace would be identified soon after and it was possible to figure out their locations through things like security camera footage.

But in Lambda, even with this information, Vandalieu would be unable to find Orbia's lover without searching for him. After all, there were no photographs or security cameras; this was a world filled with wilderness that hadn't been touched by civilization.

Lemures could be used as security cameras, but their eyesight was only about as good as Vandalieu's, so they had to be relatively close in order to identify people's faces.

But once the criminal's face and name were known, it would be possible to warn everyone in all of the villages to be on guard against them and to not follow them alone.

Also, if the Lemures found the spirits of the other victims, it was possible to summon them here through Necromancy. It was possible that they would provide information about the criminal.

"And if your lover is involved with the resistance, I'll probably learn something tomorrow," said Vandalieu.

If Orbia's lover was involved in the resistance and present in the meeting, he would definitely show some kind of response if Vandalieu were to introduce himself as a special Spiritualist who was investigating the serial-killing case.

Whether that response would be asking to meet Orbia one more time or trying to silence Vandalieu remained to be seen, however.

"I-I see. I suppose that's true, there'll be something to learn," said Orbia. Judging from the way that she was clutching her head in worry, it seemed certain that her lover was indeed involved with the resistance.

It wasn't guaranteed that he would actually be among the visiting messengers, however.

"Your Majesty, won't things be bad for Orbia-san if it turns out that the criminal is her lover?" Princess Levia whispered into Vandalieu's ear. "She is already being supplied

with your Mana, so she may turn into a Ghost."

Even in ancient times, deep feelings of love turning into rage and hatred had never been rare. Orbia was currently a spirit, and Vandalieu was supplying her with plenty of Mana.

As Princess Levia feared, certain events could cause Orbia to turn into a monster and attack her murderer.

Vandalieu gave an understanding nod. "Indeed, we need to make sure beforehand what kind of Undead she wants to become. It's impossible to become a Zombie after already becoming a Ghost, after all."

"That's r… eh?" Princess Levia did a double-take.

"If she wants to become a Zombie, I need to use Corpse Healing to repair the damage and then cast Preservation… but since her breasts and some of her tentacles are missing, that would mean doing some patchwork there."

"No, are you not going to stop her?"

"Hmm? Is there a need to?"

Vandalieu thought that revenge was generally acceptable as long as the hatred wasn't unjustified. He didn't see any need to stop Orbia, even if she were turn into a Ghost and attack the criminal. As long as nobody other than the murderer and his accomplices were involved, he saw no problems with it.

"…Now that you say that, I get the feeling that there isn't any need to stop her," said Princess Levia.

Now that she thought about it, she remembered that she herself had increased in Rank through her anger and hatred, even if Vandalieu had encouraged it. Considering that, she couldn't think of a single reason to stop Orbia if she chose to take revenge.

"What are you guys talking about?" Orbia asked.

"Ah, Orbia-san, His Majesty was just saying that he'd like you to choose between being a Zombie or a Ghost," said Princess Levia.

“I’m telling you, I won’t become an Undead… well, I am thankful to you, so if you insist… what are the differences between a Ghost and a Zombie?”

“Ah, well, if you become a Ghost –”

Princess Levia’s Undead transformation counselling continued until late into the night.

When Haj came to, he realized that he was lying in a room with its inner surface covered in white, bone-like tiles (the truth was that not only the room’s inner surfaces, but the entire room, was made of bone).

“W-where am I?”

Thinking that he had been captured and thrown in jail, Haj sprang to his feet and looked around. But all he saw was around a third of his companions that he had been fleeing with, all men, lying in beds as well.

There weren’t any collars, handcuffs or shackles around their ankles. There was nothing else in the room but the beds that they were lying on and a candlestick burning with an eerie-looking blue flame; it didn’t even appear as if there were any doors or windows.

“W-what happened to us? What is this place? Where are those monsters and Skeletons…?”

As Haj stood there, so bewildered that he had forgotten to wake his companions up, the wall transformed into a door before his very eyes.

“Ah, so you have regained consciousness.”

Three women entered.

The one at the front was a blonde woman wearing a tailcoat who appeared to be about twenty years old. Her straight posture and the way she carried herself was that of an exceptional servant that a nobleman or rich person might employ, but her figure was so voluptuous that Haj had to swallow the saliva that had gathered in his mouth.

Her swelling chest was so curvaceous that it looked as if her tailcoat would rip, and her hips were so abundant that one's fingers would be buried if they tried grasping them. Her beautiful face, which still appeared bruised, only added to a degenerate kind of charm rather than appearing flawed.

It would be reasonable to believe that she was a high-class prostitute, specialized for serving royals and nobles, who had been ordered to dress as a steward. However, the ears that were covered in her soft hair were those of a monkey's, and a silver tail longer than her arm was swaying over her bottom.

Was she a Beast-person with parents of different races?

"I have prepared meals for you. Will you eat?"

"The others are resting in other rooms, so please rest assured. Their injuries have been treated as well!"

Behind the female steward was a pair of beautiful women who looked very similar to each other, a little past their mid-teenage years. They looked adorable, but the abundant curves of their aprons and the white thighs visible at the hems of their dresses gave off a different kind of charm from the steward, but… for some reason, they were wearing sinister-looking shoulder pads and bracers.

Having noticed this, Haj's face stiffened, but the fragrant smell coming from the pot that they were carrying hit him right in the stomach.

He hadn't eaten anything since morning, and he had lost consciousness right after fleeing desperately for his life, so all of his stamina had been exhausted.

"We made soup that is easy to eat. There is also more available for second helpings," said one of the maids.

"A-ah, thanks," said Haj.

With their hunger stimulated by the soup that was being served in wooden bowls, his companions began waking up as well.

Seeing them, Haj returned to his senses. "But let me ask you," he said. "Who in the world are you people? Where is this, and what happened after we lost consciousness? And what was that monster?!"

Highly-trained, disciplined members of the resistance would never accept food from strangers without any sense of caution. But Haj and his companions were fake members of the resistance.

They were just a group of hoodlums and thugs from the city; it was a miracle that they hadn't become separated when they fled. It was likely that they would fill their stomachs with the delicious-smelling food being offered to them as soon as they woke up without asking any questions.

But with the food being offered by three slightly strange but beautiful women, they would be completely enticed.

Haj wanted to find out what kind of situation that they were in before that happened. If there was poison in the soup… not the life-threatening kind, but some kind of drug, they would be in trouble.

With the extermination force ambushing them today, Haj had finally realized that although he and his companions just considered themselves to be worthless swindlers who called themselves the resistance, the Empire considered them to be rebellious.

"…You people are the brave men and women of the resistance, fighting against the invaders of the Amid Empire. There is no mistake here, is there?" the female butler asked, narrowing her eyes.

Pinned down by her gaze, Haj felt a chill run down his spine as he answered reflexively. "Th-that's right! We're the Reborn Sauron Duchy Liberation Front Army!" He gave an organization name that was a random combination of two famous resistance organizations. And he continued speaking. He went on and on, using a believable tone of speech that he had trained from when he had pretended to be a part of the resistance and swindled naïve villagers. "D-during the day, we encountered a cowardly ambush set by the extermination force organized by the Amid Empire, and we were in the middle of retreating in order to meet up with our allies who are on standby at our hideout! We thank you from the bottoms of our hearts for sheltering us and treating our injuries!"

Hearing this, his now-awake companions reflexively stiffened their expressions.

"I-I don't know how to thank you after you saved us from such danger."

"Th-thanks to you, we have another chance to fight the enemy. Thank you!"

Their voices were stiff because of their fear of the sharp glint in the female steward's eyes, but it was probably best they began acting right away. As fake members of the resistance.

The female steward gave a sweet smile. "I see, then please rest assured. Our master is someone who feels sorrow over the current state of the Sauron Duchy and wishes for its liberation from the Amid Empire and believers of Alda who began this unjust war. He supports you all."

Haj and his companions felt truly relieved to hear this. But Haj's sense of wariness quickly came back.

"Wait," he said. "I'm sorry if it feels like we're doubting the ones who saved us, but I want you to tell me who your master is."

He thought it possible that the female steward was telling lies to try and trick him and his companions, but the answer he got made him think that a lie would have been a hundred times better.

"Please rest assured. We are… these kinds of people," said the female butler, exposing her crimson eyes and fangs.

Haj and his companions screamed.

"Haj-Aniki! Why did you tell such lies to a Vampire?! If they find out, we're going to be killed!"

"Those maids have unnaturally white skin as well; I'm sure they're Vampires as well!"

"You morons! Then would you have preferred if I told the truth?! There's no way I could do that, is there!"

Haj and his companions were having a conversation… or rather, an argument, that echoed through the bone pipes that had been placed in the room.

"I suppose I was hasty to reveal the fact that I am a Vampire after all," Bellmond said with a sigh. She hadn't expected them to be *that* frightened of her.

“Well, it cannot be helped,” said Sam. “They did not even know what to name themselves in order to conceal their true identities.”

“Jyuuh. And since you had no way of proving our position, I do believe there was no other option but to reveal that you are a Vampire,” said Bone Man.

The two of them were consoling Bellmond while hanging up laundry on laundry hangers made of bones. They had been washing the underwear and trousers of the fake resistance members who had soiled themselves while Bellmond was talking to them.

“They didn’t have to be so scared of us,” said Saria. “They were struggling so much that their sheets came off and…”

“Let’s forget about that, Nee-san. We have no choice but to erase that from our memories,” said Rita.

The two of them grimaced, having seen all kinds of unsightly things.

“It doesn’t seem like we’ll be able to ask them anything until they calm down. What will we do?” asked Hannah, who had brought Vandalieu’s message here. She was wearing a troubled expression as her flames flickered.

Bellmond thought for a moment. They couldn’t torture Haj and his companions.

“Please tell Danna-sama that we will listen to what they have to say if they calm down,” she said finally.

“Understood,” said Hannah as she disappeared, no doubt heading back to where Vandalieu was.

“But what could those people be hiding?” Rita wondered. “They were saying something about lies.”

“Jyuuh! Could it be that they are imposters who are calling themselves members of the resistance?! Jyujyuuh…!” Bone Man arrived at the truth through intuition while drying the captives’ underwear. However, seeing the many sad-looking faces around him, he quickly shut his mouth.

“Resis… tance…”

“Wrong…?”

“Fa… iled?… No good?”

These were the dispirited faces of Rapiéçage and Yamata. Had they gone and made a mistake? Should they not have brought these people here? Had they failed their task? Their faces seemed to be asking these questions.

“Jyuooh…”

“No, they were being chased by the extermination force, so there is no doubt that they are resistance members,” said Bellmond, extending a helping hand to the dismayed Bone Man.

But Bellmond hadn’t declared this just to comfort Rapiéçage and Yamata.

She had declared it because she truly thought that this was the case.

“The lies they are talking about are probably things such as the name of their organization and the fact that there are still allies in their base,” Bellmond continued.

“Eh, what do you mean?” Rita asked.

“I mean that they wanted to make themselves appear more powerful, so they pretended to be part of a larger organization than they actually are.”

“I see.”

The truth was that Bellmond was just as bad as Vandalieu at seeing people’s true thoughts, if not worse.

She had lived for over ten thousand years, but more than ninety percent of that time had been spent maintaining and managing the mansion by the underground lake in the hideout of her former master Ternecia, so there had been no way for her to develop her ability to communicate with others. Rather than her insight to read deeper into people becoming more polished, it had become weathered and turned into dust.

Eleanora, who had received training as a spy, would have likely been able to see through the lies of Haj and his companions and discerned their true strength, but Bellmond was unable to judge their abilities accurately.

“It’s true that they looked weak,” said Rita. “Their weapons were crude, too.”

“Well, I suppose that is how it is. They are just humans, after all,” said Bellmond. She had intended to defend Haj and his companions from Rita’s words, but the truth was that she didn’t think much at all of the human race as a whole.

Bellmond was a Rank 10 monster who was capable of destroying an entire small nation on her own. Thinking that Haj and his companions were reasonably competent was simply within her margin of measurement error. There were likely beings just as powerful who would still be able to more accurately determine the strength of Haj and his companions, but… having spent about ten thousand years as a hikikomori, Bellmond didn’t possess that insight.

“We should have asked Eleanora-san to come,” said Saria. “With her Charming Demon Eyes, we would have been able to hear what they have to say.”

“We can’t leave too few people in Talosheim,” said Darcia. “It can’t be helped, so let’s just wait until the resistance people calm down, alright?”

“But Darcia-sama, the lies that they have told are quite meaningless,” said Sam. “Even if they are part of a smaller organization, it would not bother Bocchan in the slightest.”

“Eh? Wouldn’t it have been better if we’d saved people who were part of a bigger resistance organization?” asked Rita.

“Rita-san, as long as we have actually managed to help the resistance, that’s enough,” said Darcia. “Even if the organization that Haj-san and his friends belong to is small, he might be able to introduce us to other resistance organizations.”

“You have realized this! How amazing of you, Darcia-sama!” Sam exclaimed.

As Darcia and Sam said, Vandalieu would likely choose to help any organization resistance, no matter how big or small it was. This would lead to a buildup of trust among the other resistance organizations. And it was too lucky, too convenient to think that they had made contact with a prominent resistance organization without doing any proper information-gathering beforehand.

…Though they had likely never imagined that they would catch fake resistance members.

“Come to think of it, what will we do with the people in the other two rooms?” Bellmond asked.

The women had been placed in another room, with the remaining men in a third, larger room. They were already awake and eating their meals.

These rooms also contained bone pipes that acted as speaking tubes, picking up the conversations inside to some extent.

“For some reason, the people in the women’s room seem to be afraid that they are going to be killed and have their blood consumed by Bellmond-dono’s master, in other words, Bocchan,” said Sam.

It seemed that things in the women’s room wasn’t much different from the people in Haj’s room.

And as for the ones in the last room where the rest of the fake resistance were gathered, there were no wary men like Haj. They had ogled Bellmond and the twins and ate the soup without hesitation, even asking for seconds. They were big fish in a way, but…

“They’re talking about me, Nee-san and Bellmond-san! They’re saying who they would prefer as a partner for a night, comparing us to other resistance members and women they know, and talking about our chests and bottoms!” Rita said indignantly.

They were simply low people. They were lacking caution to the point that Bellmond hadn’t needed to reveal that she was a Vampire.

“Incidentally, You are the most popular, Bellmond-san,” Rita added. “You did it!”

“…That does not make me happy in the slightest,” said Bellmond.

“But we were popular too; it was only a narrow margin, so we have not lost!” said Saria.

“Hohoh… if I had Bocchan’s permission, I would like to invite these people to a walk through the night sky,” said Sam.

“Father, I know you’re holding yourself back, but do it better!” said Rita.

“Sam-san, your fear aura is coming out. Please calm down,” said Darcia.

“By the way, those people, I wonder when those people are going to realize that the floors, walls and the beds that they slept in are made of Knochen… made of bones,” said Saria.

Knochen let out a groan.

The face of Mardock, the man who commanded the extermination force, stiffened as he listened to the report of the spy who had returned safely.

“A peculiar Undead made by combining the corpses of women with a Hydra, and a female Majin who manipulates lightning. How unexpected.”

The resistance contained many believers of that filthy goddess; Mardock had considered that there could be evil individuals who made use of Undead, but to think that they would really exist.

“But it did not appear that they were allies of the resistance,” the spy continued. “They were trying to run away from the Undead.”

“Hmm… which means that this Undead and female Majin are a different lot from the resistance,” said Mardock.

There was a village of Majin who worshipped Vida, and the Undead that they used as a watchdog had captured the resistance members. That was the outline of the situation that Mardock had drawn inside his head.

“What will we do?” the spy asked. “Giving chase would be simple, but… we are already inside the Scylla territory. The enemy does not seem to be a part of the resistance. Should we withdraw for now?”

Mardock rubbed his thick jaw as he contemplated his aide’s words. “No, we will continue scouting through force,” he said. “We will withdraw after acquiring some information regarding this Undead and female Majin.”

“But won’t this cause problems with the negotiations with the Scylla?”

“We are continuing *because* it will cause problems.”

Mardock disapproved of the decision made by the upper-ranking members of the extermination army, and Emperor Marshukzarl himself, to conduct negotiations with a filthy race that had been created by Vida.

As the descendant of the great champion Bellwood, it was the duty of the emperor to exterminate such vile creatures. To ignore this duty and conduct negotiations was utter madness.

“We will find evidence that the Scylla have been concealing the fact that there were Majin hiding in their territory and that these Majin are followers of an evil god who make use of Undead. And then we will bring it to our superiors!” Mardock declared.

The Scylla race’s territory was a place where the Scylla were permitted to live with their husbands and families. Members of other races created by Vida with monster heritage were not permitted to live there.

It was possible that the Scylla actually knew nothing of the female Majin and the Undead; they might not have noticed the presence of such beings. However, Mardock intended to report that the Scylla knowingly concealed their presence, regardless of the truth.

Even if it could just cause a breakdown of negotiations, that would be enough.

“But our enemies are Undead and Majin; they are able to see in the dark. Make camp for the night and then begin your pursuit in the morning,” Mardock ordered.

“As you will! Everyone, prepare to make camp!”

The extermination force who followed the trail left by Yamata, an evil that was incredibly feeble before Knochen’s walls, approached very close.

Chapter 110
Eclipse King and Tentacle King

Vandalieu suddenly realized that he was in a place that he didn't recognize.

"This is… ah, a dream."

Having experienced something similar on the night that he had undergone a Job-change to Demon Guider, Vandalieu realized that he was dreaming.

But he felt more unpleasant than he had in the previous dream. A sense of discomfort, as if he had accidentally trespassed into someone's house without realizing it.

"But it's a dream, after all… I wonder if someone else is going to come?"

He began looking to see if there was anything around in his field of vision, which somehow allowed him to see all of his surroundings without moving his neck. And then, suddenly, a voice called out to him.

"Hel… lo…"

Vandalieu lowered his field of vision to see the owner of the voice, who was below him and to the side. There was a single Scylla there.

No, looking more closely, it was something grotesque that resembled a Scylla.

Green hair and two arms, the upper body of a woman, a lower body that resembled that of an octopus. All of these were just like a Scylla's at a glance.

But when Vandalieu focused his eyes, he could see that all of these features were made of tentacles of different thicknesses, entwined around each other in bundles to form the shape of a Scylla.

It was like an elaborate straw doll, made out of fibers of flesh. It didn't look particularly impressive as it was around half of Vandalieu's size, but it was a little ghastly to look at up-close.

The first thing that Vandalieu did was apologize to this ominous-looking creature.

“I’m sorry about this,” he said. “I’m still at an age where I’m not growing much taller, so I was searching above me without thinking.”

Other than the children like Jadal and Varbie, Vandalieu was always surrounded by people who were taller than him. That was why he had the habit of looking up while looking around to see whether anyone was around.

“Not at all, do not concern yourself over such things… for it is I who summoned you here of my own accord. Please forgive me.” The Scylla-like creature spoke in a neutral, flowing tone that was unimaginable given its grotesque appearance.

As for how it was speaking despite not having a mouth, the tentacles that formed the mouth-like area quivered in rhythm with the words spoken by its voice. It seemed that it was rubbing the tentacles together there in order to produce sound.

For a dream, the setting was quite detailed.

“My apologies, but could I ask who you are? And what important matter have I been summoned for?” Vandalieu asked.

Judging from the appearance of the creature, he could guess that it had some relation to the Scylla, but he still didn’t know what it was so he maintained a polite tone. The Scylla-like creature’s tentacles quivered as it answered.

“I am known as Merrebeveil. I felt an aberrant… abnormal presence among those who worship me. Wanting to ask who you might be, I summoned you here.”

Merrebeveil was a name that Vandalieu remembered hearing before.

“Is that not the name of the heroic goddess worshipped by the Scylla race in their territory?”

Heroic gods were heroes who had become gods. Thus, they underwent transformations depending on later alterations to the religion or changes in history, but it was said that many of the statues and paintings depicting them resembled the appearance that they had when they were mortals.

But then, wasn’t it likely that they would at least not look like masses of tentacles

bound into the shape of a Scylla?

“That is a masquerade that I have kept up since before the founding of the Sauron Kingdom that preceded the Sauron Duchy,” Merrebeveil said. “I was originally the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles of the Demon King’s army. I once made a vow with the goddess Vida and became a parent to the Scylla.”

The truth was that she had been an evil god of the Demon King’s army who ruled over tentacles.

After being defeated a hundred thousand years ago in the battle between Vida and Alda, Merrebeveil and the Scylla of that time failed to escape beyond the Boundary Mountain Range. The Scylla separated into individual families and went their separate ways, but a sizeable number of them succeeded in settling into these lands that were filled with mountains and marshes.

Merrebeveil had originally been an evil god in a higher position than Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, so she had received less damage. And since she had believers in the Scylla race, her power recovered more quickly and she helped the Scylla survive, bestowing her divine blessing upon them and occasionally dispatching her Familiar Spirit.

But the number of people obeying Alda’s will grew over time, and as they began to form nations, Merrebeveil’s very existence became a heavy burden upon the Scylla.

As the Scylla worshipped an evil god, not only the believers of Alda, but the believers of other gods whose knowledge and history had been forgotten and even believers of Vida treated the Scylla as targets to be feared and persecuted.

“The people cannot distinguish between the evil gods who are remnants of the Demon King’s army and the evil gods who are on Vida’s side,” said Merrebeveil. “Alda never intended to tell us apart to begin with, and Vida and the other prominent gods were still slumbering.”

“But I do think that at least Vida’s followers could understand,” said Vandalieu.

“There were some who did, but there can be large differences between believers of Vida. Not all of them are descendants of those who fought in the battle that occurred one hundred thousand years ago; this was true then and it is still true now.”

"…I suppose that is true."

Not all of Vida's followers knew the truth about the world's history. Vandalieu knew this, but now that he was hearing Merrebeveil retell the tragedy of the Scylla race, he understood just how troublesome this fact was.

"I did consider pretending to be defeated and going into slumber temporarily, but the Scylla who was the chief at the time suggested a clever idea," Merrebeveil continued.

As Merrebeveil was considering sacrificing herself so that the Scylla could escape persecution, the chief had suggested that they pretend that Merrebeveil was not an evil god.

As a result, Merrebeveil, the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles, falsely became Merrebeveil, the heroic goddess of the Scylla, and came to be worshipped this way.

That was apparently why her previous appearance of being a large mass of writhing tentacles had transformed into her current Scylla-like appearance.

Incidentally, falsely altering a religion might sound easy to do from a mortal's perspective, but this was quite a dangerous act for a god like Merrebeveil.

Small alterations would be like putting small piercings in the ears, but changing from an evil god to a heroic god would need the same amount of resolve as being anesthetized and undergoing plastic surgery to the entire body while also receiving surgery to the internal organs at the same time.

It was no different from asking a human to undergo a surgery to become a creature made entirely of tentacles.

Even if it succeeded, their divinity would change so their personality and biology would also change. And even this result would be considered a good one; it was also possible that they would fall apart and be extinguished with their fragments forming an entirely new god, as if they had been reincarnated. It was even possible that they would separate into two gods and become weaker.

The Scylla chief of the past had suggested this without knowing how dangerous it would be, but Merrebeveil, after long deliberation, decided that there was a chance to succeed and accepted this suggestion.

And just as she had hoped, she successfully disguised herself as a heroic goddess with only her appearance changing a little and going from being in a bigender state to being more female.

She seemed happy that she had chosen to disguise herself as the heroic goddess of the Scylla, her own children.

“I see. So that allowed you to decrease the persecution that the Scylla suffered from outsiders,” said Vandalieu.

“Yes. So, who may you be?” Merrebeveil asked.

“Even if you ask me who I am… Is it not you who sent a Divine Message to Periveil-san that I would be coming?”

“I was merely passing on the Divine Message that Vida-sama sent to me… and now that I am meeting you directly like this, I can tell that you are indeed not normal.”

“Normal… well, it isn’t something that I should hide from a god, so I will tell you.”

When did I become so important that a god would personally come and ask who I am? Is it because of the Demon King’s fragments and my Mana pool that will reach one billion soon? Vandalieu wondered as he told Merrebeveil who he was, what he had done up until now and why he had come to the Scylla territory.

“Oh my… to think that these were the circumstances,” Merrebeveil murmured.

For a hundred thousand years, Vida had been sending Divine Messages about Vandalieu to the gods who were her allies as well as her own followers, but Merrebeveil had never received any detailed information.

Merrebeveil, who had transformed from an evil god to a heroic goddess, was partially different from the being that Vida had known.

Though this was a very rough example, it was as if she had changed her address without telling anyone.

“I understand the situation. I, Merrebeveil, shall become your strength.” Merrebeveil lowered her head so low that it looked as if she was crushing the lower half of her body.

“Please raise your head,” said Vandalieu. “I am happy to receive your support, but I am a Dhampir. I am not someone worthy of being called ‘onmi*’ by a god.”

TLN: This is the polite pronoun for “you” that Merrebeveil has been using to refer to Vandalieu.*

Fidirg, who had been sealed in the Scaled King’s Nest, had met Vandalieu under unfortunate circumstances, but there should have been no reason for Merrebeveil to humble herself before Vandalieu.

Being treated like this despite that felt uncomfortable. But despite Vandalieu’s words, Merrebeveil showed no signs of accepting them.

Unlike Rodcorte, many of Vida’s allies who had once been a part of the Demon King’s army were humble gods, like Fidirg.

Despite being a goddess, Merrebeveil had taken a smaller form than Vandalieu and treated him politely. Thinking that this was the case, his impression of Merrebeveil grew even more favorable.

“More importantly, there are things that I would certainly like you to accept,” said Merrebeveil. “Because I had these, I was forced to restrict my power more than usual, but I am sure that you can make full use of them.”

Her body divided smoothly, revealing two black lumps that had been buried in the bundles of tentacles.

“Are those fragments of the Demon King?” Vandalieu asked.

“Yes,” said Merrebeveil. “These fragments are different to me in nature, so I was unable to seal both of them at once. There were originally three, but the other was caught up in the confusion during the battle of ten thousand years ago, and someone stole it. I would like to leave these two fragments with you.”

The Demon King’s fragments could often be used as powerful weapons, but for Merrebeveil, they were nothing but burdens.

If they were misused and went out of control, it was possible that they could cause the events leading to the Demon King’s resurrection. That was why she had been devoted in keeping them sealed.

“As a small price for doing this for me, I shall grant you the divine protection and Title that I can…” Merrebeveil let out a small noise of frustration. “It seems that a divine protection will be impossible.”

“Ah, Fidirg said it was impossible, too. I will ask you again when you make a full recovery,” said Vandalieu.

“Then a Title, at least… you shall become a king to all who possess tentacles, the Tentacle King.”

“…There is a similar Title that is read the same way but with a different meaning, you know?”

TLN: Tentacle King is 触王/shoku-ou. I am fairly certain that the other Title that Vandalieu is referring to is 色王, which is also read “shoku-ou.” It roughly translates to “erotic/lewd king.”*

『You have acquired the ‘Tentacle King’ Title! 』

『The level of the Abyss skill has increased!』

Vandalieu was surprised that he could hear the announcer in his head even inside a dream, and also felt slightly anxious. *What will I tell everyone in Talosheim if they start growing tentacles?*

But why had the Abyss skill’s level increased?

“But merely giving you a Title is… Shall I have some of my children serve you?” asked Merrebeveil.

“No, you do not have to go so far,” said Vandalieu.

“But with this, what I have given you does not match the burden that I have made you bear.”

For Merrebeveil, the Demon King’s fragments weren’t even weapons; they were equivalent to dangerous chemical pollutants. Since she was having Vandalieu accept them, even if he didn’t consider them to be burdens, it was logical for her to provide a befitting reward. That was what she seemed to think.

“Then please give Orbia, Privel, Periveil-san and everyone else the divine protection that was supposed to be for me,” said Vandalieu. “Also, please tell all of the Scylla that they should become my allies.”

“I have already bestowed my divine protection upon Periveil, but as you will,” said Merrebeveil.

“Thank you very much.” The moment Vandalieu finished speaking these words, his consciousness blacked out.

Merrebeveil’s body collapsed like that of an octopus or squid that had used up all of its strength.

“…He managed to return. Though I requested something of him and I am very grateful for it… I do not wish to meet him in my Divine Realm ever again.”

The truth was, Merrebeveil had lied to Vandalieu.

She had told Vandalieu that she had ‘summoned’ him, but the reality was different. The moment she tried to interfere with Vandalieu’s consciousness, he had ‘appeared’ in her own Divine Realm.

In fact, Merrebeveil hadn’t deliberately taken a form that was smaller than the embodiment of Vandalieu’s mind. Her original body had simply been smaller than Vandalieu’s mind.

She had shuddered before the enormous, grotesque being that had suddenly appeared and was late in calling out to him.

“Leaving aside how grotesque and enormous his mind was, his trespassing into my Divine Realm was the power of the Abyss skill. I intended to look into him, but I was looked into instead.”

Merrebeveil knew of several beings with powers similar to the Abyss skill that had existed in the world that she had originally been in before she became a part of the Demon King’s army. These beings had been the first to be obliterated by the Demon King Guduranis.

These were those who possessed the only power in that world that the Demon King could not obtain.

Though Vandalieu possessed a power that even the Demon King did not, even with Merrebeveil 'looking' into him, it should have been impossible for him to step into her Divine Realm.

This had only happened because Merrebeveil had tried to touch Vandalieu's mind, only to have him follow her instead.

"Now that I think about it, it makes sense that he was looking up to begin with. One who is seated in the depths would need to look up in order to see those in the shallows. O gracious Vida. You bless us with constant good fortune. I pray for prosperity for me and my children."

He would be able to crush even the evil schemes of the traitors, Merrebeveil thought. With high expectations of Vandalieu, she gave thanks for how fortunate she had been to be able to form bonds of friendship with him.

Having woken up to find himself on the verge of being suffocated due to Pauvina turning in her sleep, Vandalieu succeeded in using Spirit Form Transformation on his entire body to escape from beneath her.

He quickly produced threads from his mouth, made clothes and changed into them. And then he decided to inspect the Demon King's fragments that he had received from Merrebeveil.

Judging from their names, he had decided that there would be no danger in testing them inside the room.

"…Demon King's suckers, activate."

Suction cups like those of a frog appeared on Vandalieu's fingertips.

When he pressed his fingertips against the wall of the hut, they attached themselves firmly to its surface.

"Ooh."

With the suction cups sticking to the wall, he tried climbing it. The suction cups could attach and detach themselves freely, so he was able to crawl across the walls and ceilings as he wished.

With this fragment of the Demon King, it would be easier to crawl across the ceilings of Dungeons.

And then he continued to the second fragment.

“Demon King’s ink sacs, activate.”

Ink came out of Vandalieu’s fingertips. He made an improvised container made of earth and coated in mucus produced by his tongue, gathered the ink in there and then inspected it.

He could control its properties freely; he could make it thick like squid ink or silky like octopus ink. And it seemed that he could even change its color at will.

It did not have any particular smell of the sea, so it seemed that it could be used to make ink and paint. It was possible that it would even be good for dyes used to dye cloths.

“But one small touch is needed to make these useful in battle,” Vandalieu murmured.

The fragments were suction cups and ink sacs, after all. Unlike the Demon King’s horns and blood, they did not have properties that would allow them to become weapons immediately upon activation.

Should he imitate the way that frogs, octopuses and squids used them?

No.

“Using the abilities of living things in technology… this is biomimetics, I suppose.”

“Ah, Your Majesty, you are becoming even less like a person… but I have the feeling that not much has changed,” said Princess Levia.

As she said, Vandalieu had long been able to crawl around walls and ceilings and produce all kinds of medicines, including vitamin pills, from his tongue, claws and fangs. Perhaps suction cups and ink sacs were small additions to these.

“Not much has changed, you say…” Orbia seemed shocked by Princess Levia’s reaction.

“What’s wrong~?” Pauvina asked, rubbing her eyes as she sat up in her bed.

“Vandalieu-kun is crawling around with suction cups on his fingers, and producing ink from his fingertips,” said Orbia.

“Is that all?”

“Th-that’s all, but…”

“Then I’m going to sleep for a little longer~.”

Pauvina collapsed onto her bed and went back to sleep.

After listening to her quiet breathing for a while, Orbia turned to Vandalieu, half-smiling.

“Vandalieu-kun, wouldn’t you rather become a Scylla?” she asked.

“No, that’s impossible, since I’m a male.”

Incidentally, Scylla were also capable of producing ink.

『The level of the Demon King Fusion skill has increased!』

The extermination force led by Mardock, who had begun moving at sunrise, reached their objective before long.

They had discovered the fortress that the female Majin Undead-user was likely inside.

“These are… fortress walls? There’s no way fortress walls could be built in such a high mountain…”

“Look at reality! There is actually a fortress wall built here, isn’t there!”

Just when had these fortress walls, which were as tall as the trees of the forest, been built in this mountainous region? What about the materials? And how had nobody noticed the flat ground that supported the fortress walls?

There were endless questions that could be asked, but Mardock understood the reality that enemy forces had built a fortress inside the Scylla territory.

“Retreat, retreat, quickly!” he ordered his trembling subordinates.

Mardock had thought that if the female Majin’s hideout was a small one, he would be able to exterminate everyone inside, but even though the extermination force that he led was made of elite individuals, it was not a wise idea to attack the fortress and grounds protected by walls of this size.

He wasn’t foolish enough to have convenient delusions that only the walls were sturdy and there would be no proper soldiers defending them.

He would return to the fort, report this to his superiors in the army and gather information carefully. Attacking would come after that.

However, there was something that Mardock and his companions hadn’t realized. They had already been discovered by the fortress walls and the trees standing around them.

Knochen roared and Eisen creaked as they attacked, as if refusing to let Mardock and his men get away.

The Immortal Ents that had appeared to be normal trees up until now began moving, and the fortress wall burst into pieces, the scattered bones turning into countless Skeletons.

“The fortress walls turned into Skeletons?! And there are tree monsters around us?! When did this place turn into a Devil’s Nest?!”

“They’re just Skeletons; no matter how many of them – GAH?!”

Receiving direct hits from the poison breath that Knochen released along with its roars, these supposedly elite men began coughing violently, clutching their chests. And then Bone Animals, which were Skeletons of four-legged beasts, flooded in to pin them down.

The men were being treated so roughly that it seemed the Undead didn't care as long as they didn't die.

"Retreat! Retreat! Get the captain free!"

The members of the unit immediately tried to help Mardock escape, but Mardock gave other orders. "You moron! Don't worry about me! Everyone but the rear guard, spread out and run! At least deliver the information! This is an order!" He drew his sword and joined his subordinates that were fighting as part of the rear guard.

Mardock and his extermination force had already been swallowed whole by the huge flood of fast, poison-breathing Skeletons. If he didn't make sacrifices and allow his subordinates to escape, they would be wiped out without managing to bring any information back to the army.

Having received this order, his subordinates at the back that were still alive began running. However, they came back less than five seconds later.

They had been sent flying back, their limbs and torsos twisting in directions they weren't supposed to.

"They'd already gone around us!" Mardock groaned in regret as he turned around to see his subordinates convulsing on the ground.

"That is correct," said a voice.

The owner of this voice was Bellmond, who had calmly flown around behind the extermination force.

"Good grief," she sighed. "My metal threads would sever your limbs, so I tried to capture you alive using the tail that I have been given. Perhaps because Danna-sama is too skilled, or perhaps because you are all too frail, this is not going very well. And it is difficult to use the Petrifying Demon Eye on targets that are moving around restlessly."

"W-what did you say?! You filthy Beast-person!" One of the unit's members charged at Bellmond in rage.

"Don't!" Mardock shouted, but it was too late.

Bellmond's tail appeared to vanish, and in the next instant, Mardock's subordinate made a sound that no human body should make as he was sent flying.

From the glimpse of his body that Mardock caught, he could imagine that he had been killed instantaneously from his organs rupturing and his bones crumbling to pieces.

"I am sincerely sorry," said Bellmond. "It is all due to my shortcomings that I have failed to capture everyone alive. I apologize for causing you discomfort." And then she gave Mardock a deep bow.

"You monster!" Mardock ignored Bellmond's apology, struck down a Skeleton that tried to grab him and then looked around to see if there was any way of escaping the circle of Undead.

"Be careful! There's one Skeleton that's way stronger than the others!" one of Mardock's subordinates shouted in warning.

"Be careful of the Skeleton with the armor and the shield!" said another.

"Jyuuh, it seems that I am hidden when I cooperate with Knochen," said Bone Man.

Mardock's subordinates were doing well in keeping the Skeletons back, but Bone Man was among them, cutting down Mardock's men down one after another with martial skills.

"Capture alive~♪"

The Undead Hydra that had been reported, Yamata, sang as she strangled Mardock's subordinates to death with her long necks.

"Holding… back… Punch!" the female Majin groaned as she crushed the men's skulls.

"Everyone, do you know what 'capturing alive' and 'holding back' mean?" Saria asked.

"It can't be helped, Nee-san," said Rita. "It's been a long time since we've fought humans."

These two, who had relatively normal appearances compared to the others, used their enormous halberd and glaive to slice straight through the shields of the men using Iron Wall and into their bodies.

“GUAAAAAAH! MY AAAAARMS!”

“HYIIIH, MY LEGS, MY LEEEEEGS!”

Mardock’s subordinates were alive, but they were on the ground screaming, having lost at least two limbs each. In a way, this was crueler than being killed instantly.

“These things… could it be that they really do intend to capture us alive?!” Mardock exclaimed.

Things hadn’t come to a conclusion yet, but even Mardock had noticed that the words “capture alive” had been spoken numerous times. However, he and his men felt no desire to surrender. Given the horrific scene before their eyes, they found it impossible to imagine that they would be treated decently at all. In fact, it seemed more likely that the monsters would change their minds after capturing them and just kill them anyway.

Perhaps it was best to commit suicide? This thought occurred to Mardock as well, but miraculously, he found a place where the Undead encirclement was thinner.

“Super Instant Response! Get out of my way!”

Using Surpass Limits and an Armor Technique martial skill, Mardock ran through the gaps between the Skeletons and slashed at the creaking Plant-type monsters in his way.

“Rupture!”

He used a Swordsmanship skill, and though his mind couldn’t fully endure this and his head began hurting, he ignored the pain as his sword buried itself deep into Eisen’s trunk.

As Eisen’s red sap sprayed into the air, Mardock’s lips twisted in a smile at having been able to strike back. Knowing that he had to keep running through, he tried to escape without stopping his feet.

With more creaking noises, Eisen’s trunk, which had been cut by Mardock’s slashing attack, split as if bursting. A sap-covered arm stretched out from within the trunk and sank into Mardock’s side.

“GAH?!”

Mardock failed to withstand this attack and rolled across the ground with several of his ribs broken. He raised his face to see a woman crawling out from within the trunk that he had split open.

A woman with green skin, branches growing from her back and, for some reason, a cow’s tail.

“W-what is this? What the hell are you things?!” Mardock screamed, still lying on the ground. It seemed that he had reached the limit of what his mind could endure.

The woman that had emerged from within Eisen plucked one of the fruits that was growing on the branches on her back.

“E… eat…” she groaned.

And then the fruit, which was harder than iron, came crashing down onto Mardock.

“It has become quiet, now, hasn’t it?” Sam remarked. “I suppose everyone will return soon.”

“Y-yes.”

“Fear not, there is nothing to worry about. Even if the enemy are elite individuals, there is no chance that we will be defeated by a single unit of them. More importantly, would you like some more tea?”

“Please! Please allow us to drink it!”

“Like I said, there is nothing to worry about, is there?” Sam laughed. “Such worrisome people you are.”

While all of this was going on, Haj and his companions were sitting inside Knochen’s bone mansion, listening to the sounds of battle and screams of agony coming from outside. And they were cowering before Sam, whose eyes were completely crimson including what should have been the whites of his eyes, as he calmly offered them tea.

Haj and his companions simply would not calm themselves. It would be some time before the troubled Sam realized that his efforts were in vain.

Title explanation:

【Tentacle King】

A Title that is bestowed by an evil god of tentacles such as Merrebeveil, the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles. It can also be acquired by those with tentacles who have been acknowledged as worthy of being a king (or queen), and those who are served by many races of people or monsters that possess tentacles.

Historically, this Title has mostly been possessed by those who possessed tentacles themselves. The known exceptions are a legendary tamer who tamed a Kraken, and the first king of the Sauron Kingdom.

It has the specific effect of providing an ability to display charismatic qualities to races of monsters and people who possess tentacles. It allows such races to become followers (requires the Strengthen Followers skill). It also strengthens the Title holder's tentacles, and enhances skill bonuses and effects when they are used.

Incidentally, the world that the Demon King Guduranis had originally come from was a world where intelligent life-forms with tentacles thrived. Because of this, there had been numerous gods of tentacles.

Chapter 111
Let's look at each other's eyes and talk

"We thank you for making preparations for this meeting despite the short warning, Periveil-dono," said a man as he politely bowed his head.

This man was not a messenger from the resistance, but the leader of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, Raymond Paris, who had come here with a company of messengers.

He had a well-featured face that seemed natural for a man who was the illegitimate son of Duke Sauron who had fallen in battle, and most importantly, there was an air of elegance about him.

On previous occasions, there had been no small number of young Scylla who had blushed upon seeing him, having been captivated.

"It's no great matter; it's a time of rest for farmers as we have finished harvesting our rice, and a season where we don't do any hunting. There is still some time before the festival of Vida and Merrebeveil. Everyone is surprisingly unoccupied. However, the fact that the leader is here means that this is no trivial matter," said Periveil. She had sensed that this young human was no ordinary person.

Raymond possessed a captivating charisma, the special dignity of one who stood above others that made Periveil and the other Scylla want to agree with everything he said, though it wasn't as strong as Vandalieu's.

Raymond might be able to accomplish something. He possessed something that made others believe that.

"Indeed, I don't mean to frighten you, but let us quickly get to the matter at hand… but before that, just who are they?" Raymond asked with a confused expression.

He was looking at Pauvina, who was sitting next to Privel, and Vandalieu, who was sitting in front of Pauvina.

The people present here were the most prominent Scylla in the village, including

Periveil, their husbands, Raymond and two other members of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.

And then there was Privel, Pauvina and Vandalieu. Naturally, the three of them were out of place… or rather, Pauvina stood out tremendously.

Despite that, the Scylla were focused not on Pauvina, but on Vandalieu, who, in Raymond's eyes, appeared to be an exquisite doll of undeterminable gender.

Raymond felt a curious atmosphere about them and a strange sense of discomfort, but Periveil gestured to them with her hand as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

"Come to think of it, this is the first time you've met," said Periveil. "This child is Privel. She's my youngest daughter."

"My name is Privel. Nice to meet you."

"The pleasure is mine," Raymond said as his gaze shifted upwards from Vandalieu to Privel. "And what about the one next to her, this –" He faltered as he wondered how he should refer to the enormous Pauvina.

Considering her size, even if she was a Titan, she should have been an adult. But considering her face and the size proportions of her head and body, she appeared to be a girl of around ten years of age.

"Nice to meet you. My name is Pauvina. I am Van's younger sister."

"My name is Vandalieu. I am Pauvina's older brother."

"I-I see. Nice to meet you."

Raymond was unsettled from how disproportionately young Pauvina's voice sounded for her size, and the fact that Vandalieu, whom he had overlooked for the previously-mentioned reasons, had spoken at all.

However, even after the pleasantries had been exchanged, the mystery as to what children were doing here had not been solved.

"Vandalieu-kun here is still small, but he is a Spiritualist, you see, and he's helping us investigate the murder cases," said Periveil, giving an explanation that cleared this

mystery completely.

“That is… amazing,” said Raymond. “These incidents are weighing on my mind as well, but having the assistance of a Spiritualist is reassuring. And for you to possess a Job as rare as the Spiritualist Job at such an age, you must be quite the genius. I am quite envious.”

The Spiritualist Job was said to require talent from birth in order to acquire, and it was very powerful for use in solving murder cases. There was nothing unnatural about someone with such a Job being present here, even if he was a child.

But Raymond continued to say, “However, there are very, very few who have the ability to acquire the Spiritualist Job. I do not think that you would lie, but I cannot believe you right away.”

“I think that is reasonable,” said Vandalieu.

He had only ever met a real Spiritualist. But he did indeed imagine that there were nefarious imposters who swindled people by lying that they were Spiritualists who could see spirits.

And given Vandalieu’s appearance, even with Periveil’s introduction, Raymond couldn’t be blamed for not being able to believe that he was a Spiritualist right away.

“Now then, I will show you proof that I am a Spiritualist,” said Vandalieu.

“Will you be showing us your Guild Card?” Raymond asked. “I do not think that there would be any branches that would issue them in this territory –”

“No, more concrete proof than that,” Vandalieu replied. “Visualization.”

And then, in front of Vandalieu… or rather, by his side, Orbia’s spirit appeared.

“A Ghost?!”

“Leader, please step back!”

Raymond’s subordinates leapt to their feet at the sight of Orbia’s now-visible spirit, but Raymond held up a hand.

“Calm yourselves,” he said, and then he turned to Orbia. “Are you a spirit of one of the victims?”

“It’s my first time speaking like this,” said Orbia. “Leader-san. I’m Orbia, and I was killed eleven days ago today.”

“Nice to meet you… it is rather strange to say that, I suppose,” said Raymond. “To think that the Spiritualist Job can show spirits to others using a skill… no, is it a spell? In any case, I am surprised that such a method exists.”

“I was surprised, too,” said Orbia. “So… has there been anything out of the ordinary lately? Like someone from the resistance being attacked or contact being cut off from them…”

“…No, I haven’t really heard any reports of that sort. Does this have something to do with the incidents?” Raymond asked.

“Yeah, but if there hasn’t been anything, then it’s fine.”

Orbia seemed relieved, but Raymond had suddenly turned pale. He remained calm on the surface, but Orbia’s question had clearly unsettled him.

“Orbia-san doesn’t remember anything about when she died other than the fact that the present she received from her lover was missing, so she doesn’t know what the criminal looks like,” said Privel. “That’s why we’ve decided that Van-kun should come with us to the other villages to find the spirits of the other victims.”

“That’s why this case will be solved soon,” Periveil added. “I’m sorry to have caused concern for you people who have come from outside.”

“That is reassuring to hear. As fellow believers of Vida, I wish for this case to be solved as quickly as possible,” said Raymond. “Now then, our business is –”

As the leader of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, he began persuading Periveil and the other Scylla to refuse the peace plan offered by the Empire’s army.

The Amid Empire, with Alda being its national god, would definitely not leave the Scylla race alone; it would certainly betray the Scylla one day. The Scylla should form an alliance with the resistance while they still had the chance, join up with the Orbaume Kingdom and fight the Empire’s army together. Raymond was capable of

doing this.

Raymond's argument had some persuasiveness to it. This was not only due to his charisma, but because of his confidence in knowing that he was actually in contact with people in the Orbaume Kingdom who were helping him.

There were a few holes in his speech, but this was likely because he had intended to blame the Empire for the Scylla serial-killing case.

"I understand what you want to say. But these are things that involve everyone in our territory. I'm sorry, but this isn't something that I can decide on my own," said Periveil, avoiding giving an immediate reply.

"Of course. But I have heard that the chiefs of all of the villages will be gathering for the winter birth festival. If you could discuss our proposal at that time, it would be more than enough," said Raymond before withdrawing on this matter.

It was likely that he planned to visit the other villages to persuade the other chiefs in the same way before the winter birth festival came.

It's similar to an election campaign, Vandalieu thought.

"Now then, excuse me. I thank you for making time for us today." Raymond left the room courteously, politely declining Periveil's offer of a meal.

The Ghosts stationed outside watched Raymond and his men leave the village.

Meanwhile, Vandalieu and the others gathered in the center of the room and began discussing things.

"Aren't Raymond and his men innocent after all?" Periveil.

"Yeah, I tried to lead him into saying that the present was a ring, but he didn't fall for it," said Privel. "I suppose he really doesn't know?"

"But Raymond-san was definitely unsettled!" said Princess Levia.

"He was? You're quite perceptive, aren't you, Princess Levia?" Vandalieu remarked.

"Van, you have to look at people's faces properly," said Pauvina.

“He was definitely unsettled, but I’m sure that’s because of me,” said Orbia. “I mean, I’m a spirit, so I’m sure he was scared. Yes, that must be it.”

“That’s definitely not it,” everyone said in unison.

“You didn’t have to all say it together!” Orbia said indignantly.

It was possible that the criminal was a member of the resistance. Vandalieu had already mentioned this to Privel, Orbia and the others.

The Scylla had known Raymond and the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army for over a year. Normally, they wouldn’t believe that the criminal would be among them right away, but…

“I had a dream with a Divine Message from Merrebeveil last night. It was surprising, but it seems that we should believe Vandalieu-kun?” Periveil had said.

“Me too! I got some kind of protection like you, Mother, and apparently I should stick to Van-kun in return!”

“Me too, me too! I got a divine protection and I seem to have been told to not return to the circle of transmigration. Even spirits can receive divine protections, huh?”

“Thank you, Merrebeveil,” Vandalieu murmured.

It seemed that Merrebeveil had made immediate efforts. Now that she didn’t need to suppress the Demon King’s fragments, she had been able to use some of her powers.

As a result of Vandalieu acquiring the Tentacle King Title, the other Scylla could also feel an impressive presence and charisma (though they had already felt these to some extent before because of the ‘Holy Son of Vida’ Title and the Insect User Job), so they had become unable to completely deny his words.

But it wasn’t as if they had been brainwashed, nor had their previous memories disappeared. Seeing the way Raymond carried himself and hearing his words directly made it seem impossible to believe that he was involved in such a fiendish murder case.

In fact, Raymond hadn’t let anything slip with the trap that Privel had set in her words.

It was typical for the criminal to accidentally let something slip in mystery works.

“But he knows something about the incidents,” said Vandalieu.

“Have you noticed something, Your Majesty?!” Princess Levia said in shock.

“Van, are you feeling alright?!” asked Pauvina.

“…You don’t have to be so surprised,” said Vandalieu. “First, Raymond didn’t mention a single word about the incidents during his speech. It’s a significant case, so if he believed that the criminal wasn’t among his men, it would have been fine to mention it, even if we have already come up with ways to solve it. Also, I felt his intent to kill me.”

Danger Sense: Death, which detected any risk of dying, was constantly active. Even while Vandalieu was listening to a hollow-sounding speech.

Life is full of the unexpected, thought the ‘Liberating Princess Knight’ Iris Bearheart, the leader of the Sauron Liberation Front.

“Get back, you bastards! Or you will never have this body!” she shouted.

It was unexpected enough that someone who was merely the eldest daughter of a humble family of knights would be known by an outrageous Title like ‘Princess Knight,’ but she would never have expected that she would end up making a threat like this.

“Damn you, making such a foolish threat!”

“Don’t provoke her, you idiot! What’ll you do if something really happens to her body?!”

“Please calm down, Princess Knight-san. Let’s talk; at this rate, you won’t be able to save any of your subordinates, either.”

Iris was holding a teaspoon-sized knife to her own throat. She was surrounded by over a dozen retreating, flustered people dressed entirely in black. Iris’s companions were lying at their feet, covered in blood. There were two unmoving ones that had been

burnt completely black, with white smoke rising from them.

Yesterday, Iris and her men had prevented an illegal slave trader from exporting his illegal slaves out of the country, and sheltered the enslaved people at their base to allow them to rest.

And then they had been attacked by these people who were covered in black clothing. These people had broken through the guards with force, and several of them had flown in from the sky.

At first, everyone thought that these were the companions of the slave trader that had been killed yesterday, or assassins sent by a criminal organization that the merchant had been doing business with.

But they had ignored the former slaves that Iris had immediately helped escape, and even after defeating Debis, the one who had personally killed the slave merchant, they showed no signs of wanting to finish him off.

And although they possessed the skill to defeat Iris's companions one after another, their movements strangely became worse as they faced Iris.

Debis had then seen an opportunity and slashed at one of black figures, who began screaming as he was burned by the sunlight streaming in through the wooden door that they had broken. And then Iris had intuitively realized: These were Vampires, and they were after her body.

"Let's see, at this rate, you people will be taking a few charred remains back to your master, incurring his wrath, and then he will purge the lot of you, I suppose? Do you know what effect this Chastity Protector has?" Iris asked them.

The blade that was barely large enough to even be called a dagger, the one Iris was pressing against her own neck, was a Magic Item known as a Chastity Protector.

It was a Magic Item specially made for committing suicide, designed for women of noble social status. It activated when its owner thrust it willingly into her own neck or chest, turning them into a living torch and then into a pile of charred remains within a matter of seconds.

It was a Magic Item that was thoroughly specialized for suicide, preventing the owner from being violated by enemies, whether the owner was alive or dead.

These days, they were mostly uncommon antiques, but this was something that had been passed on in Iris's family from her great grandmother's generation.

"Don't be so full of yourself," said one of the Vampires. "If anything, we could sever your head with a single blow, gather your blood in a jar and then deliver that to our master."

"Hoh, so your master wouldn't mind if he only received blood to add to his collection?" Iris asked.

"You… how do you know about Gubamon-sama?"

"Though we call ourselves the resistance, we're nothing more than a criminal organization to the current government. Thanks to that, I've had more opportunities to listen to stories told by our bad allies."

Vampires were those who haunted the darkness in the absolute depths of the underworld, but it was impossible for them to continue hiding their existence perfectly.

Rumors of the Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped the infamous Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, were particularly well-known among those who kept up with matters in the underworld.

"What will you do, filthy Vampires?" Iris asked. "I am completely serious; I would much rather end my own life than be turned into an Undead. Even Alda, who forbids suicide, would forgive this foolish former believer of his."

Realizing that Iris was serious, the lips of the Vampires twisted in frustration beneath the black masks they were wearing to protect themselves from the sunlight.

Gubamon, who had become mad with paranoia, had ordered his subordinates to carry out difficult tasks in order to turn as many of them into Undead as possible without allowing them to escape.

These difficult tasks were to capture well-known adventurers, knights, clergymen, royals and noblemen whose whereabouts were known.

Gubamon, who was a user of space-attribute magic, had gathered his subordinates, named their targets and forcibly dispatched them through teleportation. And then he

had ordered them to be ready and waiting before a certain time at the places he had sent them, along with their captured targets.

Fear of Gubamon had been instilled into these Vampires; they could not choose to run. If he had simply gone on a rampage, they might have done so. But as Gubamon ordered these difficult tasks on them, he had seemed as if he had returned to a previous, relatively more mentally stable version of himself.

Even if they were to run away, others would be sent after them through space-attribute magic; the only way to obey was to fulfil his commands. Many of Gubamon's subordinates had convinced themselves of this. But the reality was that Gubamon had already decreased their numbers rapidly with his own hands, and they would be killed even if they managed to carry out his orders.

Sending Subordinate Vampires and Noble-born Vampires in mixed groups of around a dozen individuals made it difficult for them to discuss escaping, which forced them to take the chance and hope that they would survive if they completed the tasks that they had been commanded to do. And if things went well, Gubamon's collection would grow as well.

If they returned disgracefully after failing their tasks, he would turn them into Undead on the spot. If they died, he wouldn't feel any sense of loss over such fools

It was an extremely reckless plan full of flaws that only a madman could come up with.

These Vampires who were being made to dance in that plan did indeed possess the knowledge for fighting humans. They were no strangers to kidnapping. However, they were not skillful enough to capture the leader of a well-known organization alive without causing her significant injury.

And while they were fumbling and failing to hold their strength back the correct amount, Iris had seen what they were after.

Suppressing the bitter feelings of having to yield to the threats of a mere human, the temporary leader of these Vampires spoke. "Very well," he said. "We shall spare the lives of your companions."

And then he began casting healing magic on Iris's allies.

"Oi, are you serious, Matthew?!"

“Stop complaining and give them Potions and whatever to help them out. We just need to heal them to the point where they won’t die. Amber, you stop the bleeding of the woman beneath your feet.”

Reluctantly, the Vampires used the Potions that they had planned to use to heal Iris’s injuries after capturing her on her subordinates instead, and cast healing spells on them.

“Ugh, Ojou… You can’t… Please run…” groaned the barely-conscious Debis.

“I can’t do that,” Iris said without even looking at him. “Tell everyone to carry out what needs to be done in the event of my death.”

The reason Iris carried the Chastity Protector with her was so that she wouldn’t leave behind a dead body and one of her allies could replace her as the Princess Knight after her death.

She had been nothing more than a daughter of one of many families of knights when the Sauron Duchy was prospering, and even during her missions for the resistance, she wore a mask. There were few who knew her face.

Nobody would notice if the person behind the resistance’s symbol, the Liberating Princess Knight, were to change.

“With this, your companions will not die, for now,” said the Vampire leader. “The rest is up to you.”

“Very well,” said Iris. “But first, I suppose I’ll have you walk out of the base with me. And then I shall hand myself and the Chastity Protector into your custody.”

The Vampire clicked his tongue. “Stop dragging things on. Do you think that we won’t change our minds?”

“The same goes for you,” said Iris. “I can’t have you finishing my companions off along the way to repay me for this, you see.”

“…Very well,” said the Vampire. “But don’t you change your mind. If you do, we’ll be back to slaughter all of your friends and even the ones who aren’t your friends.”

The Vampires walked out of the base, with Iris at their center. Debis desperately

crawled after them, but all he found was a trail of footprints that stopped past a certain point and the fallen, broken fragments of the Chastity Protector.

Vandalieu and his companions ate a light lunch and then departed from the village as they had told Raymond they would, accompanied by Privel and two Scylla guards (the ones that had led Vandalieu for his autopsy) to escort them.

And around the time they were far enough from the village that screams and the sounds of battle wouldn't reach it, the men appeared.

"Vandalieu-kun, wasn't it? Won't you come and join me for a conversation?" said Raymond.

He himself wasn't armed, his men spread out to block the path ahead, hands on the handles of their swords. Behind Vandalieu's group, there were another fifty men blocking the path of retreat.

It was likely that there were archers and mages stationed at distant positions as well. Vandalieu could sense signs of life indicating this.

"You don't seem to be surprised," Raymond remarked.

This was quite the abnormal situation, but Vandalieu and his companions were not unsettled. Vandalieu was constantly expressionless, but even Privel and the Scylla guards weren't fazed by the sudden appearance of Raymond and his men. They gave him a pained, disappointed look.

"There sure are a lot of them," said Pauvina as she looked around them, looking very carefree.

"Yes, since they were expecting this," said Vandalieu.

And though Vandalieu was easy to follow, he was impossible to ambush because of his constantly-active Danger Sense: Death, no matter how well any killing intent was concealed.

Even without this, Vandalieu had made Lemures and Ghosts tail Raymond and his men, so their movements had been fully known.

“I see. So, it really was a lie that she did not remember,” said Raymond, assuming that that this was the reason Vandalieu and his companions were not surprised.

These words and this ambush were as good as a confession that he and his men were responsible for the Scylla serial-killing case.

“Still, you acted quite quickly, and with quite a bold method, didn’t you?” Vandalieu remarked.

“I was driven by necessity, you see,” said Raymond. “And if we were not capable of bold actions, we would not be fighting as a resistance force.”

As he said, this ambush had been necessary for him and his men to carry out. He and his men were the real culprits behind the Scylla serial-killing case that they had continuously blamed Alda extremists for. It was absolutely impossible to avoid this fact being revealed.

Raymond had no positive proof that Orbia had really lost her memories of when she had died. Even if she had, he couldn’t be certain that she wouldn’t regain them later.

They had used a poison that caused instant death for the victims, but their eyes had remained wide open until the very end. There was no telling whether they had seen something or not.

And he couldn’t imagine that the spirits of the other victims would have conveniently lost their memories as well. The truth was that it was questionable as to whether the victim’s spirits would still be there, but as there weren’t any Spiritualists among Raymond’s men, they had no way of knowing.

That was why Raymond needed to stop Vandalieu before he reached the other villages.

“So, when you said ‘conversation,’ did you mean that you were going to silence me?” Vandalieu asked.

“Don’t be so hasty,” said Raymond. “You seem to be very clever, with the capability of thinking deeply for your age, which is why I want to suggest this. Won’t you become our ally?”

Vandalieu was surprised by Raymond’s proposal.

“D-don’t kid yourself!” Privel shouted. “Why would Van-kun become your ally?! And more importantly, tell us why you killed Orbia-san and the others!” She tried to lash out at him, but the Scylla guards held her back.

“Calm down, we’re surrounded!” one of them told her.

“As I thought,” Raymond whispered as he looked Privel and the guards. “Vandalieu-kun, what I value about you, even more than the fact that you are a Spiritualist, is the way you won over the hearts of the Scylla far more than I ever managed to, in such a short period of time.”

The sense of discomfort that Raymond had felt in front of the Scylla was the friendly way that they had treated Vandalieu.

Unlike the other children of Duke Sauron and his other relatives that had already fled to other duchies, the ones who possessed the right to succeed the throne, Raymond was an illegitimate child who had been forced to give up his right to succeed the throne. But he possessed not only raw ability, but a charisma that charmed people. This was precisely why he had taken leadership of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.

But during the meeting with Periveil and the other Scylla earlier today, he had noticed that their attention had been focused on Vandalieu, despite the fact that Vandalieu had barely spoken.

He and his men didn’t know what it was, but there was something about Vandalieu that had captivated the Scylla.

“It is not as if we did such horrible things to the Scylla because we wanted to,” Raymond continued. “All of this was for the purpose of taking the Sauron Duchy back – to liberate all of the people of the Sauron Duchy. If you were to persuade them, I am sure the Scylla race would once again realize that they, too, are a part of the Sauron Duchy, and join us in battle.”

Raymond and his men had conducted the Scylla serial-killing incidents and blamed it on Alda extremists. This was not only to prevent the Scylla from accepting the terms offered to them by the Empire’s army, but to also have them join the resistance.

Although they had named themselves the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, their military strength was nowhere near that of an army. But if they acquired the fighting strength of the Scylla race of five thousand individuals, it wouldn’t be impossible to fight back

against the Empire's army.

And if he had the Orbaume Kingdom's army mobilized through those helping him from within the Kingdom, defeating the army occupying the Sauron Duchy wouldn't be a mere dream.

"And, most importantly, you are a Dhampir," said Raymond. "We have no objection to you becoming our symbol. I am sure your existence will move the hearts of the peaceful faction of Alda worshippers in the Orbaume Kingdom, who have recently been celebrating a group of heroes slaying a Pure-breed Vampire."

Raymond gazed into Vandalieu's eyes, watching them dart around quickly as if he was hesitating. He continued pressing him for an answer.

"At this rate, our homeland will become a vassal nation to the Empire that treats you Dhampirs as monsters. I want you to fight with us."

Despite being very smart and composed for his age, he was still a child in the end. Raymond would definitely be able to persuade him. Or so he thought, but the response he received from Vandalieu was not a good one.

"I have a question. Why are you trying to get the Scylla race involved?" Vandalieu asked.

Pauvina had been stifling a yawn and the Scylla had been watching him with bated breath, waiting to hear how Vandalieu would respond when he asked this question.

"That is –"

Unfazed, Raymond tried to answer this question with the answer that he had come up with beforehand. It was easy to imagine that Vandalieu thought favorably of the Scylla, just as they loved him.

But he had acquired the Spiritualist Job at such a young age. Though his eyes showed hesitation, his expression and voice gave away no emotion or discomposure; he showed more self-control than any adult.

If Raymond didn't make a mistake, he would definitely be able to persuade Vandalieu. Believing this, he gave his response.

“Because I wanted the fighting strength of the Scylla and this territory that is a natural fortress. I am an illegitimate child who once gave up his right to succeed the throne. In order for someone like me to rule the Sauron Duchy, I need to achieve victory against the enemy army through a plan that I am in charge of. That is why I asked my younger brother to do the dirty work. I don’t think I did anything wrong. Orbia, was it? I truly don’t believe I did anything wrong to her or the other victims. They were necessary sacrifices in order to win this war.”

“Did you think that we’d be fooled by –” Privel began shouting, but then suddenly stopped. “Eh?” She stared blankly at Raymond and blinked several times.

“C-Commander? What are you saying?”

“What’s wrong with you, Commander Raymond?!”

Raymond’s subordinates had been calm up until now, but now they were bewildered and flustered.

What? What did I just blurt out?!

From the reactions around him, Raymond realized in shock and panic that he had blurted out unthinkable words, but his mouth continued speaking out of his control.

“The duke’s legitimate child, who officially has the right to succeed the throne, has escaped to the Kingdom. I mustn’t wait for him to gain power and begin a plan to recapture the Sauron Duchy. If that happens, I cannot become duke, no matter what us resistance members achieve. To make the Sauron Duchy a better place, I must become duke and rule it! That’s why I needed soldiers, an army with me at its center, to fight against the enemy!”

These were Raymond’s true intentions.

Ignoring the fact that the Scylla had been uninvolved in political or military matters since the Sauron Duchy was still the Sauron Kingdom, he had conducted a conspiracy in order to forcibly turn the Scylla race, who had completely lost interest in the world outside their territory, into his army.

But he’d had no intentions of saying this out loud.

“Yes, please continue answering her and my questions,” said Vandalieu. He was

moving his eyes around restlessly, attacking Raymond's mind and implanting suggestions into it with the Mental Encroachment skill.

And before Raymond and his men could give any kind of response, 'she' appeared.

"Tell me, did that person… did Rick kill me?"

Raymond and his men shuddered as this ice-cold question reached their ears.

Chapter 112
Q: Is this a prisoner? A: No, it is live bait.

"Finding them took a lot of time, but once we found them, it was pretty easy work, wasn't it?"

"Indeed. But I wonder what these guys were doing in a place like this that isn't even their base?"

"Probably hiding from the enemy army. Even if they call themselves the resistance, they're just rats."

The vice-captain of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, Rick Paris, had been tied up on the ground. His handsome face twisted in frustration as he listened to the Vampires conversing somewhere over his head.

What a blunder! To think that Vampires would come attacking…!

Rick and his men had been committing murders within the Scylla territory to blame them on Alda extremists and cause negotiations between the Scylla and the Empire to break down. They had been hiding in a temporary hideout while waiting for their next murder.

Rick's older brother Raymond, the commander, would travel around to each Scylla village and persuade the chiefs. Meanwhile, Rick and his men would murder another Scylla and blame it on enemy extremists, and Raymond would fan the flames of the Scylla race's anger towards the Empire's army.

That had been the plan, but their hidden base in the Scylla territory had been attacked by Vampires. Half of them were Subordinate Vampires, but the other half were Noble-born Vampires who could fly through the air and use high-level magic. Taken by surprise, Rick had been unable to put up any resistance. All but two of his men had been killed, and Rick himself had been captured.

A male Vampire with a thick jaw and a rough-looking beauty to his face, who seemed to be the leader of these Vampires, laughed. "After this, all we need to do is capture this guy's older brother. Heal the injuries of the ones who survived a little."

The Vampire's rouge-colored lips spoke with a female tone*. Rick and his surviving companions looked at him with wide eyes, but the other Vampires seemed to be accustomed to this; they didn't show any particular reactions and began carrying out his orders.

TLN: This Vampire talks like a woman. Unfortunately I can't really convey this through the translation so just imagine a macho-looking Vampire with the lisp and "gay" voice.*

With their injuries healed, Rick's two men became able to move. Despite having pale faces, they put up a brave front against the Vampires.

"What are you planning to do to us, you beasts who betrayed the goddess?!"

"Th-things won't go as you plan! The commander will definitely avenge us!"

But these words that the two of them had mustered up their courage to say were nothing more than cliché jokes for the Vampires. Rather than being displeased, the Vampire leader's smile grew wider.

"I want to request something of you," he said. "You're very lucky; your lives can be spared if you just do this one task. I want you to go to your precious leader and tell him, 'If you value your precious younger brother's life, come by yourself to the designated location.'"

They're after Ani-ue after all!

For Rick, his older brother Raymond, born to a different father, was more than just an older brother.

Despite possessing the blood of the Sauron family, Raymond was treated indifferently because he was the duke's illegitimate child. And yet, he was more resourceful and charismatic than anyone else; he was the great man who should be ruling the Sauron Duchy.

Even now, with the Sauron Duchy under the Amid Empire's occupation, Rick believed that bringing his older brother to the position of duke was his divine task.

That was why he had done all the dirty work and whatever else was needed for his older brother's sake. He held the Scylla in contempt for making no effort to fight for the Sauron Duchy despite Duke Sauron having acknowledged their right to rule

themselves. But the real reason he had courted Scylla to make them yearn for him, tricked them, killed them and put their gruesome bodies on display was to use the Scylla race and help Raymond acquire the position of duke.

These were not only Rick's desires, but the desires of his surviving subordinates as well.

"D-don't fuck with me!" one of them shouted in rage. "You homosexual bastard! Nobody's going to sell out the commander – GAH?!"

The Vampire grabbed hold of the man's head with his large hand. "I quite like lively children, you know. I like them so much that… it just makes me want to give them a love bite!" He pulled the man to one side and thrust his thick, powerful fangs into him.

The man gave a scream that gradually grew quieter. After he stopped moving, the Vampire showed his corpse to the last of Rick's remaining men.

"So, which are you? A lively child who wants my love bite? Or are you an obedient child who does his best with the work that's given to him?" the Vampire asked, licking his lips that were now stained red with the man's blood.

The last man nodded so violently that his neck looked as if it would be torn. "I-I'll do it! I'll carry out your task!"

"I see~♪ I'm happy to hear that… Now, get going."

"Yes, sir!"

Bound and gagged, Rick could only gaze at his companion's back as he ran as fast as his legs would carry him.

Ani-ue, don't you dare come to save me! Just abandon me here!

He prayed that this wish would reach his older brother.

But what Raymond chose to do was of no importance to the Vampires. One of the Vampires was already tailing the man who had run out of the hideout.

Once Raymond's location was confirmed, familiars would be used to report the information to other Vampires.

“But aren’t you being too hasty, Lord Miles Rouge?” another Noble-born Vampire asked. “There is still time before the deadline that Gubamon-sama gave us. Is there a need to rush things to the point of risking exposure to sunlight?”

“There is,” replied Miles, the high-Rank, Onee-type Vampire with the position of baron. He wiped his mouth with a handkerchief and reapplied the lipstick that he had taken a liking to recently. “You heard the news from your allies inside the fort, didn’t you? The day before yesterday, the roar of a Hurricane Dragon was heard.”

The skies above the Boundary Mountain Range were the territory of Hurricane Dragons. Their roars reached the Scylla territory near the mountain range and even the Sauron Duchy’s fort that had been built adjacent to it.

Such a loud roar wouldn’t be heard unless it was mating season or the Hurricane Dragons were fighting an incredibly powerful enemy, but…

“What about it?” the other Vampire asked. “Nobody knows much about the Hurricane Dragons’ estrous cycles. I’m sure it’s a coincidence.”

“A coincidence, huh… Rather than being a coincidence, I think that the Hurricane Dragons roared because they fought a powerful enemy that tried to cross the Boundary Mountain Range,” said Miles.

Rick listened skeptically to the conversation being exchanged above his head. *Would there really be anyone trying to cross the Boundary Mountain Range?*

Normally, Miles’s concern would be the kind that would be laughed away. But instead of laughing, the Vampires’ voices were suddenly full of fear.

“A-are you saying that the ‘Monstrosity’ of the southern region has come here?!”

“You’re joking, right?! If we were to encounter the Pure-breed-slaying Monstrosity, we could consider our lives forfeit! Tell me you’re joking, Miles!”

“Don’t make such a fuss!” said Miles. “I’m just saying that’s what I think, only based on my intuition! My unique skill is only ‘Warning!’ Also, call me ‘Mai-chan’ while we’re working!”

“Is there some significant meaning to this…?”

“It’s a jinx to make lucky things happen!”

Impossible, something that even the Vampires are afraid of, and Pure-breed-slaying? Just what is this ‘Monstrosity’…?

Rick couldn’t believe his ears, but what he was about to hear was even more unbelievable.

“Honestly speaking, my ‘Warning’ has been going off continuously ever since we received these orders from Gubamon-sama,” Miles said. “So, if we do come across the Monstrosity, obey my orders. I’ve never met any of you before we received this task; this isn’t something that I’m suggesting out of sympathy for you. But if we slip up, we’ll *all* be killed, either by the Monstrosity or Gubamon-sama. Please believe me. Listen, first of all –”

“Tell me, did that person… did Rick kill me?”

Unlike when she was revealed by the Visualization spell, Orbia appeared to be drenched, with water dripping from her. She glared at Raymond with glowing eyes as she asked him this question.

Seeing that the air about her had changed completely, Raymond tried to cover his own mouth with his hands to prevent himself from answering her question. But his body refused to move, as if it had been turned to stone from the neck down.

“R-Rick –”

“Oi! Make him stop! If you don’t, we’ll shoot arrows at the Scylla at the back!” shouted one of Raymond’s subordinates, drowning out Raymond’s words.

Raymond’s men didn’t understand exactly how the Mental Encroachment that Vandalieu was using on Raymond worked, but it seemed they had decided that the situation would become much worse at this rate and had taken independent action.

In response to these shouted words, the other resistance members pointed their weapons at Vandalieu and his companions. This was no act of intimidation; they were completely serious. The faint sounds of bowstrings being drawn came from the trees in the forest.

“You’re planning to use us as hostages? Don’t kid yourselves!” shouted Privel.

“Indeed,” said one of the Scylla guards. “If you mistake us for feeble maidens, you’ll regret it.”

Though they were lacking in combat experience against humans, each of the Scylla guards were capable of fighting multiple knights or D-class adventurers at once, and though Privel was inexperienced, she was capable of using magic. If they combined their strength, they would be able to fight against over a dozen resistance members on even terms.

“Our arrows are coated in a special poison that kills Scylla in an instant! Even a graze will kill you immediately!” Raymond’s subordinate shouted.

“Y-you’re lying! I’ve never heard of that poison!” said Privel.

“We stole it back from a laboratory occupied by the Empire, where it was being developed in absolute secrecy! It’s only natural that you don’t know of it. If you have any doubts, ask that Ghost!”

Privel and the Scylla guards stiffened as they listened to the resistance member’s threat. They had only ever fought against wild animals and weak monsters; arrows that could cause instant death through even light grazes posed a great threat to them.

“Well then, Disinfect,” Vandalieu whispered.

The Disinfect spell was cast on the whole area around Vandalieu. The resistance members could do nothing as they were enveloped in the mysterious circle that expanded outwards from him.

“J-just now, what did you…”

“Just in case, I erased all poison in the area,” said Vandalieu. “The poison on the arrows in your quivers, the poison in your pockets, all of it.”

“W-what, that’s impossible!”

“More importantly, why would we know about that poison’s effects if we were to ask Orbia-san?”

From the resistance's point of view, the Scylla were the main fighting force of Vandalieu's group, so this resistance member had shouted this threat to make them hesitant to move. But in doing so, he had let something slip.

"Answer me one more time," said Orbia. "Did Rick kill me using that poison?!"

Raymond's lips twitched as he tried to resist answering Orbia's terrifying question, but in the end, he answered.

"Th-that's right. This plan involved Rick seducing Scylla, inviting them to places where nobody else was around, killing them by giving them a ring with a poison-covered needle and putting their corpses on display."

Silence filled the air for a moment, as if time had stopped.

"Ah… AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!"

Orbia's spirit form became largely distorted as she let out a scream of grief and rage.

"K-kill them! Kill them all! Save the commander!" one of the resistance members shouted.

"I'm completely on Orbia-san's side here, so please kill everyone except for Raymond," said Vandalieu.

The resistance member and Vandalieu's orders were simultaneous, and both sides began moving at the same time.

The resulting battle was one-sided.

Grunts and dying screams filled the air.

"AHAHAHA!" Kimberley, the former scout of the extermination force who had been electrocuted to death, had turned into a Thunder Ghost, and now he was turning the resistance members into charred remains.

Pete hissed as he appeared from within Vandalieu, skewering a resistance member on his horns and continuing his charge to sandwich his victim against a tree and turn him into a pile of broken pieces of flesh.

“M-monsters?! Where did they come from?!”

“Get the commander and run!”

The members of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, especially those under Raymond’s direct command, were very capable individuals. They were elite fighters; each of them were at least equivalent to D-class adventurers and over half of them were as strong as C-class adventurers.

As former knights of the Knights’ Order that Raymond had belonged to, they were more suited to fighting on the frontlines, but they had plenty of experience when it came to battling other people.

However, they did not have enough strength to cope with the unexpected situation of powerful monsters of all kinds of races appearing and attacking them.

And their commander, Raymond, had become incapable of doing anything right at the beginning of the battle. Because all of these men were those who followed Raymond because of his leadership skills, there wasn’t anyone who could immediately step forward and take command in his place, though things might have been different if Vice-captain Rick had been there.

Some were trying to protect Raymond, some were battling the monsters and others were trying to attack Vandalieu. They were all acting separately.

“Here, Boulder Smash!”

A resistance member who had tried to attack Vandalieu was crushed by Pauvina’s steel mace and martial skill, then swallowed by the Blood Slime Kühl.

On the left side of the road, Pete and the Thunder Ghost were rampaging around with lightning flying everywhere, and on the right, the flaming Ghosts led by Princess Levia were turning the enemies to ash along with the trees that they were hiding in.

Incidentally, the resistance members that had spread out behind Vandalieu’s group had been annihilated by Cemetery Bees, and they were currently being turned into meatballs by the bees’ powerful jaws that had been capable of cutting straight through their metal armor. They were being greedy about producing food for the queen bee’s reincarnation, who would soon be hatching from her egg.

“D-did you really need us here?” Privel asked.

“…W-we were supposed to be your escorts,” said one of the Scylla guards.

Click-click-click.

The Sheep Worm, Pain, who had fluffy wool growing from his body, was protecting the Scylla as they watched these events unfolding with dumbfounded expressions on their faces.

Vandalieu had already explained his Insect Binding Technique skill to them while he was explaining the plan… the plan to lure Raymond out and extract the truth from him.

However, they hadn’t imagined that this skill would provide such overwhelming fighting strength.

“By the way, won’t this cause a forest fire?” Privel asked.

“No need to worry. Everything flammable within our range has already been burnt up, so the fire won’t spread!” Princess Levia said, full of confidence.

“I-I see, then it’s fine, isn’t it?”

Behind Levia was a hill that had been turned into nothing more than an inclined surface of ash and charred remains. There certainly had been numerous resistance members there, but Privel couldn’t even see if there were any bones left.

And then Pauvina called out to the dumbfounded Scylla.

“Onee-chans, you can’t let your guards down,” she told them. “While there are still enemies left alive, you have to stay focused. The moment you think you’ve won is the one that you’re in the most danger. It’s called Zanshin*.”

TLN: A term used in Japanese martial arts that refers to a state of relaxed mental awareness.*

“Y-yeah,” said Privel. “You’re right. We have to stay focused.”

“Yes, it is not good for us to let our guards down.”

“Zanshin, huh? I understand.”

The aftermath of Levia and her Ghosts’ battle was surreal, with even the burnt smell fading away. But Pauvina was holding a mace covered in blood and pieces of flesh. It seemed that the Scylla regained their sense of reality after seeing her and hearing her vivid words.

“Wait, more importantly, what about Orbia-san?!” Having returned to her senses, Privel looked back towards Orbia.

Orbia had already stopped screaming.

“I’ll…. kill you!”

Her appearance was considerably different to how she appeared when she was alive or when she was still a powerless spirit.

Other than being wet, the upper half of her body and her face hadn’t changed, but her long hair and the lower half of her body had become liquid.

Having been engulfed in this liquid, Raymond was coughing and foaming at the nostrils and mouth.

Vandalieu exhaled. “I get the feeling that I’ve used more Mana than with Princess Levia and the others, who were already Ghosts to begin with. Ah, please stop doing that once you’re satisfied,” he said to Orbia. “I’m still planning to use him.”

“Why?!” Orbia demanded. “Because of this guy…!”

“We can’t just leave that Rick person alone, can we?” said Vandalieu.

“That’s… true. Alright.”

Orbia waved her liquid tentacles and Raymond collapsed onto the ground like a heap of trash. With the whites of his eyes showing, he coughed out water from his lungs.

It seemed that he was mostly unconscious, but Vandalieu tied his hands and feet with threads just in case.

“Looking into my eyes and trying to persuade me was a mistake, wasn’t it?” Vandalieu

murmured.

Raymond had stronger willpower than the average person. He could even be described as tenacious. But the reason Vandalieu had been able to brainwash him with the Mental Encroachment skill in such a short amount of time was because he had been staring intently into Vandalieu's eyes to try and win him over.

If he had talked without making eye contact, there would have been almost no effect.

But it seemed that he had very much desired to have Vandalieu join him; he had been so focused on paying attention to Vandalieu's behavior that he had received the full effects of the Mental Encroachment skill.

Pete had captured a resistance member alive and was carrying him over here, holding the man's clothes with his mouth. His legs were twisted in directions that they were not supposed to twist in, but perhaps his rage had numbed his pain; he managed to glare at Vandalieu without letting out a single scream.

"You bastard! How dare you do this to the commander, to everyone!" the man shouted. "Commander Raymond is pivotal to the resistance movement! Can't you understand that killing the commander would only make the Empire's army happy?!"

"That's why I've stopped him from being killed for now, isn't it?" said Vandalieu.

"For now?! Release him, right now! Because you are too focused on supporting the Scylla, you are losing sight of the bigger picture! Rather than regret the sacrifices of the few, you must consider the many –"

"…Liiick."

"W-what are you… kah."

Vandalieu licked the wide-open eyes of the man, and the man collapsed onto the ground.

"D-did you kill him?" Privel asked.

"No, that's too troublesome, so I just administered a poison that stops him from moving through his eyeballs. He can't move, but he's fully conscious," said Vandalieu, having thought that conversing with the man would be a waste of time.

Putting his tongue back in his mouth, he approached the motionless man and whispered into his ear.

“I will have you do something for me. Please return to your base and tell them that if they value Raymond’s life, Vice-captain Rick and all of the men involved in the Scylla serial-killing case must come to the designated location. That location is –”

Using the Mental Encroachment skill to make the man believe that Raymond would be killed if he didn’t fulfil this task, Vandalieu removed the poison in his body and healed the bones in his legs. The moment this was complete, he ran off as fast as he could.

He was oblivious to the parasitic insect and parasitic plant that had been put in his body to track his location, as well as the numerous Lemures that were floating in the air above him.

“I could have the spirits of the resistance members or Raymond himself tell me where their base is, but there’s no guarantee that Rick will be there,” said Vandalieu. “It’s best to have one of his allies draw him out.”

“I see! Live bait has no use if it’s not alive! Van-kun, you’re so cool!” Orbia exclaimed.

“Rather than being cool, I get the feeling that it’s a bit cowardly… but similar methods are often used to capture bandits, so it’s probably fine,” said Privel, agreeing to Vandalieu’s method after some thought. “But I wonder if this Rick person is going to come?” she said doubtfully.

“I’m sure he will,” one of the Scylla guards reassured her. “I don’t know anything about him other than his appearance, but this Raymond should be an important person for their resistance organization. He isn’t just their leader; since he has the blood of the duke’s family, nobody can replace him. They won’t abandon him so easily.”

“Is that how it is?” said Privel.

As the Scylla race wasn’t very familiar with the principles of lineage, this was something that Privel couldn’t understand straight away. But it was true that Raymond possessing the blood of the Sauron family had great effects.

It made Raymond a symbol to the people and gave him persuasive power over the noblemen of the Kingdom. It was also the reason that these men had named themselves the ‘Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.’

The moment they lost Raymond, no matter how much organizational power the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army had, it would become nothing more than a rebellious group of mediocre power.

“And I think that person… that guy… Rick. I think he really adores his older brother. No matter what we were talking about, he would always go back to his Ani-ue.”

“Orbia-oneesan, I think that goes beyond being a bro-con,” Pauvina said with honesty.

“Back then, I just thought he was a good person who thought highly of his onii-san~!” Orbia shouted, spraying water droplets everywhere. It seemed that she was still emotionally unstable. “And one more thing! Rick is this guy’s half-brother; Raymond is the only illegitimate child of the duke’s family! Rick can’t replace him!”

“Then it seems likely that there will definitely be some kind of reaction,” said Vandalieu. “Let’s go back to Periveil-san’s place for now, and then head for the designated meeting location… back to the camp.”

- **Name:** Orbia
- **Rank:** 4
- **Race:** Water Ghost
- **Level:** 1
- **Passive skills:**
    - Spirit Form: Level 5
    - Mental Corruption: Level 6
    - Water Attribute Nullification
    - Liquid Manipulation: Level 5
    - Materialization: Level 5
    - Augmented Mana: Level 2
- **Active skills:**
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 2
    - Fishing: Level 3
    - Housework: Level 2
    - Dancing: Level 4
    - Projectile Fire: Level 1
- **Unique skills:**
    - Merrebeveil's Divine Protection

Monster explanation

【Water Ghost】

Monsters that are said to form from spirits that die close to water with deep lingering attachment and hatred in their hearts. This is one of the reasons why spirits have long said to gather near water; they are more commonly seen outside of Dungeons and Devil's Nests than other superior Ghost races.

Their main method of attack is to drag their victims into water or drown them using their own body parts that have become liquid. Also, powerful Water Ghosts can fire their liquified spirit forms as projectile weapons and display masterful use of water-attribute magic.

Due to these qualities, many of them possess memories from when they were alive, but these memories are only those related to their lingering attachments and hatred.

In many cases, all other memories are forgotten.

Their personalities are significantly distorted, and many Water Ghosts attack others indiscriminately in order to create more Water Ghosts. Even those who were friends before the Water Ghosts died are unable to talk sense into them.

It is said that those who are killed by someone they love and discarded near water without being properly buried become particularly ferocious and powerful Water Ghosts.

Orbia's memory of when she was alive has been mostly preserved. And although she is an Undead, she possesses the divine protection of a goddess and is under the effects of Vandalieu's Guidance: Demon Path skill, so she has become far more powerful than an ordinary Water Ghost.

Side Chapter 11
Those squirming in other worlds (Earth, Origin)

"Therefore, I –"

"On this occasion –"

"GRRRRR!"

"Following the precedent –"

Zuruwarn, the god of space and creation, the god with the form of a grotesque, four-headed lion, was busy negotiating with a god of another world.

…Though these were supposed to be negotiations, Zuruwarn himself had started to wonder whether this really was negotiating at some point.

Could a repeated exchange of persuasive words, humble requests, trading offers, provocations and verbal abuse be called negotiating?

If the overall goal is to negotiate, then it could be called negotiating regardless of the way words are spoken in the process, I suppose? Zuruwarn thought.

The one he was negotiating with was the god of 'Earth,' the world in which Vandalieu of Lambda and the Bravers in Origin had lived their first lives.

Though the appearance of this god was grotesque even in Zuruwarn's eyes, it was also tremendous.

At a glance, it looked as if every single god, hero, divine servant, fairy, ghost and deified historical figure from every religion, every legend and every myth had been gathered in a single room.

And yet they were all a single god.

There were countless worlds, and there were numerous ways worlds and gods could

come into existence.

The most common way was the pattern of a god existing in the beginning and creating a world. The world that Zuruwarn came from, 'Lambda,' fell under this category.

The second most common was a god from another world leading his followers and migrating to an already-existing world. The Demon King Guduranis had led the evil gods in an invasion on the world of Lambda; if he had emerged victorious, Lambda would have fallen under this category.

And the least common was the one that applied to 'Earth.'

Living organisms would spontaneously arise in an already-existing world, evolve, and then the god would be created by the religions of those organisms.

In a way, it was the purest form of religion.

"Judging from this –"

"We must also consider our position –"

"You are too noisy! Silence!"

"I want to request you to do something about it, just like this, I beg of you."

That was why the 'god of Earth' was troublesome and complicated in various ways.

It could be bluntly described as someone with a huge number of personalities, with all of those personalities constantly displaying themselves at once. And his divinity only grew as the people of Earth prayed to new gods.

And because there were so many of these personalities, this god rarely influenced what happened on the world's surface like the gods of Lambda did. It was in a state of gods and demons of different degrees of divinity being right next to each other. Their individual divinities interfered with each other, and in the end, it was only able to produce small miracles from time to time.

The gods who had lost their believers and whose legends and myths had faded away would slowly disappear as if melting or fuse with other gods, but it seemed that recently, the birth of all kinds of new gods was faster than the rate at which the older

gods were disappearing.

Seeing that even the subjects of fearful urban legends and characters from anime, comic books and games were being added to the god, Zuruwarn wished he could share some of that creativity with the people of Lambda, but couldn't the god suppress its growth a little?

The negotiations between the god of Earth *a hundred thousand years ago and negotiations with the god of Origin went smoothly, but… I will not have many opportunities to experience such complicated negotiations, so perhaps I ought to enjoy this.*

Zuruwarn, who was able to find enjoyment at any time, continued his negotiations with the 'god of Earth.'

Murakami Junpei was sitting on a bench, eating a sandwich that he had bought while listening to the news coming from the radio at a food stall.

"Sensei, why are you still listening to that radio?" asked Tsuchiya Kanako, who was sitting opposite him.

"I told you before, didn't I?" said Murakami. "If we use the internet, there's a chance of being hacked, but if we use a radio, we can't be hacked. Also, stop it with the 'Sensei.'"

"Eh, but Sensei is Sensei, right?"

On Earth, Murakami had been the teacher in charge of the field trip. Also, he was the homeroom teacher of the class that Amamiya Hiroto, who was now Vandalieu, Naruse Narumi, Minami Asagi and Tsuchiya Kanako were in.

It wasn't wrong for Kanako and Murakami's other former students to refer to him as 'Sensei' even after being reincarnated in Origin, but Murakami himself didn't like this.

"I've never taught you guys anything in this world," said Murakami. "We're even mostly the same age, aren't we? I'll tell you this now because I have the time to say it, but just because I was a teacher in my previous life doesn't mean you should force that title on me now."

“Ah, come to think of it, you wanted to be a professional athlete instead of a teacher in your previous life?” said Kanako.

“That’s right,” said Murakami. “Being a pro tennis player and playing internationally was my dream. I didn’t have enough talent to push through my parents’ opposition to it, though.”

If the salesperson at the food stall or other customers were to hear Murakami’s words, they might have been bewildered. A sport by the name of “tennis” didn’t exist in Origin.

However, there was a sport that was played all over the world, involving hitting a ball between two people using racquets. But as the use of certain types of magic was also allowed, it was a battle of both physique and magic, so it was a sport with quite different rules from the tennis of Earth.

After being reincarnated in Origin and experiencing his second youth, Murakami had aimed to become a professional in that sport. Rodcorte had given him an aptitude and talent for magic, as well as physical abilities, reflexes and perception of moving objects that were superior to those that he had possessed on Earth. And by secretly using his cheat-like ability as well, despite having been an average tennis player during his school days on Earth, Murakami had become such a good player as a student in Origin that even professionals had reached out to him.

…But that was all in the past now.

“But you used to be an idol as well, right?” said Murakami.

“Uwah~!” Kanako gasped. “You’re going to bring that up, Sensei?”

“I’m not your Sensei,” said Murakami. “And don’t make up that tone, you middle-aged woman.”

On Earth, Tsuchiya Kanako had been an ordinary high school girl, but in Origin, she had been a well-known idol. But rather than this being due to reasons such as her having a far superior physical appearance to the one she had on Earth, being exceptionally talented at singing, dancing and acting or being powerfully promoted by her producers, it was all due to her cheat-like ability.

And this was all in the past for her as well.

The reason that their dreams had been cut short was because of *Amemiya Hiroto's* activities. He had founded the nonprofit organization of the reincarnated individuals, the 'Bravers,' and openly announced to the world that they had special abilities. Because of this, it had become clear that Murakami and Kanako possessed powers that were different from magic, powers that couldn't be explained by the principles that existed in Origin.

There was no way of proving that these two had used their powers during their matches and auditions, but with the existence of their powers widely known, they had become unable to work in their respective industries.

At the time, *Amemiya Hiroto* had said, "If we continue to only misuse our powers and that misuse becomes known, we will have too many enemies to survive in this world." Reluctantly, Murakami and Kanako had agreed. It was true that there had been some people trying to investigate Murakami and Kanako to try and figure out the secret behind their success. Murakami in particular had been suspected by other players to be using some special magic that they didn't know of.

Even if *Amemiya* hadn't established the Bravers, it might have only been a matter of time before Murakami's cheating was discovered.

And for a little while afterwards, the two of them satisfied their vanity through the Bravers' activities. They received attention by doing things like disaster relief work, and the attention and applause they got when they put on shows displaying some of their cheat-like abilities was, in a way, similar to the attention that a professional athlete and idol would receive.

But two incidents shook the world and changed these circumstances.

The first was the death attribute extinction incident, in which the Undead at the secret laboratory in a military nation, which was now known by a different name, that had been exporting all kinds of products to the rest of the world. After this incident, the Bravers' activities and nature as an organization changed.

They went from simply being heroes who rescued people from disasters to performing military activities and engaging in the killing of other human beings, things that they didn't want to be involved in. Even if they used hollow justifications like saying that they were solving humanitarian problems, or fighting wars against terrorism, it didn't change the fact that they were engaging in bloody battles to the

death.

And the second incident was what the media, tabloid newspapers and talk shows had dubbed the ‘fallen hero incident,’ where Kaidou Kanata had been murdered by Shihouin Mari.

The crimes that Kanata had been committing were not such light crimes that some might defend him as a ‘dark hero’ or something of the sort; they were horrid, bloody acts that only scum would carry out.

Fortunately, they had come to light because Shihouin Mari, a fellow Braver, had murdered him. By painting her as the heroine of a tragedy, the public image of the Bravers worsening was avoided to some extent. But many began to doubt the ability of the leader, *Amemiya Hiroto*, to manage the Bravers. They were no longer the perfect heroes they once were in the eyes of society.

And then, before long, Murakami and around ten other members left the Bravers.

He had invited those who had been his students on Earth, asking them if there was any reason to keep being heroes and deny themselves from the riches they could have for the sake of an organization that had no integrity or innocence.

That was when the radio delivered news that a terrorist bombing had occurred at the Bravers’ headquarters.

“By the way, did you manage to kill Aran and Izumi-san?” Kanako asked. “They’ve still only announced that there were ‘many wounded.’”

As Aran and Izumi had concluded after their deaths, this incident was a crime carried out by the Eighth Guidance, the terrorist organization that Murakami and his followers had joined.

“They should be dead,” said Murakami. “The ‘Gazer’ said it as well, didn’t he? That those two would be killed by my hands that day. And that ‘Enma*’ assured us that they were dead as well.”

TLN: This word is read “enma” in Japanese but refers to Yama, the Hindu god of death who judges the dead.*

The ‘Gazer’ was a former member of the Bravers who had left the organization with

Murakami… or rather, been kidnapped by Murakami and his followers. She had the 'Future Prediction' ability, and though she couldn't control it, it was a perfect prediction ability unlike the 'Oracle' and 'Calculation' abilities. It gave her premonitions of important, unforeseen events that involved her.

But she had been unable to withstand the grotesque images that she saw in her premonitions with the Bravers and turned to drugs; she was completely addicted and had essentially become a disabled person, long before Kanata's evil deeds had come to light.

She had been kidnapped from the medical facility that she had been placed in, and now she was a puppet of 'Pluto'… perhaps brainwashed, Pluto's devout follower.

And 'Enma' was one of the Eighth Guidance's members. For some reason, he apparently knew the names and faces of people who had died in the past. Since he wasn't one of the people who had reincarnated from Earth, it was likely to be the effect of some kind of spell, but Murakami and the others didn't know the exact details.

"There wouldn't be any reason for Gazer and Enma to lie," Murakami continued. "And we even used Kanata's memento that we went to a lot of effort to preserve. If we failed to kill them it would be a big loss."

"Definitely," Kanako agreed. "Still, I wonder what Pluto-san and the others want to achieve? I thought it was revenge at first, but they seem too indifferent for that. But then, they don't seem to be doing things out of a strange sense of justice, either. They kill people for reasons that I can't figure out, but then they go and do charitable work as well."

"Who knows," said Murakami. "I don't know what goes on in the heads of fanatics. Well, it's fine as long as they keep letting us use them until our work is done."

Having finished eating his sandwich, Murakami scrunched up the wrapping paper and threw it in a random direction.

"Is that a disrespectful act to avoid the Oracle?" Kanako asked. "Was littering a crime in these areas?"

"Yeah, you get fined for it," said Murakami. "Well, you would if there was anyone enforcing it."

The ‘Oracle’ answered the questions of its owner, Endou Kouya, but Murakami knew that the way it answered the questions was very inflexible.

That was why these two had killed Shimada and Aran with a bomb right after committing some minor crimes, and committed minor crimes again before disappearing.

And the two of them disappeared into the crowd now as well.

The international terrorist organization, the Eighth Guidance, was quite different to other terrorists.

Their actions were entirely focused on destroying institutions conducting research on death-attribute magic and murdering the researchers. And the murder of the Bravers. These were selectively-conducted crimes.

Yes, selectively.

No matter what political or religious objectives terrorists may have, the reason the amount of support that they could receive was limited was because their crimes were carried out indiscriminately. Bombs, biological weapons, poison and, in Origin, magic. The victims caught up in the tragedies caused by these methods could be elderly people, children, pregnant women and even the friends, acquaintances and relatives of terrorist supporters who happened to be within the vicinity of such incidents.

In some cases, the terrorist supporters themselves could become victims. This was the reason.

However, the Eighth Guidance was extreme in the selection of its targets. The only people it had directly killed were the employees of research institutions and the security guards, bodyguards and soldiers defending them. Only Shimada Izumi and Machida Aran of the Bravers had been killed, along with staff members who worked for the Bravers. Not a single scratch had been caused to anyone uninvolved.

And in addition to business with sponsors to secure funds to keep the organization going, the Eighth Guidance also engaged in philanthropic work that wouldn’t yield them a single cent in profit.

Most importantly, they did not desire new members.

Thus, the Bravers and people of the criminal investigation organizations who were specialized in dealing with the Eighth Guidance considered them to be something like a very peculiar cult rather than a terrorist organization.

“According to them, we’re a cult and I’m the woman who founded it. An interesting way of putting it, isn’t it?” said Pluto, a young girl with long black hair, wearing a white one-piece dress.

She was sitting on a sunbathing chair at the poolside, talking to the white-skinned man lying on the one next to her.

The man’s glasses gave him an intellectual appearance, but his beard and chest hair made him look wild. At a glance, he looked like an elite businessman being served by his young Asian lover.

But the index finger of his right hand was curled loosely around the trigger of a gun.

“Yeah…” he murmured quietly.

Ignoring him, Pluto continued. “What’s so interesting, you ask? Because I’ve never explained anything, warned against anything or given guidance to anyone,” she said. “There’s no such thing as a religious leader who doesn’t give instructions, is there? And I’m not a leader or guide or anything in the first place. I am treated preciously because my body is frail, and I am relatively attractive, so there are simply a lot of opportunities for images of my face to be sent to the media and displayed on the internet.”

“And because you’re so free, you do some work using your brain and have your say in all kinds of things. Then you’re a leader,” a man said as he appeared. His head from his forehead to the back of his head appeared to be swollen, and he was carrying a baby that seemed to be unconscious. There was a severed tube hanging from the child, swaying back and forth.

“Jack, that child is next?” Pluto asked.

“Yeah, I suppose it has cerebral palsy? I don’t know the details, but just like Jack*, it’s a friend that is neither dead nor alive.”

TLN: This is the character called Jack speaking; he refers to himself as Jack.*

"Then say farewell to that friend," said Pluto.

As Pluto pointed her white hand towards the baby, something resembling black smoke rose from it and was absorbed by Pluto's hand.

"Yeah, I'll say farewell. See you," said the man called Jack before disappearing silently with the baby still in his arms.

Taking no notice of this, Pluto touched the face of the man next to her. As her skin made contact with his, life rapidly drained out of the man. His skin was losing its tone, his eyes were sinking into their sockets and his cheeks were becoming hollow.

"S-stop it…" the man gasped. "We won't get involved with you people, the Eighth Guidance, anymore. I'll turn over a new leaf, I won't kill anyone ever again, I swear, so please don't suck any more… from… me…"

He was an assassin hired by a certain rich person, with orders to kill Pluto and retrieve her dead body.

The man had been known to be a capable assassin, but now he was a weak man in the position of begging Pluto for his life.

Pluto burst into laughter, as if she had heard a very entertaining joke. "Fufufu, when I asked you if you felt guilt over killing people, didn't you answer that you're just a tool to be used? Since you're a tool, you don't feel guilt. The one who paid money to use you is at fault, you said. Since you admitted that you're just a tool, you can't just stop working of your own will, can you?"

Despair spread across the man's eyes that were watching Pluto's happy laughter, and then they became hollow.

"That's right, you're dead. Good night," said Pluto.

"Oh, he died?" asked Jack as he reappeared, showing his white teeth in a smile. "But that's perfect; it looks like that child just now was the last one."

Jack was known as 'Jack-o'-lantern.' Just like the Jack who tricked the devil and wasn't accepted by Heaven or Hell*, he wandered the world… or rather, he moved around the

world as if he could use the space-attribute spell, Teleportation.

TLN: This refers to Stingy Jack/Drunk Jack/Flaky Jack/Jack of the Lantern, an Irish mythical character associated with Halloween. The jack-o'-lantern may be derived from this character. See Wikipedia for more information.*

However, his teleportation destination could only be beside members of the Eighth Guidance or those who were seriously ill in unconscious states, with not long left to live.

However, he was also able to teleport with the patients, and then return them to the place they originally were.

He had just done that, bringing a terminally ill baby here before returning it.

"That was the last? But I wanted to gather a little more 'death.'"

Pluto. By stealing the 'death' and vitality of others, she could heal those who were on the verge of death and push the cost of this act on another person's vitality.

The truth was that most of the philanthropic work conducted by the Eighth Guidance, as well as the medical treatment that gained them funds from its sponsors, was done through this power of Pluto's.

"Still, you're horrible. Did you forget that I said that I'll be using it later so you shouldn't suck up so much?" complained the man who was supposed to be dead as he got up. And then he moved his neck and shoulders around and made clicking noises, as if checking the condition of his body. "Ah, my body's so stiff. The black assassin that I was in before, the one who used to be a marine, was in much better condition."

"I'm sorry, 'Shade,'" said Pluto. "That one is white and has bad eyes, so I didn't think you'd like him anyway."

"His eyes? I don't think they're that bad, but… these glasses are just for show, huh. They're a prop for his disguise."

The assassin… or rather, Shade, who had possessed the assassin's corpse, put his glasses down on the poolside table.

Shade had once been 'protected' by the Bravers and then later accommodated at a

laboratory, where he was turned into a life-form consisting of a mind without a body, similar to a spirit. He was capable of possessing very freshly-deceased corpses and use their bodies as his own.

Pluto let out a disinterested noise.

“You don’t seem very interested,” said Shade. “So, what you said just now is an excuse after all?”

“More importantly, what about the other people here?” asked Jack. “Did you kill them properly? Jack is curious.”

“Yeah, Berserk and Baba Yaga worked hard,” said Shade. “Valkyrie was happy, too. I suppose she’ll be staying inside with Isis for a while?”

This mansion that included a pool did not, in fact, belong to the Eighth Guidance; it was the property of a boss of a certain criminal organization. This boss, whose organization was known to be a militant organization, had tried to seize Pluto’s power, so Pluto and her allies had retaliated.

“Jack thinks that he should have stayed satisfied with paying money and having his illness cured by Pluto,” said Jack.

“It’s because of that greed that he was running a criminal organization,” said Pluto.

“That’s a narrow way of looking at it, Pluto,” said Shade. “After all, we’re a criminal organization, too.”

“In that case, it’s not a narrow way of looking at it, it’s the truth,” said Pluto. “We’re greedy, after all.”

The objective of the Eighth Guidance… was to die.

After living hellish lives in the laboratory, they had been saved by codename: ‘Undead’… Amamiya Hiroto, who had gone on to become Vandalieu. Everything the Eighth Guidance did was to act in accordance with his will.

But Pluto and her companions had only been in direct contact with the ‘Undead’ for a few minutes, and they hadn’t even exchanged any words. They had simply been saved; their wounds had been healed, their missing limbs restored and even the side-effects

of the experiments had been removed to some extent, and then they had been set free. During all of this, the Mana surrounding the 'Undead' had flowed into them, fusing with them and becoming a part of them. That was all.

From these few actions, Pluto and her companions had guessed the will of the 'Undead,' combining even their own desires and delusions with it to produce what was the compass guiding their actions.

They had attacked death-attribute magic research facilities so that there wouldn't be any more victims like themselves.

The reason they were so thoroughly selective about their targets was because the 'Undead' had limited its victims to those that it had desired revenge upon.

They targeted the Bravers because they had treated the 'Undead' as a monstrosity and disposed of it arbitrarily.

And finally, they would die.

They would die and go to the same place as the 'Undead.' That was their wish.

Pluto and her companions had no idea what kind of intentions the 'Undead' had when it saved them. They didn't know whether it had felt sympathy for them, felt some kind of sense of justice or whether it had intended to use them as pawns afterwards; they didn't know anything.

The reason that Pluto and her companions were offering everything they had to the 'Undead' that had already been destroyed despite this was because for them, there was no higher being than the 'Undead.'

None of the members of the Eighth Guidance had any blood-related family members. They were all orphans and children who had been sold, gathered at the laboratory for the purpose of carrying out research into death-attribute magic.

As guinea pigs, they had suffered cruel experiments, been assigned numbers and isolated in cage-like rooms. They felt grief over the changes that their bodies had been forced to undergo. No matter how much fear they felt or how much they begged for mercy, they could only listen to the footsteps of those who would ruin them.

After the annihilation of the 'Undead,' they had been unable to do anything, and the

Bravers had sent them to international organizations to be protected. Yes, protected.

They had been managed by numbers, separated from their companions that they were now aware that they had, locked up in cage-like rooms and had their bodies tampered with by researchers who repeatedly said, “This is all to help cure you,” as if these words were some kind of incantation.

And it was only because of the Mana that the ‘Undead’ had given them that they had been able to escape this new hell.

Justice was never applied in relation to Pluto and her companions; only unrelated people were punished and unrelated people were saved.

But love was only ever poured elsewhere; no hope shone for them. Despite that, despair was always lurking nearby.

Despite them being exploited for humanity’s sake, they hadn’t been included as members of humanity.

It was as if they were foreign objects in this world, wasn’t it?

The sole exception was the ‘Undead.’ Even if him rescuing Pluto and her companions had been a foolish act in the literal sense of the word*, it was the greatest sign of love that they had ever received.

TLN: Literally, the word for “foolish” here means “no love for others,” so it would also be interpreted as “indifferent.”*

If they could become closer to such a being, even death would be bliss… no, death was the only bliss.

“But we can’t simply die,” said Pluto. “Because that would mean throwing away the lives that person gave us. So let’s fight as much as we can and kill the Bravers who killed him.”

“That’s why we accepted Murakami and the others as well, isn’t it? Jack hates them all except Gazer,” said Jack.

As Jack said, the reason they had welcomed Murakami and the other former Bravers into the Eighth Guidance was in order to fan the flames of hostility between them and

Amemiya Hiroto's remaining Bravers.

There wasn't anything happening behind the scenes; it wasn't a complicated, large-scale conspiracy. There was nothing of the sort.

This was just the Eighth Guidance's plan to drag as many down with them as possible.

"Jack and Gazer get along well, you know," said Shade. "What will we do? Are we going to spare her?"

Gazer hadn't been directly involved in the incident with the 'Undead,' and though she had essentially been in a half-dead state, Pluto had even gone as far as to regenerate her dead brain cells. Shade thought it possible that Pluto wouldn't mind sparing her.

Considering that she was suicidal, even if they let her go, it was likely that she would go and hang herself or cut her own wrists.

But Jack shook his head. "Jack doesn't want to. Jack wants to take her with us; that person will definitely like her, too. He'll forgive us."

It seemed that Jack wanted to take her with them because they got along well.

"I see, then let's take her with us," said Pluto. "But you have to tell her properly that she mustn't commit suicide until then."

"Yeah, alright! Jack will tell her not to cut her wrists anymore!" said Jack.

Jack had said that the last time as well… Incidentally, Gazer had made her tenth suicide attempt yesterday. Pluto and her companions were actually impressed that she hadn't died for real yet.

"Has Enma confirmed that the one who died is the real boss and not a double?" asked Pluto.

"He has," said Shade. "It's the real one, he said. The double died in a struggle three months ago."

"I see. Then shall we go back? After we choose a souvenir for Ereshkigal* who's been waiting for us," said Pluto.

TLN: In Mesopotamian mythology, Ereshkigal was the goddess of Irkalla, the land of the dead or underworld.*

“Maybe the dry-cured ham that was in the fridge will do?” Jack suggested.

The final day that the Eighth Guidance desired was drawing closer.

“When that time comes, we’ll definitely know if that dream was just a dream or something that will come true. Ah, I’m looking forward to it,” said Pluto.

Chapter 113
Target Booking

Vandalieu and his companions returned to Periveil's village, explained that they had captured Raymond alive and spread this news so that the village would be wary of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.

And while Periveil and the others were comforting Orbia, who had become a Ghost, Vandalieu headed to the village's Job-changing room.

"So you're the child that Privel chose. Children are so precocious these days," said a man who greeted Vandalieu at the boathouse where the Job-changing chamber was. This man was Privel's uncle, the younger brother of Periveil's most recent husband who possessed the blood of King Sauron.

He was a human with green hair and eyes that were unusual for his race, around his late middle-age years. Vandalieu had the feeling that his eyes and features resembled those of Privel and her cousin Orbia, but he was a gentle-looking man and it was difficult to imagine that he possessed the blood of a royal family.

"Rather than being chosen, I didn't know about that ritual," said Vandalieu.

"That is also a rather classic way to meet," said Privel's uncle.

It seemed that approaching and calling out to Scylla while being unaware of the Scylla courting ritual was a classic beginning to a romance. Using an example from Earth, it was a cliché equivalent to a transfer student turning a corner and colliding with a girl who was on her way to school.

"Those are just old folk tales now, though," Privel's uncle added. "Adventurers who come around here to complete requests and merchants who come to do business all know about it. But if you came from the other side of the Boundary Mountain Range, I suppose you couldn't help not knowing. By the way, this is a bit late, but please take care of Orbia-nee."

"Isn't she your niece?" Vandalieu asked.

“Yeah. I personally thought it would be better to tell her that later, you see,” said Privel’s uncle. “Even my brother was mindful of it, because she was a daughter who came so late. But Orbia-nee doesn’t have anyone other than you now, does she?”

In fact, now that Orbia had become a Ghost, the only ones who could keep her company other than Vandalieu were other Undead. Normal Spiritualists apparently made sure not to get too involved with spirits and Undead.

By becoming a Rank 4 Water Ghost, Orbia had already become unable to return to the circle of transmigration of her own will. She could only linger in this world, or be purified… exterminated.

And most importantly, Vandalieu’s Mana was essential for her to maintain her sanity. Vandalieu had never explained this, though. Perhaps Privel’s Uncle had somehow sensed that this was the case.

“I don’t know what she was to the resistance, but to me, she was like a kind older cousin,” Privel’s uncle continued. “She played with me a lot when I was a child. I want you to support her in the years to come.”

“I think I’m the one who will be supported by her, but I will do my best for as long as I’m alive,” said Vandalieu.

“Yeah, I’m counting on you. As I thought, children these days are precocious… no, dependable.”

The two of them exchanged a handshake and then Vandalieu entered the Job-changing room.

Perhaps because the pattern stayed the same despite a difference in races or perhaps because the Scylla had made it easy to use for the men as well as the Scylla, the Job-changing room was the same as the Job-changing rooms in other places.

“Now then… will there be new ones?” Vandalieu wondered. With the Experience Points from the Rank 10 Hurricane Dragon and the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, Vandalieu had finally leveled his Demon Guider Job to level 100.

Vandalieu reached out and touched the crystal.

『Jobs that can be selected:【Archenemy】【Zombie Maker】【Corpse Demon

Commander】【Disease Demon】【Spirit Warrior】【Whip Tongue Calamity】【Vengeful Berserker】【Dead Spirit Mage】【Dark Healer】【Labyrinth Creator】【Demon King User】【Magic Cannoneer】【Golem Creator】【Dark King Mage】』

"Dark King Mage, huh. An upgraded Job for Death-Attribute Mage, maybe… From the way it's written, I get the feeling that it seems more normal than Death-Attribute Mage. Not that I think there's much difference. So then, what should I choose for my next Job?"

The only remaining Jobs were dangerous-sounding Jobs and upgraded Jobs like Golem Creator and Dark King Mage.

One of the upgraded Jobs would likely offer him more bonuses to everything. However, being upgraded Jobs, it seemed that they would be difficult to level. And the other Jobs were almost certainly Jobs that were related to Vandalieu's current skills.

And Vandalieu was planning to register at the Adventurers' Guild in a way that his Status wouldn't be seen, by using the Commerce Guild. It probably wouldn't be a problem to take a few dangerous-sounding Jobs.

"Change Jobs to Archenemy."

『You have changed Jobs to Archenemy!』

『Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed has increased to Medium!』

『You have acquired the unique skill 'Hostility!'』

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 8 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】,【Eclipse King】,【Second Coming of the Demon King】,【Guardian of the Cultivation Villages】,【Holy Son of Vida】,【Monstrosity】,【Scaled King】【Tentacle King】(NEW!)
- **Job**: Archenemy

- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster, Demon Guider
- **Attributes**:
    - Vitality: 1566
    - Mana: 1,061,886,667 (+212,377,333)
    - Strength: 729
    - Agility: 648
    - Stamina: 928
    - Intelligence: 1,909
- **Passive skills**:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 5
    - Rapid Healing: Level 8
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 9
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 7
    - Magic Resistance: Level 5
    - Dark Vision
    - Demon Path Enticement: Level 1
    - Chant Revocation: Level 6
    - Guidance: Demon Path: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 6
    - Strengthen Subordinates: Level 6
    - Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 5
    - Enhanced Agility: Level 3
    - Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 5
    - Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed: Medium (LEVEL UP!)
    - Enhanced Physical Ability (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 4
    - Thread Refining: Level 3
    - Mana Enlargement: Level 2
- **Active skills**:
    - Bloodwork: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 7
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 8
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 7
    - Mana Control: Level 6
    - Spirit Form: Level 7
    - Carpentry: Level 6
    - Engineering: Level 4
    - Cooking: Level 5

    - Alchemy: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 6
    - Soul Break: Level 8
    - Multi-Cast: Level 5
    - Long-distance Control: Level 7
    - Surgery: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Parallel Thought Processing: Level 5
    - Materialization: Level 4
    - Coordination: Level 4
    - High-speed Thought Processing: Level 4
    - Commanding: Level 4
    - Plant Binding Technique: Level 4
    - Thread-reeling: Level 5
    - Throwing: Level 5
    - Scream: Level 4
    - Dead Spirit Magic: Level 4
    - Insect Binding Technique: Level 4
    - Blacksmithing: Level 1
    - Artillery Technique: Level 3
- **Unique skills:**
    - God Slayer: Level 6
    - Grotesque Mind: Level 6
    - Mental Encroachment: Level 5
    - Labyrinth Construction: Level 6
    - Demon King Fusion: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Abyss: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Hostility (NEW!)
- **Demon King fragments:**
    - Blood
    - Horns
    - Suckers
    - Ink Sacs
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

“Finally, my base mana has surpassed one billion. And I keep gaining more unique skills. Hostility… Is it a bad pun? What should I do if it’s a skill that makes lots of people hostile towards me?”

As Vandalieu hesitantly left the room, everyone was no different from usual, so this seemed to have been a needless worry.

Jobs that sound bad are bad for the heart after all, Vandalieu thought.

“You mustn’t swindle people,” said Vandalieu.

“You can’t!” said Pauvina.

The two of them were scolding Haj and the other fake resistance members, who were trembling in fear.

Vandalieu and his companions had returned to the camp. They were waiting for Rick, Orbia’s murderer, to be drawn out by Raymond, whom they had taken hostage. Meanwhile, Vandalieu had turned Mardock’s extermination force who had attacked the fort while he was away into Undead while brainwashing the survivors.

The other reason they had returned was so that Vandalieu could use the small Dungeon to return to Talosheim and bring Luciliano here, who would be doing some work on the captive Raymond.

After quickly turning the dead into Undead and brainwashing the survivors, including Mardock himself, Vandalieu had gone to hear the stories of Haj and his companions… and finally discovered that they were fakes.

“It’s true that you people are different from bandits; you didn’t forcibly take money and goods from the villagers and supporters, nor did you kill them. You just accepted what was offered to you,” said Vandalieu. “But what those villagers offered you were certainly not excess things that they had in reserve. Am I wrong?”

He was lecturing Haj and his companions in an indifferent tone. He hated swindlers in general. It was true that those who were fooled had left themselves open, but it didn’t change the fact that the ones who were doing the fooling were the most at fault.

Before he learned to use death-attribute magic, Vandalieu had simply been someone with a large amount of Mana. Haj and his companions reminded him of the researchers in Origin who had whispered sweet-sounding words to him, saying that they would set him free if he put in more effort.

But do I have the right to speak badly of swindlers now?

Vandalieu wasn't without his doubts. And these people being petty swindlers was better than them being bandits. However, they had fooled Yamata and Rapiéçage, so Vandalieu didn't feel like settling things for free.

But Haj didn't have the eyes to see through the inner thoughts behind Vandalieu's expressionless face and flat tone of voice.

"You brat, getting so full of yourself just because I stayed quiet! We didn't become fake members of the resistance because we wanted to!" Haj shouted as he got to his feet without thinking, enraged by the morality speech that was being delivered to him indifferently. "A brat like you wouldn't –"

"What~?" Pauvina stood up, towering over Haj and giving him a gaze that pierced right through him.

Despite her height of two and a half meters, she was just a girl, less than ten years of age, if one ignored her size. She wasn't very intimidating. However, her hand was gripping the handle of a steel mace that would likely crush Haj's head like an eggshell.

"What were you going to say~?" Pauvina asked, giving her mace a few practice swings while eyeing Haj's head.

"I-it's nothing!" Haj squealed.

"Then sit down, okay? Or do you want me to *make* you sit down?" Pauvina was still continuing her practice swings.

"I'll sit! I'll sit down!" With his words being misarticulated because he was trembling so much, Haj sank down onto the ground.

But Pauvina didn't stop her practice swings.

The reason Haj and the other fake resistance members were trembling violently was

because they were scared of everyone, including Pauvina, but excluding Vandalieu.

Vandalieu wasn't impressive; in fact, his presence was hollow. The eyes of Haj and his allies couldn't measure him. However, everyone else's anger was very easy to see.

"Van~ let's just clobber them~!" said Pauvina, angry that her close friend Rapiéçage had been tricked by these people, swinging her mace that would clearly make a splatting sound rather than a clobbering one.

"Fakes~♪"

"No good…?"

"No, no…"

"Imposters, no… no…"

Yamata and Rapiéçage were burning with a sense of guilt over their failure.

Yamata was groaning and slithering around Haj and his companions while Rapiéçage produced physical sparks loudly with her Ogre hands and feet.

"Hahaha, there, there, everyone. Let us be amicable about this. Bocchan, may I hold their hands and take them for a run?" asked Sam, his shining crimson eyes glaring at Haj and his companions.

"You are the one being the least amicable, Father," said Saria. "If they held your hands and went for a run, they would be smashed and scraped all over the place, wouldn't they?"

"Well, I get the feeling that he wouldn't really care about that, though," said Rita.

Though Sam's daughters were stopping Sam with their words, they didn't really seem to have any desire to defend Haj and his companions.

Haj and his companions realized that Vandalieu, who had been scolding them indifferently, was the calmest of them all, and the only reason they were alive was because he was the one in charge.

Incidentally, Bellmond seemed to think that apologizing to Vandalieu was more

important than giving Haj and his companions a harsh glare; she wasn't even looking at them.

"My apologies, Danna-sama," she said. "It is all my fault for not being able to see that they were imposters. I am willing to accept any punishment."

"Then as punishment, I'm going to brush your tail," said Vandalieu.

"Th-that sort of thing is not something that you should be doing, Danna-sama. Punishments are –"

"Then change Jobs to be a maid."

"Danna-sama! Anything, anything but that! I cannot dress myself in such a way!"

"…It would definitely suit you, Bellmond-san," said Rita.

"Rita, that's not the problem here," said Saria.

In the end, Bellmond received her punishment of having her tail brushed while in tears. As Vandalieu performed this task skillfully, Darcia, who was visible through the Visualization skill, began persuading everyone regarding Haj and his companions.

"Calm down, everyone," she said. "There are a lot of things that we've learned by saving Haj-san and his friends. And I think that these people had their own circumstances, too."

It seemed that Darcia felt sympathy for Haj and his companions and wanted to bring things to a peaceful conclusion. At the very least, she wanted to avoid an extreme ending like simply disposing of them.

As a matter of fact, Vandalieu felt the same way. He hated swindlers, but not enough to kill them without reason.

Even in Lambda's societies, swindlers would not be sentenced to death unless they were swindling nobles or royalty. Though it depended on whether they could pay the required fines to their victims, they would normally become criminal slaves for a set period of time.

It didn't seem as if Haj and his companions had been making money in a vicious

manner, and apparently, their punishment would normally be becoming slaves for one to three years.

The Amid Empire's army that currently ruled the Sauron Duchy had treated them as resistance members before swindlers, so they might execute them to set an example, however.

"Well, we've learned that Chezare's younger brother is actually at the nearby fort… and since you went through hard times because you had no jobs, it's not like I don't feel any pity for you," said Vandalieu as he continued brushing Bellmond's tail with a brush made of his own threads.

He looked over her trembling shoulder and directed his gaze at everyone who wasn't participating in the argument.

Not at the unconscious Raymond, but at Privel, Orbia and the others who were a little further away. They were discussing something with serious expressions on their faces.

"What should I do, I'm seriously lacking in fighting strength," said Privel. "The only one smaller than me is Pauvina-chan, you know?"

"I'm… Hmm, maybe a little smaller than Saria-chan and Rita-chan, I suppose~?" said Orbia. "Ah, but now, if there's water, I can make them as big as…"

"It's alright, Privel," one of the Scylla guards reassured her. "You still have a future ahead of you, don't you!"

"Even with a future, it's impossible~ that person called Bellmond or something, she looks bigger than Mother!" said Privel.

"Don't lose heart, Privel! You have the prided lower bodies of us Scylla, don't you!"

"Oh yeah! Even if I can't win with my upper body, I have my lower body!"

Each of the Scylla were bending their eight tentacles back and forth as they talked. Vandalieu and the others were a little concerned over the topic of their conversation.

"Vandalieu, those Scylla people? I can somewhat understand the Ghost girl, but what's your relationship with the living ones?" Darcia asked.

“That’s Privel, whom I carelessly proposed to due to cultural differences, and her guards that protect her,” said Vandalieu.

Come to think of it, he had forgotten to ask the names of the Scylla guard onee-sans.

“I see,” said Darcia. “After your father and I met, he said he’d done bad things to girls in the past and regretted it, so make sure you don’t have regrets like that.”

“Yes, Mom,” said Vandalieu, nodding to his mother’s educational advice.

“Before that, I think you should stop getting more,” said Pauvina from behind him, offering a reasonable opinion.

However, she didn’t really seem to have much desire to stop him.

Meanwhile, Bellmond slipped away from Vandalieu’s brushing and called out to Privel. “Excuse me, it seems that Danna-sama has something that he would like to ask.”

“Ah, yes!” said Privel. “Nice to meet you, I’m Privel, please treat me well! But I won’t lose to you when it comes to the number of legs!”

“…Yes, I am completely defeated,” said Bellmond. “Leaving that aside, it seems that Danna-sama has something that he wishes to discuss.”

“Mhmm,” said Privel. “What is it, Van-kun?” She approached Vandalieu with a bright smile on her face, twisting her tentacles in circles.

“Do you have anything on this Haj and his friends?” Vandalieu asked.

“These people? Hmm, nothing in particular, I suppose,” said Privel. “Even if they were acting as fake resistance members in nearby villages and towns, they never came into our territory until now, did they?”

For the Scylla, who divided the world into the land within their territory and the land outside it, even nearby villages and towns might as well have been in another world. It seemed that they didn’t think much of the actions of Haj and his companions.

“Well, we do think that it’s troublesome that they fled into our territory, but that’s because they were being chased by those guys from the extermination force,” said Privel.

“Hmm, if it was up to the chief, wouldn’t she just let them go and pretend it never happened?” said Orbia. “Since she probably wouldn’t want to end up technically handing the resistance over to the Empire’s army.”

“I see. That’s an excellent way to not make any poison or medicine out of it*,” said Vandalieu, turning his gaze back to Haj and his companions.

TLN: This is a Japanese expression to say, “do neither good nor harm.”*

For now, it didn’t seem as if they would be killed, so they looked quite relieved. Their trembling and cold sweat subsided.

“Then let’s make some medicine, shall we?” said Vandalieu.

As he spoke these words, Haj and his companions’ faces snapped upwards again.

“Medicine?!” Haj shouted. “No way, I’m begging you, our livers and hearts can’t be used as medicine!”

“No, no, it’s just a figurative expression,” said Vandalieu. “I’m going to assign you instructors and turn you into great, real resistance members.”

“I-instructors?” Haj repeated. “For people like us? I feel bad for saying this, but we don’t have combat-related Jobs, and even when it comes to fighting skills; some of us only have level 1…”

“It’s alright,” said Vandalieu. “There are a lot of exceptional instructors in our kingdom.”

If Haj and his companions wore the Living armors of the former Red Wolf Knights’ Order in Talosheim and trained diligently, they would probably be born anew within a few months.

Ordinary citizens had raised Spear Technique and Archery to level 2 within ten days; with several months of strict training, wouldn’t they become at least as strong as D-class adventurers? If not, they would just need to patiently keep at it.

“That’s like a dream come true for us, but is it really possible?” Haj asked. “Can people like us become real resistance members?”

“Unfortunately for you, you have no say in the matter,” said Vandalieu. “You won’t be able to return home for a while. I’ll prepare paper for you, so if there is someone you would like to write letters to, please do so. What do you think of this?”

As Vandalieu looked around at Rapiéçage, Yamata and everyone else who had been angry at Haj and his companions, it seemed that they didn’t have any particular complaints. They seemed satisfied; it was kind as far as punishment goes, but Haj and his companions would be forced to go through strict training forever as long as they were unable to improve, which would possibly be a harsher lifestyle than that of some slaves.

With a timing as if it had been waiting for the problem to be resolved, a red fruit was offered out to Vandalieu.

“Eat…” groaned a green-skinned woman.

“Ah, thank you. By the way, who are you?” Vandalieu asked, looking up at her in confusion. He couldn’t tell whether what the woman was wearing was clothes or textured armor.

“You don’t know?!” Privel cried incredulously. “She’s been there the whole time, so I thought she was your friend, Van-kun!”

Vandalieu thought that the green woman could do with some more muscle, but she had the kind of attractive figure that would cause men to ogle her and reach their hands towards her.

Her face was well-featured; she was a seductive, beautiful woman in between her mid-twenties and early thirties with slightly drooping eyes.

With this appearance, one might assume that she was a popular prostitute who had painted her skin and put on strange clothes to match the taste of a customer with peculiar tastes.

However, her back was covered in bark instead of skin, and branches were growing from it. Those branches were growing red, apple-like fruits, one of which was now in Vandalieu’s hand.

Vandalieu tried eating the fruit that had been handed to him by this beautiful woman who was clearly not a normal person.

“Mmm, judging from this super-hard texture and abundance of sweet juices, it’s Eisen, isn’t it?” he said.

“Oooh… Eat,” Eisen groaned.

The truth was that the spirit of Daene, a middle-aged woman who had sold apples in the city of Niarki, had gone through all kinds of changes to become Eisen. Seemingly happy that Vandalieu had known who she was, she wagged her cow-like tail from side to side, plucked another fruit and offered it to Vandalieu.

“Munch munch… By the way, why do you look like this now? Did your Rank increase?” Vandalieu asked.

“Yes, it seems that she transformed during the battle,” said Bellmond.

Incidentally, Mardock, the captain of the extermination force, had been struck by the fruit during the battle. He was currently still unconscious, with his nose and both his upper and lower front teeth horribly broken. Perhaps his jaw had been crushed as well?

“So, everyone was wondering what Eisen-san has become after her Rank increased,” said Darcia. “Since she has separated from her tree completely, she seems to be different from a Dryad.”

“She clearly does not appear to be an Ent-type monster, and even if we ask Eisen herself, she only says, ‘eat,’ so we cannot figure it out,” said Bellmond.

“Don’t you know something about it?” Rita asked.

“Hmm, even when I cast Appraisal, I can’t figure out her race title. It’s probably a new race,” said Vandalieu.

With that being the case, I need to give it a name. What should I name it? Vandalieu thought, and then he suddenly remembered a story about fairies that he had heard from a researcher’s spirit in Origin.

Looking at Eisen again, Vandalieu thought that many features of her appearance matched that of those fairies. Some parts were different, and those fairies didn’t have fruits growing from their backs, but that didn’t really matter.

“Well then, Eisen, your new race title is Skogsrå*,” said Vandalieu.

TLN: Mythical female creature of the forest in Swedish folklore. They are sometimes depicted as having tails and hollow bark/branches on their backs.*

Having been given this race title, Eisen wagged her tail happily.

“Why, why isn’t there even anyone watching the base?”

A man of the resistance, the last surviving subordinate of Rick Paris, was breathing heavily as he looked around in shock at the temporary hideout, which was empty.

This was only a makeshift hideout of tents, with traps set all around in place of camouflage and alarms, but there should have been at least two people staying behind to watch it at all times.

The plan was to set up the hideout here so that Raymond could go around to persuade the chief of each Scylla village. The plan was for Rick and his men to stop their sneaky acts and hide while that was happening; there was no mistake about it.

Despite that, not a single person was here, let alone Commander Raymond Paris.

There were no signs of damage, so it didn’t seem as if the hideout had been abandoned after being attacked, but…

“This is bad!” a voice shouted.

A man rushed towards the hideout, looking badly injured. Rick’s subordinate thought it was an enemy at first, but seeing that it was an ally that he knew, he gave a sigh of relief and stopped his hand that had been reaching for his weapon.

But in the next moment, that feeling of relief stopped.

“Commander Raymond has been taken captive by a Dhampir!” said the wounded man. “They said that if we want him back, Vice-captain Rick and all of the people involved in the conspiracy against the Scylla must come to a designated location! If we don’t hurry, Commander Raymond is going to be killed!”

“W-what?! Vice-captain Rick has been abducted by Vampires! They said that Commander Raymond needs to come alone to a designated location if we want to save him!”

“…W-what are we supposed to do?!” the two men shouted simultaneously.

It was an unbelievable turn of events. Each kidnapper had requested the other hostage in return for their own.

Unbeknownst to the two surviving resistance members, the Vampire serving Gubamon, who had been tailing one of the men, and Vandalieu, who was watching through the Lemures that had been tailing the other, were both very troubled by this development.

Chapter 114
The Trojan horse plan and the one whose left hand I have

A strange scene was unfolding in a vast underground church with rows of thick pillars.

“Kuh, kill me! Wasn’t that your goal!” Iris Bearheart spat at the old man before her.

She had been forced to wear only a thin piece of cloth that would have reminded Vandalieu of a surgical gown.

“Hmm… for someone who was called the Liberating Princess Knight, leader of the Sauron Liberation Front, this is quite the cheap show of courage,” said Gubamon, one of the Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life.

He was an old man who was as thin as a dried tree, with his bulging crimson eyes as his only large feature.

Hearing Gubamon’s words, Iris shouted at him in rage. “I do not fear death! Even if I die, my companions will definitely achieve the Sauron Duchy’s freedom!”

She was someone who would have received a knighthood long ago if the Sauron Duchy hadn’t become occupied by the Amid Empire.

Given the social status of the Bearheart family, she was supposed to become the kind of knight who commanded soldiers and defended towns and villages from bandits and monsters, rather than the kind of knight who took part in tournaments to entertain lords and escorted high-class ladies.

Iris had been trained and educated by her now-deceased father since she was child, so that she could one day fulfil this role.

And though she had acted as a leader of resistance activities, she had constantly been fighting on the frontlines. She had crossed blades with bandits and the soldiers of the Empire’s army countless times, and her body bore scars from numerous wounds

inflicted by blades and arrows. She had faced dangers that could have claimed her life and had passed through many battlefields. She had even walked close to the line between life and death in many of them.

Her courage towered above that of others, so much so that it was impossible to imagine that she was just a girl, less than twenty years of age.

However, Gubamon, who was now caressing her neck and arms, had seen through her.

“Considering that, the muscles of her arms and legs seem quite tense, don’t they?” he remarked. “This is the same response that I would expect from a child trembling in fear, you know?”

His words struck true, and Iris let out a groan. She was aware that she was afraid of Gubamon and the things that he would do to desecrate her.

Of course, she wasn’t scared of being wounded or killed. She was frustrated at the fact that she had been defeated before achieving her goals, but she had become the Liberating Princess Knight with the determination to face this. She wouldn’t start feeling fear now. If the Empire had captured her, they would have tortured her; depending on her captors, her chastity might have been taken from her.

She had been prepared for all of this, but what Gubamon was going to do to Iris was on a completely different level.

She knew this from the heartburn-inducing stench of blood, from seeing the fates of the ones who had produced this stench. She knew it even though she didn’t want to know.

There were several dozen Zombie Giants that were even larger than the largest Titans, watching over the area while letting out deep groans.

And there were Vampire Zombies who looked just like bats, hanging from the pillars and ceiling of the underground church with their fangs bared.

Some of them were the Vampires who had brought Iris here. After Iris's abduction, Gubamon had brought them here with space-attribute magic, thanked them for their efforts and then promptly slaughtered them all.

“Well done. As a reward, I shall add you to the bottom of my collection,” Gubamon had

said to them.

Iris had been unable to believe her eyes at the scene that unfolded afterwards. Not only the Subordinate Vampires, but even the Noble-born Vampires that she and her companions had been unable to land a single blow against, had been unable to do anything to defend themselves as they were slaughtered one-sidedly.

And with hands that were used to handling corpses… *very* used to handling corpses, Gubamon had turned them into Undead.

He had combined the corpses of the weak Subordinate Vampires, which had fallen to pieces, to form a Zombie Giant with ten Vampires incorporated in it, and turned the Noble-born Vampire corpses into Vampire Zombies.

Iris could see a countless number of Vampire Zombies just by glancing around; she felt a chill as she imagined just how many times this madman had carried out this process.

But the most repulsive were the Undead that the madman had lined up proudly, the ones he referred to as his 'collection.'

Three groans rose from one of the Undead in that collection.

Iris had been reunited with the person she had wished to meet one more time in the worst possible form.

Her father, Lord Bearheart, who had died in battle during the war against the Amid Empire. His corpse had never been recovered. Iris had seen him as a part of an enormous Zombie with three heads, three pairs of arms and three pairs of legs.

"How dare you trample the dignity of the dead, the pride of my father who risked his life to defend his nation! You scum! You intend to kill me and toy with my corpse, just as you did with my father's, don't you! How about you just get on with it?!" Iris began shouting at Gubamon once more, unable to endure having to gaze at her father's lifeless, cloudy eyes and ashen face as he let out a noise that was something between a groan and a scream.

But against her expectations, Gubamon's expression changed for the first time, in response to these words that she had shouted at him.

He showed regret and remorse, as if he had made a mistake. “I have already reflected upon what I did to your father. That was a mistake,” he said. He stopped caressing Iris’s body and clutched his head as if in anguish.

Gubamon hadn’t shown the slightest sign of guilt after killing his subordinates that he had shared his own blood with, nor after turning them into Undead. But there was a deep sense of regret in his eyes now.

Iris was rendered speechless in surprise, and before she could say anything, Gubamon continued.

“During that war between the Amid Empire and Orbaume Kingdom, there were two other corpses of well-known knights alongside your father’s. A playful mood took over me and I created a Zombie by combining the three corpses. The resulting Zombie was powerful, but its movements were sluggish. Lord Bearheart had made his name known for his splendid, agile swordsmanship, and I went and put him to waste.”

“Wha–?!” Iris’s surprised expression turned gradually into one of rage, but Gubamon took no notice of her.

“It cannot be helped that his personality and intelligence was largely damaged. The true pleasure lies in resurrecting famous heroes in wooden-doll-like states,” said Gubamon, going on and on about his obsessions. “But there is no meaning to it if the heroes’ special characteristics are not preserved. When creating composite Zombies such as that one, the correct practice is to gather materials of the same type, or decide on a principle material and then add other materials that supplement it.”

What Gubamon was lamenting was not the act of turning Bearheart into an Undead itself, but the dissatisfactory result.

It seemed that Gubamon had created his Undead with a different sense of art to Ternecia’s; he was fixated on the practical use of the Undead, not just the materials used to create them.

Iris’s anger showed itself once more. “You bastard! How much do you have to toy with my father before you’re satisfied!”

“Hmph… that is why I am apologizing for not making good use of his materials. I have no idea what young people are thinking these days,” Gubamon sighed.

Most old people in the world had this thought occur to them at least once, but Gubamon was looking at things from a completely impossible angle.

“Well, it does not matter,” he continued. “It will be amusing to see you become a corpse doll with hollow eyes, yelping as you obey my commands. But I must wait to see the results of the others before I decide what kind of Undead I shall turn you into.”

Iris gasped. “You are planning to abduct someone other than me? Could it be –”

“Hoh, quite perceptive, aren’t you? I am talking about the commander and vice-captain of the other resistance organization, the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.”

“Raymond-dono and Rick-dono…!”

Iris’s head, which had been hot with anger, suddenly became cold. There should be someone who could take her place as the Liberating Princess Knight. Her companions should do fine without her.

However, there was no replacement for Raymond, the illegitimate child of Duke Sauron. His face was quite well-known throughout the duchy, and although he had abandoned his right to succeed the family, his bloodline had a large influence now that the continuation of the Sauron family's lineage was in jeopardy.

And unlike Iris, who had kept her true identity hidden from others apart from her companions as much as she could, Raymond had used his appearance, charisma, ability to speak and his own birth as weapons to gather the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army under his command.

He probably had a plan for his own rise to power after the Sauron Duchy was retaken, but that was precisely why Raymond’s organization had become the largest resistance organization.

But if Raymond and his younger brother Rick who had been supporting him all this time were to disappear simultaneously, the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army would break up at best, turn into a disorderly gathering of people and collapse at worst.

If that happened, all rebellion activities would be set back tremendously.

“You bastard, how far will you go to ruin our Sauron Duchy…!”

“I do not know whether you can call it yours, but I do not care what happens to the Sauron Duchy,” said Gubamon. “After all, the world of you creatures who do not even live more than a few hundred years is like a fleeting dream. Your nations are created and destroyed numerous times during the time it takes me to admire my collection; they are but sandcastles at the shore, are they not?”

For Gubamon, who had lived for a hundred thousand years since the age of the gods, the nations of people who lived for less than a thousand years were, just as he said, like dreams or sandcastles.

“C-curse you!” Iris muttered.

“Now then, it is time,” said Gubamon. “I am looking forward to seeing whether you become an Undead on your own or part of a resistance trio Undead.”

The Vampires who had captured Rick were taking care of his basic needs while keeping him bound, blindfolded and gagged.

“He probably won’t die within a day or two, but it would be problematic if he gets weaker by the time we take him to Gubamon-sama,” Miles Rouge had told the Subordinate Vampires.

Rick was treated quite roughly, but thanks to the treatment that he was receiving, he wasn’t suffering from dehydration. The food he was given was a liquid made by boiling cut-up pieces of dried meat and vegetables, and it tasted worse than anything he had ever eaten, however.

And after a short while, Rick noticed that the Vampires were arguing fiercely over something.

“How did it come to this?! Why?! Why at a time like this?!”

“Miles, what do we do, what are we supposed to do now?! I’ve only lived for two hundred years; I don’t want to die!”

“It’s obvious what we’re going to do, isn’t it!” said Miles. “That plan, we’re going to pull off that plan! We don’t have any other choice!”

“What?! I don’t want to do that; how can we discard our pride as Vampires?!”

“Then do you want to die?! You want to die, don’t you?! Whether you want to be killed by Gubamon-sama, killed by the Dhampir or killed by me, decide right now, you selfish boy!” Miles shouted.

The chaos that looked as if it would develop into full-blown discord between the Vampires reached Rick’s ears. They were being so conspicuous about it that Rick wondered whether it was some kind of trap, but after this conversation, it seemed that all of the Vampires had gone somewhere except for a few left behind to watch him.

It seems that you’ve done well. As expected of you, Ani-ue. Now as long as you get away from these Vampires’ ‘plan’…

Rick held these expectations of his brother, but half a day later, those expectations were betrayed.

“It’s almost time,” said Miles. “Bring that little-brother-kun over here.”

With only his blindfold removed, Rick was taken somewhere else, where he saw the Vampires and his older brother, who was bound like he was.

No, Ani-ue! It’s not a fake. It’s real…!

Rick had hoped that it was an imposter, but there was no way that he would mistake someone else for the older brother he respected and loved. Though the monster leather armor that he normally wore hadn’t been taken off, he had been disarmed and tied up with rope, and he was casting his eyes downward. And this man was Raymond without a doubt.

He didn’t have any visible wounds and his face didn’t look pale, but he was limp and lifeless; perhaps he was fatigued, or perhaps he had only recently recovered from injuries with healing magic or Potions.

I have to somehow at least let Ani-ue escape.

Rick hardened his resolve to make this happen. But that resolve wavered as he heard a harsh sound, as if something hard was creaking loudly, and he suddenly noticed an old man in front of him.

“Oh, to think that you have captured two of them! And they are still alive!” cackled Gubamon, his eyes so wide open in delight that it looked as if his eyeballs would fall out of their sockets.

Rick was an exceptional individual, but he wasn’t a superhuman like an A-class or an S-class adventurer; he could only fall to his knees at the sight of this sinister being.

“Well done, Miles! I am proud to have you as my subordinate,” said Gubamon.

“Ha, haha! It is an honor to receive your praise!” said Miles.

“But… Hmm, there is a faint smell of blood coming from Raymond. It seems that his Vitality has been depleted a little, too.”

“Th-that is… I am terribly sorry! When we captured him, he put up more of a resistance than we expected, but we have healed all of his wounds!” Miles said hastily, his face remaining stiff as he spoke.

“Well, it does not matter,” said Gubamon. “He does not seem to have any visible injuries, and I did not expect you to capture him without harming him.”

If he were to punish Miles and those under him for their ineptitude, it was possible that some of them might escape. He would have to bring them to the underground church before using them as materials.

“Now then, we will be teleporting. Stay still.” Gubamon recited an incantation, and with another harsh, creaking sound, they were in the underground church that contained countless Undead and the restrained Iris.

Still bound, Iris turned around and hanged her head in resignation. “Rick-dono, and Raymond-dono as well…”

“Her as well,” Rick muttered as he shook his head, seeing that Iris had been captured first.

And Raymond didn’t show any reaction to speak of; his head continued to hang low.

“Now then, I suppose I will connect the materials with chains. I must figure out what kind of Undead you will become before I kill you,” said Gubamon as he approached Raymond first. “Kihihi, I cannot leave this to anyone else. This moment, the moment

of the first taste of the sense of accomplishment from having a hero offered to my… hands?"

Feeling an impact, Gubamon looked at his own stomach. To his disbelief, there was a black, horn-like object piercing into it, penetrating all the way to his back.

But the most unbelievable thing was that this horn was protruding from Raymond's own stomach.

"I-impossible!" Gubamon screamed, coughing blood from his mouth. Obeying the warnings of his survival instincts that he had not heard in a long time, he tried to step backwards.

But he could not remove the horn that was skewering his stomach; he could not move from where he was.

And then several more black horns appeared from the inside of Raymond's body and closed in on Gubamon.

"Gih, Iron Slash!"

Gubamon severed the horn with an Unarmed Fighting Technique martial skill and somehow managed to retreat and run away, suffering cuts all over his body in the process.

"R-Raymond-dono?"

Iris and Rick, who was still gagged, opened their eyes wide in astonishment and stared at Raymond's grotesque body, which was covered in blood from the horns that had been produced from his body.

He raised his face upwards ominously; it looked like the face of a hollow puppet.

"You bastard, why, why do you have the Demon King's horns?!" Gubamon shouted at the grotesque Raymond, blood and saliva flying from his mouth.

As if in response, Raymond convulsed gruesomely, and then his stomach split open.

"Ah, it was cramped in there."

Several screams resounded in the underground church as the white Dhampir, Vandalieu, crawled out of Raymond's stomach.

After taking Raymond hostage, Vandalieu had been trying to draw out Rick, the criminal responsible for tricking Orbia and murdering her. After finding out that Rick had been taken captive by Vampires, Vandalieu discussed the upcoming change of plans with everyone.

If possible, Vandalieu wanted to have Orbia settle things personally, and he wanted to gain information from the Vampires.

As Vandalieu and his companions wracked their brains to figure out what should be done to achieve these goals, the Vampires gathered at the location that Vandalieu had designated, the open space that he had created in front of the camp.

…While waving a white flag.

"We surrender, we surrender! Please listen to what we have to say!"

Vandalieu's mind stopped working for a few seconds at the sight of the Vampire with a wild-looking beauty to his appearance at the front, calling out with an onee-style tone of speech while waving the white flag in front of the other Vampires.

"That person is… a man, isn't he?" said Darcia.

"He definitely looks like a man to me," said Privel. "Is he not a man?"

"…The minds of many Vampires who have lived for a long time undergo changes. How very embarrassing."

Bellmond, who was aware that she herself was a 'strange person,' explained this phenomenon to the bewildered Darcia and Privel.

"Bocchan, what will we do?" asked Rita.

"For now, I suppose we'll hear what they have to say," said Vandalieu. "There's no sign of enemies waiting to ambush us, and even if they're planning something, we can slaughter them all whenever we want."

The Rank 10 Bellmond and Rank 9 Knochen were present. And Vandalieu himself was here, too.

A dozen or so Vampires was no match for them.

Of course, I don't mind killing them without listening to them and then extracting information from their spirits afterwards, but since Rick isn't here, it's probably best to deal with them peacefully for now, Vandalieu thought as he stepped outside Knochen's walls with Bellmond to hear what the Vampires had to say.

And then the Vampires – Miles and his followers – all began begging for their lives and explaining the situation.

"Please spare us; at this rate, we're going to be killed by that crazy bastard Gubamon! We weren't involved in the incident where your father was killed, we're telling the truth!" Miles pleaded.

"We offer you Rick Paris, whom we've captured alive! We'll tell you information about Gubamon and whatever else you want to know! So please, just spare our lives!" said another Vampire.

"We'll offer you anything else we can; we'll become your subordinates or servants or anything!" Miles added. "We just don't want to die!"

The 'plan' that Miles had mentioned was, to put it plainly, for the Vampires to "offer everything and plead for their lives." It was a horrible plan that involved trampling over their own pride as noblemen of the night. It was no wonder that some of the other Vampires had objected to it.

However, the reality was that they were in a position that they wouldn't survive if they did not do this.

Since Vandalieu had already captured Raymond, Miles and his followers would need miracle after miracle to occur if they wanted to abduct Raymond. They would be killed first.

In fact, since they had already abducted Rick, whom Vandalieu and his companions were targeting, it had been highly likely that the Vampires would be attacked and killed if they didn't run away.

But if they gave up on acquiring Raymond, Gubamon would see them as having failed their mission and kill them.

They couldn't rely on getting an ounce of support from the other Vampires who served Gubamon, and asking for help from Birkyne's group would have been downright stupid. They were Vampires who worshipped the same evil god, but since they belonged to different factions, they were competitors. They couldn't expect kind treatment from each other.

But with that said, abandoning everything and fleeing was dangerous, too. They would probably be able to hide for a while, but the connections in the underworld that they had been using up until now would become unusable, so it would be difficult to survive for a long period of time.

Even if they were lucky and could find a place where they could settle down, if Birkyne or Gubamon's subordinates found out where they were one day, they would be murdered for being traitors.

So then, perhaps fleeing the Bahn Gaia continent altogether and moving to a different continent was a better choice, but this would be a reckless decision as well.

Other continents had Vampires worshipping other evil gods marking their territory. Miles and his companions would be outsiders; hoping that there would be a place for them to survive there was a gamble with unfavorable odds.

That was why the option with the most hope for Miles and his followers, the option that they would never choose under normal circumstances, was to surrender to Vandalieu and beg for their lives.

"I see. I understand the situation," said Vandalieu. "Depending on your cooperation with us and how you work for us, we might take you in."

This choice had actually been quite effective for Vandalieu.

The things that Miles and his followers were offering, namely Rick and information on Gubamon, were things that Vandalieu could obtain even after killing them. However, the plan that had just occurred to Vandalieu had a high chance of failure if Miles and his followers didn't cooperate.

But on the other hand, if they cooperated, it had a high chance of success.

And Vandalieu believed that he shouldn't kill people if there was no reason to. To him, Miles and his followers, who had begged for their lives with everything they had, were not people that he should kill. It seemed that they hadn't been involved in the execution of his father Valen, either.

Vandalieu had already heard the story from the Vampire responsible for that before breaking his soul, and there certainly hadn't been a Vampire with an onee-like tone of speech mentioned.

Sparing their lives in exchange for their cooperation was probably the right thing to do.

"R-really?! Leave it to us, we'll cooperate with you on anything you need!" said Miles.

"Now then, I'm going to give you an outline of my draft plan for killing Rick Paris and Gubamon, and taking back Talosheim's heroes who were stolen by Gubamon, Zandia and Jeena," said Vandalieu.

The Vampires, including Bellmond, choked in disbelief.

Miles and his followers knew that Vandalieu had already defeated Ternecia, someone who was Gubamon's equal. Bellmond had been present at the time. But even they were surprised by Vandalieu's declaration.

Killing Ternecia was the result of an elaborate plan that took a long time, involving the use of the A-class adventurer party, the Five-colored Blades.

Now, he was going to improvise some additions to his plan, which had initially been just to get revenge on Rick, in order to slay a Pure-breed Vampire who had lived since the age of the gods. Given this announcement, Bellmond and the other Vampires couldn't be blamed for choking in disbelief.

Some of Miles's subordinates seemed worried about the fact that Bellmond had reacted the same way.

But Bellmond returned to her usual, courteous self.

"If you say that you desire it, Danna-sama, then it is my duty to obey," she said. "I do not have any objections, but please think about what kind of plan this will be."

Seeing this, Miles and his followers seemed to have decided to suppress their trembling.

“Now that it comes to this, I’ll follow you all the way,” said Miles. “There’s no problem with this, is there, guys?!” he added, looking at the other Vampires.

And so, the plan to kill Gubamon began.

“But with that said, the one who must suffer the most trouble is me, is it not, Master?” said Luciliano. As he said, he was the one who had to work the hardest.

“It’s fine, isn’t it? After I kill Gubamon, I’ll bring back a lot of Undead that he created,” said Vandalieu.

“Then I suppose it cannot be helped. I would have liked to follow you like I did last time, Master, but it seems that you have many people to protect this time. I shall pass on this one,” said Luciliano.

All Vandalieu had to do after that was quickly help Luciliano with the surgical procedure with his Surgery skill, and then arrange to meet up with Miles and the other Vampires.

And those events had led to the current situation.

Covered in blood, Vandalieu exhaled as he crawled out of Raymond… the special Live-Dead that Luciliano had made surgical adjustments to.

Despite being smaller than other boys his age, it had been difficult for Vandalieu to hide inside Raymond, whose build wasn’t particularly large. Luciliano had secured the required amount of space; he had increased the room to work with as much as possible by making it look as if Raymond was wearing leather armor, reduced his heart and lungs to compact sizes, removed all of his digestive organs and rearranged his blood vessels. Vandalieu had forced himself into this space by dislocating his joints and turning some parts of his body into spirit form, and stayed hidden inside.

All of this had been so that he could avoid using magic as much as possible, allowing him to go unnoticed until he was right next to Gubamon.

The result of this effort was that Gubamon was standing in front of Vandalieu now, blood spurting from his mouth and veins popping out over his head in anger.

“C-curse you! How dare you… ruin my… materiaaaals!”

Gubamon was on his knees, still struggling to remove the Demon King’s horns that were protruding from his body. He was a Pure-breed Vampire like Ternecia, who had regenerated her internal organs and spine despite being reduced to a mere severed head. Normally, having a large hole opened in his stomach wouldn’t be a fatal wound.

It would heal within a few minutes at most. However, each of the piercing wounds caused by the Demon King’s horns had gouged out a large amount of Gubamon’s Vitality.

Gubamon gasped in pain. “I-I can’t pull it out?!”

The Demon King’s horns couldn’t be removed, even with the superhuman strength that didn’t match his thin arms that resembled withered branches. The surface of each of the Demon King’s horns had numerous Demon King’s suckers growing on it.

The suckers had attached themselves to Gubamon’s flesh, organs and bones, firmly fixing themselves inside his body. Even a nearly-invincible Pure-breed Vampire wouldn’t be able to easily tear out his own organs and spine.

But it seemed that the Undead-obsessed old man was far more displeased with the fact that the materials that he had almost obtained had been ruined than the damage he had suffered.

“You bastard, how dare you turn my corpse, my hero, into such damaged goods!” he screeched.

“MMMPH! MMMMPH!”

Rick, who was still gagged, was screaming something. Tears were flowing from his bloodshot eyes, and though his screams were muffled, they sounded pleasant. It seemed that he was incredibly shocked by the sight of his older brother, who had collapsed onto the ground now that the inside of his body was hollow… just as Vandalieu had planned.

But disposing of Rick would come later.

“Miles,” said Vandalieu.

“Y-yes! We’re falling back, guys!” said Miles.

He and the other Vampires had been dumbfounded at the sight of Gubamon, someone who had always been an absolutely powerful figure to them, vomiting blood and suffering. They snapped into action in response to Vandalieu’s words.

“Ah, take that woman with you,” Vandalieu added, pointing at Iris.

“Certainly!”

The Vampires picked up Rick, who was thrashing around, and cut the chains binding Iris with their axes and claws to carry her off as well.

“You bastards, you betrayed me! Prepare yourselves! I will kill every last one of you and turn you into Undead!” Gubamon screamed upon realizing that his subordinates had betrayed him.

“Shut up, you crazy old man! Looking at all the Vampire Zombies around, I can tell that we would have met the same fate whether we betrayed you or not! We couldn’t keep up with your silly nonsense anymore!” Miles shouted back.

His words were completely reasonable, but it seemed that all logical thought had already fallen out of Gubamon’s mind.

“Curse you, splitting hairs over such a trivial matter!” Gubamon cursed Miles over something completely unreasonable before turning to give orders to the subordinates that would never betray him. “Undead, slaughter them all!” he commanded.

Gubamon had lost half of his sanity, but he didn’t expect Rank 5 and 6 Undead to be able to do anything against Vandalieu, who used the fragments of the Demon King. As long as they could slow him down a little, that would be fine.

His subordinates were simply products to be recycled, so he would feel no loss even if they were destroyed.

The Zombie Giants and Vampire Zombies groaned as they began moving. Vandalieu stayed where he was.

Gubamon's improvised, handmade Undead approached Vandalieu, but then they turned around.

And then they bared their fangs at Gubamon and roared at him threateningly.

"Wha–?! Why, why are my Undead, even if I did improvise their design, why are the Undead that I created myself…?!"

"I can tame Undead," said Vandalieu.

"What did you say?!"

This fact was common knowledge for those who knew Vandalieu, but for Gubamon, this was an astounding situation.

He had killed most of his subordinates in fear that they would betray him, but he had been betrayed by the Undead who should have been completely obedient to him.

It was as if he had simply supplied Vandalieu with more forces of his own will.

"But it doesn't seem like I can tame all of them," said Vandalieu. "This is a rare situation, so I'm a little surprised."

There were some Undead who hadn't left Gubamon's side.

Undead that emanated a presence that indicated that they weren't ordinary Undead, equipped with Magic Items.

"Yes, that's right! My beloved ones are here! Now then, lend me your strength!" Gubamon commanded.

Lord Bearheart, a handsome young man wielding a spear, a female Titan priest and a female Titan mage girl. And there were several other Undead heroes with them.

Their power was much less than when they were alive, but the average Noble-born Vampire would be no match for them. Even Miles was watching with a pale face, holding his breath.

But rather than feeling threatened, Vandalieu felt happy at the fact that he had found the ones that he truly needed to protect.

“Zandia and Jeena located.”

Chapter 115
Plunderer

“What am I to do?”

Hihiryushukaka was pondering his options, having confirmed that the one he could see through Gubamon’s sight was Vandalieu.

No matter how much he thought about it, Gubamon’s chance of defeating Vandalieu was less than ten percent; in fact, it was questionable as to whether that chance was even one percent.

Now that the Demon King’s army had lost its powerful central figure, the Demon King, its remaining evil gods didn’t have a community through which they could exchange information and cooperate with each other. Some of them might form alliances with their own self-interests in mind, but that was it.

Therefore, Hihiryushukaka was unaware that Vandalieu had already defeated a monster with the divine blessing of Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God, and his spirit clone, in the southern region of the continent.

But Hihiryushukaka had noticed that Luvesfol had fled the continent’s southern region.

That event was probably not unrelated to this Dhampir. How much stronger had Vandalieu become after pushing the weakened Ternecia to the brink of death and stealing her fragment of the Demon King?

“I shall measure him by using up this broken body of mine.”

The minds of the Undead were muddy. These artificially-created Undead had been made like this to begin with.

In the midst of that obscure mess, in which their own consciousness was mixed in, the order of their creator, Gubamon, was the only thing that resounded clearly. That was

why the Undead instinctively obeyed his orders.

But the moment they saw *that*, Gubamon's voice had become terribly unclear for them.

And then the Vampire Zombies and Zombie Giants gathered around Vandalieu, as if it were only natural. They had no awareness of having betrayed Gubamon.

Gathering under Vandalieu's command was just as natural for the Undead as their own arms and legs obeying the commands of their brains.

But the Undead heroes that Gubamon had made through special methods remained on his side.

"Agh…"

"C… Come…"

"I-I am… eh… roo… support… shieh… mahi, maih."

"It seems that the Demon Path Enticement that I'm always letting out unconsciously can't overcome the obsessions of a madman that have carried on for tens of thousands of years," said Vandalieu, dropping his shoulders in disappointment.

"Fuhahaha! So it would seem! You appear to have a special skill, but it seems that it is not enough to steal the Undead heroes that I have taken great efforts to create!" Gubamon gloated.

But there were about forty Undead heroes around Gubamon. Meanwhile, Vandalieu had over a hundred Undead gathered at his side.

The situation looked clearly favorable for Vandalieu.

And blood was still dripping from the black horn that was still embedded in Gubamon's stomach.

"What is he doing? Can't he just push through with the numbers advantage…?" murmured one of Miles's subordinates.

"You idiot, try thinking a little harder," said Miles. He was still holding Iris, who was watching the situation quietly. "Even if he wanted to rely on numbers to suppress the

Undead heroes, the ones that Vandalieu… Vandalieu-sama has with him are the mass-produced type. They are nothing but small fry for Gubamon, since he can wipe them out with a swing of his claws or a single incantation. No matter how many of those Vandalieu-sama has, it's pointless."

"I-I see," said Miles's subordinate.

"In other words, this battle is hopeless…" Iris murmured. For some reason, she was watching the scene with a tragic look in her eyes.

"No, I haven't said anything like that," Miles said to the woman in his arms.

The look in Iris's eyes didn't change; it seemed that she had interpreted Miles's words as a poor attempt to comfort her. "I don't know who that child is or what his objectives are," she said.

From Iris's point of view, Vandalieu and Miles seemed to be trying to save her. But they had used an absurd method to accomplish this, killing Raymond and utilizing his corpse as if it had been only natural to do so.

She had no doubts that they were Gubamon's enemies. But it was difficult to say that they were her allies.

But Iris couldn't help but wish for one thing.

"Please. Please win and set my father free!"

Alda. I have been unfaithful, turning away from preserving order by becoming a part of the resistance that sought to break it. But please, hear my prayer! Please bring victory to this Dhampir called Vandalieu!

Iris's prayer would have likely caused an enormous frown to spread across Alda's face if he were to hear it. As if this prayer was some kind of signal, Gubamon and Vandalieu both opened their mouths at the same time.

"My heroes, dispose of those good-for-nothing Undead and stop that brat's movements!"

"Please follow me and suppress the Undead heroes."

At that moment, Gubamon was certain that he would win the opening engagement. The Undead heroes were few in number, but each of them would be capable of fighting at least two of the lower-quality Undead at once and emerging victorious.

Once he stops moving, I will tear him to pieces with my Demon Eye! Gubamon thought to himself.

Gubamon didn't think that this alone would be enough; his enemy was someone who possessed fragments of the Demon King, the one who had caused Ternecia's death. He would activate his fragment of the Demon King first, force the level of his Demon King Encroachment Degree skill to increase to allow the fragment to go wild, and find an opening to use his fragment to defeat Vandalieu.

That was Gubamon's plan. A large part of his collection would likely be destroyed in the process, but it couldn't be helped. He needed to survive before hoping for anything else.

But Gubamon's plans began falling apart immediately.

"They are evenly matched with my Undead heroes?!"

To his disbelief, the mass-produced Undead that he had not spent any effort in creating were battling evenly against the Undead heroes.

Of course, the mass-produced Undead were fighting two-on-one and three-on-one battles, but they were still suppressing the Undead heroes that should have been able to overwhelm them.

"It seems that I can make better use of Undead than you," Vandalieu said to the astonished Gubamon.

The truth was that the Attribute Values of the mass-produced Undead had increased drastically under the effects of the Guidance: Demon Path skill. But Vandalieu had no obligation to politely tell Gubamon the truth, so he kept quiet about this… not to mention that outsiders like Iris were still present.

Right before Gubamon's eyes, a hero from a savage tribe with characteristic tattoos had his arms pinned down behind him by Vampire Zombies, and an elderly Dwarf hero disappeared inside a Zombie Giant as if being swallowed whole. A female unarmed fighter of a Beast-person race was surrounded on all sides and was being beaten to a

pulp, unable to make use of her agility.

They were all heroes that had possessed imposing Titles such as 'Thousand-man slasher,' 'Boulder Cutter,' and, 'Genius of Claws,' but they had lost their ability to coordinate with allies and their decision-making abilities had drastically diminished after they became Undead, allowing them to be captured easily.

"No, that is not all," said Gubamon. "My Undead heroes' movements are poor; what is the meaning of this?!"

As Gubamon had realized, the movements of his Undead heroes were more sluggish, more exaggerated and clumsier than usual.

The Undead heroes were letting out groans that sounded as if they were fighting some internal struggle.

Vandalieu's Demon Path Enticement had lost to Gubamon's power over them, but by a smaller margin than either Vandalieu or Gubamon had thought.

The Undead were constantly in a dream-like state so that they would obey Gubamon's orders more easily, but Vandalieu's Demon Path Enticement was at least effective enough to give their own consciousness a form.

For the first time since they had been turned into Undead, they were mustering all of their strength to defy Gubamon's orders with everything they had.

"Y-you bastard!" Gubamon said furiously, as if his precious lover had been stolen away from him.

"It seems that I'm more popular than I thought," Vandalieu joked casually – but he wasn't drawing closer.

He was standing at the front, but he had stopped there.

"Everyone, that's how it is, so please secure them," said Vandalieu.

And then a countless number of monsters and people emerged as if exploding from his back.

Pete let out a loud hiss, and the Cemetery Bees began buzzing.

It looked as if the insectoid monsters were attacking the Undead, but they were actually carrying the immobilized ones away.

“Good grief, you are being eccentric as usual. I do not think ordinary people would go this far,” said Bellmond as she used her metal threads to sever the limbs of a skilled Undead hero, who was still struggling despite the fact that his movements had grown more sluggish. “But Danna-sama, it seems difficult to find opportunities to use the Petrifying Demon Eye that you were so kind to transplant for me.”

“That’s because it’s a Demon Eye that’s actually harder to use when capturing enemies alive, isn’t it?” said Vandalieu. “Can’t you just petrify their limbs or something?”

“If I concentrate, it may be possible, but… it is easier to simply sever the limbs if I wish to capture them,” said Bellmond.

If she were to petrify the entire body, there was a chance that the thin parts such as the limbs or neck would break during chaotic battles. This was especially true when fighting enemies that could smash boulders just by carelessly swinging their limbs and weapons around; it was very possible that stone statues in unnatural positions would be turned into rubble.

Thus, it was easier to capture the Undead by severing their arms and legs if their conditions post-capture were of no importance.

“Please recover the severed limbs as well,” said Vandalieu. “I’ll be reattaching them afterwards. And please don’t treat them too roughly.”

“Certainly,” said Bellmond.

Just what on earth was severing the limbs if not rough treatment?

Though it was likely not searching for an answer to this question, a Zombie hero mowed down the Vampire Zombies around it with a Mythril spear, which resembled the Orichalcum one that Sam was currently in possession of, and closed in on Bellmond with a screech.

“Ah, you can be rough with that one,” said Vandalieu.

“Certainly,” said Bellmond

“Gigih, stop… gagagah?!”

The Undead hero… the one who had once been praised as Mikhail, the Divine Spear of Ice, continued flying towards Bellmond with full force, even after she had severed each of his limbs at three different points and reduced him to nothing more than a dismembered torso.

And then, with a swing of Bellmond’s tail, he was sent flying away with a dull sound, shards of his shattered Adamantite armor scattering across the floor.

But some Cemetery Bees recovered him from where he landed. Vandalieu apparently had an idea that could make use of Mikhail, depending on what Rank he possessed after becoming an Undead.

But there were other Zombie heroes like Mikhail who couldn’t stop their own resistance because of how exceptionally powerful they were in combat.

The Zombie Bearheart groaned as it swung weapons using its three pairs of arms. Gubamon had seemed disappointed with how he had turned out, but the mass-produced Undead and the insects couldn’t approach him because of his absurd strength and number of arms.

Jeena, the ‘Saint of Healing,’ who was spouting a shining gas of a poisonous-looking color from the numerous pipes protruding from various places on her body, was using a mace and shield of sinister design that was unfitting of her Title to repel the Zombie Giants and keep the Vampire Zombies in check.

Her back was being protected by the ‘Tiny Genius’ Zandia. Her wrist that had been severed by Mikhail had been fused with a strange-looking staff, and she was screeching loudly as if in pain.

She had been a genius mage with an aptitude for all attributes (except for the death attribute) while she was alive, but she was supposed to have lost the ability to recite incantations and the willpower needed to cast spells after becoming an Undead. Despite this, through some unknown principles, she was releasing spells from her staff.

All of them were simple, elementary level spells such as Flame Bullet, Wind Blade, Earth Spear, but each swing of the staff released another spell, repelling Vandalieu’s monsters.

There were about ten other Undead that were resisting stubbornly as well.

“Now then –” Vandalieu began.

“I will not let you steal any more of my collection!” Even if Gubamon was willing to sacrifice his Undead himself, it seemed that he was unable to endure having them stolen by the enemy.

He attacked Vandalieu, who had stopped moving, with the Demon Eyes of Destruction.

Vandalieu reflexively raised his two layers of defense, the Magic Absorption Barrier and the Impact-negating Barrier, but this made Gubamon certain that his attack had succeeded.

The effect of the Demon Eyes of Destruction acted directly upon the target within its vision. Whether there was a sheet of glass or a magical barrier in front of its target, it made no difference. As long as Gubamon could see the target, the effects would not be blocked.

Vandalieu had been unaffected by Eleanora’s Charming Demon Eyes, and he hadn’t been exposed to the effects of the Petrifying Demon Eye. Because of this, he had been negligent in preparing a defense for Demon Eyes and put too much trust into his barriers.

There was no response from Danger Sense: Death, but sensing something unusual, he hastily turned the floor into Golems to use them as a shield. But it was too late. Of course, Bellmond and the others who were fighting the Undead heroes behind him wouldn’t make it in time to save him.

“Now explode!” Gubamon cackled.

The image of Vandalieu that Gubamon saw twisted and then burst, painting his entire vision red.

“GYAAAAH!” Gubamon screamed.

“…That hurts,” said Vandalieu.

Gubamon was clutching his ruptured eyeballs. Meanwhile, Vandalieu had suffered lacerating wounds from which he was bleeding, and though they were not deep

wounds individually, they covered his entire body.

“Your Majesty?!” cried Princess Levia.

“Hey, are you alright?!” Orbia shouted in concern.

The two of them had been instructed to be on standby, but they showed themselves after seeing Vandalieu being injured for the first time. Vandalieu turned to them, dropped his shoulders and shook his head.

“Mentally speaking, I’m not alright,” said Vandalieu. “I let my guard down. Even though I’ve been improving myself and training hard to be prepared for danger.”

“Umm, you’re covered in blood. What about physically?” Princess Levia asked.

“The wounds have not reached my bones or organs,” Vandalieu told her. “My muscles and tendons have been severed in several places, but that’s all… Ah, I’m so embarrassed that if there was a hole, I’d crawl into it. I need to do some serious reflection.”

In truth, the fact that Vandalieu had almost died because he had let down his guard had caused more damage to him than the wounds themselves. But how had he managed to suppress the effects of the Demon Eyes of Destruction to this extent and reflect it back to Gubamon?

“Judging from the sensation, I feel like a skill activated… this is the effect of the Abyss skill, maybe?”

As Vandalieu had instinctively sensed, this was the effect of the Abyss skill. This skill, which stared back at those who tried to peer into its owner, countered effects such as Demon Eyes that activated through looking at the target.

“GYAAAAAH! MY EYES, MY EEEEEYES!” Gubamon was shouting words resembling those of a certain captain* as he writhed in agony.

TLN: This is a reference to Laputa: Castle in the Sky. There is a scene where Captain Muska shouts, “My eyes, my eyes!” and this is apparently now a well-known line.*

If his eyeballs had simply been crushed, they would have regenerated in less than ten seconds, given the nature of the Pure-breed Vampires’ immortality.

But because the eyeballs had burst while still in their sockets, the force had broken the bone surface behind them, sending fragments of bone backwards and damaging Gubamon's brain.

The optic nerves had been turned into mincemeat, and half of the brain behind them was now in a state resembling crushed tofu. It was surprising that Gubamon was still managing to writhe around so energetically. It was surprising, but it would likely be a while before his eyeballs regenerated.

But it would take Vandalieu a while for his severed muscles and tendons to heal as well, so his physical ability would be decreased during this time.

The actions that the two of them chose to take in this state were unintentionally very similar.

"This is the perfect opportunity. Demon King's fragments, activate."

"AAAAGH! Demon King's Carapace, activate!"

Both of them activated their fragments of the Demon King at almost exactly the same time.

With a burbling sound, Gubamon's body changed form in a sinister way, a black carapace growing around him as if bursting from the inside of his body. A large shell appeared on his torso, and smaller shells of appropriate sizes covered his upper arms, forearms, fists, thighs, shins and feet.

Rather than looking like a turtle, Gubamon appeared as if he had put on a suit of armor that had been made by joining a series of shells together.

"Guboaaagh! Defense… form!"

Gubamon tore out the sucker-covered Demon King's horn that was still piercing his torso, along with his own organs and spine, and then covered himself in this full-body carapace that even covered his head.

It had a misshapen appearance, but if Armor Technique martial skills were to be activated with this, this suit of armor would be unrivaled; even an Orichalcum weapon wouldn't be able to pierce it easily.

Gubamon was confident that it would hold strong, even if Vandalieu used the Demon King's horns.

If Ternecia was the one with the greatest fighting strength and offensive power among the three Pure-breed Vampires who worshipped the Evil God of Joyful Life, Gubamon was the one with the most powerful defense, capable of fighting in a steady manner.

"Divine Iron Armor!"

This is my most powerful Armor Technique martial skill! With this activated, even Ternecia herself would not have been able to break through my defense! Come, if you dare!

Now that his vision had been destroyed, he had no choice but to solidify his defense and use it to buy time for his body to regenerate. Even if meant activating a dangerous fragment of the Demon King.

"We're capturing more and more of them," said Vandalieu.

Gubamon had decided to defend himself, but although Vandalieu was wary of the strange new appearance that the linked shells gave Gubamon, he made no attempt to attack.

He had used Out-of-body Experience, using his spirit form to check what was happening behind him, and using the Demon King's blood that he had activated in order to capture the Undead heroes that were continuing to resist.

"Orbia, please help as well. Controlling liquids is your specialty, isn't it?" Vandalieu was requesting Orbia, who had become a Water Ghost, to help him with managing the Demon King's blood using the Dead Spirit Magic skill.

"I don't know if I have any specialties considering the fact that less than three days have passed since I became a monster, but… What is this?! Just touching it a little is making me go nuuumb~?!" Orbia went limp and started letting out unladylike noises the moment she tried to help.

"Your Majesty, this is Orbia-san's first time; using the raw liquid is too much of a stimulus!" said Princess Levia. Her words sounded like they could cause a misunderstanding, but their truth couldn't be denied.

"…Ah, so it's stimulating even without turning into a Potion," Vandalieu noted.

Despite this carefree-sounding exchange, the red-black Demon King's blood that was spraying from the wounds all over Vandalieu's body was forming bundles of tentacles and attacking the Undead heroes.

The tentacles coiled around the Undead heroes' legs, tied them up, covered them and then turned frozen solid.

Bearheart and his slow movements were helpless against this, and even Zandia's struggles were in vain as she, too, was imprisoned.

The ones who had succeeded in escaping were the heroes that were Harpies or Drakonids who could fly, and Jeena.

The moment the blood tentacles trapped both of her legs, her upper body separated itself from her lower body at her waist, leaving only her upper body suspended in the air. It seemed that she had the ability to use the shining gas that she was emitting from the pipes all over her body in order to stay afloat.

"How unlucky," said Vandalieu.

In the next moment, the Zombies who had fled into the air began falling back down, one after another.

Though the underground church was tall, it had numerous pillars and a ceiling that made it a poor environment for airborne combat.

The Undead heroes that had flown into the air were being surrounded by Cemetery Bees as well as Pete and Kühl, who had crawled up the pillars. They were brought down to the ground, where they were restrained by the Demon King's blood.

Even Jeena, perhaps unable to fight to her best ability with the lower half of her body missing, was easily caught by Bellmond's threads, which wrapped around her pipes and brought her down into the reach of the Demon King's blood.

"Was there any meaning to incorporating that trick into her?" Vandalieu wondered.

In some situations, it was probably advantageous to be able to separate the upper and lower bodies and having them act separately, but right now, it was nothing more than

a futile act of resistance.

Gubamon would have said that it was the imagination and romance of a craftsman, however.

The Undead heroes' movements were considerably inferior to when they had been alive, but they wouldn't have been defeated so one-sidedly and even captured in the end if their own wills had been preserved like in Borkus's case.

But although they were once heroes, they had been turned into puppets made of dead flesh. And puppets could only move as well as the puppeteer.

And now that his vision had recovered a little, that clumsy puppeteer was currently looking through the gaps in his carapace with his eyes open wide in anger.

"You would go as far as to use a fragment of the Demon King to steal my entire collection from me?!" he howled.

Growing suspicious at the fact that no attacks were coming his way after he had activated the Demon King's carapace and waited, Gubamon had taken a look to see the astounding sight of Vandalieu ignoring him and collecting all of the Undead heroes.

Gubamon's ability to reason had been restored by the danger that Vandalieu had put him in, and he could see that Vandalieu had treated the Undead heroes as the main course while Gubamon was just a side dish.

"If they are going to be stolen from me, then I shall just crush all of you!" Gubamon shouted, pouring even more Mana into the carapace as the announcer in his head informed him that the level of his Demon King Encroachment Degree skill had increased.

The carapace that had a round appearance before was now covered in rugged protrusions. It was just like the shell of an alligator snapping turtle, a carnivorous species of turtle.

"He's going to throw it," said Vandalieu.

"Consecutive Spinning Chaotic Strikes!"

Despite his heavy appearance, Gubamon began spinning with light steps, throwing

pieces of the Demon King's carapace everywhere.

The pieces of carapace were only a little larger than a person's fist, but they were spinning at high speeds and were covered in protrusions that were harder than Adamantite. Even a graze would gouge out a large chunk of flesh.

A countless number of these projectiles were fired haphazardly, but although they hit the Undead heroes as he intended, the Demon King's blood merely cracked; the Undead heroes remained mostly unharmed.

The same applied for Vandalieu himself.

"They are not as powerful as Ternecia's horns, are they," Bellmond remarked.

Using her metal threads, she was deflecting the projectiles from their intended trajectories far more easily than she had once done to the attacks of her former master. She was even able to protect the Undead and monsters around her.

"Kuh! So, this is the end," Iris muttered. Powerless against this fragment of the Demon King, she prepared herself for the worst.

Meanwhile, Miles gave a throaty scream, tears welling up in his eyes. "NOOOOO! I don't want to diiie~!"

They tried to use spells and martial skills to repel the projectiles, but unlike Bellmond, they were not capable of instantly performing any attacks that would be effective against a fragment of the Demon King that could even slay a god.

"We're done for~!"

The other Vampires were screaming in despair as well as the pieces of the Demon King's carapace closed in. But before the spinning shells reached them, a wave of blood engulfed them and black horns flew in to repel them.

"KYAHAHAHAHA!"

Orbia seemed to be in a strange state due to the Demon King's blood.

"Ah, don't go any further past that point, okay?" Vandalieu said, pointing at Raymond's empty corpse.

Vandalieu had protected everyone, including Rick, who seemed to have gone from mad to dumbfounded.

“He… protected us? No, not just us!” said Iris.

She looked around the battlefield to see that all of the pieces of the Demon King’s carapace that Gubamon had released had been blocked by the Demon King’s horns and blood. Not only the insectoid monsters that Vandalieu had produced, but even the Zombie Giants and Vampire Zombies that were far away from Bellmond were unharmed.

“Is he intending to defeat a Pure-breed Vampire without suffering any losses?”

“Yeah! That person is a true hero! My hero!” said Miles.

Vandalieu seemed to have won over Miles’s heart rather than the princess knight’s.

Seeing that his attack had been completely blocked by Vandalieu, Gubamon quivered, and then gave a loud laugh. “Fuhahahahaha! The trouble you went through to protect not only the Undead heroes, but the pieces of trash as well! Very well, protect them as much as you like!

In his blurred vision, he could see that a large amount of liquid was still spurting from Vandalieu’s body.

If Vandalieu wanted to say naïve things like wanting to protect everyone and refusing to make sacrifices no matter what, then Gubamon would let him say them as much as he wanted. It was convenient that he was exhausting so much of his power defending the slow-moving small-fry.

A second time, a third, Gubamon repeated the indiscriminate release of his carapace projectiles, and Vandalieu blocked all of them in the same way. And then Gubamon unleashed his secret technique to deal Vandalieu the final blow.

“It is time! Consecutive Spinning Chaotic Strikes! And take this! Great Demon Carapace Pulverization!”

After releasing yet another attack at Miles, Iris and the others who couldn’t protect themselves, Gubamon began moving, turning himself into a projectile and launching himself at Vandalieu.

His secret technique was an original martial skill that he could only use while the Demon King's carapace was active, combining the Throwing and Unarmed Fighting Technique skills.

Vandalieu, who was already using several fragments of the Demon King simultaneously, wouldn't be able to block this easily. This was the reality in Gubamon's head.

"Err, Ice Blood Death Water."

Before Gubamon's attack could reach its target, Vandalieu cast a new Dead Spirit Magic spell that transformed Orbia into a cloud of intense cold that enveloped Gubamon. Even the carapace couldn't completely protect Gubamon from the cold; he let out a scream as the surface of his body froze.

But as expected, the Demon King's carapace had withstood the Dead Spirit Magic spell that Vandalieu had poured a lot of his Mana into. At this rate, Vandalieu's life would still come to an end after only causing Gubamon some moderate damage.

But Vandalieu cast a second Dead Spirit Magic spell.

"Bone Flame Jailing Destruction Bullet."

Princess Levia transformed into huge, black flames in the shape of a skull that engulfed Gubamon.

"GAAAAH!" Gubamon screamed. "But once I endure this… what?!"

The Demon King's carapace was a step behind in offensive power, but it possessed an absolute, impenetrable defense. And yet, cracks were loudly appearing on its surface, and it was breaking apart.

The contraction and expansion caused by rapid cooling and heating had damaged the Demon King's carapace.

"Have you heard of tortoise shell divination*?" Vandalieu asked.

TLN: A form of fortune-telling, seems to be Chinese in origin.*

An enormous lump of ice, Vandalieu's Death Ice Bullet, struck Gubamon's thin body

that was now exposed.

“Your fortune is… so broken that I can’t tell.”

Chapter 116
The final revenge and the almost-forgotten princess knight

"GUAAAAH! Impossible, how can you cast elemental magic while using the Demon King's fragments?!" Gubamon shouted.

The Demon King's carapace had been shattered by being exposed to extreme cold and extreme heat, and all of the bones and organs of his body had been broken by the Dead Spirit Magic spell, Death Ice Bullet, that contained an amount of Mana that he had only seen a handful of times in his hundred-thousand-year-long life. In the next moment, he was sent flying in a random direction, where he crashed into a pillar and stopped.

"GEHAAH!"

He lost consciousness for a moment, and his use of the Demon King's carapace was interrupted. It was impossible for him to activate it again with his remaining Mana.

He felt like one of his eyes that had been in the middle of regenerating was now damaged as badly as the rest of his body. He didn't have an accurate sense of what kind of state he was in, and though it was far too late for this, he felt a sense of danger.

N-now that things have come to this, I have no choice but to escape!

With his composure coming back with the warnings of his survival instincts, Gubamon decided to retreat and began reciting an incantation for a space-attribute spell. Fortunately, his use of the Demon King's carapace had already been cancelled, allowing him to cast spells.

However, this did not go as planned.

Due to the nature of space-attribute magic, it was completely impossible to cast if the caster didn't possess an accurate perception of the target space.

When teleporting in particular, the caster needed not only a precise perception of the place he wanted to teleport to, but also of the space that he currently existed in.

However, with only one remaining eye that was still only partially regenerated, that was impossible for Gubamon.

I-I must somehow buy enough time for my vision to return! As long as my vision returns, I will be able to escape!

"H-how impressive, to corner me to this extent. What do you say to joining me? No, how about accepting me among your subordinates? I shall give you all the information I have on Birkyne, and I will be able to lure him out of hiding. With your abilities and my power, it will be simple to bury him," said Gubamon, offering sweet-sounding, persuasive words to Vandalieu, who was likely preparing to deal the final blow right this moment.

It didn't matter whether Vandalieu accepted the offer or responded with anger. Gubamon just needed to buy as much time as possible.

But no response came.

This made Gubamon's uneasiness grow rapidly. The fear of a lethal attack that could be coming at any moment made him lose his presence of mind.

"Wait, wait! Do you not wish to bring your parents back?! I shall lend you my power; I have been bestowed the divine protection of Hihiryushukaka! There must be a way!" Gubamon shouted. Unable to remain composed, his speech grew faster and higher-pitched the more he spoke. "And I am a master of space-attribute magic; if I join the ranks of your subordinates, you will be able to go anywhere in the Bahn Gaia continent, anywhere you wish, in an instant! What do you say – HYIH!"

Suddenly noticing a silhouette flying towards him from the corner of his still-blurry vision, he reflexively cast the no-attribute spell, Mana Bullet, towards it.

The amount of Mana he had put in it was small compared to the amount in Vandalieu's Dead Spirit Magic spell that he had been hit by moments earlier, but it still contained more than enough power, and it hit the silhouette directly. The silhouette broke and scattered with a disgusting noise that sounded as if a fluid-filled sack had been crushed.

"Ah… Have… have I done it?!"

Gubamon thought that he had possibly killed Vandalieu, but in the next instant,

something invaded him, turning his spine cold.

“So, you can still use magic. I’m glad I checked just in case. But it seems that you can’t use space-attribute magic.”

The thing that had invaded Gubamon was Vandalieu, who had divided himself and used Spirit Form Transformation.

“Y-you bastard! Then, just now…!”

“That was the Demon King’s ink sac. I made the ink’s color red and mixed blood with it to make it look like a severe wound and made it gush out,” the spirit-form Vandalieu explained as he forcibly fused with Gubamon’s body.

But that was an irrelevant detail to Gubamon now.

“I normally wouldn’t be able to fuse with someone against their will, but it seems that it’s possible even with a Pure-breed Vampire as long as your body and mind have been sufficiently weakened,” said Vandalieu.

Gubamon screamed at the sensation of losing control over his body and senses with each passing second.

“Hihiryushukaka-sama! Save me, please save me! Please send me your Familiar Spirit!”

Gubamon seemed to be trying to forcibly overcome this situation with Familiar Spirit Descent; a rather thin pillar of light descended on him from overhead. But the physical Vandalieu was already prepared for this. A projectile made of the Demon King’s horns was fired from the cannon barrel made of the Demon King’s coagulated blood, shattering the pillar of light to pieces.

“I get the feeling that it was much weaker than the Familiar Spirit of Luvesfol that I shot before… Has Hihiryushukaka been investigating me?” the physical Vandalieu whispered to himself.

Gubamon didn’t have the time to pay attention to Vandalieu’s words; he panicked at the fact that the Familiar Spirit Descent had been broken and begged Hihiryushukaka for more help.

“O great Evil God of Joyful Life! Hihiryushukaka! Please send me a Familiar Spirit, a more powerful Familiar Spirit!”

But Hihiryushukaka did not answer Gubamon’s prayers a second time.

“I-impossible! You would discard me here?! The one who has served you for a hundred thousand years?!”

“It seems that you’ve been abandoned,” said the spirit-form Vandalieu. “Even though you’ve served him for a hundred thousand years.”

Gubamon let out a scream. He could understand the intent in Vandalieu’s voice now that the fusion… or rather, encroachment, was complete.

Vandalieu was delighted.

“Gubamon, it’s very enjoyable to take things from you, whether they’re physical or not,” Vandalieu continued. “You have taken my parents from me and companions from Borkus and the others, and now I will take everything from you. I accidentally let my guard down, but this is a sweet pleasure. Your subordinates, your targets, your collection, your fragment of the Demon King. There are three more things left that I will take.”

What more are you planning to take from me?! Gubamon wanted to scream, but his mouth would not move.

“And now I’ve acquired your body. There are two things left.”

Before Vandalieu even finished this sentence, the scenery changed. Vandalieu had manipulated Gubamon’s body to cast space-attribute magic, teleporting into the Sauron region.

Gubamon was surrounded by more spirit-form clones of Vandalieu that were approaching him without hesitation. Gubamon fearfully wondered what they were going to do, and in the next moment, they began attacking him mercilessly, even hitting the clone inside him.

Black Flame Spear, Death Water Slice, Dark Lightning. Vandalieu used Dead Spirit Magic spells, including the water-attribute and lightning-attribute ones that he had only recently become able to cast, to turn Gubamon into dust.

“And now there is only one thing left.”

There should already be nothing left. Now there is nothing left for me but to regret my own actions and swear loyalty to this wonderful person, thought Gubamon, who had died and turned into a spirit, and was now under the influence of the Demon Path Enticement skill. But as if firmly denying Gubamon’s desire, he used a hand with its claws extended to grasp Gubamon’s soul.

“And now there isn’t anything else left.”

Vandalieu wanted to break Gubamon’s soul right this instant, but he still wanted to learn various things from him such as information on Birkyne and what kind of treatments he had applied to the Undead, so that would have to come later.

He exhaled heavily as he returned to being a single body.

“Well done, Your Majesty,” said Princess Levia.

“It was the highest of honors to be of use to you,” said Kimberley, the former scout of the resistance extermination force.

“Danna-sama, if you are fatigued…” Bellmond loosened her tie and kneeled with her white neck exposed.

Blood Potions contained Vandalieu’s own blood, so they weren’t very effective on him. Bellmond indicated for him to suck her blood.

“I used a lot of Mana and only have about a tenth of it left, so I’ll gratefully accept, but your wrist will do, you know?” Vandalieu pointed out.

“I cannot allow you to do such a thing, Danna-sama. Ever,” Bellmond said firmly.

It seemed that drinking blood from the neck was a rule for Vampires. Perhaps it was something like table manners?

“But when Eleanora drinks my blood, she only drinks a little from my fingertip,” said Vandalieu.

For some reason, Bellmond turned her gaze away, her cheeks flushed. “How shameless,” she blurted out quietly.

Was sucking blood from the finger a shameless thing to do?

Vandalieu decided that he would ask Eleanora why she had sucked blood from his fingertip once he returned. Things might end badly if it signified something significant like an engagement and he didn't know about it.

"Well then, just a little," said Vandalieu.

Recovering from the battle came first. He didn't much feel like trying to wring blood out of Gubamon's remains, so he lightly pierced Bellmond's skin with his fangs and licked the blood that seeped out of the wound.

"Kuh, ah, this is… teasing…" Bellmond whispered.

Vandalieu didn't recall doing anything to tease her, however.

"Bellmond-san is making a face that cannot be shown to Pauvina-chan or Privel-san yet!" Princess Levia exclaimed.

Kimberley let out a wolf whistle. "It's so lewd that I can tell even after I've died – GYOH?!"

The Thunder Ghost took a direct hit from Princess Levia's large fist and rolled across the ground. It seemed that Ghosts could punch… or rather, touch each other.

Still, does it actually feel good to have someone drink your blood? I didn't really feel anything.

Vandalieu was very doubtful, but even small amounts of the blood of Bellmond, who was a high-Rank Vampire and even possessed the unique skill, Offering, restored Vandalieu's Stamina and Mana remarkably.

Vandalieu could understand why Ternecia had kept her.

"Danna-sama, more…" Bellmond had her tail wrapped around Vandalieu and was behaving like a spoiled child, even though he had already removed his mouth from her neck.

"No, I've had enough, and we're outside. We still have work to do," said Vandalieu, trying to get her to come to her senses.

He spotted Miles and the other Vampires watching him and Bellmond with fear in their eyes. It was very late for this, but perhaps he really should ask what sucking blood signified for Vampires.

Suddenly, an unfamiliar female person, whose age was somewhere between a girl and a woman, called out to Vandalieu.

“Vandalieu-dono, was it?”

Vandalieu froze for a moment as he struggled to remember who she was, and then realized that it was the one who had been captured by Gubamon.

He had captured her alive, so she was probably some heroic person from somewhere.

“My name is Iris Bearheart,” she said. “I want to thank you. Not only did you rescue me from danger, you stopped my father as well.”

“Father? Huh. I only did what I did to achieve my own goals, so please don’t worry about it. I’m just glad you’re safe,” Vandalieu said humbly.

He didn’t know anything about Iris, but he guessed that her father had been among the Undead heroes.

He felt slightly disappointed, wondering if it would have been best to leave behind the Undead that was apparently her father.

“…I am hesitant to ask these questions after you saved my life, but I want you to answer,” said Iris. “You have Vampires under your command; just who are you? And what did you do to Raymond-dono?”

Now aware that Iris and Raymond apparently knew each other, Bellmond used the tail that was still wrapped around Vandalieu to try and separate him from Iris.

“I’m a half-Vampire called Vandalieu. After I captured Raymond alive, I remodeled his body while he was still alive and used him to kill Gubamon, and then killed him. He was a necessary sacrifice,” said Vandalieu, answering Iris’s questions before he had even been separated from her properly, answering the second question with a particularly large amount of detail.

“Is that… true?” Surprised, Iris took a step backwards in response to Vandalieu’s

answer that seemed inhuman towards Raymond. “Even if it was to defeat a Pure-breed Vampire, that is –”

“Mmm… MMMPH!” Rick, who had been staring into space while still tied up and gagged, suddenly got up and ran towards Vandalieu, as if to ram his body into him.

But Rick’s reckless charge was stopped before Bellmond or Princess Levia could do anything.

“What are you so angry for?” Orbia asked.

She had made herself visible, materialized herself and seized Rick with her tentacles.

Perhaps he hadn’t noticed her up until now because of the shock of having seen Raymond’s gruesome body, but his handsome face twisted in horror now as he looked at Orbia, who was now a Ghost.

“MMPH?!”

“Ah, you can’t answer like this, can you?” Orbia removed Rick’s mouth gag.

For a few moments, Rick stared blankly at the smiling Orbia, whose face was a different color now. And then anger appeared on his face again as he shouted at Vandalieu in rage.

“You bastard! You bastards killed Ani-ue! Ani-ue was the hope of the Sauron Duchy! Ani-ue would have taken the Sauron Duchy back from the Empire, become the king one day and lead this country to become better and more powerful! Ani-ue did everything he could and fought for the people more than the other members of his family who fled! You’re calling him a necessary sacrifice?! How dare you say that!”

Vandalieu remained expressionless and said nothing.

And the smile on Orbia’s face slowly grew wider and wider as she watched the disgraceful behavior of the man she had once loved.

“Why did you kill Ani-ue?!” Rick continued. “Did you feel sympathy for this woman?! The Scylla have no loyalty for their own nation! Even as their motherland was endangered, even after it was invaded and taken, they made no attempt to fight! Despite being citizens of the Orbaume Kingdom, no matter how much the Sauron

Duchy's soldiers and citizens bled, they kept their eyes shut! Yet when the blood of a few members of their own race was spilled, they made an uproar! How can you sympathize with them?! Why won't you realize that the fault lies with them for not moving before we had to dirty our hands?!"

Rick's body couldn't move because he was trapped by the cold, liquid tentacles, but his mouth had moved instead as he spat out all of the rage and hatred in his heart. His shoulders heaved up and down with his wild breathing once he was finished.

But he trembled slightly and his breathing grew shallower as he heard Orbia laugh.

The Orbia that Rick was looking at was laughing truly happily, so happily that it could even be called cheerful laughter.

"W-what, why are you laughing…"

"It's really you after all, Rick," said Orbia. "You're the Rick I know. No matter what I ask, you only ever talked about your onii-san in the end. I thought you might change after you saw your Onii-san being broken right in front of your eyes, but you haven't changed after all."

"What?! You –"

"No, it was Vandalieu-kun," Orbia continued. "Even though I don't have any blood anymore, all the blood rushed to my head and I couldn't think of anything but killing him on the spot. So, you know, we don't love you anymore, Rick."

"We?!" Rick gasped as Scylla faded into appearance around him, one after another.

They, like Orbia, were victims whom Rick had tricked, killed with the poisoned ring and had their corpses put on display.

"I've always been watching you closely…"

"How dare you…!"

With Vandalieu giving them Mana, they had gone from being mere spirits to Ghosts.

"None of us want to see your face anymore; we don't need you. So… bye-bye, forever," said Orbia in farewell, but contrary to her words, she wrapped her arms around him

and held him closer.

“S-stop, let me go! I will avenge Ani-ue…?!”

Rick was engulfed and trapped inside Orbia, who was a Water Ghost. With bubbles coming out of his mouth, he thrashed his arms and legs around to try and escape from inside her, but the other Scylla Ghosts used the Materialization skill and kept him trapped.

Being killed by the spirits of the women he had rejected. Of all the fates that he could have met, this was probably one of the better ones.

“W-women’s grudges are scary,” whispered Miles. He had been watching with a horrified expression on his face, far away from Rick so that he wouldn’t get involved.

Iris almost nodded in agreement before returning to her senses and hastily shouting at Orbia to stop. “Wait! Please listen to what I have to say!”

“Eh?” Vandalieu was surprised as he heard Iris’s voice; he had completely forgotten that she existed.

The Thunder Ghost who was once a scout of the resistance extermination force whispered into Vandalieu’s ear. “This woman is probably the Liberating Princess Knight of the Sauron Liberation Front.

“I see, so you’re an important member of the resistance,” said Vandalieu. “I’ll listen to anything you have to say except for sparing Rick’s life.”

As expected, Iris gave a groan, as if she was lost for words. But it seemed that she wasn’t actually lost for words; she quickly began speaking.

“It’s true that he and his men did something unforgivable to the Scylla,” she said. “But his power, the power of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army, is necessary to take the Sauron Duchy back. Although it is frustrating to admit, we can’t do it alone. I will make him repent for his sins, so please stop them!”

“I’m really sorry, but no,” said Vandalieu. “Ah, by the way, is there anywhere you’d like us to send you?”

“Danna-sama, before that, I believe she will need something to wear,” said Bellmond.

“Now that you mention it, that’s true. It completely slipped my mind,” said Vandalieu. He turned to Iris. “I’ll knit you something now. Do you have any requests for the color or design?”

Thinking that it would be morally problematic to abandon a half-naked woman, he produced threads with his mouth and began knitting.

“No, wait! I told you, listen to what I have to say!” Iris approached Vandalieu, looking like she wanted to say more.

Vandalieu stopped his knitting and directed his hollow gaze at her. Perhaps sensing something in that emotionless gaze, or perhaps realizing that Bellmond’s Petrifying Demon Eye was pointed at her, ready to attack at any time, Iris stopped her feet.

The emotion that Vandalieu felt towards Iris was, for once, the same as those of his eyes. He was tired of this. This word was sufficient to describe how he felt.

But even if it’s tiresome, maybe it’s best that I explain things, Vandalieu thought as he started speaking.

“I don’t think it’s wrong to claim that Raymond and Rick’s actions were for the purpose of retaking the Sauron Duchy,” he said. “I know that the world doesn’t move on pretty words and wishful thinking alone, and I know that it’s necessary to accept both good and evil in order to protect your nation. The Amid Empire occupying the Sauron Duchy isn’t a situation that I would wish for, either.”

As Iris said, if Rick was used to gather the survivors of the Reborn Sauron Duchy army, they might have the power to one day overcome the Empire’s army.

Furthermore, the now-deceased Raymond could have gone on to become a fine duke, develop the Sauron Duchy and rule the people better, just as Rick said.

Vandalieu understood this.

“Then –!” Iris began.

“But this is no reason to kill Orbia and the others, or force disadvantages upon the Scylla race. That is where you people of the resistance are mistaken,” Vandalieu continued.

Vandalieu understood everything, but his response to all of that was, “So what?”

This was the uncomfortable feeling that Vandalieu felt whenever he talked with members of the resistance. They prioritized the great number of civilians in the Sauron Duchy over the Scylla race, but it was only natural for him to prioritize the Scylla like Orbia, Privel and Periveil over people he had never met, whose faces and names he didn’t know.

And it was troubling to only discuss the possibilities of the future. The problem at hand was the crimes that had been committed in the past.

“And you say that you’ll make him repent for his sins, but it seems to me that if the Sauron Duchy is retaken, you’ll use that achievement as an excuse to spare his life,” Vandalieu added. “For you people, saving everyone in the Sauron Duchy other than the Scylla will be a ‘benevolent act’ that can cancel out the crime of tricking Orbia and the others, killing them and putting their bodies on a gory display, won’t it?”

Did I say too much? Vandalieu wondered as he looked at Iris’s face, which was now pale. But it seemed that she hadn’t given up yet.

“W-we are not ignoring the Scylla race,” Iris said.

“Then if the Sauron Duchy was to be retaken, how would the Scylla be treated afterwards?” Vandalieu asked. “I would think that it’s only natural to let the Scylla move in and out of their own territory freely and set up branches of every Guild for them, if not giving the chief of each village a court rank.”

“That is… I can only say that we will do our best.” This was the only answer that Iris could give.

She was nothing more than a resistance leader, born to a family of knights. Even if her efforts were acknowledged, she could never become duchess. Whatever she said now would only be empty promises.

And Iris knew that important noblemen had a strong tendency to hate members of races like Scylla, who had superior physical ability, Mana and lifespans compared to humans, being involved in the world of political and military affairs.

That was why the Scylla had been trapped in their own territory and why it had been ensured that no Guilds established branches for them.

“And as for reasons to kill Rick… I don’t need to explain them, do I? I have the agreement of one of the chiefs, Periveil-san, on this,” said Vandalieu.

In fact, the motive behind tricking and killing Orbia and the others had been to use the entire Scylla territory as their fort and utilize the Scylla as their soldiers, so it was actually harder to find a reason to *not* kill Rick.

Nobody, let alone Periveil or Privel, defended Raymond and Rick.

“A chief of the Scylla race… I see. Then I won’t say anymore.” Iris seemed to have given up on pleading for Rick’s life. “But for a short while, can you make it seem as if Raymond and Rick died honorable deaths in battle?” she asked.

Raymond, an illegitimate child of Duke Sauron, and his younger brother Rick, had been pillars of the resistance movement. The truth behind their deaths would cause a huge scandal. The morale of the entire resistance was at stake, so Iris seemed to want to prevent this scandal from happening.

“We don’t really mind that,” said Orbia. She and the other Water Ghosts had thrown Rick onto the ground like a piece of trash after he stopped showing any signs of life.

It seemed that they didn’t have any interest in anything related to Rick.

Vandalieu was slightly unhappy with this, but Orbia and the other Water Ghosts were the victims. If they didn’t mind, then it was probably fine, so he gave Iris a nod.

“So, more importantly, Vandalieu-kun, I want to talk about the future of us Scylla, who think of you as someone who is reeeeeeaaaaally precious to us,” said Orbia. “I heard from Levia that you’re a real king! That’s amazing, huh? So… apparently, you have some nice marshlands?”

“I do, but about half of it is land for the Lizardmen,” said Vandalieu.

“But you still have the other half, right?” said Orbia. “So, the chiefs have been discussing things and preparing to search for a place that we can migrate to, you know?”

“K-king?” Iris said in surprise. “What are you talking about… No, you possess the fragments of the legendary Demon King, the power to kill a Pure-breed Vampire and the ability to rule Undead and Vampires… Really, who are you? Could it be, you’re the

Demon –”

“Iris-dono, there is something that we must discuss as well,” said Bellmond. “Mainly things to do with confidentiality, and our relationship going forward.”

“It will be quite a long discussion, so shall I make some tea?” said Princess Levia. “Ah, but before that, you will need something to wear, won’t you?”

“It can’t be helped,” said Miles. “Just wear my cloak until Vandalieu-sama returns.”

The bizarre Scylla serial-killing case had been resolved and the mad Pure-breed Vampire Gubamon had been defeated. The only remaining problems were the future of the Scylla, Vandalieu’s future relationship with the Sauron Liberation Front, Mardock and the surviving members of the extermination force, and Chezare’s younger brother Kurt who was still in the fort near the Scylla territory.

Incidentally, Alda, who watched the records of the battle between Vandalieu and Gubamon through Iris, was astonished by the ‘monstrosity’ that was growing in a far more twisted direction than he had expected.

『You have acquired the Demon King’s carapace!』

『The levels of the Rapid Healing, Death-Attribute Magic, Status Effect Resistance, Magic Resistance, Demon Path Enticement, Guidance: Demon Path, Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed, Mana Enlargement, No-Attribute Magic, Mana Control, Spirit Form, Multi-Cast, Parallel Thought Processing, High-speed Thought Processing, Plant Binding Technique, Insect Binding Technique, Artillery Technique, Demon King Fusion and Abyss skills have increased!』

Job explanation:

【Demon Guider】

A peculiar Job among the Guider-type Jobs that are thought to be conditions for becoming champions. It is a Job that can be acquired by one who willingly walks on a path that is neither the path of righteousness nor the path of evil.

However, as a Guider-type Job, it has a problem. Guider-type Jobs greatly increase the Attribute Values of those who possess them, but their true nature is to influence and raise up those other than the Job owner.

However, many fear and avoid the guidance to the demon path. Thus, it is difficult for those with this Job to manifest its proper power.

Because Vandalieu has already attracted many to his side with skills such as Death-Attribute Charm, he has overcome this obstacle.

Chapter 117
Dear younger brother

When the Familiar Spirit sent after Gubamon activated the Familiar Spirit Descent skill was destroyed by Vandalieu, Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, felt both surprise and relief.

Having a bad feeling, he had immediately dispatched a weak, replaceable Familiar Spirit, minimizing the damage he suffered.

If he had dispatched his own spirit clone to save Gubamon, it was likely that he would be writhing in agony right about now, experiencing pain similar to having his flesh and bone smashed to pieces.

"…I suppose he is destined to be broken like Ternecia now."

As Hihiryushukaka had predicted, Gubamon had been defeated and his soul was in Vandalieu's grasp. But in return, he had managed to acquire more information for Hihiryushukaka than expected as well.

Considering the overall benefits of Gubamon's work over the past hundred thousand years, Hihiryushukaka thought that Gubamon might have been a capable subordinate god.

But seeing Gubamon go mad and kill his subordinates who were Hihiryushukaka's believers, Hihiryushukaka had half-given up on Gubamon. Gubamon hadn't offered his believers as sacrifices; he had simply slaughtered them and reduced their numbers too much.

But since Ternecia had been destroyed and Hihiryushukaka had no plans to obtain a replacement for her, cutting Gubamon off completely would have meant reducing the number of cards in his own hand.

That was why he had watched things unfold for a while, but thanks to that, he had learned that the Dhampir possessed dangerous skills other than the ability to break souls.

“First, he possesses an ability that allows him to tame Undead. Because of this, the forces that Gubamon created were almost meaningless. Second, he has an enormous amount of Mana that is similar in quality to the Demon King’s, allowing him to use the Demon King’s fragments masterfully.”

The ability to tame existing Undead created by others was a complete upgrade on Hihiryushukaka’s divine protection.

The volume and properties of Mana that allowed the simultaneous use of multiple fragments of the Demon King, something that would normally cause the Demon King Encroachment Degree skill’s level to increase instantly, burning through the wielder’s sanity and Mana and sending the Demon King’s fragments on a rampage.

The latter was extremely dangerous in particular. The Demon King’s fragments were powerful. There were differences between individual fragments, but a single fragment would allow the wielder to do battle against a hero equipped with Upper-class and Legendary-class arms made of Mythril and Adamantite.

But in the end, this was borrowed power. Gubamon and Ternecia had come up with ways to combine it with their own martial skills, but even so, it was difficult to say that they had used that power to their full potential.

However, Vandalieu was using this power masterfully as if it came to him naturally. And in addition to the Demon King’s blood that he had acquired and the horns that he had taken from Ternecia, he even possessed the suckers and ink sacs that were supposed to be in the possession of Merrebeveil, the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles.

That god, who had been taken in by Vida, had only acted through the Scylla for the past hundred thousand years. Considering this, the Demon King’s fragments had likely been given to Vandalieu rather than stolen.

Through Gubamon’s eyes, Hihiryushukaka had seen that there was a Scylla Ghost among the Ghosts that followed Vandalieu.

And now, with the Demon King’s carapace taken from Gubamon, Vandalieu possessed five fragments.

This was troubling news. The Demon King’s fragments were powerful individually, but they displayed even greater powers when multiple fragments were combined. This was only natural, as it was the Demon King Guduranis who had combined all of these

fragments and led the evil gods, including Hihiryushukaka, in a difficult battle against the champions and even destroyed four of those champions.

“And that Job is problematic as well. It seems that he acquired a Guider-type Job, just as Ternecia feared in the moments before her death. And he possesses the Hostility skill as well.”

Hostility was a superior version of skills such as Goblin Slayer and Dragon Slayer that increased the damage dealt by the skill owner against certain enemies.

Its effect was simple; it increased the damage the skill owner dealt against all enemies.

Because of this skill, the reflected effect of the Demon Eyes of destruction had caused even greater damage to Gubamon. And unfortunately for him, he had activated the Demon King’s carapace and used his enhanced defense to try and endure his enemy’s attacks.

He had deliberately chosen to receive attacks from a foe who possessed a permanent damage-increasing effect.

In hindsight, Gubamon might have had a better chance to win the battle if he had fought steadily using the space-attribute magic and martial skills that he was proficient with, rather than relying on the Demon Eyes of Destruction and Demon King’s fragment. Furthermore, if he had kept his subordinates ready and waiting instead of turning them into Undead, he would have had more tactics available to him, such as using his subordinates as decoys to buy time.

In other words, Gubamon had been continuously sabotaging himself from the moment he began killing his own subordinates to turn them into Undead.

He had gifted his enemy with more forces by turning his subordinates into Undead, had the power of his Demon Eye that he was overconfident in reflected back onto him by his enemy’s Abyss skill and activated the Demon King’s carapace, adopting a strategy of defending against the attacks of an enemy with a damage-increasing skill.

Considering the sizes of Gubamon and Vandalieu’s Mana pools, it was probably also a poor move to try and attack the Vampires who had once been Gubamon’s subordinates and the monsters that Vandalieu had produced from his body.

Gubamon might have been able to buy some time with this, but he had paid an

enormous amount of Mana to do so. The amount of Mana that Vandalieu had spent to defend was larger than the amount that Gubamon had expended in terms of the raw numbers, but considering Vandalieu's total Mana pool, it wasn't a significant amount.

There had been no way for Gubamon to win a battle to the death where he was tightening a noose around his own neck.

But the problem was not Gubamon, whose fate had already been sealed, but whether Hihiryushukaka's only remaining pawn, Birkyne, would be able to kill Vandalieu.

Birkyne was inferior to Ternecia in offensive power and inferior to Gubamon in defensive power. Did he have any chance of defeating Vandalieu?

As a Pure-breed Vampire, Birkyne was equal to Ternecia and Gubamon in terms of power. He could use magic and martial skills to a high standard, and though it wasn't suited for direct combat, he did possess a fragment of the Demon King.

His qualities were not those of a warrior or mage, but those of a conspirator pretending to be a strategist. In a way, he was a man who believed in himself.

"…It would be difficult."

The probability wasn't zero, but Hihiryushukaka thought that Birkyne, who was inferior in fighting strength to the other two Pure-breed Vampires, had slim chances of defeating Vandalieu, who had already defeated both.

Vandalieu hadn't fought Ternecia or Gubamon head-on. But his power had increased remarkably since the time he faced Ternecia.

If Hihiryushukaka asked himself whether Birkyne would be able to deal with Vandalieu's development, he could only answer that it would be difficult.

"But no matter how slim his chances of victory are, he must be victorious, or there will be no future for me."

News of Ternecia's defeat had already spread beyond the Bahn Gaia continent. Gubamon's defeat would be well-known before long, too.

If people lost their fear of Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, and no longer saw a reason to fear him, only his own downfall would await him.

From a mortal's perspective, it might be a mere downfall in image, but for Hihiryushukaka and the other evil gods who were the remnants of the Demon King's army, there was no purpose if they were not feared. Being treated with contempt would be their end.

The three Pure-breed Vampires had been very effective as billboards to instill fear, but… now, that had backfired on Hihiryushukaka.

There was also the option of simply fleeing, but Vandalieu, whose mother was a Dark Elf, would live between three thousand and five thousand years. It was difficult to imagine that Hihiryushukaka would manage to escape him for that long.

With that being the case, the best plan was to make a gamble while he still had a chance at victory.

"I suppose I shall form a plan that works under the assumption that Birkyne's plan fails."

Hihiryushukaka turned his gaze towards Birkyne, who was still unaware of Gubamon's destruction.

Two days after being abducted by Vampires, Iris Bearheart reappeared before her companions of the Sauron Liberation Front.

"I'm happy that you are so vigilant, but isn't it about time you believe me?" asked a wet-faced Iris.

Her companions had been pouring holy water over her the moment she had reappeared.

"As you can see, the color of my eyes hasn't changed. I haven't got fangs, and I still have a pulse. I'm not a Vampire or an Undead," she said.

Finally, Debis and the others lowered their silver weapons that consisted of silver tableware.

"Ojou… I'm so glad you're safe!" Debis exclaimed.

"I thought it was over. If you'd come back a day later, I would have been forced to

become the princess knight!"

Wiping her wet face with a cloth that she had been handed, Iris returned the happy smile of her companions. She had made preparations so that things would remain in order even if she died at any moment, but she hadn't desired death. She was truly happy at being reunited with her companions.

"But Ojou, just how did you escape the Vampires?" Debis asked.

"About that… Debis, everyone, the Sauron Liberation Front has always been acting with the resolve to accept both good and evil," said Iris.

From the point of view of those who currently ruled the Sauron Duchy, the resistance was undeniably a group of criminals. No matter what kind of high ideals they had, they hadn't been able to get by through clean actions alone. They had even stained their hands with acts that ignored the principles of chivalry altogether.

Debis's betrayal of the slave merchant had been a spectacularly murky act for a member of the Mercenaries' Guild.

"But I have gained the resolve to tread through even murkier waters. Do you have the resolve to follow me?" Iris asked her companions.

The Sauron Liberation Front had made sure not to step over a certain line, but Iris's companions gasped at her mentions of treading through murkier waters.

"Ojou, could you possibly be speaking of making pacts with the Vampires?!"

"Iris-ojou, we mustn't! Those things, those Vampires that worship the Evil God of Joyful Life, I'm sure they have connections with the Amid Empire! They're just going to make use of us and then sell us out to the Empire in the end!"

Iris's companions had waded through murky waters numerous times, but making deals with the Vampires who worshipped the Evil God of Joyful Life was such a contaminated river that it made all of the past deeds they had done look like clear spring water.

They were beings who scorned and trampled over the most basic rules that even applied in the underworld. They could not be trusted to keep up their ends of any bargains. That was what Iris's companions were trying to tell her.

“No, they’re not the ones we’re going to be making a deal with,” Iris told them. “We’ll be making a deal with an organization led by the one who defeated Gubamon, one of the leaders of the Vampires who worship the Evil God of Joyful Life, and saved me. They offered me conditions and promised to offer us aid if these conditions are fulfilled.”

“Gubamon? You mean a Pure-breed Vampire was defeated?! There’s no way…!”

“But look, Iris-ojou was taken by Gubamon’s subordinates, but she’s safe and back with us now, so it might be true,” said Debis. “Iris-ojou, just who in the world is this monster who defeated a monster from the age of the gods and asked us to tread through murkier waters?”

Iris looked at her surprised companions as she answered. “Vandalieu-dono, a Dhampir with the Title of ‘Holy Son of Vida,’ who is responsible for slaughtering the Mirg shield-nation’s expedition army of six thousand in the southern region of the continent. The conditions that he offered are –”

The extermination force led by Mardock Zet had defeated Raymond and Rick, the Paris brothers who led the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army.

Having received this information, Kurt Legston decided that he should be happy about this.

The Paris brothers had been the most troublesome bunch among the resistance. The Sauron Liberation Front led by the Liberating Princess Knight was troublesome as well, but the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army led by the brothers had considerable organizational capability, and they were a powerful enemy with many former members of Knights’ Orders among their ranks.

Many units that had underestimated them as another mere resistance group had suffered great losses.

This resistance organization had been exterminated, so as an unimportant part of the Empire’s army, it was something that Kurt should be happy about.

“But it is quite surprising that two such important individuals were hiding in a place

like this. And even more surprising was your skill that brought us their heads," Kurt said with a smile, praising Mardock, who had come to deliver this report.

Kurt was truly happy from the bottom of his heart.

Now quickly, allow me to get out of this small fort, make a triumphant return to the army's headquarters and then receive my promotion in the Empire, Kurt thought as he offered Mardock a drink.

Mardock, whose face was wrapped in bandages, emptied the cup given to him before speaking. "Not *at* all. I lost many *of* my subordinates in *the* process. This is all the result of their *work*."

TLN: There is random katakana in Mardock's speech where there shouldn't be, though the sentences are all pronounced the same way and are normal as far as grammar goes. I interpret this as him having stiff, unnatural-sounding speech but I don't really know how to convey this in translation… something like italicizing random words might be the English equivalent.

Mardock's tone of speech was strange due to his injuries, but Kurt felt more discomfort at the words that he had spoken. Was Mardock the kind of man to say such admirable words?

It was true that nearly half of Mardock's unit had died. As a unit, these losses were enormous, and it was likely that many of the victims had been with Mardock for a long time. This was why Kurt didn't consider it completely unnatural that Mardock was thinking about the men who had been sacrificed.

But would he show these emotions to Kurt, whom he had been thoroughly unpleasant towards up until now?

I was certain that he would at least say something like, "For you to not notice such large figures hiding in a place so close by, you must really enjoy engaging in unarmed combat with the documents on your desk."

Taking no notice of Kurt's suspicions, Mardock changed the topic of conversation to an entirely different one.

"Come to think of it, are you *aware* of the incident in which a Hurricane Dragon's roar was heard several days *ago*?" Mardock asked.

“Yeah, since we could even hear it from here,” said Kurt. “But nothing strange has been happening, so I suppose it is just their mating season, or perhaps a territorial conflict with another Dragon.”

What is this about, all of a sudden? Kurt wondered, growing more and more suspicious.

But Mardock continued speaking. “… If I were to tell you that the Dragon’s roar was a sign that something crawled out from the other side of the Boundary Mountain Range, what would you *do*?”

“Mardock-dono? What are you saying?” Kurt asked.

Monsters crawling out from the other side of the Boundary Mountain Range. This was a phenomenon that occurred several times a year in Kurt’s homeland, the Mirg shield-nation. These were mostly monsters that lost the battle for a place in the mountain range and wandered outside after being expelled.

However, a monster that would cause a Hurricane Dragon to roar, a monster that would threaten not only this fort but the existence of the entire Sauron Duchy, had never emerged from the mountain range.

“There is no way that is possible,” Kurt said. “If that was true, then we would have bigger things to worry about than the resistance. We would need to send a message to the army headquarters right now, send out requests to summon A-class adventurers _”

Suddenly, an unfamiliar noise came from the wooden door behind Kurt. He immediately turned around, and then opened his eyes wide in surprise.

A small silhouette so black that it looked as if it were enveloped in the darkness of the night itself had entered the room by breaking through the office door that was made of rotting wood.

“In this world, windows are usually wooden doors, so the ‘outside the window!’ joke can’t be used, can it?” said the small silhouette that was covered completely in black with a flat tone that was very out-of-place.

“Your Majesty, I cannot understand that joke.”

Another figure completely covered in black, about the size of an adult man, entered

the room after the smaller one.

“Th-thieves!” Kurt shouted. “Mardock-dono, the soldiers at the front –?!”

“I *shall* have you *be* quiet now.” Mardock produced a dagger from his pocket and placed its blade at Kurt’s neck. “The men at the front *have* already been replaced *by* my subordinates.”

“Mardock, what are you playing at, you bastard?!” Kurt demanded.

He had been personally distrustful of Mardock, but Mardock was supposed to be exceptional as a soldier. Kurt was more bewildered than angry at Mardock’s betrayal.

In this situation, what purpose was there in betraying Kurt, who was nothing more than the commander of a small fort?

“Actually –” Mardock began.

“I’m not Captain Mardock, you knooow,” said another voice, finishing the sentence.

A familiar-looking man emerged from Mardock’s back like a larva emerging from its chrysalis.

“You’re from the extermination force…!” said Kurt.

Kurt didn’t remember the man’s name, but he had been a scout of Mardock’s unit. Kurt had seen him a few times, but he had always maintained a stiff expressionlessness, perhaps because he was earnest or perhaps because he was simply a gloomy individual.

“I am Kimberley, formerly of the extermination force, Commandant Kurt Legston~.” The man had become quite transparent, but he was now giving a twisted smile, a grin that exposed his teeth.

As Kimberley emerged, Mardock collapsed onto the ground like a piece of rotten wood, but Kurt found himself unable to move.

Kimberley was far too close for Kurt to try anything.

Kurt was the third son of the Legston family of earls that had served as marshal for

generations, but he himself didn't possess the fighting strength of a hero. He wasn't particularly strong compared to the average knight.

I might have been able to do something if I had some more space and my weapon and shield were nearby, but… Well, I was completely defeated the moment the captain got close to me, Legston thought.

But even as he gave up hope, his mouth asked another question on its own. "… To think that Mardock was possessed by a Ghost. What about the other members of the extermination force?"

"No, Mardock is the only one who has been taken over by a Ghost's Possession skill. I'm just manipulating the others," said the small, black figure.

"That makes no difference to me," said Kurt.

It seemed that over a dozen enemies had entered the fort. The morale of the soldiers holed up in the fort had never been high to begin with, and it was unlikely that they had felt any sense of caution towards Mardock and his men who had made a triumphant return after taking the heads of two important members of the resistance.

Thinking about future improvements that would likely never be made, Kurt turned his gaze towards the small figure. "So, what's your goal? Surely you're not going to tell me that you're after my head," he said in self-deprecation.

The small figure shook its head as it answered. "No, our goal *is* you. But with your head still attached, if possible."

A pale smoke rose from the small figure, and the blackness that looked like the darkness of the night rapidly began to disappear. What was left was a white Dhampir child.

Kurt himself had never seen this child before, but he remembered the top-secret orders that he had been given 'just in case.'

"You are Vandalieu?!"

Vandalieu blinked in surprise at the fact that his own name had come from Kurt's mouth. "Why do you know my name?" he asked.

"…It is a name told to me by the top brass of my homeland," said Kurt. "After doing all of those things… slaughtering the entire expedition of six thousand men, sending over half of them back as Undead and then destroying the cultivated land using the Undead and deadly poison, did you think that we would not be cautious of you?"

And for Kurt, Vandalieu was the killer of his older brother and the reason that he had been demoted.

He had wondered what kind of monster Vandalieu would be, but Vandalieu's appearance was truly that of a child. He had a well-featured face that could pass for a girl's, a doll-like expressionlessness and wax-like skin that didn't look like it belonged to a living person at all.

But he was a monster to be feared.

Kurt had heard from Thomas Palpapek, the Mirg shield-nation's marshal, that this monster haunted the southern region of the continent beyond the Boundary Mountain Range. Top secret orders had been issued to the commanders of the forts, checkpoints and garrisons near the Boundary Mountain Range, to be followed in the event that Vandalieu was discovered. Those orders were to report the Dhampir's appearance to the homeland and then prioritize avoiding battle and keeping casualties to a minimum.

But Kurt hadn't been seriously vigilant about this, as he hadn't expected that the Dhampir would appear in the former Sauron Duchy to the north of the Boundary Mountain Range.

He would never have dreamed that Vandalieu would come to the former Sauron Duchy in order to obtain rice.

"I see. Well, I suppose any place under the Empire's rule would at least do something like this," said Vandalieu, satisfied with this explanation. "So, this is the business that I've even gone as far as to use my 'ink' to sneak in here for…. I want to recruit you."

"Recruit me, you say?" Kurt repeated, doubting his own ears. It seemed impossible in a variety of ways; he found it difficult to believe that he was even that valuable an individual. But then he voiced the greatest of the questions that he had. "Can't you do that after killing me and turning me into an Undead without making all this effort?"

Considering the expedition army's transformation into Undead and Kimberley's

transformation into a Ghost, there was no doubt that the boy in front of Kurt's eyes could tame Undead. So then, why was he going out of his way to recruit a living soldier of an enemy nation? Wasn't this some kind of trap? Kurt couldn't trust Vandalieu at all until these questions were answered.

But it wasn't Vandalieu who answered Kurt's question.

"It's because I recommended it," said the larger figure, who had remained silent after the first words it spoke when it first entered.

A thin smoke rose from the figure. The Demon King's ink that had been used as camouflage disappeared, revealing a deathly-pale face that Kurt knew very well. Kurt's jaw almost dropped onto the ground.

"Ani-ue, Chezare-ani-ue?!"

"I received your letter before the expedition army departed, but it's been three, no, four years since we last talked directly? Or should I say that it's the first time? It seems that you've aged considerably since we last met." Chezare's gaze wandered as if lost, and then he shrugged his shoulders as if finally giving up on something. "Ah, it's useless. I can't remember what kind of face I made when I talked to you. Did I have a politer tone? Leaving that aside, have you gotten married yet?"

"…That is the face, Ani-ue. After you became an adult, you did have a politer tone, however," said Kurt. "The marriage proposal I reported in my letter was canceled after the expedition army was defeated and I was demoted."

"I see. That's convenient for us," said Chezare. "So, you were wondering why we made all this effort to recruit you, weren't you?"

"I would like you to apologize, Ani-ue, even if only as a formality."

From Kurt's point of view, the words and behavior of the Undead before his eyes were exactly like those of his older brother, to the point that they were exchanging these words so naturally.

Kurt was a believer of Alda; it was only natural for him to believe that Undead were evil beings. But he couldn't deny that this was certainly his older brother.

"The reason is because there is a possibility that your personality and memories will

be damaged when you become an Undead," Chezare continued. "It's only natural, since it's something that happens after you die. I've changed quite a lot myself, haven't I?"

"No, that is not… No, you have indeed changed quite a lot," Kurt agreed. He felt that there was something decisively different about his older brother compared to when he had been alive.

While he was alive, Chezare would have never infiltrated a fort of the enemy army for any reason.

"There are some who become more useful after becoming Undead; that's true for me and Kimberley. But that doesn't mean it will be true for you. That's why His Majesty has come to recruit you."

"If I refuse, will I be killed and turned into an Undead?" Kurt asked with a bitter smile.

"Yes," Vandalieu replied. "It's already been decided that this fort will fall, so that's what will happen."

There wasn't any use in lying, so he answered honestly. The act of slaughtering six thousand people from Kurt's own nation and returning them as Undead might have been a defensive battle followed by a counterattack from the perspective of Vandalieu and his allies, but from Kurt's point of view, these actions were likely the act of a fiend.

"So, this is how you'll be treated if you accept my recruitment. My nation doesn't have an aristocratic system yet, so I can't guarantee you a court rank, however." Vandalieu handed Kurt a document.

Kurt took it, but before even looking at it, he gave Vandalieu a bewildered look. "Didn't you think that I would be enraged and refuse you? You *are* my brother's killer."

"I did," said Vandalieu. "That's why I prepared plenty of fighting forces before coming here."

Princess Levia, Orbia and a large number of other Ghosts appeared around Vandalieu for a moment, and then disappeared again. Realizing that the creepily-smiling Kimberley wasn't the only Ghost around, Kurt's expression stiffened.

"But Chezare has told me that you're a calm, patient person," Vandalieu continued. "If you still hate me, then it can't be helped. It's fate that we're speaking face-to-face like

this, so I would accept if you were to challenge me to a one-on-one duel. Would you like that?"

With his expression still frozen, Kurt thought… The strength left his face and shoulders as he gave his answer. "I shall decline. I am thankful for your consideration."

Even if they were to duel, Kurt did not feel like he could win against the child before his eyes. Chezare and Kimberley had been looking at him to silently urge him to decline as well, but the marshal's secret written orders had also read, "Avoid fighting him at all costs."

And Kurt had never particularly hated the 'Monstrosity' that had turned the tables on the expedition army.

Though he had felt seething emotions upon first hearing the news, once he calmed down and thought about it, he had realized that the Mirg shield-nation had simply lost a war.

It had invaded enemy lands, been completely defeated and then suffered an invasion in return. Excluding the Undead, these were events that had repeated themselves in history over and over again.

It wasn't as if he felt no grudge at all, but after talking to the Undead older brother before his eyes, even that grudge had grown weaker. It might have been different if his older brother had been rotting and letting out groans of suffering, but Chezare was almost exactly the same as he had been while alive other than the deathly-pale color of his skin.

Perhaps as an Alda believer, it was proper for him to be burning with anger, but before being a believer of Alda, he was a military man, a commander.

The king of the enemy nation had personally come to meet him and offered him a chance to change sides before killing him. This was a prestigious thing, and in this situation, he had essentially already been defeated.

Considering these facts, Kurt had no time to be enraged. Anger simply got in the way of his work.

"But what will happen if I sell out my subordinates and betray my homeland?" Kurt asked.

“The details regarding that are written in the document,” said Vandalieu.

Kurt lowered his gaze to the document in his hands to find that the details were indeed written there.

If Kurt accepted Vandalieu’s recruitment, all of his subordinates’ lives would be spared.

And there were promises that would be fulfilled if the Mirg shield-nation went to war with Talosheim, the nation that Vandalieu ruled, such as actions being taken to persuade the Legston family to join Talosheim’s side.

If all of the promises written here were kept, they were extraordinarily good conditions for Kurt.

However, there were also some points that concerned him.

“Why have you gone out of your way to write, ‘I will definitely kill Thomas Palpapek, and this is not negotiable?’” Kurt asked.

“He has connections to the Vampires who worship an evil god, and he is one of the masterminds behind my mother’s death,” Vandalieu replied.

“…Would you care to tell me about this topic in more detail, ‘Your Majesty?’”

It didn’t take long for Kurt to renounce his faith in Alda and swear loyalty to Vandalieu and his nation while still alive.

- **Name:** Eisen
- **Rank:** 7
- **Race:** Huge Skogsrå
- **Level:** 1
- **Passive skills:**
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 7
    - Rapid Regeneration: Level 6
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 6
    - Magic Resistance: Level 6
    - Physical Resistance: Level 6
    - Augmented Vitality: Level 8
    - Enhanced Physical Ability (Bark, Branches): Level 7
    - Fruit Production: Level 10
    - Sap Production: Level 10
    - Branch Production: Level 10
    - Allure: Level 5
- **Active skills:**
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 3
    - Throwing: Level 3
    - Armor Technique: Level 1
    - Spirit Siphon: Level 1

Monster explanation:

【Skogsrå】

A plant-type monster of which none currently exist in Lambda other than Eisen. She appeared as a result of her Rank increasing from being an Immortal Ent, and this race name was given to her because her appearance is similar to fairies that appear in legends that Vandalieu heard in Origin. There are also similar legends on Earth.

Their base Rank is 6.

They are beautiful women with green skin, but the skin on their backs is replaced with bark, and several branches grow from there. Also, they possess tails similar to those of cows for some unknown reason.

There are no other Skogsrå in Volume 5, so it is difficult to inspect them as a race, but because Eisen was formerly an Immortal Ent, she possesses powerful regenerative abilities and a great resistance to status effects. When she was an Immortal Ent, she swung her branches and roots to fight, so she has acquired the Unarmed Fighting Technique skill. She has also learned the Throwing skill from throwing her fruit.

She can extend the branches on her back to use them as weapons, and produce fruit from them. Also, her sap can be used as an ingredient for a high-quality syrup. The wooden clothes that she wears were actually created by her, and can be replaced at any time.

Other than her simple fighting strength, she is also surrounded by a charm similar to that of a high-class prostitute due to her Allure passive skill, and she can touch any creatures she seduces to attack them with Spirit Siphon.

Also, it is thought that she can become capable of using earth-attribute magic, life-attribute magic or perhaps both.

She looks similar to a human in appearance, but she is essentially a plant, so she can survive for a long period of time as long as she has water and sunlight. However, she is also capable of eating.

Incidentally, it is a mystery as to why she only ever says, “Eat.” It is thought that her vocabulary will grow in the future.

She secretly participated during the battle against Gubamon, and with the Experience Points gained during this battle, she has developed into a Rank 7 Huge Skogsrå.

As the Adventurers’ Guild has never identified Skogsrå, the parts used as proof of extermination, how dangerous they are and the tradeable materials that can be obtained from them are unknown.

Chapter 118
Objectives are about 70% complete

March. It was still cold, but a spring-like warmth could be felt in the sun's rays as Vandalieu served cooked Sauron rice onto a plate.

The moment he inhaled the aroma contained in the steam rising from the white, glossy rice, emotion swept over his entire body.

"Oh…" Vandalieu let out a noise of wonder.

His body trembled spontaneously at this smell, which stimulated his hunger more than any other spice possibly could right now.

Vandalieu had never trembled other than in anger, even during battles to the death against Pure-breed Vampires. Seeing him react like this now, those watching him were shaken.

"…Privel, wasn't it? That substance, it's just food, isn't it?" asked Eleanora, who had remained in Talosheim while Vandalieu went to the former Sauron Duchy.

"That should be the case, but… I've started to lose the confidence to say that," Privel muttered.

"Incidentally, is this some kind of ritual, perhaps?" Nuaza the Lich, clergyman of the Church of Vida in Talosheim, was watching Vandalieu in confusion. "The Holy Son has created and reproduced countless food items in the past. But I do not believe he has ever shown such happiness."

"Indeed," said Zadiris in agreement. "He was happy when he made miso, soy sauce and curry, but never to this extent."

But these words had a different impact on Privel and the other Scylla.

"…That's Vandalieu-kun being happy? Orbia-san, were you able to tell?" Privel asked.

"No~ not at all," said Orbia. "Just because I've become a Ghost doesn't mean I can see

auras or… spiritual things?"

"He's a surprisingly easy-going child, but it's hard to tell what he's thinking when he's quiet, isn't it?" said Periveil.

As Periveil said, one would become able to read Vandalieu's emotions quickly after getting to know him to a certain extent. His expressionlessness never changed, but he wasn't a quiet person and often expressed his emotions through gestures.

However, it became impossible to read his inner thoughts once he stopped doing that.

"You still have a long way to go, don't you?" Tarea remarked.

"You don't understand Van's habits," said Basdia.

"You won't be able to serve as Vandalieu-sama's servants at this rate," said Eleanora.

The three of them, who could still read Vandalieu's inner thoughts in this situation, were wearing proud expressions.

Privel let out a noise of frustration.

"No, I'm not a servant," said Periveil, and then she turned to her daughter. "Privel, don't just stay quiet and feel bitter about it!"

"But I can't forgive them for having bigger chests than me!" Privel complained.

"Eh? That's what we were talking about?!" Orbia exclaimed in surprise.

"No, we didn't mean that it's a matter of having a bigger chest," said Basdia.

"I won't lose when it comes to the number of legs!" Privel shouted, not listening.

"There's no way we can win against Scylla who have eight legs, is there?!" Eleanora exclaimed.

"Could you please not wrap these around me?!" said Tarea, who had become entangled in the tentacles that Privel had been flailing around unconsciously.

"Serves you right. But the only ones who could compete with them are Arachne,"

Zadiris muttered as she gave a sidelong glance at her rival, her daughter and Eleanora, who were engaged in a pointless argument – or rather, were being one-sidedly covered by Privel's tentacles.

And then Zadiris sniffed the white rice as Vandalieu was doing.

"It is indeed a pleasant smell, but…" she murmured.

Southern rice, which was similar to Indica rice, had a slight smell to it when it was cooked with the rice alone. But the Sauron rice, which was similar to Japonica rice, certainly had a pleasant aroma to it.

But is it really enough to make him so happy… no, make him tremble with emotion? Zadiris wondered, but then she got the feeling that she knew the reason behind this.

"This is it, this is real rice!" exclaimed Kasim.

"Mmm, it's so nostalgic!" said Fester.

The two of them, having once cultivated this rice in their farming villages in the Sauron Duchy, were moved to tears. Zeno was silent, but that was because tears of emotion were wordlessly flowing down his cheeks.

"I see, so it is emotional attachment," Zadiris murmured in understanding as she took a mouthful of white rice with the chopsticks that she had recently become completely accustomed to using. "… Mmm, well, it is delicious."

But not delicious enough for her to continue eating it on its own like Vandalieu, Kasim, Fester and Zeno.

As Vandalieu munched on the Sauron rice, a flavor different from that of southern rice spread through his mouth. Compared to the white rice of Earth, it was a little inferior… perhaps.

"The truth is, I don't really remember it," said Vandalieu. "It's already been about thirty years since I ate Japonica rice."

His uncle on Earth hadn't gone as far as to say that white rice was a luxury, so he had

been eating white rice like an ordinary person.

However, in the military nation in Origin that had the research laboratory, where Vandalieu had spent his second life, the culture was similar to the European culture of Earth. It wasn't that they didn't have rice, but there had been no need to go out of their way to provide rice for Vandalieu, an experimental animal. Vandalieu got the feeling that when he *had* been given food that was properly food-like, it had been mostly bread, with a few occasions where he had been given pasta.

He had indirectly wished for rice, but this wish had never been granted, as the researchers had believed that negative feelings would have a good effect on the death-attribute magic. The food after that had been block-shaped nutritional supplements, and, in the end, either liquid food made to be deliberately unpleasant or intravenously-administered food.

And as a matter of fact, even when he had lived as Amamiya Hiroto on Earth, Vandalieu's staple food in the mornings had been bread. Since there wasn't an enjoyable dining table to be at for him, he had preferred bread that could be finished quickly.

Even so, Vandalieu thought that the rice of Earth had tasted better, but that was probably a matter of how it was cooked. The performance of Japanese rice cookers had been too outstanding.

"That's why I can't compare them, but I think it's delicious," Vandalieu said. His physical body craved rice, so he had used Out-of-body Experience to have his spirit form slip out and thank Privel.

"Hearing you say that makes me happy," Privel said with a smile.

Now that he thought about it, obtaining this Sauron rice had been the reason for Vandalieu's visit to the Scylla.

…The other objective of establishing allies on the outside hadn't been entirely fulfilled, however, as the Scylla race had migrated here.

But Vandalieu decided to be satisfied with having made connections with the Sauron Liberation Front led by Iris.

"Privel-san, Periveil-san, all of you Scylla, really, thank you," said Darcia. "Vandalieu has

always been saying that he wanted to eat rice, ever since he was a baby…"

"How splendid this is for you, Bocchan," said Sam. "This servant of yours remembers when you heard from Darcia-sama that there is rice in the Orbaume Kingdom, and you responded with, 'Seriously?!'"

"We remember it too. We couldn't talk like this back then, though!" said Rita.

"How wonderful," said Saria. "I prefer bread, but you really did say, 'Seriously?!' How truly wonderful!"

"…Mom, everyone, it's fine to be happy for me, but I think it would also be fine for you to forget a few more details," said Vandalieu.

It seemed that Darcia, Sam and the two sisters remembered the events from before Vandalieu stayed in the Ghoul village very well.

"To think that my lord has desired this rice for so long…" Bone Man murmured.

Knochen let out a confused groan.

It seemed that Bone Man, who had only contained the spirits of mice, and Knochen who had been a series of Bone Beasts back then, did not remember these events.

"Wow, so he says things like that as well?" Orbia said in surprise. "He always speaks in a polite tone that isn't childlike at all, so I've been wondering if he's been like that since he was a baby."

"His Majesty was a rascal once as well, wasn't he?" said Princess Levia.

"More importantly, I'm starting to get sick of eating just rice," said the Zombie hero, the Sword King Borkus, one of Talosheim's heroes.

"Me too. Can we cook some meat?" asked Vigaro, the young leader of the Ghouls who was also Basdia's father.

It seemed that the two of them wanted some side dishes.

"Then I suppose we'll go with curry and rice," said Vandalieu.

Thinking that it would be perfect since the rice was already on flat plates, the spirit form Vandalieu served up the rich-flavored curry that had been kept warm in a pot.

In the end, Kurt Legston, commandant of the small fort that served as a barrier adjacent to the Scylla territory, accepted Vandalieu's recruitment.

At first, he had intended to accept it, simply because he had been told that he would be turned into an Undead and dragged away if he didn't. But it seemed that learning that Thomas Palpapek had ties with the Vampires who worshipped Hihiryushukaka, the Evil God of Joyful Life, had changed his mind.

"I'm sure the marshal thinks that it's for the sake of the nation, but even so, there are lines that must not be crossed… Well, what I will do from now on is likely something that crosses the line from the marshal's perspective," Kurt had said as he swore loyalty to Vandalieu in exchange for a guarantee that the lives of his subordinates would be spared.

After that, he had explained things to the hundred or so subordinates and handed control over the fort to Vandalieu. Most of these subordinates were those who had been demoted in the previous war.

That was why when Vandalieu asked them whether they would prefer to be released after having their memories erased or to join Kurt in following him, over ninety percent of them had chosen the latter option.

Of course, there had been no small number who had only agreed because they were terrified of having their minds being altered after seeing Mardock and his men, who were now in vegetative states, rather than being drawn to Kurt's steady character and the conditions promised to them by Vandalieu.

After that, Vandalieu had brainwashed the few soldiers who had still refused and then began the task of helping the Scylla move.

"So, everyone, that's how it is, so let's move to Van-kun's country!" Orbia had told the Scylla, and the Scylla were welcomed into the marshlands to the south of Talosheim, where the Lizardmen lived.

Thanks to the Divine Messages sent by Merrebeveil, who was worshipped by all Scylla, and the fact that Vandalieu had resolved the Scylla serial-killing case, Vandalieu had already gained the trust of the entire Scylla race.

And the 'Tentacle King' Title that he had gained made the Scylla view him more favorably, so the discussions had proceeded in a smooth fashion.

And Vandalieu had tested the Insect Binding Technique skill to find that he was indeed able to equip Scylla, so he had used that ability to bring the chief of each Scylla village to the marshlands that they were moving to in order to present it to them. The Scylla had already been searching for a place to migrate to in order to escape from the Amid Empire's occupation of the Sauron Duchy, so they had approved of settling in these great marshlands.

All that was left to do after that was Vandalieu shuttling all of the Scylla across.

Of course, it would have troubled the Scylla race to have them move with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and there were also their husbands and sons whom Vandalieu couldn't equip, so he had Knochen, Sam and the newest addition to his subordinates, Miles and the Vampires who worked under him, to make numerous trips back and forth to carry the luggage across.

As for the route they took, the territory of the Hurricane Dragon that Vandalieu and his companions had defeated on the way to the Sauron Duchy was open. Since Knochen contained the bones of that Hurricane Dragon, monsters inferior to it wouldn't dare approach.

"Now that we've crossed the Boundary Mountain Range so many times, there isn't much to it, is there!" said Miles.

"Hahaha, indeed!" Sam laughed. "I have already surpassed Bocchan in the number of times I have crossed the Boundary Mountain Range!"

Knochen let out a satisfied groan.

Vandalieu had been wondering whether he should suppress his unpleasant feelings and turn Gubamon into an Undead in order to have him use space-attribute magic to move all the luggage across, but seeing how much Sam and Miles were enjoying the physical labor, he decided not to worry about it.

Also, Talosheim would now secretly support the Sauron Liberation Front led by Iris.

This was so that the Empire's army wouldn't gather strength now that the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army led by Raymond and Rick had collapsed.

The one who had mainly been in charge of the negotiations with Iris was Bellmond, whose poor ability to interact with others was now clear, but it seemed that Iris had been a very accepting person.

"It seems that she'd stopped being a follower of Alda after she became a criminal, so she happily agreed to a religious conversion. But it seemed that she won't yield on the release of her father," said Vandalieu.

The corpse of Iris's father, Lord Bearheart, had been retrieved by Gubamon's subordinates after he fell in battle during the war with the Amid Empire. And since he had been turned into an Undead, Vandalieu had recovered him.

"Well, I don't mind that," said Vandalieu. "But I don't know about sending him back to Rodcorte, so I suppose I'll destroy him, take out his spirit and leave it in her custody in a state where she can see him."

Vandalieu had no emotional attachment to Iris's father, so he didn't really feel any loss in releasing him.

It was up to Iris as to whether she would use the item containing her father's spirit or destroy it and pour holy water over it to purify it.

And so, Talosheim began assisting the Sauron Liberation Front with food and goods. Iris and her men would fight the Amid Empire as believers of Vida and the gods on her side, and as members of the resistance.

…Even if it was questionable as to whether they could win against the Empire, now that they had received Blood Potions and arms made of the Demon King's fragments, and were able to use the old Scylla territory as a base, they would not be annihilated unless something extraordinary happened.

Incidentally, Haj and the other fake resistance members had been taken to Talosheim and would be sent to support the Sauron Liberation Front after they were trained.

Once the Scylla race's immigration and other things had progressed to some extent,

Kurt and his men left the small fort as well. Vandalieu had the Undead members of the extermination force and Knochen's Skeletons cause some damage to the fort, left Mardock and a few other corpses around and then had the Undead continue moving around as a pack. Anyone would assume that the fort had fallen to stray Undead.

The soldiers who'd had their memories erased would be the few survivors.

"But I am sure some of the higher-ups would notice," said Kurt, who constantly spoke in the tone of a retainer. "The marshal would certainly suspect that you are involved, Your Majesty."

"That will not be a problem," said Chezare. "Even if they notice and suspect this, we will have already returned to the southern region of the continent. Let us make the marshal, who is working tirelessly to reorganize the army, groan in frustration."

It seemed that the brothers had agreed to treat each other in the same way as they had done before.

The most troublesome thing for Vandalieu came after this.

The moving of the Scylla race didn't end at simply releasing them into the marshlands. They needed places to live, fields to grow their rice and facilities to raise the ducks and Huge Capybaras that were their livestock.

But there were some carpenters among the Scylla and their husbands, so Vandalieu simply needed to turn wood and other materials into Golems and move them as they instructed, assembling them into the shapes of houses.

"Your Majesty-san, is there anyone else who can do this? If there are, we'd have no choice but to close down our businesses," said one of the workers.

"No, I'm the only one who can do this," said Vandalieu. "And I can't always be busy building things, so please work hard and don't close down your businesses."

All of the workers felt a deep sense of relief at Vandalieu's words.

And then Vandalieu used Golem Transmutation again to turn the marshlands into water-filled fields. The climate and daylight hours were slightly different to the original Scylla territory, but the land was good, so it was possible to harvest crops here, even if they would taste a little different.

And learning from the poor example set by the relationship between the Sauron Duchy and the Scylla territory, it was decided that no race would be limited to certain areas. It was only natural that there were many Lizardmen and Scylla in the marshlands, but Vandalieu had decided to add Ghouls and Undead to these lands as well.

The reverse was also arranged; Lizardmen and Scylla chose representatives who would take turns to spend time living in Talosheim.

This was to have them remain involved in political, military and commercial matters through personal interaction. And, most importantly, to give everyone a sense that they belonged to this nation.

Vandalieu very much disliked the idea of the races separating in the future, starting independence movements that would divide the nation. This was especially true because Vandalieu would still be alive in that future, since he was a Dark Elf Dhampir with a long lifespan.

The Scylla race's family register still needed to be created and they needed to be taught things like how to pay income taxes, but these things were all settled around three months after the Scylla moved in, allowing for things like the rice-tasting meeting.

Things had settled down with the Scylla race's migration to Talosheim, but nothing had settled down anywhere else in Bahn Gaia continent.

First of all, the Sauron Duchy remained very stable even as spring approached.

Raymond and Rick Paris had been leading the Reborn Sauron Liberation Army, one of the two beacons of hope for the people who were unhappy with the Amid Empire's rule, but they were now dead.

There were still small-scale groups of their members scattered around the duchy, but there was nobody who was in any position to unify them and take command. They couldn't function as an organization anymore.

But these groups had been saved by the Sauron Liberation Front that still remained. Its leader, the Liberating Princess Knight, was gathering the members of the Reborn Sauron Duchy Army who had been isolated all over the duchy.

In addition to their great numbers, they also had the support of a mysterious benefactor who was providing them with materials.

But the loss of Raymond, who was the illegitimate son of Duke Sauron, had a large effect on the entire resistance movement; many worried about how things would be coordinated with the Orbaume Kingdom.

And things were going smoothly for the Empire's army after two important figures of the resistance had been killed – or at least, they made the duchy's people and the Orbaume Kingdom believe that this was the case.

An extermination force of elite individuals and a small fort adjacent to the Scylla territory had been annihilated, and now an Undead clean-up operation needed to be conducted. This was quite painful for the Empire's army.

But the most painful thing of all was that the Scylla race had vanished from their territory. There had been plans to slowly strangle them, incite them to rebel and then exterminate them one day, but according to the plans of Marshukzarl, Emperor of the Amid Empire, that would have been conducted over a hundred years from now.

The taxes that the Scylla would have paid during that time, as well as the benefits of the things they produced, had disappeared.

The plans of pretending to be friendly towards the Scylla race in order to acquire their technology and agricultural knowledge had vanished as well.

And the now-empty Scylla territory was a heavy burden on the Empire's army. Most of it consisted of empty mountains and marshlands, but there was also a Devil's Nest filled with monsters as well as a Dungeon. If they left it alone, the monsters would multiply and it was possible that the Devil's Nest would expand rapidly.

Since the large number of mysterious Undead had appeared and destroyed the fort, a budget needed to be set aside to manage this.

The higher-ups of the Amid Empire and Mirg shield-nation that had dispatched their armies to occupy the Sauron Duchy were groaning in frustration.

Emperor Marshukzarl had gathered all kinds of information, and the Mirg shield-nation's marshal, Thomas Malpapek, had received information through yet another different Vampire who acted as a mediator between him and the Vampires. Both of

them were certain that Vandalieu was behind this series of events.

And in different places and at different times, both of them uttered the same words.

“Just how long is he planning to keep crawling around…!”

And a small commotion had been caused in the Orbaume Kingdom in the eastern region of the continent. The other dukes and military men who had connections to Raymond had lost their ally.

Those collaborating with Raymond were those who had been unable to make connections with the legitimate sons of Duke Sauron that had fled the Sauron Duchy, so even if things went well and the Sauron Duchy was taken back, they wouldn’t be given any significant benefits.

This was why they had intended to make Raymond the new duke, even though he had given up his right to succeed the family despite possessing the duke’s blood. To thank them, Raymond would have used his connections to give them many benefits.

That possibility had vanished, but it was far too late to make connections with Duke Sauron’s true sons now, which was why they were flustered.

It was possible that the civilians of the continent who knew nothing had benefited from this series of events as well as the Scylla race.

Gubamon had been defeated and the number of his subordinates had dropped sharply, so there were far fewer fearsome monsters to be afraid of now.

“Come to think of it, when are we going to the Noble Orc empire?” Darcia asked.

“I suppose after this year’s crop-planting is finished and the growth of the rice settles down,” said Vandalieu, having been reminded of the Noble Orc empire’s existence by this question. “I want to make adjustments to Zandia and Jeena in the meantime, too.”

Vandalieu had stationed Lemures and surveillance Golems at the southern tip of the marshlands, but there hadn’t been any visible movements.

Postponing the plan to visit the empire probably wouldn’t cause any problems.

“Yes, yes, you want a meatball?” said Vandalieu.

He fed a specially-made meatball to the squealing larva resting on his head, the queen of the Cemetery Bees that had hatched not long ago. It looked difficult to digest at first glance, but the worker bees had mixed their saliva in and even the bones had been crushed into it, so it was actually very easy to digest.

As Vandalieu fed this meatball preserved with the Preservation spell to the white larva with a round abdomen, he suddenly remembered something. “Come to think of it, Mom, regarding Homunculi, Merrebeveil said that she could help if it was with making tentacles.”

“Umm, what about the non-tentacle parts?” Darcia asked. “I don’t mind having tentacles like the Scylla, but being made *only* of tentacles would be…”

“That’s what I thought,” said Vandalieu.

There would be a big difference between “a mother with tentacles” and “a mother made of tentacles.”

Darcia’s values had changed due to various external influences, but it seemed that she didn’t want to become a creature consisting only of tentacles. That was true even if the scales of Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, was added to it.

“Ah, also, I’m planning to change Jobs to Zombie Maker after this,” Vandalieu added.

With this, he would be able to make progress with making adjustments to the Undead heroes he had taken from Gubamon.

- **Name:** Vandalieu
- **Race**: Dhampir (Dark Elf)
- **Age**: 8 years old
- **Title**:【Ghoul King】,【Eclipse King】,【Second Coming of the Demon King】,【Guardian of the Cultivation Villages】,【Holy Son of Vida】,【Monstrosity】,【Scaled King】【Tentacle King】
- **Job**: Zombie Maker
- **Level**: 0
- **Job history**: Death-Attribute Mage, Golem Transmuter, Undead Tamer, Soul Breaker, Venom Fist User, Insect User, Tree Caster, Demon Guider, Archenemy
- **Attributes**:
    - Vitality: 2066
    - Mana: 1,071,505,533 (+321,451,659)
    - Strength: 943
    - Agility: 698
    - Stamina: 1003
    - Intelligence: 1,919
- **Passive skills**:
    - Superhuman Strength: Level 5
    - Rapid Healing: Level 9 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Death-Attribute Magic: Level 10 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Status Effect Resistance: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Magic Resistance: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Dark Vision
    - Demon Path Enticement: Level 2 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Chant Revocation: Level 6
    - Guidance: Demon Path: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Automatic Mana Recovery: Level 6
    - Strengthen Subordinates: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Venom Secretion (Claws, Fangs, Tongue): Level 5
    - Enhanced Agility: Level 3
    - Body Expansion (Tongue): Level 5
    - Strengthened Attack Power while Unarmed: Large (LEVEL UP!)
    - Enhanced Physical Ability (Hair, Claws, Tongue, Fangs): Level 4
    - Thread Refining: Level 3
    - Mana Enlargement: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Active skills**:

    - Bloodwork: Level 3
    - Surpass Limits: Level 7
    - Golem Transmutation: Level 8
    - No-Attribute Magic: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Mana Control: Level 7 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Spirit Form: Level 8 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Carpentry: Level 6
    - Engineering: Level 4
    - Cooking: Level 5
    - Alchemy: Level 6
    - Unarmed Fighting Technique: Level 6
    - Soul Break: Level 8
    - Multi-Cast: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Long-distance Control: Level 7
    - Surgery: Level 5
    - Parallel Thought Processing: Level 6 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Materialization: Level 4
    - Coordination: Level 4
    - High-speed Thought Processing: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Commanding: Level 4
    - Plant Binding Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Thread-reeling: Level 5
    - Throwing: Level 5
    - Scream: Level 4
    - Dead Spirit Magic: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Insect Binding Technique: Level 5 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Blacksmithing: Level 1
    - Artillery Technique: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
- **Unique skills:**
    - God Slayer: Level 6
    - Grotesque Mind: Level 6
    - Mental Encroachment: Level 5
    - Labyrinth Construction: Level 6
    - Demon King Fusion: Level 4 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Abyss: Level 3 (LEVEL UP!)
    - Hostility
- **Demon King fragments:**
    - Blood
    - Horns

    - Suckers
    - Ink Sacs
    - Carapace
- **Curses**
    - Experience gained in previous life not carried over
    - Cannot learn existing jobs
    - Unable to gain experience independently

Job explanation:

【Archenemy】

A Job that can be acquired by a death-attribute mage who has been cursed by a god or has been recognized as an enemy by multiple powerful beings and organizations while he has also recognized them as enemies.

This Job grants the Hostility skill that increases damage dealt against all enemies. It provides great increases to the Vitality and Strength Attribute Values, while making it difficult to increase the Mana and Intelligence Attribute Values.

Side Chapter 12

The gods watching from afar, and others

There is an expression, “eyeballs will fly out of their sockets*,” that expresses surprise. The surprise that Alda felt was equivalent to this expression.

TLN: Obviously a Japanese expression – i.e. to be so surprised that your eyes are going to fall out of their sockets*

“There is no mistake with this, Curatos?” he asked.

“There is no mistake,” said Alda’s loyal subordinate god, Curatos, the God of Records.

“The simultaneous activation of multiple fragments of the Demon King… the blood sealed away by Nineroad, the horns that were in the possession of the Pure-breed Vampires and the ink that had gone missing…” Alda murmured.

“He has likely now acquired the carapace that Gubamon was in possession of,” Curatos added. “I could not confirm this through Iris Bearheart’s eyes, but he may already be in possession of other fragments as well.”

The sealing of the Demon King’s fragments had been conducted by Alda, Vida and the three surviving champions, one of whom was Nineroad. The locations of many of the fragments that Vida had been responsible for sealing were now unknown.

Alda and his followers suspected that Merrebeveil, the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles, had sealed some fragments, but they had never acquired any positive proof of this.

But the problem was not the locations of the fragments. It was the fact that there were at least four fragments inside the body of a single person with their seals removed. Under normal circumstances, that person should have lost their sanity and gone on a rampage long ago.

If they were anyone other than the Demon King.

“This ‘Monstrosity’ could potentially be the true second coming of the Demon King,” said Alda.

These words sent a wave of unrest through the gods and Familiar Spirits present here, as if shaking the entire Divine Realm.

“That’s impossible; the Demon King’s soul was divided and its pieces were sealed by powerful gods! My lord, some of them should be with you!” shouted a heroic spirit whose name had echoed through the lands when he was still alive.

His voice almost sounded like a scream of terror. But his reaction was one of the better ones; there was no small number of Familiar Spirits who couldn’t even speak.

That was how much the Demon King Guduranis was feared. Those present here were those without physical bodies who had ascended beyond mortal life, but because of this, it was easy for them to understand what having their souls broken would mean, deepening their fear.

“Precisely. Even now, some of the Demon King Guduranis’s soul fragments are in my possession,” Alda replied reassuringly.

An air of relief spread among those who had gathered in this Divine Realm. However, Alda suspected that the fragments of the Demon King’s souls that he did not possess were, in fact, contained within that Monstrosity.

“So, Curatos, what of that Monstrosity?” Alda asked.

“Unfortunately, my lord, Iris Bearheart has stopped believing completely, so we are currently unable to determine his location,” said Curatos. “As for Mikhail’s soul that had been trapped…”

“I see.”

Iris Bearheart had been a devout believer despite being young, but since she had renounced her faith in Alda, their mental connection had become weak. And just when she had sent Alda a strong prayer, this was how things had ended up.

“Could Heinz and his companions oppose this Monstrosity?” Curatos asked quietly.

“That is still currently impossible,” Alda replied.

Heinz’s party would likely deal Vandalieu a serious wound and even defeat some of the Undead, insects, plants and Vampires that were his subordinates. But defeating

him in the end would be difficult. Alda saw things this way.

Heinz had finally acquired the Guider Job, very recently. The uneasiness from the fact that he was not the one who had truly defeated the Pure-breed Vampire Ternecia had obstructed his growth.

But since he possessed the Guider Job, he would develop significantly in the future.

“It will be possible one day,” said Alda.

Just like Bellwood, who had withstood the Demon King army’s onslaught with many sacrifices, but defeated Guduranis in the end.

Shimada Izumi and Machida Aran had been reincarnated in the foreign world of Origin and then killed by Murakami, another person who had been reincarnated in the same world, putting an end to their second lives.

The two of them chose to become Familiar Spirits of Rodcorte, the god of reincarnation, instead of being reincarnated to live their third lives in Lambda. Now, they existed within Rodcorte’s Divine Realm.

They had divine-looking appearances; there were shining, golden rings floating above their heads, and pure-white wings extended from their backs.

“We’re seriously just support staff. Being an angel is lame,” Aran whispered in a serious tone.

He was gazing at a PC monitor with half-closed eyes; he simply looked like a salaryman cosplaying as an angel. No matter how high the quality of that cosplay was.

Izumi, who was wearing a suit, sighed as she spoke to him. “That’s what he told us, isn’t it?”

“That’s true, but I didn’t think it would be this bad,” said Aran. “Don’t you think it’s a bit too much? In various ways.”

“That’s just how life is,” said Izumi, dismissing Aran’s complaints.

She didn't have an angel's halo or wings. Her appearance was exactly the same as it had been when she was alive in Origin.

The reason there was such a difference between Izumi and Aran's appearances was simply because of the difference in the images that they had.

Familiar Spirits were beings that consisted only of a mind; their appearances changed depending on their own wills and the images that others had of them when looking at them.

Aran's appearance drew strongly from his image of a western-style angel, while Izumi had maintained her own appearance from her life in Origin.

If they were acknowledged by people, their appearances would be further influenced by this; they could become things like komainu* or foxes depending on the religions and legends involving them.

TLN: Komainu are statues of lion-dogs found at Shinto shrines.*

But as Rodcorte wasn't acknowledged by anyone other than those he had reincarnated and the gods of the various words, Izumi and Aran were unlikely to be influenced by the people.

"By becoming Familiar Spirits, you were released from your physical bodies and ascended to beings of the mind," said Rodcorte. "The fact that you do not possess a physical body is the same as when you were merely spirits, but your essence is now different. Your current, unstable state will likely continue for some time. Make sure you remain close together until you stabilize."

Izumi and Aran obeyed the orders of their new master, taking turns to gather information about the worlds through the eyes of the people in Lambda and Origin while supporting the circle of transmigration systems.

However, the tool for performing this task was the PC in front of Aran. Of course, there was no way that there would really be a PC there.

The truth was simply that Izumi and Aran's powers as Familiar Spirits drew their forms from the images in their minds.

"If you don't like it, you could just make it a crystal ball or a magic book," said Izumi.

They were able to change their powers to take any shape. However, there was no guarantee that changing their shapes would allow them to perform the same tasks.

“Shimada-san, you’re only saying that *because* you know it’s impossible, right?” said Aran.

“I’m saying it because you’ve been making the same complaint over and over,” said Izumi.

The images in their heads were not easy to change. When they tried to think of tools that were easy to use, they always came to PCs, tablets and mobile phones.

If they were only interested in the appearance of their powers, they could change them into crystal balls, stone slabs or even abacuses. But there was no avoiding the fact that they would find their work more difficult trying to use these.

This wasn’t a problem of their dispositions or anything of the sort; this was something that almost always happened when people who had previously lived in technologically-developed civilizations ascended to become Familiar Spirits.

“Though I don’t think there’s a need to devote yourself to being mystical just because you’ve become an angel,” Izumi added.

Unlike Aran, who repeatedly made the same complaints, she didn’t seem dissatisfied at the fact that she wasn’t very angel-like.

“It’s fine to be the same as we have been up until now, isn’t it?” Izumi continued. “In fact, I think it’s easier than being told to use crystal balls to do the same work that we’d be able to do with PCs.”

“That’s true, but you know~…”

For Aran, becoming a Familiar Spirit had been such a small change that he only had these subjective complaints to make.

He hadn’t lost any ability to feel emotions, nor had his memories from when he was a human faded. The only thing that had changed was his perception of time.

Of course, he no longer felt any physical fatigue now that he didn’t have a physical body, but he did feel mental fatigue.

And most surprisingly, he was still able to eat and drink after becoming a Familiar Spirit.

"Well, I suppose I'll get used to it eventually," Aran said before taking a sip of his instant coffee.

The coffee was the same brand that he had consumed frequently in Origin.

Of course, the instant coffee from Origin hadn't been brought into the Divine Realm. Aran had reproduced it from his own memories.

Gods of legends from all times and places often held feasts; this was how the food and drink was served at such feasts.

"Hmm, Shimada-san, could you give me a coffee?" Aran asked. "The drip-brewed one."

The foods and drinks that gods could produce depended on their nature and divinity. New Familiar Spirits like Aran and Izumi could only produce things that they had been very familiar with when they were humans.

"Later," said Izumi. "You should have drunk something other than instant and canned coffee."

"…I have no response to that," said Aran.

The two of them were having this kind of meaningless conversation, but their hands were working. They were checking whether there were any problems with the circle of transmigration systems and fixing small errors.

In between doing this work, they were also gathering information on Murakami, Tsuchiya and the Eighth Guidance, the ones that they had been unable to find while they were still alive in Origin, as well as information on Vandalieu and his companions in Lambda.

They had thought that they would be monitored by their new master Rodcorte while they did this, but that wasn't the case. There were certain tasks that needed to be done, but it seemed that Rodcorte had no interest in saying anything about anything else they did as long as they did their work.

Well, it might just be because there would be no point in monitoring us, though, Izumi

thought.

There was so little that the two of them could actually do. Even though they had once been reincarnated individuals, they were unable to send messages to the people of Origin and Lambda.

Of course, interfering directly was impossible as well.

They could see and listen to a great amount of information through the eyes and ears of the people belonging to Rodcorte's circle of transmigration systems, but that was it.

Of course, they couldn't manipulate the systems and arbitrarily decide where people would be reincarnated, either.

In the current situation, even their cheat-like abilities, Calculation and Inspection, were not of much use.

"What do you think of Murakami and the Eighth Guidance's movements?" Aran asked.

"It seems that Pluto is planning some kind of large-scale suicide," said Izumi. "As for Murakami, it seems that he killed us with motives that are even easier to understand than I'd thought."

"I see~ well, there's no other choice but to let things happen as they will."

Izumi and Aran felt anger towards Murakami and the others responsible for killing them, sympathy towards Pluto and her companions, and regret that they hadn't done what needed to be done when "protecting" Pluto and her companions from the research laboratories in the beginning. But these emotions wouldn't reach anyone now.

The only thing they could do was gather enough information to persuade them once they arrived in this Divine Realm.

"So, what about Lambda?" Izumi asked.

Aran put both of his hands on his head. "I give up," he said. "Vandalieu-kun is too good at leading people. They quickly get pulled into Vida's circle of transmigration system, so the footage just cuts off."

Like their master Rodcorte, Aran and Izumi could only gain information through the eyes of those belonging to Rodcorte's circle of transmigration systems. They couldn't gain information from the Scylla, who were a race created by Vida.

However, Vandalieu had exchanged words with several people in the former Sauron Duchy, including the Scylla's husbands.

But Vandalieu kept unconsciously guiding them to Vida's circle of transmigration system, so it was impossible to gather information continuously.

Even so, they had managed to learn of the events of the battle with Gubamon thanks to Iris Bearheart and Rick Paris.

And through the memories of people who were investigating Vandalieu from afar, such as the Amid Empire's emperor, Marshukzarl and the Mirg shield-nation's marshal, Thomas Palpapek, they successfully gathered information despite the large time lag.

There wasn't much news in this, however.

"I think we should stop letting our guards down against him just because he doesn't have any cheat-like abilities," said Aran.

"He's actually more of a cheat than us," Izumi remarked.

Vandalieu possessed five fragments of the Demon King and over a billion Mana. And though he didn't possess an aptitude for other attributes of magic, he could use the fire, water and wind (lightning only) attribute spells through the Dead Spirit Magic skill, where he utilized dead spirits, unlike spiritual magic*.

Vandalieu's abilities were strange. Even in Origin, being able to erase small mountains with ease was impossible except for legendary monsters and heroes.

"He intends to have him clash with *Amemiya* and the others, isn't he… our master, I mean," said Izumi.

"…Depending on how their abilities are used, they have a chance," said Aran. "The predictions of my Calculation ability are saying that, but…"

In Origin, Aran had been able to believe in the results produced by the calculations of his ability.

In Origin, if the organizational power of the Bravers was used and each nation lent its assistance, there was a chance for victory, even if there was no way to avoid horrific losses that would make one want to cover their eyes.

But those reincarnated in Lambda wouldn't be able to bring the equipment and weapons that they used in Origin, and they wouldn't have the social positions or connections needed to gain the assistance of all of the nations.

Izumi and Aran thought that it would be a high-difficulty mission right from the beginning, but Rodcorte seemed to have no intention of giving up.

"Well, the most more problematic thing is the way he acts, or rather, the principles behind his actions," said Aran. "He treats Undead the same as people… or if you look at it the other way, he only sees living people as equals to Undead. We already knew that, but… that's why he killed Raymond and Rick of the resistance in that situation."

Aran viewed the way that Vandalieu had killed Raymond and Rick as problematic.

Even Aran felt anger at what Raymond and his men had done to the Scylla race "for the sake of the people." He didn't like it at all, and he was comfortable in declaring that it needed to be stopped.

But he thought that Vandalieu should have made use of the brothers without killing them. Instead of punishing them, he should have negotiated and established a cooperative relationship.

On Earth and in Origin, justice was not always carried out and not all evil was punished. This was especially true in politics. This was common knowledge.

And the Bravers in Origin had operated with this common knowledge in mind. They fought terrorists and captured criminals. But they didn't do things like cause chaotic civil wars in military dictatorships by killing their leaders, nor did they reveal the dark sides of large nations' secret services, causing difficulties for those nations to manage themselves.

The world, nations and the many people could not be protected through pretty words and wishful thinking alone. In Origin, this fact had ingrained itself deep into Izumi and Aran's minds.

But what Vandalieu had done in the former Sauron Duchy, though the scale of his

actions was quite different, was the opposite of what the Bravers did.

He had formed a cooperative relationship with Iris Bearheart and the organization she led, but the resistance movement had been set back considerably by Raymond and Rick's deaths.

"Before, I said that he is rational or at least tries to be rational, but that was wrong. He's very emotion-driven," said Aran. "I don't think that in itself is a bad thing, and it makes me think favourably of him as a person, though."

"This makes me more and more uncertain as to whether he will be willing to talk things out with the Bravers," said Izumi. "By the way, where is our master?"

"…He's busy dealing with the system faults that occurred when the souls of Rick, Raymond and his men were broken," said Aran. "I don't think calling out to him will get any responses for a while."

Rodcorte's work had become a little easier, but he still needed to devote a lot of time to the system when souls were broken.

"It looks like he hasn't noticed the letters that arrived from the gods of Origin and Lambda, either," said Izumi.

The Amid Empire's S-class adventurer, the Thunderclap Schneider, clicked his tongue as he read the letter that had been delivered by a bird-type monster that had been specially-trained by a tamer. And then he quickly wrote a reply.

"Tch, I took the effort of going out in a boat and they still go and send me these troublesome letters," he muttered.

His party member Lissana was actually the reincarnated form of Jurizanapipe, the Evil God of Degeneration and Intoxication, who had betrayed the Demon King and joined Vida and the champion Zakkart. A few months ago, she had received a Divine Message from Ricklent, the genie of time and magic.

As a secret believer of Vida, Schneider had set out on a boat towards the Dark Continent, a continent consisting entirely of Devil's Nests, with his companions several days ago. They were obeying the Divine Message's instructions to visit the

war-god Zantark, who was widely considered a fallen god who had fused with an evil god.

Indeed, it had only been a few days since they set sail. Despite Lissana having received Ricklent's Divine Message months ago.

But that couldn't be helped, either. Even if Schneider behaved in unheard-of ways, he was still the only S-class adventurer in the western region of the continent. There were several A-class adventurers that were said to be his equal, but not a single adventurer who surpassed him.

In other words, he was unexpectedly busy.

In particular, Schneider had continued refusing to associate with the Empire using his numerous achievements and military value. Thus, his official social status was no different from an ordinary civilian. This meant that anyone could request things from him as long as they had the money.

Thus, many requests fluttered into Schneider's inbox.

Even after Lissana had received the Divine Message, he had finished requests that he had already accepted and completed the requests that he was unable to turn down. Finally, a few months later, the year had changed and Schneider had finally been able to set sail.

"What was written in that letter?" asked Dalton, the Dark Elf with a mohawk, who probably wouldn't have felt uncomfortable to be called one of the sailors of this boat.

Schneider snorted. "It's a request from some duke somewhere to hunt down the resistance in the Sauron Duchy that they invaded years ago, and investigate the source of some Undead that destroyed a fort," he said. "I can't deal with this stuff! Are they trying to work this old man to death!"

"Yeah, it's true that you can't deal with that. On top of it being a pain, you'd be resented by the honest lot who support the resistance," Dalton agreed. "Whether you're an old man or not is another question, though."

Schneider was currently scribbling his reply of, "Save your sleep-talking nonsense for when you're asleep!" His true age was that of an old person in Lambda, or a little past middle-age on Earth.

However, he had maintained the youthful appearance of a man in his twenties. He had platinum-blonde hair that he insisted was white, toned skin and muscles that covered his entire body like a suit of armor.

Lissana, who was sunbathing on the deck while having perfumed oil applied to her by a Dragon about the size of a person, and the Dwarf woman Merdin, the one with the most common sense among the members of this party, were in agreement with Dalton.

“I wouldn’t call anyone who goes for walks on top of the sea ‘for health reasons’ an old man,” said Lissana.

“Yeah, you were running around like an idiot, too. You should have just kept running all the way to the Dark Continent,” said Merdin.

Saying that it was good for his health, Schneider had been taking walks on the ocean every morning. To be more precise, he had been running around on the water’s surface without using magic.

“Seriously, I don’t know why they can do something like that…” the Dragon whispered, remembering how nightmarish it was. The sight of Schneider, Dalton and Zorcodrio, who was actually a Pure-breed Vampire known by his nickname Zod, running around on the ocean’s surface.

If they were using magic, it would be nothing more than a skillful performance. Mages capable of using wind-attribute magic to create masses of air beneath their feet or water-attribute magic to harden the water surface beneath them weren’t uncommon.

But even from the Dragon’s point of view, these three were monsters to be able to do this with pure physical strength alone. He definitely didn’t want to be kicked by those ridiculously powerful legs.

“What, even Merdin and Lissana can do that,” said Schneider.

“We do it with magic and Magic Items!” Merdin exclaimed.

“Don’t think that I’m the same as you. I’m in charge of the brain work,” said Lissana.

“Brain work…?” the Dragon repeated.

Lissana shot him a glare that seemed like it could kill someone. “Do you have

something you want to complain about, Luves?" she asked, showing the pink scales and long tongue that were proof that she was an evil god.

"It's nothing!" shrieked Luves… or rather, Luvesfol, the Raging Evil Dragon God.

Luvesfol, the one who had sealed Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, in the marshlands south of Talosheim, created a Scaled King as his priest and stolen the faith of the Lizardmen from Fidirg. He was wounded after having his Spirit Clone destroyed by Vandalieu, and he had been making his escape to the Dark Continent, thinking that he would be killed if he stayed where he was.

However, the domains of slumbering gods such as Vida had been in his way, and since he was injured, he had been unable to move as he wanted. It had taken him time to make his escape, and unfortunately for him, the day he had finally managed to leave the Bahn Gaia continent was the day that Schneider and his party set sail.

Normally, there wouldn't have been any problems. It was almost impossible to do anything to Luvesfol, who existed in a Divine Realm with a mortal body. In fact, it would be impossible to even notice Luvesfol's existence.

"You shitty, useless Dragon!"

"I've found you at last!"

"I don't really know what's going on, but you're in the way!"

Indeed, there wouldn't have been any problems if there hadn't been the reincarnated form of an evil god, a Pure-breed Vampire who possessed strength equivalent to a god's despite merely being a member of one of the world's intellectual races, and a Dragon-slaying adventurer.

Having lived in the continent's southern region for about a hundred years, Luvesfol had been slow to notice the presence of these three. His Divine Realm was breached and attacks were laid into him one-sidedly, and after that, Dalton and Merdin joined in to beat him to a pulp.

Lissana had once been an evil god of the Demon King's army, and Zod had fought the Demon King's army alongside the champions under Vida's command. Of course, they knew of Luvesfol, who had betrayed them and joined the Demon King's army after the Dragon-emperor god Marduke had fallen.

And they knew about everything that he had done afterwards.

Now, Luvesfol had materialized as a small Dragon. Gods could gain a weak physical body in exchange for being unable to use most of their divine powers. This would normally be incredibly risky, but Luvesfol had been forced into this state.

It was a seal, in a way.

“Luves, your hands have stopped,” said Lissana. “Haven’t I taught you that you need to apply the oil evenly?”

“I-I know!”

“Make sure to massage me properly as well, okay? Ah, and I haven’t forgotten that you used your breath against me in your aim to profit from the battle between Vida and Alda.”

“Ugh, you remember everything?!”

“Please keep in mind that I also remember that your betrayal during the battle against the Demon King’s army caused the frontlines to collapse, forcing us into a hellish battle to try and retreat,” Zod added.

Luvesfol screamed in terror. For Lissana and Zod, he was someone who certainly deserved to be killed. And there was a single reason he hadn’t been killed yet… since he had betrayed the dragon god and joined the Demon King’s army, if he were to die, his soul would return to the Demon King’s circle of transmigration system and he would be reincarnated one day.

As the Demon King’s system currently had nobody managing it in addition to having always been unstable to begin with, there was no guarantee that even gods could be reincarnated with their memories and personalities intact unless they made preparations like Lissana had. There was a high chance that they would be reborn as a Goblin or Giant Frog with brand-new memories and personalities.

However, the chance that they could be reincarnated as something new with their memories, personalities and power miraculously intact was not zero.

So normally, they would have completely destroyed Luvesfol’s body and sealed his soul away, just as Schneider had done to the Elder Dragons that he had exterminated

in the past, but… they hadn't been able to prepare the soul-sealing ritual on their boat voyage, so Luvesfol was in this state as a small Dragon now.

"It's not like I don't feel sorry for you, but every time I do, I keep remembering another evil thing that you did, so I can't sympathize," said Lissana.

"You're right," said Dalton. "Should I give him a punch then?"

"Dalton, he's weaker than a Wyvern right now, so he'd die if you punched him," said Merdin.

Luvesfol was being tormented by Lissana and Zod, but Merdin and Dalton didn't feel any sympathy for him, either.

They were treating him like a criminal slave.

But it seemed that Luvesfol had some knowledge regarding the Dark Continent and Zantark's whereabouts, so he was still being treated better than normal criminal slaves.

The clues he could give were on the level of, "He might be somewhere over there," but it was far better than nothing.

And thanks to him, they had managed to gain some information regarding Vandalieu.

"The Demon King's fragments, huh? Will he be alright, using things like that?" Schneider wondered.

"Hmm, the truth is that Zod and I don't know any details about them," said Lissana. "And I don't have any memories of a hundred thousand years ago; I can only remember events that happened after I was reincarnated in this Elf body –"

"I was also sealed a hundred thousand years ago, and was slumbering until recently," Zod added.

Nobody would have suggested trying to use the Demon King's fragments in the period immediately following the Demon King's defeat. Thus, Zod and Lissana didn't know much about them. They only knew as much about them as Schneider and the other two.

“We’ve fought monsters whose fragments of the Demon King were on a rampage, and Elder Dragons who kept them to use as trump cards, but they were surprisingly manageable,” said Schneider. “They become unable to use elemental magic, and their movements become sloppy… normally, at least.”

This had been the case for the enemies in possession of the Demon King’s fragments that Schneider and his companions had faced. The fragments themselves had posed no problems either; Schneider and his companions simply needed to place strict seals on them after defeating their owners.

“Th-that Dhampir used the Demon King’s blood to make gun barrels and fired projectiles made of the Demon King’s horns using the Telekinesis spell. It’s true!” said Luvesfol.

Vandalieu had calmly used magic, even if it was no-attribute magic, with two of the Demon King’s fragments active at once.

It was probably dangerous for Schneider and his party to work under their previous assumptions.

“Well, there’s no use in worrying about it. If things get really bad, I’m sure Ricklent will say something else to Lissana. More importantly, we need to find Zantark,” said Schneider, turning his thoughts towards the still-unseen Dark Continent that was somewhere across the ocean. “According to the legends, the Dark Continent has a fountain of youth.”

“Not that you need that fountain,” said Merdin.

Side Chapter 13
Luciliano's report - Upper section

The ‘Degenerate’ Luciliano, a former C-class adventurer, is currently a life-attribute mage who conducts research on Undead.

But now, he is not known for his past, but for being the personal apprentice of Vandalieu, the king of Talosheim who possesses numerous ‘king’ Titles.

This story is a reorganization of the reports, research documents, dissertations and diaries that Luciliano has left.

Of course, ‘mage’ is a Job, but mages are also creatures that study diligently through reading references, training and conducting research and experiments, and then recording and consolidating the results of their research. I, Luciliano, who was essentially excommunicated from the Mages’ Guild that I was studying at, am no exception.

There are some adventurers and mercenaries who have acquired skills at level 1 or 2 in order to use simple spells that could produce drinking water and light fires, as well as beginner-level offensive spells to fight against monsters that are resistant to physical attacks. However, these are generally not considered to be mages.

They are merely those who can use magic. They are those whom those of the Mages’ Guild would ridicule as “magic-users.”

Being a mage myself, I believe the important thing is tools for writing. I have previously struggled in this area. Paper is generally expensive. But with that said, it isn’t a precious metal, either. What I mean is that it is not affordable enough to freely use as much as I would like on a daily basis.

And relatively inexpensive paper also exists in addition to the high-grade paper that nobles and royalty use for their letters and notes and the paper that is used for documents that must be preserved over long periods of time.

I use this inexpensive paper, enduring its unpleasant texture and how difficult it is to write on. Cheap paper is truly a third-rate product. It is not pleasant to use, and it does not preserve well. And in the end, it is still not affordable enough for large quantities of it to be used.

It is also common to use dried tree bark and leaves as a replacement for paper. The copied request forms posted on the request boards of the Adventurers' Guild and such are mostly done with these. It seems that there were some Guild branches that used real paper for this in the past, but many uncivilized adventurers tend to tear the request forms off the boards. The large costs of reprinting these forms is what led to the use of a cheaper replacement today.

And while that cheaper replacement may work for writing memos, it cannot be preserved and thus is not suited for recording the methods and results of experiments, so I do not use it very often.

As an adventurer, the cost of paper was a headache-inducing problem.

Compared to that, the nation of Talosheim that Master rules over is like heaven.

That apparently wasn't the case before I came to the nation, but now, straw paper is mass-produced. Mass-production is a wonderful thing, is it not? Though its quality is not quite as good as high-grade paper, I am able to obtain paper that is more than good enough for writing on, for a cheap price.

Since Master has acknowledged my research as a national project, I can obtain this paper as part of my research expenses.

Last year, there was a Golem factory that created high-quality paper, and even printing press Golems. The literacy rate of the citizens is increasing. In the future, Talosheim's production and demand will likely rival or surpass those of other large cities.

With that said, I am not a researcher of paper. I am a mage who researches the Undead.

So first, I will describe the Golems that Master has created.

All of the Golems created by my master, Vandalieu, are Undead.

Normal Golems are created by Alchemists who grant life to human-shaped materials using methods such as life-attribute magic. However, the Golems created by Master

consist of inorganic materials with spirits haunting them to cause them to move.

They are similar to Cursed weapons and Living Armors, which are Undead consisting of weapons or suits of armor that are haunted by evil spirits.

This is why Master's Golems are weak to anti-Undead light-attribute magic spells, but… there would be none who would see that they have such a weakness upon seeing them for the first time.

Nevertheless, they are a source of endless interest.

But it seems that Master does not hold much interest in them.

"Are Golems really that interesting?" he asked.

It is likely that he sees them as things that he can move like his own arms and legs rather than as things that ought to be researched.

"Of course," I replied. "If it is possible, I would like to interview the spirits that you use to move the Golems. Would you cooperate with this?"

Recently, Master's Golems have been evolving on their own; some of them have gained the Absorption skill to absorb external materials of the same kind that their bodies are made of in order to repair damage that causes their body volumes to decrease.

Though the fibrous Golems in the paper factory reduce their own bodies to produce paper, it seems that more materials can simply be poured onto the Golems to return them to normal.

This is extraordinarily convenient, but what the spirits responsible are thinking and what kind of states they are in are questions of immense interest.

I asked Master to cooperate with me so that I can interview them in order to answer these questions, but Master told me, "I don't think you should have too much hope in the results."

And unfortunately, just as Master said, there were almost no results to speak of.

It seems that the spirits that inhabit Golems are heavily influenced by the inorganic materials that make up their bodies; their personalities from while they were alive are

lost or altered within a short period of time. Perhaps I should have expected this, as becoming a paper-making machine or a printing press would be unbearable if they still possessed consciousness as people.

In the end, I was able to conduct the interviews with Master acting as an interpreter, but I shall record that there weren't any meaningful answers.

Recently, Master has acquired the Zombie Maker Job. Someone who makes Zombies… how wonderful.

I am also capable of creating Zombies with life-attribute magic, but it is likely that this Job must be acquired by creating Zombies through death-attribute magic.

In fact, the Zombies created through the methods that I have used so far cannot even compare to the Zombies created by Master in terms of performance. The Zombies are not so different when they are first created, but there is a large difference between their future potentials.

Leaving that aside, Master, after acquiring this wonderful Job, sat in the corner of the room, holding his knees.

"Have you acquired an inconvenient skill, perhaps?" I asked.

Even in the past, there are records of people who have acquired previously-undiscovered Jobs, only to acquire undesirable skills. Even though one can select their Job, they cannot select the skills that they acquire.

Dangerous Jobs often have unusual names, so if such Jobs are avoided, fatal situations do not usually arise. However, it seems that almost all of the Jobs that Master can acquire are dangerous, so there is no way to avoid them.

As I thought, it seemed that there was indeed something inconveniencing him.

Master raised his face with a more sluggish movement than usual and spoke in a grave tone. "I didn't acquire a skill, but… if I let my guard down, I unconsciously turn corpses around me into Zombies," he said.

"Hoh! What a wonderful yet fearsome thing that is, Master!" I exclaimed.

A mage who inadvertently turns the corpses around him into Zombies. If such a person were to be present on a battlefield… No, Master has always been capable of such things.

“In other words, you can create Zombies without casting any spells, and the Mana expended to do so is small?” I asked.

It seems that this summarized the extent of the changes; Master gave a nod.

Automatically creating Zombies without casting spells has a large effect.

But why in the world would this ever be a problem?

“I have to wonder why you are feeling sad about this, Master. It is true that you would be troubled as to what to do with the Zombies that rise if you were planning to travel across old battlefields, but are we not currently in the royal castle of our own nation? There should not be many corpses around,” I said.

There are many Undead in Talosheim, but there are no corpses that are not Undead. There is good public order and the nation has no problems with food, so there are far fewer unexpected deaths than other cities.

Even those with serious illnesses are quickly cured by Master, and Potions are provided to those who are severely wounded.

Thus, I believe there is nothing for Master to feel sad about.

“That’s true, but food ingredients and tanned hides and furs turn into Zombies as well, so I have become unable to go near the kitchen and the workshop where Tarea and the others work until I can control it,” Master said.

“…So those are considered corpses as well.”

It is true that food ingredients and hides are parts of corpses.

Even if the food ingredients become Zombies, it is not as if they begin decomposing immediately. But while that is true, it would certainly be unpleasant to have the ingredients squirming during the cooking process.

And it would be dangerous if the materials used to create weapons and armor were to

thrash around while they are being processed.

“If this Job doesn’t help with making adjustments to Zandia and Jeena that I stole back from Gubamon, the point of me taking this Job was…” Master muttered.

“Well, will it not be useful in the future?” I suggested.

In situations where there is a sudden need to create a large Zombie army, for instance. I believe it is certainly possible for such situations to arise in Master’s case.

The knowledge that I am able to acquire at Master’s side is precious. Among that knowledge, the second most precious knowledge is that of foreign worlds.

“I don’t know if this knowledge is correct in this world, though,” Master said as a preface before speaking of other worlds’ knowledge of living organisms.

To me, this knowledge was far more precious than gold or jewels. It seems that this was also useful for Master; by talking to a life-attribute mage who has dissected numerous corpses, he was able to confirm the differences between the other worlds and this one.

Of course, as the advanced examining equipment that Master speaks of does not exist, there are also many things that we cannot confirm.

“In summary, it seems that the overall body compositions of humans, Elves, Dwarves, Ghouls, Titans and Beast-people are not very different from that of the humans of ‘Earth’ and ‘Origin,’” I concluded.

Things such as the ears, eyes, nerves and the presence of venom glands are different, but the skeletons, the number of organs and their locations in the body, and the arrangement of muscles is largely the same. It is likely that Dark Elves are mostly the same as well.

The body compositions of heterogeneous races such as Drakonids and Scylla have many differences, but the humans that were the first to be created in this world, as well as the Elf and Dwarf races that followed, have almost identical structures to the humans of other worlds. This fact is also very intriguing.

“The humans of worlds that have enormous differences, such as the absence of magic, are so similar to the people of this world. This cannot be a mere coincidence,” I said. “Perhaps information, such as the model used for creating humans, transcends the barrier between worlds and is shared by the gods? Or is it simply that it is easy to create humans, or that the worlds themselves have qualities in common that make the human form effective for living in them?”

“You don’t hesitate to say things that might be taken as the words of a heretic by some people, do you, Luciliano?” Master remarked. “But it’s true that the humans are mostly the same. Even the upper halves of Scylla are similar to humans. It could just be the result of Rodcorte choosing us humans from Earth because our forms and biology are similar to those of the humans of Lambda, though.”

“I see; there is that possibility as well,” I said. “It is a reincarnation conducted by the will of a god, after all. And there is also the example set by the world that the Demon King and his army originally existed in. The written legends say that only hideous, evil, cursed creatures existed there. Have you tried asking a god regarding this topic?”

My Master is acquainted with a god. Two, in fact.

If he were to ask them directly, we would be able to acquire clues to solve this mystery, but –

“If we go to the deepest part of the Dungeon, he’ll come out for us, but I’d feel bad making him come out too much,” Master said. “Merrebeveil, on the other hand, doesn’t really summon me. She might be the shy type.”

“…It seems that things don’t really go as we want them to,” I said.

I was unable to tear off the veil of sacred mysteries in one bound, but the knowledge that master has shared regarding the correct function of the skeleton, the muscles and the organs is significant to me, both as a mage and as a researcher.

The most precious knowledge that I can acquire after having become Master’s apprentice is the knowledge regarding Undead. Even the knowledge from other worlds is overshadowed by this.

I worked as an adventurer while conducting my research, so I considered myself more knowledgeable regarding live Undead than those who kept themselves holed up in the archives of the Mages' Guild. But the knowledge that I am able to gain by observing the Undead at Master's side is of a completely different quality.

The Undead that come into existence spontaneously in Devil's Nests, Dungeons and old battlefields are, with almost no exceptions, natural enemies to all living creatures. It is impossible to observe them safely. In fact, most observations are dangerously made while battling them.

In fact, there is no chance of conversing or interacting with them.

The exception would be the Undead that I and similar practitioners are able to create, but they are merely corpses with false life bestowed upon them through magic. Though they bear similarities to Undead, they are different. There is almost no point in observing them at all.

But in the nation of Talosheim ruled by Master, the Undead are leading lives as citizens in society.

There are some with somewhat abnormal speech and conduct, but most of them still possess intelligence and personalities similar to those that they possessed while alive.

This is truly a utopia for me.

"Wait!" Borkus said.

"Did we not agree that there would be no waiting? Do men take back their words?" I asked.

"Grr, men don't take back their words! Take it all!"

"Well then, I will do so without reserve."

It is not because I defeated the Sword King Borkus in a game of shogi with money at stake that I feel that this place is a utopia. That was just part of my observations.

Incidentally, gambling is only permitted in Talosheim at publicly managed facilities.

It seems that in the world of Earth where Master spent his first lifetime, gambling was

controlled by those with a firm footing in the underworld, held in shady places that no respectable individuals should approach.

It is likely that there is a considerable amount of prejudice in this view. After all, from what I have heard from Master, the country of Japan that he lived in had far better public order than this world.

That was why Master felt negatively about the idea of shogi and Reversi matches being played at gambling dens with money at stake, but it seems that he changed his mind after Eleanora suggested the establishment of regulated, publicly-managed gambling dens and casinos.

And it appears that Master does not hate gambling, either… though it seems that rather than liking gambling itself, he likes putting on an air of being a rich person.

And so, gambling dens and casinos with set limits on the maximum stakes and rates were established.

“How about one more match?” I suggested as I formed a mountain with my chips.

But Borkus let out a frustrated groan and declined. “I’ll pass. Even if I’m just using small change, Gopher will yell at me if I waste any more.”

I felt admiration for Borkus as he mentioned the name of his only daughter, and as a researcher, I made a note to remember his words and actions.

According to the Mages’ Guild’s knowledge regarding the Undead, their heads are either as empty as those of beasts or filled with hatred for the living. There is also a chance that they possess the intelligence that they had while alive, but have lost their sanity.

It is possible to converse with Undead whose memories from while they were alive still remain, such as Ghosts. However, even their memories are simply “remaining” memories that fade with time, leading them to ultimately become the natural enemy of all living creatures like other Undead.

These are the ideas that are advocated.

However, the Undead of Talosheim are different.

Their intelligence, memories and personalities are preserved in a state similar to when they were alive. None of the important people at the Mages' Guild would have imagined this. Undead who enjoy board games, gamble and restrain themselves due to the warnings of their family members!

Before I became Master's apprentice, I wouldn't have believed it even if I saw it with my own eyes.

Of course, everyone knows that Undead are not particularly unintelligent compared to other monsters.

There are plenty of records of Undead knights who wielded their weapons as masterfully as they had while alive and Undead adventurer parties whose ability to act with sophisticated coordination was still preserved. One could even say that Undead capable of casting spells, such as Liches and Skull Mages, are more intelligent than some lowly hoodlums.

At the very least, they should possess higher intelligence than Goblins and Orcs who are only capable of swinging sticks of wood around.

However, the world believes that this is due to the "remains" of their previous lives.

But observing the Undead of Talosheim, including Borkus, would allow one to quickly learn that they possess high thinking capabilities.

But as a researcher and as a mage, I can declare that this perception and experience is harder to obtain than knowledge from other worlds.

"By the way, have you heard anything about *that* thing from the kid?" Borkus asked.

This question pulled me out of my faint emotional, delighted mood and brought me to my senses. What he was pointing at had nothing to do with Undead, but even I had my questions about it.

"Bunny girls," I muttered.

The female employees that carry drinks and light meals around, clean up shogi boards, billiards tables and dart boards, and make all kinds of preparations while wearing sensationally bizarre clothing. Master has named them "bunny girls."

Their shoulders and backs are exposed, and the shapes of their cleavage (if present) and hips are unconcealed. They wear tights that Master has made, so their skin isn't exposed, but they cling tightly to their bottoms and legs. Does this not actually make them more indecent?

And most bizarre things of all are the hairbands with decorations that look exactly like rabbit ears and decorations that look like rabbit tails, attached just above the bottom.

"I do not know the details, but it seems that female employees in casinos on Earth, the world where Master once lived, dressed in this way," I said.

"Are you serious? Earth is a world with only humans, right? It's not like they could have been obsessed with rabbit-type Beast-people," said Borkus.

"It seems that even Master does not know why they are rabbits, but… there are apparently some regions of Earth that consider rabbits to be a symbol of good fortune, so perhaps that has something to do with it?" I suggested. "Also, it is likely a form of service to the male customers."

"Huh, I see. Well, they're sexy so I don't hate it, but… what happens if we get workers who are Beast-people other than rabbit-type?" Borkus asked.

He was concerned that it would be unsightly for Beast-people of other races who already possess their own ears and tails to dress as bunny girls.

"Who knows? Perhaps they would simply become fox girls, wolf girls and panther girls," I suggested with a bitter smile.

I gave a rather vague answer since I was not particularly interested in this topic, but Borkus seemed to be satisfied with this explanation. A convinced expression appeared on the remaining half of his face.

"I see. It's true that we don't have to limit ourselves to bunnies like Earth," he said.

Not that I think that Earth limits itself to bunnies, either.

Incidentally, I spotted Master sitting at a table with a plate reading "VIP seat" soon after this, so I tried asking him about bunny girls once more, but the answer I received was the exact answer I had expected.

“I don’t know the exact reason or how they originated, but it seems that casinos have bunny girls.”

Somehow, my master’s desires for worldly luxuries… or rather, what *seem* like worldly luxuries, is so strong that he has gone full circle and become unworldly.

I began questioning his sanity when I heard that he had once tried and failed to take a bath in a tub filled with gold nuggets.

Even now, he was stacking golden chips into a mountain on the table, surrounded by Zadiris, Basdia and Eleanora who were serving him in bunny girl suits.

“By the way, Master, did you win in your gambling?” I asked.

“…I was utterly beaten,” Master replied, collapsing forward onto the table.

It seems that Master is not very good at board games and gambling.

“Do not ask questions to tease him. I am sure you can tell by looking that the chips in this pile are toys made of fool’s gold,” said Zadiris.

Incidentally, fool’s gold is a metal known as false gold, and it produces sparks when two pieces are struck together, so they are sometimes used as flint sparks. That is how worthless the metal is. In other words, Master is just acting.

Furthermore, the plate that reads “VIP seat” is also something that Master created and placed on the table himself.

“Vandalieu-sama, I’ve been thinking this for a long time, but I think you should educate this insolent apprentice of yours,” said Eleanora.

“Luciliano is my advisor as well as my apprentice, so it’s perfect that he’s a little insolent,” Master said. Thankfully, it seemed that he did not intend to follow Eleanora’s fearsome suggestion.

“Spare me. I would certainly not wish to end up like those former fake resistance people,” I said.

The last time I saw them, Haj and the other fake resistance members had become berserkers who licked their weapons with maddened looks in their eyes. Their Jobs

are apparently also Berserker, making them equivalent to D-class adventurers at least in attack power.

“I have to question that, too. They probably won’t live long at this rate,” said Basdia, whose spectacular chest, latissimus dorsi and feminine legs were barely concealed by her bunny girl suit.

It seemed that she thought this would be problematic as well.

Master contemplated for a short while before suddenly raising his face to speak. “Well then, let’s supply them with dependable partners so that they *can* live long.”

“Partners?” I repeated.

Did he intend to have them work in pairs? But then, what did he mean by “supply?”

“I will provide them with Living Armors that will act as their partners, not as their instructors,” Master said.

“I see. That would give them high-performance armor as well, so it’s killing two birds with one stone,” said Basdia. “And even if the enemy were to try to steal them, they would just run away on their own unless they were actually defeated.”

“How wonderful. As expected of you, Master,” I said.

Could Haj and his companions continue taming Undead that have been separated from Master for a long period of time?

What happens to Undead that are separated from Master for a long period of time?

Interested in the results of this experiment, I, like Basdia, agreed with Master’s suggestion.

There are certain skills that the Mages’ Guild considers Undead to have none, or very little of. These are creative, artistic and imaginative abilities, and sensitivity to emotion.

This has been concluded from the testimonies of adventurers who have fought Undead

for many years and examining the remains of mages who have become Undead, and it is a believable theory to some extent.

From deciphering the records of research left behind by mages who turned themselves into Undead while they were still alive for the purpose of this research, it is very clear that their creative and imaginative abilities degrade over time.

The works said to be created by artists who have become Undead are either extensions of works they created while they were alive or mere scribbles.

I took this knowledge for granted, but intriguingly, there are Undead in Talosheim who engage in this kind of creative work.

These include Datara and Nuaza, who are Undead Titans. This does not need to be explained in the case of Datara, who swings his hammer at the forge. But as for Nuaza, in addition to being the leader of the Church of Vida, he also carves stone statues of Master and of the gods.

The two fields that they are working in are different, but both are Undead who perform creative work.

I asked them questions regarding the above-mentioned theory, but I received an unexpected answer.

“That’s probably not wrong,” said Datara.

“I think it is correct as well,” said Nuaza.

I had firmly believed that the two of them would reject the commonly-accepted theory, but surprisingly, they agreed with it.

“What in the world makes you feel this way?” I asked them. “In my eyes, it seems to me that the two of you are conducting work no differently from the living.”

“You see, that’s just because you’re watching us work from the side. I’m just managing by listening to advice from Tarea-jouchan and the other newcomers.”

According to the blacksmith Datara who creates arms using the new materials brought in by Master and the others, he is simply using techniques that he cultivated in the past; it seems that he does not need to use his brain very much.

“Unlike you, I don’t have any education so I can’t say anything for sure, but creative power is, you know, coming up with new ideas, right? I’m bad at that. When things don’t go well with the way I’ve been doing things up until now, I have to consult others,” he confessed.

Despite being a pale-faced, stubborn-looking old man, he is surprisingly flexible and listens to the suggestions of others.

Nuaza gave a large nod of agreement. “I do not use my head very much while carving statues, either. I am simply carving things as they appear to me.”

“Indeed, the stone statues of Master have not had any glorifications added to them; they resemble him so closely that one would not notice he were there if he were to stand next to them,” I said.

Master really does blend in with them from time to time. Particularly after he acquired the Demon King’s ink sacs, he has been camouflaging himself by covering himself in stone-colored ink, so it is difficult to tell unless one approaches him.

…I wonder if it is really alright to use a fragment of the Demon King for such a prank. What would the Demon King think if he knew that a part of his own body was being used in this way? I suppose I will have to set aside such idle thoughts.

“But how do you carve statues of gods that you cannot directly see?” I asked.

Nuaza has even created statues of Fidirg, the Dragon God of Five Sins, and Merrebeveil, the Evil God of Slime and Tentacles who is now the heroic goddess of the Scylla. Unlike Master, he cannot directly see these gods to create statues of them.

He has carved statues of beings that he has never actually seen before. There is no mistake that this is a creative task.

“Oh no, the Holy Son has used the Golem Transmutation skill to create large models to show me what they looked like,” Nuaza said.

“…I see.”

“It appeared that I simply needed to carve the statues using these as a reference.”

It seems that Master, who has met the gods directly, provided a model to work with.

“Well, until I died, I really was a hard-headed old man,” said Datara. “My creative power might have faded more than the youngsters back then. But now, I feel like I’m young again.”

“That is because you have many Ghouls like Tarea-san helping you in the female working team, isn’t it? Ah, Luciliano-dono, I only began carving statues after becoming an Undead, so I do not think that my answers would be of much use to you,” Nuaza added.

It seems that the commonly-accepted theory cannot be affirmed or refuted just by listening to the views of these two.

I must be diligent in gathering more testimonies.

Side Chapter 14
Luciliano's report – Lower section + Epilogue

I let out a scream of delight at the sheer number of Undead that Master recovered from Gubamon.

"Master, you are the greatest!" I exclaimed.

"You can praise me more, you know," Master said arrogantly, though with no expression on his face.

There were countless Undead filling the underground workshop beneath the royal castle, so many that even the moment it would take me to look back at Master would have felt like a moment wasted.

All of them were the handmade Undead created by the Pure-breed Vampire Gubamon.

"Kufufufu, I cannot stop drooling! I will become dehydrated at this rate!" I said.

"It somehow seems to me that the Zombies are scared of him, Holy Son," said Nuaza.

"Luciliano-san is very happy, isn't he? He's like a child who has received a new toy," said Darcia.

"This is bad, kid! Your mother's eyes are looking crazy!" said Borkus.

Even Nuaza and Borkus's rude words coming from behind me did not reach my ears.

First of all, there were the recently-made, mass-produced Zombie Giants and Vampire Zombies that make up the majority of the Undead. These were wonderful.

"How effective…" I murmured. "Surgical modifications and processing has been done where needed, but corners have been cut where they should have been!"

"…Jyuuh? Is it not a bad thing to cut corners?" asked Bone Man, who was assisting me with inspecting and modifying the Undead.

“It depends on the situation,” I replied. “This is obvious, but to Gubamon, these were mass-produced products… equivalent to cast-metal weapons, for instance. The only meaning to them is their numbers. Thus, one must not spend more time on them than necessary. However, it would also be meaningless to cut too many corners and have them be of no use. Over here… Observe!”

The Zombie at the core of a Zombie Giant retched as I opened its skull along the stitch-marks on its head, exposing its brain. I then pulled out the metal plate separating the left half of the brain from the right side.

“This metal plate restricts the Undead’s own will, emotions and thoughts! This is a trick to ensure that the only thing it can perceive clearly are the orders of its master, Gubamon,” I explained. “But this is no simple feat. This metal plate that bears Hihiryushukaka’s holy symbol, in order for it to exhibit its effect, it requires precise surgery to insert it into the correct place at the correct depth within the brain!”

The fields of medicine and biochemistry are apparently far behind the worlds that Master lived in previously. I was able to immediately understand how Gubamon’s surgery works because of the knowledge that Master shared with me regarding how the brain functions.

With that said, it seems that even on Earth and in Origin, the brain is not fully understood.

It is likely that Gubamon and the other Pure-breed Vampires either learned the mechanisms behind the brain’s function from the champions who were summoned here from another world, or given this knowledge by Hihiryushukaka.

The Zombies making up the Zombie Giant groaned as I then cut through their joints and the seams joining the corpses together.

“But look here!” I said, pointing at the exposed muscle and bone. “Only the skin and superficial muscles have been sewn together; the deeper muscles remain separate! In this state, the superhuman strength of the Subordinate Vampires used to create this Zombie Giant cannot be fully used, and it would lose balance when it moves. However, effectively joining the muscles and skeletons of multiple corpses so that they maintain good balance is almost an impossible task. It is a great undertaking that would take me numerous days.”

It is likely that Gubamon only needed a single day to complete one of these Zombie

Giants. However, he had lowered the quality of each Zombie Giant in order to produce many of them within a short period of time.

And yet, they are wonderful; they still possess the minimum fighting strength that would be expected given their Ranks. In fact, a D-class adventurer party would likely suffer enormous losses while fighting a single one of these Zombie Giants.

This is in great contrast to the Undead created by Ternecia, who is now preserved as a headless Live-Dead.

Perhaps because she saw Undead as works of art, her Undead did not have much practicality (fighting strength). The details such as the fine touches added to their skin and her preservation techniques were spectacular to make up for it, however.

On the other hand, Gubamon was something like a collector who gathered outstanding weapons rather than works of art.

“Huh…” Bone Man muttered.

Unfortunately, it seems that he does not understand how wonderful this is.

“My lord is able to perfect each Undead within ten minutes,” he said.

“Master is an exception,” I said.

Bone Man was looking at the area where Master’s five spirit form clones had formed something of an assembly line, briskly adding finishing touches to the Undead one by one.

Since all of the clones are Master himself, their coordination was immaculate. Not only was he adding finishing touches, but he was also increasing their degree of perfection by using the Demon King’s fragments.

“You must not use the standards set by Master for those other than him,” I said.

Master himself isn’t quite fully aware of this, but he is very much standing on a place where no normal person is able to climb. One’s intuition would become crooked if they were to compare Master to others.

“Hmm… so this means that my lord is great,” said Bone Man.

“It is fine as long as you understand that,” I said.

It is up to those who behold him to decide whether they see Master as a monster or as a genius. Of course, I view him as the latter.

Incidentally, Master’s main body (though I am unsure if it is accurate to call it this) was busy making adjustments to Talosheim’s heroes, Zandia and Jeena.

The two of them were the party members of the Sword King Borkus. Zandia is Princess Levia’s younger sister, while Jeena was once the leader of the Church of Vida, respected by Nuaza. In other words, they are special Zombies that those here have emotional attachment to.

They are one of the reasons that Master took the effort to hide inside Raymond, teleport to the underground church and kill Gubamon.

The two of them let out pitiful groans.

It cannot be said that their current status is favorable, even if they are fine in terms of simple fighting strength.

Unlike Gubamon’s mass-produced products, it seems that he poured all of the techniques that he knew at the time into creating these Undead heroes, doing his utmost to achieve functional beauty in them.

However, those techniques and his creativity ignored and scraped away at everything other than their fighting strength.

…I must have changed considerably to see Undead with things other than their performance and fighting strength harmed and think that they are in “unfavorable states.”

“Just hold out a little longer, Jou-chan, Jeena,” Borkus muttered.

“Your Majesty, my sister, my sister and Jeena-san will get better, won’t they?!” said Princess Levia.

The two of them were watching anxiously as Zandia continued gasping in pain and Jeena groaned, breathing strangely.

“Of course,” Master declared.

When Master has no confidence in himself, he often states it, so it is likely that the Zandia and Jeena will get better. Though the idea of Undead “getting better” is a strange one.

“Mana is squeezed out from the spirit inhabiting Zandia’s body by the tubes, and her staff uses that as the source of its power, allowing her to cast numerous types of magic. A kind of false Zombie mage,” Master said. “Zombies aren’t supposed to have a sense of pain, but the fact that she feels pain is likely due to the fact that the spirit feels pain when Mana is drawn from it.”

“A mechanism to draw Mana from the spirit. This is a technique that does not exist in the underworld; it is likely one of Gubamon’s original techniques,” I said. “I am sure precious materials or drugs have been used to achieve this.”

“As for Jeena, it seems that her lungs have been replaced by a device that expends Mana to produce a special smoke. With this, the upper half can fly in the air after separating from the lower half,” Master continued. “Because of this modification, it seems that she can’t talk. It probably wasn’t really a problem for Gubamon though, since he didn’t intend for her to use magic.”

“An unknown magical device, a precious one at that,” I said. “If they were mass-produced, perhaps creating the ‘blimps’ and ‘airships’ that you spoke of would be more than mere dreams, Master?”

The techniques used by Gubamon are all techniques that would make any ordinary mage wonder why anyone would use such sophisticated techniques on Zombies. Even I feel this way to some extent.

“I understand that they’re precious, but they will probably get better if I take all of these out, remove the metal plates buried in their hindbrains and spinal cords, and replace all of their blood that contains the drugs,” Master said. “So, I’m going to set up a partitioning screen, so please step back, Luciliano.”

“W-why?!” I shouted in response to Master’s attempt to shut me out of the process.

“Because the fair skin, brains and organs of maidens are going to be exposed,” Master replied.

“How can you deny me the chance to witness such a wonderful thing, Master! Surely you understand how valuable it would be to observe the states of the various body parts of those who died two hundred years ago!” I protested, half-screaming, but it seemed that this had the opposite effect to what I intended.

Master had his clones line up some partitioning screens that seemed to be for obstructing vision, for an absolutely outrageous reason.

“I mean, you said before that you have no interest in anything but the Undead,” Master said.

“Wait a minute, Master! That isn’t what I meant – geh!”

“Shut up and get over here!” Borkus growled, grabbing me by the back of the neck.

“Luciliano-san, my sister is still unwed!”

“Have some honor, you shameless person!”

I could do nothing but watch the partitioning screens being set up as I endured Princess Levia and Nuaza’s irrational verbal abuse.

From my perspective, it seems that you Titans of Talosheim always walk around half-naked, so I think you should cover your skin more before saying things like “unwed” and “shameless.”

Incidentally, it seems that Gubamon’s soul was destroyed around the same time that the surgery and adjustments for the Undead heroes was finished.

『The levels of Vandalieu’s Soul Breaker, God Slayer and Surgery skills have increased!』

All living creatures contain souls. There is no doubting this fact.

However, the question of *where* the soul is contained has been a topic of unending debate between philosophers from time immemorial.

Is it in the chest where the heart is, or the head where the brain is?

If it is in the heart or the head, does that mean that monsters and members of Vida's races that possess multiple of these organs also possess multiple souls? Or are the souls of monsters and those who share their blood stored elsewhere?

This difficult problem that not even Spiritualists can answer has caused researchers headaches for a long time.

I myself pondered it when I was younger, to the point that I began to develop fevers. And in the end, I never came to a satisfactory answer.

I asked Master, only to have him tell me that even in the worlds that he had previously lived in, an answer had not been found. In fact, on Earth, souls had not even been confirmed to exist.

How unexpected, for the people of Earth to not have confirmed the existence of souls despite having such an advanced civilization.

But the existence of Undead had also been unconfirmed on Earth, and the majority of Spiritualists there were apparently frauds. With that being the case, perhaps it is not so surprising.

…Earth is a world that has many places that are easy to live in, far more than this world, but it seems that it is a world that people like Master and myself would find difficult to live in.

Leaving that aside. What I came to become interested in was composite Undead… Undead that contained parts of numerous corpses, but only contained, without a doubt, a single soul.

"Surprisingly, it seems that in the world of Earth that Master lived in, there is a form of medical treatment where organs from the dead are transplanted into the living. It is a wonderful medical feat that is conducted without fear of any gods, but what interests me is what happens to the patients afterwards," I said. "It seems that the patients see the memories and dreams of the organs' former owners, learn their habits and begin feeling a desire to eat the food that they liked while they were alive."

Even on Earth, this was apparently something considered 'occult' at first, a kind of superstition or rumor, but a little before Master died on Earth, it seems that it was

considered a theory with some basis to it.

Perhaps because Master had little interest in such topics back then, he only vaguely remembers that there might be places other than the brain where a person's memories are stored.

Incidentally, the same phenomenon occurred in Origin, with the most strongly-advocated theory being that it was caused by the influence of the donor's Mana contained within the organs.

"So, I wanted to hear from you composite Undead, and you two, as you are the only two living beings in Lambda who have received transplants," I said, finishing my long prefacing statement while being held upside-down.

Eleanora and Bellmond looked at me with suspicious expressions.

"The moment I hear you tell stories about Vandalieu-sama, I feel suspicious," said Eleanora.

"Is it not simply idle gossip?" said Bellmond.

It seems that the two of them have never experienced such a phenomenon.

"Dreams? Food…?"

"La～♪"

"Eat…"

"Rururu～♪"

No proper conversation developed between me and Rapiéçage or Yamata, who had coiled her neck around me. Perhaps I should have asked Pauvina-jou or Master to translate for me.

The investigation of whether this phenomenon of Earth and Origin occurs in this world is a matter of extreme importance.

This world, and the foreign worlds of Earth and Origin. If this phenomenon occurs in all three of the worlds, then perhaps there are other phenomena that the worlds have

in common.

…Not that there is something that I would immediately want to test at this point in time even if I were to confirm this fact. Frankly, I am not interested enough in this ‘Earth’ that apparently has no Undead to feel a desire to research it.

Though I do believe that its cuisine is wonderful.

However, I do think that this should be confirmed if possible, as I may think of something to investigate in the future.

In Yamata’s case, it is not a portion of her organs that have been transplanted, but the upper bodies of women, including their brains, transplanted onto each of her necks. Is she not perfect for investigating the theory that memories are recorded in places other than the brain?

In any case, Eleanora and Bellmond became cooperative once I explained the goal behind this investigation. Rapiéçage and Yamata’s attitudes did not change significantly, however.

But Eleanora didn’t seem to have any ideas.

“Sorry, but I don’t really feel anything,” she said. “But maybe the effect on me is small, since only my scarred skin and the organs beneath it have been replaced. I’ve come to enjoy blood more than before, but that might be because I’ve become an Abyssal Vampire.”

I turned my gaze towards Bellmond, who has had a considerably larger portion of her body replaced through transplantation, but she shook her head.

“I do not believe I have acquired any of Ternecia’s memories or preferences, either,” she said. “However, I have had dreams where I am jumping between the branches of trees in a forest, but I cannot tell whether these are memories of the original owner of this tail, or whether they are memories from my own early childhood.”

Bellmond’s transplanted tail is that of a monkey-like monster. As this monster is extremely rare, nobody in Talosheim knew what it was called, but it was apparently an agile monster with a long tail.

But Bellmond was born as a forest-monkey-type Beast-person. Since ten thousand

years have passed, she apparently does not remember her childhood very well, but she apparently lived in a forest before she was expelled from the village she was born in.

There is no telling where these dreams originated from.

“I see. I may ask the same question at a later time, so please cooperate with me when that time comes,” I said. “Hmm? Have you remembered something, perhaps?” I asked Rapiéçage and Yamata, who were looking this way.

My hopes had been raised only a little, and this turned out to be appropriate for the answer they gave me.

“Rappie, eat, meat, insects, grass, raw.”

“…I see.”

Rapiéçage seemed to be trying to say that her tastes have changed since she was alive.

Rapiéçage is a combination of the party members of the A-class adventurer, the Divine Spear of Ice Mikhail, who lived a hundred years ago. She has the head of a female warrior, the torso of a female mage and her arms and legs from the elbows and knees down have been replaced by those of an Ogre that the party had tamed. The horns of a Dragon-type monster called a Trihorn have been used for her skeleton, and she possesses the wings of a Pterosaur as well as the tail of a snake with a Cemetery Bee’s stinger at the end.

Thus, she is asking whether the fact that she eats raw meat, insects and grass might be the phenomenon that I have described, but…

“That is because you are an Undead, a Zombie,” I said.

It is thought that Undead, especially Zombies, eat only meat, but surprisingly, they also eat plants when no other food is available. It is just that they are so ferocious that they prioritize attacking any moving object that is in front of them.

“Eat～♪”

“Fish, meat, people… When I eat them…”

“I chew~ and break them~♪”

It seems that Yamata’s consciousness has been taken over by nine beautiful women’s upper bodies that have been attached to her, but her base core is a Hydra. Thus, any non-Hydra-like behaviors that she displays must be the influence of those parts that have been transplanted.

Talking and singing like this is certainly non-Hydra-like behavior, but since they are behaviors that have been taught to her by Ternecia, they must not be taken into account.

“It is true that Hydras swallow things whole when they feed, but… I am not particularly knowledgeable about Hydras, so what should I make of this?” I wondered.

“How about having her let go of you first?” Bellmond suggested.

“The color of your face is pretty amazing right now,” said Eleanora.

I suppose I will not come to a conclusion anytime soon. More inquiry and investigation are required.

Ah, at this rate, my lifespan may not be long enough. I am attracted to the idea of becoming an Undead, but I would like to avoid any damage to my memory and thinking capabilities in doing so. I suppose I shall consider becoming a Vampire.

There is also the option of having Master cast Youth Transformation on me, but… Master will discover my weaknesses and there will be no undoing that, so I wish to avoid this if possible. Apparently there is not a single person who has overcome the pleasant and unpleasant sensations felt during the Youth Transformation process.

A king passed away.

He was a great king, praised by everyone.

During times of war, he had taken up his own sword and defeated more enemies than anyone else, reducing soldier casualties and protecting the people.

During times of peace, he had behaved nobly and properly wherever possible to set

an example for the people, and he had never allowed the people or soldiers to starve.

He had never been arrogant when interacting with allied nations that he had formed pacts with, and he had been loved by everyone.

However, even this great king had made a mistake. He had died before fully settling the matter of who would succeed him.

The king had two sons.

His eldest son was a prodigy who had inherited his qualities. It was expected that if he were to succeed the throne, he would lead the empire just as the king had done.

The second son possessed exceptional military prowess, but was a problematic child whose most notable features were his violence and quick temper.

However, when the king passed away, there were some who advocated that the second son should become the next king.

On the day that marked a month since the king's passing, the two brothers confronted each other with their subordinates at their sides.

Clad in armor, weapons in hand.

Younger brother, do you really wish to become king, even if it would mean dividing the empire and doing battle with your own older brother, your own flesh and blood? The older brother asked.

There are those who would become outcasts if you were to become king, just like me, Ani-ue, the younger brother replied.

The elder brother reprimanded the younger one. *Why do you not think of the people before your own fame! Such an individual does not deserve to become king,* he said.

The younger brother ridiculed the older brother. *The people? Don't you mean livestock? Becoming food for us will be their happiness.*

The older brother suppressed his anger as he continued trying to persuade the younger brother. *Do you think that this selfishness will be forgiven? This will not be accepted by our allied nations, or, more importantly, the gods!*

The younger brother responded with contempt. *This is why Chichi-ue and you are no good, Ani-ue. No matter what you do, it's always about the people, the allied nations and the gods! Nothing else. I, on the other hand, would be able to turn everyone in the allied nations into our slaves. And we have a new god.*

The older brother's subordinates began murmuring amongst themselves at the younger brother's mention of a new god, but the older brother held up a hand to silence them. And then he drew his sword from its sheath and made a declaration to the younger brother.

"Bugogoh, buhibuhihih!"

In that case, I no longer consider you my brother!

The younger brother pointed the blade of a scythe at his older brother.

"Buhihihih! Bufufubuhih!"

That's the best news you could have given me! I'll kill you without holding back!

"Mububujenge, BUGOOOH!"

"Ravovifard, BUKYAKYAKYAH!"

The Noble Orc brothers prayed to the gods that they worshipped, and Familiar Spirits descended upon their bodies. And then they leapt at each other, aiming for each other's necks.

And so began the civil war that divided the Noble Orc empire in two.

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